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MAY 2018



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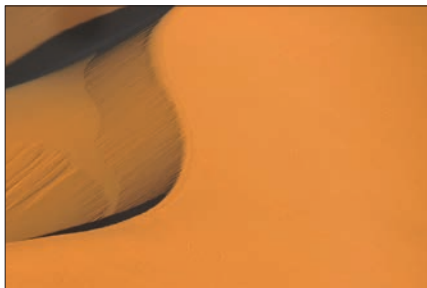
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# Preserving America's Global Leadership

BY BARBARA STEPHENSON

**W**e in the Foreign Service, the team that bears such responsibility for maintaining America's global leadership role, are again in a period of significant transition and change. This is a good time to take stock and look forward, asking what each of us needs to do to ensure that the world continues to look to the United States for leadership.

We are working under a new National Security Strategy, one that takes a clear-eyed look at the serious and escalating threats to our nation and concludes that “we must upgrade our diplomatic capabilities to compete in the current environment.” Meanwhile, AFSA's recent in-depth review of Congressional Budget Justifications showed that spending on core diplomatic capability has declined significantly over the past decade.

In anticipation of deep funding cuts, hiring and promotions were cut deeply, contributing to the loss of hundreds of Foreign Service officers and specialists, with the loss in top leadership ranks particularly pronounced.

We now know that Congress, with overwhelming bipartisan support, firmly rejected deep cuts and passed a budget that actually *increases* the international

affairs budget. For this, we pause and give thanks—profound thanks.

Base funding for “ongoing operations,” the budget line item

that covers core diplomatic capability, also held firm. If OCO (overseas contingency operations) funding is taken into account, total funding for core diplomatic capability dipped slightly (by 1.6 percent, from \$5.05 billion in 2017 to \$4.96 billion in 2018), while still coming in ahead of 2016 levels (\$4.89 billion). If we look only at “enduring” (or base) funding for core diplomatic capability without OCO, funding in 2018 is actually up compared to 2017.

I am sharing these complicated numbers for a reason. As stewards of this institution, we need to understand the funding decisions that underpin America's global leadership role.

Simply put, \$5 billion—the amount we spend on core diplomatic capability—is not a big number. It is about what America spends annually supporting Afghan forces, and a little more than one-third the cost of a new aircraft carrier.

What's more, the \$5 billion America spends on core diplomatic capability is not a big number compared to the \$9.5 billion China budgeted for diplomacy this year. While apples-to-apples comparisons are hard to nail down, the trend lines are clear. China increased spending on diplomacy in 2018 by 15 percent over 2017, and by a whopping 40 percent since 2013. While China's spending on diplomacy grew by 40 percent, America's declined by 33 percent over the same period, from \$7.4 billion in 2013 to \$4.9 billion in 2018.

For the first time in my 32-year Foreign Service career, I am grappling with whether we can maintain American diplo-

matic superiority in the face of such funding decisions. As the National Security Strategy says, we need to be building up diplomatic capability—not pulling back.

Even before the painful and unnecessary loss of talent over the past year, American diplomacy had been on a starvation diet, and tales of depleted political, economic and public diplomacy sections at embassies were a regular staple of AFSA's conversations with members. I hear this often: With just one more mid-level officer at post, we could have such an impact, really put America's soft power to work, really level the playing field for American businesses.

Rebuilding our nation's diplomatic capability will take time, and it will require all of us to give our best effort. Now that Congress has spoken and rejected cuts with such clarity, AFSA will press for an immediate restoration of hiring and promotion numbers. We will press to deploy more mid-level officers to the field, where the Foreign Service delivers the greatest value for the American people.

I sincerely hope that the tide has turned, and that reinforcements will soon be on their way. In the meantime, until reinforcements arrive, your role in maintaining America's global leadership is more important than ever.

Now is the time to lead from wherever you are and to demonstrate that the trust placed in the Foreign Service will be repaid many times over in the results we achieve for the American people. I promised congressional appropriators that they could count on us to do that. ■



*Ambassador Barbara Stephenson is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.*

**Editor in Chief, Director of Publications**  
Shawn Dorman: [dorman@afsa.org](mailto:dorman@afsa.org)

**Managing Editor**  
Susan Brady Maitra: [maitra@afsa.org](mailto:maitra@afsa.org)

**Associate Editor**  
Donna Gorman: [gorman@afsa.org](mailto:gorman@afsa.org)

**Publications Coordinator**  
Dmitry Filipoff: [filiipoff@afsa.org](mailto:filiipoff@afsa.org)

**Ad & Circulation Manager**  
Allan Saunders: [saunders@afsa.org](mailto:saunders@afsa.org)

**Art Director**  
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**Advertising Intern**  
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## CONTACTS



[www.afsa.org](http://www.afsa.org)

**AFSA Headquarters:**  
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# Whither Democracy?

BY SHAWN DORMAN

This month we examine the state of democracy in the world, a timely topic today as we consider the resilience of our own democracy in the face of numerous challenges.

In her new book, *Fascism, A Warning*, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright sounds the alarm against a U.S. retreat from the world, noting that at a time when authoritarianism is growing in many countries, American leadership is “urgently required.”

“I don’t see America as a victim,” Albright said on Fresh Air April 3. “I see America as the most powerful country in the world that has a role to play, standing up for democratic ideals and human rights across the board.”

That sentiment was certainly true 20 years ago, when I was a junior political officer at Embassy Jakarta with a portfolio including student and youth affairs. It was spring 1998, and young Indonesians were leading the “Reformasi” movement—protesting the corruption, collusion and nepotism of the 32-year repressive Suharto regime and calling on the president to step down. They looked to the United States for inspiration—we had the freedoms to which they aspired.

It was important for the United States to be on the right side of that bold democracy movement. On May 20, 1998, Sec. Albright said publicly that Pres. Suharto had an “opportunity for an historic act of states-

manship,” suggesting he should hasten a transition process. Suharto stepped down on May 21.

In recognition of the 20th anniversary of Indonesia’s relatively successful experiment with democracy, retired FSO Ed McWilliams (my former boss in Jakarta), offers a progress report.

The focus section includes evaluations of the state of democracy in other regions. David Kramer, former president of Freedom House, looks at a decade of backsliding in Europe and Eurasia. USAID FSO Alexi Panehal provides an overview of worrisome trends in Latin America.

USAID’s Assia Ivantcheva covers the field of electoral assistance. Also from USAID, Mariam Afrasiabi and Mardy Shualy look at the how the United States supports civil society in the face of “closing space.”

Amb. (ret.) Jerry Feierstein evaluates Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 plan for economic and social change, and journalist Ben Barber shares his views on growing authoritarianism in Southeast Asia.

On the home front, former Senior Advisor to the Director General Alex Karagiannis examines the state of U.S. diplomatic capacity following the Rex Tillerson tenure, and offers suggestions for the new Secretary.

FSO Phil Skotte speaks out about the critical role of cultural and language expertise. Also notable are the responses to the March Speaking Out on the need for support for FS families with special needs kids, including a response from Medical Director Charles Rosenfarb. ■



Shawn Dorman is the editor of The Foreign Service Journal.

## An International Conversation Is Needed

I write in response to Senator Lindsey Graham's call for a national conversation on U.S. foreign policy in the March *FSJ*.

Because problems of the international system are growing from day to day, American political elites should be aware of one thing: Even as a superpower, the USA is not capable of solving the problems of the world by itself.

Heavily supported globalization has created global problems, and for the first time in modern history the United States needs true collaborators instead of strategic partners. Why?

The USA's competitors, such as China and Russia, are already very excited about the possibility of a power transition. But their reputation and their lack of experience in world governance do not offer a very bright future for the international system. If the power transition occurs, the new world order will be based on hard power and pure militarization.

No country has the kind of soft power gravitas the USA has. It is high time for the United States to utilize its soft power to bring about democratic values and peace for real.

Action speaks louder than words, and this conversation should be international.

*Yiğit Anil Güzelipek*

*Assistant professor, Department of Political Science and International Relations*

*Karamanoğlu Mehbetbey University  
Karaman, Turkey*

## Support for Special Needs Kids

Thank you to *The Foreign Service Journal* for publishing Kathi Silva's excellent March Speaking Out column,

"Families with Special Needs Kids Need Support."

Since Maureen Danzot and I co-authored a similar article in June 2016 to first ring the alarm bell about deteriorating State Department support for more than 1,000 Foreign Service families who have children with disabilities, the situation has, if anything, become worse.

As Kathi Silva highlighted, over the past several years policies and practices regarding access to the Special Needs Education Allowance, burdensome and limiting bidding procedures and growing medical clearance issues have all combined to increasingly limit opportunities for a large number of Foreign Service personnel in terms of where they can serve overseas. This, in turn, leads to limitations on career advancement, more broken assignments and curtailments, and increasing instances of lengthy family separations.

The parallel cost to the State Department and other foreign affairs agencies is significant. Personnel are forced to waste hundreds of hours jumping through unnecessary bureaucratic hoops, suffer from declining morale and are increasingly unable to serve in areas where their training and experience base could be utilized most effectively in pushing forward U.S. policy interests.

Never mind the cost of addressing increasing numbers of Equal Employment Opportunity complaints and grievances from affected employees who have simply had enough with how they and their families are being treated.

There are some small glimmers of hope. The State Department recently formed a Special Needs Education Allowance Task Force, including all the

various department stakeholders, and has asked for periodic input from

AFSA and the Foreign Service Families with Disabilities Alliance.

This indicates at least recognition that there are problems that must be addressed. It remains to be seen whether this effort will result in significant positive reforms, or will be limited to minor fixes. For the former

to occur, we expect that greater attention and engagement from more senior leadership in the department will be required.

In the meantime, membership in the FSFDA employee organization is growing. We encourage all those affected by these issues to join so that we can be more effective in providing mutual support while speaking with a common voice on issues of concern. Please contact me via State email if interested in becoming a member.

*Mark R. Evans*

*Chair, Foreign Service Families with Disabilities Alliance*

*FSO*

*Embassy Stockholm*

## Steadfastness in Public Service

When I was in the fire academy, during particularly hard stretches of physical training, our captain used life-and-death imagery to spur us on.

He painted the picture of an unconscious victim in the back bedroom of a fully consumed house. Your air tank is low, you cannot see your hand in front of your face and the floor is getting spongy. But you've got to get to the back bedroom!

"If you quit on this training," he said, "you will quit on a fire."



At State, we're seeing people quit the department, many through retirement or the choice to seek other employment; but some who've left have taken the opportunity to publicly explain themselves in letters, editorials and videos. This self-aggrandizing method of departure is unacceptable, and should not be lauded.

Instead of releasing "honor-bound" statements that feed a polarized media machine (some claimed "leaks," but still sought attention for themselves), why not praise the women and men, including our Locally Employed staff, of the missions you left behind?

They are the ones who continue to protect American citizens, who facilitate legitimate travel to the United States, who promote U.S. business, and explain our policy and our people in every corner of the world. You not only left them in the back bedroom; you bragged about it.

Public service is not easy. It requires a steadfastness that can withstand the political winds, even when they blow at hurricane strength. An organization that cannot count on its employees to hold together in difficult times is weak.

If your personal issues prevent you from continuing to serve, fine. Don't make a spectacle of it on your way out.

*John Fer*

*FSO*

*Embassy Riga*

## After Parkland

The February massacre of 17 high school students and teachers in Parkland, Florida, was painful for any of us to contemplate. But as a former Foreign Service officer whose beloved daughter, Bessie, was murdered 25 years ago in Washington, D.C., I feel particularly close to these grieving parents.

With that in mind, I offer the following 10 things I have learned that

you may find unacceptable, but almost certainly will encounter:

1. The pain never goes away. Never. The death of a child is not the natural order of things; and the pain and grief are something that will help you recover, but never forget.

2. Every parent grieves in a very personal, unique way. Grieving is not a competitive sport, and your terrible trauma stands by itself—even in the face of the Holocaust, wars and pestilence.

3. Blaming America's flawed gun laws is tempting, but largely fruitless. I tried to join the National Rifle Association to change our gun laws from inside. They would not accept my membership. Guns and hunting are as American as fathers and sons.

4. Memorials help, but are soon forgotten. Truly, candles should be lit and songs sung; vigils and graveside services held; and memorial plaques and nameplates erected. But they will all be largely forgotten—except by the parents of murdered children.

5. Yelling at politicians never hurts. Now that presidents as "Mourners in Chief" are part of America's political/cultural landscape, by all means give the president, Congress and the media a piece of your mind. But expect no change.

6. The death of a child often leads to a divorce of the parents. This is a sad byproduct of the murder of a child. Perhaps some relationships are strengthened by tragedy, but statistics show otherwise.

7. A desire for revenge is a natural consequence; but, over time, it may ineluctably transform into forgiveness. If parents of murdered children suffer forever, just consider the parents of the shooter whose suffering is eternal.

8. The death penalty makes sense,



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until you force yourself—as I did—into thinking through the physical act of killing the shooter with your bare hands.

9. You may see your child again in some angelic scenario. I have seen my beloved daughter Bessie twice. The first time was the day after her funeral: she was dressed in a flowing heavenly gown, comforting people at her grave. Another time she was in a surrealistic image done by a young Croatian painter who captured her as a child, suspended in space, with an uncertain smile on her lips and a tear in her eye.

10. There is something beyond our comprehension of an earthly existence, and angels are clearly a part of it. Wiser people than I have long suggested that “over there” or “on the other side” are places that are always there—if only we can be open to them.

*Thomas R. Hutson  
FSO, retired  
Omaha, Nebraska*

## Share Your Views

The *Journal* welcomes your letters to the editor. Letters should be less than 550 words, and must include your name, connection to the Foreign Service (FSO, FSS, FS retiree, FS family member), and city or post of current residence. The *Journal* reserves the right to edit letters for space and clarity. ■



**Share your thoughts about this month's issue.**

**Submit letters to the editor:  
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# Response from MED— Our Commitment to Foreign Service Families

BY DR. CHARLES ROSENFARB, MEDICAL DIRECTOR,  
BUREAU OF MEDICAL SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF STATE

As a fellow Foreign Service parent, I couldn't agree more with Kathi Silva (March Speaking Out) that the Foreign Service provides a rich environment for our kids. Many FS children certainly do bloom—adapting, adjusting and developing in unique and wonderful ways that we could only have dreamed of when we began our careers.

As the director of the Bureau of Medical Services, I can say unequivocally that the entire MED team takes our mission to “safeguard and promote the health and well-being of America’s diplomatic community and their family members” very seriously.

MED personnel, both in Health Units overseas and our offices here in Washington, work very hard to learn as much as they can about the availability of local health resources at all posts, continually reassessing their quality on the basis of feedback from patients and host-country professional colleagues.

At the same time, we strive to fully understand and appreciate each of our patients’ unique health needs prior to and during their time overseas. Our goals, of course, are to ensure that those needs can be met at the assigned mission and that the department, as an employer, does what it can to reduce the health risks employees and family members face in postings where access to quality medical care may be very limited or nonexistent.

Meeting our goals is especially chal-

lenging when a child’s health and well-being is involved. An adult may argue that they understand the dangers to their health if posted to a medically austere location, and that they accept those risks. But what if the issue, for example, is a family with a child who is two years behind in school potentially being posted to a country with limited services? I can think of few things more heartbreaking than to see a child fall further behind in their development, or to have a family curtail after a few weeks at post because the needs of their child could not be met.

Our system is designed to prevent families having to face those situations. The department provides more than 1,000 Special Needs Educational Allowances each year to ensure that families receive the services and support they need. Yet in our efforts to avoid outcomes potentially harmful to children we sometimes end up at odds with parents facing difficult choices. One of the toughest tasks for any health care practitioner is sharing hard truths with patients, especially ones that may significantly affect their lives. Patients sometimes fundamentally disagree with their assessments. But in MED we do our best to explain why we feel our administrative decisions are appropriate for each affected family.

The daughter I helped raise over the course of three overseas tours didn’t have special educational needs. She did, however, have a medical issue that could have had physical consequences and complica-

## SPEAKING OUT

## Families with Special Needs Kids Need Support

BY KATHI SILVA

Raising children in the Foreign Service is a lot like gardening—we provide a rich environment for our children with all the right conditions and hope they will bloom, but as gardeners know, there is a lot of adapting and adjusting to whatever conditions may arise, and our plants don’t always grow in ways we expect.

Good gardeners do what they can to establish strong roots, provide a rich environment of support for their growing plants and create a plan and a system that responds to unpredictable factors out of their control. For families with special needs children, this system is even more important.

In recent years the number of children in the United States diagnosed with special needs is rising, and this trend is also seen within the State Department. (Just a few years ago, thanks to a positive relationship with the Office of Medical Services (MED), now the Bureau of Medical Services) and the support and flexibility MED gave us to “grow out gardens,” the experience of raising a special needs child overseas was mostly a positive one.

As international awards become more

inclusive and tele-therapy gains popularity, there are more options than ever before to address special needs overseas. Thus, the challenges for families with special needs children overseas should be increasingly manageable.

Yet for the past couple of years the experience of Foreign Service families with special needs children has been the opposite:

### Why Reduce Support?

In the June 2016 *Foreign Service Journal*, Maureen Dunton and Mark Evans wrote an important “Speaking Out” column about the fact that parents were increasingly having a hard time accessing Special Needs Educational Allowance (known as SNEA) funds and getting a say in the medical clearance options for their children. Since then, there have been numerous articles on behalf of, and by, disgruntled parents in an effort to resolve these concerns.

A parent advocacy group, the Foreign Service Families with Disabilities Alliance, was created in 2016 with the goal of providing a unified voice for families dealing with MED issues. When the alli-

ance’s suggestions were not answered and the number and types of complaints were serious enough, AFSA got involved by writing letters and attending meetings with MED to mediate parents’ complaints.

The State Department Office of Civil Rights is addressing 4 complaints from a Foreign Service employee who argues that some of MED’s current practices are disadvantageous to Foreign Service members whose dependents have special needs. This, he says, is a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The case is likely to open the door to many similar complaints.

On Oct. 29, 2017, a *Washington Post* article by Jackie Spinner, “State Department support for diplomats with children with disabilities is contracting,” brought public attention to the issue. One month later, Senators Ben Cardin (D.Md.) and Patsy Murray (D.Wash.) sent a letter to the State Department questioning the “erosion” of support for Foreign Service Families with special needs children. Congress has also requested briefings from the State Department and MED in particular on special needs issues.

The disfranchisement of Foreign Service Families by MED, and the seemingly high-handed way it is handling clearances and educational allowances for our special needs children, have gone public. More people are aware of the problems, but has anything changed? Not in the direction families were hoping.



Kathi Silva is married to a Foreign Service officer; they have served together in Madrid, Rio de Janeiro, Caracas, Pretoria, Paris and Washington, D.C. She has a master’s degree in public health and is currently completing a master’s degree in a new world of children with disabilities and given her more than 15 years of experience

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## Speaking Out March 2018

tions. As a physician, I was fortunate to know a great deal about the nature of her condition. But not having served before at the locations I was bidding on and not knowing anything about the quality of the local care at those posts, I realized I was in no position to make an informed decision about where my own child’s health care needs could be safely met. As a parent, I felt fortunate that I could rely on the knowledge and expertise of the staff in MED’s Office of Medical Clearances.

Like any bureaucracy, MED can do better. We can—and will—redouble our efforts at communicating proactively and in as timely a manner as possible. We will do more to ensure that our policies and practices are transparent and remain consistent as staff change. And we will reaffirm our commitment to fostering a fully collaborative partnership with patients and families alike.

We also pledge to our patients and the department that we will continue to advocate very strongly on behalf of all FS children, and that we will assure to the best of our abilities that those kids have access to the high-quality health and educational services they require to fully flower and grow. As medical professionals first and foremost, advancing the physical and mental health of our employees and family members will always be our singular motivation. ■

## Former Diplomats to Congress: Restore Power and Influence of U.S. Diplomacy

**M**ore than 200 former U.S. ambassadors and other high-level diplomats wrote a letter to Senator Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), the Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Senator Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), the ranking member of the committee.

The March 21 letter asked the senators and their colleagues to use Mike Pompeo's confirmation hearing for the job of Secretary of State as an opportunity to "focus public attention on the urgent need to restore the power and influence of American diplomacy."

The letter was signed by those who have served both Republican and Democratic administrations, including many Career Ambassadors such as William Burns, Ruth Davis, Elizabeth Jones, Thomas Pickering, Nicholas Burns and J. Stapleton Roy. They urged the senators to support four main elements needed to get American diplomacy back on solid footing: policy leadership, resources, staffing and oversight.

The former diplomats implored the administration not to retreat from global engagement, which they call a "strategic tool" to protect our country. "Without an engaged diplomatic component of national power, we weaken our alliances, lose credibility in the eyes of both our partners and our adversaries and increase the likelihood of unnecessary and costly wars," they wrote.

The diplomats requested that senators ask Secretary-designate Pompeo to give his views on U.S. global engagement and also present "his vision for adequately funding the diplomacy required to promote and protect America's sovereignty, security and prosperity" during the hearing.

The letter expressed concern about the more than 50 ambassadorial posts that remain unfilled, as well as the 16 of 22 unfilled assistant secretary positions. The signatories recommended that Pompeo be asked about his plans for "ending the very damaging hiring freeze, and his ideas on how the State Department should be held accountable for meeting clear metrics for diplomatic readiness to include staffing levels and competent training at each rank of the career services."

They also suggested the senators ask Pompeo about his commitment to congressional oversight to "assess diplomatic readiness, priorities and resource needs."

Amb. (ret.) William Burns told the *Washington Post* that the letter was a product of the signatories' "profound concern about the broad attitude of dismissiveness to diplomacy, the marginalization of professional diplomats and the corrosion of the institution."

"The letter itself is not advocating any policy position," added Amb. (ret.) Nancy McEldowney. "It's advocating for

a robust international engagement with allies and dialogue across the board, to achieve whatever policy ends up being."

## More U.S. Diplomats Expelled from Russia

**O**n March 29, the Russian Foreign Ministry announced that it would expel 150 Western diplomats, including 60 Americans, in retaliation for the expulsion of 150 Russians from nearly two dozen countries in the wake of the Kremlin's alleged role in the poisoning of a former Russian spy and his daughter in England. Russia also announced that the U.S. Consulate General St. Petersburg would close.

The Russians declared 58 diplomats in Moscow and two at the consulate in Ekaterinburg to be *persona non grata*; all were required to leave the country by April 5.

The move is the latest in an ongoing series of diplomatic spats with Moscow. In July 2017, after the U.S. Congress imposed a new round of sanctions, Russia cut the U.S. presence in Russia by 755 people, including both diplomats and locally engaged staff.

## 50 Years Ago

### Humphrey Stars in Rivkin-Harriman Awards Ceremony

**H**ubert Hubert Humphrey swept the Foreign Service into his *abrazo* of ebullient optimism and sketched out the role of America's diplomats in an all-but-explicit campaign canvas entitled "The Rising Sun of American Promise."

The Vice President of the United States was addressing the first annual awards luncheon of the American Foreign Service Association on April 18. He presented the \$1,000 Rivkin and \$1,000 Harriman Awards to two officers of the Foreign Service whom the vice president identified with "the humanitarian generation" of American life today.

... He saw the Foreign Service families' devotion to teaching people around the world how to share and how to give as representing the truest aspirations of American life.

—Excerpted from a news article of the same title in the May 1968 FSJ.



## SITE OF THE MONTH: MAPPING THE STATE OF THE WORLD

Maps can help us make sense of a confusing world, and this month we showcase three interactive maps on useful websites that show different ways to view the world.

“Freedom in the World” is Freedom House’s flagship annual report, assessing the condition of political rights and civil liberties around the world. Published since 1973, it ranks the state of freedom by population and by country, with supporting texts for 195 countries and 14 territories.

This year’s report shows that 71 countries “suffered net declines in political rights and civil liberties, with only 35 registering gains.” The report also shows “an accelerating decline” in U.S. political rights and civil liberties.

CIVICUS, which bills itself as “a global alliance of civil society organizations and activists,” monitors the state of civil society around the world and reflects its findings on a



map. Its June 2017 report, “Civic Space in the Americas,”

examines people’s right to organize, speak out and take action country by country. While civic space in the Americas is more open than in some other regions of the world, CIVICUS found that it is still seriously restricted in more than a third of the region’s countries.

And for yet another way to “map” the world, look to the Matador Network’s depiction of cost of living around the world. Map enthusiasts may find a way to connect levels of freedom or restrictions on civic space with the cost of living in a particular country. Of course, those of you thinking about next year’s bids may also find this last map intriguing from a purely self-interested point of view.

A farewell video made by several of the departing diplomats was shared widely online, as was a blog post, written by Anne Godfrey, the spouse of the current deputy chief of mission in Moscow.

“Those of us left behind will stay tough and keep the mission going,” says Godfrey. “Last week we rallied around our friends and did what we could to help them meet the deadline for departure. Next week, the halls of a building emptied of some of the finest people I have the privilege of knowing, will be walked by some of the finest people I have the privilege of knowing. And we will pick up the pieces, carry on the work and continue to live here in this sometimes gloomy, but ever vibrant and enigmatic city.”

### State Makes Cuba Staffing Cuts Permanent

On March 2 the State Department announced that it would make the staffing cuts put in place last October at U.S. Embassy Havana permanent.

Last September, State recalled 21

Americans from Havana, all of whom complained of unexplained headaches, dizziness, hearing loss and other medical problems—their symptoms were blamed on some type of “sonic attack.”

In October, with no answer to the mystery in sight, the department ordered all non-essential staff and family members to leave post.

By law, the department was required to revisit the decision within six months and either send the diplomats back to post or make the cuts permanent. Former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson signed off on the plan to permanently reduce staffing.

According to an April 2 report in the *Daily Beast*, researchers at the University of Michigan say the problem could have been caused if a pair of eavesdropping devices were accidentally placed too close together in a home or hotel room, triggering a painful, high-pitched tone. The researchers submitted their findings to the State Department, but told the *Daily Beast* that they had not received a response.

### Don’t End the Iran Deal

In March more than 100 U.S. national security experts, including nearly 50 retired military officers and more than 30 former ambassadors, wrote a letter to the president urging him to remain in the Iran nuclear deal.

The president set a May 12 deadline—the date by which he has to either waive sanctions against Iran or leave the deal—for the United States and its allies to agree on changes to address what he calls flaws in the deal.

The letter, from a group called the National Coalition to Prevent an Iranian Nuclear Weapon, states that maintaining the U.S. commitment to the Iran nuclear deal “will bring substantial benefits and strengthen America’s hand in dealing with North Korea, as well as Iran, and help maintain the reliability of America’s word and influence as a world leader,” while “ditching it would serve no national security purpose.”

Signatories include well-known former State Department officials such as FSO

Thomas Countryman, who had served as assistant secretary of State for international security and nonproliferation; Ambassador (ret.) Ryan Crocker, ambassador to Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Kuwait and Lebanon; Ambassador (ret.) Thomas Pickering, undersecretary of State for political affairs and ambassador to Israel, Russia, India, El Salvador, Nigeria, Jordan and the United Nations; and Ambassador (ret.) Patrick F. Kennedy, undersecretary of State for management.

Military officers who signed the letter include U.S. Air Force Lieutenant General (ret.) James Clapper, a former director of national intelligence, and USAF General (ret.) Michael Hayden, a former director of the National Security Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency.

Former Senator and Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Rela-

## Contemporary Quote

**ee** I have met hundreds of State Department employees. I know them. And in the past few weeks I have had a chance to meet dozens and dozens more. To a person they expressed to me their hope to be empowered in their roles and to have a clear understanding of the president's mission. That will be my first priority. They've also shared how demoralizing it is to have some vacancies and, frankly, not to feel relevant. I will do my part to end those vacancies; I will need your [Congress'] help. And I will work every day to provide dedicated leadership and convey my faith in their work, their professionalism. **”**

—Mike Pompeo, nominee for Secretary of State, during his confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 12.

tions Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) also signed the letter, as did former Senator and Chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services Sam Nunn (D-Ga.).

Those named here join a small group of administration officials, including Defense Secretary James Mattis and

Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Joseph Dunford, who have advised the administration to remain in the deal. ■

*This edition of Talking Points was compiled by Donna Gorman, Shawn Dorman and Susan Maitra.*

There has long been bipartisan consensus that our country is safer, stronger and more prosperous when America leads. As conflicts destabilize regions and threaten the lives of millions around the world, American global leadership is needed now more than ever before—not only to save lives abroad, but to keep us safe here at home. Remaining a force for good in the world takes a fully funded, fully staffed State Department and development agencies.

—Representative David Price (D-N.C.), at a meeting with Raleigh business and community leaders on March 27.

Everything we do in EUCOM [U.S. European Command], we look at it as an interagency activity. Generally with State in the lead, as diplomacy leads, is the way that we work here in a democracy. So everything I do, we look at from a whole-of-government approach. And in each country, our objective is to support the ambassador and the ambassador's country team

## Heard on the Hill



in that country. So a reduction of their abilities would not be positive.

—General Curtis Scaparrotti, Commander of EUCOM, at a hearing of the Senate Committee on Armed Services on March 8.

Our country's standing in the world has been on the decline over the past decade or more, and that certainly continues. Throughout the 20th century, our allies viewed the United States as a reliable partner and a source of stability, a friend whose ideals and leadership made our world a better place. Unfortunately today we are not counted on as we

once were. The chasm between what our leaders say and the actions that they take can have a devastating impact. ... In order to execute foreign policy effectively, the Secretary must have a fully functional department behind him.

—Senator Bob Corker (R-Ky.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, from his statement opening the Pompeo confirmation hearing on April 12.



# What the State Department Should Bring to the Table: Cultural and Language Expertise

BY PHIL SKOTTE

When I served in Moscow I met with the head of Russia's consular affairs bureau. I have forgotten his name, but will never forget what he told me about his career path.

He said that he had served with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 21 years, and that 17 of them had been in Pyongyang. About his Korean-language skills, he said that if he was on the phone, Koreans thought he was Korean—he had no accent at all.

At the Russian Foreign Ministry, all my interlocutors spoke wonderful English and knew America well. All of them had been identified early in their careers as America experts, or at least English-speakers, and were put on career tracks that led to considerable time in North America. We always conversed in English, because their English was far better than my Russian.

No doubt the Russian diplomat who served 17 years in Pyongyang had a more difficult career than the diplomats who served in New York, Washington and Miami, but they all had one thing in com-

mon. All of them knew the language and culture of their assigned countries very well, and brought a high level of cultural and linguistic expertise to their tasks.

## A Good Deal for Taxpayers

During my 25 years in the Department of State I have noticed that many other foreign ministries have a similar approach. These foreign ministries recognize that their interests are best served by developing diplomatic expertise over long years in similar cultural and linguistic environments. The taxpayers in these countries get a pretty good deal on language training when their diplomats return again and again to the same language environments.

Unless you have lived overseas for long periods, you might not understand why language and cultural awareness are so vital, and why they take so long to learn. To give a simple example, when I served in Manila we collected little gifts (pens, calendars, wine, etc.) and gave them to our local staff in a Christmas drawing. The holiday party was fun, and the staff left in a festive mood.

But when I tried the same thing years later in Hong Kong, the Chinese staff was subdued and even disappointed. A senior staff member came to my desk afterward and told me that they were all unhappy because they had “used up” their luck for the year on mere pens. Now they probably could not win the lottery.

A better informed and more culturally astute officer would not have made this error. Of course, ruining a holiday party and dashing lottery hopes are relatively minor costs to bear. But imagine errors that ruin trade negotiations or even peace talks. Imagine a poor relationship with host-government officials when a plane goes down and we need to identify our citizens in a hospital or morgue. Imagine higher stakes than pens and calendars.

And realize that cultural and linguistic expertise are not built overnight, much less online. With apologies to the experts who claim you can learn Hebrew in three weeks, real linguistic and cultural expertise grow like vegetables, slowly and imperceptibly over a long period.

## A Modest Proposal

Before moving to a modest proposal to deepen the cultural and linguistic expertise of the Department of State, let me paint a contrast to the career path of the Russian friend I introduced in the first paragraph.

An American Foreign Service officer starts his career with some high school



*FSO Phil Skotte currently serves as the Bureau of Consular Affairs liaison with the intelligence community. He joined the Foreign Service in 1993 and has served previously in Manila, the Vatican, Hong Kong, Budapest and Moscow. His domestic assignments include work as a foreign policy adviser for special operations at the Pentagon and director of American Citizen Services worldwide. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, he worked as a commercial fisherman in Alaska, a schoolteacher, an athletic director and a ship's carpenter. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and not necessarily those of the U.S. government.*

## Unless you have lived overseas for long periods, you might not understand why language and cultural awareness are so vital, and why they take so long to learn.

Spanish. The State Department, for whatever reason, decides not to build on that existing foundation. Instead, it teaches him Italian for six months and sends him to the Vatican for two years.

Years later State gives him a year of Hungarian and assigns him to Budapest for three years. He stays an extra year, giving the department an extra 12

months on its language investment. After Budapest, it gives him a year of Russian and assigns him to Moscow for two years. Staying for four, he doubles their investment return.

Now, after six years in English-speaking America, this officer is not conversant in any of the four languages he learned at great expense to taxpayers.

In the recent assignment cycle he bid on an Italian job and a Hungarian job, but received neither. Instead, the State Department assigned him to Shanghai via (you guessed it) one year of Chinese-language training. I am this officer.

My modest proposal is to move us around less, and incentivize us or force us (Pyongyang, anybody?) to concentrate on fewer areas and languages. Instead of the current helter-skelter approach to assignments, develop a system that truly enables the State Department to bring cultural and linguistic expertise to the table. When we do this right, we are outstanding and are a huge asset to the United States.

How do I know? Because there are many examples, current and historical, of Foreign Service officers who brought this expertise to bear to America's benefit. We used to have more "China hands" and "Russia hands"—people who could be counted on to know their own country *and* the country in which they served.

In retrospect, I wish that my career had looked more like theirs. For various reasons—some of my own making, and others due to a system not organized to value long service in a few places—I have a little Russian, a little Hungarian, some rusty Italian and some even older Spanish. Let's not even talk about Chinese.

We can do far better, and at lower cost. We can strengthen the State Department, better promote our national interest and give the taxpayers more value for their language training dollar. ■



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AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION

# Straight Talk on Diplomatic Capacity

**Lessons learned from the Tillerson tenure can help the new Secretary of State enhance the State Department's core diplomatic and national security mission.**

BY ALEX KARAGIANNIS

**P**resident Donald Trump's firing of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and intention to nominate CIA Director Mike Pompeo as his replacement could have profound implications for the reforms that Secretary Tillerson initiated at the State Department. What will not change is the fact that State employees, including career members of the U.S. Foreign Service, are eager for serious, sober and substantial reforms that will enhance the effectiveness of the State Department's capacity to carry out its core diplomatic and national security mission.

Tillerson's "redesign" initiatives were ill-equipped to do that; they front-loaded staff and budget cuts rather than determining strategic priorities, strengthening capabilities and building advantages. The now-common sport of analyzing the damage done to the State Department during the past 16 months understates the problem. It's worse when examining hard data in historical context.

The new Secretary can take simple but consequential steps that boost State's ability to drive and execute policy and deliver results for the United States. Here are my suggestions:



*Alex Karagiannis retired from the Foreign Service in November 2017 with the rank of Minister Counselor. He last served as Senior Advisor to the Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources in 2017.*

- Draw on the talents of State’s professionals. They are as capable, determined and mission-driven as their colleagues at the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense and other national security agencies.

- Fill under secretary, assistant secretary and ambassador positions on the basis of qualifications. Judgment, initiative, curiosity and experience count; amateurism has consequences.

- Establish strategic priorities: sustain the budget, suspend the hiring freeze and hire to at least attrition until results are in.

- Create investment funds for human capital training and development and a new information technology architecture; these are multiyear outlays that need dedicated long-term resources.

- Staff and empower a change management team that will oversee and implement the back-office reforms now underway; devise solutions to structural and systemic rigidities, anomalies and misalignments; and communicate continuously with employees and stakeholders.

### Viewing the Deconstruction

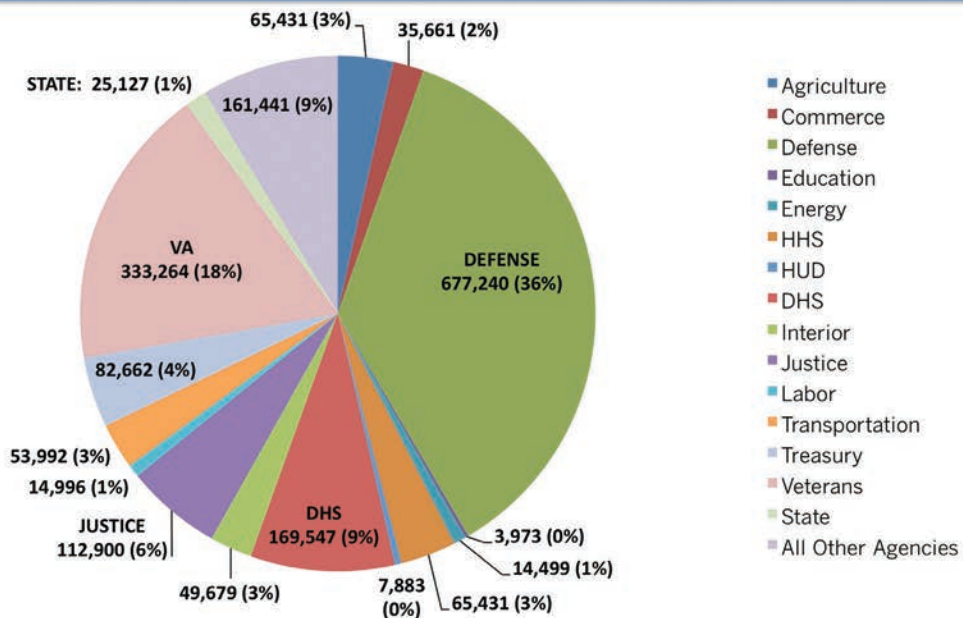
In 1969 Dean Acheson published his seminal, Pulitzer prize-winning book, *Present at the Creation*. It covered the extraordinary time in the late 1940s when clear-eyed, hard-headed, tough-minded Americans reshaped the world, creating new organizations and institutions to establish a stable system of international relations. Seared by the events of the 1930s and 1940s—world economic stagnation/depression, ethno-nationalist jingoism, fascism, authoritarianism, totalitarianism, civil wars, foreign aggressions and a global conflagration in which America fought a two-front war—they were determined to found a new economic, political and security architecture.

Through it, for the next 70 years the United States led the world in extending liberty, democracy, prosperity and justice; drew in allies and partners; and created conditions for peace and human dignity unparalleled in human history.

Today it appears to many that the Trump administration is equally determined to deconstruct that system—as it looks

## FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BRANCH CIVILIAN WORKFORCE U.S. Direct Hire, Non-Seasonal, Full-time, Permanent

DOS – 1% of employees; DOD, VA – 54% of employees; DOD, VA, DHS, DOJ – 69% of employees



Sources: OPM “Sizing Up the Federal Workforce Fiscal Year 2016” (as of 9/30/2016, last complete available data); Department of State Bureau of Human Resources, data as of 12/31/2017. Federal civilian employment *does not* include U.S. Postal Service, intelligence agencies, congressional or legislative branches; State Department data includes both Civil Service and Foreign Service personnel.

inward and focuses on the tactical and transactional, oblivious to opportunity for the transformational. Central to this effort, Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney started the budget process by proposing to slash the State Department's Fiscal Year 2018 budget by 31 percent. Then, in February 2018, he tabled State's FY2019 budget with a new 23 percent cut from the FY2017 enacted levels.

Although Congress signaled—and acted on—its opposition to the administration's proposed budget for State, that posture alone will not displace a national security policy that sidelines diplomacy. America today faces an international environment that is volatile, dangerous and complex. Its adversaries are aggressive and capable; nonstate actors are numerous and lethal; regional and transregional threats are growing more sinister; and ideological movements are increasingly pernicious and inimical to democratic interests. A strong, capable State Department would bolster other instruments of national power and offer a broader spectrum in which to operate.

Trump's plan to boost defense spending while slashing State's diplomatic capacity (resources and people through a 23 percent cut in the overall budget, with a 26 percent reduction in operational funds) faces a problem. However much it is necessary, defense spending will take years to increase readiness (e.g., by producing more planes, ships and missiles). Moreover, it is ill-suited for pressing current challenges. Russian cyber-meddling, refugee flows, humanitarian crises, disease outbreaks, lagging exports and investments, and trade disputes do not easily lend themselves to military solutions. Rather, they require active, preventative and long-term, front-line diplomatic engagement.

### Targeting Staff

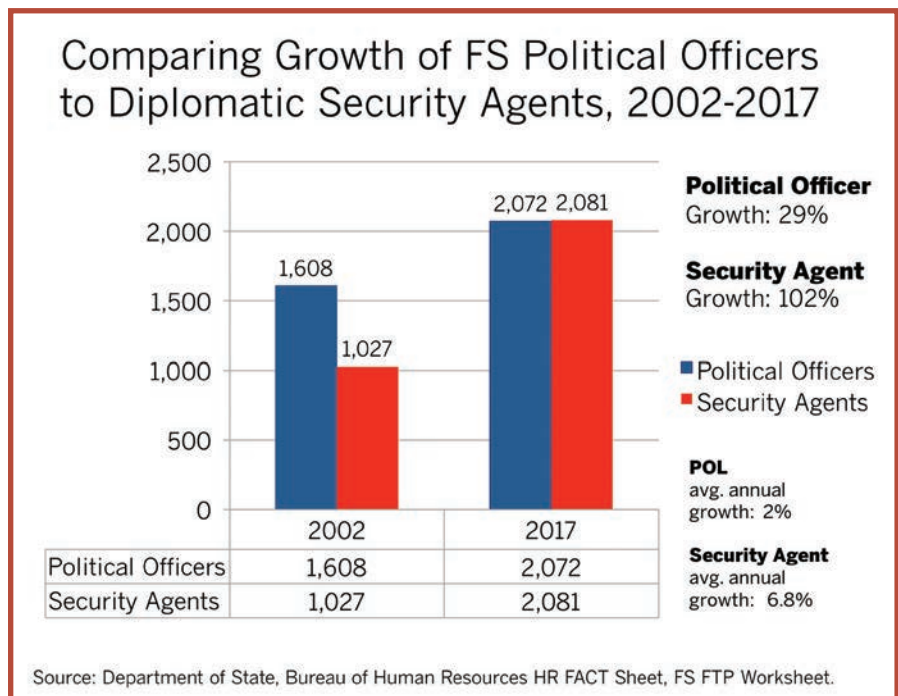
When Rex Tillerson arrived at State, employees welcomed him, hopeful his private-sector experience would help strengthen the department. These hopes were off the mark. Tillerson had a rocky tenure; he did not establish a close working relationship with Trump, or with his 535-member board of directors (aka Congress), or with domestic constituencies and stakeholders. Unable to get his personnel choices past the White House, he had a very spare bench of confirmed under secretaries and assistant secretaries. And he appeared to

have little trust in or time for the career professionals, disposing of many gracelessly. His chief of staff and deputy chief of staff were national security novices, more adept at micromanaging than leadership. Morale plunged, and the department was seemingly adrift, as amply chronicled in many academic, think-tank and media analyses.

Secretary Tillerson initially resisted but then acquiesced in the 31 percent cut submitted by OMB for the FY18 budget. Though that budget went nowhere on the Hill, he demanded commensurate workforce reductions, only grudgingly scaling them back even though State's total staff numbers would barely amount to a rounding error at the federal level. State accounts for just 1 percent of executive branch civilian employees and only 1 percent of the federal budget (see chart on p. 20). The federal government spends nearly as much on Lockheed Martin as on State, according to a Feb. 16 *Washington Post* analysis.

Tillerson also extended the president's temporary hiring restrictions indefinitely and applied them even to eligible family members, disrupting operations at overseas posts and undermining productivity and morale. He insisted his staff review all exemptions, prompting a blizzard of paperwork that elevated routine tasks to Secretarial level.

Further, he pushed a "Redesign" (later rebranded "The Impact Initiative," or TII) intended to reshape the State Department, hiring two outside consultancies to facilitate an ostensibly employee-



run process. The consultancies labored under shifting direction and leadership, with “work streams” that were more siloed and stove-piped than integrated teams.

Rather than accelerate reforms, the process sidelined and stalled initiatives by the bureaus of Human Resources and Information Resource Management and other bureaus that were already underway. From a change management perspective, Tillerson’s team heeded none of the experts in establishing a clear vision, ideal end state, timelines, champions or a coherent communications strategy. The changes prioritized back-office, legacy and operational matters (all of which must, of course, be addressed), but did so without first establishing strategic priorities and strengthening core functions and responsibilities.

## **Déjà Vu All Over Again**

By focusing first on workforce numbers rather than strategic purpose, the initial actions began gutting the State Department of professionals with the experience, knowledge and judgment to articulate and execute policy and get results. Ignoring Government Accountability Office reports of the 1990s and mid-2000s that had sounded the alarm concerning the deleterious effects of staffing gaps and deficits at State, Tillerson and his advisers insisted on drastic cuts.

In doing so, they flew in the face of history. Following the dissolution of the USSR and Yugoslavia, State had staffed 19 new embassies with existing personnel and flat budgets. That was followed by the Clinton-Gore “Reinvention of Government” exercise that saw steep budget and staffing cuts, and then the disbanding of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and the merger into State of the U.S. Information Agency, engineered by Senator Jesse Helms. That exercise brought 2,100 employees into State without funding for their integration, but did not constitute a net gain in Foreign Service personnel.

After 9/11, the department moved to expeditionary and transformative diplomacy, staffing two mega-missions in Afghanistan and Iraq through volunteers, while drawing down elsewhere to meet those needs. Secretaries of State Colin Powell and Hillary Clinton took action to address GAO concerns, and with the backing of Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama and Congress’ approved budgets, State hired new personnel to close staffing deficits. But State’s post-9/11 growth was highly uneven.

To cite just a few prominent examples, since 1995 Diplomatic Security Bureau personnel increased by nearly 200 percent; consular personnel (processing visas for foreigners and passports for U.S. citizens) grew by more than 160 percent; and other specializations grew by more than 100 percent. In contrast, core diplomatic

staff grew by just 42 percent (2 percent on an annual basis), even as their responsibilities and overseas deployments to dangerous postings increased.

At any given time, two-thirds of the Foreign Service is overseas, serving in more than 270 embassies and consulates. In dozens of posts, other agencies outnumber State Department personnel.

## **Running into Facts**

The focus on budget cuts and workforce reductions also ran into stubborn facts. The proposed 31 percent budget cut for FY18 could not produce commensurate workforce savings. Five bureaus comprising 5 percent of the workforce accounted for 80 percent of the funds to be reduced (assistance, contributions to international agencies, exchanges). Even eliminating those bureaus entirely would yield only a 5 percent staff reduction.

Tillerson eventually settled for an 8 percent total workforce reduction of U.S. direct-hire personnel by the end of September 2018. That number was arrived at only after more draconian reductions (on the order of 15 percent or more) were shelved because they would have required a costly and protracted reduction-in-force exercise. The 8 percent downsizing was predicated on attrition, incentivized attrition (buyouts) and reduced intake. For FY17, intake was capped at 77 percent of attrition for the Foreign Service (the actual number was lower); for FY18, the cap was 40 percent of attrition. For the Civil Service, it was worse: zero hiring in FY17; and 25 percent of attrition in FY18.

Because the Foreign Service brings in new employees in cohorts, reduced hiring has a generational impact, exacerbating the types of deficits that GAO had previously identified. For the Civil Service, in particular, it means a collapse of expertise in key bureaus. No process improvements, which are geared to back-office functions, will make up for the resulting policy and operational shortfalls.

When defending staffing numbers Tillerson’s staff often pointed to the fact that the State Department employs 75,000 worldwide, suggesting its workforce is huge. But 50,000 of those employees are local nationals, the majority of whom perform security work (approximately 37,000), initial visa screening and other essential internal operational activities that support several dozen other federal agencies at overseas missions. Those local employees were never part of the reduction exercise—that exercise was targeted at the 24,775 U.S. direct-hire Foreign and Civil Service personnel on the rolls as of Jan. 31, 2017.

To hit the mark of 1,982 fewer employees and account for minimal (well below attrition) hiring, approximately 2,300 employees would need to leave the rolls—a huge and disruptive churn. Even

worse, the Tillerson plan failed to address structural and systemic anomalies. For example, approximately 67 percent of the Foreign Service serves overseas at any given time. But more than 50 percent of DS agents serve stateside, even as the threats and risks to U.S. personnel and facilities are abroad. DS agents have now edged out political officers as the largest cohort in State. They exceed by 500 each the economic, public diplomacy and consular officer cadres, and number close to 900 more than management officers. This can hardly be characterized as an optimal mix.

Moreover, five bureaus (led by Consular Affairs and Diplomatic Security) account for 70 percent of Civil Service positions. Their hiring, which is given priority under the staffing exercise as those bureaus have deficits, automatically means that the needs of other bureaus in the State Department may be nearly shut out—whether in arms control, non-proliferation, sanctions enforcement, trade promotion, civil aviation, energy, human rights or a host of other critical areas.

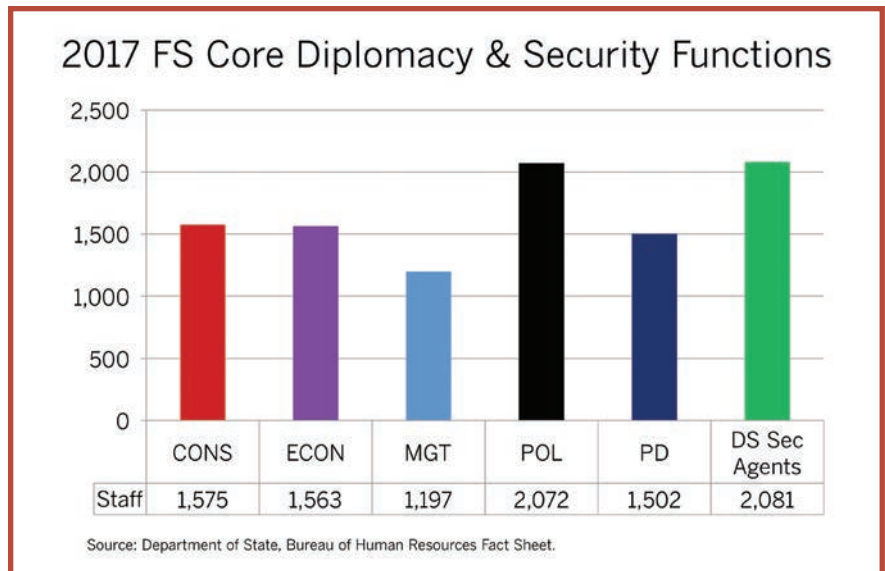
Tillerson and his senior team downplayed the loss of senior leaders and career ambassadors. It is normal to see retirements at those ranks. What is unusual is that so many were forced out at one time—a precipitous decline when contrasted to the many vacancies at the assistant secretary level and many posts lacking ambassadors.

### Budget Reality

Though Tillerson and his staff claimed that State’s budget was unsustainable, they offered no empirical evidence in support and made no business case why drastic retrenchment in budget and personnel was necessary. The department has yet to put budget figures into context, either historically or in comparison to national security spending overall. In fact, State’s budget has declined since 2008.

The operational budget for core diplomacy functions (the Diplomatic and Consular Programs account) has been on a downward slope since 2010, even as requirements grew. Budget growth came in the form of separate outlays for security, embassy construction and other administrative functions. Funding for diplomacy shrank, both in nominal and inflation-adjusted terms, severely straining capacity to advance America’s national security, economic and trade interests.

Juxtaposition of the budget and staffing numbers clearly shows



a slow, gradual retrenchment, now dramatically accelerated. No efficiency improvements will substitute for or translate into diplomatic acumen, capabilities or clout in the policy arena at home or abroad.

In looking closely at the president’s FY19 budget request, several warning signs pop out, as the Brookings Institution noted in a Feb. 13 report by Thomas M. Hill, “What Trump’s Budget Means for the State Department—Snap Judgments.” *First*, OMB manipulated various funding accounts to disguise de facto cuts.

*Second*, it both sliced the Overseas Contingency Operations account and shifted it into State’s base operational account. That could be a sensible solution because it requires State (and Congress) to deal with normal operations, not indefinite special circumstances. But it does not change anything on the ground. State still needs to spend huge funds in Afghanistan, Iraq and other conflict areas for ongoing operations; none of those funds are easily reprogrammed to address needed structural reforms or develop a future workforce for new challenges.

*Third*, it cleverly (some say deviously) shifts monies between programmatic and operational accounts, making both targets for future cost-cutting exercises when the programs are found “ineffective” or “duplicative” and the workforce must be reshaped (downsized) for the sake of efficiency.

*And fourth*, while everyone recognizes that State requires a massive IT upgrade and modernization—with a whole new architecture and state-of-the-art, secure data management, data visualization and messaging systems—there are no new dedicated funds for that. Rather, it appears that monies are reprogrammed,

Fewer employees and lower budgets rarely produce great results in a diplomatic arena where intractable problems bedevil policymakers and initiative, judgment and expertise are at a premium.

tapped from the Bureau of Consular Affairs' fee-generated revenues for departmentwide IT needs. In short, the FY19 budget proposal is a shell game of robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Moreover, State's payroll costs are less than 10 percent of its total budget, a budget that also supports physical and virtual presence to expand U.S. influence even where programs are declining. State provides a security and administrative platform overseas for more than 30 other U.S. government agencies, many of which have increased their overseas footprint and need for services that State provides. Cutting State's budget would have wide repercussions.

Three conclusions about the administration's budget proposals were painfully obvious: The Trump administration looked to ignore Congress, which favors healthier funding for State; if enacted, the budget would make State more a support service for other agencies than a strong diplomatic agent; and it would generate a diplomatic void that Russia, China and other adversaries will gladly exploit.

In March Congress passed and President Trump signed an omnibus spending bill. It calls, inter alia, for the State Department's Inspector General to review the "Redesign" to ensure it used proper processes and included employee input. State is also required to report to Congress on actions it took in response to Trump's reorganization directive to all federal cabinet agencies and subsequent guidance from the Office of Management and Budget. Congress further noted that it expects State to maintain FS and CS staff levels on board as of Dec. 31, 2017.

Under this budget, State avoids the most deleterious consequences of painful cuts, but is far from being put on an upward trajectory in building diplomatic capacity for the future. It is still necessary to address structural rigidities, anomalies and misalignments. And it is essential to redress systemic underinvestment in people (the entire human capital development life cycle) and information technology.

Moreover, by itself this budget does not address State's and diplomacy's marginalization as an instrument of U.S. leadership.

### An Uncertain Future

All of this has had a predictable, debilitating effect on the State Department and its employees, who have long wanted constructive change. Indeed, the professionals at State had already launched numerous reform initiatives to strengthen the department; many were stalled as the focus shifted to the "Redesign/TII." To cite only a few projects already underway: a new IT architecture (including email and messaging systems; data hygiene, migration, integrity and visualization); new performance management systems for both the Foreign and Civil Service; new assignment and deployment patterns for the Foreign Service, with streamlined referral/vetting procedures; increased emphasis on talent acquisition and diversity and inclusion programs; enhanced professional and leadership development training, better coaching and mentorship programs; rationalized bureaus, deputy assistant secretary positions and special envoys; and expanded and enhanced shared service models.

These internal reforms were all designed to fuel performance and productivity by reducing internal clutter and complexity and focusing on external goal delivery. All took a back seat during the extended hiring freeze and workforce reduction exercise. In short, State lost time and momentum. Instead it devotes staff power to the "FOIA surge" (whittling down the backlog of Freedom of Information requests), widely perceived as an exercise to drive people out by displacing them to tasks incommensurate with their diplomatic skills and experience, while higher priority national security objectives are underserved.

The stated objective of the TII is to "improve efficiency, effectiveness and accountability" and to give staff more fulfilling and rewarding careers. Surveys have consistently shown that employees are "fulfilled" when given responsibility to carry out well-articulated policy in furtherance of U.S. national security. Instead, Sec. Tillerson walled himself off from employees and embarked on an exercise that degraded rather than boosted operational and diplomatic capacity. Fewer employees and lower budgets rarely produce great results in a diplomatic arena where intractable problems bedevil policymakers and initiative, judgment and expertise are at a premium.

A more strategic approach would be to aim for **responsibility** (empowering people and rewarding initiative and judgment); **effectiveness** (defining and successfully driving policy outcomes that advance U.S. values, interests and goals); and **efficiency** (reshaping programs and processes to focus on goal delivery, not



merely internal coordination). Each of these requires an infusion of capital—human and financial.

The State Department’s mission is quite straightforward: to advance and safeguard American security and promote American interests and values worldwide through diplomacy; to achieve national goals without putting people and treasure at risk through military action; to persuade others to work with and for us in common cause. As in business, certainty and predictability are valued in diplomacy. Here, predictability generates credibility and reliability, which, in turn, generate trust and cooperation. One of America’s greatest strengths has been to serve as model and example.

It is true that disruptions can and do produce short-term gains. But they are rarely a durable foundation for long-term, relationship-based success. With a reduced U.S. foreign affairs budget, dispirited employees and a cramped vision of U.S. leadership, many of America’s adversaries and rivals see retreat and retrenchment, spiked with bluster about military force and economic threats. Little wonder that friends and allies now question the value of America’s word or loyalty.

It is said that the one thing other countries dislike more than American leadership is the absence of American leadership. America may be losing its unique capacity to inspire.

### Looking Ahead

The new Secretary of State can set the department on a firmer foundation and truer course. It will not take much to generate energy from the workforce. It’s not necessary to undo the prospective reforms. It is necessary to validate, integrate and fund strategic priorities. Cut clutter and complexity; don’t mistake motion for movement; and don’t confuse internal coordination for external goal delivery. Invest in people.

State Department and USAID employees are as capable, determined and skilled as their colleagues in other national security agencies. They value leadership. They want to know that the Secretary’s team values them—people first, mission always—and that it will look to have the right people in the right places at the right time with the right resources, support and protection to carry out the mission. ■

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# The State of Democracy in Europe and Eurasia

## FOUR CHALLENGES

**In a decade of backsliding on democracy around the world, the countries of Europe and Eurasia feature prominently.**

BY DAVID J. KRAMER

**I**n its most recent annual survey, “Freedom in the World 2018: Democracy in Crisis,” Freedom House documents 12 straight years of decline in political rights and civil liberties around the world. The countries in the Europe and Eurasia region play a significant role in this overall decline.

Indeed, the region is beset with four major challenges to democracy, all interrelated: the authoritarian challenge posed especially by Vladimir Putin’s Russia; the backsliding from democracy in countries such as Hungary, Poland and Turkey; a general lack of confidence in the democratic system among countries on the continent; and corruption, which opens the door for nefarious forces to undermine democratic, market forces.

The confluence of these four factors has put Europe in a dangerous position.



*David J. Kramer is senior fellow in the Vaclav Havel Program on Human Rights and Diplomacy at the Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs, part of Florida International University. He previously served as president of Freedom House and*

*as assistant secretary of State for democracy, human rights and labor and deputy assistant secretary for Europe and Eurasia in the George W. Bush administration.*

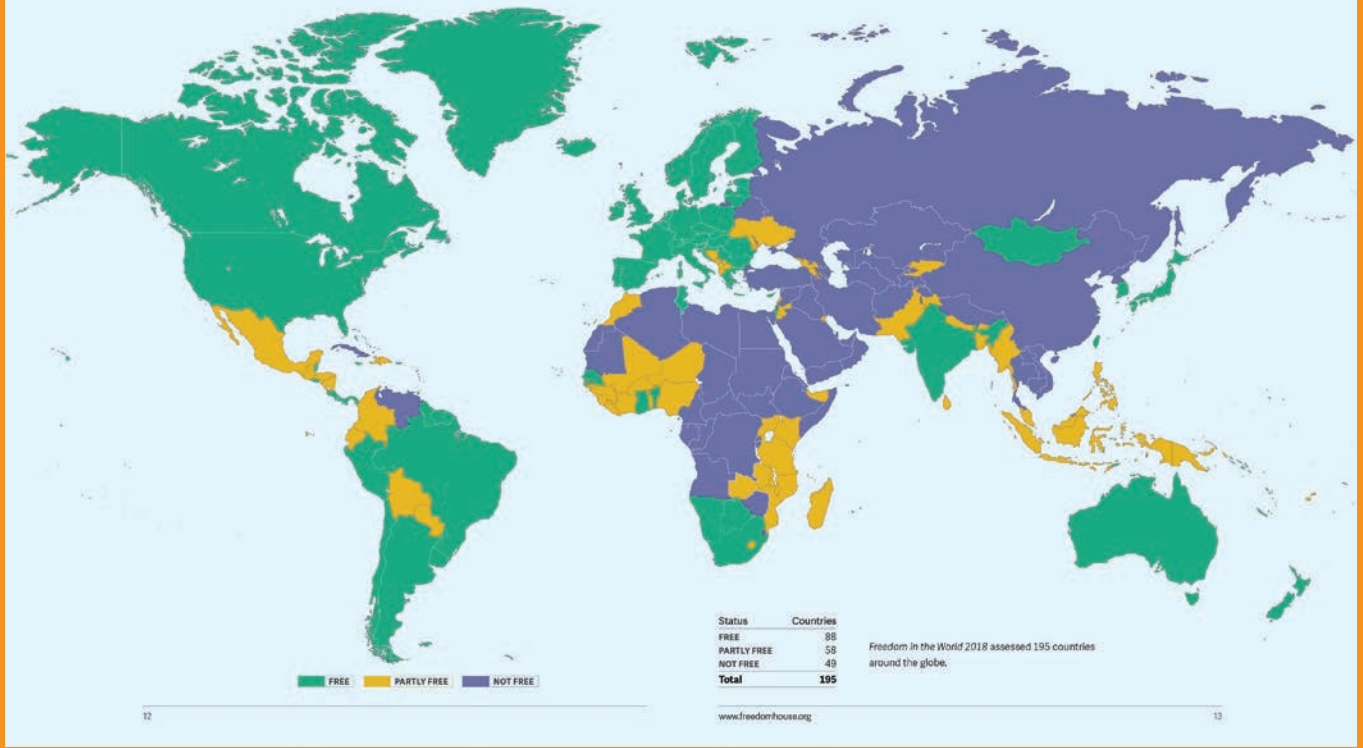
### The Authoritarian Challenge

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s authoritarian regime leads the campaign to undermine the very concept of democracy in Europe, the United States and other countries in the Western Hemisphere. We saw this with Russia’s interference in the U.S. election in 2016 and elections in France, Germany, Austria and the referendum in the Netherlands; we are seeing it with Russian interference in Mexico’s presidential election scheduled for this July.

The Kremlin uses bots and trolls in an online effort to tap into divisive, sensitive topics such as immigration and to spike debate with phony tweets and messages. For example, in January 2016 they spread a false story in Germany about a Russian-German girl who was allegedly raped by illegal immigrants. For nearly a decade, RT and Sputnik, the Kremlin’s main propaganda outlets, have been used not to promote and elevate the image of Russia, but instead to denigrate democracies in Europe and the United States, claiming that these countries are corrupt and unresponsive to voters’ concerns on issues such as immigration.

Putin views democracies on the continent, especially those that border Russia, as a threat to the system he has in place. He especially regards popular movements by Ukrainians, Georgians and others pressing for integration with the Euro-Atlantic community, greater democracy and an end to corruption as a serious challenge to the political model he has established in Russia, which depends on perpetuating the myth that the West and the

## FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2018



United States are threats. Putin refuses to accept that people in Ukraine and Georgia, for example, to say nothing of Russians themselves, are capable on their own of demanding better from their leaders; they must be instigated from outside. This is why he accused former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton of giving a “signal” to Russians who protested the fraudulent parliamentary elections in December 2011.

But Putin is not alone in leading the authoritarian charge. Ilham Aliyev oversees a massively corrupt regime in Azerbaijan, which has more political prisoners than Russia. Belarus continues to suffer under Aleksandr Lukashenko’s tight grip on power. The United States has applied targeted sanctions for human rights abuses against Putin’s Russia and Lukashenko’s Belarus, but not against Aliyev’s Azerbaijan. Leaders of all these countries need to know that there are consequences for engaging in gross abuses against freedom, targeting critics and denying the opposition the right to participate in the political process, as well as for interfering in other countries’ elections. Western democracies should not legitimize phony elections in Russia (in March) and Azerbaijan (April), and Western leaders should not be con-

gratulating these leaders for winning rigged elections.

It is important to remember that the way regimes treat their own people is often indicative of how they will behave in foreign policy. If they engage in authoritarian practices within their own borders, they are less likely to respect the rights of people elsewhere, to say nothing of concepts of sovereignty and territorial integrity (see Russia’s invasions of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014). If we do nothing in the face of gross human rights abuses, we signal to leaders in these countries that they can get away with such behavior, emboldening them to push the envelope even further. For the sake of freedom and democracy, as well as for security reasons, it is important to push back against authoritarian behavior in Europe and elsewhere.

### Democratic Backsliding in Europe

Poland and Hungary were among the first in Europe to transition from communist systems to thriving democracies. Their membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union was the culmination of their efforts to return to the European fold. Poland has been a leader and model for

## Brexit demonstrates how Europe lost confidence in the path it was on—toward greater integration, solidifying of democratic gains and a market system.

other countries in the region seeking to make a similar change. Following the victory of the Law and Justice Party in Poland in 2015, however, the European Union and human rights groups have raised concerns involving the courts and justice system, press freedom, nongovernmental organizations and treatment of the previous party in power. They have voiced similar concerns regarding Viktor Orban and his Fidesz Party in Hungary.

As Freedom House notes in its 2018 survey, “In Hungary and Poland, populist leaders continued to consolidate power by uprooting democratic institutions and intimidating critics in civil society.” While Poland remains strongly suspicious of Putin, Orban has been much more receptive to returning to “business as usual” with Russia, threatening to undermine European unity in confronting the Putin challenge. That said, both countries joined with the United Kingdom, the United States and others in expelling Russian diplomats in March for the Kremlin’s alleged role in the poisoning of a former Russian spy and his daughter in the U.K.

Turkey is another country going in the wrong direction; Freedom House moved it from the “partly free” to the “not free” category in this year’s survey, the “culmination of a long and accelerating slide” in that country, according to the human rights organization. Since a coup attempt in 2016, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has arrested tens of thousands and fired many more from various government and other jobs. More journalists are in prison in Turkey—roughly 150, many accused of support for the Gulenist movement—than in any other country in the world.

According to the Freedom House survey, “In addition to its dire consequences for detained Turkish citizens, shuttered media outlets and seized businesses, the chaotic purge has become intertwined with an offensive against the Kurdish minority, which in turn has fueled Turkey’s diplomatic and

military interventions in neighboring Syria and Iraq.” That has created problems for the United States and the forces it backs in Syria and Iraq. Again, the way Erdogan treats his own people reflects the way he aggressively and dangerously goes after forces he doesn’t like beyond Turkey’s borders.

Beyond these three countries, right-wing populists and nationalists are winning seats in various European parliamentary elections, as well as in the European Parliament. They denigrate democratic values, demonize immigrants and refugees, and play into the hands of Putin by threatening the sustainability of the democratic model. The fact that far-right leader Marine Le Pen made it into a runoff election against Emmanuel Macron is frightening, even if Macron ultimately won. The rise of the Alternative for Germany Party, the first far-right party to win representation in Germany’s Bundestag since 1945, should be additional cause for concern. The victory of the Five Star Movement and the League in Italy’s elections made Putin happy but has pro-E.U. and pro-democracy forces deeply concerned. The United Kingdom has long been one of the continent’s leaders in defending and promoting democracy, but Brexit has reduced its profile considerably in this area, and in the European Union more broadly.

### A Lack of Confidence

Brexit demonstrates how Europe lost confidence in the path it was on—toward greater integration, solidifying of democratic gains and a market system. Negotiations between London and Brussels have damaged the union’s standing and energized other countries, such as Poland, to defy Brussels. Splits within the E.U. cause it to lose its appeal among aspiring nations like Ukraine and Georgia, as well as countries in the western Balkans. The desire to join the organization has long been an incentive for nations to undertake difficult reforms to meet the criteria for membership. If the image of the E.U. suggests confusion and disenchantment, aspiring states might rethink their goals and, in turn, abandon important but difficult democratic and economic reforms. That would be a further setback to the cause of democracy on the continent.

Equally important, the European Union seems uncertain how best to fight the authoritarian challenge. In contrast to the strong sanctions imposed after Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, only four states—the United Kingdom, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—have imposed sanctions for Russia’s gross human rights abuses. Failure to enact measures like those the United States has in place under the 2016 Global Magnitsky Act (the Russia-specific Magnitsky Act passed in 2012) signals Europe’s weak-

ness to Moscow. Similarly, the E.U. seems feckless in the face of backsliding among member-states like Poland and Hungary. And the only reaction to Erdogan's crackdown in Turkey has been to delay further talks on possible membership, a goal many in Turkey have already given up.

Leaders on the continent have become too removed from the needs of their voters, and the refugee crisis of 2015-2016 exacerbated the rise of xenophobic forces there. The need to pay more attention to constituents should not translate into doubts about the democratic system of government, however. Europeans should remember the words of Winston Churchill: "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others." Failure to defend their democracies plays right into the hands of Putin.

## Corruption

Putin also exploits European weakness through corruption, his greatest export. But for Putin to export corruption, the West, including the United States, must agree to import it. That Marine Le Pen's party openly took roughly \$10 million from a Russian bank for the campaign last year should be a source of shame, not pride. Moreover, it should be illegal to accept foreign funds, as it is in the United States. Making foreign funding of elections, parties and candidates illegal would go a long way toward limiting Putin's corrupting influence.

Transparency in funding for think-tanks and research institutes is also necessary to ensure they are not fronts for the Kremlin, their cronies or others like the Aliyev regime. There should also be greater transparency in high-end purchases of real estate, companies and other assets. The derisive nickname "London-grad" refers to the Russian, Azerbaijani and other money, much of it ill-gotten, flowing through London's banks and real estate market. Going after corrupt Russian and other money should be a top priority for Western governments.

Continued dependence on Russia for energy also contributes to corruption in Europe. Putin uses oil and gas as tools against others, and projects like Nord Stream II, a pipeline that would run from Russia to Germany under the Baltic Sea, should be viewed through this lens. This pipeline would eliminate Ukraine as a transit country, causing serious harm to that country's economy. Moreover, the pipeline is not commercially viable, since Nord Stream I, along which Nord Stream II would run, is not near full capacity. It instead would entrench German-Russian energy ties at a time when such reliance is prone to manipulation and pressure from the Kremlin.

Ukraine's past dependence on Russian energy left it vulnerable when Moscow decided to turn off the taps to Ukraine in the height

## The refugee crisis of 2015-2016 exacerbated the rise of xenophobic forces on the continent.

of winter. The energy sector in Ukraine has been thoroughly corrupt for years, but the reduction of Ukraine's reliance on Russian supplies for its own domestic consumption and development of alternative energy sources, along with an end to wasteful subsidies for heating, have helped Ukraine address this vulnerability. Still, Ukrainians worry that the tremendous sacrifices they made during and since the Euro-Maidan Revolution in early 2014 are being forgotten amid massive corruption that threatens their country's future as much as Russia's military aggression does.

To be sure, even without Russian influence, the West has had corruption problems; but Putin makes the problems significantly worse. Working together, Europe and the United States need to clean up their own house and deprive Putin of openings to exploit. They should impose sanctions, as permitted under the Global Magnitsky Act, for corruption originating from places like Russia and Azerbaijan. If those who engage in illicit activities cannot enjoy the fruits of their ill-gotten gains, they might be less likely to engage in such activity in the first place.

## What to Do?

If current trends continue, we will see weakened democracy across the continent, an emboldened Putin and increased corruption—a dire outlook. Questions these days about the United States' commitment to democracy do not help. European governments need to aggressively defend and promote democracy and freedom throughout the continent. They must not assume that countries that seem to have made the transition to democracy successfully are finished with their work.

We in the West must restore confidence that democracy, while not perfect, is the best system of government we have. We must push back against the authoritarian challenge and recognize Putin for the threat that he is. We should pass and enforce legislation and sanctions policies that put authoritarian leaders and their accomplices on the defense. It is time, in other words, for Europe and the United States to seize the initiative, securing gains and victories for democracy and freedom on the scoreboard. ■

# Worrisome Trends in LATIN AMERICA

**Widespread corruption, crime and a lack of security, education, employment and basic services are driving a loss of faith in democracy throughout the continent.**

BY ALEXANDRIA “ALEXI” PANEHAL

**T**he growing repression in Venezuela has dominated U.S. coverage of Latin America and the Caribbean for quite some time, understandably. The intensifying political and economic turmoil under President Nicolas Maduro’s misrule has driven tens of thousands of desperate Venezuelans to Colombia and Brazil—on top of the massive brain drain during Hugo Chavez’s tenure. That exodus, in turn, has precipitated a refugee crisis in Colombia and Brazil; the latter government declared a “social emergency” in February as a result.

The breakdown of law and order in Venezuela reflects a growing perception in the region of citizen insecurity, which can weaken public faith in political institutions and the rule of law.

On the positive side, an incredible three out of every four Latin Americans of voting age either voted in a presidential

election last year or will be eligible to do so in 2018. Those two years are packed with a total of nine presidential elections—in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay and Venezuela—not to mention legislative midterm elections in several countries. The outcomes of that balloting will have major ramifications, positive and negative, for U.S. economic and political interests in Latin America and the Caribbean.

While holding free and fair elections is an important exercise of democratic principles, it is not sufficient. Strengthening the rule of law, inculcating respect for minority and human rights, and increasing citizen satisfaction with government services are also important building blocks in that process. Unfortunately, recent polling data reflect some discouraging trends in those areas. Yet despite some worrisome trends as far as support for democracy in the region is concerned, economic ties between the United States and Latin America remain strong.

## The Power of Trade and Investment

The United States continues to be one of the top trading partners for nearly every country in Latin America, so these trends should be of concern in Washington, D.C. According to the U.S. Census Bureau for 2016, America’s top four trading partners in Latin America in terms of exports to the United States were Mexico, Brazil, Colombia and Argentina. Chief exports to the United States from Latin America include oil, agricultural products, minerals and manufactured goods. In terms of exports from the United States to Latin America, sales more than doubled between 2000 and 2013.

To solidify its economic dominance of the region, the United States has signed reciprocal trade agreements with its most important Latin American partners, as well as regional trade agreements

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*Alexandria “Alexi” Panehal, a Foreign Service officer with the United States Agency for International Development since 1983, is currently on the faculty at the National War College. Prior to that assignment, she was USAID mission director in Santo Domingo from 2012 to 2016 and in Quito from 2005 to 2009. Her earlier overseas assignments include Managua, Bangkok, Tunis, Tegucigalpa and Kyiv, where she was deputy director of the Regional Mission for Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus. Following the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, she coordinated interagency efforts for shelter and infrastructure reconstruction. The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author, and not necessarily those of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. government.*



Venezuela's National Police use tear gas and plastic pellet gunshot against protesting students in Altamira Plaza in Caracas in 2014.

like the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Central America and the Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement. In addition, U.S. foreign direct investment in Latin America is twice as great as it was a decade ago, much of it in Brazil and Mexico.

At the same time, new, influential economic actors have entered the scene. In the last 15 years, China has emerged as a new economic powerhouse in the Americas, and recent Russian economic and political activity in Venezuela is cause for concern. Both of these trends bear watching.

China tends to concentrate its trade and investment in a few key countries—principally Venezuela, Ecuador, Chile, Peru, Mexico and Brazil—that possess natural resources like oil or minerals, which are of particular interest to Chinese investors. Its volume of trade with the Americas as a whole has skyrocketed, from \$12 billion in 2000 to more than \$260 billion in 2013. Beijing has also stepped up its lending to the region, from \$1 billion in 2008 to \$37 billion in 2010. Similarly, in 2015, Beijing's imports from Chile, Peru and Brazil represented 8, 5 and 2.5 percent of each nation's gross domestic product, respectively.

Chinese and, more recently, Russian involvement in Venezuela warrants special attention. Historically, the United States has maintained substantial investments in Venezuela and conducted considerable trade, primarily in imports and exports of petroleum and its derivatives, with that country. However, the exploitation of new domestic reserves has reduced our dependence on imported oil, while the imposition of sanctions against the Chavez and Maduro regimes, and the growing economic and political turmoil in Venezuela, have curbed the appetite of U.S. investors. Moscow and Beijing have both moved into the resulting vacuum.

Russia's state-owned oil company, Rosneft, has extended at least \$17 billion in loans and credit to Caracas since 2006, giving more than \$1 billion in April 2017 alone. On at least two occasions, this influx of Russian cash reportedly kept the Venezuelan government from defaulting on its foreign loans. In exchange, Moscow has been promised future oil shipments, acquired ownership interests in some of Venezuela's more profitable oil projects and gained greater control over Venezuela's crude reserves.



A protestor at the national strike in Guatemala in 2015 holds a sign saying "Not my President," referring to then-President Otto Fernando Pérez Molina, who left office on Sept. 2, 2015, and was arrested the following day on charges of corruption.



In Quito, protestors meet riot police during a demonstration against the policies of then-President Rafael Correa, in particular the inheritance tax laws introduced by his government, in 2015.

Fueled by widespread trafficking in drugs, weapons and people, as well as poverty and gangs, Latin America has become one of the most violent places on earth.

### Law and Disorder

In addition to facilitating China and Russia's inroads into Venezuela, the country's turmoil has also undermined U.S. and Latin American efforts to combat the drug trade. Narcotraffickers have now shifted some of their operations to Venezuela, where ungoverned spaces and outright collusion with local authorities (including Venezuelan Vice President Tareck Aissami, who is linked to cocaine cartels) facilitate their activities. Because of the influx of drug traffickers, as well as the emergence of paramilitary groups and general lawlessness, Venezuela held the dubious distinction of having the highest murder rate per capita in the world in 2016. But concern over the crime rate extends far beyond Venezuela.

Ask people almost anywhere in Latin America what their key concern is, and many will say crime. Fueled by widespread trafficking in drugs, weapons and people, as well as poverty and gangs, Latin America has become one of the most violent places on earth. In 2013, nearly one in every three murders in the world took place on the streets of Latin America—where just 8 percent of the world's population lives. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's "Global Study on Homicide 2013," which examined peacetime murder statistics from all over the world, ranked 13 Latin American countries among the top 20 most dangerous in the world; these included Honduras, Venezuela and Brazil.

Latin American cities are particularly dangerous. According to the *World Atlas*, in 2017 the top three cities in the world with the highest murder rate per capita were all in Latin America; Los Cabos, Mexico, ranked first, followed by Caracas, Venezuela, and Acapulco, Mexico. In fact, of the top 50 most murderous cities, Latin America accounted for an astounding 90 percent (40 cities). Most of these cities were concentrated in a few countries, notably Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela and Bolivia.

A perception of governmental inability to combat crime is also widespread. The World Justice Project's 2017 report ranked most Western Hemisphere countries near the bottom on its order and security index, with Venezuela at 110th out of 113 countries worldwide, and Colombia, Bolivia and Guatemala at 105, 101 and 100, respectively.

The region's ranking was even worse on the WJP's Criminal



Justice Index, with Honduras, Bolivia and Venezuela scoring as the bottom three. Eleven other Latin American countries, including Ecuador, Colombia and Mexico, fell within the bottom tercile, as well. On the WJP's Rule of Law Index, Venezuela was again dead last at 113—below Cambodia, Zimbabwe and Afghanistan—while Bolivia and Honduras scored among the worst in the world, at 106 and 103, respectively. The index noted that, compared to 2016, 14 countries in the Americas slipped down, while only 11 improved and five stayed the same.

The apparent inability of these governments to combat crime has provoked two disturbing responses that may not bode well for stability in the region. First, it has provided yet another reason for people to emigrate. Recent surveys by both Vanderbilt University and the Inter-American Dialogue indicate that insecurity and the fear of crime now appear to be one of the most important “push” factors that compel people to emigrate. A significant percentage of migrants from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador cited violence—not economic opportunities or family reunification—as their primary motive for entering the United States.

Second, it seems clear that many people in the Americas feel democracy has not delivered on its promises. Job creation, access to quality education, poverty alleviation, citizen security and improvements in the quality of life have not reached enough Latin Americans, especially the poor. Although the World Bank projects that the region's economies will grow on average by 1.2 percent in 2017 and 2.1 percent in 2018, the growth of the middle class has slowed. Consequently, some 39 percent of Latin Americans are vulnerable to falling back into poverty. And even though the middle class has grown a little, so has inequality. Despite substantial improvements between 2002 and 2014, Latin America still has the highest level of income inequality in the world.

## Restoring Faith in Democracy

When governments don't effectively combat crime, many people conclude that a democratic system can't protect them.

They therefore become more inclined to sacrifice some freedom for more security. Vanderbilt University's 2017 Latin American Public Opinion Poll reveals that popular support for democracy reached its lowest regional average in 2014 (the last year for which we have comparable data across the region), even as responses favoring “authoritarian stability” and citing “democracy at risk” hit levels not seen in decades. These antidemocratic attitudes were particularly pronounced in Brazil, Haiti, Venezuela, Paraguay and Jamaica.

The Economist Intelligence Unit's 2017 Democracy Index also showed a broad decline in support for democracy. Of the 24 Latin American countries encompassed in its review, only one, Uruguay, was categorized as a full democracy. Fifteen were branded “flawed” democracies, five were “hybrids” and two—Venezuela and Cuba—were identified as “authoritarian regimes.” All of these studies point to a disturbing decline in support for democratic structures throughout the Americas.

Part of the explanation for this regression from democratic norms can be attributed to rampant corruption. Vanderbilt's LAPOP surveys have documented that this has a strong, corrosive influence on citizens' trust in their

government. In Latin America, corruption has historically been widespread and deep-seated and impunity commonplace. Still, the unfolding of the Odebrecht bribery scandal has shocked voters from Brazil to the Dominican Republic, and led to the resignations of Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski and Ecuadoran Vice President Jorge Glas, and the latter's subsequent sentencing to six years in prison. This anticorruption effort, initiated by crusading public prosecutors in Brazil and embraced by suits filed by both public prosecutors and private citizens in other Latin American countries, may reflect an awakening of activism in Latin America to finally try to weed out corruption and impunity.

The World Justice Project ranked the vast majority of Latin American and Caribbean countries in the bottom third in the world in terms of combating corruption. Transparency Inter-



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On May 20, 2017, millions marched in Caracas to mark the 50th consecutive day of protests, demanding an end to repression and immediate elections.

national's latest Corruption Perceptions Index also gave these countries an average grade of 44 out of 100 (anything below 50 indicates governments are failing to tackle corruption in their own system).

There are several policy implications for the United States in all that is brewing in the hemisphere. First, helping Latin Americans control their crime wave would not only help stem the flow of illegal drugs into the United States but, based on recent surveys of the push-and-pull factors that influence emigration, it also could dampen the flow of illegal immigration. Second, promoting more effective governance and the rule of law, and helping authorities combat corruption, are both critical to the creation of more stable democracies. The United States is providing these countries with some assistance through the Merida Program, the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative and the Central American Regional Security Initiative to combat drug trafficking and the crimes associated with it, such as money laundering and bribery.

Finally, strengthening our economic ties with the region

will help create more jobs there and more reliable trading partners for U.S. businesses. This, in turn, can also dampen the impulse to migrate, reduce the attraction of illegal jobs, and offset the influence of actors such as China and Russia in Latin America. A strong and sustained U.S. presence throughout the hemisphere can also help combat the other nefarious influences that seep across our common borders like trafficking in persons, arms and drugs, as well as, potentially, terrorism.

Our foreign policy focus tends to shift with the latest crisis. In the case of the Americas, as I have tried to underscore in this article, the absence of crises does not imply that all is well. Trouble is brewing in Latin America. We need to remain vigilant to the disturbing trends and maintain our focus on, and commitment to, the region.

The United States and Latin America are inextricably linked by our economies, our shared political principles and security concerns, and the strong bonds between our peoples. Now is not the time to lose sight of all we have to gain, or lose, in Latin America. ■



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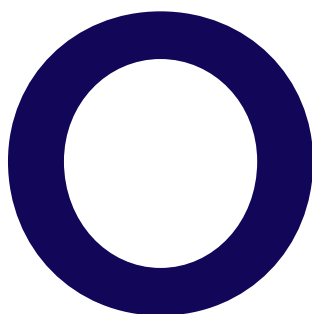


A group of Kenyan youth march for peace before the general elections in March 2013.

# USAID Election Assistance LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

Since the 1990s electoral assistance has come into its own as a branch of foreign aid and as an academic discipline.

BY ASSIA IVANTCHEVA



families and children away, uncertain when they would be able to return home safely. The tension was palpable. Everyone agreed

in the eve of the 2017 general election in Kenya the streets of Nairobi were empty. Schools, shops and restaurants were closed, and an urgent question hung in the air: Will there be violence between supporters of the two camps on Election Day? Many residents left town or sent their

*Assia Ivantcheva currently serves as senior adviser in the Elections and Political Transitions Division at USAID's Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG Center). In the past, she has led DRG portfolios at USAID/Serbia and Montenegro and at the USAID regional mission in Kyiv, covering Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. She also served for three years as a senior official at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Warsaw.*

that the zero-sum, winner-take-all dynamic around elections had to stop, but no one was confident the desire for peace would prevail. It was typical of the type of sensitive, fragile and polarized environment the U.S. Agency for International Development steps into to provide critically important electoral assistance.

Beginning in the late 1980s, the world experienced an “electoral boom,” with the number of developing countries holding competitive elections for executive office more than doubling by the end of the century. The rapid emergence of multiparty democracies in both old and new nation-states after the end of the Cold War brought still more elections. At the same time, USAID’s support for democratic elections expanded with bipartisan backing from Congress, increasing exponentially following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Electoral assistance has not only developed into its own sector; it has become a subject of academic study and an academic discipline—today’s graduate students can get a master’s degree in electoral assistance.

Over the years USAID has provided assistance to developing countries in five main areas: election legislation and administration; civic and voter education; electoral oversight through



observation; preventing electoral conflict; and political party development. Today USAID and its partner organizations are recognized as global leaders in these areas.

Since the early 2000s, USAID has supported the emergence of a global community of practice on international and domestic election observation that includes a consensus on standards and codes of ethics. USAID supports the activities of many of the most prominent U.S.-based organizations involved in election assistance, including the National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, International Foundation for Electoral Systems, Democracy International and The Carter Center. USAID and its partners have also provided long-term support to local election groups, many of whom have become powerful players in their own countries and regions,



A 90-year-old woman is biometrically verified to vote on Election Day in Ghana in 2017.

Three months after the death of President Michael Sata, a snap presidential election was held in Zambia on Jan. 20, 2015. USAID worked with election officials, political parties and civil society observers to ensure a peaceful, nationwide election.

such as NAMFREL (National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections) in the Philippines, ISFED (The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy) in Georgia and "Civil Network OPORA" in Ukraine, as well as regional networks and organizations like ANFREL (Asian Network for Free Elections) in Asia or and EISA (Electoral Institute of Southern Africa).

USAID is the recognized leader in supporting political party development, a sometimes-misunderstood component of our work. Per its political party assistance policy, USAID does not support particular parties or "pick winners." Rather, its assistance

is nonpartisan, aiming to strengthen the ability of parties and politicians to effectively represent their constituents regardless of ideology. Unlike European political foundations, which mostly work with “sister parties” that share their ideological orientation, USAID works with all significant democratic political parties.

In Washington, D.C., USAID officers coordinate assistance with colleagues at the State Department and at the interagency level, as well as deploying to support USAID missions. Along with colleagues from State’s Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, we help embassies with Election Day observation and donor coordination. Finally, we provide topical training, publications and tools to our DRG colleagues in the field.

### **Questions to Consider When Offering Assistance**

USAID’s electoral assistance has not run perfectly over the last few decades. There have been a number of hiccups and lessons learned along the way. In some cases technocratic solutions inadequately address deeply political issues; assistance is offered to political parties whose dedication to internal reform has been mostly rhetorical; or peace messages do not reflect sufficient research into needs and audiences. Moreover, although elections and electoral assistance by themselves cannot be expected to guarantee democratic development, elections remain the only means to a legitimate democratic government. So the question is not whether to assist with elections, but rather, what kind of election support is needed. It is essential, at the same time, to manage expectations about what such assistance can deliver.

During 2017, elections varied widely across the globe: from highly competitive to predictable, from peaceful to violent, from credible to some that made for incredible stories. We still use qualitative terms to describe elections, such as “free and fair,” “credible,” “legitimate,” “inclusive,” “peaceful,” etc., and there is no single international standard for democratic elections. But there is an emerging global consensus around a set of standards rooted in universal human rights and codified in public international law. Many of these standards include basic civil and political freedoms, such as freedom of peaceful assembly, association and expression; the right to life; and the underlying concept of rule of law. Promoting those standards and principles through programming is at the core of USAID’s electoral assistance.

In 2018 more than 60 national elections will take place in countries where USAID could provide assistance, excluding potential snap elections or unexpected political crises. In Africa alone, there will be some 20 national elections; data shows that one in five elections on the continent are at risk of violence that leads to loss

When it comes to peace, the electoral cycle approach is the only viable conflict mitigation approach because it covers the period before, during and after an election.

of life. Given limited resources and staff, which elections should we focus on? Elections that may trigger violent conflict, or elections where peaceful competition could lead to positive changes? Elections in small countries that badly need assistance, or elections in countries that are considered a foreign policy priority and thus have significant resources? Should we assist with the conduct of local elections that are often neglected and yet directly affect the average citizen, or focus on high-profile national elections?

We also need to decide how best to plan and design election assistance for all relevant domestic stakeholders, and how to conduct policy analysis and needs assessments in coordination with other U.S. agencies and international donors. We need to design, procure and manage programs; monitor and troubleshoot on Election Day; and address challenges during the post-election period.

### **The Electoral Cycle Approach**

Election Day steals the headlines, and assistance funding and staffing spike around that time; but as the excitement fades, embassies, USAID missions and partner nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) on the ground continue to carry out electoral assistance and prepare for the next election.

This long-term assistance does not produce headlines. It often includes activities that do not sound terribly exciting: legal analysis and organizational assessments, training, workshops, surveys, voter registration drives and advocacy campaigns. And yet, since the early 2000s this long-term, electoral cycle approach has been embraced by the international community and become the norm among election practitioners, who know that improvement of the process is best achieved between elections.

When it comes to peace, the electoral cycle approach is the only viable conflict mitigation approach because it covers the period before, during and after an election. For example, in more

## The news on cyberthreats and election interference in the United States and elsewhere has caused some observers to question the premise of election assistance itself.

than 90 percent of cases examined, violence begins in the pre-election stage. Evidence from the pre-election period in Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Guyana, Kenya and Sierra Leone demonstrates that external scrutiny makes manipulation more costly and more difficult, which in turn deters the opposition from using violence as a means to affect elections.

USAID's long-term electoral assistance model, a component of overall development strategy, is vital to effecting policy change. A key strength of this approach is the goal of ending the need for electoral assistance itself by focusing on self-reliance. Through our partner organizations, USAID's assistance aims to build the capacity of domestic institutions—election management bodies, the judiciary, police, political parties, civil society, the media and domestic election observation organizations—to carry out democratic elections. At the same time, we recognize that sustainable outcomes take at least several peaceful and credible electoral cycles to establish themselves. Thus, withdrawal from electoral assistance needs to be gradual and well timed.

### 21st-Century Challenges to Free and Fair Elections

Challenges to conducting free and fair elections in the developing world persist and include continued discrimination and de facto exclusion of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and ethnic and religious minorities; insecurity and violent conflicts; and corruption. In addition, the 21st century has seen other disturbing trends, including:

*The deteriorating quality of the electoral and political process.* In cases where democracy is in decline, the ability of authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes to hold *legal yet illegitimate* elections has increased. Many authoritarian countries have good laws on the books and institutions that are efficient in implementing the political visions of governing elites. They follow the letter, but not the spirit of the law, creating “false” opposition

groups and GONGOs (government-supported organizations) that mimic legitimate citizen observer groups. There is evidence that authoritarian regimes learn from each other.

In 2018 Russia, Egypt and Venezuela have held, and Azerbaijan will hold, elections with predictable outcomes. There are countries in Africa, Latin America and the former Soviet Union where elected leaders refuse to let go of power and manipulate laws and procedures to stay for a third or fourth term, undermining democracy. In other places, such as Libya, South Sudan and Afghanistan, the outcome may be unpredictable, but the high degree of internal conflict, insecurity and corruption threatens to undermine the whole enterprise.

*Issues regarding technology and social media.* Online media have provided the tools and platforms for citizens to express their demands and mobilize civic and political movements. They have also helped increase scrutiny over governments and have improved observation methodologies and the speed of data processing. Governments have used biometrics to improve identification and voter registration, and have even implemented electronic transmission of results in the name of efficiency and integrity. However, the use of technology for elections has also raised a whole host of new issues, which can paradoxically undermine the integrity of the electoral process and voters' trust.

As of 2015, at least 25 countries in Africa, including Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Malawi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, had included an electronic component in their electoral systems. There were some successes, but also quite a few failures due to high upfront and recurring costs, procurement problems, increased vulnerability to fraud, insufficient domestic capacity to implement or maintain the new equipment, and voters' lack of understanding of the new systems.

Countries such as Ukraine experienced cyberattacks that interfered with their elections. With another important election in Ukraine scheduled for 2019, USAID, the donor community and civil society groups are focused on protecting the country's electoral system against cyberattacks and countering Russian disinformation and propaganda.

Finally, the news on cyberthreats and election interference in the United States and elsewhere has caused some observers to question the premise of election assistance itself. But there is a vast difference between election assistance—an integral component of international development—and election interference. Ken Wollack, NDI's outgoing president, says this is like comparing a life-saving medicine to a deadly poison. USAID's election assistance aims to make the process transparent and strengthen local institutions, while interference is about secrecy and

undermining institutions. Assistance supports open data and access to information, while interference is about closed sources and disinformation. Finally, electoral assistance follows publicly known standards, strategies, funding streams and programs that support a credible electoral process—regardless of the outcome.

### Back to Kenya: Post-Election

Kenya's 2017 election was one of the most technologically advanced and yet most divisive elections in recent African history. It was also one of the most expensive elections in the world. The election was marred by the murder of the Election Commission's IT chief, the withdrawal of the opposition candidate from the October election re-run, demonstrations and a police crackdown that resulted in loss of life.

The election yielded a record number of court cases, one of which led to the Supreme Court's annulment of the presidential election—an unprecedented decision for Africa and a high mark for judicial independence. However the decision also raised questions within the global election community: The court's finding was based on whether the electoral process was "simple, accurate, verifiable, secure, accountable and transparent," as mandated by the constitution, rather than whether the problems that occurred negated the results or the will of the voters.

This decision may embolden other courts to play more active and independent roles, but it could also encourage "spoilers" to try to overturn results they do not like. The other five elections held in August 2017 in Kenya, including for governors and Parliament, were also heavily litigated—Kenya's courts had to review more than 300 cases. Finally, international observers relied on the traditional practice of communicating preliminary findings shortly after Election Day; this caused a backlash, emphasizing the need to put extra effort into qualifying statements, as well as focusing more on technology.

In the end, the effectiveness of USAID's electoral assistance depends on our ability to learn and evolve. While neither USAID nor any international donor was responsible for the technology used in the Kenyan elections, the overall electoral assistance provided there remains an interesting case to further examine and draw lessons.

One thing is clear: neither the use of technology nor the country's specific political dynamics fundamentally change the principles behind electoral assistance. Transparency, accountability and oversight of the entire electoral process—as supported by USAID—remain fundamental principles that need to underpin any electoral assistance efforts. They can help ensure the integrity of the process and keep the trust of the voters. ■

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## Saudi Arabia

# LIBERALIZATION, NOT DEMOCRATIZATION

The plan for sweeping changes to meet economic and demographic challenges does not appear to include an opening-up of the political system.

BY JERRY FEIERSTEIN



A Saudi Arabian woman in full niqab.

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**S**audi Arabia's leadership is coming under growing pressure to address significant economic and demographic challenges so it can remain a stable, prosperous country. These include:

- Nearly 45 percent of the population (currently about 26 million) is under the age of 25.
- Although the official unemployment



*Jerry Feierstein retired in May 2016 with the rank of Career Minister, following a 41-year Foreign Service career. In addition to service as ambassador to Yemen from 2010 to 2013, his nine overseas postings included Pakistan (three tours), Saudi Arabia, Oman, Lebanon, Israel and Tunisia. From 2013 until his retirement, Ambassador Feierstein was principal deputy assistant secretary of State for Near Eastern affairs; earlier in his career, as deputy coordinator of the State Department's Counterterrorism Bureau, he led the development of initiatives to build regional networks to confront extremist groups, block terrorist financing and promote counterterrorism messaging. Amb. Feierstein joined the Middle East Institute in October 2016 as a senior fellow and is the director of its new Center for Gulf Affairs.*



rate is less than 6 percent (private estimates are significantly higher), nearly one-third of young Saudis are unemployed.

- As demand for jobs grows, the traditional employers—the public sector and the energy sector—are increasingly incapable of providing opportunities.

- Young, urbanized Saudis are demanding reforms that will relax the country’s highly restrictive social climate, especially in regard to gender issues.

In response, Mohamed bin Salman, the country’s young crown prince—famously known as MBS—has already instituted a number of popular social reforms, and is now undertaking sweeping economic changes to address the country’s challenges. But as of now, a real democratic opening in the political system does not appear to be in the cards.

The United States has a strong interest in seeing the crown prince’s reform efforts succeed. Regional security and stability, as well as the health of the global economy, depend on a stable Saudi Arabia fully integrated into the international community. Saudi reforms would also open doors for greater U.S. business participation in one of the most prosperous economies in the world.

At the same time, efforts to address the demands of a young, urbanized and well-educated population must also include meaningful political reform. It is therefore in the interest of the United States to encourage the Saudi leadership to include measures to build a more open, democratic government in their plans.

### It’s the Economy, Stupid

MBS’ project revolves around “Vision 2030,” a comprehensive economic and social initiative with three core elements:

- Developing a diversified and sustainable economy that shifts away from reliance on the energy sector as the main pillar;
- Shifting the main driver of economic growth and prosperity from the public sector to the private; and
- Creating the millions of jobs needed to absorb the coming demographic wave as the public sector retreats from its historic role as employer of first resort.

Perhaps no element of the Saudi economic reform package

has received more international attention than the proposal to privatize a small portion of the country’s crown jewel, Saudi Aramco, which Saudi authorities value at \$2 trillion. The exact percentage of the company that would be sold to the public has not yet been announced. In addition, the timing of the sale is still unknown; there is some speculation that the release of stock for sale on international markets may be delayed at least until 2019

in hopes that rising prices in the energy sector will strengthen the company’s valuation. But whatever the details of the initial public offering turn out to be, it’s important to remember that this is only one element of a much broader reform package.

Another important element of the Saudi economic strategy involves major investments to turn the private sector into the main engine for job creation, increasing its contribution to gross domestic product from the current 40 percent to 65 percent by 2030. The effort has two prongs: expanding the private sector of the economy, and privatizing elements that had until now been public-sector enterprises. Specifically, Riyadh sees significant potential in areas as diverse as retail, mining, tourism and (surprisingly, for a country uniquely associated with the oil and gas industry) renewable energy. Another

consideration driving the Saudi interest in solar and nuclear energy is the recognition that the country’s growing domestic energy demands are eating into its capacity to export its most marketable asset.

In addition to diversifying the economy, the Saudis have announced their intention to transition certain labor categories, particularly in education and health care, from governmental control to the private arena.

Beyond developing new sectors for economic growth, Vision 2030 also proposes measures to make the Saudi private sector more competitive and more attractive for investors. Specifically, it sets the ambitious goal of placing Saudi Arabia in the top 10 nations on the Global Competitiveness Index and increasing the share of foreign direct investment in the economy from 3.8 percent to 5.7 percent of GDP. Building on the country’s geographic advantages, the plan aspires to make Saudi Arabia a regional



THE WHITE HOUSE

Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis meets with Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz, at right, in Riyadh on April 19, 2017.

hub for trade and finance. Toward that end, Riyadh commits in the plan to reform visa processes, remove licensing obstacles for enterprises of all sizes and improve financial services.

### Transforming Saudi Society

Vision 2030 is an aspirational document. It's unlikely that all the ambitious goals it lays out can or will be achieved over the next decade. The plan is frank about the need to open up Saudi society on many levels if economic reforms have any hope of succeeding.

First and foremost among the Saudi traditions that pose obstacles to economic reform and modernization are those related to gender and women's roles in society. MBS created a domestic and international stir last fall when he announced that the government would drop its ban on women driving beginning in June 2018. The royal decree immediately removed one of the most contentious issues in Saudi society. Although actual implementation has not yet begun, the press is reporting that many young women are eagerly discussing which model of car they plan to buy when the new laws are implemented.

That decision was followed by other steps to relax restrictions on women's freedoms. The government has already announced that women will no longer be prohibited from attending public sporting events, and a senior Saudi cleric recently suggested that women would no longer be required to wear the abaya and niqab (full veil) when out in public. Other elements of the traditional, "male guardianship" system remain intact, although the government has pledged to permit women to travel abroad without a male family member accompanying them.

In many ways, these recent initiatives to enhance women's roles in society are a lagging indicator; Saudi women have been making steady inroads into historically male-only preserves for

years. By 2014, well over half of Saudis graduating with bachelor's degrees were females, though the percentage of women seeking post-graduate degrees remained among the lowest of any Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development member-state.

Vision 2030 seeks to increase the proportion of Saudi women in the workforce—already rising, particularly in the retail sector—to 30 percent by 2030. To help make that happen, Riyadh is dropping the requirement for gender segregation in the workplace.

Beyond gender issues, the crown prince's ambitious plans to move the Saudi economy toward a private-sector focus will require sweeping changes to the country's traditional cradle-to-grave social welfare system. Interestingly, young Saudi women appear far more interested in finding careers in the private sector than their male counterparts, who often prefer the security and better pay and benefits of public-sector jobs.

In an effort to change that dynamic, the government has pledged to equalize pay and benefits packages across the private and public sectors, and encourage entrepreneurship and enterprise opportunities. Unusual for an OECD country, unemployment is higher for young, educated Saudis than it is for their less-educated peers. Recognizing that, the plan emphasizes the need to strengthen higher education. Thus the government has proposed to re-examine the curricula of institutions of higher education to ensure that they are producing graduates with the skills the private sector demands.

In a further attempt to steer more young Saudis toward careers in the private sector, the government recently announced that by the end of the year some businesses in the retail sector would no longer be permitted to hire non-Saudis. While past attempts at promoting "Saudization" of the economy have fallen well short of

expectations—foreign nationals still constitute the vast majority of employees in the Saudi private sector—the growing demand for jobs for Saudis and the public sector’s inability to satisfy that demand both lend a new urgency to the effort.

MBS is also shaking up his country’s power structure, which has long featured a dynamic tension between the ruling Al Saud family and the arch-conservative religious establishment that promotes the austere Wahhabi doctrine originally espoused by the 18th-century Islamic cleric Mohamed ibn Abd al-Wahhab. By asserting that the Saudi government would seek to place Saudi Arabia’s religious practices closer to the mainstream of Sunni Islam, thereby returning the country to its pre-1979 practices, Mohamed bin Salman has taken steps to curtail the power and authority of the religious establishment.

So, for example, his decisions concerning the roles and participation of women in Saudi society have upended decades of religious doctrine aimed at confining them largely to roles as homemakers. In addition, the government recently restricted the hitherto unchecked authority of the dreaded mutawa’een (religious police) to enforce Wahhabi strictures.

These decisions are broadly popular with younger, urbanized Saudis (although likely less popular among more conservative religious elements and citizens in the religious heartland). Similarly, steps to introduce aspects of “normal” urban life to the country, including reintroducing movie theaters and permitting music concerts, albeit still gender-segregated, have improved the quality of life for young Saudis and reduced intergenerational frictions.

### **Dim Prospects for Political Change**

In his first year as crown prince, Mohamed bin Salman, with the approval of his father, King Salman bin Abdul Aziz, has implemented the most sweeping changes in generations. But there is no indication that he intends to match his dramatic moves on the social and economic fronts with equally substantial reforms of the country’s governing structures. In fact, indications are that Saudi Arabia under King Salman and the crown prince will remain an authoritarian state, with little scope offered for popular participation, let alone peaceful political dissent.

Authorities continue to arrest and imprison Saudi citizens merely for criticizing the government or participating in peaceful protests. Nearly all members of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association have been imprisoned for their pro-rights advocacy, according to Human Rights Watch. Several bloggers and social media activists, including women advocating for improved women’s rights and the prominent blogger Raif Badawi, have been

Indications are that Saudi Arabia will remain an authoritarian state, with little scope offered for popular participation.

sentenced to extended prison terms for their activism. In a stunning display of authoritarian power, late last year the government detained dozens of the country’s wealthiest and most prominent businessmen and senior government officials for weeks in the five-star Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Riyadh, on allegations of corruption. The detainees were held until they agreed to return to the government billions of dollars—some reports suggest the final figure was in excess of \$100 billion—in alleged corrupt payoffs.

There is little doubt that corruption in Saudi Arabia is a significant impediment to economic reform. Steps by the government to root it out would undoubtedly improve the business climate and attract greater foreign and domestic investment. Moreover, by all accounts, the government’s move against those accused of corruption was generally popular with Saudi citizens.

In a March 18 interview with Norah O’Donnell of “60 Minutes,” Mohamed bin Salman insisted that the Ritz-Carlton detentions were “extremely necessary.” But as one close observer of the Saudi scene has noted, the anti-corruption drive was the right thing to do, but done in the wrong way. The crown prince insisted that all of the procedures “were in accordance with existing and published laws,” but they do not appear so to many observers.

Instead of building systems to stem corruption through a strong legal framework and judicial review, thus building confidence in the rule of law, the state chose to shake down the accused in an opaque process without ever being called on to prove the charges in court. By arguing that the action was justified by a sense of urgency preventing the use of more formal legal channels, the government lost an opportunity to build the kind of framework that will benefit Saudi society over the long term.

For generations, the theory of governance in Saudi Arabia was that the population would accept the absolute rule of the Al Saud family in return for prosperity and stability. The question, now, therefore, is how reduction, or even the elimination, of core elements in the social safety net will affect the population’s expectations. Accommodating the demand of young Saudis for loosened



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societal controls will undoubtedly reduce pressure on the ruling family to allow for a greater popular voice in fundamental government decisions. But will that trade-off be enough?

### The U.S. Interest in MBS' Success

Saudi Arabia has been a pillar of U.S. foreign policy and national security in the Middle East since the end of World War II, as well as a key partner in promoting global economic prosperity. In his comments welcoming the crown prince to the White House in March, President Donald J. Trump highlighted the broad scope of U.S.-Saudi cooperation in promoting regional security and stability. As the Trump administration sharpens its approach to Iran in the coming months, seeking to challenge its regional ambitions, ballistic missile programs and interference in its neighbors' affairs, Saudi Arabia will be a critical partner. Moreover, the administration will look to Riyadh to assist in the reconstruction of Iraq and Yemen, the stabilization of Syria and efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

For all these reasons the United States, which is counting heavily on Saudi support, has every reason to welcome the Vision 2030 initiative and to contribute to its success. In particular, the U.S. business community has been deeply engaged in the initiative, and will benefit from its close ties to Saudi counterparts.

But we also have an equally strong interest in shoring up Saudi Arabia's long-term political stability. Toward that end, Washington should do all it can to ensure that Saudi society has safe channels for airing dissent. It should also make the case to the Saudi leadership that its willingness to accept divergent views is an important component of our engagement. For as the experience of the Arab Spring suggests, when authoritarian regimes actively suppress dissent, the result is often an unhealthy build-up of pressures that leads to an unmanageable explosion of anger and frustration.

As MBS and the Saudi leadership advance broad, sweeping changes in the fundamental fabric of their society, it becomes more important than ever that the population have access to acceptable, peaceful means to express its views on those proposals. Part of the U.S. contribution to the success of the Vision 2030 project should therefore be continued engagement with the Saudi leadership, encouraging it to embrace greater popular participation in decision-making, more open political debate and a strong adherence to the rule of law. Such reforms can be as important to the overall success of the transformative project as the social and economic adjustments Vision 2030 is slated to bring to Saudi Arabia. ■



SYEDA SAMEEN/COURTESY OF USAID

USAID's Citizens Voice Project in Pakistan aims to increase engagement between citizens and state institutions.

# Supporting Civil Society in THE FACE OF CLOSING SPACE

**Development professionals focus on the need to bolster and expand civil society's “open space” in countries around the world.**

BY MARIAM AFRASIABI AND MARDY SHUALY

**“I** am the last and only dictator in Europe; and, indeed, there are none anywhere else in the world,” declared Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko in a memorable 2012 interview. The reality, of course, is that Lukashenko is part of a sizable and growing club of leaders imposing brazenly dictatorial rule. Throughout the past decade, freedom of speech, assembly and association has been

under broad assault worldwide, with restrictive legal frameworks, coordinated campaigns against public advocates and members of political opposition, and undercutting of independent media. Holding nominal elections and having a president are fig leaves for rulers who brook neither dissent nor opposition. Crackdowns on civil society coincide with the suspension of term limits and the hollowing out of legislatures. These are features of “closing space”—a term for environments in which restrictions hamper the ability of civil society and political actors to mobilize and operate. This phenomenon is becoming more severe, both in terms of the numbers of



*Mariam Afrasiabi is a senior adviser in the Civil Society and Media Division at USAID’s Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance in the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance. She previously served as a democracy and governance adviser in USAID’s Bureau for the Middle East.*

*Mardy Shualy is a Presidential Management Fellow who worked in USAID’s DRG Center from 2017 to 2018. At USAID, he led the completion of the 2016 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index, and contributed to agency policy for programming in closed spaces. Previously, he worked at the World Bank and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in South Africa.*

Without an active civil society empowered to hold a government accountable to its citizens, development investments will be unsustainable.

countries implicated and the brutality of tactics employed by both state and nonstate actors. Since 2015, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law states, more than 100 laws have been proposed or enacted by governments that restrict the ability of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to register, operate, receive foreign funding or assemble freely. And, according to CIVICUS, a global civil society alliance that releases civic space ratings worldwide, only 13 percent of countries are considered to have fully open civic space—and those countries contain only 3 percent of the world’s population.

Private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs) that play such a critical role in development have faced a mounting backlash in many countries. In some highly restrictive countries, the fabric of civil society has been deteriorating or destroyed because punitive laws and restrictions on foreign funding make it near-impossible for local organizations to operate. These trends are a growing concern in many countries where USAID and other funders work, forcing the closure of projects that provide critical services, including fighting child marriage, advocating against gender-based violence, providing clean water and promoting nutrition among pregnant women and children.

Yet civil society has remained surprisingly durable and resilient. A radio activist in Belarus explained what drives him forward despite the repressive government’s efforts to suppress civil society: “Maybe I’m naive, but I believe in positive change. Nothing lasts forever. And nothing is a given. In order to come to a democracy, and [one] that it is sustained for a long time, we have to endure the severity of the dictatorship. We need to learn from all the mistakes to avoid even thinking of going back. Freedom, rights and equality become real values only when Belarusians will naturally come to this understanding. Hence the motivation. It is interesting to work in a country which has the prospect ahead, where there are chances of a positive change. And, most importantly, this country is my motherland.”

Such determination must be matched by assistance providers with systematic approaches to identifying and responding to closing political and civic space. Bolstering civil society and strengthening democratic governance are critical for achieving more prosperous and sustainable democracies and, ultimately, for ending the need for foreign assistance. In such high-stakes environments, standard best practices for development and diplomacy are useful, but may be insufficient.

### USAID’s Approach to the Trend

Authoritarian governments and nonstate actors have demonstrated creativity and ruthlessness in dismantling civic space. Coercive tactics in one country are replicated and adapted to local contexts by repressive regimes in other countries. Some examples are clear and direct. China, for example, shared its internet censorship and monitoring techniques with Iran, which used them to create a policed “Halal” intranet. Other cases involve indirect replication of style: Mexican drug cartels, for

## The Turn Toward Dictatorship

**I**n 2014 the student movement and civil society in general started a cycle of demonstrations against [Venezuelan President Nicolás] Maduro’s regime. That year, we started to see a heavy crackdown in the way that the regime tried to control the situation in the streets—they used armed civilians to kill the demonstrators; they started to jail people for being in the protests and persecuted people for expressing themselves. It wasn’t easy for anyone to assimilate to the arbitrary behavior of the government, and we started to see how it was turning from a very bad government to a dictatorship. At that moment, my NGO was focused on tracking people who were detained and disappeared through actions of the military. We tracked more than 3,000 people, started using social media to inform the public about it, tried to get legal help to those who needed it and, at the same time, crossed the whole country undercover, teaching activists about digital security to secure them against digital threats.

—Melanio Escobar, digital activist, Venezuela

example, have followed the example of violent governments by hijacking opponents' social media accounts to broadcast grisly displays of revenge. The chart on page 48 lists some of the common techniques used to close civic space, with specific country examples.

Without an active civil society empowered to hold a government accountable to its citizens, development investments will be unsustainable. USAID plays an instrumental role in the design, implementation and evaluation of innovative programs to respond to closing space. Our approach includes long-term support to civil society strengthening programs worldwide. We collaborate with other agencies and interagency working groups of the U.S. government, as well as other actors, for a broad and coordinated approach to these thorny challenges.

While there is no one-size-fits-all solution to closing space, USAID has developed a three-pronged approach that codifies effective responses to common concerns: prevention, adaptation and continued support.

**Prevention** begins with identifying and tracking civil society conditions. Tools like the USAID-supported Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index provide systematic analysis of emerging trends in civil society, critical for identifying where risks and opportunities lie. CSOSI reports on the strength and overall viability of the civil society sector in more than 70 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and Eurasia, based on seven key dimensions: legal environment, financial viability, organizational capacity, advocacy, service provision, infrastructure and public image.

USAID's Legal Enabling and Environment Project tracks the development of restrictive law, policy and regulatory proposals. Blocking restrictive changes while they are in draft form can be both easier and more effective than trying to repeal laws that have been passed and put into practice. Last year, LEEP's support provided direct technical assistance in 17 countries. Because of its intervention, laws or regulations were improved in Congo-Brazzaville, Côte d'Ivoire, Somalia and Kosovo; the effects of restrictive laws or draft laws were mitigated in Indonesia, Moldova and Nigeria; and the initiative helped empower CSOs and civil society in numerous other countries.



GLOBAL COMMUNITIES WEST BANK AND GAZA/ COURTESY OF USAID

A Palestinian boy stands in front of his campaign poster urging his peers to elect him to a position on his Youth Local Council in Hebron, West Bank. Since 2012 USAID's partner Global Communities has promoted youth involvement in democracy and local governance through these voluntary bodies, composed of Palestinian youth from 15 to 20 years old.

USAID also emphasizes a "big tent" approach to its activities, engaging a broad array of activists, including journalists and the private sector, to reinforce open civic space. When asked how he has changed his operations given closing political space, Charles Vandyck, a leader in West African civil society development stated: "A lesson learned from years of campaigning on social justice issues is that the most unexpected alliances often give the most impact. It brings new perspectives and entry points to the table, but most of all, it gives the cause credibility, legitimacy and, ultimately, power. And that, more than anything, is what matters."

**Adaptation** under changing conditions requires flexibility. If a government restricts the operations of nonprofit organizations, for example, a group can sometimes legally reincorporate as a for-profit enterprise while pursuing similar goals. As repressive governments try to keep pace and adjust to CSOs' changing behavior, civil society must constantly evolve to stay ahead of new impediments. When restrictive laws are passed, USAID seeks opportunities to mitigate their impact on civil society, working with CSOs and governments to soften policy enforcement. When governments seek to strangle CSOs with cumbersome administrative requirements, assistance programs can provide legal and technical support, ensuring that organizations can avoid disruption due to noncompliance.

Finally, redressing closing space is a long-term commitment that requires **continued support**, even in the face of ongoing repression. When autocrats sense that foreign attention is wan-

# CLOSING SPACE: TACTICS AND EXAMPLES

Tactic	Description	Country Examples
<b>Loose or vague legal frameworks.</b>	Governments intentionally obscure the legal permissions required for civil society actors and organizations. CSOs can be dissolved under thin pretense, with the uncertainty driving self-censorship and undercutting long-term planning.	<b>Cambodia</b> enacted a new Law on Associations and NGOs in August 2015 that, among other provisions, bans unregistered organizations while vaguely defining which groups are required to register; requires “political neutrality” of CSOs; and gives the Ministry of Interior full control over registration.
<b>Burdensome civil society organization registration.</b>	Governments impose odious registration requirements, impeding the establishment and operation of organizations.	In <b>South Sudan</b> , a 2016 law imposes substantial and costly registration renewal, documentation and hiring requirements. It prevents CSOs from engaging in activities other than those agreed on in advance with the government; requires expatriates to secure work permits before arriving in South Sudan; and removes some legal recourse for CSOs appealing government decisions.
<b>Denial of registration.</b>	Broad provisions give restrictive governments license to deny registration to any viable organization they view as a potential threat.	The government of <b>Azerbaijan</b> has lost at least five cases before the European Court of Human Rights, which has found denials of registration to violate the freedom of association.
<b>Approval for activities.</b>	Governments require organizations to screen individual activities, allowing government agents to closely monitor activities and filter any unfavorable actions.	In <b>Ethiopia</b> , charities and societies raising more than 10 percent of their income from foreign sources may not engage in activities listed in Article 14 (j-n) of the Charities and Societies Proclamation, including advancement of human and democratic rights; promotion of equality and rights of the disabled and children; conflict resolution; and promotion of efficiency in judicial and law enforcement services. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Unfavorable taxes and fees.</b>	Governments have taken a variety of approaches to drain organizations’ resources—for instance, denying tax benefits, levying fees and imposing stiff bureaucratic penalties for any noncompliance.	In <b>Zimbabwe</b> , some CSOs are forced by local authorities to pay exorbitant fees (up to \$1,000 per year) to carry out their work. If an organization refuses, no Memorandum of Understanding is granted and the CSO’s activities are not allowed to proceed. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Limits on external funding.</b>	Foreign funding can be a critical source of revenue for civil society, whether from diaspora groups, bilateral donors or multinational organizations. Governments have hampered civil society by taxing, diminishing or blocking such funding.	In October 2016, <b>Bangladesh</b> enacted the Foreign Donations Regulation Law, which includes new administrative hurdles and penalties for foreign-funded NGOs for vague offenses such as “making derogatory statements against the Constitution and constitutional bodies.”
<b>Restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly.</b>	Authoritarian regimes continue to stifle opposing voices; as activists have turned to the internet and social media to communicate, repressive governments have kept pace with online censorship and digital attacks.	Since 2012, <b>Russia</b> has intensified a crackdown on freedom of expression online, threatening user privacy and secure communication, and instituting greater controls over content. Measures such as local data storage laws make it easier for the authorities to identify users and access personal information without judicial oversight. While these measures are in the early stages of implementation—and the extent to which they can and will be enforced remains unclear—the message about greater state control is clear.
<b>Criminalization.</b>	Some countries have criminalized failure to comply with certain CSO law provisions, such as registration and reporting.	In <b>Egypt</b> , a new, extremely restrictive NGO bill ratified by the president in May 2017 gave a legal role to security and intelligence officials in deciding on the registration of NGOs and their ability to access domestic and foreign funding. Under the bill, violations carry very harsh penalties ranging from one to five years’ imprisonment in addition to fines ranging from 50,000 Egyptian pounds (approximately \$3,125) to one million Egyptian pounds (approximately \$62,500). <sup>3</sup>
<b>Government-sponsored competition.</b>	To maintain a pretext of civil society without risking opposition, regimes frequently establish government-organized NGOs (GONGOs) that act as proxies for the ruling regime, mimicking official positions while crowding out other civil society actors.	<b>Russia</b> provides grant funding to NGOs through the Presidential Grant Foundation for the Development of Civil Society. Though it is possible to interpret these grants as a concession to restrictions on NGOs receiving foreign funding, the majority of the available resources went to pro-government groups. For others, the presidential grants represent possible co-optation by the state, particularly as other funding options decrease in the face of legislative and other pressures. These groups must weigh whether accepting public financing places them at risk of becoming GONGOs.
<b>Defamation.</b>	Regimes resort to smear campaigns to undercut CSOs’ legitimacy and popularity; labeling groups as puppets of foreign powers is common, as are defamatory claims against oppositional individuals.	President Duterte’s public statements in the <b>Philippines</b> against critics of his war against illegal drugs, including human rights groups, are seen as attempts to silence dissent. <sup>4</sup>
<b>Violence and intimidation.</b>	Governments employ techniques such as attacks on peaceful demonstrators, threats to civil society organization personnel, arbitrary detention, arrest and prosecution with draconian sentences, forced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, digital surveillance and the criminalization of civil society internet use.	In <b>Iran</b> , more than 700 human rights defenders and political activists, such as Abdolfattah Soltani, remain in prison for their peaceful activities. <sup>5</sup> In May 2016, a revolutionary court sentenced prominent Iranian human rights activist Narges Mohammadi, who had been detained for a year, to a total of 16 years in prison on charges of “membership in the banned campaign Step by Step to Stop the Death Penalty” and meeting with the former E.U. High Representative for Foreign Affairs. <sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [icnl.org/research/monitor/ethiopia.html](http://icnl.org/research/monitor/ethiopia.html) <sup>2</sup> [icnl.org/research/monitor/zimbabwe.html](http://icnl.org/research/monitor/zimbabwe.html) <sup>3</sup> [usaid.gov/middle-east-civil-society](http://usaid.gov/middle-east-civil-society) <sup>4</sup> [usaid.gov/asia-civil-society](http://usaid.gov/asia-civil-society)

<sup>5</sup> [ipa.united4iran.org/en/prisoner/](http://ipa.united4iran.org/en/prisoner/) <sup>6</sup> [amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/09/iran-shameful-16-year-sentence-for-narges-mohammadi-a-devastating-blow-to-human-rights/](http://amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/09/iran-shameful-16-year-sentence-for-narges-mohammadi-a-devastating-blow-to-human-rights/)



dering and support is waning, they act swiftly to eliminate opposition. Just as interrupting a medical regimen may induce drug-resistant disease strains, sporadic support provides autocrats with opportunities to stifle vibrant civil society organizations, replacing them with so-called “government-organized non-governmental organizations” (GONGOs). GONGOs mimic civil society and effectively crowd out competing organizations.

Diplomacy is a critical complementary tool to development for promoting civil society in closing spaces. Diplomatic pressure must be applied, sustained and leveraged most strongly during politically tense periods; governments are most likely to attack civil society in the run-up to elections, for example. Multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the Community of Democracies and Open Government Partnerships aim to serve as platforms to identify, alert and respond to threats to democracy, and to support and defend civic space. Civil society actors must also be included in conversations with high-level visitors, ensuring that they maintain visibility and are recognized as important players in the political process. Sustained efforts also depend on strengthening and expanding existing CSO networks, pooling resources and cross-pollinating strong ideas.

Finally, donors and operating units working in closing spaces must create and maintain opportunities for staff to routinely share challenges, resources and best practices to ensure that the agency as a whole stays current with this cross-cutting trend. USAID offers a three-day, in-person course, “Supporting Civil Society in Closing Spaces,” to its Washington and field-based officers to better equip them with the tools needed to work in these highly challenging environments. USAID also recently launched an agencywide Closing Spaces Community of Practice, which will build on the knowledge base of its members and their extended networks to disseminate information—including best practices and policy, as well as legal, contractual and operational resources—so that missions are better prepared to address closing space in individual countries.



PHOTOGRAPH BY IREX/COURTESY OF USAID

A reporter in Yerevan, Armenia, scuffles with a police officer while covering a protest against the demolition of a historic building in 2015.

## A More Resilient Landscape

According to CIVICUS, almost one in 10 people live in a country with fully closed civic space, and more than a third of the world’s population lives in countries with repressed civic space. In the post-Cold War era, states around the world have gained independence and liberal freedoms, only to fall prey to autocratic repression.

For the U.S. government and its partners, operating in closing space demands exceptional considerations. Commitments to accountability and transparency must be weighed against the risks posed to local partners. The benefits of a specific program must be weighed against potential backlash to a full development portfolio. Contingency plans for suspended access or

**I**n most countries in Africa, state and nonstate actors—through the use of restrictive legislation, policies and judicial persecution, as well as physical attacks, threats and detention of activists and journalists—stifle freedom of expression, assembly and association. We realized that most of these restrictions occur when civil society groups speak out against a specific public policy. We also started to see that the restrictions increase during politically sensitive periods, like elections and prior to constitutional changes on term limits of political leaders.

—Charles Vandyck, West African Civil Society Institute

disrupted communications must be prioritized.

Donors must be as creative, adaptive and resilient as CSO partners have been. Dependence on government funding cycles, reliance on static indicators and outmoded procurement practices can hamper our ability to operate nimbly in restrictive environments. We must continue moving toward more participatory design and flexible implementation of programs, matching programming needs for partners in closing spaces with novel and unprecedented services. As our CSO partners are experimenting with different organizational forms, revenue streams and partnerships to fortify their operations, we as donors must also experiment, pilot and scale up efforts to match these changing landscapes.

One such effort is the Civil Society Innovation Initiative, a project funded by USAID, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and private philanthropic organizations, but led and driven by hundreds of CSO actors globally. CSII has launched six civil society hubs around the world that connect actors globally and pilot outside-of-the-box approaches to tackle issues ranging from resource scarcity in the Latin America and

Caribbean region to the exploration of innovative approaches to financing and fundraising in South Asia and the Middle East.

We hear grim stories from the field, but also stories of resilience and fortitude. Melanio Escobar, a Venezuelan cyber activist who works to track individuals detained and disappeared by the military, explained his condition directly: “I don’t feel very safe, because I’m not safe.” But like so many activists, fear is not the end of his message. Escobar continued: “I feel like anytime something can go wrong, like in the case of many others; but it’s a fear that I have to face every day if I want to help my people. I know it does not sound logical, because it isn’t, but freedom and democracy are worth the risk.”

West African activist Charles Vandyck shared the impetus for continuing to combat closing space day-to-day that is summarized in his daily credo: “I am a firm believer in people power and the need to ensure that citizens are engaged and are actively contributing to an Africa that is transparent, accountable and just. I am fighting for a better Africa for future generations. Therefore, I must be motivated, always!” ■

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# Authoritarianism Gains IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

**A new breed of autocrat seems to be taking root in Southeast Asia today. Is the “domino theory” finally playing out?**

BY BEN BARBER

**A**uthoritarian rule is spreading among Southeast Asian nations today. In Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Indonesia, a new breed of autocrat is taking root. It seems that the old “domino theory” is finally playing out; though not the original domino theory, which served to justify U.S. intervention in Vietnam. According to that theory, if we failed to win the war in Vietnam, communism would spread from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos to take over U.S. allies from Bangkok to Singapore and Jakarta.



*Ben Barber has written on foreign affairs since 1980 and has published in various outlets including The London Observer, USA Today, The Baltimore Sun, The Toronto Globe and Mail, The Huffington Post, McClatchy News and other publications. He was State*

*Department bureau chief for The Washington Times, which nominated him for the Pulitzer Prize for a series on the Hmong in Laos, Thailand and the United States. From 2002 to 2010 he was a senior writer for USAID. His photojournalism book, Groundtruth: Work, Play and Conflict in the Third World (2014), is available on Amazon.*

Today’s dominoes are not allies of Beijing or Moscow; nor do they practice central state economic planning. They are crony-capitalist, one-party states. They grow like bamboo, which spreads it shoots underground, past fences and across property lines and borders. Tough, flexible and expansive authoritarian regimes such as Vietnam have inspired former U.S. allies in Southeast Asia such as Thailand and the Philippines to stifle the press, curb democracy and quell critical voices that embarrass those in power.

In the shadow of China’s rise to world prominence during the recent period, elected leaders, independent courts, rule of law, religious tolerance and protection for minorities are being threatened or dispensed with in many Southeast Asian countries.

## After Vietnam

The United States poured two million American troops into Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos from 1965 to 1975, leaving 58,000 Americans dead and estimates of from 1.4 to 3.5 million civilian and combatant deaths in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Presidents John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon told us that we had to keep doubling down on troops, weapons and air power to prevent the dreaded domino effect, which would end our way of life.

Advised by Gen. William Westmoreland and other hawks during the Vietnam War, successive presidents vowed to bring



BEN BARBER

Women on bicycle in poor and cold Hanoi in 1988, when the regime first allowed foreign reporters in.

Today's dominoes are not allies of Beijing or Moscow; nor do they practice central state economic planning.

our troops home, only to find it impossible to escape the political and military quagmire. The Soviet Union and China stood behind the communist forces in Indochina, fueling fear that if their surrogates won power in those desperately poor countries, this would pose a threat to America. In the end, the communist forces won. They were willing to suffer deeper and longer than we were. By 1975, our embassies were evacuated in Saigon, Vientiane and Phnom Penh. So we sat back and waited for the dominos to fall.

But by 1988, when the unified Vietnamese government finally allowed Western reporters in, it appeared that the communists had won the war but lost the peace. While people in Hanoi and Phnom Penh suffered from hunger and lack of medicine, electricity and soap, the more capitalist economies from Bangkok to Singapore were booming. While in Hanoi for the 1988 Tet New Year

holiday, I saw people thin as rails sitting in cold damp houses and able to offer a visitor only unsweetened tea and candied vegetables. In a sharp contrast, Bangkok offered endless curbside restaurants providing prawns, fish, duck, rice and noodles.

So that year, without softening its absolute control over political power one bit, the communist regime in Hanoi opened its borders to foreign investment and trade. It allowed farmers to sell their rice on the open market instead of to the government at discounted prices. In one year Vietnam shot up to be the world's second-largest rice exporter.

### The Reverse Domino Theory

In the late 1980s, instead of the victorious North Vietnamese military forcing Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines to become communist, the bustling Southeast Asian nations seduced the austere reds with an endless supply of consumer goods smuggled into Saigon. While government shops were mostly empty, the black markets sold Singaporean beer, Thai toothpaste, Malaysian pajamas, medicine, motorcycles, sugar, rice and televisions. This seduced the communist nations: they created crony capitalism with a socialist tinge.

Murray Hiebert, a Southeast Asia expert with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, told me in a recent interview that although the United States spilled its blood and treasure in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and then re-engaged in the region under President Barack Obama, there is no longer a tight American connection to Indochina.

Vietnam, which Hiebert recently visited, is booming, but it seeks economic advantage out of closer ties to Washington. The United States recently sent an aircraft carrier on a friendly visit to Vietnam, a far cry from the days when U.S. warships attacked North Vietnam. Meanwhile China is building the Belt and Road Initiative to spread trade and influence—and it is not talking about human rights.

Although the communists loosened central control over the economy, the regimes of Indochina remained ready to imprison, silence and punish those who would seek to seriously challenge authority. So by 1990, when communism had collapsed globally as an economic system from Moscow to Beijing, Prague, East Berlin and Indochina, Vietnam and its allies Cambodia and Laos kept the authoritarianism at the center of their political systems alive. And that is now spreading to other countries in the region.

China has advanced this process, its giant industrializing shadow falling across countries where an ethnic Chinese trading subculture has long been both admired and resented. In its early years of authoritarian capitalism, China showcased a non-West-



BEN BARBER

The only Khmer Rouge refugee camp in Thailand, shown here in 1988, was the most active in fighting the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia just across the border. The camp was located on a main road leading to Bangkok, and many feared it would be the first “domino” to fall. But the Vietnamese never invaded, and the refugees were repatriated to Cambodia after the 1991 peace accord.

China showcased a non-Western way to get rich and stifle opposition at the same time, without democracy or respect for human rights.

ern way to get rich and stifle opposition at the same time, without democracy or respect for human rights. The Chinese Communist Party showed it was possible to save face, crush the opposition and still nurture a crony capitalism that supplied world markets.

Russia, too, provided a boost to autocrats worldwide as Vladimir Putin and his allies seized control of the Russian economy and media. Now Putin polls at 80 percent approval and has just been elected for another six-year term. There is no alternative view permitted in the Russian media.

“The real story of the state of democracy in Southeast Asia is not the threat of contemporary reversal—it is the strength of

endurable authoritarianism in the non-democracies,” Cornell University’s Thomas Pepinsky wrote recently in Australia National University’s online publication, East Asia Forum.

“What makes the politics of disorder a thorny problem for Southeast Asian democracy is that these illiberal policies are popular among many citizens,” Pepinsky added.

### Islamic Militancy and Other Factors

The failure of the 2010-2011 Arab Spring gave yet another boost to hardliners in Southeast Asia. From Egypt to Tunisia, Libya to Yemen, the fall of dictators led to chaos and Islamic militancy. Only the staunch monarchs in Morocco and the Persian Gulf kept the lid on and ensured domestic peace, at the cost of stifling the tender shoots of democracy.

This virulent religious view has already joined the authoritarian trend in Southeast Asia. Indonesian politics is living in the shadow of hardline Islamist groups, some of them linked to attacks on foreigners and Indonesian Christians. Other Islamic fighters have taken over parts of the Philippines.

Other factors behind the growth of authoritarianism have been population growth and ethnic rivalries. Some countries

## The failure of the 2010-2011 Arab Spring gave yet another boost to hardliners in Southeast Asia.

such as the Philippines failed to provide or sufficiently promote contraceptives to limit family size, and so tens of millions of young men found themselves without land or jobs. Ethnic rivalries could be kept from erupting by authoritarian regimes.

Burma has long used fear of restive separatist minorities to rally support for the most violent military repression. Karen, Kachin, Shan and other hill tribe fighters who made it through malarial jungles to the Thai border told us of rape, murder,

burning villages, forcible recruitment as porters and other terror by Burma's army. When peace talks seemed to bear fruit, the fighting would reignite, possibly to gain support from the ethnic Burman people who are the core of the county.

"Southeast Asia is and always has been well on its way to being a democratic abyss," Dan Slater of the University of Michigan wrote recently in the East Asia Forum.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership was to have linked together the U.S. economy with allies including Southeast Asia. But President Donald Trump pulled out of the accord, and it now languishes as China expands. A year after Trump's inauguration, no one has been confirmed as assistant secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific affairs.

The ASEAN countries want trade with China but also want U.S. engagement in the region's markets and diplomacy "as a hedge in case China gets rough," says Hiebert.

It seems that the post-Vietnam War period, now receding in the rear-view mirror, was a booming time of openness, which may not survive the belated fall of the new dominoes. ■



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# Democracy in Indonesia

## A PROGRESS REPORT

**On the 20th anniversary of its democratic experiment, Indonesia can cite significant gains. Growing challenges may threaten that progress.**

BY EDMUND MCWILLIAMS

**W**ith a population of more than 260 million and an economy that ranks tenth in the world, Indonesia appears destined to be one of the major international players of the 21st century. Since the 1998 overthrow of H. Muhammad Suharto's dictatorship, the country has cut its poverty rate in half, and its per capita gross domestic



*Edmund McWilliams, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer, was political counselor in Jakarta from 1996 to 1999. Between 1975 and 2001, he opened and served in U.S. embassies in Bishkek and Dushanbe, and also served in Vientiane, Bangkok, Moscow, Kabul, Islamabad, Managua and Washington, D.C. Since retiring from the Service, he has volunteered with U.S. and foreign human rights nongovernmental organizations.*

*The author dedicates this article to the memory of Isa Gartini, a longtime employee of Embassy Jakarta who worked tirelessly to improve the observance of human rights and promote democratization in Indonesia. She passed away in January.*

product now exceeds \$3,500. And despite the weight of decades of dictatorial rule, post-Suharto Indonesia has made steady progress toward becoming a full and functioning democracy.

That evolution was not widely expected. Many Indonesians who had served in the Suharto administration declared in the wake of the dictator's fall that Indonesia was "not ready for democracy." As others ruefully observed, however, "That is what the Dutch told us."

Those who had faith in the promise of Indonesia's democratic experiment have largely been vindicated. In addition to Parliament and other political institutions, an array of nongovernmental organizations focused on the defense of democracy, human rights and the environment have emerged. It is also noteworthy that just one of Indonesia's presidents in the post-Suharto era has been a military figure.

Still, the country faces many of the same challenges today that it faced 20 years ago. An entrenched elite who benefited from years of association with the Suharto regime, including those with ties to the powerful Indonesian military, remains in place. Despite the sharp reduction in poverty, half the population is economically vulnerable and, according to the World Bank, the wealth gap is growing. Uneven health and educational services, and the activity of radical sectarian elements create additional social pressures.



A woman votes in the 2014 parliamentary election in Aceh.

Political transitions and governance at the provincial and local level have not always been as democratic as those at the national level, to be sure.

### Political Transitions and Human Rights

During the past 20 years Indonesians have chosen national leaders four times, first through parliamentary elections and then direct popular elections. Those elections have proceeded without significant violence or irregularities and, with one exception, the subsequent transitions have complied with the Indonesian Constitution. Yet even that case suggests strong support for civilian rule.

In 2001 the country's armed forces refused to obey the orders of Abdurrahman Wahid, the nation's first democratically elected president, when he sought to declare a state of emergency to head off his removal. Instead, 40,000 troops marched into the capital with guns pointed at the presidential palace. Parliament then voted to remove Wahid from office, replacing him with

Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Megawati lost her 2004 election bid to Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, a retired general who, as a minister in Wahid's government, had refused to support his call to declare a state of emergency. And in 2014 President Joko Widodo (popularly known as Jokowi) defeated a field of candidates that included major military figures.

Political transitions and governance at the provincial and local level have not always been as democratic as those at the national level, to be sure. Significant economic and judicial cor-

ruption, as well as the extensive role and power of the Indonesian military, continue to influence political campaigns, party candidate selections and elections.

At the same time, respect for personal freedoms in Indonesia is constrained by what Amnesty International describes as "broad and vaguely worded laws" that are used to "restrict personal rights, notably the right to free expression and of peaceful assembly and association." Many of these statutes date to the Suharto era, and some back to the period of Dutch colonial rule.

The criminal code includes articles criminalizing "rebellion," "incitement," "defamation" and "blasphemy." These crimes, which are not well-defined, have served as the basis for charges against all manner of dissent, and even peaceful protest. The U.S. State Department's annual 2016 human rights report for Indonesia notes that "elements within the government applied treason, blasphemy, defamation and decency laws to limit freedom of expression and assembly." For its part, Amnesty International counts at least 38 prisoners of conscience in Indonesian prisons.

Religious and other minorities, including LGBT organizations and citizens, face harassment, intimidation and violence, especially from militant Islamists. The government does not effectively protect minorities from such violence, and sometimes actually stokes it with inflammatory rhetoric.

The National Human Rights Commission is not an effective



body in addressing systematic or specific abuses. The body has no formal powers of investigation, such as subpoena power, and the government is not obliged to act on its recommendations. Its reports have not led to effective prosecutions, even in notorious cases like the 2005 murder of a prominent human rights advocate, Munir Said Thalib.

### **Press Freedoms Grow, But ...**

The Indonesian media scene in 2018 is vastly different from that of the Suharto era, when government censorship and self-censorship characterized print and broadcast media. Indonesian media today are robust and largely free of government control and sanction.

Nevertheless, journalists, and sometimes publishers, face extra-judicial threats and sometimes violence by entrenched economic elites and religious organizations. Security forces, either acting in league with these interests or on their own behalf, are often the agents of intimidation and violence. The corrupt Indonesian justice system gives those who are targets of critical media treatment over corruption and other abuses avenues to challenge journalists, publishers and NGOs in the courts.

The U.S. State Department's annual human rights reports for Indonesia have consistently noted that "elements within the government, judiciary and security forces obstruct corruption investigations and harass their accusers." The same can be said of efforts by security forces and other government elements to block investigation of abuses of human rights, including crimes against humanity dating back to the birth of the Suharto dictatorship in 1967.

### **Security Force Impunity**

The armed forces' political and economic clout remains essentially unchallenged. Ever since its founding, the Indonesian military has derived funds from legitimate and illegitimate businesses, as well as rent-seeking relationships with national and international enterprises operating in Indonesia. Because its responsibility is based on a concept of "dwi fungsi," or two functions, the military is empowered to play both a defense role and a sociopolitical role. The latter, its "territorial" role, involves maintaining a security, political and economic presence down to the village level.

This "territorial" role is supported by intelligence operations that include both monitoring of and sometimes involvement in local political activity, especially dissent and media activity. Through this involvement of active military forces, and in collaboration with retired military officers, the military retains

significant influence over political party activity at the local, provincial and even national level.

Security force members are regularly and reliably accused of arbitrary arrest and brutalization of prisoners, including beating, torture and killing. The U.S. State Department notes that in addition to the military, many police officers also fail to conduct themselves in a manner that protects Indonesia's democratic institutions and values. Its Indonesia human rights report cites "police inaction, abuse of prisoners and detainees, harsh prison conditions and insufficient protection for religious and social minorities."

Command responsibility is not acknowledged in these abuses, and when officers are charged the investigation is internal. In the rare event of a conviction, perpetrators receive administrative actions and sentences that are not "commensurate with the severity of [the] offenses," as the State Department's human rights report puts it. This absence of appropriate justice encourages security force personnel in such conduct and intimidates the general population.

In 1999 the people of East Timor voted in a United Nations-supervised referendum for independence from Jakarta. The vote, which was undertaken under conditions of severe intimidation by Indonesian security forces, resulted in the death of an estimated 1,500 East Timorese and the physical destruction of approximately 80 percent of the country's infrastructure. Despite rulings by U.N. tribunals, Indonesian security force officials still have not been punished for these crimes, much less for those carried out during their 24-year occupation of East Timor.

Six years later, the Indonesian government and separatists in the province of Aceh reached an accord, ending a decades-old conflict in which the abuse of insurgents and civilians had been rampant. In the Suharto and early post-Suharto era, the Indonesian military, acting in part to defend commercial interests including logging and drug running, employed tactics developed in similar repression campaigns in Papua and Indonesia-occupied East Timor.

The 2005 peace settlement was memorialized in a memorandum of understanding that pledged formation of a human rights court and a truth and reconciliation commission to address decades of security force abuses. Thirteen years later, the government still has not created either body.

### **The Special Case of West Papua**

Papuan resistance to Indonesian control has been active since 1969, when Jakarta, in violation of its commitments under a 1962 U.N. mandate, forcefully annexed the province. Government-

## Corrupt and impervious to calls for its accountability before the Indonesian judiciary, the Indonesian military conducts itself very much as a Suharto-era institution.

organized transmigration of Indonesians from other islands to West Papua has marginalized the native Papuans as resources and assistance programs are diverted to the new arrivals.

For the most part, local resistance has been nonviolent, yet security forces often attack peaceful demonstrations. There is a small armed movement, but it is largely rural and poorly armed; it targets security force personnel and installations, as well as some corporations exploiting West Papua's vast economic riches. In response, the Indonesian military conducts sweeps that force whole villages to flee to surrounding forests and mountains, where they have inadequate access to food, medical assistance and shelter. In addition, Indonesian special forces murdered the Papuans' most prominent nationalist leader, Theys Eluay, in 2001. The perpetrators received minimal sentences.

The Indonesian government has long impeded coverage of its pervasive human rights abuses in West Papua. In policies and practices that have not changed substantially since the Suharto era, the government prevents journalists, researchers, human rights monitors and others from traveling to and working in the province. Through a "clearing house" comprised of security forces and various government ministries and agencies, it severely restricts access; those few observers allowed to visit endure restrictive itineraries and invasive monitoring. Papuans believed by the government to have cooperated with journalists and human rights monitors are singled out for harsh, extra-legal retribution.

Through these restrictions, the post-Suharto administrations have prevented international monitoring of crimes against humanity extending to ethnic cleansing and what knowledgeable observers have described as "creeping genocide" in West Papua. Like his predecessors, Pres. Widodo has pledged to reform Indonesia's approach to dealing with Papuans, but these pledges have yet to bear fruit.

## The Challenge of Ethnic Diversity

The Suharto dictatorship recognized the potential for instability posed by the archipelago's religious, ethnic and racial diversity. While the dictatorship enshrined Javanese dominance of this multiethnic society, it carefully balanced and contained potential challenges to the system, especially as posed by the dominant faith, Islam (87 percent of Indonesians are Muslim). Leading Islamic organizations, notably Nhadlatul Ulama, played a central role throughout the Suharto era in creating space for religious tolerance among Indonesia's Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Islamic confessions.

In the latter years of Suharto's reign and since, however, foreign funding for establishment of Islamic boarding schools (called pesantren) and other Islamic institutions has grown significantly. Most of that funding has come from Arab Persian Gulf states and has promoted the ultraconservative Islamic doctrine of Wahhabism.

Indonesia's history of tolerance among Islamic sects and toward non-Islamic faiths, based on Indonesia's founding pluralist philosophical principle of Pancasila, is diminishing. A growing intolerance has not only fueled anti-Christian prejudice, but has targeted other Islamic groups, notably the Shia, Ahmadiyya and Kebatnan (a syncretic amalgam incorporating Hindu and Buddhist traditions).

Anti-Christian prejudice is fueled in part by the significant proportion of Indonesian Christians who are of Chinese ethnic background. The Chinese-Indonesian community has often been a scapegoat in times of political and social tension because of the wealth they are reputed to possess. For example, during the widespread street violence that preceded the 1998 downfall of the Suharto regime, organized in part by elements in the Indonesian military, Chinese communities were specific targets. And in 2017, Vice President Jusuf Kalla claimed that "inequality" was driven by religious differences.

The emergence of militant Islamic groups, such as the Islamic Defenders Front, Hizbut, Tahrir Indonesia and Laskar Jihad has further undermined Indonesia's traditional tolerance. Several of these groups have benefited from cooperative relations with the Indonesian military, enabling them to commit violence against religious and secular organizations, businesses and individuals who do not adhere to their strict religious precepts.

The intrusion of religious and ethnic intolerance into Indonesian politics appears to be escalating. In 2017 Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (aka Ahok)—the governor (mayor) of Jakarta, one of the most powerful political positions in the country—was defeated in a re-election bid. Ahok had been vice governor of Jakarta and

was elevated to the governorship when Jakarta's then governor, Joko Widodo, was elected president of Indonesia in 2014.

Despite very high job-approval ratings, Ahok's loss was widely seen as the result of his Chinese-Christian lineage. However, another factor was the release of a video of an Ahok speech that had been altered to make it appear he was insulting Islam. The winning candidate, Anies Baswedan, ran an explicitly sectarian campaign and appeared before the radical Islamic Defenders Front to court its support as a Muslim.

Adding insult to injury, shortly after his defeat Ahok was convicted of blasphemy, and is currently serving a two-year sentence.

### An Uneven Record

Indonesian democracy has made impressive strides, particularly in light of its long repression. The rapid emergence of nongovernmental organizations focused on defense of democracy, human rights and the environment incubated a mostly young cadre of Indonesians who have played substantial roles in assisting at the birth of Indonesia's democracy. Their vision and courage, along with that of a vibrant print and broadcast media, have provided a stable basis for its further development. Yet the country continues to face many of the same economic and political challenges it confronted when the Suharto regime fell.

While poverty rates have been cut in half over the last 20 years, 10 percent of the population remains below the poverty line; another 40 percent is described by the World Bank as vulnerable to falling below that line. The World Bank also notes that the wealth gap is growing. Radical sectarian elements, particularly militant Islam, as well as political opportunists among the old elite who fear the rise of democratic forces, will undoubtedly continue to exploit the resulting social unrest to destabilize the democratic process in Indonesia.

Corrupt and impervious to calls for its accountability before the Indonesian judiciary, the Indonesian military conducts itself very much as a Suharto-era institution, with no strong commitment to the observance of human rights or democratic norms. This is especially apparent in West Papua, where it has ruthlessly



In May 1998 Indonesian students demonstrating for democracy and for President Suharto to step down took over the Parliament compound. This photo was taken after Suharto had ceded power to his vice president, B.J. Habibie. The red banners read "Return wealth to the people" (far left), "We Reject Habibie" (middle) and "Justice for Soeharto & Co" (far right).

repressed democratic and pro-independence activists much as it did in East Timor and Aceh. Its influence in the political realm and its access to significant financial, training and other assistance from abroad, including the United States, render it largely immune to ongoing calls for reform.

Advocates of U.S. assistance to the Indonesian military have long argued that such support, in particular training for senior Indonesia officers, exposes the Indonesian military to U.S. values and the proper role of the military in society. Critics of this support point out that some of the most egregious human rights abuses were committed during the Suharto years, when U.S.-Indonesian military cooperation was broadest. Critics also point out that some of those Indonesian military officers with strongest ties to the U.S. military, including Generals Wiranto and Prabowo, have the darkest human rights records. These critics of U.S.-Indonesian military ties argue that the prospect of U.S. assistance should be employed to press for reforms of the Indonesian military.

U.S. government support for democratization and respect for human rights has included training and other assistance for the Indonesian police. The national police force nevertheless remains significantly corrupt, and its human rights record, including treatment of detainees, remains a problem. U.S. government support for and cooperation with Indonesian NGOs, especially those advocating reform and respect for human rights, has had a positive impact.

Accordingly, despite significant progress and the courageous work of its reform-minded citizens, Indonesia's democratic experiment remains very much a work in progress. ■

**THE STATE OF STATE**

**Burns and Stephenson Discuss the Future of Diplomacy**

On Feb. 27, AFSA President Ambassador Barbara Stephenson and Ambassador (ret.) Nicholas Burns joined forces to give a presentation on “The State of the State Department.”

Hosted by WorldBoston and held at the Boston Public Library, the event was attended by approximately 250 local professionals, students and interested citizens.

Amb. Stephenson spotlighted the role of the Foreign Service in boosting the U.S. economy: “Diplomats are at work every day ensuring that U.S. businesses face a level playing field overseas, that procurement processes are transparent and fair, and that American companies, which don’t pay bribes, get a fair shake,” she explained.

Diplomats even work on behalf of people who never plan to leave the United States, she told the crowd. “U.S. diplomats, working with Customs and Border Protection colleagues, negotiated for years with the European Union to reach an agreement making it possible to share passenger name records” for every flight originating in Europe and landing on U.S. soil, making all Americans more secure at home.

During his remarks, Amb. Burns argued that the cost to fully fund diplomacy is minuscule: “Everything we spend under the sun in the United States of America that has



Ambassadors Nicholas Burns and Barbara Stephenson answer audience questions at the Boston Library on Feb. 27.

to do with international life, all of that’s \$58 billion. Just the *increase* [in the proposed military budget] exceeds everything we do on the civilian side. That’s not smart, and it’s not right.”

It is difficult to describe diplomatic successes, explained Amb. Stephenson, “in part because, done well, our work is often nearly invisible.” Diplomats don’t have uniforms, she told the crowd. “We don’t have tanks, or ships or missiles. What we have is our people.”

Diplomatic prowess is used to channel all of the military, economic and cultural power of the United States “into global leadership that has kept us safe and prosperous at home,” she added.

Amb. Burns echoed her thoughts on the importance

of our civilian forces. “We negotiate peace for the United States. We intervene in the toughest situations. Our people are on point, in dangerous situations.” Of himself and Amb. Stephenson, he noted: “We’ve both faced terrorist threats to us and our families in our career.”

This is a time of “existential challenge” for our country, said Burns. “We’ve been the primary power in the world over the last 73 years. We spend more in our defense ... than the next 10 countries combined, and no other country has the cultural appeal, or soft power, that we have. We’ve got this big responsibility to use this power wisely.”

But, he noted, we cannot maintain a global leadership role through our military alone—soldiers and civilians

need to work together if we are to be successful.

“The United States is strongest when we integrate our ability to project force—that’s the military—[with] our ability to negotiate and get our way without firing a shot, integrating diplomacy and defense,” Burns argued. “We have the greatest military in the world. We never want to be number two or three after China or Russia. ... But we’ve got to have first-rate

diplomacy. And we’re in danger of losing it.”

Amb. Burns ended his remarks with a discussion of the opportunities ahead. “There’s a lot at stake that challenges us,” he said, telling the audience that we can contribute to poverty alleviation and to eradicating polio “if we have the money in the State Department budget to fund vaccine programs, and if we have the diplomats to run them.”

“These are great positive goals, along with the firefighting that we have to do. But it’s going to be civilians and military together,” he said. “If you fully fund one and don’t fund the other, America is going to be weaker, less capable and certainly less successful.”

Watch the video at <http://bit.ly/State-of-State>. ■

## “Deep Dish” Podcast Interviews AFSA President

AFSA President Ambassador Barbara Stephenson joined the Chicago Council on Foreign Affairs for its Deep Dish podcast on March 15. She discussed cuts at the department, our country’s anomalous use of political appointees, partnering with the military and the challenges diplomats face when forming and implementing foreign policy.

As the podcast opened, host Brian Hanson asked Amb. Stephenson to explain to his audience what the

State Department is and what Foreign Service officers do for our country.

“We in the Foreign Service maintain a home base called the American embassy in nearly every country in the world,” Amb. Stephenson explained. “Real Americans like me run and staff that embassy. We speak the local language. We understand that country’s history and culture, and we know how to get



things done. ... The presence of the U.S. Foreign Service around the world is the foundation for America’s global

leadership role favored by nine in 10 Americans.”

Amb. Stephenson also explained why senior military leaders have been so vocal in supporting a strong State Department. Throughout her career, she said, diplomats and members of the military “spent a lot of our time working together out in the field

as an integrated team, and at our best we just worked seamlessly under the American flag.”

When asked what she plans to tell the incoming Secretary of State, Amb. Stephenson said that she would ask that he “use us as fully as possible so that we can contribute meaningfully to the mission that Congress gave us, which is to shape and implement America’s foreign policy.”

You can listen to the complete podcast at <https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/blog/global-insight/deep-dish-inside-state-department>. ■

## AFSA Hosts Networking Happy Hour

On March 28, AFSA welcomed members and nonmembers alike to a networking happy hour at its D.C. headquarters. This was a great opportunity for AFSA members to meet and socialize, as well as for nonmembers to learn about AFSA’s role in promoting the Foreign Service. AFSA is planning more happy hours in the near future—contact [member@afsa.org](mailto:member@afsa.org) to find out more. ■



AFSA/SHAWN DORMAN

A-100 classmates Frances Chisholm and Phil Skotte catch up at AFSA HQ.



AFSA/ASGEIR SIGELJUSSON

## CALENDAR

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| May 1<br>12-2 p.m.<br><b>Seminar: “Long Term Care”</b>  | May 4<br>5-6:30 p.m.<br><b>AFSA Foreign Service Day Reception</b>                               |
| May 3<br>11 a.m.-5 p.m.<br><b>AFSA Open House<br/>(and complimentary professional headshots)</b>      | May 8<br>12:30-1:30 p.m.<br><b>Luncheon: 16th Consular Fellows Class</b>                        |
| May 3<br>12-1:30 p.m.<br><b>AFSA Book Notes:<br/><i>Our Woman in Havana</i></b>                       | May 15<br>12-1 p.m.<br><b>Foreign Affairs Retirees of Maryland and D.C. Host AFSA President</b> |
| May 3<br>2-2:30 p.m.<br><b>Workshop: “How to Write a Concise Professional Bio”</b>                    | May 16<br>12-1:30 p.m.<br><b>AFSA Governing Board Meeting</b>                                   |
| May 3<br>3-4:30 p.m.<br><b>Workshop: “Advocating for the Foreign Service in Your Local Community”</b> | May 25<br><b>Deadline: AFSA Dissent and Performance Award Nominations</b>                       |
| May 4<br>4:15-4:45 p.m.<br><b>AFSA Memorial Ceremony</b>  | June 3-8<br><b>AFSA Road Scholar Program Chautauqua, N.Y.</b>                                   |



## It Can't Be Easy

Being in the Foreign Service is fantastic, but it's hard. I'm not even talking about the daily demarches, cables, meetings and taskers. I'm talking about the challenges we face today when explaining U.S. foreign or domestic policy—or even just everyday events—to an international audience, often a highly skeptical one.

When we meet with AFSA members during these chaotic times, we hear over and over again that people need open and honest discussions within offices and missions around the world about the state of State, and of our nation. I've spoken with many of our AFSA post reps overseas: Those who report that morale at post remains high also report that their leadership has encouraged open dialogue about the uncommon challenges facing those of us representing our great nation to the world these days.

There's one thing about being an American abroad that's particularly tough. No matter where you go or whom you meet, everyone already has an opinion, whether right or wrong, about the United States. That's not necessarily the same for any other country on earth. I mean, what do most Slovaks think about Bahrain, or most Sri Lankans about Bolivia? I could be wrong, but I bet not much.

During my assignment in Brazil, locals would goad me, in a good-natured way, about Americans' lack of global knowledge. "Americans think Brazilians speak Spanish," they'd complain, "and they think Buenos Aires is our capital!"

It's not easy to defend against this. But slowly, I'd begin to turn the questions around on my new friends. "I know, but the United States is so far away," I'd smile. "So, what's the capital of Guyana, your neighbor?" I'd ask. Blank stares. I'd follow up with "And what language do they speak in Suriname?" Sheepish grins appeared; inevitably a round of drinks would be bought as the point was made.

At the end of the day, most folks don't know much about anything that doesn't directly affect them.

These days I tip my hat to my colleagues serving overseas. It can't be easy to explain U.S. foreign policy, or our domestic situation, or our political problems. When the president refers to host countries with expletives, that can't be easy to explain. When policies (or even leaders) change at the drop of a tweet, that can't be easy to explain. And when our longstanding global leadership position is diminished from Washington, causing skittishness among our friends and allies around that world, that can't be easy either.

## No matter where you go or whom you meet, everyone already has an opinion, whether right or wrong, about the United States.

It's got to be tough to explain events at home. Historically we've spoken from a place of strength and humility, acknowledging our shortcomings but still pressing for the high road. Does that still work? How do we talk about alleged Russian meddling in our election? Sexual harassment? How about gun violence? When yet another school shooting happens, how can we explain that?

With so much chaos in our own country, how can we craft and support U.S. foreign policy, protect U.S. national security and defend American interests all over the world? Where do we focus our efforts?

As we watch many in our senior ranks depart, I have an urgent request for those of you still on the job: *Lead*. So many of our Career Ambassadors, Career Ministers and others in the Senior Foreign Service have left in the past 16 months. That loss is palpable. You can feel it at Main State. You can certainly feel it at our missions overseas, where many of our posts are still without their ambassadors. Coupled with everything else, it can get a guy down. But all of this can maybe—just maybe—be

an opportunity for our next generation of leaders.

Lead as a mentor. Lead as a colleague. Be there and listen to what your subordinates are saying, when they're unsure about our mission, when they're questioning how we'll make it through the coming months and years. The best bosses inspire, reassure and motivate. They foster dialogue and remind folks about what makes us strong. Be open and honest with your teams.

These days aren't normal. But despite the chaos, we'll get through this. Together, we'll emerge stronger, but only if we support one another. We need our own Foreign Service leaders to guide us during times of change, to provide reassurance and move us forward.

And we need to look inside ourselves to be the leaders we need now. ■



## Looking Back, Moving Forward

The FAS AFSA office recently underwent a renovation, which forced me to sort through decades of files. Because some of my predecessors were document collectors, I discovered a treasure trove of history hidden in those files.

The stacks of old FAS newsletters, phone lists and other documents will soon move to a new home in the archives of the National Agricultural Library. But in the meantime, I am fascinated by how things have evolved in FAS, particularly for women and minorities. In 1930, all FAS attachés were white males. Over the next 50 years, minor-

ities and women occupied an increasing but still small percentage of non-administrative positions in the agency.

As a second-generation FAS Foreign Service officer, I got a glimpse of the old days in those files. During my father's first overseas assignment, his evaluations included a section on my mother's entertaining skills and general comportment. It was not until 1972 that this section was officially abolished. That same year, the Foreign Service also stopped forcing female FSOs to resign after they got married.

While progress for women and minorities has been

inching forward over many decades, rights for gay officers were not seen as an issue until the 1990s. In fact, prior to 1995 a security clearance could be denied solely on the basis of sexual orientation. It was not until 1998 that a presidential executive order barred discrimination based on sexual orientation in the federal workplace.

Progress for women, minorities and the LGBTI community has come in the form of societal transformation, legal action, trailblazers and allies who supported change. Although our workforce is increasingly diverse, we are still on a long road

toward equality.

Can we finally achieve equal pay and proportional representation in high-level positions for minorities and women? Will the #MeToo movement help eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace? When will the government finally offer paid maternity/paternity leave? How soon will other underserved and under-represented groups achieve advancement?

Slow progress is still progress, but we have the power to speed things up. I hope future FSOs will look back at current times with surprise at how much has evolved since today. ■

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## Telling Our Story: Outreach at AFSA

AFSA's outreach efforts continue as we head into the summer months. After close to 40 speaking engagements across the country in January, February and March—in places ranging from Ames, Iowa, to Minneapolis, Minnesota—our Foreign Service retirees remain committed to telling the story of the Foreign Service from coast to coast, explaining to their fellow citizens what diplomats do and why it matters. In addition, 12 retired members of the Foreign Service spoke at a Road Scholar educational program in Washington, D.C., in April.

AFSA has also engaged with retiree members on our annual effort to place letters to the editor in newspapers around the country ahead of Foreign Service Day on May 4. Last year, we had 54 placements and look forward to reporting on what we hope will be an even greater success this year.

AFSA board and staff members also do their part. On Foreign Service Day, former outreach coordinator Dr. Catherine Kannenberg will speak to the Charlotte International Rotary Club in Charlotte, N.C. AFSA President Ambassador Barbara

Stephenson has a packed schedule in the coming weeks and months, as well.

After a high-profile appearance alongside Ambassador (ret.) Nicholas Burns at the Boston Public Library in February (see page 60), in May, Ambassador Stephenson will meet with the Foreign Affairs Retirees of Maryland and Washington D.C. In June, she will speak to a large Oasis lifelong learning class in Maryland.

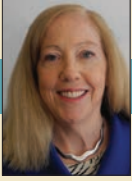
In August, Ambassador Stephenson will be a featured speaker during the summer season at the Chautauqua Institution in Chautauqua, N.Y., where

she is expected to address an audience of 4,000.

We continue to encourage retiree members to join the AFSA Speakers Bureau. Members of the bureau have access to regularly updated talking points and speaker resources, as well as early access to AFSA event registration.

It's an ideal vehicle for channeling your desire to be engaged and allows members to be part of the ongoing effort to enlarge the U.S. Foreign Service's domestic constituency.

Learn more at [www.afsa.org/speakers](http://www.afsa.org/speakers). ■



## EER Season: Thinking About the Precepts

It's EER season again.

The first step in crafting a persuasive EER is a review of the Foreign Service promotion precepts, or “competencies”—the skills, knowledge and abilities required to advance to the next level. Two characteristics of the current precepts stand out—their flexibility and their comprehensiveness. The precepts apply to many different circumstances, and the sub-categories under each skill group are numerous enough to capture widely diverse accomplishments.

These characteristics are not random. AFSA negotiates with management every year on its procedures to implement the promotion system—for example, on the Bureau of Human Resources' instructions to promotion panels. Every three years AFSA negotiates the substance of the precepts. We review the procedures and content of the precepts to ensure fairness and general applicability, and to minimize circumstances that could prompt grievances.

Taking advantage of the precepts' flexibility and their comprehensive nature is probably the wisest course of action when confronted with that blank EER form today.

Composing a compelling evaluation does not just fulfill an obligation to yourself or to your employees. It

forges a link in a long chain of responsibility Foreign Service members have as stewards of the Service. Tying your day-to-day work or that of your employees to mission, bureau or overall U.S. foreign policy goals makes it clear that the annual promotion panel process not only maintains high standards of corps performance, but it binds our work to our foreign policy priorities. If EER drafting feels like an unwelcome distraction, take a deep breath and remember you are serving everyone by doing your best.

For some of you, this year's report might be more about the journey than the destination. One important function of diplomacy is to create a bank account of trust with foreign interlocutors. When crises occur, diplomats draw on those accounts to partner with others to address the challenges and find solutions. Part of any diplomat's job is building up those accounts, and you may have done more of that recently. It's valuable but not high-profile work, often leading to insights on how to strengthen the U.S.-host country relationship.

Similarly, when your career takes an unwanted detour, or a busy policy account is suddenly quiet, it might be time to build up other types of accounts—bulwarks of substantive

knowledge, deep wells of language expertise or a foray into mentoring that will pay off in future tours. Accomplishments this year might be skewed towards how you used that new knowledge or your mentoring role to guide newer employees or inter-agency colleagues, rather than how you used your skills to change the world. That's okay—the precepts highlight the importance of mentoring employees in multiple places and using horizontal management (e.g., with peer-level colleagues). Finally, don't forget “community service and institution-building”—key precepts in times of change.

This is not to say that recent management decisions have not put some Foreign Service members in possible jeopardy, especially those members who have opened their windows to compete to cross the threshold. Drastically lower promotion numbers have serious consequences, and we are doing all we can at AFSA to raise the alarm about the potentially grave damage continued lower promotion numbers will cause.

Our promotion system, modeled on that of the military, is unusual in the federal government. The Foreign Service Act of 1980 mandates that Foreign Service promotions be decided

by independent panels, and the system has served the Foreign Service well. A 2010 State Department Inspector General report examined the panels, their work and their findings and concluded that the system is “fundamentally fair and trustworthy.” A 2013 Government Accountability Office report concurred with the IG's conclusion, noting that although there are still improvements to be made, State had addressed deficiencies well.

Because we believe in the integrity of the promotion system and see it as integral to the strength of the Service, AFSA opposed the Bureau of Human Resources' recent change to criteria for applying to cross the senior threshold. Given the limited number of greater hardship positions available, only a subset of FS-1s will be able to meet the new requirements for multiple greater hardship tours or obtain a waiver from HR.

AFSA supports streamlining the Professional Development Program—the fewer boxes to check, the better—but we favor keeping independent promotion boards to select the next generation of Senior Foreign Service leaders.

The promotion system belongs to members of the Foreign Service—its stewards. EER time is another chance to refine that stewardship. Happy drafting! ■



## AFSA Honors 2017 Sinclair Language Awards Recipients

Each year since 1982, the American Foreign Service Association has recognized the outstanding accomplishments of members of the Foreign Service in the study and utilization of difficult languages through the Matilda W. Sinclair Awards program. Proficiency in foreign languages is a vital skill in the work of the Foreign Service, not only for professional development but also for personal security and success at post.

AFSA established this program as a result of a generous bequest from former Foreign Service Officer Matilda W. Sinclair, who sought “to promote and reward superior achievement by career officers of the Foreign Service...while studying one of the Category III or IV languages under the auspices of the Foreign Service Institute.”

Any career or career-conditional member of the Foreign Service from the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Foreign Commercial Service, Foreign Agricultural Service, Broadcasting Board of Governors or Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service is eligible for the award.

Recipients are selected by a committee comprising the dean of the FSI School of Language studies (or his or her designee), an active member of AFSA and the AFSA Awards and Plaques Committee. Each winner receives \$1,000 and a certificate of recognition.

This year’s recipients demonstrated dedication to their chosen language and extraordinary skills by engaging in a wide

variety of in-language activities, including participating in the In-Language Media Practicum at FSI with mock interviews on various subjects in Icelandic, engaging in conversation at the Estonian Independence Day reception in Estonian, conducting visa interviews without the assistance of an interpreter in Khmer, conducting outreach to Bangladeshi students interested in studying abroad in Bengali and putting in extra effort, both in and out of the classroom, to improve their language skills.

We are pleased to announce the 2017 Sinclair Award recipients:

- **Geoffrey Anisman—Russian**
- **Oscar Avila—Icelandic**
- **Kathryn Barnes—Farsi**
- **Edward Dunn—Estonian**
- **Bryan James Furman—Bengali**
- **Jason Inslee—Cambodian/Khmer**
- **Leo Jilk—Armenian**
- **Janette LeHoux—Dari**
- **Autumn Patterson—Bengali**
- **Pamela Pontius—Vietnamese**
- **Carly Ros—Farsi**

For more information about the Sinclair Awards, please contact AFSA Awards Coordinator Perri Green at [green@afsa.org](mailto:green@afsa.org) or (202) 719-9700, or visit [www.afsa.org/sinclair](http://www.afsa.org/sinclair). ■

## Reward Meritorious Service: Nominate a Colleague for an MSI!

With the 2018 open season for MSIs quickly approaching, AFSA has a recommendation for all our members: Look around!

Do you have colleagues whose work is exceptional, and who are delivering on mission priorities, but who might not otherwise get the recognition their work deserves? Does one of your colleagues demonstrate policy leadership, collaboration across functional lines or other markers of excellence

that should be recognized with an award?

Nominate that person for an MSI!

MSIs are no longer tied to the promotion process. To ensure equity and equal access, the MSI award program is open to all eligible Foreign Service career employees on a yearly basis and is structured as a competitive, nominations-based awards process.

Especially meritorious service is defined as “out-

standing performance and/or service in the areas of policy leadership, collaboration across functional lines and human resources development.” It recognizes superior performance exceeding normal work expectations, irrespective of potential to serve at a higher grade.

A Meritorious Service Increase is a permanent raise to the next higher salary step within a Foreign Service class. It is in addition to any promotion and regular

within-class step increase. Those approved for an MSI who have reached the highest step of their grade (FS 2-7, step 14 or FS-1, step 10 and higher) by the effective date of an approved MSI will be granted a cash payment in the amount of \$2,500 in lieu of a step increase.

In order to receive an MSI, you must be nominated. Anyone can nominate an employee, but all nominations require approval by

*Continued on page 66*

MSI • Continued  
from page 65

## In recognizing excellence in your colleagues, you are making the Foreign Service stronger.

an official in the employee's chain of command, such as the bureau office director, post principal officer or other senior official. Nominations from overseas posts do not need post joint awards committee approval. Nominations must be submitted to your bureau's Executive Office between April 1 and June 16.

In recognizing excellence in your colleagues—particularly those who might feel disinclined to draw attention to their accomplishments—you are making the Foreign Service stronger, building the next generation of Foreign Service leaders and highlighting the commitment to service that unites us in this career.

The MSI nomination form, DS-1903, can be found on MyData, on the intranet at <https://mydata.state.sbu/home>. Nominations criteria can be found in the Procedural Precepts for Foreign Service Meritorious Service Increase Panels (on the HR/PE intranet site at <https://intranet.hr.state.sbu/offices/pe/Pages/default.aspx>). For more information, contact [msi@state.gov](mailto:msi@state.gov).

Please take the time to nominate your deserving colleagues. ■

## Back to School: Labor Management Matters

In May 2017 AFSA and the Department of State launched FSI course PA457 (Foreign Service Labor Management Relations). The Labor Management section at AFSA developed this course to increase employee and management understanding of labor management relations within the foreign affairs agencies.

Successful completion of the course enables members of the Foreign Service to better understand the relationship between the union and their respective agencies. In the course, you will learn about:

### AFSA—Your Exclusive Representative and Professional Organization

The history of Foreign Service labor management relations dates back to 1924, when the Consular Corps was combined with the Diplomatic Corps to form the Foreign Service of the United States. In the same year, the Consular Association reconstituted itself as the American Foreign Service Association—AFSA—the professional organization for members of the U.S. Foreign Service.

In 1972 AFSA won the right to be the exclusive representative of the Foreign Service and currently holds

exclusive representation rights for members of the Foreign Service in six foreign affairs agencies (State, USAID, FAS, FCS, BBG and APHIS).

AFSA is unique in that it is both the exclusive representative and the professional association for the U.S. Foreign Service. Over the years AFSA has played a significant role in advancing priorities identified as important to the Foreign Service and our membership. AFSA engages in congressional advocacy, produces *The Foreign Service Journal* and administers a scholarship fund for the children of Foreign Service members.

AFSA is the sole recognized labor union for the Foreign Service; foreign affairs agencies may only negotiate

management and the union hold certain rights and are legally bound to carry out specific obligations. The Foreign Service Labor Management course (PA457) discusses these rights and obligations in more detail.

As an employee, you should know your rights, which include:

- The right to join or assist the labor organization without fear of penalty, and the right to refrain from joining the union.
- The right to act as a representative of the labor organization and to present its views to authorities.
- The right to an attorney outside the exclusive representative in grievance processes, if desired.
- The right to have a union representative present during an investigatory interview conducted by the agency if you reasonably believe the interview may result in discipline or termination.

Do you want to learn more? The Foreign Service Labor Management course (PA457) is available through FSI's Leadership and Management School and takes approximately one hour to complete. We encourage all Foreign Service members to sign up and learn about labor-management relations within the foreign affairs agencies.

—Jason Snyder,  
AFSA Grievance Counselor



changes to conditions of employment with AFSA.

### Rights and Obligations

As detailed in the Foreign Service Act, employees,

## Inventory and Inspection: How to Ensure a Better Packout

*Q: After my packout from post, someone from the General Services Office came, as required, to do the inventory of government property, and to assess the state of the furniture, carpets, etc. The embassy then sent me an enormous bill, claiming that I had damaged the chairs and soiled the carpets. How should I proceed?*

A: This problem arises more often than it should, and is really something that needs attention throughout your occupancy of the house or apartment. You need to be aware of what you have and its condition from the day you move into your post housing.

The first thing you must do is ensure that you have an **accurate inventory** and description of the condition of the furniture and fittings when you move in. This gives both you and the GSO a baseline from which to work. If there are any stains, wear or damage on any furniture, carpets or fittings, be precise about where the damage is located and its nature.

Take **pictures** and make sure that they are reliably dated. Share them with the GSO office. Keep copies of all the documentation. This will enable you to identify damage that was not caused by you or your family when you face the pack-out inspection.



ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/DMITRYMO

**The first thing you must do is ensure that you have an accurate inventory and description of the condition of the furniture and fittings when you move in.**

**Throughout your occupancy,** it probably goes without saying that you should make sure that the furniture and fittings are treated well. If any damage occurs, make a note of the extent of the damage, as well as when and how it occurred. This will ensure that you are not taken by surprise during the check-out inspection.

**During the check-out inspection:**

- Make sure that you and the GSO representative do

the inspection together.

- Compare your observations with those you made on arrival; keep a copy of your check-in inventory.

- Make sure you get a copy of the rough report, but keep your own list as you go through the house.

**If you disagree with the bill** when you get it, ask to go through it with the GSO office. There are a number of factors that are worth bearing in mind:

- Fair wear and tear is not your responsibility. Things wear out over time, and

unless you avoided walking anywhere on the carpets or sitting on any of the chairs, yours will show some normal wear and tear.

- If you have damaged something that needs to be replaced, depreciation should be taken into account. You should not be charged for the cost of a new item to replace a 10-year-old armchair.

- Look at any proposed re-upholstery costs very carefully. If necessary, compare the proposed costs with other upholsterers. Once again, you should not be charged for fair wear and tear.

- Be realistic. Damage or soiling by pets and/or children does not count as fair wear and tear and is your responsibility to clean, repair or pay to have rectified upon leaving. Large scratches and/or cigarette or other burns on furniture are not fair wear and tear either, and are also your responsibility.

If you need help in negotiations with the GSO, speak with your AFSA representative at post. They can contact the AFSA Labor Management Office on your behalf.

—James Yorke,  
Senior Labor  
Management Adviser

## Thank You for Your Service:

### *FS Retirees, March 2017-March 2018*

During the past 16 months, the Foreign Service has lost some of its best diplomats, especially at senior levels, for a variety of reasons. What follows is a list of members of the Foreign Service who have retired since early 2017, as published (by month) in *State Magazine*. We hear from AFSA members that because *State* is no longer published in print, many do not see the lists of retirements published there. Beginning with this issue, we will be periodically publishing the names of those who have left the Service.

You will see the names of friends and colleagues, and you will recognize the names of many who are “Foreign Service famous”—known throughout the department for their years of service and depth of knowledge.

AFSA would like to thank all of the people whose names are listed below, and their family members, for their service to our country and for the personal and professional sacrifices they made over the course of their careers.

We wish them all luck in their future endeavors. They are missed.

#### **MARCH 2018**

Bellman, Sarah Kaye  
Bolin, Michele L.  
Browning-Larsen, Eric  
Christopher  
Brummet, Kenneth G.  
Carpenter, Theodore R.  
Clarke, Owen A.  
Glasscock, Byron N.  
Grier, David C.  
Hodgson, Mark Anthony  
Labensky, Steven J.  
Miron, Edward J.  
Mozdzierz, William J.  
Quick, Delia D.  
Rose, Susanne Catherine  
Schepman, Joseph G.  
Smith, Timothy J.  
Wennerstrom, Anne C.  
Wennerstrom, Martin

#### **FEBRUARY 2018**

Bodde, Peter W.  
Campbell, David S.  
Chalkley, John Mark  
Cox, Suzanne L.  
Crevier, Justin C.  
Hall, Sarah C.  
Jay, Jerry A.  
La Lime, Helen R.  
Meagher Lee, Gregory S.  
Long, Kim Michelle  
Mateyov, Brian W.  
Miller, Gina L.

Nakpil, Victoria Ledda  
Pratt, Samuel Otis  
Quanrud, Pamela G.  
Ridnour, Daniel C.  
Riley, Timothy J.  
Ronish, Shane T.  
Schepman, Joseph G.  
Sibal, Jack G.  
Sindelar, Jocelyn M.  
Taylor, Steven C.  
Vaughn, Debbie M.  
Wiggins, Frontis B.  
Youmans, Bruce A

#### **JANUARY 2018**

Abercrombie-Winstanley, Gina  
Abrams, Stephen O.  
Bame, David J.  
Baum Jr., Russell Alton  
Bennett, Virginia Lynn  
Bryant, Craig P.  
Castro, Christian M.  
Cooke, Robin C.  
Cote, Janet A.  
Dickmeyer, James C.  
Ebanks, Rohan L.  
Ebert, Kathleen M.  
Gallo, Thomas G.  
Godbee, Joseph  
Goodman, Walter E.  
Grant, William Kevin  
Hampson, John M.  
Haslach, Patricia  
Holmstrom, Todd C.

Holst, Alan Rand  
Jacobson, Tracey Ann  
Karagiannis, Alexander  
Kleinwaks, Elise H.  
Kyna, X.  
Lee, Charles  
Llorens, Hugo  
Meaux, Michael P.  
Meininger, Laurie J.  
Messenger, Jane S.W  
Miller, Janet B.  
Miller, Janet Woodbury  
Osius III, Theodore G.  
Powers, Roberto  
Price, Richard C.  
Putz, Christine A.  
Ramadan, Virginia Sher  
Reed, Howard Verne  
Rezek, James M.  
Roxbury, Steven J.  
Sadousky, Robert A.  
Schellack, Rodney Lynn  
Schwartz, Larry  
Schwartz, Stephen M.  
Shorter, Elenita M  
Spaulding, Kenneth  
Townsend, Heather A.  
Vargas, Carol M.  
Walsh, Susan M.  
Whitaker, Nenita V.  
Wilson, Andrew Chester  
Witow, Jason

#### **DECEMBER 2017**

Aldridge, George W  
Ashbery, Wayne B.  
Bopp, Rita W  
Cellars, Jeffrey R.  
Cunningham, Donald Kenneth  
Elliott, Susan M.  
Garde, Dennis T.  
Gilbert, Terri Rebecca  
Gopinath, Keshav  
Harold, Christine Anne  
Jasik, Theodore E.  
Moore, Margaret J.  
Moore, Mark L.  
Reddick, Eunice S.  
Stuart, Steven W  
Taylor, John Edward

#### **NOVEMBER 2017**

Abbott, Lucy K.  
Aguayo, Daniel E.  
Arvizu, Alexander A.  
Bachman, Brian  
Baroody, Judith R.  
Batchelor, Jeffrey B.  
Bates, Pamela Marie  
Bauer, Kristen F.  
Boardman, Chase H.  
Boohaker, Richard L.  
Bowen, Andrew  
Boyle, David William  
Boyle, Leilani J.  
Brand, Paul Eugene

Brems, Frederick G.  
Brennan, Michael F.  
Brooks, Carolyn O.  
Brown, Diana F.  
Brownfield, William R.  
Bryan, Judith L.  
Bucher, Lisa K.  
Butler, Eldred P.  
Cable, Floyd Steven  
Campbell, Robert W.  
Carrington, Ralph Wesley  
Childs, Gary L.  
Colin, Thomas J.  
Comiskey, Tamara G.  
Demaria, Joseph  
Dogonniuck, Joseph A.  
Doman, Susan C.  
Donahue, David Tannrath  
Engle, Thomas Scott  
Eshelman, Stephanie  
Ferguson, Joseph P.  
Frazier, Robert A.  
Garrett, Stephen W.  
Gayle, Michael A.  
Gfoeller-Volkoff, Tatiana  
Gilles, Joanne  
Gonzalez, Francisco Javier  
Green, Hollyn J.  
Groth, Gregory S.  
Grover, Charles H.  
Gwaltney, Sheila S.  
Harold, Christine Anne  
Harper, Steven F.  
Harrison, Jennifer A.  
Hawkins, Jeffrey J.  
Hays III, Joseph G.  
Hegendorfer, Daryl R.  
Heien, Debra P.  
Henifin, David Edward  
Henke, Marcia K.  
Hennessey, Kathleen M.  
Hoza, Michael Stephen  
Jefferson, Sheila R.  
Johnson, Eric A.  
Johnson, Kathy Ann  
Jones, Deborah A.  
Jones, Laurence Kent  
Jones, Stuart E.  
Kirkconnell, Laura Jean  
Kotto, Violet F. Henderson  
Kubiske, Lisa Jean  
Landherr, Karen E.  
Langston, Ellen C.  
Lanzet, William H.  
Lattimer, Timothy Peter  
Lepuschitz, Judith K.  
Lesh, Vivian M.  
Long, Kemp L.  
Loo, Edward  
Lyle, Dale Kendall  
Marut, Christopher J.  
McCarthy, Nancy H.  
McCormick, Georges F.  
McKean, Margaret  
McKenna, Jacqueline K.  
Meagher, Patrick Joseph

Meradith, John W.  
 Meurs, Douglas J.  
 Midura, Christopher  
 Miller, Thomas S.  
 Milstead, Eric N.  
 Moffit, Stephen L.  
 Moore, Patrick J.  
 Moore, Teresa  
 Morley, Edward P.  
 Morris, David T.  
 Morris, Richard C.  
 Muelder, Timothy A.  
 Neil, Elizabeth Ann  
 Odium, Geoffrey M.  
 Ogot, Onnie Berber  
 Palmatier, Gary J.  
 Pannell, Sheila Marie  
 Patterson, Greg S.  
 Penn, Brian A.  
 Perrone, Daniel M.  
 Pifer, Jerry Dean  
 Pifer, Karolyn  
 Piness, Peter  
 Pollard Jr., Ralph Thomas  
 Prespare, William R.  
 Randolph, Charles  
 Rettberg, Dirk  
 Reynolds, Robert H.  
 Rice, Kurt R.  
 Richards, Stuart A.  
 Robinson, Sandrale M.  
 Rodriguez, Deborah Ann  
 Rosenman, Richard G.  
 Rowan, Christopher  
 Sardelli, Adrienne K.  
 Schulz, Kirsten A.  
 Schwartz, David J.  
 Sheppard, Gary  
 Siebentritt, Carl R.  
 Silver, Richard R.  
 Smith, Adam L.  
 Smith, Robin Angela  
 Smoak, Rebecca B.  
 Soule, Robert E  
 Staeben, Derwood Keith  
 Stafford, Nancy M.  
 Stofko, James August  
 Taylor, John C.  
 Taylor, Teddy Bernard  
 Thomas-Greenfield, Linda  
 Titus, Daphne M.  
 Tracey, Debra C.  
 Voorhies, Michael R.  
 Waldo, Jeffrey Scott  
 Warlick, Mary Burce  
 Weinstein, William  
 Weller, Wesley A.  
 Wenig, Mark L.  
 West, Terrence  
 Westfall, Gary W.  
 White, Terry J.  
 Wise, N. Ridgway  
 Wolfe, David C.  
 Woolridge, Rudolph T.  
 Yeager Jr., Loren R.  
 Yip, Sau Ching

Zebley, David C.  
 Zwach, David M.

#### OCTOBER 2017

Abdulle, Mariam H.  
 Bhatnagar, Alka B.  
 Burnham, Vicki Jean  
 Chappel, Mary Jean  
 Coppedge Amato, Susan P.  
 Daley, Thomas William  
 Eustace Jr., John Martin  
 Fleitz, Louis G.  
 Geiger, Ricky Lee  
 Hadley, Warren D.  
 Hallett, Kathy M.  
 Hyland, Jason P.  
 Isaac, Paul C.  
 Koen, Joseph C.  
 Petrie, Ronald C.  
 Rowe, Laughn P.  
 Salarano, Paul  
 Savinon, Ana M.  
 Sims, Gail S.  
 Sirotic, Aldo J.  
 Walsh, Judith M.  
 Wessel, David K.

#### SEPTEMBER 2017

Alcantara, Bartolo  
 Beecroft, Robert Stephen  
 Byron, Kevin M.  
 Catala, Carmen Pickett  
 Chomiak-Salvi, Tania  
 Classick, Carla D.  
 Classick, Michael A.  
 Cudal, Gabriel F.  
 Dahm, Amy E.  
 Daniels, Jasper Ray  
 Depietri, Howard A.  
 De Witt, Robert C.  
 Dixon, Michael Scott  
 Fasciglione, Richard J.  
 Flattum-Riemers, Jan Marie  
 Fotheringham, Marialuisa N.  
 Johnson, Sylvia D.  
 Landry, Leslie E.  
 Leighton Jr., Henry A.  
 Lischke, Jeffrey D.  
 Mastel, Paul N.  
 McEldowney, Nancy E.  
 McFadden, John M.  
 Moreno, Luis G.  
 Nealon Jr., James D.  
 Nicholas, Richard A.  
 Pedraza, Jose  
 Rank, David H.  
 Stapleton, Anthony K.  
 Touchstone, Michael P.  
 Wing, Vincent K.  
 Wohlers, Paul Dashner  
 Yeutter, David M.  
 Zaman, Wendy A.

#### JULY/AUGUST 2017

Bixby, Jay H.  
 Bulkin, Carleton Myles

Cortese, Christopher T.  
 Gibbons, Peter G.  
 Kavanagh, Christopher  
 Lipinski, John M.  
 Macy, Michael  
 Murphy, Mary E.  
 Nadeau, Carla T.  
 Ober, Richard C.  
 Rodriguez, Deborah Ann  
 Rodriguez, Rodney  
 Roth, Michael R.  
 Tompkins, Wesley M.

#### JUNE 2017

Abeyta, Susan K.  
 Aguirre, Alberto V.  
 Anderson, Eric Charles  
 Andrews, Theodore Howard  
 Bing, Jeffrey L.  
 Bretz, Michael B.  
 Browning II, Robert J.  
 Bunnell, Theron Q.  
 Chapman, Gregory D.  
 Coleman, Claire L.  
 Combs-Ashruf, Ingrid G.  
 Contractor, Shaila  
 Cortese, Christopher T.  
 Devilla, Dean L.  
 Erickson, Andrew S. E.  
 Evans, Rodney Allen  
 Figueroa, Carlos I.  
 Flanagan, Craig  
 Gibbons, Peter G.  
 Gourlay, Elizabeth Perry  
 Grice, Lisa D.  
 Gurski, Alma R.  
 Haley, Timothy G.  
 Harville, John W.  
 Hicks, Howard A.  
 Hicks, Jeffrey B.  
 Hunter, James Joseph  
 Johnson, Debra I.  
 Kenney, Kristie Anne  
 Kontek, Thaddeus L.  
 Kronenburg, Stephanie A.  
 Loi, James L.  
 Mann, Andrew Cooper  
 Mccarthy, Patricia Sheehan  
 Mitchell, Mark Paul  
 Moone, Joseph E.  
 Mulrean, Peter F.  
 Mutschler, Susan K.  
 Nuland, Victoria Jane  
 O'Friel, Paul Christopher  
 Ordonez, Michael A.  
 Pare, Etienne J.  
 Pierrot, Garry  
 Pines, Nathaniel J.  
 Poulton, Lynette J.  
 Robinson Jr, David M.  
 San Miguel, Dennis  
 Schaefer, Josephine M.  
 Schellack, Rodney Lynn  
 Starr, Karen  
 Thedy, Tod M.  
 Thomason, Olin

Weech-House, Gilda T.  
 Whately, Reginald E.  
 White, Margaret Bryan

#### MAY 2017

Denne-Bolton, Sara J.  
 Mcdermott, Susan A.  
 Pagel, Dana L.  
 Smith, Gentry O.

#### APRIL 2017

Bassett, Leslie Ann  
 Baucus, Max S.  
 Bond, Michele Thoren  
 Brooks, Joyce Ann  
 Calhoun, Keith H.  
 Countryman, Thomas M.  
 Ettesvold, Kaara Nicole  
 Haase, Robin L.  
 Horton, Supin  
 Ioane, Falaniko Ateliano  
 Kelly, Thomas Patrick  
 Kennedy, Patrick Francis  
 Loring, Pamela  
 Loveland, James David  
 Lowder, Todd S.  
 Lute, Douglas E.  
 Lynn, George W.  
 Mangum, Gloria R.  
 Martin, William John  
 Patterson, Anne Woods  
 Russell, Susan A.  
 Wessel, Peter  
 Westphal, Joseph William  
 Winer, Jonathan M.  
 Zumwalt, James P.

#### MARCH 2017

Abbott, Jan D.  
 Ahson, Mazhar  
 Callaghan, Anne Taylor  
 Cazier, Dale P.  
 Dunkley, Martha K.  
 Dunkley, Michael L.  
 Ijames Jr., Don D.  
 Jurkiewicz, Joanne M.  
 Kazmin, Catherine M.  
 Korpi, Ryan F.  
 Landymore, Frank W  
 Meagher, Zita E.  
 Moran, John G.  
 Myelle, Mark E.  
 Picardi, Judith E.  
 Pizarro, Ricardo M.  
 Putnam, Elizabeth Candace  
 Quinn, Patricia C.  
 Reade, Evan G.  
 Rodriguez, Rafael A.  
 Sangbong, Monica Mdaughli  
 Swan, James C.  
 Ureta, Horacio Antonio  
 Warlick Jr., James Bowen  
 Weston, Richard Charles  
 Youngquist, Debra L.  
 Zappia, Harold



## AFSA Governing Board Meeting, March 28, 2018

**Awards and Plaques Committee:** It was moved that the Governing Board approve the committee's recommendations for winners of the Matilda W. Sinclair Award for their achievements in the study and utilization of difficult languages in 2017. (For a complete list of names, see p. 65.) The motion was adopted.

**Management Committee:** It was moved that the Governing Board authorize the retiree vice president to support the re-appointment of six current FSGB members who are willing to continue to serve. The motion was adopted.

It was moved that the Governing Board authorize the retiree vice president to support the appointment of whatever new non-FS arbitrator that Management nominates if his/her resume reflects qualifications on par with existing non-FS arbitrator members of the FSGB and after the AFSA retiree vice president has briefed him/her on the main difference between the FS and Civil Service personnel and employee-management systems. The motion was adopted.

It was moved that the Governing Board authorize the retiree vice president to support the appointment of the following retired FS members: Keith Curtis (FCS retiree), David Eckerson (USAID retiree) and Madelyn Spirnak (State retiree). The motion was adopted.

It was moved and amended that the Governing Board approve the following disposition of unexpended budget items from 2017: Use \$134,000 for FY18 operating costs; move \$215,000 into the AFSA operating reserves; and move \$115,000 into the FAD operating reserve. The motion was adopted.

**Membership Committee:** It was moved that the Governing Board approve the criterion that applicants for the Associate Membership category must show demonstrated, active links to the Foreign Service community. The motion was adopted.

**New Business:** It was moved that the Governing Board approve of the following individuals as nominees for the Foreign Service Impasse Disputes Panel: Christopher Krafchack, Jay Raman, Ryan Stoner, Rachael Mueller and Brent T. Christensen. The motion was adopted.

It was moved that the Governing Board put forward for discussion the decision to terminate two AFSA staff members and the manner in which it was done. The motion was adopted and the Governing Board went into executive session. ■

## AFSA Welcomes New USAID VP

On Feb. 21, the AFSA Governing Board approved USAID Foreign Service Officer Jeffrey Levine to serve as vice president for the USAID constituency until July 2019, replacing outgoing VP Ann Posner, who retired in March.

Jeff is an accomplished development professional with more than 25 years of experience in designing, implementing and evaluating programs; partnership

development; and administration. He brings a collaborative approach and deep Foreign Service experience to AFSA after tours in Africa, South America, Asia and the Middle East, as well as in Washington, D.C.



As a single parent, Jeff has learned to apply work-life balance to his career. He is co-chair of the USAID Employees Resource Group (RPCVs@USAID) and, continuing his previous ways as

a backstop coordinator, frequently mentors new officers.

He looks forward to utilizing his background of diverse assignments, responsibilities and opportunities to represent and advocate on behalf of all USAID FSOs and their families.

The USAID AFSA office is in the Ronald Reagan Building, Room 2.10-C. Jeff can be reached at [jlevine@usaid.gov](mailto:jlevine@usaid.gov) or (202) 712-5267. ■

NEWS BRIEF

**AAFAA LAUNCHES INTERNSHIP SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

The Asian American Foreign Affairs Association, in partnership with AFSA, recently launched the AAFAA Internship Scholarship Fund to increase diversity in the Foreign and Civil Service. This fund aims to provide financial assistance to interns who are members of underrepresented groups within the Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) diaspora.

In addition to this new collaboration with AAFAA, AFSA has for years partnered with the Thursday Luncheon Group (TLG) to support a deserving minority college student for a summer internship at the State Department. AFSA has also partnered with the Hispanic Employees Council of Foreign Affairs Agencies (HECFAA) since 2014 to sponsor a Hispanic-American college student for a summer internship at the department.

“Internships with the department are one of our most effective recruitment tools, offering students the opportunity to gain experience in Washington or at posts abroad,” says AAFAA’s Finance Chair Joseph Lin, but “almost all of these internships are unpaid, leaving students to bear the associated financial burdens. The reality is that many qualified AAPI students cannot afford to take unpaid internships.”

Though Asian-Americans generally have high median household incomes, says Lin, the figure is not representative of the AAPI population as a whole. Aggregate data distorts information on many Asian subgroups and masks large differences in economic situations, such as with some Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders, who top the nation’s charts in poverty, lack of education and unemployment. AAFAA intends to address these needs with this scholarship, and help support the department in ensuring our workforce is qualified, inclusive and diverse.

According to Lin, at the senior foreign service level, Asian-Americans represent less than 3.75 percent of the department’s workforce. AAFAA hopes to change this by launching the scholarship program, adding qualified, diverse candidates to the talent pool.

To learn more about how you can contribute to the fund, please contact AAFAA at AAFAA@state.gov. To learn more about the TLG and HECFAA scholarships, visit [www.afsa.org/minority-internships](http://www.afsa.org/minority-internships). ■

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■ **Terrell Arnold**, 92, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Jan. 24 at Ascension St. Michael's Hospital in Stevens Point, Wis.

Mr. Arnold was born in Bluefield, W. Va., the son of the late Charles and Mary (nee Craven) Arnold. He entered the U.S. Navy in 1943, becoming chief petty officer and also quartermaster before he was honorably discharged in 1946.

After military service, Mr. Arnold obtained a bachelor's degree from Stanford University, a master's degree in political science and economics from San Jose State and an associate's degree from SUNY Plattsburgh University.

Mr. Arnold married the former Yvonne Wright on Nov. 25, 1951, in Las Vegas, Nev.

He joined the Foreign Service in 1957 and served in Washington, D.C., Cairo, Calcutta (now Kolkata), Colombo, Manila and São Paulo before retiring as a Minister Counselor in 1984. After retirement, Mr. Arnold worked as a consultant to the State Department until 2009.

Mr. Arnold published six books on contemporary foreign relations and was working on a book about the Israel/Palestine conflict. He previously served as president of the Rotary Club of Stevens Point and president of Learning Is For Ever. In his spare time Mr. Arnold enjoyed fishing and birdwatching.

Survivors include his wife, Yvonne Arnold of Stevens Point, niece Pamela Arnold of Sandston, Va., and other nieces and nephews.

■ **Jane Coffey**, 87, the spouse of retired USIA Foreign Service Officer Fred Coffey, died on Feb. 1 at home in Denton, Texas, of Alzheimer's disease.

Mrs. Coffey was born and raised in Everett, Wash., by immigrant parents.

Mrs. Coffey's husband joined the Foreign Service in 1956; together they served

in Brazil (twice), Nicaragua, Indonesia (twice), Thailand and Argentina. Their four children were born in Rio de Janeiro, Managua and East Java, Indonesia.

Her family recalls that she adapted quickly to the political and economic conditions at post, hiding her children under the bed when communists in East Java were breaking windows in the neighborhood but getting annoyed when a touring American drummer stole the toilet seat from the family's bathroom in Surabaya.

Mrs. Coffey volunteered for many years with SHARE of McLean, Va., after her husband retired. She and her husband moved to Denton, Texas, three years ago to allow her to participate in a drug trial for Alzheimer's in nearby Dallas.

Mrs. Coffey is survived by her husband Fred; son Jeff (and wife Susanne) of Texas; daughter Teri (and her husband, Mike, and sons Tate, Logan and Cooper) of Virginia; son Pat (and his son, Taz) of California; and son Fred III of Florida.

■ **Priscilla Staples Goodby**, 86, the spouse of Ambassador (ret.) James Goodby, died of lung cancer on Feb. 2 at Sibley Memorial Hospital in Washington, D.C.

Mrs. Goodby was born in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 7, 1932, the daughter of Laurence and Ruth Staples. Her father was the executive director of All Souls Unitarian Church for 35 years. Mrs. Goodby was a 1949 graduate of Wilson High School and a 1953 graduate of Wellesley.

She joined the staff of the Federal Reserve Board in Washington in 1953 and served for nearly a decade with its International Division, resigning to accompany her husband on his overseas assignments.

Mrs. Goodby and her husband served in Brussels, Geneva, Stockholm and Helsinki, where Mr. Goodby was the U.S. ambassador to Finland. When they

returned to private life, Mrs. Goodby assisted her husband in researching, writing and editing several books about international security issues.

Her family reports that Mrs. Goodby was a strong advocate for social justice, beginning with her active early life at All Souls Unitarian Church, one of the few public places in Washington at that time open to African-Americans, not only for worship but also for sports and social activities.

Mrs. Goodby was a lifetime member of the Southern Poverty Law Center. For several years she was an officer of the Board of PLAN of Maryland-D.C.

For the past several years, the Goodbys have spent part of the year in the Bay Area of Northern California while working with former Secretary of State George P. Shultz at Stanford University's Hoover Institution.

Mrs. Goodby is survived by her husband, Amb. James Goodby of Washington, D.C.; two children, James Laurence Goodby of San Jose, Calif., and Sarah Walcott Goodby, of Washington, D.C.; and a sister, Dorothy Staples Egbert, of Stillwater, Okla.

Memorial contributions in her name may be made to the Southern Poverty Law Center.

■ **Joseph Charles Guardiano**, 86, a retired Foreign Service officer with USAID, died on Dec. 22, 2017, in Fort Myers, Fla.

As a youth growing up in West New York, N.J., Mr. Guardiano wanted to see the world—and so he did. The Air Force took him to England and then to Savannah, Ga., where in his spare time he earned an associate's degree at Armstrong College.

The GI Bill paid for his education at Columbia College in New York City and his master's degree study at Columbia University's School of International Affairs, where he met and married classmate Janet.



He was honorably discharged from the Air Force in 1954. He joined USAID in 1960 and was posted in Chad, Niger, Thailand, Korea, the Philippines, Zaire (Congo) and Senegal. He also spent two years in Rome “on loan” to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

Mr. Guardiano retired to Cape Coral in 1981 after 20 years of service, but when USAID asked him to return on contract, he and his wife moved to Mauritania for two years.

Back in the United States, Mr. Guardiano earned his Ph.D. in geography—a field he chose because it covers nearly all aspects of human organization—at Clark University at age 60.

He retired again to Cape Coral and later, Fort Myers. Bitten by the political bug, he became an avid volunteer for his newly chosen political party in the 1990s, eventually serving as county chair for two years.

He also took on short-term USAID projects to Egypt, Slovakia and other locations, and taught a series of courses to USAID officers in Latin America.

Meanwhile, Edison College and Florida Gulf Coast University met his own craving for learning. As the oldest person in class—including his professors—he worked his way through several layers of calculus, and enjoyed literature and Florida geography courses well into his 70s.

Those who knew him will remember Mr. Guardiano for his endless curiosity, his energy and, most of all, his wit.

Mr. Guardiano is survived by his wife, Jan, of Fort Myers, Fla.; their sons Greg (of Colorado), John (of Washington, D.C.) and Jeb (and Jeb’s wife, Gail) of Detroit, Mich.; his sister, Sylvia (and brother-in-law Frank); and 10 nieces and nephews. His brother, John, and sister-in-law, Pat, predeceased him.

■ **Walter Vance Hall Jr.**, 87, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Jan. 6 in Alexandria, Va.

Mr. Hall was born in 1930 in Emmerton, Va., the son of Walter Vance Hall Sr. and Emma Lemoine Griffith. He graduated from Hampden-Sydney College, served in the U.S. Navy and then earned a degree from Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service.

Mr. Hall served in Seoul, Naples and Suva, as well as in the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Vienna. Following his retirement in 1982, he continued to work in the State Department on freedom of information cases until 2000.

Mr. Hall was a lifelong member of North Farnham Parish Church in Farnham, Va., and during his long residence in Alexandria he was an active parishioner at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church.

He was a member of the board of directors of the Historic Alexandria Foundation and the American Library Company. He served two terms on the Alexandria Archeology Commission and was a longtime member of the Metropolitan Club.

Family members recall that Mr. Hall enjoyed his nearly 20 years of tutoring in Alexandria public schools. He also took great pleasure in working in his garden, reading, entertaining friends and cooking, and he was an enthusiastic traveler.

Mr. Hall is survived by his wife, Julia Elisabeth Ramberg Hall, of Alexandria, whom he married in Rome in 1963; two sons, John Ramberg Hall (and wife, Denise Ann Hall) of Hackettstown, N. J., and Walter Vance Hall III of Chesapeake, Va.; and grandsons Lleyton Vance Hall and Anders John Hall.

Memorial contributions may be made to The Saint Paul’s Foundation.

■ **Karen Hartman**, 63, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Jan. 14 in Douglas, Mich., of pancreatic cancer.

Mrs. Hartman was a graduate of Michigan State University and the University of Michigan.

She worked for the U.S. Information Service from 1984 to 1985, setting up an English-language library in Sanaa. In 2003 she joined the Foreign Service as an information resource officer, serving in Nairobi, Pretoria, Rome and Washington, D.C.

Mrs. Hartman was instrumental in launching “maker spaces” in Europe, Africa and Asia, where the use of U.S. information technology is demonstrated and shared with the goal of inspiring entrepreneurship. She retired in 2015 as the deputy director of the Office of American Spaces.

Mrs. Hartman published five textbooks, one of which is still in use.

She is survived by her husband, Jack; their daughters, Tracy and Hilary; and granddaughters, Charlotte, Lily and Willa.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network.

■ **Charles Bowman “Charlie” Jacobini**, 72, a retired Foreign Service officer, died at home in Lewes, Del., on Jan. 8.

Mr. Jacobini was born in Borger, Texas, and raised in various places in the United States and in Manila. He earned his bachelor’s degree from Trinity College in 1967 and his master’s degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy of Tufts University in 1968.

Mr. Jacobini worked for Chase Manhattan Bank in New York before entering the Foreign Service in 1969.

He was detailed to the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support office in Bien Hoa, and was then posted to Recife as an economic-commercial officer in 1972. While in Brazil, he was seconded to Vietnam for six months prior to the fall of Saigon.

Mr. Jacobini returned to Brazil in 1974

to serve as consul general in Belem. He subsequently served in Tokyo, Cairo and Ankara, as well as Washington, D.C. His last overseas assignment was as economic counselor in Singapore from 1994 to 1995.

After retiring he went to work for Edison Mission Energy in Jakarta.

Mr. Jacobini returned to the United States in 1998 and worked in the private and public sectors on trade policy and intelligence analysis.

He spent nine months in Belgrade, advising the government of Serbia on its application to join the European Union, followed by three months at the embassy in Tirana as an interim political/economic counselor.

For several years, he worked at State on scientific cooperation with Ukraine and other former Soviet republics. He retired again in 2012, moving to Lewes, Del., in 2016.

His family recalls that Mr. Jacobini was a renowned cook who loved entertaining, travel and adventure.

Mr. Jacobini is survived by Dianne Rotte Jacobini, his wife of 37 years; and by his daughters, Anne Campbell and Caroline Nash, and their husbands. He is also survived by his mother, Billie Jacobini. A son, Thomas, died in infancy.

■ **Lorna Marke**, 53, spouse of active-duty Foreign Service Officer Robert Silberstein, died on Feb. 23, in Washington, D.C., three years and three months after being diagnosed with non-smokers' lung cancer.

Ms. Marke was born in Dover, England. She was raised in Houston, Texas; Lagos, Nigeria; and The Hague, Holland. She received a bachelor's degree from Johns Hopkins University and a doctorate of veterinary medicine from Cornell University.

Ms. Marke practiced veterinary medicine in Washington, D.C., and overseas in Costa Rica, India, Croatia, Vietnam and

Lithuania, as she accompanied her spouse.

Family members and friends recall Ms. Marke's selfless devotion to her family and friends, her love of veterinary medicine, and her compassion and caring for others even as she suffered from cancer. She formed deep, lasting friendships everywhere she studied, worked and lived.

Ms. Marke is survived by her husband, Robert Silberstein, and their sons Jonathan, 20, and Michael, 18, of Arlington, Va. She is also survived by her mother, Shirley; sister, Samantha; and brother, Antony; as well as her two dogs, Spotz and Yena.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations to the LUNgevity Foundation in Ms. Marke's name, at [www.lungevity.org/lornamarke](http://www.lungevity.org/lornamarke).

■ **Doris Eleanor Mattos**, 95, spouse of the late U.S. Information Service FSO Edward H. Mattos, died on Jan. 2 in Arlington, Va. Mrs. Mattos and her husband served together in the Philippines, Spain, Malaysia, Canada and Washington, D.C.

After returning to Washington, D.C., Mrs. Mattos created an application review program with the D.C.-based Youth for Understanding, a student exchange program. She developed the department from a single voluntary position to a paid position with a large staff of volunteers.

Mrs. Mattos traveled extensively with her husband and, following his death, continued to be active in traveling, theater, cultural events, literature and cuisine.

Family members remember her as a loyal Democrat who was thrilled to be able to vote for an African-American and then a woman for president in her lifetime. She loved dogs, a good joke, a glass of Scotch with the evening news and a good meal.

Mrs. Mattos is survived by her three daughters and their families, Laure Stern (of California), Kate Mattos (of Virginia) and Elizabeth Cheever (of Maine). She also

leaves grandchildren Henry Stern, Sophie Greenbaum, Ella Jacobs, Mark Cheever, Emily Cheever and Eleanor Mattos; and a great-grandson, Moses Greenbaum.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Arlington Parks and Recreation's Bon Air Memorial Rose Garden or a charity of your choice.

■ **George "Tom" Novinger**, 61, a retired Foreign Service officer, and his wife, Gladys Novinger, 62, died on Nov. 25, 2017, in a tragic accident at Rainbow Falls in Hilo, Hawaii.

Mr. Novinger grew up in La Crescenta, Calif. A fifth-generation Californian, he earned B.A. and M.A. degrees in music at Occidental College in Los Angeles. He became a math teacher and swim coach at Hoover High School in Glendale, Calif., before moving to Japan with his former wife, Michiko.

Mr. Novinger joined the State Department Foreign Service in 1989, and served for 24 years. He and his family were posted to Hong Kong, Japan, Paraguay, Brunei, South Korea and Syria, where he served as chargé d'affaires.

In 2008 he earned a master's degree in national resource strategy from the National Defense University in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Novinger's passion in life was choral music, and he started and directed international choirs in each city where he lived. Highlights of his conducting career include performances for Prince Charles and Princess Diana of Wales in Tokyo in 1986 and for First Lady Hillary Clinton in Paraguay in 1995.

After retirement, he and his new wife, Gladys, and stepson, Joseph, moved to Spring Valley, Calif., where he developed Vineyard Hacienda, a wedding venue and bed and breakfast where they also made their own wine.

He became a frequent speaker on the Middle East and Far East at colleges, universities and World Affairs Councils. President of Balboa Park New International Cottages, Inc., he also chaired the Balboa Park New International Cottages Construction Group and was on the executive board of the House of Public Relations at Balboa Park.

Mr. Novinger also served on the governing board of Steele Canyon High School and was a member of the Jamul-Dulzura Community Planning Group. He and his wife were co-chairs of the advisory board of the San Diego Diplomacy Council, served on the San Diego International Affairs Board and led the nonprofit Remedios Naturales in Peru that researches medicinal uses of jungle plants. He was a founding board member of Make Music Los Angeles.

Mr. and Mrs. Novinger are survived by his daughter, Saya Joy Novinger; her son Joseph Harmes III; his parents, George and Anne Marie Novinger; and his sisters, Mary Novinger Noble and Barbara Novinger.

Donations honoring their memory may be sent to [HouseofPeru.com](http://HouseofPeru.com).

■ **Richard Ripley Peterson**, 78, a retired Foreign Service officer, died at home in Bristow, Va., on Jan. 25 after a two-year battle with pancreatic cancer.

Mr. Peterson was born in Chicago, Ill., and attended Northern Illinois University. He joined the State Department Foreign Service in 1963 and served for 35 years, with postings to Bermuda, the United Kingdom, Mexico and the Philippines.

In retirement, he honed his cooking skills and explored his love of technology, while never giving up the travel bug. His family remembers him for his kindness and sense of humor.

Mr. Peterson is survived by his wife,

Sally, and his children, Elizabeth and Thomas.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins, where he received excellent care during his illness.

■ **Ruth Sorensen Singer**, 86, the spouse of retired USAID Foreign Service Officer Derek Singer, died on Jan. 10 in Falls Church, Va.

Mrs. Singer, the only daughter of the late C.A. and Annis Chaikin Sorensen, was born and raised in Nebraska. She graduated from University of Nebraska in 1952 and from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in 1955.

She married Derek S. Singer, and the pair began a career in public service, including Peace Corps assignments in Bolivia and Tunisia, public television administration in Chicago and USAID postings in the Congo, Kenya, Ecuador and Cameroon.

Family members recall Mrs. Singer's extensive community involvement, including participation in the civil rights movement, work with the Kennedy administration, involvement in the Unitarian Church, speech writing and teaching English.

A lifelong member of the Democratic Party, she worked with former Senator Fritz Hollings (D-S.C.) to publish *The Case Against Hunger* (Cowels, 1970), and was a Democratic delegate from Illinois for the 1976 presidential election.

Predeceased by her brothers Robert, Tom, Ted and Phil, Mrs. Singer is survived by her husband, Derek, of Falls Church, Va.; her children, Vicky, Alex, Ted and Jason; and her grandchildren. Mrs. Singer donated her body to science.

■ **Edward O. Stellmacher**, 93, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Jan. 7,

2017, in New Braunfels, Texas.

Mr. Stellmacher joined the Foreign Service in 1956, serving in Cali, Guatemala City, Juarez, Piedras Negras, Munich, Manila and Hermosillo, before his retirement in 1975.

His family recalls that he loved playing his Hammond organ and gave concerts at every post, including the Philippines.

Mr. Stellmacher was preceded in death by his wife, Mary, and son, Philip. He is survived by daughters Linda Stellmacher-Lester and Barbara Stellmacher-Squires.

■ **Nilva J. Tull**, 85, the spouse of retired Foreign Service Officer James L. Tull, died on Jan. 20 in Virginia Beach, Va.

Mrs. Tull was the daughter of an Iowa farmer and her husband was the son of a hardware store owner in Eldora, Iowa. After graduation from Eldora High in 1949, both attended Iowa State Teachers College.

Mrs. Tull graduated in 1951 and began teaching elementary school in Grady, Iowa, while Mr. Tull enlisted in the U.S. Navy. The couple married in April 1953 at the Naval Air Station in Alameda, Calif., and later moved to Boulder, Colo., where Mr. Tull earned degrees from the University of Colorado.

Mr. Tull entered the Foreign Service in 1958. Over the next 32 years, Mrs. Tull accompanied him to posts in Cali, London, Montevideo, Santo Domingo, Nicosia, Bogotá and San José. Mr. Tull retired from the State Department in 1990.

Mrs. Tull was preceded in death by her husband, who died on March 12, 2011, in Alexandria, Va.

Survivors include the couple's children, Stephen Tull of Crofton, Md.; Elizabeth (Tull) Arbon of Centennial, Colo.; Christopher Tull of Virginia Beach, Va.; and two grandsons, Trevor Tull and Graham Arbon.

Mrs. Tull will be buried in Eldora, Iowa, alongside her husband. ■

## In Defense of an Embattled U.N.

### Would the World Be Better Without the UN?

Thomas G. Weiss, *Polity*, 2018, \$24.95, paperback/Kindle, 240 pages.

### UNTold: The Real Story of the United Nations in Peace and War

Ian Williams, with illustrations by Krishna, *Just World Books*, 2017, \$21.95/paperback, \$19.99/Kindle, 176 pages.

REVIEWED BY W. GARY GRAY

In the Trump era, with the United Nations, international organizations in general and, arguably, the entire postwar world order under siege at the very time cross-border global challenges are accelerating, *Would the World Be Better without the UN?* could not be more timely. This is the kind of indispensable primer I wish I'd been able to read before embarking on my own United Nations work. Author Thomas Weiss effectively captures the essence of the overriding issues I saw playing out on the ground in various U.N. operations.

Weiss first lays out the basic framework for understanding the United Nations: there is the "First U.N." of the member-state governments, which often complicates the work of the "Second U.N." (the U.N. Secretariat and related organizations), while the "Third U.N." of NGOs and other nonstate actors exerts increasing influence. In a comprehensive but concise and readable fashion, he traces the activity and origins of the often bewilderingly convoluted and overlapping U.N. entities involved in "international peace and security," "human rights and humanitarian action" and "sustainable development."

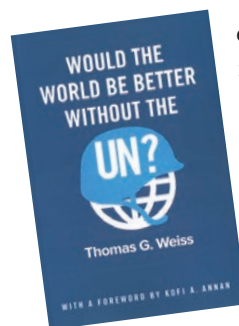
Having established the groundwork, Weiss proceeds to a more intellectually challenging, difficult-to-quantify "what if," or "counterfactual" approach, speculating on how postwar history might have played out in the absence of the United Nations. As he acknowledges, many historians regard such methodology with skepticism; but Weiss nevertheless makes a convincing case for the U.N.'s overall positive contribution to the world order.

He argues that the U.N. and related entities have played crucial, irreplaceable roles in providing a neutral venue for antagonistic governments to resolve crises in arms control (specifically in monitoring weapons of mass destruction and chemical weapons disposal) and in dealing with increasingly global epidemics.

### After this strong defense of the UN and its ideals, Weiss presents an equally powerful indictment of its many failings.

Weiss also highlights the considerable achievements of lesser known branches of the U.N. family, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization and the Universal Postal Union, whose critical functions are now taken for granted.

He sees the United Nations as most influential in enshrining and spreading ideas now accepted as international norms, including human rights and humanitarian values, arguing that such ideals would not have taken hold as fast if left merely to the marketplace. In his view, despite the many flaws of its human rights structures and their procedures, the U.N.'s "naming and shaming" of human rights violators via such mechanisms as the Universal Periodic Review



cannot be dismissed as mere rhetoric.

After this strong defense of the U.N. and its ideals, Weiss presents an equally powerful indictment of its many failings. He maintains, as was so obvious to us practitioners on the ground, that the organization could do so much better, be so much more creative and robust, especially given that the "Second U.N." has "more autonomy and room for maneuver than is generally believed."

Weiss scathingly zeroes in on what he calls the United Nation's four major ailments: "unreconstructed, sacrosanct sovereignty," "lackluster leadership," "North-South theatrics" and "atomization."

Based on my own experience, I could not agree more with the author's contention that excessive deference

to sovereignty can be the most costly of these failings, potentially "lethal for the planet." I think he could have gone further, however, to examine how these ailments reinforce each other.

From my observation, "lackluster leadership" is often manifested in resorting to the "sovereignty" pretext as a means of avoiding uncomfortable confrontations with host government leaders on difficult issues, while "atomization" provides convenient excuses for passing the buck within the U.N.

Having spent my last assignment with the U.N. in the most hopeless endeavor I've ever encountered—futilely attempting to coordinate peacekeeping, development and humanitarian efforts in South Sudan—I

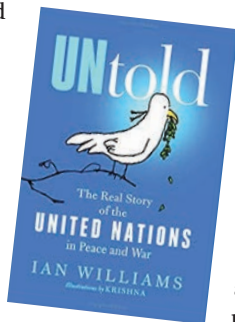
can only wholeheartedly concur with Weiss's blistering critique of the counterproductive overlap and competition among its various moving parts, particularly in the humanitarian aid/development areas.

Weiss urges donors to insist not merely on "coordination," which he aptly describes as a "vacuous recipe to leave bureaucratic things as they are," but a thoroughgoing consolidation and centralization of "a system that has more in common with feudalism than with a modern organization."

While Weiss demonstrates impressive mastery of the human rights, humanitarian aid and development fronts, I would like to have seen this book delve deeper and more critically into peacekeeping and peacebuilding issues, perhaps providing more comparative analysis and lessons learned from the various peacekeeping operations.

For instance, why was Timor a relative success while other missions interminably founder? Also useful would have been more focus on the people-on-the-ground factor, more recognition of how, amid all these organizational failings, small numbers of dedicated talented individuals are achieving progress or at least keeping missions afloat in the world's worst places.

Describing himself as one who prefers to be "an optimist who is sometimes wrong, rather than a pessimist who is always right," Weiss finds glimmers of hope for the U.N. in recent developments. In addition to the increased focus on peacebuilding, he cites UNWOMEN, a relatively new organization uniting previously competing elements, as evidence that



the organization can consolidate and rationalize operations. He also sees the new emphasis on R2P (responsibility to protect) as reflecting increased willingness to override sovereignty when necessary to protect endangered civilians.

In *UNTOLD*, a much slimmer, less substantive volume, author Ian Williams is updating his *UN for Beginners* published in 1995. He attempts to cover much of the same ground as Weiss, with a similar theme (the U.N. is highly flawed, but we'd be worse off without it) but in a lighter, more entertaining, rambling way. *UNTOLD* may be suitable for those seeking a quick, intellectually undemanding overview, but is certainly no substitute for the much more rigorous, well-researched analysis of Weiss's book.

*UNTOLD's* overly simplistic and sometimes over-the-top anti-Americanism may be off-putting to readers. That said, the book does provide some interesting anecdotes, historical curiosities and trivia tidbits for us U.N. fans, such as why American U.N. officials have to learn to write in British English (it's a legacy of the League of Nations).

Both books laud the 2017 selection of António Guterres as U.N. Secretary-General, seemingly a rare case of overcoming political obstacles to select the best available candidate for the job.

Proponents of multilateralism can only hope that Weiss is correct in arguing that this new leadership, growing threats to the United Nation's relevance and recognition of the "desperate need to reinvigorate and update rather than jettison the universal organization that was essential to the current operating system" could "provide impetus

for a long-postponed and desperately needed change in how the world does business."

---

*W. Gary Gray served in the Foreign Service from 1985 to 2002, with assignments in Bucharest, Pretoria, Moscow, Maputo, Jakarta, Dili, Kuala Lumpur and Washington, D.C. From 2002 to 2013 he held senior management positions in United Nations peacekeeping missions.*

## The Democracy Debate

### Does Democracy Matter? The United States and Global Democracy Support

*Adrian Basora, Agnieszka Marczyk and Maia Otarashvili (eds), Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017, \$35, paperback, 222 pages.*

REVIEWED BY BRITTANY FOUTZ

At a time when authoritarianism seems to be trending in many places around the world, there is a new focus on democracy—its characteristics, its prerequisites, its vulnerabilities and the best ways to promote its development and safeguard its foundations.

U.S. democracy promotion has been a powerful force for positive change in the world, with democratic breakthroughs, for example, in Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Ukraine. But as challenges to democracy arise, confidence in its future is being questioned.

*Does Democracy Matter? The United States and Global Democracy Support*, edited by Ambassador Adrian Basora, Agnieszka Marczyk and Maia Otarashvili, was released in the midst of this debate.

In this book 11 scholars and experts on democracy assess the state of democracy and its promotion, noting that much of the powerful democratiz-

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ing momentum and euphoria of the 1990s and early 2000s has been lost, at least in the short term. Their essays, presented in 10 chapters, summarize the results of a decade of research and policy dialogue organized by the Foreign Policy Research Institute's Project on Democratic Transitions.

The authors delve into available knowledge and new research on democratization efforts, whether authoritarian regimes can successfully impede democratization, what role external actors can play, how to streamline and improve existing mechanisms of U.S. democracy assistance, and how to balance the need to reform and restore democracy.

In the first chapter Carl Gershman, president of the National Endowment for Democracy, addresses democracy's global situation and proposes policies to respond to the challenges ahead. He suggests that the best way to rebuild strong international democratic conviction is to connect American citizens with people on the front lines of democratic struggles around the world.

Nikolas Gvosdev then advocates the American realist position, acknowledging that while the growth of democracy abroad may enhance the U.S. strategic position in the long term, there are too many compelling interests—including stability and security—that must take priority in the short term.

Richard Kraemer advocates a different view, framing democracy assistance in terms of political will rather than financial services and encouraging donors to learn from past democratic transitions.

Sarah Bush encourages the United States to follow the "three Ds" of



democracy assistance effectiveness: donor priorities, delivery mechanisms and design.

The first portion of the book ends with a chapter by Melinda Haring, arguing for greater transparency, monitoring and competition when allocating resources for democracy

assistance.

In the second part of the book, Tsveta Petrova discusses U.S. democracy promotion in Eastern Europe. Michal Koran offers a more pessimistic view in his essay, arguing that democratic societies are becoming increasingly disenchanted by politics in general.

Larry Diamond describes what he characterizes as a "global democratic recession." Factors such as the prominence of societal cleavages, erosion of civic engagement and lack of accountability in governance, he argues, are contributing to the problem.

Agnieszka Marczyk explores new patterns, such as how elections can be used to strengthen authoritarian regimes.

In the final chapter, retired FSOs and former ambassadors Adrian Basora and Kenneth Yalowitz review the long U.S. foreign policy experience with democracy promotion and offer five general policy conclusions and recommendations.

In an era of doubts about the legitimacy of democracy, this book is a major addition to the literature and a valuable resource for policymakers. ■

*Brittany Foutz is a Ph.D. student in international conflict management at Kennesaw State University. She received an M.A. in conflict analysis and dispute resolution from Salisbury University.*

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# The Card from Kabul

BY BEN EAST

**A**n Afghan businessman with good English, admiration for the United States and a carpet enterprise in Virginia, Mohamed was a regular at our visa counter in Jeddah.

The next-to-last time we met—11:15 a.m., December 6, 2004—a blast-resistant window separated us. The day's final applicant, he was alone in the waiting room when the high-low alarm started wailing.

"Just a minute," I said. Time to duck beneath the counter. "Get low. I'll be right back. Sorry for this."

"No problem."

An Afghan male taking refuge in Saudi Arabia after the Soviets invaded his country, Mohamed knew patience where visas were concerned. We liked him and he liked us, but rules were rules. He understood the process, though our implied distrust hassled him.

Gunfire erupted just outside. To this day I have no idea how Mohamed reacted to it.

"Some drill," I said to a colleague crouched beside me.

"No drill," he replied. "Those are AK-47s."

The Marine called over the intercom, "Gas! Gas! Gas!"

## Mohamed spoke of Kabul, of life before the Russians, of his admiration for all things American.

The poison gas we'd trained against? We had no masks at the counter. I crawled to my office for a Quickmask.

Shadows crossed the blinds above my desk—clouds or terrorists? How many doors between me and the gunfire?

A colleague in Riyadh called, described CNN's coverage of smoke billowing from our compound.

"Turn off your phone," he said. So I had that to think about.

What did the attackers fail to understand about America to make them want to kill us? What perceived failings of ours mobilized their anger?

Five colleagues were killed outside the chancery. Ten were sent to the hospital.



The last time I saw Mohamed, months later, we didn't speak of December 6. We didn't speak of the visa he'd yet to receive.

Tickets to my next diplomatic assignment in hand, I visited his shop in Jeddah for gifts. I chose an hour when we'd

be locked in alone while the rest of the city knelt in prayer.

There was tea, of course, and piles and piles of deep red Turkmen carpets. We toured his shop, dark, labyrinthine, crowded with carpets and art. I felt safe hidden within this dim, antiquated scene.

We reached tour's end and sat on a pile of soft wool carpets at the rear. Mohamed spoke of Kabul, of life before the Russians, of his admiration for all things American. He pulled out his wallet, and I prepared to say agreeable things about cherished family photographs. Instead he thumbed a tattered card.

When he handed it over, I read: "U.S. Information Service Library, Kabul. Expiry: 1982."

There was no requirement that he say anything about the place, what he'd read there, the movies he'd seen, the American speakers he'd heard as a young man in Kabul. Those things all resided in that tattered card from long ago.

He loved America, knew my country as well as I did. My government had seen to that by building, staffing and supplying a library of our collective works.

Decades later, a refugee in a country that could never be his own and that had its share of killers who hated an America they didn't know, Mohamed kept the memory as close as possible, tucked in his wallet among his cherished things, deep in a pocket of his robe. ■



*Ben East is a Foreign Service officer who has served in Saudi Arabia, Nicaragua, Ghana, Mexico and Washington, D.C. Before joining the State Department he taught English literature and composition in Malawi as a Peace Corps Volunteer and elsewhere. His debut novel, Two Pumps for the Body Man (New Pulp Press, 2016), has been described as "doing for American diplomacy what Catch-22 did for military logic." His articles have appeared previously in The Foreign Service*

*Journal, and his short stories have appeared in the online literary journals Atticus Review and Umbrella Factory Magazine.*



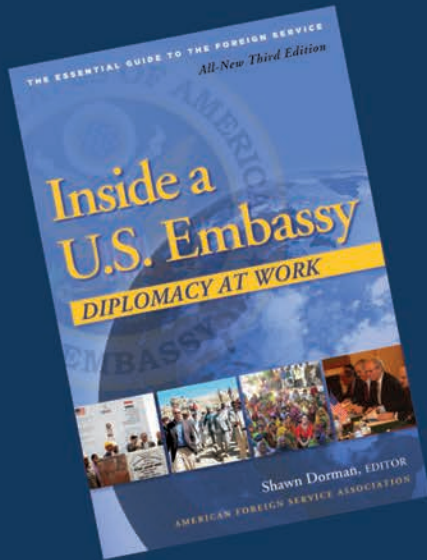
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**M**y family and I had traveled through Taghit, a small and ancient oasis town in the Algerian Sahara, into the Moroccan Sahara, near the town of Merzouga. There, in the early hours of New Year's Day 2017, we saw a group on camels in the distance traversing the Erg Chebbi dunes. The dunes are ever shifting, and one can see the sands blowing off their ridges. ■

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*Stuart R. Denyer, an FSO, is teaching consular policy at the Foreign Service Institute. He served previously as consul in Algiers. He took this photograph with a Nikon Coolpix P530.*

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