

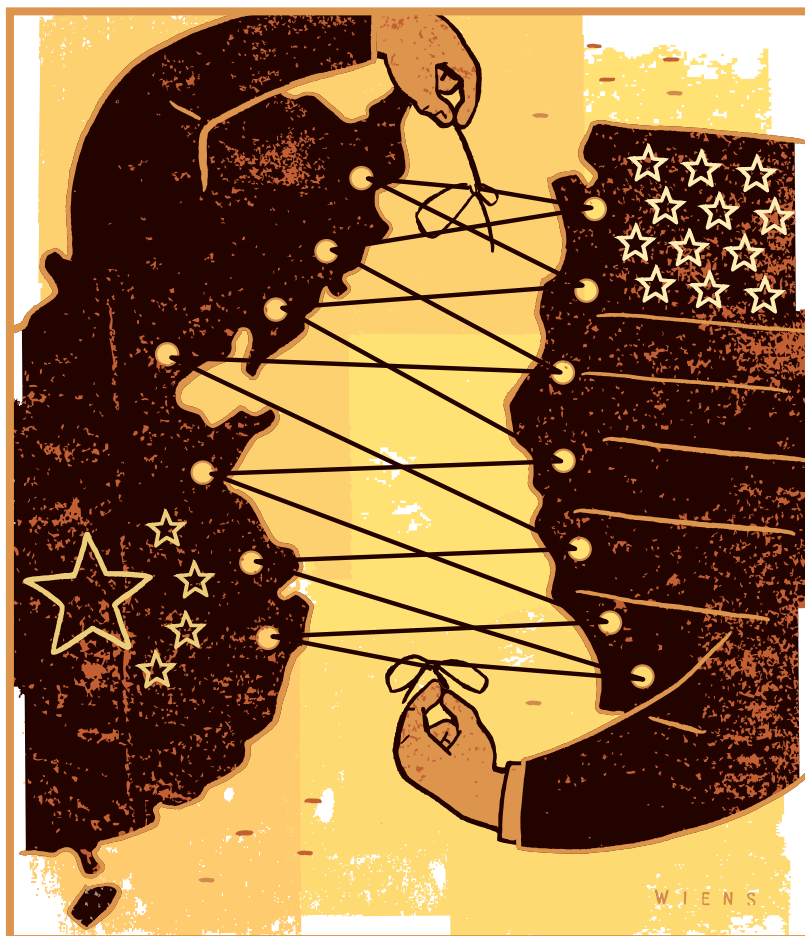
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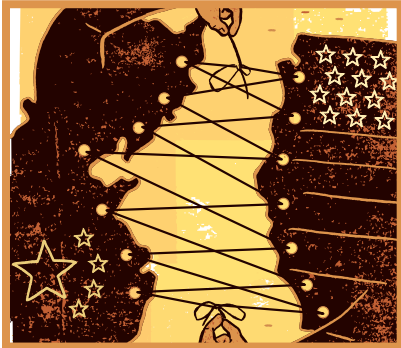
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PRESIDENT'S VIEWS

Can We Revive Constructive Dissent? Should We?

BY SUSAN R. JOHNSON

The AFSA dissent award program has often been the subject of President's Views columns by my predecessors, as well as letters, Speaking Out columns and *FSJ* articles. The purpose of such pieces is not just to draw attention to AFSA's annual awards ceremony, or even to celebrate a program that is unique to AFSA and the diplomatic profession — important as both those goals are.



Rather, AFSA has long regarded the expression of constructive dissent and the courage to speak out within the institutional framework as essential to effective diplomatic practice and to professionalism. Offering alternative approaches and solutions has always been at the heart of AFSA's role, both as a professional association and a union.

Dissent is sometimes about a broad policy goal or the national interest, but more often it relates to strategies and tactics. In the fluid circumstances of foreign relations, the experience and judgment of individual members of the Foreign Service create room for honest differences of opinion. For the good of overall policy and its implementation, the tradition of constructive dissent needs to be sustained, recognized and appreciated within the context of institutional discipline.

With seniority comes the responsibility not only to give one's best professional advice and judgment to political

leadership, but also to clearly encourage this practice within the institution. Senior members of the Foreign Service should be role models in this regard and not be seen as swayed by political expediency.

For all these reasons, AFSA's constructive dissent award program seeks to place real value on dissent within the system through public recognition of constructive dissenters. Yet over the decade since 9/11, AFSA has received a decreasing number of genuine dissent nominations, especially for the entry-level (Harriman) and senior-level (Herter) categories. Last year AFSA could not give awards in either of these categories.

The problem, as AFSA President John Naland commented in his June 2009 column, is not necessarily a lack of constructive dissenters within the Foreign Service. Rather, there seems to be a shortage of colleagues willing to nominate them for an AFSA dissent award as a way of recognizing integrity and intellectual courage, and the value of dissent for effective policy implementation.

What underpins this lack of motivation? Does it stem from a view that the awards are a pointless exercise? Or does it reflect a change in the quality and understanding of professionalism and ethics within the Foreign Service? Are the nomination guidelines unclear, and do we need to do more to simplify

and publicize them?

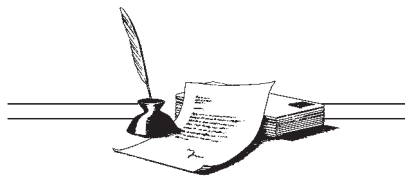
And should we dismiss the apparent disinterest as a minor indicator of little import, or take it as a symptom of a deeper malaise: the institutional decline of the Foreign Service where political expediency and adjustment, rather than honest and objective advice, the hallmark of professionalism, count for career advancement? This is an important issue that calls for thoughtful introspection and analysis.

AFSA will continue to champion creative, constructive dissent and will work to strengthen professionalism in diplomacy. Increasing member engagement in these and other AFSA issues is a priority.

We welcome your ideas on how we can strengthen the tradition of constructive dissent and the understanding of why it is important for the institution.

Specifically, should we expand the awards' scope to include non-Foreign Service members of our agencies? Should we expand our concept of dissent to clearly include the written expression of creative alternative policy approaches and encourage its publication in the *FSJ*, as our colleagues in the military do? How can we improve our system for eliciting dissent nominations? And should AFSA be more proactive in seeking out examples of constructive dissent to recognize?

Let us know what you think by writing johnson@afsa.org. ■



LETTERS

Recognizing Locally Employed Staff

As director general of the Foreign Service and head of the Bureau of Human Resources, I am grateful that the June issue of the *Foreign Service Journal* has drawn attention to the State Department's dedicated Locally Employed staff, who are an essential component of our 275 missions around the world.

These employees perform dozens of essential functions; we could not do our work without them. As Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has said, "Ambassadors come and go, Secretaries come and go, but the Locally Employed staff is really the memory bank and the experience base for everything that we do."

Our LE staff often serve under difficult and challenging circumstances to meet our nation's needs, and we want to provide them with the very best support. That is why HR hired consultants to examine staffing levels, organization and salary survey processes in the Office of Overseas Employment, the office that handles issues affecting our LE staff.

I am pleased that we have been able to satisfy all of the recommenda-

tions contained in the State Department's Office of the Inspector General report regarding LE staff compensation issues. We are currently modernizing our compensation process to ensure that we remain competitive with local labor markets, and have made a good deal of progress on an Alternate Retirement Plan that will allow LE staff to make voluntary contributions to a retirement savings plan.

I am also delighted to note that, despite the frustrations, most LE staff find their work rewarding. In 30 years in the Foreign Service, I have met and worked with amazing LE staff, whom I am proud to call colleagues and friends. As discussed in their articles in your June issue, many appreciate working with a dedicated team of highly motivated professionals, doing work that is meaningful and relevant.

We welcome your comments and suggestions as we strive to better serve our community of LE staff.

*Ambassador Linda
Thomas Greenfield
Director General and
Director of Human
Resources
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C.*

Thanks, Local Employees

Finally, a *Journal* issue dedicated to our local employees. As my 25 years in the Foreign Service approach their end with my upcoming retirement, I want to say "thank you" to all the local employees who always were so kind and helpful to me. Without them I would not have enjoyed my assignments, or even survived them.

The local employees were the ones who always said good morning, not my fellow American Foreign Service members. And they were the ones who asked if I needed any help, not my American colleagues. Instead, many of my colleagues yelled at the local staff and belittled them.

What I witnessed was appalling, and led me to wonder: If they are like that at work, what are they like at home?

So, again, thank you to all the local employees at our embassies and consulates.

*Paula P. Guimond
Consular OMS
Embassy Beijing*

A Professional Service

Thanks to Susan Johnson for her May President's Views column, "Time

for FSOs to Stand Up for the Foreign Service.” I found it to be an exceptionally well-reasoned case for a professional Foreign Service. I was indeed sad to read about the “substantially diminished” role for the Foreign Service within the State Department.

Speaking from the perspective of a management-coned generalist, I see the rise of the functional bureaus and the increased influence of Foreign Service specialists on the operations of the department as good developments. We are a better-managed organization today than we were 25 years ago, largely because of the dramatically increased number of Information Management Officers, DS Special Agents, Financial Management Officers, Human Resources Officers, General Services Specialists, Facilities Managers and Office Managers.

But if I’m not mistaken, there has been no corresponding increase in the number of Foreign Service generalists, other than the transition of U.S. Information Agency officers into the public diplomacy cone. I think that we still have only about 7,000 generalists, or roughly one generalist for every one million foreigners. With half of them overseas, a quarter in training, and more than a few assigned to liaise with the Department of Defense, that does not leave many FSOs to staff the State Department.

It’s not just a matter of numbers, and Johnson’s article persuasively argues the unique value of a professional, career FSO. But numbers are a factor.

Every great power in history, as far back as the Romans, has invested heavily in its diplomatic corps. That is even more important today, in the globally interdependent world of the 21st century. This is why I sincerely applaud the article and wish AFSA the best in its efforts on behalf of the Foreign Service.

Michael S. Hoza
FSO
Embassy Moscow

Career Ambassadors

As usual, AFSA President Susan Johnson deserves praise for the rational and cogent arguments in defense of career ambassadors in her April President’s Views column, “Professionalism versus Patronage and Elitism.”

Sadly, her argument is doomed to be just one more cry in the wilderness. Any hope of changing the current practice of filling approximately one-third of our embassies with largely unqualified and counterproductive political appointees is nowhere in sight.

By openly violating the 1980 Foreign Service Act, the present system serves too well the desire to pay off political supporters and cronies. Until diplomacy is recognized as a profession, as it is in all other leading countries, no change can be anticipated.

It’s astonishing to see the proponents of a system that perpetuates the vestiges of an anachronistic 18th-century practice — rewarding what is truly a modern “elite,” almost an aristocracy — label our professional diplomats as “elitist.” Such a warped definition serves the interests of the ruling elite, not the truth.

In an America that is currently experiencing one of the most oligarchic periods of its history, it is understandably the natural practice to sacrifice reality and coherence. Truly, America deserves better of its leadership: namely, leadership.

Robert F. Illing
FSO, retired
Porto, Portugal

Professionalism and Ethics

I am so very pleased to see AFSA President Susan Johnson’s various messages about professionalism and ethics. I have been retired from the Foreign Service since 1996, following a 35-year career, but even then I could see that this was a real problem.

So much more emphasis was put on “what the Foreign Service can do

for me” than the other way around. Many of my colleagues saw only the downside of every assignment, and none of the benefits and geographical and cultural education of living abroad.

Another problem I see is that so few people in the United States know about the Foreign Service, the lives employees lead, and the hardships they face. Most people I have encountered since retirement believe employees get free housing, free cars, free furniture, free food and anything else they may want. I’ve tried educating those I call friends, but it’s a hard row to hoe.

I am also shocked by how few people know what an embassy can and cannot do for them when they are traveling. Most have said they would not consider calling the embassy in a real emergency. I have asked here at New Mexico State University if I could speak to students who might be traveling abroad to give them this information.

I hope we can get the word on the Foreign Service and all it stands for out to as many people as possible. I will continue to do what I can from New Mexico.

Judy Chidester
FSO, retired
Las Cruces, N.M.

An Embarrassment

The letter to the editor in the June *Foreign Service Journal* from Ambassador Edward Peck and Russell J. Surber is an embarrassment to the Foreign Service.

The letter, in a venomous tone, castigated the *Journal* for printing, in the magazine’s monthly Cybernotes section, a public and quite justified comment by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton regarding the April Russian and Chinese vetoes of a United Nations resolution on Syria.

The authors of that letter stated that “[The Secretary’s] statement



should have generated nothing but entirely justifiable ridicule, and is shatteringly out of place in the 'Magazine for Foreign Affairs Professionals,' whose editors (in theory, anyway) have some familiarity with foreign affairs."

To paraphrase the Secretary's statement at the U.N.: It is quite distressing to read comments by two former members of the Foreign Service decrying the right of the *Foreign Service Journal* to print a public statement by our hardworking and courageous Secretary. It is just despicable. I ask, whose side are Amb. Peck and Mr. Surber on? Obviously not on the side of an open society.

The letter stands in stark contrast to the excellent interview in the same issue by Steve Honley with Ambassador Bill Swing, whose service embodies all that the Foreign Service stands for. Amb. Swing and Ambassador George Vest (the director general of the Foreign Service, whom Amb. Swing served as deputy 25 years ago) were the two most compassionate "people persons" I ever had the privilege of serving with during my own FS career.

We can rest assured that neither of these two gentlemen would have embarrassed themselves as Amb. Peck and Mr. Surber have done.

Peter F. Spalding
Senior FSO, retired
Washington, D.C.

Birth Control and Liberty

In writing, what one leaves out is often as telling as what one includes. That is certainly true of Ben Barber's advocacy piece for "birth control" in the April issue, "Seven Billion and Growing."

His comments about the Obama

administration's "order" that Catholic institutions fund abortifacient drugs under the president's health care package conveniently omits reference to the religious liberty rights upon which the administration tramples.

Beyond that issue, Barber rightly writes about a "battle over birth control." The current controversy is not just about preventing conception, but also about preventing birth. When Congress first entered this area with the Family Planning and Population Research Act of 1970, the bill explicitly banned the use of federal funds to pay for abortions.

Through semantic gymnastics and outright misrepresentation (e.g., continuing to hawk post-conception abortifacients as "contraceptives"), advocates of "birth control" have striven mightily to provide abortionists with unfettered access to the federal trough.

Whatever one thinks of *Roe v. Wade* — and there are significant numbers of Americans who regard it as the raw judicial imposition of bad law — advocates of its "right to privacy" are in bad faith when they demand society at large, including those who object to abortion, become financially complicit in it.

Finally, considering the fiscal insolvency (e.g., Social Security), workforce inadequacy and demographic implosion now faced by Western Europe, Japan and the United States — all countries that have been international heralds of birth control — one might charitably suggest that overpopulation is hardly their problem.

John M. Grondelski
FSO
American Institute in
Taiwan
Taipei

In the Vann-guard

Regarding John Limbert's July-August article, "Celebrating Intellectual Courage: AFSA's Constructive Dissent Awards," I was pleased to see a mention of John Paul Vann as the recipient of the 1968 Herter Award for constructive dissent.

I had the definite privilege to be assigned to the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program in Vietnam at the time that Vann was the CORDS deputy for the IV Corps, which had its headquarters in Can Tho.

John Paul Vann was a most inspiring individual, and I believe that inspiration followed me through my ensuing Foreign Service career. In fact, I have no doubt that his experience influenced me to use the Dissent Channel (for a management issue) some years later. As it turned out, I was successful in achieving the goal that I had set out in my presentation.

Without a doubt, John Paul Vann was an outstanding leader!

Dick Weeks
FSO, retired
Washington, D.C.

Thompson Theories

I own a Jim Thompson silk tie. By Josh Glazerhoff's criterion (see his May review of Joshua Kurlantzick's biography, *The Ideal Man: The Tragedy of Jim Thompson and the American Way of War*), that allows me to weigh in on Mr. Thompson's disappearance from the jungles of the Cameron Highlands.

By coincidence, I arrived in Bangkok on March 4, 1967, for a two-year research assignment. Before the month was over, Thompson was reported missing in Malaysia.

Rumors flew: first came the man-

LETTERS

eating tiger theory, followed by speculation about a hit-man sent by a Thai business rival. Then there was the theory that Chinese communists in the Malaysian underground had kidnapped Thompson for information about U.S. intelligence operations.

The tiger theory was dismissed by Malaysian police: tigers are messy eaters and no body parts were strewn in the jungle. The hit-man theory was improbable: Thailand, not Malaysia, was the preferred site for a contract murder. Similarly, the communist theory was discredited because Thompson's information had become obsolete after his time with the Office of Strategic Services.

Recently, however, I came across a fourth explanation that I find most credible. A friend and colleague, retired FSO Gordon Murchie, proposed it to me over a glass of Viognier wine at the Foreign Affairs Day luncheon in May.

During embassy assignments in northeast Thailand and in Bangkok as liaison to the Thai government's Communist Suppression Operations Center, Murchie and his wife, Anita, became friends with Jim Thompson. The Murchies were familiar with Thompson's regular trips to the Cameron Highlands, but they themselves only visited occasionally.

They would stay at the main lodge, not far from the separate, secluded cottage frequented by Thompson and his other friends. This cool jungle retreat was reached by taxi up the mountains with one of the many waiting ethnic Indian Malaysian drivers, most of whom had the last name of "Singh."

Murchie believes that Jim Thompson's last taxi ride to the Cameron Highlands was probably with a crime lord disguised as an ordinary taxi

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driver — Hare Singh. (Hare is a Hindustani title of respect; Singh is not his real name.) Thompson, the theory goes, had been targeted by criminals while visiting various antique shops during a side trip to Penang. They learned through the underworld grapevine that this rich American, the “Silk King” and antique collector, was traveling with a lot of cash in order to close an important business transaction with a wealthy Singaporean Chinese couple, well-known antique dealers.

Stalking Thompson's cottage, Singh then followed him as he took a walk outside in late afternoon on March 26, 1967. Singh delivered a knockout blow, not to kill him, but to get the key to his cottage and remove the hoard of U.S. dollars. But because Thompson was already sickly, he died from the mugging.

Panicking, Singh put Thompson's body in his taxi and dumped it in the Straits of Malacca, in the tradition of local pirates giving their victims permanent burial at sea.

If one selects the simplest rather than the most complex of competing theories (Occam's razor), Murchie's explanation is both the most succinct and the best explanation of how Jim Thompson vanished. ■

*Jose Armilla
FSO, retired
Vienna, Va.*

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CYBERNOTES

Assessing Prospects for Sino-American Relations

There is certainly no shortage of think-tanks, media outlets, government organizations and advocacy groups, all assessing Washington and Beijing's diplomatic, political and economic moves and their ripple effects on the rest of the world.

From that vast universe, here are three sites worth regular visits by anyone interested in following Sino-American relations. Each offers a wide range of thoughtful perspectives, including voices from China and Asia.

The first, run by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (www.carnegieendowment.org), surely needs no introduction for most Foreign Service members. Shortly after President Barack Obama's inauguration, Carnegie's Beijing office issued a policy brief listing several principles intended to minimize misunderstandings between the two superpowers. That report, titled *Avoiding Mutual Misunderstanding: Sino-U.S. Relations and the New Administration*, is still relevant nearly four years later.

Its authors encourage Washington to keep the Chinese Communist Party leadership's motivations in mind as it formulates policy; take responsibility for the financial crisis, as Beijing wishes to be responsible only for its own do-

Their business has been aggressive in Africa — in natural resources, in uranium, in oil. We are an open country, open to investors from anywhere. But we want 'win-win' partnerships, and that is our relationship with China. We will defend our interests, and they will defend theirs.

— Mahamadou Issoufou,
president of Niger, speaking
about Chinese investments
in Africa during a June 12
interview with the *Financial
Times*; www.ft.com.

mestic affairs; establish high-level relations with PRC officials; pursue multi-lateral policies that include China as a responsible stakeholder; and cultivate a positive image of America to accrue political capital within Chinese society.

The Obama administration has followed some of those recommendations, but ignored others. So, on June 19 Carnegie followed up with a study titled *America's Hammering China's Renminbi Makes Little Sense*, undercutting the popular notion that Beijing is the main culprit for America's economic woes. For instance, Carnegie asserts, China's surpluses are not driv-

ing America's deficits because there is a difference in timing for the trade balances of each country.

Project Syndicate (www.projectsyndicate.org) describes its mission as "bringing original, engaging and thought-provoking commentaries by esteemed leaders and thinkers from around the world to readers everywhere." A June 20 article by Yao Yang, "Couple's Counseling for the U.S. and China," certainly lives up to that ambitious billing.

Yao, who is director of the China Center for Economic Research, a professor of economics at Beijing University and the editor of *China Economic Quarterly*, takes as his starting point the notion that Washington and Beijing view their marriage as dating from China's 1972 return to the international community, with the honeymoon being the next two decades, followed by the marital unrest of the past two decades.

Like squabbling spouses, the two nations have engaged in behavior that harms the relationship and themselves, even as they become increasingly interdependent. China's inadequate protection of intellectual property rights has deterred American and European companies from deploying new technologies there.

By concentrating its support on a few favored firms, the PRC distorts the



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market, a behavior Yao describes as “gambling against the odds.” In addition, both sides suffer from structural problems that hinder efforts to forge closer economic and commercial ties.

The East Asia Forum (www.eastasiaforum.org), was created in 2006 and is still directed by Emeritus Professor Peter Drysdale of the Crawford School of Economics and Government at Australian National University. Covering issues facing the economies of East Asia, its contributors hail from Japan, China, South Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Australia.

A common thread among its commentaries on Sino-American relations is the idea that both sides have plenty of work to do to improve their relationship. Washington must undertake serious financial sector reforms and could take lessons from Beijing’s crisis management skills, while China must address its human rights issues and the concerns of its neighbors over the threat its military poses.

Refreshingly, a Feb. 14 article by Jin Canrong, a professor at Renmin University, finds “Reason for Optimism in Sino-American Relations.” Jin notes that the Obama administration has pursued senior-level exchanges with the PRC, promoted “smart power” diplomacy and enlisted greater engagement by Beijing in multilateral diplomacy. Not all those overtures have paid off, of course, and much remains to be done, but there has been genuine progress.

— *Eva M.A. Moss, Editorial Intern*

A Rebalancing Act

On July 18, the Center for American Progress (www.americanprogress.org) hosted Under Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs

Lael Brainard for a discussion of the future of the U.S.-China economic relationship. In introducing Under Secretary Brainard, CAP Chairman John Podesta cited her extensive experience, dating back to her role in the Clinton administration handling the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis and facilitating Beijing’s 2001 accession to the World Trade Organization.

Brainard began by emphasizing the extent to which the decisions China makes in the next several years will affect the global economy. For that reason, she explained, the Obama administration has consistently pressed Beijing to abide by international norms, and made clear the economic and political costs of not doing so: “China can no longer insist on one set of standards for big leaders and another for itself.”

That philosophy motivated the administration’s recent decisions to file WTO complaints against China regarding auto tariffs, rare earths and solar panels. How the United States and China manage these points of tension and pursue areas of mutual interest will have important effects on the economic future of both nations. As Brainard observed, “What matters is not just what happens on paper but what also happens on the ground.”

Finally, she discussed the administration’s ongoing “strategic rebalance to Asia.” With half the world’s population, many of its most dynamic economies, and as a key source of U.S. jobs, the Asia-Pacific region represents a tremendous economic opportunity for the United States. China is at the heart of this initiative, but it also poses a variety of new challenges for the U.S. economy.

— *Eva M.A. Moss, Editorial Intern*



What's In a Number?

On June 4, the Shanghai Stock Exchange ran afoul of the country's censors by appearing to mark the 23rd anniversary of the Tiananmen Square crackdown that left hundreds of pro-democracy protesters dead. The government has never provided a credible accounting of the number of victims or arrests in the sweeping crackdown that followed.

In an unlikely coincidence clearly unwelcome to China's communist rulers, the Shanghai Composite Index fell 64.89 points by the end of the day, matching the digits of the June 4, 1989, crackdown in the heart of Beijing. And in another odd twist, the benchmark had opened that morning at 2,346.98, a figure also seen as referencing the anniversary when read backward.

Wisely, officials at the stock exchange refused comment. Even so, "Shanghai Composite Index" soon joined the many words and phrases blocked by censors in China's lively microblog world. On the popular Sina microblog site, searches using "June 4," "64.89," "stock market" and "benchmark Shanghai Composite Index" were all blocked.

Such searches drew the cryptic response, "According to law such words cannot be shown." That prompted some users to comment on the "magical" nature of the market, while others groused about not being able to discuss the stock market online.

Asked at a press briefing whether the government had changed its stance regarding the "June 4 issue," Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Weimin said: "I just knew you would ask this question. The political case you mentioned was concluded long ago by the ruling party and government." He went on to denounce the U.S. State Department's call for a reconsideration of the party's stance as "rude interference in China's internal affairs."

In Hong Kong, tens of thousands crowded into a large park to mark the anniversary. They held aloft white candles that transformed the area of soccer pitches into a sea of light, before observing a minute of silence. Activists then laid a wreath at a makeshift monument dedicated to the Tiananmen Square victims, bowing three times as is customary in traditional Chinese mourning. ■

— Steven Alan Honley, Editor

50 Years Ago...

Throughout the ranks, including the highest positions, the most deeply felt differences with prevailing foreign policy — on which members of the Foreign Service are more knowledgeable than any other group — must be silently confined within the internal processes of the government. ... If an officer's accumulated experience and judgment must be silently buried when it does not prevail, the nation itself loses the advantages of informed, audible argument over foreign policy. And it can be wondered if the career can thus rest upon foundations capable of giving genuine personal satisfaction.

— From "A Letter of Resignation" by Edward E. Wright, *FSJ*, September 1962.



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SPEAKING OUT

Overhauling the EER Process

BY TYLER SPARKS

Now that another Employee Evaluation Review season has mercifully come to a close, it seems clearer than ever that our personnel evaluation system is broken. It wastes a staggering amount of time each year, effectively shutting down offices, embassies and consulates for weeks as Foreign Service officers scurry to get their reviews just right — only to produce inflated, subjective and non-quantitative evaluations that are of dubious value to promotion panels.

The entire process derails so much of our work, and results in such a poor product, that it would surely shame our institution if its excesses were truly known by the general public. We need to take immediate action to change the system from the ground up.

Ninety Years...

The amount of time spent just to craft EERs, not even including the time the promotion panels spend reviewing them or our Bureau of Human Resources professionals spend cajoling supervisors into submitting them in a timely fashion, is simply mind-boggling.

Each EER consists of an overview of the position duties (called the Work Requirements Statement), three primary evaluation sections (a statement of the employee's accomplishments by either the employee himself or his or

Reinventing the Employee Evaluation Report would improve morale and enhance efficiency at State.



her supervisor; a rating of the employee's potential for higher grades by the supervisor; and a review, generally done by the supervisor's supervisor) and a final, optional (except for untenured officers, for whom it is mandatory) personal statement from the employee.

Each section is painstakingly drafted with the knowledge that EER narratives are the primary tool promotion panels use to rank-order candidates. A misplaced comma or misused word can, we are told, rile a promotion panel to the extent that it passes over the employee for promotion.

Mindful of this, employees, raters and reviewers all obsess over the portions they draft, spending hour upon hour writing, reviewing, circulating to colleagues for their input, rewriting and re-reviewing to ensure that the EER presents them in their best light.

They then must wrestle with the EER online computer system, ePerformance, to ensure that each of their

sections is approved by all parties and fits into the space allotted. Finally, an at-post review panel of three other employees is convened, which again reviews the EER for typos or inadmissible comments.

If we use an extremely conservative estimate of the time required for each step in the process (one hour for the WRS, three hours per primary evaluation section, one hour for the employee statement, one hour for ePerformance wrangling, one hour of colleague consultation, and two hours for the at-post review panel), we come to a total of 15 hours spent on each EER.

Take those 15 hours and multiply them by the 12,000 members of the Foreign Service who are rated each year, and we come up with a shocking figure: 180,000 hours. That is the equivalent of 22,500 workdays, 61 calendar years or 90 working years. Ninety years of work just to complete our own reviews!

...And for What?

What's worse is that we end up with subpar products that rely too heavily on a supervisor's writing ability (or that of the employee, who all too often is asked to write his or her own evaluation), are almost uniformly inflated, and fail to offer a quantitative rating. All those flaws make them horribly blunt tools for promotion panels to use in ranking employees.

SPEAKING OUT



The members of those panels have almost certainly never met the employees they are reviewing. All they have to go on as they pit each employee against the rest of the group for promotion is a stack of EER narratives from the previous three to five years and their best judgment.

So promotion panelists must “read between the lines” of each evaluation, doing their best to spot descriptions that damn with faint praise to flag employees who performed less well than the rest of their cohort. The only other input for their decisions is award nominations.

Not once in the process is the actual supervisor — the one who has the greatest knowledge of the employee’s performance — asked to rank his or her employee against their peers. And yet we wonder why we sometimes see good employees passed over for promotion while bad employees rise through the ranks.

Our review process is in drastic need of an overhaul. We need a system that significantly reduces the

Currently, promotion panelists must “read between the lines” to spot evaluations that damn with faint praise.

amount of time and energy it takes to produce a review, freeing up that time to pursue the important work of diplomacy and development. It should also accurately and fairly evaluate employees and, without overstating their accomplishments, produce EERs that enable promotion panels to identify high-performing employees.

Finally, we need to rely more on supervisors’ familiarity with these individuals by asking them to rank their subordinates against others in their

class. For an idea of how this might work, we can look to the Marine Corps.

A Better Way

The Marine Corps Fitness Report (NAVMC Form-10835A) includes a brief description of the position (akin to our work requirement statement) and then a short (15-line) statement on the Marine’s accomplishments during the reporting period. There is both a primary rating section, completed by a rating officer known as the Reporting Senior, and a secondary review completed by a Reviewing Officer.

So far, that sounds like the EER process. Otherwise, however, the two processes could not be more different.

The Marine Corps rates its members quantitatively on 14 different criteria, rating from A (worth just one point) to G (seven points). In addition, each RS has a rating profile that is tracked throughout his or her career.

To guard against grade inflation or

DESCRIPTION	COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT
THE EMINENTLY QUALIFIED MARINE	0
ONE OF THE FEW EXCEPTIONALLY QUALIFIED MARINES	3
ONE OF THE MANY HIGHLY QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS WHO FORM THE MAJORITY OF THIS GRADE	13
A QUALIFIED MARINE	26
UNSATISFACTORY	40
UNSATISFACTORY	18
UNSATISFACTORY	6
UNSATISFACTORY	0

The Reviewing Officer “Christmas Tree” Rating Format of the Marine Corps with the Reviewer’s Historical Reviews of other Marines. Taken from an actual USMC Fitness Report.



deflation, the rated Marine's numerical score is adjusted based on this profile. So, if a Marine is rated by an RS who traditionally inflates his or her grades, that rating will be adjusted automatically in proportion to the traditional margin of inflation. The reverse is true for those Marines who are rated by an RS who traditionally deflates his or her grades.

Reporting Seniors are repeatedly reminded that inflating their grades will only do a disservice to Marines who are truly exceptional, as their high marks would then be deflated and the Marine would not stand out as he or she should.

The Reviewing Officer gives the rated individual a single overall rating from "Unsatisfactory" to "The Eminently Qualified Marine," with an intended distribution shaped like a Christmas tree (see figure on p.18). If the review is either the lowest or highest mark (either of which are extremely rare), the RO must give a specific justification. The RO's career reviews are also tracked, and listed in a breakdown on the review itself, to make clear where the rated Marine falls in relation to his peers in the RO's historical review scores.

There is a short, 13-line narrative rating statement written by the RS and a nine-line narrative review statement by the RO. If either the RS's rating or the RO's review is deemed to be adverse, the rated Marine is given the option of making a statement.

The beauty of the Marine Corps system is that it produces a quantitative, numerical rating for each officer, yet also guards against grade inflation by adjusting for the rater or reviewer's historical grading. In doing so, it generally allows those who have the most

This system would give supervisors the ability to compare employees against their peers in a clear and direct manner.

engagement with, and observation of, the rated Marines to effectively rank them against their peers.

The Marine Corps evaluation system is simple and occupies only a fraction of the time the current EER process takes. One Foreign Service colleague who served as an officer in the Marines before joining the State Department estimates that it takes, on average, two person-hours to craft an entire Marine Corps Fitness Report. That includes both the rater and reviewer sections, by the way.

Reducing the time spent on each EER from 15 hours to two would give productivity a huge boost, freeing up more than 78 working years of time annually to focus on the challenges the State Department was created to address.

Fixing the System

It is past time to rethink the way in which the Foreign Service evaluation process works. We need and deserve a better system, one that cuts down on our workload and enhances our ability to promote the very best officers into the upper ranks of the Service. Toward that end, I propose adopting a model that allows supervisors to quan-

titatively rate their employees, along the lines of the current practice in the Marine Corps.

Our metrics could be the very same ones our system purports to use right now, the six precepts for the Foreign Service. For each of the precepts (leadership, management, interpersonal, communication, intellectual skills and substantive knowledge) we could use two or three subcategories.

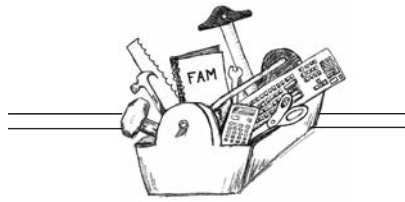
Each supervisor would rate the employee in each category on a scale of one to 10, with the total being the employee's overall score. A short narrative could also be included, but not more than a paragraph or two. In turn, again cribbing from the Marine Corps, we should track the ratings history of each supervisor and either adjust the ratings automatically or note it clearly on the rating. The reviewing officer's section could then be changed to a singular ranking, akin to those given by Marine Corps ROs.

This system would give supervisors the ability to compare employees against their peers in a clear and direct manner. In addition, good employees would no longer be put at a disadvantage by the poor drafting ability of their boss.

Finally, this approach would also force supervisors to rethink their propensity for grade inflation, a key obstacle to any honest evaluation system, and severely reduce the staff hours needed for a review.

The end result would be improved morale, enhanced efficiency and a better, stronger State Department. ■

Tyler Sparks, a political officer in Managua, entered the Foreign Service in 2005. He previously served in Lilongwe and San Jose.



FS KNOW-HOW

Use Checklists to Make Visa Interviews Smarter

By JEFFREY E. ZINSMEISTER

Adjudicating visas is a high-volume, high-risk activity. It usually involves a large number of repetitive interviews in a compressed amount of time, where the consequences of even one mistake can be very serious. Moreover, the need for speed and accuracy inherently conflict — the faster you work, the more prone you are to careless error.

This makes for a challenging balancing act. Go too slow, and you risk not keeping up with demand. Go too fast, and you can make mistakes ranging from forgetting to verify a visa fee payment to giving a visa to a potential overstay — or worse. The problem is aggravated when one considers the carnival of distraction that characterizes visa interviews, such as screaming children in the waiting room.

How, then, can the Department of State keep adjudication numbers high while avoiding mistakes? For as Assistant Secretary of Consular Affairs Janice Jacobs stated in a January cable, while expediting visa issuance is a White House priority, the department cannot “be ‘soft’ on border security.”

The department seeks to resolve this tension between speed and accuracy in several ways, starting with training. The introductory consular course that all new visa adjudicators take encompasses units on visa law and procedure, and gives officers opportunities to conduct mock interviews.

Turning best practices into explicit routines helps consular professionals internalize and apply important fundamentals.



Consular supervisors are instructed to watch for signs of stress and fatigue and to encourage line officers to take periodic breaks. In addition, consular software applications are designed to prevent the most consequential careless errors.

Still, even the best training, mentoring and management cannot fully prepare a line officer for the role of a high-volume adjudicator. Nor can consular software guard against all human error, such as forgetting to collect a visa fee receipt from an applicant or verifying that the name, date and place of birth and passport number are entered on the application precisely as they appear in the applicant’s passport.

Thus, valuable as such instruction is, the real learning happens when new officers walk into a consular section for their first day of work. There they observe more experienced colleagues on the line, and then interview applicants

under the supervision of a more senior officer. Eventually, new officers have amassed enough experience to interview on their own.

The basic premise of this approach, whether stated or implicit, is that the more training and experience officers have, the less likely they are to make careless mistakes. Unfortunately, recent research in other fields suggests that is not necessarily true.

Modern Medicine’s Weapon Against Careless Error

Studies from medicine and law indicate that the distraction-filled environment characteristic of high-volume, high-risk activities can lead even the most experienced professionals to commit errors. In medicine, for example, one finds a rough analogue to the non-immigrant visa interview in the process of inserting intravenous catheters. It is a relatively straightforward procedure that emergency room and intensive care unit doctors must perform many times throughout their workday. Nonetheless, infections readily develop in poorly inserted catheters, which often prove deadly in weak patients.

In 2001, Johns Hopkins University physician Peter Pronovost published a remarkable study of intravenous catheter insertion in 103 ICUs across Michigan. At the time, this seemingly simple, repetitive procedure was causing



a significant number of deaths from secondary infections, even though well-trained, highly specialized doctors were involved.

Pronovost's idea was as simple as it was controversial. He required all doctors to use a five-step checklist for every insertion, which basically went like this: (1) wash hands; (2) clean the patient's skin with antiseptic; (3) put sterile drapes over the patient; (4) wear sterile scrubs; and (5) put a sterile dressing over the catheter site.

The checklist seemed so obvious that it sparked skepticism. Why force experts to "dumb down" their work by using a checklist for such an easy task? Yet the results spoke for themselves. The infection rate from catheter insertions in the ICUs went from 11 percent to zero. Why?

Subsequent commentaries, including surgeon Atul Gawande's superb article in the Dec. 10, 2007, issue of *The New Yorker*, detailed the important process at work in Pronovost's approach. His checklist cut through the distractions of urgent care and forced physicians to focus on the basics.

ICU care is terribly complex, and demands that physicians make a large number of critical decisions in a very short time frame. Background tasks like inserting catheters can get lost in this cognitive "noise" of higher-level decision-making. Moreover, the impact of this cognitive noise seems to affect expert physicians, too, suggesting that expertise alone is not enough to forestall careless error.

The beauty of Pronovost's checklist was that it assisted physicians of all experience levels in reducing mistakes. Other applications of this approach in hospitals, like inserting ventilator tubes or washing one's hands, have shown similar results. The trick is the same:

***State seeks to resolve
the tension between
speed and accuracy in
visa adjudication in
several ways, starting
with training.***

institutionalizing best practices into explicit routines so that distracted practitioners don't forget important fundamentals.

Lawyers Use Checklists, Too

Some in the legal world are reaching similar conclusions about a critical high-volume, high-risk task in lawsuits: document review. Under U.S. law, parties to civil lawsuits often must turn over documents relevant to the case to the other litigants in preparation for trial. In complex matters, this process may involve combing through millions of documents — both hard-copy and electronic. Further, once the relevant documents have been selected, lawyers must find and set aside any privileged material before disclosing the remainder to the other side.

Even though managing this collection and review process can be quite complex, the individual reviewer's job is often a relatively simple but repetitive one, similar to that of a visa officer.

And like visa work, serious consequences can attach to even small mistakes. One need only look at one recent malpractice claim to understand the dangers: a major U.S. law

firm was sued for accidentally disclosing attorney-client privileged information when it responded to a U.S. government subpoena.

Given the risks involved, some practitioners have sought to improve quality control by understanding document review as a process and standardizing it, much as Dr. Pronovost did in Michigan intensive care units. At least one law firm has had its review process certified as ISO 9001-compliant, which generally involves extensive checklist-based internal auditing. Another touts adherence to the principles of Six Sigma, a quality-control system from the manufacturing world that effectively reduces complex tasks to checklist-type steps.

Some legal commentators now predict that such checklist-based systems will proliferate as document review becomes increasingly complex. The consequences of even one mistake are simply too great.

**Checklists at the
Consular Window**

These examples demonstrate that even the most experienced, skillful practitioners can only handle so much information without losing track of something. On the visa line, this can take the form of failing to collect a machine-readable visa fee receipt, neglecting to check the accuracy of a name or date of birth, writing notes in the wrong case file, or missing a hit in a clearance. (It should be noted, however, that officers must manually override hits on serious ineligibilities to issue a visa.)

This brings us back to the question posed at the beginning of this article: How can we help officers efficiently carry out high-volume, high-risk tasks like visa adjudication? Training and ex-



perience can only go so far; without a systematic way of processing interviews, even the most senior officers can make mistakes. The consular systems help focus one's attention; but in all fairness, they do not appear to have been designed with usability as a primary consideration.

Leadership on this issue has largely come from the field. Embassy Reykjavik, for instance, has created a series of checklists for non-immigrant visa interviews. While simple and geared to busy officers, the document has space to collect more detailed information where needed.

Other posts may have drawn up similar resources, as well, but it is difficult to know for sure absent a clearinghouse for this type of information.

***Leadership on this
issue has largely
come from the field.***

In addition, many embassies and consulates have created checklists for locally employed staff who perform an initial review of applications for completeness.

The same techniques can assist with immigrant visa adjudication, as well. My first supervisor in the Foreign Service, the consular section chief in Praia, taught me a technique based on

the same model as Dr. Pronovost's: harness a standardized method to avoid careless error.

For each applicant, I would verify his or her ID, administer the oath, take fingerprints, collect signatures, verify fee payment, confirm basic information, ask other necessary questions, write my case notes and adjudicate the case. This methodical process ensured that I chose the right visa class, collected the appropriate fees and did not miss any ineligibilities. Moreover, by placing the documents in the same order in every case, if I had to pick up the file again later I could quickly tell if all documentation was complete.

I would encourage all consular supervisors to consider using checklists at their posts, to both train new officers and provide experienced hands with a useful refresher. The content of such checklists would, of course, vary depending on the specific needs and conditions at each post.

Such a tool may seem overly simple to visa line veterans, but research suggests that it adds value, even for the most seasoned officer. It also helps promote what Assistant Secretary Jacobs identifies as our core mission: to protect U.S. citizens.

In a field where just one mistake can make headlines, the usefulness of checklists as a training tool should not be ignored. ■

Jeffrey E. Zinsmeister, a former commercial litigator, is a second-tour, political-coned Foreign Service officer in the narcotics affairs section in Mexico City. His first assignment was as a consular officer in Praia. The views expressed in this article are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of State or the U.S. government.



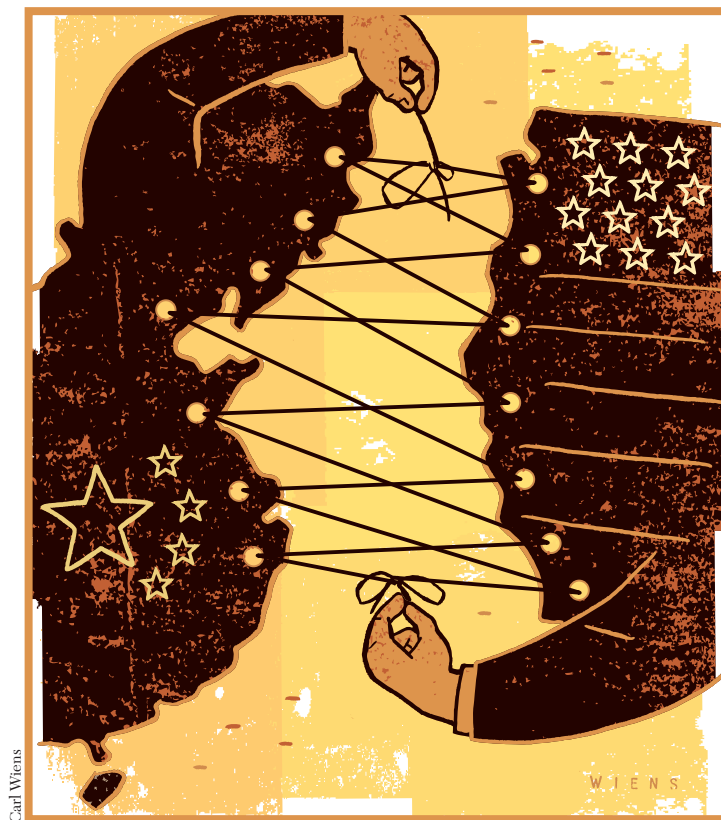
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FOUR DECADES AFTER THE OPENING TO CHINA



FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER
SHARES HIS THOUGHTS ON THE STATE OF U.S.-CHINA
RELATIONS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF DIPLOMACY.

As national security adviser from 1969 to 1975, Henry Kissinger was instrumental in paving the way for President Richard Nixon's historic trip to Beijing in February 1972, and the subsequent establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the two governments. As Secretary of State from 1973 to 1977, Kissinger continued to cultivate the new relationship, among many other diplomatic initiatives.

For this special issue of the Foreign Service Journal, he graciously agreed to reflect on the 40th anniversary of the es-



Ian Houston

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger with AFSA President Susan Johnson.

establishment of diplomatic relations with Beijing, U.S.-China relations today, and other topics, in an interview conducted by AFSA President Susan Johnson at his New York City office on July 25.

SJ: *What is your assessment of the state of Sino-American relations today? How do you see them evolving, and what do you think their impact is on the global situation?*

HK: Sino-American relations may be the single most important relationship, in terms of its impact on the international situation. If China and the United States are in a cooperative relationship, it will be easier to construct an Asian and global system on the basis of common objectives and purposes. If we are in a confrontational position, many if not most countries in Asia will have to choose sides. This will strain their domestic structure and lead to stagnation in international politics — and if it were to lead to war, it would result in the exhaustion of both sides.

At the same time, global cooperation with equals is not the national style of either country. There's a difference in cultural perspective, in the sense that we believe our values are relevant to the entire world, and the entire world are aspirant Americas. As a result, there's a strong missionary spirit in American foreign policy.

Chinese believe that their values are exceptional but

not accessible to non-Chinese. And, therefore, the Chinese concept of world order is one in which their importance is recognized and respected by other countries.

We are both challenged to modify our historical approach. It's a new experience for both countries.

Where is the relationship today? Formally, the statements of both sides are very positive; and almost certainly, they are sincere on both sides. But in both countries there are significant elements who argue that the traditional pattern of international relations, which dictates confrontation between an aspirant country and an established country, is going to reassert itself and who are therefore advocating a more confrontational approach. That is the challenge of American foreign policy. It's also the challenge of Chinese foreign policy.

The current administration has understood the importance of the Sino-American relationship. It cannot always bring itself to apply these principles in every concrete case. But they are basically moving in the right direction, and the Chinese are trying to also move.

There are many unsolved issues, but the most positive thing is that for eight American administrations and for four generations of Chinese leaders, the main lines of diplomacy established in the 1970s have been maintained and elaborated.

SJ: *Do you see any significant changes in the way we*

define our national interests and the way the Chinese define theirs in these last four decades? To what extent do you think we have gotten what we were expecting and they feel they have gotten some measure of what they were hoping for?

HK: We both achieved what we were aiming for at the beginning. Our challenge was, we had to end the war in Vietnam. We had to restore American confidence that a global policy was possible. We had to show to the American public that peace could be the overriding objective of American foreign policy. And we had to conduct the Cold War. So, to the extent that we restored fluidity to the international system, and that we brought in a country that had been excluded, we affected the calculations of the key players and we limited the confrontational aspect of the Cold War.

China was facing the concentration of a large Soviet army on its borders and had some real reasons, which become more and more apparent today as more documents appear, to fear an imminent invasion of their territory. So they operated in the classic Chinese style of getting the distant barbarian to confront the nearby barbarian. We attempted to be closer to each side than they were to each other. They attempted to line us up on their side in a quasi-alliance posture. We couldn't go that far, but we found enough common ground so that a good part of the design was achieved.

Now we are in a different world. There is no common security danger, but a whole set of common problems — like energy, environment, proliferation. There is the issue of China emerging as an economic competitor, as well as a growing military power, side by side with other emerging countries like India and South East Asia.

Therefore the key problem becomes: Is it possible for each of us to achieve basic national objectives without turning the relationship into a military confrontation? And is it possible for us to sustain this over an extended period of time, so that in time, cooperation becomes a fundamental commitment on both sides? Or are we doomed to irritate each other for such an extended period that, at the end, it winds up in a conflict? And as I said, to me the model of World War I is the one that we must avoid.

The key problem is how to achieve basic national objectives without turning the relationship into a military confrontation.

SJ: Four decades after your historic initiative to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, is there anything you have found particularly surprising? Or have most developments followed along expected lines?

HK: During the Cold War, except for a little hiccup when the Gang of Four was dominant in China, things moved in the direction we were hoping they would move — almost the optimum direction in which we were hoping they would move. The current period was not expected; if someone had shown me a picture of Beijing today in 1971, and said this is what Beijing will look like in 40 years, I don't pretend that we foresaw any of that. We did foresee that China would become a more important country and that it would grow. That was not surprising; but the speed and magnitude of it are surprising to me.

SJ: Let me shift gears a little bit. Against that backdrop, how do you assess the importance of diplomacy for the United States today since we are also the world's premier military power?

HK: I don't like to treat diplomacy and military power as alternatives. We are in the habit of saying that the military fight up to a certain point, and then the diplomats take over, or the other way around. I think the two should be linked. At all times, diplomacy is extremely important, and should be pre-eminent. In the present world, where the number of problems that one can even imagine solving with military means is shrinking, the role of diplomacy is even greater.

Where I sometimes get into disagreement with the Foreign Service, as much as I admire its talents, is the temptation to turn diplomacy into a sort of a technical exercise consisting entirely of day-to-day negotiations. Diplomacy has to start with a strategic vision of where the country and the world should go. The day-to-day problems should be seen in relation to this overall strategy. Of course, this is difficult to achieve when there are thousands of cables coming in every day, and most of them are framed as issues requiring immediate attention.

I was talking the other day to a German, head of the Pirate Party, and their motto is "every document should be

public.” I said, “Answer me this question: when I was Secretary of State, and it’s the same for today’s Secretary of State, thousands of cables come in during the day. He or she sees maybe 50, if they’re lucky. So then how do you turn the urgent into something important and long-range?”

That’s the big challenge that we have in designing our diplomacy. We are very good at the day-to-day stuff; we have more trouble with the long-range design.

SJ: *That’s a very interesting observation. From your perspective, how important is it to have a strong, professional, career Foreign Service for the conduct of diplomacy?*

HK: It is essential. All of us who have worked with the Foreign Service, even though we might be at times exasperated, know that it is crucial to American foreign policy. Without the people willing to go all over the world and to make huge sacrifices, our international efforts could not function. And their competence is the indispensable intellectual resource for the Secretary of State.

We need a career Foreign Service with a high morale. We have to focus it more on the strategic aspects of the work, so that officers don’t get too absorbed in the daily flow of cable traffic, which threatens to drown everybody.

As Secretary of State, what I found was that in any crisis, in any fast-moving situation, the Foreign Service is indispensable, because they know how you respond, to whom and in what way. They are essential to guide you through the crisis. I know all my fellow Secretaries of State, with whom I’m in close touch, feel the same way.

What needs to be done more is to get a conceptual apparatus geared to day-to-day policymaking. I know there is the policy planning staff, but that sometimes becomes a sort of an academic enterprise that writes abstract think papers. The question is how to relate these two to each other. A professional Foreign Service is not only essential; it needs to be fostered and further developed.

When people write about me, they usually say that I preferred to act on my own. But if you look at the people

For eight American administrations and four generations of Chinese leaders, the main lines of diplomacy established in the 1970s have been maintained and elaborated.

who worked with me as Secretary of State, an overwhelming majority were Foreign Service officers, especially on the Middle East troubles.

SJ: *What would you say to someone considering a career in diplomacy today?*

HK: You have to know what you want to do with your life. If you want to be able to say at the end of your life that you left things better than they were and that you worked every day on something that made a contribution, then you should become a diplomat. But if you want comfort, and if you want to raise a typical family, and if the material possibilities of this country are your principal objective, you should not do it.

SJ: *Well, that’s an interesting thing we’re wrestling with today ... who joins and who doesn’t, and at what point do they decide that this is something that they want to do with their life, or that it isn’t.*

HK: You might know Winston Lord. Well, Winston wanted to quit when we went into the sanctuaries in Cambodia, and I said to him: “Winston, if you want to make yourself feel good, then go out there and march around with a placard. If you want to help end the Vietnam War, stay with me.” And to his enormous credit and sacrifice, and to the country’s benefit, he stayed.

SJ: *Turning to another topic, would it be fair to say that you see human rights as an important, but not necessarily determinative, facet of our bilateral relations with China?*

HK: That would be correct.

SJ: *And how do you think U.S. policymakers should balance competing national interests, in particular our human rights interests and others?*

HK: It depends. I don’t know the exact balance. If somebody does, he’s wiser than I am. Human rights are an important element in our policy. So the first thing you have to decide, of course, is if it’s best achieved by confrontation or by engagement.

I lean toward engagement, but I wouldn’t say that as an

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absolute principle — when you deal with Hitler, you cannot achieve progress with engagement. I wrote an article on Syria, in which I agree with the strategic objective. I do not think it rises to the level of using American military force to achieve it, but that's a question of judgment.

SJ: *On another issue, today there was an article in the New York Times about the International Crisis Group's report on the rising risk of fighting in the South China Sea. How do you see tensions over these conflicting claims unfolding, and is there any particular advice that you would have for policymakers in Washington or for our diplomats in the field?*

HK: The dotted line that was put forward by a previous Chinese government some years ago reflected a view of where the Chinese empire had traditionally projected its influence across the sea. But they didn't frame the

At all times, diplomacy is extremely important, and should be pre-eminent.

issue then in terms of the modern concept of freedom of the seas. It's a traditional Chinese view, but how it applies to contemporary circumstances has not been made fully clear.

I think we have two problems in the South China Sea. One is the freedom of navigation; the second is the future of the various archipelagoes that dot the region. We should try to separate those two issues, and try to get all the concerned parties to agree on some concept of freedom of navigation as a first step.

The easiest would be for all of us to ratify the Law of the Sea Treaty. This would remove the freedom of navigation issue. On the issue of these archipelagos, I would try to avoid dealing with them as a coherent issue. I think we should resist the use of force in settling it. I would hope that in the evolution of our Asian policy, a way could be found to deal with them one by one as they come up.



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SJ: Do you think that the Chinese, in light of how far they've come and what they've done in other situations, would prefer or be willing to foreswear any use of force?

HK: Probably not. They may be willing to *not* use force, but they may not be willing to foreswear it. Nor would we.

SJ: Which analysts or agencies do you find to be the most reliable sources of information on developments in China, during your time in government and now?

HK: In my time in government, there was so little contact with China at first. We had no diplomats there. I occasionally would talk to visitors who had been in China, and also learned something on visits to Hong Kong and from Hong Kong reporting. The CIA was fairly good, as well. Although as late as July 1971, when I was already on the way to Beijing, they published a report that said: "Yes, the Chinese may want to open toward the United States, but never while Mao is still alive."

I relied mostly on State Department personnel, with

some reliance on the CIA. But when I was in government, the CIA wasn't very elaborated in China. When George W. Bush was president, he arranged for me to get CIA briefings, and I thought the CIA was very good. But so was the political division at the embassy. They work so closely together anyway.

SJ: Is there any final point you'd like to make, either about our relationship with China or the importance of diplomacy?

HK: I've made my basic point on the need for a conceptual apparatus, and for creating a core of people who are nonpartisan and who can provide continuity in American foreign policy. Certainly one of the key aspects of foreign policy has to be reliability, so that other countries can gear their actions on the expectation of your own, or our own, conduct. And for that, the Foreign Service is essential.

SJ: Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with us, Dr. Kissinger. ■



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HUMAN RIGHTS, CHINA AND 21ST-CENTURY DIPLOMACY

DEVELOPMENTS IN CHINA OFFER NEW
OPPORTUNITIES TO REFRAME OUR APPROACH
TO BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

BY MICHAEL H. POSNER

As U.S. diplomacy re-balances toward Asia, China is playing an increasingly large role in every sphere. It is now our largest trading partner outside of North America. China is an important partner in addressing regional and global security issues, from North Korea to Iran to Syria. Beijing's decisions and the character of the U.S.-China relationship are critical to our prospects for success in tackling global challenges, ranging from nonproliferation to climate change to the future of the Internet.

As China's role on the global stage has grown, the United States has underscored the importance of China playing by international rules, norms and universal principles. Human rights is no exception. Indeed, protection of human rights is an important national interest, in addition to a moral one. China's future stability and its value as a long-term partner will depend on its government's will and capacity to meet the aspirations of its 1.3 billion citizens. Therefore, the United States has integrated human rights as a central element of our diplomacy.

While we maintain a longstanding commitment to uni-

versal rights, we have opportunities to do what we do differently than we have in the past. Rapid changes within Chinese society and the growing demands by ordinary Chinese citizens for reform offer new opportunities for the United States to reframe the emphasis of, and approach to, our bilateral discussions of human rights.

Human rights has long been an issue in U.S.-China relations. From Tibet to Tiananmen Square, from the Cultural Revolution to the one-child policy, and with regard to specific dissident cases, human rights issues in China have stirred passionate feelings on both sides of the Pacific. Many Americans are harshly critical of the Chinese government's persecution of dissidents and its one-child policy, while some Chinese are angered by what they see as an effort to judge their country as part of some broader effort to foment instability in China and to bring about the demise of the Communist Party.

But we believe that engaging on all issues, including ones where we have differences, is part of building a strong U.S.-China relationship — as well as a more stable and prosperous China. The State Department has engaged with the candor and pragmatism that arise from the conviction that progress on realizing universal rights and the rule of law advances the national interests of both nations

Michael H. Posner is the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

and helps to build a more mature bilateral relationship.

Economic Success, Political Lag

Our dialogue must begin with a clear-eyed assessment of what is happening in China today. The country's spectacular economic growth over the last 30 years has lifted an estimated 600 million people out of poverty. China has become the global epicenter of manufacturing, producing not only apparel and toys but also cars, cell phones and iPads.

Last year, U.S. trade in goods and services with China exceeded \$500 billion. With hundreds of millions of increasingly wealthy consumers, China is a prime market for companies from around the world.

Chinese society, too, has changed, as the inward focus of the last century has been replaced by an increasingly international outlook. Chinese tourists and investors roam the world, and more than 330,000 Chinese students are studying abroad, some 150,000 of them in the United States.

Chinese citizens are wired: More than half a billion of them have Internet access, a penetration rate of about 38 percent. One in five global Internet users is Chinese.

They are connected: There were more than a billion Chinese mobile phone subscribers in a population of about 1.3 billion. And they are on the move: More than half of

all Chinese now live in urban areas, creating a web of new cities on what was farmland three decades ago.

Yet China's economic transformation has not been matched by progress on political reform, democratic development, and the government and party's respect for human rights and the rule of law. If we consider some of the characteristics experts prioritize for successful developing nations — transparency, accountability, the rule of law, a strong civil society, a free press, Internet freedom, freedom of religion, free and fair elections, and independent unions — none of these is fully present in China. (Though it isn't a candidate, it is still striking that the world's second-largest economy would not qualify as a partner under the publicly available Millennium Challenge Corporation criteria, which require that a country "demonstrate a commitment to just and democratic governance, investments in its people, and economic freedom as measured by different policy indicators.")

Chinese Communist Party officials are publicly reluctant to accept any linkage between democratization, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and the ability to cope with change (and thereby preserve stability) that generally characterizes the world's democratic nations. If anything, China's economic success blunts the impetus for top-down

Making Common Cause

Thirty-five years after DRL's creation, we enjoy close, mature partnerships with the regional bureaus. We must. We share a common charge from the president to encourage governments to respect human rights and democracy. It is in our national interest to do so.

Start with Burma. Two years ago, led by Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell, the administration started new diplomatic engagement with Burma's military regime. President Thein Sein took the first steps toward reforming Burma's repressive political system. In response, DRL and EAP worked together to adapt our policy to ensure that principled engagement achieved human rights results, and rewarded the regime for positive change, while keeping on pressure to halt abuses and promote further reforms.

DRL and EAP's tight cooperation has already played a part in real results: hundreds of political prisoners released, Aung San Suu Kyi free and in parliament, and authorization for U.S. investment accompanied by reporting requirements to ensure transparency.

All around the world, DRL and the regional bureaus take advantage of differing contact networks, expertise and organizational focus to create practical, on-the-ground outcomes. DRL's collaboration with NEA is encouraging Bahrain's monarchy toward national reconciliation and dialogue with the opposition, while in Tunisia we have arranged mediation training to reduce and manage strikes disrupting the Tunisian economy.

Our Internet Freedom and Programming teams work with the regional bureaus to finance and spread secure communication technologies that help human rights defenders escape surveillance and detection, and allow citizens access to the open Internet. And together with EUR, we coordinate with partners in the European Union on human rights challenges from North Africa to North Korea, from Belarus to Burma.

To paraphrase President Obama, governments that respect human rights and democracy are more just, peaceful and legitimate. Their success fosters an environment that supports America's national interests. That success is our common cause.

— *Michael H. Posner*

democratic reform, even while political soul-searching takes place over such issues as corruption.

China has made efforts in recent years to leverage political influence overseas to limit criticism of its human rights record. Beijing is a major aid donor in Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia, sits on the United Nations Human Rights Council, and is courted for its diplomatic support on issues ranging from Sudan to Syria.

Yet China's economic model is not as widely admired as it was several years ago. It has become apparent that China's rapid economic growth absent political modernization has created multiple stressors. These include corruption, income inequality, lack of protections for a vast and growing population of migrant workers, environmental degradation, consumer safety issues and labor unrest.

Moreover, the huge leap in living standards has gener-

Societies change from within, and the nature of that change is in the hands of the Chinese people.

ated rising expectations. While economic growth has happened without political reform, sustaining a modern economy without modern, rights-respecting rule of law is looking increasingly challenging.

Calls for Change

These social pressures are expressed in the large number of citizen protests that have taken place around the country in recent years. These spontaneous, sometimes violent protests are organized by ordinary Chinese citizens over a wide range of issues that mainly concern the quality of everyday life: land disputes, abuse of power by local officials, environmental threats, labor unrest and food safety.

While some Chinese officials believe that they can continue to walk the path of economic growth without political liberalization, others are clearly grappling with how to answer these growing demands for change from their citi-



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zens. The Chinese people are rightfully proud of their nation's accomplishments, but many young people, particularly the "Post-90s Generation" (those who were born after 1990, and so were not alive for the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown), do not equate the expression of discontent with government performance with a threat to national pride.

A sense of pervasive unfairness in the system and demands for political openness, less corruption, and more accountability come not only from less privileged Chinese youth and workers, but also from members of the urban elite, who are increasingly rich, well-educated and wired. Although there are no publicly available official figures for the number of Chinese strikes and protests each year, non-governmental groups estimate there were about 30,000 collective protests by workers during 2011, including wildcat strikes in the Pearl River delta.

Younger Chinese workers tend to organize these strikes to contest wages, demand improvements in health and safety, protest the mistreatment of migrant workers or address other workplace issues. Despite government attempts to stop them, and the fact that independent unions are illegal, the strikes continue.

The State Department engages on labor issues with Chinese officials at a variety of levels, and we work and exchange ideas with labor activists who understand that China's transition to a modern industrial relations system that permits collective bargaining and independent unions will promote better conditions for workers and greater social stability, avoid the economic disruptions caused by frequent strikes and help to build the new middle-class consumers that can drive China's economy.

By stressing this connection between improvements in human rights and the interests of the Chinese government in fostering social stability, we have sought to build bridges and trust with Chinese officials and Chinese workers. We offer diplomatic support for labor reform where appropriate, and technical expertise where desired.

Jumping the "Great Firewall"

The Chinese government has responded to the advent of the Internet and other new communication technologies by attempting to control the content available online. But here as well, while China is a controlled system, it is not a monolith. The "Great Firewall" continues to filter the Internet in China and local censors troll the Web deleting millions of pages and posts; yet the Post-90s Genera-

tion and many other Chinese citizens have learned how to "jump the wall" to access blocked content and share it.

With bipartisan support from Congress, the State Department and USAID have spent or committed \$100 million to promote Internet freedom around the world.

While media reporting about political strife or the cases of dissidents is strictly limited, reporting on "quality of life" issues, such as land and labor rights, is now widespread (except in Tibetan areas and Xinjiang, where much more stringent controls on information are the norm). Citizen reporting, including tough criticism of the government, permeates the Internet in China and drives social media sites, despite the government's exhaustive efforts to delete it. A recent Harvard University study concluded that Chinese censorship is now primarily directed toward thwarting collective action, not suppressing criticism of the state, its policies or even its leaders.

Ordinary Chinese citizens are using the Internet to improve their lives in myriad ways, from building businesses and taking online courses to connecting with far-flung family members. A significant number are also struggling against censorship and protesting the lack of a say in the way they are governed. And in some cases, they prevail.

In early July, mass protests in the city of Shifang in southwestern China forced the local government to halt its approval of plans to construct a \$1.6 billion copper plant because of pollution fears. On Weibo, a major Chinese microblogging Web site with more than 300 million registered users, photos showed clouds of tear gas fired at demonstrators, and citizens reported that riot police had fired stun grenades in an attempt to disperse a crowd reported to number in the tens of thousands. Chinese reporters were reportedly blocked from entering the city, and the official media did not run accounts of the July 3 announcement by the Shifang local government that it would halt the copper-smelting project.

Nevertheless, news, images and video spread rapidly on Weibo, even after "Shifang" abruptly disappeared from the list of frequently searched terms. Several media outlets reported that high school and university students had been the initial driving force behind the movement to halt construction of the factory, prompting a state-run newspaper to editorialize that high school students should stay out of politics and study.

The Shifang incident follows a number of other cases in which Chinese citizens have challenged local officials — with varying degrees of success — on a range of issues. In

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Wenzhou, citizens demanded an official investigation of a July 2011 high-speed train crash that killed some 40 people. And in Dalian, residents organized daily protests outside a chemical plant to spotlight fears that the paraxylene produced there would spill and endanger the surrounding communities.

An Opening for Food Diplomacy

Food safety also continues to be a flashpoint. Public outrage following a tainted-milk scandal in 2008 led to sweeping government attempts to improve food safety controls. In June, infant formula manufactured by a Chinese company was found to contain high levels of mercury; but in a sign of

By stressing the connection between improvements in human rights and the interests of the Chinese government in fostering social stability, we have sought to build bridges and trust.

progress, this time the contamination was discovered and announced by China's product quality watchdog, the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine.

In the past, Internet searches on terms such as "tainted milk" were shut down, and the father of a child who died from drinking tainted milk was jailed for his food safety activism. But increasingly, the Chinese media are permitted to report on the ongoing battle to control rogue food manufacturers.

In March, for example, the *China Daily* newspaper ran a report about contaminated peas. And in May, the state-run news agency Xinhua revealed that it was common practice for vegetable sellers to spray their cabbages with

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formaldehyde, a carcinogen, because few can afford refrigeration.

With the Chinese people now ranking food safety as a top priority, this concern provides an opening for engaging the government on productive responses to citizen concerns.

Corruption is an even more sensitive topic, one that touches almost every person in China. In general, Chinese authorities have portrayed it as a purely local problem, but recent news stories have offered an intriguing window into the dealings of senior government officials and their families.

It is notable that in some cases, Chinese national authorities have sided with rural citizens who have protested — even violently — illicit land seizures and other excesses by local authorities. This spring, democratic elections were

As we move past stilted talking points to pursue real progress, the topics we choose to raise with Beijing must amplify Chinese voices for reform.

held in the village of Wukan, three months after villagers blockaded themselves to protest what they claimed was the illegal sale of their land to property developers by local officials.

As in the standoff in Shifang, the granting of elections in Wukan was seen as a rare concession by the Communist Party, and it is unclear whether the lesson of Wukan will be implemented elsewhere in China.

The Rules Apply to Everyone

As we look toward a future in which both the United States and China have an enhanced interest in closer cooperation, U.S. expressions of concern over events in China need to be based on universal human rights principles that apply to every nation, including our own.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton stressed this theme in a July 9 speech in Mongolia, where she argued that the transformation of that nation from “a one-party communist dictatorship into a pluralistic, democratic political system” challenges the notion that “freedom and democracy are exclusively Western concepts.”

The U.S.-China relationship is mature, multifaceted and resilient. We are able to cooperate on a range of issues that are important to both countries, as our most recent Strategic and Economic Dialogue demonstrated, and those issues include human rights.

As we continue to move past stilted talking points and pursue real progress, the topics we choose to raise with Beijing should amplify Chinese voices for reform. We must focus on the issues that matter the most to Chinese citizens and where American moral, diplomatic or technical support can most help Chinese activists.

We must also be mindful that societies change from within, and the nature of that change is in the hands of the Chinese people. It will not be dictated by the United States, nor should it be. But as Secretary Clinton has said, “Fundamentally, there is a right side of history. And we want to be on it.”

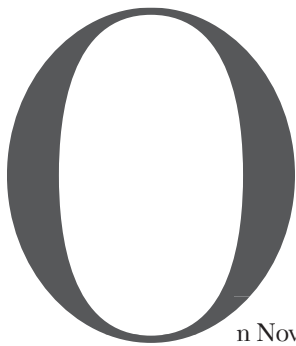
For that reason, the United States must continue to support the many courageous Chinese citizens who are demanding that their human rights be respected. We need to stand with them as they build the stronger, freer, more rights-respecting society that they deserve. ■

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AFTER JUST THREE YEARS, THIS PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE PROGRAM IS ALREADY BRINGING THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA CLOSER TOGETHER.

BY STANTON JUE

On Nov. 16, 2009, en route to his first summit meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao in Beijing, President Barack Obama made a brief stop in Shanghai. There he took part in a town hall-style meeting with several hundred carefully vetted students at the Museum of Science and Technology.

At the outset of the event, the president reviewed the positive impact of growing contacts between the Chinese and American people and institutions since the restoration of full bilateral relations 30 years earlier. The success of this engagement, he noted, depended in large measure on greater mutual understanding, on sustaining an open dialogue and on learning more about each other — and from one another.

For this reason, Pres. Obama proudly announced that the United States intended to dramatically increase the number of American students who study in China to 100,000, as part of an initiative to deepen and expand bilateral contacts. He added that Washington does not view

Beijing as an adversary and has no intention of trying to contain its rise, for one country's success need not come at the expense of another.

While the president hoped his message would be delivered without restriction to a broad national audience, there is no way of knowing how many Chinese people actually heard or understood his remarks. But Hu warmly welcomed the 100,000-Strong Initiative, which was included in the joint communique issued after the summit. And many observers have hailed it as one of the most consequential people-to-people programs to be discussed during the Beijing summit, and a long-overdue recognition of the strategic importance of such engagement.

In the program's first year, 2010, Beijing offered 10,000 bridge scholarships for American participants, which cover most of their in-country expenses. Two years later, the third Strategic and Economic Dialogue expanded the number of annual scholarships China offers to 20,000. As Pres. Hu declared in 2011, "Not even the most sophisticated telecommunication technology can replace face-to-face exchanges."

A Long History of Exchanges

The first attempt to organize cultural and educational exchanges between the United States and China ended

Stanton Jue is a retired FSO whose career with the U.S. Information Agency and the Department of State spanned 35 years. He served in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, China, South Vietnam, Cambodia, Australia and Washington, D.C., and continues to write about Chinese affairs.

nearly 130 years before Pres. Obama's trip. Yung Wing's Chinese Educational Mission to the United States was ambitious but short-lived, lasting from 1872 to 1881.

After a Western expedition put down the 1900 Boxer Rebellion, China was required to pay massive war reparations to seven European powers and the United States. In 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt approved the use of some of those funds for three purposes: to create a scholarship program for Chinese students to study in the United States; to set up an American preparatory school in Beijing (which later expanded to become the premier Tsinghua University); and to establish a foundation to fund the China Institute in New York City in 1925.

The Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program, as it was known, enabled about 1,300 Chinese students to attend universities and colleges in the United States between 1909 and 1939. Participants included an extraordinary number of legendary figures who later contributed greatly to Sino-American relations and helped modernize China. In fact, the impact of this program continues to reverberate to this day.

In 1946, Senator William Fulbright, D-Ark., introduced legislation to establish the Fulbright International Exchange Program. China, then known as the Republic of China, was the first country to sign on in 1947. Unfortunately it was suspended two years later, when the Communist Party took power in 1949. After a lapse of 30 years, the Fulbright program was resurrected following the establishment of official relations between China and the United States in 1979, and has become China's flagship academic exchange program with the United States.

Even so, participation in the exchanges has been decidedly one-sided. According to the Institute of International Education and the State Department's Educational and Cultural Affairs Office's last "Open Doors" report, issued last November, some 158,000 Chinese students were enrolled at American colleges and universities. Representing 22 percent of the total international student population in the United States, it is the largest single contingent of foreign students here.

In contrast, fewer than 14,000 American students studied in China in 2010. Though striking, this numerical imbalance is not a concern in and of itself. After all, foreign students contributed more than \$21.2 billion to the U.S.

***China's first effort to organize
cultural and educational
exchanges with America
lasted from 1872 to 1881.***

economy last year. The real concern is that so few American students study Chinese language and culture or aspire to learn more about China.

It is also worth noting that Chinese participants typically come from families with means, and tend to enroll in science and technology programs at major schools. In contrast, American students mostly take short-term courses, either for a summer or a single school year. Fortunately, thanks to increased funding from both governmental and corporate sources, the mix of American students going to China has slowly begun to change.

Ambassadors for the United States in China

Speaking at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing in May 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton offered the following description of the 100,000-Strong Initiative's purpose. In her view, it enables American students "to learn Mandarin Chinese, to experience Chinese culture, and to learn about the hospitality of the Chinese people, while they also serve as ambassadors for the United States in China."

The need for Americans to learn a foreign language and culture is also strongly endorsed in a November 2011 report from the Council on Foreign Relations. The CFR task force report found that American students are ill prepared to compete with their global peers due to their lack of language skills, cultural knowledge and global awareness. This jeopardizes their ability to interact with others in many fields.

To lead the effort, State set up a small office in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs known as the 100,000-Strong Office, and named Carola McGiffert, a smart-power leader at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, as its director. Drawing on more than two decades of experience, she moved the initiative rapidly and seamlessly forward, even without funds appropriated for it by Congress, by enlisting private-sector support. Thanks to her advocacy, American corporations with business ties to China and other private-sector entities have already pledged more than \$15 million.

After the office was set up, an advisory committee co-chaired by former Chicago Mayor Richard Daley and former Senator Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., selected four U.S.

cities as centers for the initiative: Washington, D.C., Seattle, Los Angeles and Chicago.

At a Dec. 3, 2011, session with foreign reporters at the Washington Foreign Press Center, McGiffert explained how these public-private partnerships operate. First, donors' contributions go directly to the schools and study-abroad programs of their choice. So when Coca-Cola pledged a million dollars last year, that money went to six universities via a competitive process administered by a foundation. In addition, part of the grant was designated to support need-based scholarships for lower-income students.

That last aspect is critical, because most American participants in international educational exchanges traditionally hail from large universities. To diversify enrollment, the 100,000-Strong Initiative aims to create opportunities for low-income students, those attending two-year colleges and community colleges, minority students, and middle and high school students from underserved communities. The idea is that the sooner we can expose young minds to Chinese language and culture, the better prepared they will be to interact with their peers on the world stage.

Private-sector organizations also sponsor fundraising events to support the 100,000-Strong Initiative. A Dec. 17 concert in Beijing featured a number of American and Chinese pop stars under the logo "Booey Lehou," which is drawn from an excerpt from a Confucius saying that essentially means "We are very happy when friends come from afar."

The Road Ahead

The Third Consultation on China and U.S. People-to-People Exchange that took place in Beijing this past May was sadly overshadowed by the furor over the fate of dissident Chen Guangcheng. But participants in the discussion concurred that in its first three years, the CPE has already had a significant impact on Sino-American relations through exchanges in the areas of education, science and technology, sports, culture and women's issues. These activities, along with the 100,000-Strong Initiative, have played an influential role in enhancing and strengthening ties between the citizens of America and China.

Still, there are signs that the organization's structure is inadequate to carry out its ambitious mission over the long

American corporations with business ties to China and other private-sector entities have already pledged more than \$15 million for the program.

haul. This prompted a restructuring of the program, moving it out of the Department of State and recreating it as an independent, private, nonprofit entity. Toward that end, the Ford Foundation recently agreed to give \$1 million in seed funding to establish a 100,000-Strong Foundation. This will move the initiative toward a model of partnering collaboration and reciprocity between private, nonprofit organizations and individuals, with less emphasis on national self-interest and direct governmental involvement.

Sec. Clinton rightly hailed the Ford Foundation's commitment as crucial to supporting and sustaining the goals of the program beyond its original four-year term. It also represents a valuable model for bringing together government, civil society and the private sector to carry out other people-to-people projects. ■

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A PERSONAL HOMAGE TO THE FOREIGN SERVICE

AFSA's 2012 LIFETIME CONTRIBUTIONS TO AMERICAN DIPLOMACY AWARD
WINNER OFFERED THE FOLLOWING REMARKS AT THE JUNE 26 AWARDS CEREMONY.

BY WILLIAM LACY SWING

There is only one appropriate way to begin my remarks, and that is to thank AFSA and its Awards Committee for honoring me with this high recognition. I am simply overwhelmed with gratitude.

I am particularly pleased to associate my wife, Yuen, with this award, as she has always been “the wind beneath my sails,” the one who kept my feet on the ground and my head out of the clouds. She brings me back to reality, believing as she does that “behind every success-

ful man stands a surprised wife.”

This is a moment of mixed emotions, a *mélange* of gratitude and of humility. For while Yuen and I appreciate this distinction, we both know there are so many others, many of them close friends — some of whom are here today — who are so much more deserving than we of this recognition.

Yuen and I also know that we stand on the shoulders of all our colleagues who have supported us and made us look good over the past five decades — people like Jane Jazynka, my Office Management Specialist and personal assistant for some 22 years.

I am grateful for the particularly fortuitous moment that this award offers me to reflect on the years gone past — an entire half-century, since I joined the Foreign Service in 1963. Washington was still reeling from the McCarthy period, and all my Foreign Service colleagues were across the river studying Vietnamese at what was then known as Arlington Towers — a prevailing atmosphere that at times seems to be resurfacing in today's Washington.

My reflection on my years of service has not, however, produced any brilliant flashes or memorable passages or guideposts for the future. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I know that those of you who know me will not be surprised.

On a selfish note, my retrospection has helped me to learn from my past, and this has been valuable to me personally.

This ceremony has also given me an opportunity to renew old friendships at State and beyond. A number of these good colleagues and friends are here with us today.

William Lacy Swing, a member of the Foreign Service for 38 years, was ambassador to the Republic of the Congo (1979-1981), Liberia (1981-1985), South Africa (1989-1992), Nigeria (1992-1993), Haiti (1993-1998) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1998-2001). After retiring from the Foreign Service in 2001, Ambassador Swing served the United Nations as Special Representative to the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and Chief of Mission for the U.N. Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (2001-2003), and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2003-2008). He was elected director general of the International Organization for Migration in 2008, a position he still holds.

Ambassador Swing delivered these remarks at the June 26 AFSA Awards Ceremony, where he received the 2012 Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award.

My Good Fortune

It's moving to be so recognized. But it is I who should be thanking our government for giving me the opportunity to serve it and the American people for the past 50 years — nearly 40 of these in the Foreign Service, almost a decade with the United Nations and, for the past four years, with the leading global agency for migration.

None of this would have been possible without consistent support from the Kennedy administration through nine others, including that of President Obama, who has just nominated me for a second term as director general of the International Organization for Migration.

My good fortune, much like yours no doubt, has been the opportunity to serve our country and people — in an admittedly very modest manner and in very minor roles. Throughout my career, the Foreign Service and this department have been unfailingly generous to me.

Without our government's continuing support, for example, I would never have been able, after retirement, to head two United Nations peacekeeping operations, one of these the largest in U.N. history — or later, as Washington's candidate, to be elected by IOM's 127 member-states to lead an intergovernmental organization with a \$1.5 billion budget, 2,000 active projects and 8,000 staff in 400 locations around the globe, serving migrants and our member-states.

So I would like to use the few remaining minutes to renew my gratitude to our government for its support — support that has allowed me to do things and to represent our people in places I never dreamed of as a young farm boy growing up in the South.

Washington has consecutively opened a series of doors before me, one after the other — the Foreign Service, U.N. peacekeeping, and now the world of immigration, in which more people are on the move than at any other time in recorded history amidst a countercyclical wind of anti-migrant sentiment.

Were I to be asked, "Would you do it all over again? That is, join the Foreign Service and devote your adult years to U.S. diplomacy," the answer would be a resounding "yes!" I say yes for many reasons, but would cite only three here very briefly — and these three points represent a sort of personal homage to the Foreign Service.

The Opportunity to Serve Globally

In the 1980s, just after the U.S. Civil Service Commission

was renamed the Office of Personnel Management, a colleague quipped in regard to OPM that "service used to be our middle name."

Jokes aside, we must never forget that diplomacy is all about service. And we forget at our own peril that we are in the Foreign Service to serve, first and foremost.

Some three years ago, in this same building on a similar occasion, I referred to diplomacy as "the indispensable public service." I still believe this to be the case. It surely has to be a consolation for us all that, amidst globalization and the digital revolution, diplomacy has not only survived, but is being revalidated daily as an indispensable discipline and art in managing relations among peoples and nations.

Diplomacy places an accent on dialogue. Diplomacy explores options. Diplomacy creates understanding and promotes tolerance and appreciation for cultural and other differences that get in the way of progress. Diplomacy is all about sustainable engagement. Diplomacy is about building policy consensus, and developing a supporting constituency that will ensure the necessary resources for effective policy implementation.

Diplomacy is our last best hope for peaceful settlement of conflicts. But given government's investment in the vital capital of diplomacy — in comparison to government outlays on other instruments of influence — one has to wonder just how widely this view of diplomacy's indispensable nature is shared.

The Opportunity for Lifelong Learning

Second, a career in the Foreign Service, at the U.N., or at an international organization such as IOM introduces one to an unparalleled lifelong learning experience — continuous learning that is vital if one is to survive and essential if one is to advance our national interests.

Formal learning, such as language learning and history, yes. But there is also the learning that comes from drawing lessons from experiences, the good and the bad, as well as best practices — practices that improve our game and our score.

We learn from our failures as well as from our successes. And I have had more than my share of defeats. Yet while failure may discredit us as diplomats on particular occasions — as it did me — such shortcomings cannot ultimately discredit diplomacy. Failure merely highlights our own limitations, both as diplomats and human beings.

*A Foreign Service career
offers many opportunities,
including the chance
to live history.*

The Opportunity to Live History

My third point in paying homage to a Foreign Service career is the opportunity it provides to live history.

Nelson Mandela once said in my presence, just after leaving prison, that he felt at that moment as if he were in “physical contact with history.” I have never forgotten these lines, which are etched in my memory. And I’ve never heard a more expressive description of the Foreign Service experience.

You and I are, indeed, the privileged few, called to this noble task — often as observers, reporters, witnesses; sometimes as actors — at the epicenter of world events. Those events, more often than not, affect the lives of many people — as, for example, when, with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the IOM evacuated and repatriated 250,000 migrant workers from danger

Diplomacy has not only survived, but remains an indispensable discipline and art in managing relations among peoples and nations.

in Libya to 54 countries. And, for this privilege, while rarely recognized or applauded, we receive an enormous “psychic” income — one that continues to accumulate interest over time.

This unique experience which is the Foreign Service also carries with it enormous responsibilities — responsi-

bilities relative to our sense of professionalism, the institutional admonition to provide exemplary leadership and to be accountable for all that we do, decide and say.

My Love Affair with Diplomacy

My half-century love affair with diplomacy — bilaterally at State, and multilaterally at the U.N. and IOM — leads me to the following conclusions:

Diplomacy remains a noble undertaking of public service to which we fortunate few have been called.

The Foreign Service embarks us simultaneously on a lifetime of continuous learning. Our admission to this remarkable career offers us unprecedented opportunities to live history and, at the same time, imposes heavy responsibilities on us to be at all times worthy of our calling.

Thank you. ■

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EL SALVADOR'S REMARKABLE TRANSITION

THE 2009 TRANSITION REMAINS A TESTAMENT TO THE PEOPLE OF EL SALVADOR
AND A MODEL OF EFFECTIVE U.S. SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE HEMISPHERE.

BY ROBERT BLAU

This summer has seen El Salvador mired in a constitutional crisis. In April, a coalition of parties in the lame-duck legislature, led by the leftist FMLN, nominated new judges to the Supreme Court. The existing Supreme Court ruled that this procedure was unconstitutional. The newly nominated judges took up their positions anyway, leaving the country with two competing Supreme Courts. The controversy prompted two U.S. senators to call into question our bilateral assistance programs.

Just before presstime, news from El Salvador indicated that the interested parties had reached an agreement to resolve the impasse peacefully and constitutionally.

The text that follows, which was drafted before these developments, recalls the high expectations and optimism of El Salvador's 2009 transition. That optimism has now been further strengthened.

An Unusual Election

On June 1, 2009, Mauricio Funes, the candidate of the

Robert Blau, a Foreign Service officer since 1983, is currently the senior State Department adviser to the Air University and a faculty member at the Air War College, both located at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Ala. Prior to that assignment, he was deputy chief of mission in San Salvador from 2008 to 2011, and chargé d'affaires from 2009 to 2010. He has also served in Santo Domingo, Conakry, Brasilia, Panama, Lisbon and Washington, D.C. The views in this article are the author's alone; they do not represent the views of either the State Department or the U.S. Air Force.

Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN in Spanish), was inaugurated president of El Salvador. Given the country's history of civil war and political polarization, the transfer of power to a representative of the former guerrilla movement after two decades of rule by the ARENA Party (the Spanish acronym for the National Republican Alliance) was like leaping into the unknown.

The 1992 Peace Accords had foreseen a day like this, but it was nonetheless remarkable. And three years later, it remains praiseworthy. Although his government is struggling to fight crime and improve the country's economy, President Funes has wielded executive power democratically, and the American and Salvadoran governments have maintained a close and productive relationship.

While the Salvadoran people deserve the credit for how they handled the transition when it finally happened, this important development also showcased the U.S. policy of supporting democracy in the hemisphere. So it is worth taking a look at how it came about.

In 2009, every elected seat in El Salvador was up for grabs: 262 mayors and 84 members of the legislature in January, followed quickly by the presidential election in March. These contests all pitted the country's two main political brands against each other: FMLN on the left vs. ARENA on the right.

ARENA had won all the presidential elections held after 1992 and governed democratically. Though labeled "right wing," the administration of President Elias Antonio Saca (2004-2009) would be considered centrist, if not slightly left of center, by American standards. Pres. Saca had instituted welfare transfer payments and presided over a populist regime of subsidies for bus fares, cooking gas and electricity

that were effectively bankrupting the government. He had also rejected a proposed gold-mining venture by Pacific Rim Corporation, putting him in the same camp as environmentalists, anti-business activists and the Catholic Church.

Saca's foreign policy alignment was, however, with Washington: El Salvador sent a battalion of troops to Iraq, for example, and refused to recognize the Fidel Castro regime in Cuba.

For its part, the FMLN had put down its weapons in 1992, and gradually gained seats in the legislature and mayoralties around the country. Recent mayoral and other campaigns were grounded more in local issues and folklore and less in ideology.

Even the oil deal that some FMLN mayors negotiated with Venezuela's state-owned oil company, PDVSA, was as much about money as ideology. The resulting consortium, called "Alba-Petroleos," has generated campaign funds for the FMLN that would be illegal if El Salvador had a modern campaign finance law; but it doesn't, so the oil and money keep flowing.

*As the March 15, 2009,
election date neared, polls
showed a tightening race,
fueled by impassioned,
smash-mouth campaigning
by both sides.*

Over the years, some moderate FMLN figures had bailed out, or were expelled, leaving the leadership in the hands of hardline former guerrilla commanders still loyal to Castro (and now Hugo Chavez). However, the party's next generation of leaders had come of age after the civil war, and even some of the former guerrillas have mellowed over time. Having learned that they could not win the presidency running one of their own

members, the FMLN leadership approached Mauricio Funes to join the party and head their 2009 ticket.

Funes was a celebrity journalist with broad name recognition, who had contemplated running for president well before he was nominated. His TV news fame had coincided with the rule of successive ARENA-led governments, which Funes targeted regularly in muckraking stories.

A Marriage of Convenience?

The Funes/FMLN "marriage" was based on each side's conviction that the other was its vehicle to power, and decisions about how to share power after victory were postponed. FMLN hardliner Salvador Sanchez-Ceren was named Funes' running mate, generating much speculation.

One conspiracy theory even postulated that the FMLN would assassinate Funes just after he was sworn in, leaving Sanchez-Ceren in charge. Such fears were allayed by pledges that Funes would uphold the Salvadoran constitution, which ascribes considerable powers to the president of the republic. (Sanchez-Ceren now looks like the FMLN standard bearer in 2014.)

Meanwhile, ARENA experienced its own nomination controversy. Pres. Sacca, who had also been a media personality before taking office, believed he could engineer the process in a way that looked fair, but in the end produced the candidate he wanted all along. Vice-President Ana Vilma Escobar made exactly that allegation, publicly, even before she and Sacca left office. Although it would be hard to find ARENA members, or even Salvadorans in general, who do not like Rodrigo Avila, a former chief of the national police and legislator, his presidential candidacy got off to a poor start as a result.

As the March 15, 2009, election date neared, polls showed a tightening race, fueled by impassioned, smash-



Sarah Currlin

Chargé d'Affaires Robert Blau and Mrs. Blau (to the right) congratulate Salvadoran President Mauricio Funes and Mrs. Funes (to the left) on election night in 2009.

mouth campaigning by both sides. In January of that year, ARENA's Norman Quijano won the mayoral race in San Salvador, giving a substantial boost to that party's hopes. But ARENA was burdened by the worldwide recession, which had hit El Salvador hard, due to its tight linkage to the U.S. economy. In addition, it had governed for 20 straight years and lost some of its luster after the postwar reconstruction boom had worn off.

The FMLN's campaign theme was one of change, which meshed well with its candidate's personal popularity and charismatic campaign style. Even though ARENA had a good record of sustaining economic growth and reducing poverty, it had trouble answering the question: "What have you done for me lately?"

So the party went on the offensive, linking Funes and the FMLN to Hugo Chavez and leftist radicalism. (Funes would joke afterward that he ran

against both Avila and Chavez, as footage of Chavez's ranting became a regular feature of ARENA's televised campaign ads.)

Staying Above the Fray

The U.S. embassy made a concerted effort to stay out of the campaign, a policy helped by the fact that both Funes and Avila campaigned as America-friendly candidates. Funes even ran a TV ad giving the impression that he had President Barack Obama's endorsement, forcing me as chargé d'affaires to clarify publicly that the U.S. government was not taking sides.

That clarification angered FMLN supporters in the United States, who wanted me to protest against dirty campaigning by ARENA. Reflecting on the mudslinging in American election campaigns, I did not think a U.S. representative had any standing to make such a protest.

The embassy did respond near the end of the campaign to a newspaper article trashing Funes' economic adviser, Alex Segovia, based on a purported internal USAID memo (Segovia was once a USAID contractor). I called Funes to explain that we could not authenticate the memo and were not the source of the story, and then called the editor of the newspaper to ask that he print a correction, which he did.

Back in Washington, a group of House Democrats signed a public petition in favor of free and fair elections that was widely interpreted in El Salvador as an endorsement of the FMLN. A similar number of Republicans put out a rejoinder worrying about the possibility of El Salvador falling into the Chavez orbit if the FMLN were to win.

U.S. embassy officials met with each candidate a few days before the election to reiterate our faith in the



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Salvadoran President Mauricio Funes and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton at their joint press conference on the day of Pres. Funes' inauguration.

electoral process and our commitment to work closely with whoever won. Each candidate showed us polling data that assured us of his own victory. (Our view was that the forecasts were within the margins of error of the most respectable polling organizations.) We joined publicly with civic leaders appealing for calm and for the loser to graciously accept the results.

The embassy didn't just pay lip service to fair elections, either. We fielded a team of observers that covered the entire country, equipped with modern communications gear that allowed us to track them from a command center in the chancery throughout the day. I was invited with the diplomatic corps to watch the 6 a.m. opening of the downtown San Salvador polling center, near the site of the data processing for tabulating results.

In addition to official observers, including Federal Election Commissioner Steven Walther, there were teams from the Organization of American States and other non-governmental organizations, such as the National Democratic Institute, which deployed a monitoring team led by retired FSO Jim Swigert.

A Peaceful Process

El Salvador was blessed with great weather for Election Day, and turnout was brisk. Our observers reported normal conditions in every corner of the country.

What most concerned us was the possibility of results so close that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE, in Spanish) would be unable to declare a winner without provoking a challenge from the loser. FMLN candidate Violeta Menjívar's election as mayor of San Salvador in 2006 had been by an extremely narrow margin, with the vote recount cut short because the venue was surrounded by a menacing partisan mob.

Just after dark, my wife, Carmen (an embassy election observer), and I made our way to the hotel serving as a media center. The drive took us through areas where large groups of FMLN supporters were roving in the streets — preparing for either a mega-victory party, or as some reports indicated, an aggressive protest were Funes to lose. Police set up a perimeter around the hotel, marked by 10-foot-high coils of barbed wire.

Once inside the lobby, we could see many representatives of ARENA and

FMLN, as well as Salvadoran and international media. The FMLN's anticipated victory was going to be a big story, for obvious reasons. At intervals of roughly half an hour, the TSE would release election returns.

At about 9 p.m. TSE President Walter Araujo invited a small group to his suite to report that the results still pending were not going to be enough to overcome what by then had become an insurmountable lead for Funes. Araujo was ARENA's top man on the TSE, so this was essentially a preview of ARENA's concession speech. To his credit, Araujo followed through on schedule with statistical announcements that made it clear that Funes was going to be the winner. (The final result was: Funes, 51.3 percent; Avila, 48.7 percent.)

At this point, our objectives were threefold: help validate the election results; congratulate the winners (and console the losers); and lobby our own government for top-level congratulatory calls. The embassy's public affairs team helped organize the journalists' swarm in such a way that Federal Election Commissioner Walther and I could tell the media that we were convinced of the fairness of the election and the validity of the results.

We added that the U.S. government looked forward to continued, excellent relations with El Salvador, which was echoed by the State Department's press spokesman at the next day's briefing. That may seem like a very standard line; but given U.S.-Salvadoran history, it needed to be repeated many times before it sank in.

Congratulating the Winner

Moments later, I crossed paths with FMLN spokesman Sigfrido Reyes, who later became the legislative assembly's president. At my request, he called Funes to tell him we wished to meet him before he addressed a victory rally, and off we zoomed, arriving in time to be the first representatives

of a foreign country to congratulate Funes in person. We posed for a photo, which circulated quickly in the blogosphere. It was precisely the symbol we wanted to transmit of U.S. support for free elections and an orderly, democratic transition in El Salvador.

Funes was gracious in victory, and reported he had just received a congratulatory call from Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. I promised to do what I could to get Pres. Obama to call Funes as soon as possible. The victorious candidate then went out to greet a large throng of supporters assembled at Masferrer Circle, and reiterated his promise to govern in the letter and spirit of the country's constitution.

Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Tom Shannon quickly mobilized an effective response to the results. He had already planned to visit San Salvador right after the election to discuss the

*We joined publicly
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appealing for calm and
for the loser to graciously
accept the results.*

broad outlines of shared U.S. and Salvadoran interests with whoever won. On the morning Shannon arrived, Pres. Obama phoned Funes to offer his congratulations.

Accompanied by his wife and foreign minister-to-be, Funes expressed his pleasure with the president's call during a meeting with Shannon and three of us from the embassy. He as-

sured us that his desire for good relations with the U.S. was not just campaign rhetoric, but rather a sensible way to govern a country that had a third of its citizens living in the United States and sent half of its exports to the U.S. market.

Shannon and Deputy Assistant Secretary Craig Kelly later arranged for Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to attend Funes' June 1 swearing-in ceremony. At a joint press conference, Pres. Funes and Sec. Clinton talked about the importance of maintaining cordial relations.

When a *New York Times* reporter asked Sec. Clinton if the U.S. government would apologize for its role during El Salvador's civil war, she replied: "We're not looking backward into history to define this relationship; looking forward, we can expect to build a relationship based on good will and many shared interests." Funes' statements were equally upbeat. The press con-

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ference had been preceded by a warm private meeting that included his key foreign and economic policy advisers.

Ironically, that meeting followed the president-elect's meeting with the Cuban delegation, one of several from leftist countries. Though the announcement that the two countries would establish full diplomatic relations made a big splash, I saw the incoming government's lovefest with the U.S. delegation as the more significant story. Fidel Castro certainly noticed that, for he published an op-ed column chastising Funes for having publicly recognized Sec. Clinton during the inauguration ceremony.

A Stable Transition

Pres. Saca publicly congratulated Funes on election night, and then worked closely with him to ensure a smooth transition. He took the blame within ARENA for a losing strategy before parting ways with the party. ARENA standard-bearer Rodrigo Avila also conceded defeat graciously and returned to private life.

The Salvadoran media covered the campaign thoroughly and aggressively, in an atmosphere of complete press freedom. Voters were enthusiastic, peaceful and respectful of the process, and the TSE proved itself up to the task of administering a free and fair election, even if some rules could be tweaked — for example, absentee balloting.

Throughout the first three years of his term, President Funes has been a strong defender of democracy, openness and pragmatism. But two years from now, he is expected to hand over power peacefully and constitutionally to his successor — just as Pres. Saca did on that memorable day in June 2009.

Given El Salvador's violent history, that outcome could not previously have been taken for granted. The timely resolution of the recent constitutional clash will help ensure a clear path to a second smooth transition in 2014. ■

THE RESPONSIBILITY DOCTRINE

ACROSS ITS FOREIGN POLICY AGENDA, THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION HAS PURSUED A STRATEGY OF PRODDING OTHER NATIONS TO HELP SHOULDER THE BURDENS OF GLOBAL PEACE AND STABILITY.

BY NINA HACHIGIAN AND DAVID SHORR

In one of the most memorable scenes in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Aunt Polly punishes Tom for skipping school by sentencing him to put a fresh coat of whitewash on their picket fence. Being an enterprising young man, Tom convinces other kids to join in, and they quickly line up to take turns painting the boards.

Twain's scene resembles recent U.S. diplomatic efforts to obtain greater contributions from the world's critical players. Getting other nations to play a larger constructive role is vital; in today's interconnected world, future peace and prosperity hinge on those nations' willingness to step up.

As President Barack Obama stressed on taking office, "Our power alone cannot protect us." Even a global superpower cannot mount effective responses to 21st-century challenges on its own. The United States needs partners to help bolster the global economy, prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, stem climate change, alleviate poverty and destroy terrorist networks.

Simple fairness says Americans shouldn't have to shoulder the burden of international problem-solving alone, especially as nations that have risen within the existing system seek greater prominence. And even if the U.S. were inclined to continue picking up the tab for protecting the global commons, fiscal realities will constrain it.

This recognition has led the administration to pursue a strategy — call it the "Responsibility Doctrine" — of prodding other nations to shoulder the burdens of fostering a sta-

ble, peaceful international order. Across its foreign policy agenda and with unprecedented emphasis, the administration has persistently sought contributions from other nations.

Real-world progress for the doctrine has been partial but significant. While deep, sustained cooperation among pivotal powers remains elusive, and many serious differences divide them, the vision of a world where the United States draws major powers into collective efforts is not imaginary: it is already happening.

The Responsibility Strategy

Under a responsibility doctrine, foreign policy is driven by the need to solve global problems and strengthen the multilateral norms and structures on which a viable 21st-century, rules-based order depends.

The aim is not simply to establish a balance of power, but to bring about a dynamic framework through which to practically address global challenges. The strategic premise is that emerging major and middle powers can become significant contributors to global peace and prosperity — whether co-opted or pressed into accepting responsibility along with influence.

Looking at the multilateral agenda's top-tier issues, it is clear that they represent vulnerabilities of the international system itself. Consider the consequences if the global economy couldn't sustain growth, terror groups carried out large-scale attacks, the club of nuclear-armed nations grew to 15, or the planet's temperature rose by four degrees Celsius.

Such matters can only be addressed through consistent, active cooperation among all the world's pivotal powers. Influential nations must fulfill basic civic duties — adhering to international laws and norms, contributing to global problem-

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solving and enforcing norms when others flout them — to preserve a peaceful and prosperous rules-based order.

The strategy is not about the United States stepping back, but others stepping up. The U.S. must continue serving as a leader, guarantor of the system and a catalyst of collective crisis-management. In addition, Washington's traditional alliances with nations sharing democratic values remain a bedrock of U.S. foreign policy.

Even so, there is a compelling case for bringing diverse emerging powers, including the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), into closer alignment on global challenges, despite geostrategic rivalries.

Executing the Responsibility Doctrine

The Obama administration has already implemented the responsibility doctrine in a variety of ways, using positive as well as negative inducements. Standard elements of statecraft have a distinct place in this approach.

Building strategic relationships. The responsibility doctrine calls for thickened working relations. Multi-agency dialogues help U.S. officials get to know their counterparts, build understanding of other governments' motives and frameworks, and establish the channels needed to facilitate action.

These processes also establish a context to track follow-through on old commitments and set timelines for new ones. Finally, they force the U.S. (and the other nations) to coordinate its own policies across multiple departments, agencies and issue areas.

In 2010, for example, the U.S. and India set up a foreign minister-led strategic dialogue that annually convenes officials from across the two governments. The two governments also established working-level groups such as the Green Partnership, Agricultural Dialogue, Health Dialogue, and the Partnership on Innovation, as well as CEO and women's forums.

The strategy is not about the United States stepping back but others stepping up.

With China, the administration augmented an already dense web. The Strategic Economic Dialogue, initiated by the George W. Bush administration, expanded to become the "Strategic & Economic Dialogue," with a new Strategic Security Dialogue running in parallel. Regional and thematic fora on Latin America and Africa, an agricultural forum and clean energy partnership, among others, were also launched.

The challenge for the now-famous "reset" of U.S.-Russian relations was to reverse a downward slide and cooperate where Washington and Moscow share common ground. This produced a historic arms reduction treaty with inspections, assistance on curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions, and a crucial NATO supply route for Afghanistan.

Compartmentalizing. In relationships between large countries, especially those with differing political systems, disputes are bound to surface in some areas even when cooperation is possible in others. This tension is nothing new, but as more countries wield influence, it will certainly become more common.

Obama administration officials have been able to manage serious differences with emerging powers and still push forward where cooperation is possible. This past March, the administration filed cases charging China with erecting trade barriers — prompting Beijing's vehement protests — even as it collaborated with Beijing

on a diplomatic strategy to relaunch talks on denuclearization with North Korea. An even more vivid example was the delicate diplomacy to ensure that activist Chen Guangcheng and his family were protected, and the Strategic and Economic Dialogue could proceed.

And in April, though India vaulted to the top spot among Iran's energy customers, U.S. and Indian officials proceeded with their trilateral dialogue with Japan on geopolitics in Asia. Despite Russia's troubling backslide on democratic governance, its help with Iran and supply routes to Afghanistan remains crucial.

Welcoming new leadership. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's notion of a "multipartner world," in which the United States joins in varied forms of cooperation with a wider set of partners, captures the responsibility doctrine's basic operating mode. To make it work, other nations must help conceive and execute joint efforts — and then get to share in the credit.

Rather than resenting others' growing roles, Americans should see them as signs of our own successful leadership. Critics who view this trend as undermining American influence are forgetting President Ronald Reagan's classic dictum about how much you can accomplish when you don't care who gets the credit. In that spirit, the United States has encouraged emerging powers such as South Korea, Mexico and South Africa to serve as hosts and chairs of key multilateral conferences and summits, thereby raising their stakes in success or failure.

The shift is most conspicuous when nations play new roles at the forefront of high-profile issues. NATO's "Unified Protector" operation against Moammar Qaddafi in Libya was a concerted effort to spread responsibilities, as Pres. Obama urged European allies and Arab nations to supply hard power alongside the United States. In ex-

change, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and other leaders took a share of credit for leading an international coalition to stop the slaughter of innocents.

But as the ill-fated Turkish and Brazilian attempt to mediate with Iran two years ago shows, collaborative leadership is not easy to orchestrate.

Withholding. At times the United States must pull back some of its own contributions, or threaten to do so, to induce others to do their part. For example, the NATO allies have spent decades arguing over Western European underinvestment in military capability.

While last year's intervention in Libya was an important display of European leadership, it also highlighted serious gaps in the continent's hard power. Much of the problem stems from the moral hazard of relying on the U.S. military presence, which Wash-

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ington is now reducing.

Peer pressure. Another of the responsibility doctrine's techniques is to form coalitions with other nations to shape a country's behavior. This has long been standard practice in statecraft, but the Obama administration is bringing it to a new level with emerging powers.

In 2009 and 2010 Beijing assertively pressed its South China Sea territorial claims. In its role as security guarantor in the Pacific, the U.S. swiftly provided reassurance to rattled Southeast Asian nations.

The issue came to a head at a July 2010 meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, where Sec. Clinton joined her regional counterparts in a forceful call for a multilateral solution to these disputes. While it continues to assert its claims, Beijing has moderated its tone somewhat.

The administration has also leveraged international peer pressure regarding China's undervalued currency. First, it encouraged countries like Brazil and Indonesia to highlight how an artificially low renminbi undermines their own exports. Washington also made China's currency an issue at the 2010 Group of 20 forum; as a result, the renminbi tends to strengthen



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prior to G-20 meetings, with a total increase of 14 percent over the past two years.

Helping close the sale back home. The administration has also tailored its requests of other governments to domestic political sensitivities. No foreign leader wants to be seen as doing the bidding of America, after all. So when U.S. officials press China to rebalance its economy from exports toward domestic consumption, they stress that Beijing's own Five-Year Plan calls for exactly that shift.

Converting "rule-takers" to "rule-makers." Many key multilateral norms and mechanisms are due for updating, and the emerging stakeholders should be actively involved. This is a valuable opportunity to strengthen their sense of ownership and constructive participation.

Recent climate change negotiations offer vital lessons in the need to adjust expectations and prepare for a steady slog. Because of the chaotic atmosphere at the December 2009 U.N. meeting in Copenhagen, the forum's real achievements have gotten short shrift.

Thanks both to Pres. Obama's personal intervention and heightened global scrutiny, China and India made their first-ever commitments to cut the carbon intensity of their economic growth, and China relented on measurement and reporting. Participating nations, comprising nearly the entire world, committed themselves to the goal of capping a maximum aggregate temperature increase at two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit).

Leveraging international institutions. The administration has greatly increased U.S. engagement with international institutions, taking advantage of their built-in mechanisms to spread the burden for maintenance of the rules-based order. For instance, United Nations member-states collectively contribute more than 100,000

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a stakeholder.*

peacekeepers a year, deployments that benefit the U.S. by bringing stability to wartorn regions. For every dollar the U.S. lends to the International Monetary Fund's bailout mechanism, other governments collectively lend five.

The United States has pushed to ensure that any increase in voice that emerging powers get in international institutions is closely linked to increased contributions. At the IMF, an increase in voting shares automatically triggers an increase in mandated contributions.

The Group of 20's annual leader summit has important symbolism in gathering emerging and established powers as peers, and rising powers have actually led the group into new areas such as economic development and anti-corruption. The G-20 has adopted a Mutual Assessment Process, whereby member-states review and critique each other's growth plans. This motivates them to weigh domestic policy choices in the context of shared responsibility for a strong, balanced global economy.

In another tactic to induce responsible action, the United States has championed the Trans-Pacific Partnership, an exclusive institution-information where responsibility is the price of admission. The TPP trade initiative sets high standards for labor, environmental and intellectual prop-

erty protections, and only countries willing to meet them may negotiate their entry. While Asia's largest trading nation, China, currently falls short of those goals, the TPP might prod Beijing to make improvements to meet the threshold for eligibility.

In other cases, the administration has sought to induce responsibility within institutions other pivotal powers value by highlighting when the institution is failing a basic test of credibility. In March, when the U.N. Security Council debated the Arab League peace plan for Syria, Sec. Clinton argued that withholding support for the plan "would mark a failure of our shared responsibility and shake the credibility of the United Nations Security Council."

Leading by example. The administration has been explicit about the need for the United States to keep its own house in order as it calls on others to do their civic duty. Consider, for example, nuclear nonproliferation, a U.S. priority.

The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty represents a bargain between the world's nuclear "haves" and "have-nots" requiring (a) that non-nuclear weapon nations stay that way and (b) that the world's nuclear "haves" disarm. To keep the diplomatic upper hand in critical negotiations over Iran and North Korea's nuclear programs, the United States has needed to show good faith in reducing its Cold War stockpile. Indeed, some Republican senators who voted for the U.S.-Russian New START arms treaty acknowledged this in the ratification debate.

The responsibility message. A consistent message about the duties of membership in the world community is also essential to the responsibility doctrine. Often, the strongest case for others to follow America's lead is to argue in terms of civic obligations and the rules of the road. These themes have been a drumbeat of the foreign policy message in recent years.

In his first United Nations General Assembly address, for instance, Pres. Obama listed his initial steps to bring the United States into sync with the rest of the world, and then put them into perspective: “This cannot solely be America’s endeavor. Those who used to chastise America for acting alone in the world cannot now stand by and wait for America to solve the world’s problems alone. We have sought — in word and deed — a new era of engagement with the world. And now is the time for all of us to take our share of responsibility for a global response to global challenges.”

Calling out the irresponsible. A loud and clear message of responsibility is equally important when countries fail to step up. When Russia and China vetoed a recent U.N. resolution aimed at preventing further violence in Syria, the United States and its partners did not let them off easily.

“It’s quite distressing to see two permanent members of the Security Council using their veto while people are being murdered,” Sec. Clinton said in a blunt statement publicized around the world. “It is just despicable, and I ask whose side are they on? They are clearly not on the side of the Syrian people.”

British Foreign Secretary William Hague said Russia and China had “sided with the Syrian regime and its brutal suppression of the Syrian people in support of their own national interests.” And Morocco’s U.N. ambassador, the sole Arab member of the Security Council, voiced his “great regret and disappointment” at the double veto.

This public shaming did not sit well in Beijing and Moscow, and they were distinctly more forthcoming in the months afterward, though not enough to agree on a course of action.

Rhetoric vs. Reality

The gap between the palpable demand for international cooperation

The responsibility doctrine asks Americans to embrace a more expansive definition of international leadership.

and the inadequate supply is one of the great quandaries of our interconnected age. While key powers agree on desired outcomes — ridding Iran and North Korea of nuclear weapons programs, rebalancing the global economy, alleviating chronic poverty — figuring out how to allocate the pain and work to reach these ends sometimes seems a Sisyphean task.

If the responsibility doctrine succeeds, emerging powers will internalize the duties that come with being a stakeholder. Here in the early stages of the process, these players are gradually gaining a sense of ownership over the major challenges confronting the world and a dawning awareness that shared problems must be solved. The internal debates in China, India and elsewhere about those nations’ global roles are positive signs.

Just in recent years, nations united under U.S. leadership to keep the world economy from falling off a cliff in 2008-2009, protect the Libyan people from an imminent bloodbath and help depose their dictator, battle pirates off the Somali coast, decimate al-Qaida’s leadership, contain a swine flu pandemic, repatriate nearly 900 kilograms of highly enriched uranium and isolate Iran like never before.

On some issues progress has fallen far short of what is needed. Climate change negotiators are devising important new frameworks and commit-

ments, but nowhere near what the science demands. China has revalued its renminbi 40 percent since 2005, but the larger challenge of rebalancing its economy is advancing slowly at best.

The Long Haul

Many of these problems have festered for years or decades, with nations avoiding paying the piper. For participants and onlookers alike, the process of breaking ingrained habits will test everyone’s patience. Nor do the political incentives help: the downside is immediate, while gratification comes years later.

Today’s leaders won’t repeat the order-building masterstrokes of their postwar predecessors at Bretton Woods or Dumbarton Oaks. Instead, the contemporary marks of leadership will be the diligence and dexterity to grind out steady progress.

Finally, the responsibility doctrine asks Americans to embrace a more expansive definition of international leadership. While America will remain the world’s indispensable power, it can only be effective by inducing others to act alongside it. Trying to block other nations from boosting their stature will not preserve American influence.

Instead the United States should focus on setting the global agenda and defining genuine success. Reaching solutions to critical global problems is more important than constantly affirming the U.S. as the unique and powerful leader the world already fully recognizes. Sec. Clinton expressed this crucial point when she said that “part of leading is making sure you get other people on the field.”

Indeed, the main justification for the responsibility doctrine is the reality that the times demand it. It has become one of the clichés of global interdependence that today’s challenges are too formidable for even a superpower to deal with on its own. But this particular cliché has the virtue of being true. ■



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AFSA NEWS

American Foreign Service Association • September 2012

AFSA Holds 45th Annual Awards Ceremony

BY DONNA AYERST

On June 26, AFSA honored members of the Foreign Service community for their courage, integrity and effort. The State Department's Benjamin Franklin Diplomatic Reception Room was filled with family, friends and colleagues of this year's award winners.

In her opening remarks, AFSA President Susan R. Johnson noted the importance of celebrating the courage it takes for an officer to constructively dissent from policy and the dedication to perform in an outstanding way.

Deputy Secretary of State Ambassador William J. Burns stressed the significance of the awards. "AFSA awards play a critical role in highlighting integrity, fortitude and outstanding service to others, and recognize the critical role of Foreign Service employees in carrying out U.S. foreign policy around the world," he stated.

Shining A Light

"These awards shine light on exceptional performance and professional contributions both during and after a career in the Foreign Service," Burns continued. "They recognize those who have demonstrated the intellectual courage, initiative and integrity to challenge the system from within, to question conventional wisdom, and to offer creative and bold alternatives."

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson then took the stage to present this year's winner of the Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy



(L to R) Susan R. Johnson, Jon B. Clements, Sara Hurst Butler, Alexander Rivkin, the Honorable Robert S. Rivkin, Joshua W. Polacheck, Leila Gupta, James Velez, Caldwell Harrop, Mette Beecroft, Amb. William Lacy Swing, Ian Houston and Amb. Johnnie Carson.

Award. "Ambassador William L. Swing has devoted his life to advancing the cause of peace and bringing stability to some of the most difficult and challenging places in the world. Bill is the consummate diplomat, and he has inspired many of us by his hard work and commitment to public service," Carson said.

Accepting the award, Amb. Swing said, "I am particularly pleased to associate my wife Yuen with this award, as she has always been 'the wind beneath my sails,' the one who kept my feet on the ground and my head out of the clouds. She brings me back to reality, believing as she does that 'behind every successful man stands a surprised wife.'"

Swing reflected: "My half-century love affair with diplomacy has thus led me to the following conclusions, namely: that diplomacy remains a noble undertaking of

public service to which we fortunate few have been called; that the Foreign Service embarks on simultaneously upon a lifetime of continuous learning; and that our admission to this remarkable career offers us unprecedented opportunities to live history and, at the same time, imposes heavy responsibilities upon us to be at all times worthy of our calling."

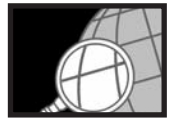
Questioning Policy

The Honorable Robert S. Rivkin presented the William R. Rivkin Award for Constructive Dissent by a Mid-Level Officer to Joshua Polacheck, for pointing out that security restrictions imposed by the Department of State hinder FSOs' ability to perform their mission.

The following AFSA Outstanding Performance Awards were presented: the Nelson B. Delavan Award for an Office Management Specialist to James R. Velez, Mazar-e-Sharif; the M. Juanita Guess Award for a Community Liaison Office Coordinator, to Sara Hurst Butler, Port-au-Prince; the Avis Bohlen Award for a Foreign Service Family Member, to Leila Gupta, Nairobi; and AFSA Post Representative of the Year Award, to Jeff J. Jacob, Kabul.

To read Amb. Swing's full remarks please turn to page 38; to access them online, go to <http://alturl.com/ud87m>. To view the AFSA Awards Ceremony in its entirety, please visit <http://alturl.com/std7h>. □

AFSA NEWS BRIEFS



AFSA Mourns the Death of USAID FSO Ragaei Abdelfattah

On Aug. 8, as this issue of the *Journal* was going to press, Ragaei Abdelfattah, a U.S. Agency for International Development Foreign Service officer, was killed during a terrorist attack in Afghanistan. Several Afghan civilians and three International Security Assistance Force service members also died in the attack, and a State Department FSO was injured.

USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah issued the following statement on Aug. 9:

“Ragaei died a hero — in service to our country and our agency’s mission of providing help to those in need and advancing our national security. He was an invaluable member of our provincial reconstruction team in Afghanistan, and worked tirelessly with his colleagues to help local communities improve governance and advance development. He served in Afghanistan since June 2011, and recently began his second year of service after returning from home leave.

“Ragaei’s passion, integrity and thought-leadership made an impression on all who knew him in Afghanistan. He

was recently promoted to the task force level, which oversees provincial reconstruction teams throughout eastern Afghanistan. Ragaei played a leading role in the Highway Seven Economic Corridor Strategy, a critical effort designed to increase economic activity along the highway linking Torkham Gate with Kabul.

“In our agency’s history, we have known the loss of courageous and committed members of our community, including Foreign Service Nationals and implementing partners. We honor their memory and their service.

“As a large organization with a presence in roughly 80 countries across the globe, it can be difficult in times of sadness and pain to reach out and support each other. But we are a strong community — united not only by our commitment to our mission, but also our care and concern for our colleagues serving in difficult and dangerous circumstances far from their homes and their families.”

A full obituary of Mr. Abdelfattah will appear in the October edition of the *Foreign Service Journal*.

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Views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the AFSA State VP.



Dealing with Divorce

A Foreign Service post is a community. People you work with may also be friends, neighbors, fellow parents and providers of day-to-day essential services. In such an environment, divorce overseas can directly affect relationships with colleagues and may even affect the operations and productivity of a post.

Working closely with the department's Family Liaison Office, the Office of Medical Services and others, AFSA is in the process of developing best-practices for possible divorce scenarios: an employee or employees divorcing in the U.S.; an employee divorcing a non-employee spouse overseas; and a tandem couple divorcing overseas.

An agency will reduce its own liability by channeling its actions through the employee (legal restrictions might require it to do so). The core relationship between employer and employee gives the FS officer considerably more control than would normally be the case. This may cause the spouse who is leaving the Foreign Service to have a greater need for assistance.

Rules protecting employee rights can be abused to restrict access by the "departing spouse" to household effects, or other joint property such as a car, insurance and bank accounts. In the case of a foreign-born spouse, the employee may convince the spouse that he or she has no rights at all.

When MED or the Bureau of Diplomatic Security becomes involved, this can prove to be a double-edged sword. In cases of domestic abuse, DS must follow up by bringing the abuser to justice. Equally, if substance abuse is the issue, MED intervention may be required. However, AFSA has also seen cases where DS has focused so strongly on developing a criminal case that its actions (e.g., pushing an allegedly abused spouse to testify against the other spouse) impede the resolution of otherwise resolvable issues.

Recently, we have become increasingly concerned with the DS focus on extramarital affairs and similar "morality police" issues. Despite the DS assertion that affairs carry the risk of blackmail, in many cases the spouse is aware of the affair. Such issues need not end a marriage, but are more likely to lead to divorce if DS turns them into disciplinary or security clearance matters. Conversely, we have also seen cases of false accusations made by divorcing spouses intent on improperly initiating a disciplinary or security clearance process to punish their ex.

Many potential issues can be avoided with planning and foresight:

- **Divorce is always easier between posts or while both parties are "independent" of State Department support.** Legal matters, such as serving documents, are easier if both parties are in the U.S. It should never be assumed, however, that simply bringing people back to Washington is a solution. For some couples, divorce may be more practical elsewhere in the U.S., or even overseas. But it is usually most difficult at post.

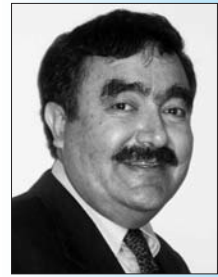
- **Separation of goods is complicated when items are in storage or must be shipped from post.** Although inappropriate, it is not uncommon for the employee to restrict access to such items by the departing spouse. Therefore, it is extremely important to allow people to pack themselves out of post, and to have access to their residence to do so. Home leave or separation addresses may reflect the home town of one spouse but not the other. In some cases, the spouse leaving the FS may wish to settle elsewhere. Designating where household effects can be shipped should be made before separation occurs.

- **Access to information and forms is important.** Care should be taken to ensure that both spouses are directly informed, and that information is not provided solely to the employee. Spouses must have access to the department's intranet, where most information is available. (Many community liaison offices at post provide such access.) Posts should not assume that tandem employees know things merely by virtue of their employee status. Foreign-born spouses are less likely to be fully aware of their rights and, in addition, may be subject to other issues. We have heard, for example, of an employee using a foreign-born spouse's ignorance of the naturalization process to coerce that spouse into giving up certain rights in a divorce.

- **As in any divorce, efforts should be made to preserve a stable environment for children.** Whenever possible, departure from post should coincide with the school year. The timing of other issues, which may include child custody, insurance or marriage counseling, should also be considered.

All couples considering divorce should get legal advice. Many questions are addressed in FLO's booklet *Divorce and the Foreign Service*, available in the CLO and on FLO's Web site at www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c23129.htm. The department's Employee Consultation Service is a good resource for confidential counseling services, and FLO staff can provide information on a range of divorce issues to both employee and spouse. □

Views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the AFSA USAID VP.



Language and Tenure: You Get What You Pay For

As your watchdog, I am constantly on the lookout for assaults to our profession. At AFSA, we believe that Foreign Service officers from all five member agencies — the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Foreign Agricultural Service, Foreign Commercial Service and the International Broadcasting Bureau — should have equal standing, status, opportunities, privileges and responsibilities, along with the trust reposed in us by the president of the United States, who ultimately commissions us for the job.

USAID Foreign Service officers are expected to achieve high levels of professionalism and competency comparable to those at the State Department, our closest sister agency. However, I recently became aware of a potential move by the USAID Office of Human Resources to lower our professional standards. It seems that HR is looking at the possibility of diluting the language requirement for tenure in a USAID Category A language (French, Spanish or Portuguese) from a Speaking 3/Reading 3 (S-3, R-3) level to an S-2, R-2 level. They cite three justifications for the proposed change: cost savings; the difficulty some administrative program support officers have achieving current language levels; and better coordination of language skills with an ultimate assignment. In my view, all of these are weak reasons for modifying a system that has worked well for several decades.

The language tenure requirement for an S-3, R-3 level (professional working proficiency) has been around since the late 1970s, and only a handful of the thousands of new officers have not met the required levels. Achieving the current standard is just part of being a well-rounded FSO, and I know of no one who regrets having learned foreign languages. Our FSO work force must be agile, physically and mentally, because we are called on to serve, sometimes unexpectedly, in many different environments where having language abilities make us more useful — whether immediately or in the future.

In my previous *AFSA News* columns, I have pointed out that USAID FSOs are being made to feel like second-class employees by the agency, which pays lower entry-level salaries compared to similarly qualified State Department new-entry employees. Now, it seems, USAID FSOs are being targeted for fewer

Professionally, our goal should be to reach for higher levels of language skills in our work force.

We at USAID are not second-rate employees.

training opportunities overall, as evidenced by the proposed lowering of tenure requirements.

While, on the surface, saving money seems to be in everyone's interest, the real result of the proposed change will be the opposite — a waste of funds and resources. Personal experience tells me that on a professional level an S-2, R-2 language level, which is classified as "Limited Working

Proficiency," is close to useless overseas. An officer working at that level will not have the ability to function competently with host country counterparts. Funding a mere 20 weeks of language training at the Foreign Service Institute, then sending FSOs to a foreign country where they are barely functional in the language is akin to pushing someone off the plane with half a parachute. It makes much more sense to invest in an additional four weeks of training to achieve the S-3, R-3 level.

HR has proposed that officers be tenured at the S-2, R-2 level and then go on to reach higher language levels once they are at their new post. However, AFSA has heard of many FSOs who have followed that route, only to become too involved in their day-to-day job to engage in serious language study. In addition, there is no guarantee that the quality of instruction overseas will meet the standards of FSI, the ultimate judge of competency.

The overwhelming majority of USAID FSOs have consistently and successfully achieved tenure within a foreign language at the presently required levels. There is no reason to lower the standards for the needs of a few FSOs — fewer than 5 percent — who have difficulty with foreign languages. This can only result in a much larger group of officers being sent to post barely qualified in the host-country language and thus at risk of becoming isolated from the societies in which they work.

Diplomats must be skilled in foreign languages, and highly skilled at that. Professionally, our goal should be to reach for higher levels of language skills in our work force. We at USAID are not second-rate employees. The Foreign Service Act of 1980 is clear: "Foreign Service posts abroad will be staffed by individuals who have a useful knowledge of the language or dialect common to the country in which the post is located." That includes USAID FSOs.

After all, you get what you pay for. □

AFSA Board Adds New Members

Over the summer, the AFSA Governing Board welcomed four new members to replace others who have departed. We thank Kimberly Krhounek, Grace Choi, Mary Glantz and Les Hickman for their service on the board and wish them the best in their onward assignments, whether abroad or in retirement.

Two members joined the board at its July meeting: Lillian Wahl-Tuco and Tim Corso. Ms. Wahl-Tuco is a State Department mid-level consular officer who has served in Paris, Skopje, and as Iceland/Denmark desk officer, and is currently the Czech desk officer in EUR/CE. She also serves on the board of “Balancing Act,” an employee organization which promotes work-life balance issues. Prior to coming to State, Ms. Wahl-Tuco worked in the non-profit sector in refugee repatriation and with the World Affairs Council.

Bureau of Diplomatic Security Special Agent Tim Corso currently serves as the lead investigator for State’s Rewards for Justice Program. He previously served in Rabat, Baghdad and the DSS Washington Field Office. Mr. Corso is a graduate of North Carolina State University and Vermont Law School and is an active member of the District of Columbia Bar Association.

At the August meeting, the board welcomed Ted Osius and Alex Copher. Mr. Osius is a political officer, most recently serving as deputy chief of mission in Jakarta. He joined the department in 1989. Earlier postings include New Delhi, Bangkok, Manila, the Vatican, the United Nations, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, and the Korea desk in Washington.

Alex Copher is an information management officer, most recently serving in Georgetown. He joined the department in 1989 and served for 23 consecutive years overseas in Accra, Asuncion, Almaty, Bogota, Lilongwe, Kathmandu, Rangoon and Yerevan. Mr. Copher served as the AFSA post representative in Georgetown and as a “Hometown Diplomat.” □

BOOK NOTES

The Dissent Papers Revealed

BY EVA M.A. MOSS, AFSA STAFF

On July 10, AFSA hosted author Hannah Gurman for an in-depth presentation of her new book, *The Dissent Papers: The Voices of Diplomats in the Cold War and Beyond* (Columbia University Press, 2012). The audience comprised current and former Foreign Service employees, journalists, students and members of the public.

Six years in the making, Gurman’s book takes a scholarly approach to analyzing the impact of diplomatic writing, the meaning of dissent and the intersection of the two. Some of the questions that drove her research and writing were: What is dissent? What personal and institutional histories give rise to dissent? Were dissenters always right? Does dissent make a difference?

To answer these questions, each chapter of the book spotlights individual diplomats and policymakers who constructively dissented against a particular facet of U.S. foreign policy. Included are famous diplomats, like George Kennan, Jack Service and John Paton Davies, as well as more contemporary Foreign Service officers, such as Ambassador Thomas D. Boyatt and John Brady Kiesling. The book also discusses State Department policymaker George Ball and former Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Gurman’s presentation combined brief readings from the book and commentary with PowerPoint slides. The approach demonstrated the utility of her decision to tell these stories as individual narratives, “like a patchwork quilt of professional and biographical trajectories.”

The juxtaposition of the practitioners’

perspectives with Gurman’s academic, research-based approach created a valuable synergy. This was evident when she invited Amb. Boyatt to comment on her overview of his dissent on Cyprus policy under Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 1974. Amb. Boyatt received AFSA’s Christian A. Herter Award for constructive dissent by a senior-level Foreign Service officer in 1977. (He had already received AFSA’s William R. Rivkin Award for constructive dissent by a mid-level FSO in 1970.)

Amb. Boyatt pointed out that AFSA began its dissent awards program several years before the State Department set up its Dissent Channel in 1971. Besides the Rivkin and Herter Awards, AFSA confers the W. Averell Harriman Award for constructive dissent by a junior officer and the F. Allen “Tex” Harris Award for constructive dissent by a Foreign Service specialist.

The lively and thoughtful Q&A session that followed gave the audience the opportunity to share comments and observations steeped in first-hand experience. Afterward, Gurman commented, “I really enjoyed the event and especially appreciated some of the incisive questions and comments in the Q&A.”

An excerpt from the book appeared as an article, “Dissent in the Kissinger Era,” in the July-August 2011 *Foreign Service Journal*. Gurman’s work has also appeared in *Diplomatic History*, *The Journal of Contemporary History* and *Small Wars Journal*, as well as on www.Salon.com and www.HuffingtonPost.com.

Ms. Gurman is a clinical assistant professor at New York University’s Gallatin School of Individualized Study, where she teaches U.S. history, literature and culture. She is also a columnist for the digital think-tank, *Foreign Policy in Focus*, and is currently editing a volume on counterinsurgency for New Press. □



Author Hannah Gurman discusses her new book.



Amb. Tom Boyatt makes a point during the Q&A.

Spotlight on Intellectual Courage



Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson (center) presents AFSA's Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award to Amb. William Lacy Swing. Also pictured (L to R): AFSA Executive Director Ian Houston (far left), AFSA President Susan R. Johnson and Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns.



The Honorable Robert S. Rivkin (L) presents the William R. Rivkin Award to Joshua W. Polacheck.



Mette Beecroft (L), president emerita of AAFSW, presents the Avis Bohlen Award to Leila Gupta.



Jon B. Clements, Clements Worldwide CEO, presents the M. Juanita Guess Award to Sara Hurst Butler.



Mr. Caldwell Harrop (L) presents the Nelson B. Delavan Award to James Velez.



Not Pictured: Jeff J. Jacob, AFSA Post Representative of the Year.

And Exceptional Performance



PHOTOS BY DONNA AYERST

Capturing American Diplomacy One Interview at a Time

BY BETH ROMAGNOLI, AFSA STAFF

A small white building sits on the outskirts of the George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center in Arlington, Va. Belying its plain exterior, the building houses a lively group of professionals and a wealth of knowledge that make up the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training.

Founded in 1986, ADST was created as a scholarly entity whose mission is to support the Foreign Service Institute. Since then, the nonprofit organization has grown to include many programs and depends on funding from foundations, an endowment and donations. More than 400 members support the organization through dues and volunteer activities.

An energetic staff, which includes interns and other volunteers, works hard to achieve its two primary objectives: supporting FSI's training programs and advancing knowledge of U.S. diplomacy.

"We play to our strengths," says Ken Brown, the association's president. The association provides FSI with a link to the private sector, secures funds for new pilot programs, recognizes outstanding individuals through annual and biennial

awards for leadership and foreign language training, and examines FSI courses for academic credit.

ADST offers programs not only for FSOs-in-training, but for the general public, as well. Their Web site, www.usdiplomacy.org, explores U.S. diplomatic history and foreign affairs. Numerous exhibitions highlight the history of diplomacy and showcase diplomatic memorabilia.

The Jewel in ADST's Crown

The Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection is the jewel in ADST's crown, however. Since 1985, more than 1,700 interviews have been collected from former Foreign Service members. The oral histories span 70 years and create a dynamic picture of the lives and work of American diplomats. As ADST states: "These interviews go beyond official events and take audiences behind the scenes to understand the inner workings of American diplomacy as it defends the nation's citizens and their interests in a changing world."



ADST's Oral History Director Stu Kennedy (L) interviews former Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte.

During training, the oral history collection serves to inform Foreign Service officers on what has been done in the past and the type of diplomatic work they may encounter during their own careers.

Oral History Director Stu Kennedy (who has conducted more than 1,000 interviews) noted that the recorded memories are much more blunt than a memoir. "They strip away the diplomatic gloss from the hard work."

The stories circle the globe — from Saigon and the Vietnam War, to life in Saudi Arabia during the Persian Gulf War and working in the European underground during World War II. Whether the diplomats were immersed in the action or a fly on the wall, their pride in being a part of history comes through ADST's transcripts.

"It is a very large collection of American social history," Kennedy remarked. As the collection continues to grow — with 80 new interviews added annually — it stands as one of the most significant oral history collections on foreign affairs.

The collection is also made available to writers and teachers of foreign affairs, high school and college students, and the general public through the Library of Congress' American Memory collection at memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/diplomacy/. □

ADST Book Series

"Since 1776, extraordinary men and women have represented the United States abroad under all sorts of circumstances. What they did and how and why they did it remain little known to their compatriots. This book series seeks to demystify diplomacy by telling the story of those who have conducted our foreign relations, as they lived, influenced, and reported them." So reads the inscription found in each book published by the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training with DACOR.

Two series — Diplomats and Diplomacy, and Memoirs and Occasional Papers — capture the lives of American diplomats living and working abroad. Publishing Director Margery Thompson oversees the production of each book, from manuscript to securing a publisher. Collectively, the two series encompass 75 books, with more to come this year.

The series covers a wide array of topics: *The Anguish of Surrender* by Ulrich Straus, *China Boys* by Nicholas Platt, *Emperor Dead and Other Historic American Diplomatic Dispatches* by Peter D. Eicher, and *African Wars: Recollections of a Defense Intelligence Officer* by William G. Thom, for example. Six ADST books have received the Douglas Dillon Award for Books of Distinction on the practice of American diplomacy.

Foreign Service Youth Honored at Annual FSYF Awards Ceremony

BY GABRIELLE HAMPSON, COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH OFFICER, FAMILY LIAISON OFFICE

On July 20, Director General of the Foreign Service Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the Family Liaison Office and the Foreign Service Youth Foundation co-hosted the 2012 Foreign Service Youth Awards ceremony in the State Department's George C. Marshall Center. Foreign Service children were recognized for their artwork, essay writing, video production, community service and academic achievement. The ceremony also honored children whose parents are serving or have served at an unaccompanied post.

ART CONTEST

(Sponsored by State Department Federal Credit Union)

Ages 5 to 8

First Place: Narisara "TenTen" Mayer, Washington, D.C.

Second Place: Sophia Bitner, Consulate Jerusalem

Third Place: Ethan Banerjee, Washington, D.C.

Ages 9 to 12

First Place: Riley Domaingue, Washington, D.C.

Second Place: Liam Meyler Rathke, Embassy Kuala Lumpur

Third Place: Marlo Fowler, Embassy Podgorica

Ages 13 to 18

First Place: Gabrielle Young, Washington, D.C.

Joint Second Place: Sara Cha, Washington, D.C.

Joint Second Place: Håkon Bard, Embassy Moscow

Third Place: Olivia Doret, Embassy Paris

KIDVID CONTEST

(Organized by FSYF and the Overseas Briefing Center, a division of FSF's Transition Center, and sponsored by Peake Management)

First Place: Luke Bailey, Anna Bailey, Molly Bailey and Daisy Bailey, Embassy Riga

Second Place: Kyle Baluyut, Dean Quinlan, Noah Thurston and MeiLin Bucher, Embassy Rangoon

Third Place: Mitchell Carswell and Camryn (Cami) Carswell, Embassy Sofia

Fourth Place: Dylan Locke, Embassy Beijing

Fifth Place: Drew Turner, Embassy Kathmandu

ESSAY CONTEST

(Sponsored by McGrath Real Estate)

High School

First Place: Vivian Holt, Embassy Gaborone

Second Place: Caroline Ezekwesili, Embassy Cape Town

Third Place: Elizabeth Caltagirone, Embassy New Delhi

Middle School

First Place: Alexander Toyryla, Consulate Chengdu

Second Place: Claudia Amadeo, Embassy Brasilia

Third Place: Martin Lahm IV, Embassy Bucharest

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

(Sponsored by Clements Worldwide)

Rebecca Blaser, Embassy Kampala

Jasmyn Roecks, Embassy Addis Ababa

MERIT SCHOLARSHIP

(Sponsored by GEICO/Foreign Service Youth Foundation)

Reia Tong, Washington, D.C.

To learn more about each award, please visit www.fsyf.org.

In 2006, the department began sending medals and certificates of recognition to children whose parents were serving or had served at a high-risk unaccompanied post. Designed and distributed by FLO, the awards acknowledge the sacrifice that children and families make when employees volunteer for an unaccompanied tour. To date, more than 3,000 children have been recognized for their sacrifice.

For more information about FLO's Unaccompanied Tour Recognition Program, please visit the FLO Web site at www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo. □



Winners of the 2012 Foreign Service Youth Awards. Front row (L to R): Martin Lahm, Sara Cha, Alexander Toyryla, Molly Bailey, Narisara "TenTen" Mayer, Daisy Bailey, MeiLin Bucher and Kyle Baluyut. Second row (L to R): Gabrielle Young, Claudia Amadeo, FSYF President Linda Garvelink, Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Caroline Ezekwesili, Reia Tong, Jasmine Roecks, and Rebecca Blaser.



Each year, children of parents serving at unaccompanied posts are eligible to receive medals of recognition for their sacrifice. Front row (beginning with blue dress, L to R): Riley Perlman, Sheridan Perlman, Erin McCarthy, Colleen McCarthy, Jocelyn Hamon, Kelly McCarthy, Sean McCarthy. Second row (L to R): Michael Schetta-Ramos, Savannah Sudweeks, Olivia Sudweeks, Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Dwayne McDavid, David McCarthy, Kelsey Dinoia, Noah Horwath and Melissa Horwath.

GLIFAA EQUALITY AWARDS CEREMONY

Honoring Personal and Professional Courage

BY BETH ROMAGNOLI, AFSA STAFF

On June 18, AFSA President Susan Johnson opened the Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies 2012 Equality Awards ceremony by welcoming members and others to the association's headquarters and expressed pleasure in hosting GLIFAA's event for the first time.

Then-GLIFAA President T. J. Lunardi honored this year's winners — two Foreign Service officers, Jeremy Curtin and Robyn McCutcheon — for their personal and professional courage, their shared goal of promoting a more diverse Foreign Service and their commitment to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's Chief of Staff Cheryl Mills' keynote speech celebrated the awardees and expressed gratitude for their "contributions to this nation."

Patient and Knowledgeable

During Jeremy Curtin's more than 30 years in the Foreign Service, he specialized in international public affairs and strategic

The award honors Curtin for his "efforts to ensure that the partners and spouses of LGBT foreign affairs employees receive equal rights and accessible benefits."

communications. He served in Europe and East Asia, including as minister-counselor for public affairs in Seoul.

Throughout his career, Curtin has been a tireless advocate on behalf of LGBT families. In presenting the award, Lunardi described him as a "patient and knowledgeable resource."

The award honors Curtin for his "efforts to ensure that the partners and spouses of LGBT foreign affairs employees receive equal rights and accessible benefits." Upon receiving the award, Curtin observed, "There is still a lot to be done, but the commitment is there."

At present, Curtin is a senior fellow at the University of Southern California's Annenberg Center on Communication

Leadership and Policy, where he is developing a program to explore how government and nongovernmental organizations can incorporate new communication technologies, including social media, to achieve strategic objectives.

Courage and Selflessness

Robyn McCutcheon, currently serving in the Information Programs Center in Bucharest, has marked a path for all those who follow behind her by becoming the first Foreign Service officer to go through gender transition while serving at an overseas post. The award commends "her courage and selflessness in serving as a role model for transgender foreign affairs employees and a pioneer in transgender rights."

McCutcheon was unable to attend the event, but her response to receiving the award was short and eloquent: "Gender transition takes the same courage as running out of a burning building. I will strive to justify all the confidence you show in me today. Never have I felt this proud to serve my country as in this moment."

McCutcheon served as economic officer in Tashkent from 2008 to 2010, where she oversaw the beginning phase of negotiations leading to the U.S.-Uzbekistan Science and Technology Cooperation agreement that was signed in December 2010. Before that, she served in Moscow in the consular section and, then, in the office of Environment, Science and Technology, where she managed the civilian nuclear energy portfolio at a time of intense negotiations over the U.S.-Russia Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement and a uranium suspension agreement governing trade in nuclear fuel. From 2004 to 2005, she served on the Russia desk monitoring Russia's external relations.


Prior to joining State, McCutcheon was a NASA engineer and worked on the Hubble Space Telescope Project. □



GLIFAA Equality Award winner Jeremy Curtin (L) with T. J. Lunardi, GLIFAA president.

The American Foreign Service Association
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or call (202) 719-9715.

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The idea for the markers came from Georgette Garner and her son, Lt. Col. Robert J. Garner, who asked AFSA to find a way to commemorate their husband and father’s Foreign Service career. The design was created by Chris Murray, the son of AFSA member Al Fairchild.

The markers may be purchased for \$149 through PayPal at www.afsa.org/marker, or you may request an order form by calling (202) 719-9715. If you have not already done so, please consider purchasing a marker. □

AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

52nd Annual AAFSW Art & BookFair

The 52nd annual Art & BookFair of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide will take place from Friday, Oct. 12, through Sunday, Oct. 21. The event will be held in the Diplomatic Exhibit Hall of the Harry S Truman building. The fair will feature books, art, collectibles, stamps and coins from all over the world. All proceeds benefit Foreign Service families and the AAFSW Scholarship Fund.

Donations — especially rare books, art items, stamps and coins — are now being accepted. For donation pickup, please call (202) 223-5796 or e-mail bookroom@aafsw.org. If you would like to volunteer to help at the event, please contact Judy Felt at (703) 370-1414.

New Requirement for Financial Aid Scholarship Applicants

Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, at least one Foreign Service parent must be an AFSA or Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide member for the student to be eligible for AFSA’s need-based, undergraduate financial aid scholarships. This change is being made to ensure consistency with AFSA’s Merit Awards Program, where the policy has been in place since 1997. Applications will be available in November.

During the current school year, the AFSA Scholarship Program will provide financial aid to 100 Foreign Service students, with individual scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$4,000 and totaling \$229,000. For more information, please see www.afsa.org/scholar.

Consider Giving to the AFSA Scholarship Fund Appeal

This month, AFSA will announce its annual AFSA Scholarship Fund Appeal. Donations may be made by mailing a check or online at www.afsa.org/donate_to_afsa.aspx with a credit card. Your support may help AFSA bestow one more scholarship to a child of one of your colleagues to help him or her go to their first-choice college. Our aid ranges from \$1,000 to \$4,000, depending on the need of the family. There are families that AFSA must turn away due to lack of available funds, so we appreciate whatever amount you can give.

FSYF Welcome Back Picnic

The Foreign Service Youth Foundation’s annual “Welcome Back Picnic” will take place on Sunday, Sept. 16, from 4 to 6:30 p.m., at Nottoway Park, 9601 Courthouse Rd., Vienna, Va. Join us in welcoming back recently returned FS families to the Washington, D.C., area. Please bring a side dish, salad or dessert to share. For more information please call FSYF at (703) 731-2960 or email fsyf@fsyf.org.



ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/SKIP O'DONNELL

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT:

Planning for Change Seminar

The Senior Living Foundation of the American Foreign Service will host its 5th Planning for Change Seminar on Thursday, Sept. 20. The event will be held at the Courtyard by Marriott, 1600 Rhode Island Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. All AFSA members are cordially invited.

Once again, the program will include esteemed speakers discussing relevant topics:

THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT (ACA) AND THE FEHB PROGRAM. A discussion of how the ACA might affect employees and retirees in the FEHB Program.

Speaker: Daniel Green, Deputy Director for Healthcare and Insurance, Office of Personnel Management.

THE FOUR SEASONS OF PREVENTION. Staying healthy is a year-round undertaking, especially once you are in the Golden Years. Learn what you should be doing every spring, summer, fall and winter to promote your own good health and how to identify medical problems before they become serious.

Speaker: Dr. Charles H. Rosenfarb, Deputy Medical Director, U.S. Department of State.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION FOR SENIORS. A discussion on exciting new research on medications for conditions affecting seniors.

Speaker: Dr. Robert Epstein, President, EF Associates, LLC.

UPCOMING CHANGES TO STATE RETIREMENT SYSTEMS. A brief discussion on the new Global Foreign Affairs Compensation System, Annuitant Express changes and other upcoming processing changes affecting you.

Speaker: Jeffrey Mounts, Managing Director, Global Compensation, Office of the Comptroller/Global Financial Services.

WILLS AND TRUSTS. A discussion of important legal documents.

Speaker: Jonathan Kinney, Partner, Bean, Kinney and Korman, P.C.

Space is limited. Please RSVP by Friday, Sept. 7, at www.SLFoundation.org, by e-mail at info@SLFoundation.org, or by phone at (202) 887-8170. □

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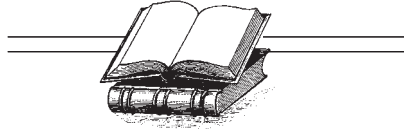
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BOOKS

Deconstructing Dissent

**The Dissent Papers:
The Voices of Diplomats
in the Cold War and Beyond**
*Hannah Gurman, Columbia
University Press, 2012, \$45,
hardcover; 296 pages; \$19.99,
Kindle Edition.*

REVIEWED BY STEVEN ALAN HONLEY

There is much to admire in *The Dissent Papers: The Voices of Diplomats in the Cold War and Beyond*, Hannah Gurman's survey of how and why Foreign Service officers have dissented over the past 70 years.

As one might expect from a book that began life as a doctoral dissertation by a clinical assistant professor at New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study, Gurman takes a scholarly approach to her subject, which encompasses two overlapping concerns. The first is the reason most Foreign Service readers would be drawn to this work: her assessment of the history, value and impact of internal dissent over U.S. foreign policy since World War II.

Even people already knowledgeable about the steep price many dissenters have paid for daring to speak truth to power will find her discussion useful, even surprising. Consider this

*Even readers already
familiar with Foreign
Service dissent will
find Gurman's
account useful,
even surprising.*



trenchant passage from her opening chapter, devoted to the rise and fall of George Kennan's career:

"His influence on policy had always been a combination of his persuasiveness as a diplomat-writer, his willingness to compromise his positions for the sake of influence, and the larger political context in which he wrote. *Readers of the Long Telegram and the X-article were not persuaded as much as satisfied to have their views articulated in an authoritative manner*" (emphasis added).

The next chapter looks at Jack Service, John Paton Davies and the other China hands. Gurman does a solid job of describing the issues at stake and the shifts in the American political climate as the Cold War intensified. She also usefully highlights the roles of relatively obscure FSOs like Clarence Gauss, who served almost continuously in China from 1912 to 1944 and who encouraged Service and Davies to cultivate local

contacts and "learn to write well."

Regrettably, that discussion is overshadowed by her other main interest: analyzing the evolution (or deterioration) of American diplomatic writing.

To be fair, Gurman makes a reasonable case that "Over the course of the Cold War, the State Department continued to bureaucratize and began to adopt corporate management practices. The effects of these policies were reflected in the written reports and analyses of rank-and-file diplomats. Instead of amplifying and enriching the policy debate with new information and innovative analysis, most diplomats wrote routine and innocuous reports, memos and letters designed to deflect rather than gain attention."

But where does that insight leave FSOs? Gurman never explains.

Her third chapter, which assesses the efforts by Under Secretary of State George Ball to prevent (or at least slow down) the Vietnam War by waging bureaucratic warfare, is mildly interesting, but just does not belong in a book ostensibly devoted to "the voices of diplomats." For all his virtues, Ball was a political appointee who does not seem to have had any particular sympathy for the concerns of his Foreign Service colleagues.

Fortunately, Gurman's final two chapters, which examine the Dissent Channel and its effect on Foreign

Inside a U.S. Embassy

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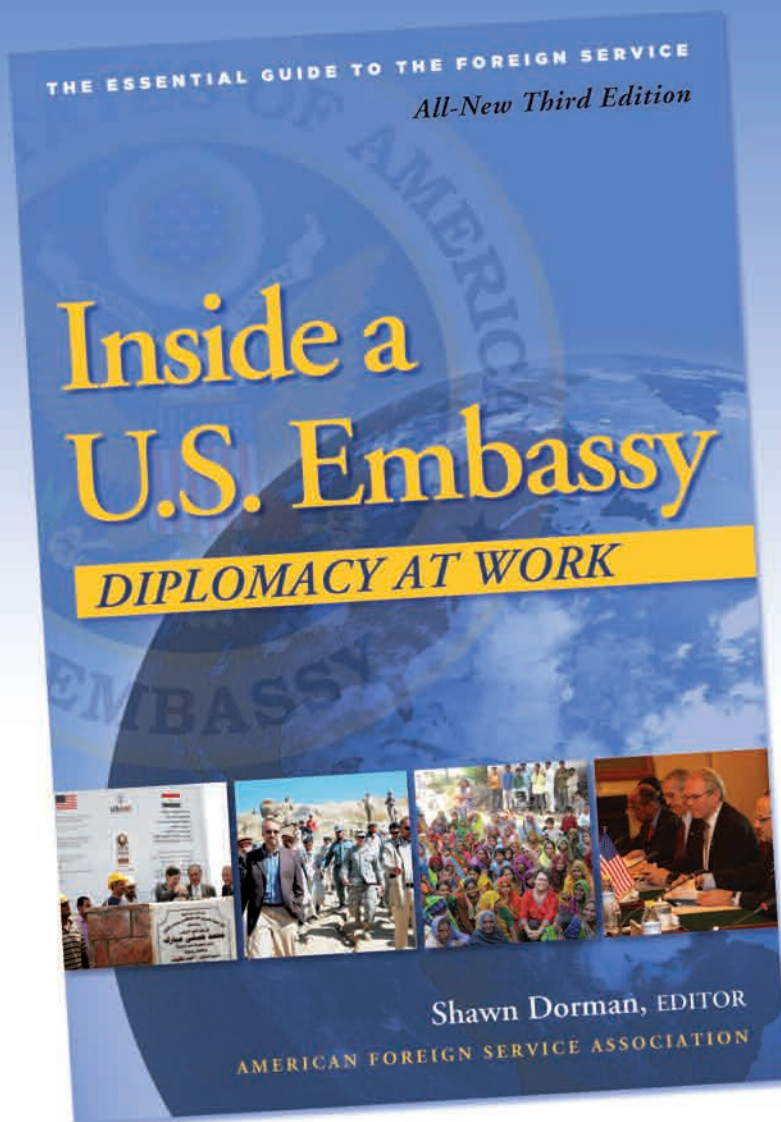
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B O O K S

*I have no hesitation
in recommending
The Dissent Papers.*

Service dissent since 1971, do a better job of melding her two broad concerns. Even here, though, I must note an irritating flaw in an otherwise worthwhile account.

While Gurman cites several *Foreign Service Journal* articles about and by dissenters, she seems utterly unaware of the historic role AFSA has played in promoting constructive dis-

sent through its awards program. She also repeatedly misidentifies AFSA as the “Foreign Service Association,” one of many sloppy errors throughout the book that indicate her editor did not serve her well.

Still, I have no hesitation in recommending *The Dissent Papers*. It is a serious, long-overdue treatment of constructive dissent that I hope will show non-practitioners why it is so important — not just for its practitioners, but for the health of U.S. foreign policy. ■

Steven Alan Honley was a Foreign Service officer from 1985 to 1997, serving in Mexico City, Wellington and Washington, D.C. He has been editor of the Foreign Service Journal since 2001.



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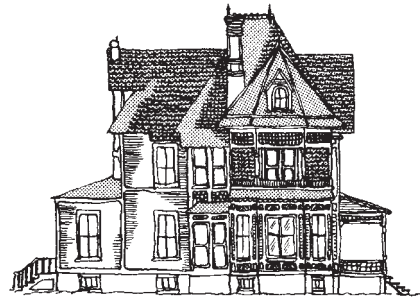
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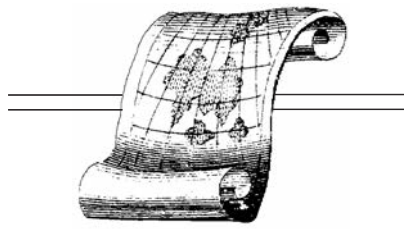
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REFLECTIONS

Serpentine Diplomacy

BY ROBERT GRIBBIN

In 1993, while I was ambassador to the Central African Republic, the citizenry participated in the nation's first (and so far only) free and fair election. Four of the 15 presidential candidates, including the incumbent, Andre Kolingba, led the pack.

The French and German ambassadors, the European Union delegate, the United Nations resident representative and I formed a donor committee that coordinated our collective financial input and strove to preach the virtues of democracy. The United States brought only a little money to the table, but our influence as a bulwark of democracy was impressive nonetheless.

The campaign grew hot with slings and arrows from all camps. Much of the politicking broke out along tribal lines and rallies, broadsides and sound trucks all sought to win over voters.

At one time or another, each candidate sat on my couch and asked for America's blessing. I applauded their patriotism and willingness to engage, and reiterated the U.S. commitment to an open process, but promised nothing concrete. Nonetheless, when each spoke to the press on exiting the embassy, he implied that he had received a warm endorsement.

The campaign was a festive experience, not least because the citizenry finally awoke to the fact that they had a say. Only late in the process did the president's inner circle realize that he

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was not very popular and would probably lose. So they began to plot disruptions.

As was my habit in this season, I took breakfast on the terrace of the residence one day during the last phase of electioneering. The morning was fresh, bright and clear, but held the promise of another hot and humid day.

Looking up into the large, sweet-smelling frangi pangi tree that overhung part of the terrace, I spied a big, long, black snake intertwined among the blossoms. I grabbed my croissant and coffee and quickly retreated behind the sliding glass door into the house.

When I summoned the house staff, they chattered excitedly and went to inform the gardeners. I had to go to the chancery, so I left the issue in their hands.

I arrived home for lunch to find that the staff, including the day guards, had laid out on the terrace for my inspection an eight-foot-long black mamba

— one of Africa's most aggressive and deadliest snakes. I heard recitations of the battle with the beast and the bravado of the victors.

I congratulated them profusely for their bravery and prowess in keeping us safe. Indeed, no one could have rested easy until the snake had been dealt with in this fashion.

By late afternoon a story was circulating widely in the city to the effect that President Kolingba, angry with the U.S. ambassador for advocating free elections and foreseeing his own impending exit, had used his black magic to send a mamba to kill the ambassador. The snake had snuck into the garden that morning and laid in wait to strike.

However, the ambassador's magic proved to be stronger. He had sensed the evil presence and had defeated the snake. Thus, as a consequence, the elections would go forward as planned, and Pres. Kolingba would lose.

One week later, that's exactly what happened. ■

Robert E. Gribbin spent many years in East and Central Africa, first as a Peace Corps Volunteer and then as a diplomat, including two tours in the Central African Republic — first as a junior officer (1974-1976) and later as ambassador (1992-1995). He is the author of a novel set in the CAR: State of Decay — An Oubangui Chronicle (Infinitypublishing.com, 2001).



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