

# THE **FOREIGN SERVICE** JOURNAL

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

APRIL 2019



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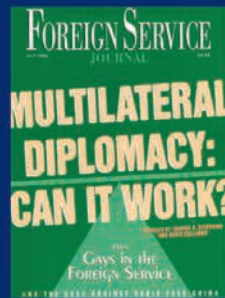
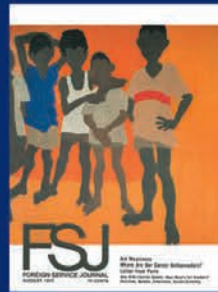
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**On the Cover**—NATO Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs meet at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, on Oct. 14, 2010, to prepare for the 2010 NATO summit in Lisbon, Portugal. Credit: U.S. Department of Defense. Inset: President Harry S Truman signs the Washington Treaty establishing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on April 4, 1949, in Washington, D.C. Credit: Abbie Rowe/National Archives and Records Administration. Composition by Driven By Design LLC.

# Time to Refund the Iraq Tax

BY BARBARA STEPHENSON

As news circulates about a significant reduction in Foreign Service positions in Iraq, and the State Department's new *Five-Year Workforce and Leadership Succession Plan* reports on pages 4 and 49 "abolishing a large number of positions in warzone areas," members have begun to ask me if it is finally refund time for the "Iraq tax" levied more than a decade ago.

Members of the Foreign Service vividly recall being asked during the height of the "civilian surge" in Iraq to identify positions our embassies could sacrifice for the cause of ensuring that every position in Iraq was filled with a Foreign Service volunteer. Now, well over a decade later, we still find ourselves struggling in short-staffed political and economic sections at embassies around the world.

The most recent report of State HR's Overseas Staffing Board validates the concern members express about being short-staffed. The model showed a deficit of almost 200 overseas positions in "core diplomacy" (the term the Overseas Staffing Model uses for political, economic and front office positions). Deficits in other categories were also flagged by the OSB report.

These deficits would be even higher if accurate planning assumptions had been used instead of those derived from the administration's 2017 budget proposal, namely, 32



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

## The evidence is clear: we have too few Foreign Service positions in the field.

percent budget cuts and 8 percent staffing cuts. Members will recall that Congress rejected these cuts as tantamount to a "doctrine of retreat" and fully restored funding for FY 2018.

The evidence is clear: we have too few Foreign Service positions in the field.

Why does it matter that American embassies are operating with depleted Foreign Service teams, with too few players to cover all the bases? This has long been a suboptimal situation that has led to missed opportunities and too little mentoring. But in the face of competition from rapidly rising powers such as China, the cost of leaving American embassies short-staffed has rapidly risen to dangerous levels, jeopardizing America's global leadership.

Members, especially those serving in Africa, report that they are outnumbered four or five to one by Chinese diplomats working on economic and commercial issues. Lest we be tempted to discount the impact of being so outmatched, consider what retired Ambassador Stuart Jones recently shared during an AFSA panel on "Economic Diplomacy Works": According to *Engineering Digest's* annual global survey of the top engineering and construction firms, in 2008, there were no Chinese firms in the top 10. By 2018, Chinese firms occupied eight of those slots. Bechtel, which had always been in the top 10, had slipped to number 12.

This is what great power competition looks like. This is why nearly 100 American business associations wrote to Secretary Pompeo in October asking for more FSOs at embassies and consulates. "We urge you to send more diplomats overseas," they wrote. "Foreign competitors are continually extending their economic reach into markets where America's diplomatic presence is limited."

Congress also takes seriously the threat of rising competition. That is at least part of the reason why Congress voted by such wide margins to reject proposed cuts and again restore funding for the FY 2019 International Affairs Budget.

The appropriations bill passed on Feb. 14 increases funding for "Diplomatic Programs," including \$84 million for the "overseas programs" line item, which covers overseas support costs for moving FSO positions from Washington to the field. Congressional language firmly prohibits reducing staffing.

How do we begin to reclaim lost ground and reassert American global leadership? For starters, it is time to refund the Iraq tax, especially given the announced reduction of positions in Iraq. It is time to make a serious effort to restore positions overseas—in advance of the next bidding season—and give embassies and consulates the full teams needed to protect and defend American interests. ■

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# NATO: An Enduring Alliance

BY SHAWN DORMAN

On April 4, 1949, in the wake of World War II, the leaders of 12 European and North American countries met in Washington, D.C., to establish and sign the North Atlantic Treaty. This new military alliance guaranteed that any member country would protect any other in the event of aggression from an outside country.

In 1955, the Soviet Union and affiliated communist countries in Eastern Europe created the Warsaw Pact in response.

Today NATO has 29 member countries, including 10 former Warsaw Pact members and three from the former Yugoslavia.

On its 70th anniversary, experts are asking: How has the alliance changed, and what might its future hold? Is NATO in crisis? Are NATO's days numbered?

As more than one of this month's authors point out, the survival of NATO has regularly been pondered. Yet it remains in force and relevant.

In this issue of the *Journal*, we take a look at the evolution of the alliance. Lord Robertson, secretary general of NATO from 1999 to 2003 and British defense secretary from 1997 to 1999, offers an alliance to-do list in "Reinforcing NATO for the Future."

Steven Keil from the German Marshall Fund writes about "Global Shifts and American Political Will as NATO Turns 70." And NATO expert Chris Kremidas

Courtney looks at new alliance initiatives in "Working with NATO to Address Hybrid Threats." We also share a selection of excerpts



Shawn Dorman is the editor of The Foreign Service Journal.

from *FSJ* articles about NATO from 1949 to the present.

This month's feature is timely. In "The Tragedy of Venezuela" retired FSO Oliver Griffith presents a cautionary tale of how a nation that was once one of Latin America's most prosperous and promising has devolved into dysfunction and crisis.

And the Speaking Out is a blunt but useful take on bidding. If you've ever wondered how the "deciders" determine who gets those plum posts overseas, look no further. In "Straight Talk on Bidding," FSO Paul Poletes lifts the curtain on the process and gives you insider advice on whether and when to bid on that popular post.

In her President's Views column, Ambassador Barbara Stephenson suggests that it's time to get a refund on the Iraq tax. Rather than abolish the positions that were created to staff up Iraq and Afghanistan during the height of the wars, those positions should be moved back to the posts that lost them—and still need them.

Thank you to those of you who joined us for the *FSJ* centennial exhibit at the U.S. Diplomacy Center last month. The exhibit will be on display through Foreign Service Day on May 3, so do stop by. Hopefully it will inspire you to dig deeper into the history of diplomacy and the Foreign Service.

Please visit the *FSJ* digital archive at [www.afsa.org/fsj-archive](http://www.afsa.org/fsj-archive). And consider submitting your own Foreign Service story. Author guidelines are at <http://www.afsa.org/fsj-author-guidelines>. Drop me a line to pitch an article, share something interesting you find in the archive or let us know what you think of this issue. ■

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## On Economic/Commercial Diplomacy

I'd like to make two comments regarding the excellent article by Shaun Donnelly and Dan Crocker, "Six Elements of Effective Economic/Commercial Diplomacy," in the January-February *FSJ*.

First, I agree with the authors' recommendations. When I went to Mexico as ambassador in 1993, I had six objectives I wanted to accomplish. At the top of the list was to grow the commercial relationship between our countries. I would note that at this time, the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, was fully supportive of elevating commercial development as a top priority at U.S. embassies. This was a fundamental change.

As CEO of the American Stock

Exchange and before that on the House Ways & Means Committee, I had concluded that private-sector commercial development should be a major part of our foreign policy. It would create wealth worth defend-

ing and would lead to another important objective: promotion of democracy. I witnessed that in Mexico.

After we passed the North American Free Trade Agreement and commerce flourished between our countries, the demand for openness in Mexico's political system took hold. That was the end of the one-party rule that had governed Mexico for more than seven decades.

My second comment concerns the Foreign Commercial Service, which was created by an amendment I co-sponsored with Congressman Bill Frenzel (R-Minn.).

We had led a Ways & Means Task Force on U.S.-Japan Trade from 1978 to

1980. Among our findings was that the commercial officers at State were largely ineffective at selling U.S. goods and services abroad, and that the "commercial cone" was the least desirable career path at State.

After exploring several options, Bill and I decided to legislate removal of this function from State and pass it over to the Commerce Department as the FCS. That has been largely successful.

*James R. Jones*

*Chairman, Monarch Global*

*Strategies LLC*

*U.S. ambassador to Mexico, 1993-1997*

*Member of Congress (D-Okla.),*

*1973-1987*

*Washington, D.C.*



## Economic Diplomacy Stories Inspire

I'm up reading the January-February *FSJ* at 1:30 a.m. I loved the Taylor guitar story, which I'll share with my guitar-playing husband later. Bob Taylor sounds like an amazing guy who worked so well with the embassy to form a great partnership with Cameroon. He's replanting trees that get used for making

guitars, and doing it with local labor!

The other stories were inspiring too. And the photos are smashing. A class act.

Most people have no idea what our embassies do—and do for our country. The Taylor guitar story is a perfect example. I hope it will be widely read.

*Linda Michel*

*FSJ reader*

*Owings Mills, Md.*

## Father-and-Son Ambassadors

The interview with Ambassador Ron Neumann in the December *FSJ* includes the observation that only the Neumann

and Adams families have produced father-and-son ambassadors. Not so!

The Francis family of Troy, New York, also produced a father-and-son team: John M. Francis and his son Charles S. Francis. Furthermore, like the Adams family, they followed each other to represent the United States in the same country a generation apart.

According to the State Department's Office of the Historian, John M. Francis served as minister resident in Greece from 1871 to 1873; as minister resident/consul general in Portugal from 1882 to 1884; and as envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary in Austria from 1884 to 1885.

His son Charles was envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to Greece from 1901 to 1902, with accreditation to Romania and Serbia. Later, like his father, he was ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Austria, from 1906 to 1910.

The Francis family were newspaper publishers in Troy and prominent supporters of the Republican Party.

*Stephen Muller*

*FSO, retired*

*Troy, New York*

## Responding to Radically Simple Ideas

Writing in the November 2018 *FSJ*, Mr. JC Windham raised some creative ideas for improving the Foreign Service. While I do not agree with all his ideas, I applaud his initiative.

In particular, he recommended eliminating management officer positions and having each of the specialist sections report directly to the deputy chief of mission (DCM).

I have found that the coordinating role of management counselors at post is absolutely essential, and it's impractic-

cal for the DCM to take on this additional responsibility. However, I do think the department could look more creatively at how those management counselor positions are filled.

I have met many brilliant FS specialists who feel their upward mobility is limited in their career track. Why should they not one day run a management section or be a DCM?

To make this happen, I would argue that management counselor positions at posts should only be open to experienced FS specialists. This would provide the upward mobility. To compete for one of these positions and show that they are



well-rounded, FS specialists would need to have demonstrated experience outside their specialty, including completing a tour as a consular officer, just as management-coned FSOs do now.

As Mr. Windham suggests, the department might then stop taking in entry-level management officers. But with the

above process in place, the department could let specialists take these senior management-level jobs and then backfill with new entry-level specialists.

With this change, the overall career path of someone in a management counselor job might be the same as today—e.g., a tour as an assistant general

services officer, a tour as consular officer, then as senior GSO before becoming management counselor—with the major difference that now the department would have provided an upward career path for all specialists, whether GSO, office management specialist, financial management officer or something else.

I know I tread on dangerous ground, given that I am neither a specialist nor in the management cone. But I have worked with wonderful colleagues in management sections, both FSO and FS specialist, and wonder whether the FSO/FSS split there still makes sense.

*Stuart Denyer*  
FSO  
FSI/SPAS/CON  
Arlington, Virginia ■



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# BUILDing Better Development Financing

BY REPRESENTATIVE TED YOHO

I was honored to be asked to write an article for the American Foreign Service Association's magazine, whose readership is made up of a prestigious group of Americans whose work has a serious impact around the globe. To all current and former Foreign Service professionals, I thank you for your service and dedication to our country.

You are on the front lines in more than 270 U.S. embassies, consulates and various posts around the world. It is safe to say that most Americans do not realize or fully understand the importance of your work in assisting other countries, problem-solving and promoting the United States' interests around the world—while also improving conditions in the countries in which you serve. As diplomats and development specialists, you understand the role soft power—especially foreign assistance programs—plays in remedying issues and advancing our nation's interests overseas.

When I was first elected to Congress in 2012, I must admit, I was one of those who didn't fully appreciate the scope of our Foreign Service community. Soon after my arrival on Capitol Hill, I was fortunate to be named a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, which provided me the opportunity to learn

---

*Representative Ted Yoho (R-Fla.) is a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and lead Republican of the HFAC Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and Nonproliferation. He is also a member of the Committee on Agriculture.*



## I developed a deeper understanding of how aid could be an important tool in maintaining American leadership while creating strong allies in a complicated and unpredictable world.

more about this very important component of our national security apparatus.

When I first arrived, it was no secret that I was in favor of eliminating all foreign aid. I had long been skeptical of how U.S. taxpayer dollars were spent overseas, having heard countless stories of America's generosity being rewarded by wasteful projects and corrupt foreign bureaucrats enriching themselves at the expense of the U.S. taxpayer and robbing their own citizens of those intended benefits.

However, the more hearings I attended, testimonies I heard and experts I spoke to, the more my views on

foreign assistance changed. I developed a deeper understanding of how aid could be an important tool in maintaining American leadership while creating strong allies in a complicated and unpredictable world. As my views evolved, I better understood the effectiveness and importance of U.S. foreign aid. In particular, that if it is used properly, it could transition countries from "aid to trade."

Evaluating the way our foreign aid is implemented, I noticed there was plenty of room for improvement. It was imperative that we elevate America's global competitiveness, reform our anti-

quated programs and bring development finance into the 21st century.

That is what led our team to introduce The Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development (BUILD) Act, which was signed into law last year. I believe this is the most important reform of U.S. foreign development programs in decades.

The BUILD Act consolidates various federal development programs and agencies into one full-service, self-sustaining U.S. International Development Finance Corporation. Essentially, the IDFC combines the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and the U.S.

**The BUILD Act has reformed and modernized America's approach to development finance and made it more efficient and effective.**

Agency for International Development's Development Credit Authority, while at the same time expanding U.S. development finance capabilities.

The BUILD Act has reformed and modernized America's approach to development finance and made it more efficient and effective. U.S. foreign aid and development, when properly implemented, is a potent tool of soft-power diplomacy. As you well know, when used effectively these funds help improve our diplomatic, economic and national security interests around the world.

When you combine a modern development finance system with knowledgeable and experienced Foreign Service members such as yourselves, it spreads goodwill and stability to other countries. This goodwill leads to partnerships that help create strong economies, strong trade agreements and strong national security.

Thanks to you and your dedication, the future of U.S. foreign policy and the U.S. Foreign Service is looking bright. I cannot wait to hear about how professionals such as yourselves go on to utilize the tools created by the BUILD Act and witness the positive impact you create around the world. ■



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## GAO Releases Report on “Persistent Overseas Foreign Service Vacancies”

In March, the Government Accountability Office released a new report, “Department of State: Integrated Action Plan Could Enhance Efforts to Reduce Persistent Overseas Foreign Service Vacancies” (GAO-19-220).

This is the GAO’s third report in 10 years on Foreign Service staffing shortfalls, and the findings are striking. Despite an increase in the number of positions staffed between 2008 and 2018, as of March 31, 2018, fully 13 percent of State’s overseas Foreign Service positions were vacant—nearly the same vacancy percentage the GAO found in both 2008 and 2012 (see the graph).

GAO acknowledges the State Department’s various efforts to address the vacancies and the factor of fluctuating appropriations, but points to the fact that the department lacks an action plan that is integrated across its relevant offices and fails to identify the cause of the persistent vacancies.

Even State’s *Five-Year Workforce and Leadership Succession Plan: Fiscal Years 2016-2020*, GAO found, lacks such a comprehensive focus. “Addressing chronic vacancies in critical positions at overseas posts requires a thoughtful, coherent and integrated action plan that defines the root causes of persistent Foreign Service vacancies along with suggested corrective measures,” states GAO.

GAO concludes with one recommendation for executive action: “The Secre-

## Military Brass Urge Support for Diplomacy and Development

In congressional testimony and in public statements, representatives of the U.S. military have been weighing in on plans for the 2020 U.S. federal budget, as they did on previous budgets, urging policymakers to “continue to protect resources for America’s International Affairs Budget.”

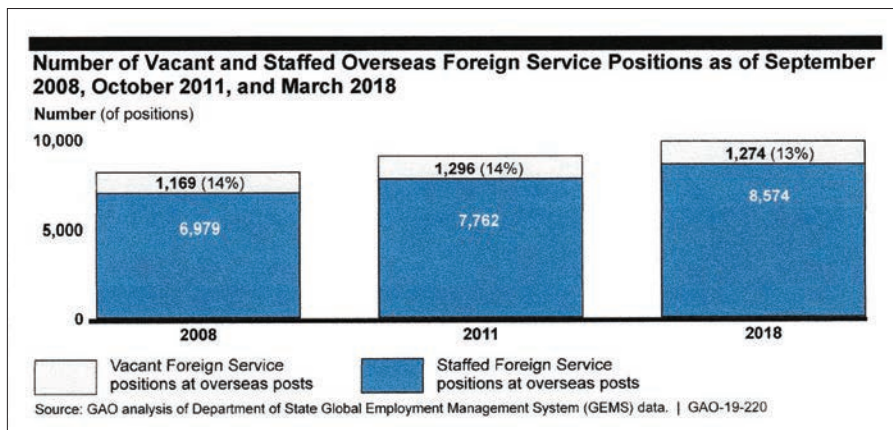
A March 10 statement addressed to legislators by retired admirals and generals from all six of the regional combatant commands states: “We know that the military alone cannot keep our nation safe. Diplomacy and development are essential to combating threats before they reach our shores.

“We stand with and share the perspectives of our fellow combatant commanders who have testified before Congress in recent days on the strategic importance of the State Department, USAID, and other U.S. development agencies as key partners around the world to protect our interest and our values.”

The brass conclude: “As Congress considers next year’s federal budget, we urge policymakers to continue to protect resources for America’s International Affairs Budget. Doing so is critical to keeping our nation safe and prosperous in a world of global threats and great power competition.”

## Former Senior National Security Officials Oppose National Emergency

On Feb. 25, 58 former national security officials issued a statement in opposition to the president’s Feb. 15 declaration of a “national emergency” that would allow him to divert previously appropriated funds to build a wall along the southern border of the United States.



According to State’s data, as of March 31, 2018, overseas posts with State’s highest foreign policy priorities had the highest percentages of vacant Foreign Service positions. The data also shows high vacancy rates in regions with security risks that could threaten U.S. interests.

The vacancies, GAO found, increase workloads, adversely affect morale and make it difficult to perform some important functions such as training and improving processes.

tary of State should develop an integrated action plan that defines the root causes of persistent Foreign Service vacancies at overseas posts and provides suggested corrective measures to reduce such vacancies, including steps necessary to implement solutions.”

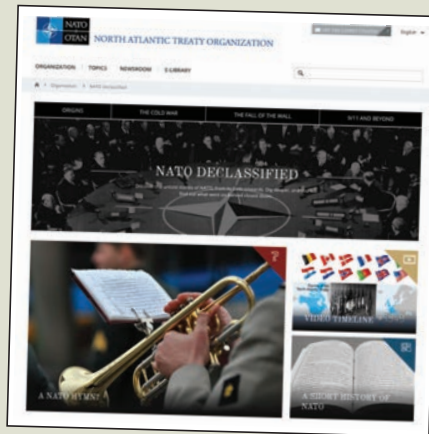
Significantly, GAO notes that its study did not assess whether the total number of authorized overseas Foreign Service positions was appropriate or met State’s needs.

## SITE OF THE MONTH – NATO DECLASSIFIED: [HTTPS://WWW.NATO.INT/CPS/EN/NATOHQ/DECLASSIFIED.HTM](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified.htm)

It's NATO's 70th anniversary and you just can't get enough of NATO? Policy wonks, historians, photographers and students alike will get a kick out of "NATO Declassified," a section of NATO's own website that bills itself as the place to "discover the untold stories of NATO, from its birth onward."

The site is a bit confusing to navigate, but your patience will be rewarded by numerous historical photos from the NATO archives, a video timeline of significant events in the history of the alliance, links to speeches given at NATO headquarters over the years and stories specific to the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the post-9/11 period.

One section, "The Cold War," has a subsection that focuses on espionage against NATO, including a video about what motivated people to spy against the alliance. This section also includes images of security posters distributed by the alliance over the years, and information about how NATO has been pictured in popular movies and books.



Another section, "NATO Leaders," gives a short biography of each NATO leader, from General Eisenhower (1950-1952) to Anders Fogh Rasmussen (2009-2014). Still another section showcases the various symbols that have been used by NATO in the past and explains their significance. This section covers everything from NATO's mobile information center to the "NATO strap," a watch band first produced by the British Ministry of Defence in 1973.

"Experts' Corner" posts declassified NATO documents broken down by subject (e.g., the founding treaty, the fall of the Berlin Wall) and provides lists of recommended reading on each specific topic.

Be sure to check out the section "A Short History of NATO." In addition to the history lesson, this section is sprinkled with photos that span the entire history of the organization.

The rich visuals alone make "NATO Declassified" a site worth visiting.

The statement will be entered into the Congressional Record.

The bipartisan group of former U.S. officials included many who worked for the State Department such as former Secretaries of State Madeline Albright and John Kerry; former Deputy Secretary of State and former Deputy National Security Adviser to the President Antony Blinken; former Deputy Secretaries of State Bill Burns and Strobe Talbott; former Under Secretaries of State for Political Affairs Ambassador R. Nicholas Burns, Thomas Pickering and Wendy Sherman; former Assistant Secretaries of State Johnnie Carson, Eric Schwartz, Andrew Shapiro, Linda Thomas-Greenfield and Arturo Valenzuela; and Ambassadors (ret.) Ryan Crocker, John Feeley, Roberta Jacobson,

Anne Patterson and Dana Shell Smith.

They wrote: "We have lived and worked through national emergencies, and we support the president's power to mobilize the Executive Branch to respond quickly in genuine national emergencies. But under no plausible assessment of the evidence is there a national emergency today."

The statement goes on to explain that there is "no documented terrorist or national security emergency at the southern border," where "illegal border crossings are near forty-year lows."

They point to the administration's own recent Country Report on Terrorism, which found "no credible evidence" that any international terrorist groups had established bases in Mexico, and they note that since 1975, there "has been only

one reported incident in which immigrants who had crossed the southern border illegally attempted to commit a terrorist act."

In fact, they explain, between October 2017 and March 2018, 41 foreign immigrants on the terrorist watchlist were intercepted at the northern border, while only six were stopped at the southern border.

There is no human or drug trafficking emergency at the southern border, the statement continues, and redirecting funds for a claimed emergency will undermine U.S. national security and foreign policy interests.

Lastly, they write, "there is no factual basis for the declaration of a national emergency for the purpose of circumventing the appropriations process."

## Marking NATO's 70th

**N**ATO was founded when the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington, D.C., on April 4, 1949, by the United States, Canada, Britain, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Portugal, Belgium, Iceland and Luxembourg.

Approaching the April anniversary of its founding, many experts, former policymakers and academics have been looking back at NATO history, considering its state today and hypothesizing about what comes next for the alliance.

Former U.S. Ambassadors to NATO Nicholas Burns and Douglas Lute sound the alarm in their February report from the Harvard Kennedy School's Project on Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship, "NATO at Seventy: An Alliance in Crisis."

The authors say that "NATO remains the single most important contributor to security, stability and peace in Europe and North America." They list 10 major challenges the alliance faces in 2019, including internal challenges such as reviving American leadership of the alliance, restoring European defense strength, upholding democratic values and streamlining decision making; and external challenges that include containing Putin's Russia, ending the Afghan War



and refocusing NATO partnerships.

They emphasize that the single greatest challenge for NATO today is "the absence of strong, principled American presidential leadership."

During a March 13 House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing, "NATO at 70: An Indispensable Alliance," members of Congress and witnesses all spoke in support of a strong NATO.

"We are seeing a rise in authoritarianism, continued threats from international terrorism and extremism, and aggressive attempts by Putin to invade Russia's neighbors and attack democratic elections throughout the world," HFAC Chair Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.) stated. "It's by working with our NATO allies standing side-by-side that we can successfully face these challenges head on."

Douglas Lute also testified at the House

hearing: "NATO needs to pay more attention to China's increasing influence in Europe. ...In the coming decades, NATO's importance will only grow because of the U.S. competition with China."

Lute stated: "I want to point out a false narrative that ignores the values and erodes the cohesion of NATO. This false narrative claims that NATO is an anachronism, outdated and obsolete; that our allies are ripping us off, taking advantage of our generosity. This is simply not true.

"The truth is," he continued, "that the U.S. created NATO and has maintained the alliance for 70 years because NATO is in America's vital national security interest. America benefits economically, politically and militarily from the alliance. NATO and our other treaty allies are the single greatest geostrategic advantage over any peer competitor. Russia and China have nothing to compare. In short, NATO is indispensable."

The Center for European Policy Analysis announced plans for an April 3 ministerial forum, "NATO at 70," at its Washington, D.C., headquarters. Attendees will include the foreign ministers of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Lithuania, Romania and Latvia, in addition to Senator Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), a member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

## Contemporary Quote

**ee** The window for defining America's pivotal role will not stay open forever. Whether we seize the moment of opportunity before us will depend in large measure on whether this chamber and this committee can help recapture a sense of shared vision and shared purpose; whether we can recover a sense of diplomatic agility out of the muscle-bound national security bureaucracy we have become in recent years; and whether we can come to terms with the realities of a new international landscape, and shape it skillfully with our considerable enduring strengths. **”**

—Ambassador William Burns, in an opening statement at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, "Assessing the Role of the United States in the World," Feb. 27.



There are more NATO-related events and writings to come. The Democratic and Republican House and Senate leadership has invited NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg to address a joint session of the U.S. Congress on April 3 in honor of the anniversary.

And the NATO Secretary-General announced plans for a summit of the leaders of the 29 member-states in London in December to mark the 70th anniversary.

## Ambassador Tracker: Checking In on Appointments

**A** FSA keeps a close eye on appointments for senior officials and ambassadors. Here is where the situation stands as of early March.

The Trump administration has to date made 137 ambassadorial appointments. Of those, 70, or 51 percent, are career members of the U.S. Foreign Service and 67, or 49 percent, are political appointees.

This is an unusually high number of politically appointed ambassadors at the midpoint of an administration. Since the Gerald Ford presidency, career Foreign Service officers have made up 70 percent of ambassador appointments on average.

Notably, 28 of the 137 appointees have yet to be confirmed by the Senate.

The diversity of the ambassador picks has also come under some scrutiny. According to media reports, only 15 of the appointees are non-Caucasian and

## 50 Years Ago

### Russia and the Middle East

...Although Peter the Great has often been cited for initiating Russian dreams of influence in the Middle East, these interests were limited to Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia. Neither Czars nor Commissars were interested in Mesopotamia or the Nile Valley until the start of the war in Europe in 1939. Stalin and Molotov pressed Hitler and then the allies for a Russian sphere of influence “south of the Soviet Union in the direction of the Indian Ocean.”

At Potsdam, Molotov demanded “bases in the Mediterranean for its merchant fleet,” and a “trusteeship” for Libya. All of Russia’s demands were refused, however, and the Montreux Convention of 1936 still regulates traffic in the Black Sea straits and there are no Soviet bases in the Mediterranean.

The British withdrawal from Egypt in the 1950s gave Moscow its first opportunity in the Middle East. Khrushchev adopted a more moderate line toward “Third World” countries, including a policy of collaboration with “bourgeois nationalism” of the Nasser type. The Arabs were developing a more forward policy of “neutrality” at the same time, allowing for rapproche-

ment with the Soviet bloc. This led to arms deals with Egypt in 1955 which were followed by the establishment of economic and technical missions.

The same pattern took place in Syria in 1956 and Iraq in 1958. Nevertheless, the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956 made a greater impact on the Arab political mind than millions of dollars of Soviet economic and military aid. Moreover, the instability and unreliability of Arab governments and their leaders caused the Soviets to proceed deliberately.

This delicate balance was shattered by the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, which opened up new military and economic opportunities for the Soviets.

—Melvin A. Goodman, from “Russia and the Middle East in the Wake of the Mediterranean War,” *FSJ*, April 1969. Goodman, a former Woodrow Wilson Fellow, was at the time of publication writing his dissertation on U.S. recognition of the Soviet Union in 1933 for Indiana University.



there are no African-American women among them.

Out of 51 individuals appointed by the Trump administration to senior positions at the foreign affairs agencies (State, USAID, FCS, FAS and the U.S. Agency for Global Media) only six are non-Caucasian. Of those, 46 are political appointees, two are recalled Foreign Service retirees and three are active-duty members of the Foreign Service.

Only one currently encumbers an assistant secretary-level position: Ambassador Carol Perez, the newly confirmed Director General of the Foreign Service. The other two active-duty FSOs in senior positions are Ambassador David Hale, who serves as under secretary of State for political affairs and Michael Harvey, who is USAID's assistant administrator for the Middle East.

By historical standards, this number is quite low. At the same point in the Obama administration, for instance, there were 12 active-duty Foreign Service officers in under secretary and assistant secretary positions.

## Last U.S. Diplomats Leave Venezuela

**O**n March 12, facing deteriorating conditions in Caracas, the State Department pulled its remaining diplomats out of Venezuela.

A nationwide power outage plagued the country for a week in mid-March. The embattled President Nicolás Maduro blamed the outages on the United States, a claim Washington denies. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo blamed the power outage and Venezuela's other internal problems on Maduro, accusing both Cuba and Russia of propping up the Maduro government.

Pompeo tweeted on March 11 that the decision to close the embassy "reflects

the deteriorating situation in #Venezuela, as well as the conclusion that the presence of U.S. diplomatic staff at the embassy has become a constraint on U.S. policy."

Fewer than two dozen Americans remained in the embassy after the partial drawdown in January.

## First Screening of "A Diplomat of Consequence"

**A**s a first-tour officer in the Dominican Republic in 1999, Chris Teal happened across a photo of Ebenezer Bassett, an African-American and one of the first U.S. envoys to the island of Hispaniola. Intrigued, he began to research Bassett and ultimately wrote a biography, *Hero of Hispaniola: America's First Black Diplomat* (Praeger, 2008). This year marks 150 years since Bassett's appointment.

Teal was convinced that the significance of Bassett's story—he was appointed ambassador to Haiti and the Dominican Republic in 1869—went far beyond his breaking the color barrier and that his work and accomplishments deserved a wider audience today. So he set out to make a documentary film about Bassett while on a sabbatical fellowship at Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

In February Teal, now on a faculty assignment at the Inter-American Defense College at Fort McNair, held the first screenings of his film, "A Diplomat of Consequence," at the DACOR-Bacon House and at George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs in Washington, D.C.

Upcoming screenings of the film will be announced on Facebook at



Ebenezer Bassett, from the February 2009 FSJ.



[www.facebook.com/EbenezerDBassett](https://www.facebook.com/EbenezerDBassett) and on Instagram at [www.instagram.com/ebenezer.bassett](https://www.instagram.com/ebenezer.bassett).

## Economic Diplomacy Works: FCS Featured on Podcast

**F**oreign Commercial Service Officer and AFSA FCS Vice President Dan Crocker was the featured guest on a Feb. 4 episode of the "American Diplomat" podcast.

Mr. Crocker explained the role of the Foreign Commercial Service both overseas and domestically, helping the audience understand its work assisting small businesses and building American prosperity at home.

In 1980, Crocker said, the president signed into law "the authority to help U.S. companies export more overseas, and defend U.S. companies' interest, and also to promote inward investment—foreign investment."

"It's about creating jobs," he continued, explaining that FCS has trade specialists in 76 countries that together represent 90 percent of U.S. exports. FCS "helps about 30,000 U.S. companies every year," and more than 80 percent of those

### Beware of Unintended Consequences

As former Department of Defense Secretary [James] Mattis said, 'If you don't fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition.'

With a growing crisis in Venezuela, an unpredictable North Korea, an aggressive China and Russia creating mischief around the globe, terrorism on the rise in Africa, and Iran continually threatening Israel, we must show our strength through a properly resourced and forward leaning diplomacy. ...

The president's budget proposal contains some much-needed reforms and I welcome cutting waste, fraud and abuse from any programs that are not getting the American people the results they deserve. But we must be careful that cuts don't have unintended consequences that cost us more in the medium and long term. This is especially true of impactful cuts to humanitarian and developmental assistance.

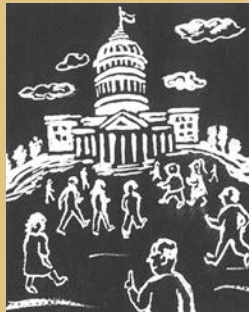
—Representative Michael McCaul (R-Texas), lead Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, from his statement on the administration's proposed FY2020 International Affairs Budget, March 11.

### Understanding the Value of Diplomacy

We need to make it clear to these dedicated public servants—and to the rest of the world—that the United States understands the value of diplomacy. And we need to give our personnel the support and resources they need to carry out this important work.

—Chairman Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), in his opening statement at the House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing, "The Trump Administration's Foreign Policy: A Mid-Term Assessment," Feb. 27.

## Heard on the Hill



### U.S. Leadership Essential

When the United States scales back or cuts our State Department and foreign assistance budgets, or pushes out career, experienced diplomats, we fatally undermine our ability to renew and revive our leadership at just the time when our leadership is more essential than ever before.

—Ranking Member Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), in his opening statement at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing,

"Assessing the Role of the United States in the World," Feb. 27.

### Diplomatic Engagement Critical

With countries like China and Russia working to undermine democratic values and respect for human rights, American leadership is more important than ever. The U.S.-led international order has helped populations across the globe enjoy safer, more stable, and more prosperous lives, and I believe American diplomatic engagement is critical to leaving a better world for the next generation.

—Rep. Ann Wagner (R-Mo.), during her testimony at the Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs members' day hearing, March 6.

### Diplomacy's Unbeatable ROI

With just about 1 percent of the federal budget, the United States gets no better return on its investment than the work of our diplomat and development professionals, which saves millions of lives, builds stronger economics, and creates a safer world.

—Heather Higginbottom, in her opening statement at the House Foreign Affairs Committee Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing, "America's Global Leadership: Why Diplomacy and Development Matter," Feb. 27.

companies are small- and medium-sized companies.

Crocker explained the benefit to U.S. taxpayers: "When we look at our appropriations—this is the money Congress gives us to operate, right?—these are taxpayers paying for our jobs, domestically and overseas. We know that we drive

about \$200 of economic benefit, mostly in exports, as a result of every \$1 in appropriations.

"It's a great outcome. It represents over \$63 billion in export benefits for these companies. It also represents about 328,000 jobs."

Crocker provides statistics and case

studies that help to explain why the work FCS does has such a positive effect on the U.S. economy. Listen in at [www.amdip-stories.org/podcast/more-fun-facts-about-trade](http://www.amdip-stories.org/podcast/more-fun-facts-about-trade). ■

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

# Straight Talk on Bidding: What You Need to Know Before Trying for that Heavily Bid Job

BY PAUL POLETES

In every bidding cycle, many hundreds of FSOs and specialists spend untold hours chasing after heavily bid jobs. I'm talking about those vacancies in every cone and specialty that attract 20, 30, sometimes more than 40 bidders. A few years ago, I bid on a job against 80 other hungry FS-1s. (I didn't even make the short list.)

Most of the time, these bidders' hopes are misplaced. For many, their dreams of working in Rome or Singapore are doomed even before bidding season begins, a victim of unrealistic expectations and not understanding how assignment decisions are made.

Think you've got what it takes to land one of those "dream jobs"? Here's what you need to know.

## The Truth About Heavily Bid Jobs

At some of the places I've worked, all it took to get on the short list was a pulse and a lack of any recent felony convictions. But that's not the case in Riga, where for the summer 2019 cycle we had 144 bidders on seven positions, including



*Paul Poletes is deputy chief of mission at U.S. Embassy Riga. He joined the Foreign Service in 1998, and has served in Athens, Dhaka,*

*Bishkek, Tirana and Ashgabat, as well as three tours in Washington, D.C. The views expressed here are his own.*

one job with more than 40 bids. And it's definitely not the case across the European Union and at lots of other "nice" or "important" places.

If you fancy landing a heavily bid job, first consider the odds you face. If 30 people bid on a position, you've got only a 3.33 percent chance of landing on top. And that assumes every bidder has an equal shot, which they don't.

In reality, on even the most heavily bid jobs, no more than about 10 people have a realistic chance at getting selected, and only about half of those will get on the short list. In other words, you had better odds of getting into the Foreign Service than you do of getting that assignment in Australia.

Second, and what few bidders who have never been in a position to decide understand, is that the people who get these jobs almost always have a comparative advantage that sets them apart.

Either they have a high-level patron, or they are known favorably by the deciders. Or they have skills or experience that sets them apart. Maybe they work at the country desk (or, if bidding on the country desk, are coming from the country itself). Or they have a 4/4 in the language or prior regional experience. In some cases, they have all of the above.

For heavily bid jobs, you need to do everything right, have the right qualifications and be a little lucky—and that's just to get on the short list. So the next

time you find yourself thinking about joining 30+ other people vying for a job, ask yourself: What's my comparative advantage, and how will I leverage it to get this job? What do I have that most of the other bidders don't?

If you can't answer those questions, you should probably look elsewhere.

## How to Get on the Short List

On heavily bid jobs, deciders feel like they own the world. We have so many candidates to choose from that we can afford to be ultra-picky, especially when making the first cut. This is what you face when you take on 40 other people for a job. Unless you have a backer with lots of pull, your resumé, 360s and everything else need to sparkle. Are you a diamond in the rough? You'll probably stay there, because, at least in the beginning of the season, no one has the need to dive into the weeds looking for you. But should you decide to forge ahead anyway, here's how to do it:

**Details matter.** More than once this year I received an introductory email in which someone either listed the wrong position or misspelled my name. Had there been only four bidders on these jobs, I would have been more forgiving. But when there are 20+, I'm looking for any excuse to trim the list. As carpenters like to say, "measure twice, cut once." Translated into FS-speak, that means "proofread three times, send once."

**Brevity matters.** And while we're on the subject of the introductory email: be brief. Overly long, detailed emails are a turnoff and take too long to read. Tell me about yourself, lay out your comparative advantage and what you bring to my team, and do it all in 300 words or less. Don't press me for an interview in our first communication. On heavily bid jobs, there's no time to speak to everyone, and pressuring deciders for an immediate interview makes you look presumptuous and overly pushy (remember, it's all about interpersonal skills).

**References matter.** Assuming your introduction didn't misspell my name or get the position wrong, I've now moved on to your 360s and resumé. What matters most for me is that you have good interpersonal skills, relevant experience and strong recommendations from people I know and trust. References that I solicit myself count more than the plain-as-oatmeal online 360s. I also rely on the advice of the incumbents, working with them to sort through applications. Together, we look for comparative advantages. Those who have them make the short list.

**Experience matters.** Regional and bureau experience is important. In the Foreign Service, we're expected to be able to parachute into any job, in any region, and succeed. But if you've spent your whole career in WHA or EUR, don't expect your bid on a job in India to get the same attention as the person with prior South Asia experience. You don't know French? FSI will teach you. But your bid on that job in Paris probably won't get the same consideration as the one coming from the person who already has a 4/4. (Unless the fluent French speaker has lousy interpersonal skills, in which case not even a 5/5 will help them with me.)

## Lots of bidders hurt their chances because they refuse to commit to one bid as their top choice.

### Stretch Bids—For the Most Part, Don't Bother

Stretch bids are allowed because they give the department flexibility to fill jobs that might otherwise sit empty. But when it comes to hotly contested jobs, your stretch bid gambit will almost certainly fail. Unless you have a high-level patron or get clear assurances from the deciders that they want you and only you for the job, your stretch bid is a waste of time.

Stretches are a dicey proposition for everyone involved because they don't go to panel until stretch season, which usually takes place months after bid season closes (unless you have bidding privileges—see below). By then, everyone else on the short list will be long gone, so if the stretch doesn't get approved by Human Resources, the decider has no Plan B.

For this reason, few deciders or assignments officers are willing to go through the risk and extra effort required to push through stretch bids when so many other qualified, at-grade bidders are vying for the same job.

### A Note on Bidding Privileges

"Bidding privileges" can give you an advantage in some circumstances, but on heavily bid jobs they don't count for much. If I'm serious about a stretch bidder for a position, I'm more likely to take a risk on someone with bidding privileges, because getting that assignment through panel is easier.

But simply having bidding privileges

doesn't change the fact that you probably have less relevant experience than most of the other people vying for the same job. So unless you have assurances from the deciders that they are strongly interested in you, don't expect much help from that quarter.

### Fear of Commitment

Lots of bidders hurt their chances because they refuse to commit to one bid as their top choice. They think being coy will keep them in the running for multiple posts at once, and fear that clearly identifying a number-one bid will ruin their chances with everyone else.

Ranking top choices is a bidding minefield. Telling me that Riga is your second or third choice in fact could hurt your chances, because I don't want to put someone at the top of my list unless I'm certain he or she will accept an offer. But the next time you make a short list and are dancing around a decider, with neither side willing to say "you're number one," ask the decider this: "If I were to commit to X as my top bid, would that make a difference in where I am on your short list?"

Sometimes it won't matter. If you're number three on my list, but my number one and two have already said Riga is their top choice, I probably won't move you up. But deciders often face a short list full of people unwilling to commit.

I try to be transparent and honest with bidders, and I appreciate the same from them. Let me know where I am on your list, and let me know if you change your mind. I'll never think ill of a bidder who calls back and tells me Riga has moved up

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## I try to be transparent and honest with bidders, and I appreciate the same from them.

or down her list; but I will hold it against someone who says Riga is his first choice but then turns down an offer because he changed his mind and never told me.

Deciders crave certainty. We never want to make an offer to someone unless we're reasonably sure that person will accept. So do the deciders and yourself a favor: commit to us, and we'll be more likely to commit to you.

### 360s

The online bidding applications used by pretty much every bureau now are a huge time saver. But although the applications are more efficient, they've also made the resulting 360s a lot less honest, and therefore less valuable. Since the advent of the bidding websites I've read at least a thousand 360s and have yet to see a single one—not one!—that said “I don't recommend this person” or “I wouldn't work with him/her again.”

Is everyone in the Foreign Service really that good? No, they're not. Over the years I've torpedoed numerous bidders with stellar online 360s after someone who was not listed as an “official” reference raised serious red flags about the bidder. This is why most deciders I know look skeptically at online references.

For heavily bid jobs, don't rely on the robo-360s. To get ahead, you need your best references to send thoughtful recommendations directly to the deciders. Better yet, find people who know the deciders, and have them recommend you.

### What's a Bidder to Do?

Bidding is a frustrating and stressful process for everyone. Here's how to

make it easier and improve your odds of landing the job you want:

**1. Know your comparative advantage(s) and go after jobs where you can exploit that advantage ruthlessly.** If you don't have something that puts you ahead of the other bidders, look somewhere else.

**2. Look at less heavily bid jobs.** Fewer bidders means better odds, and a greater likelihood that the deciders will give you a closer look. Instead of looking needy and desperate as you and 50 others try to attract the deciders' attention, you may find the deciders are chasing you.

**3. Bid the job, not the city.** Far too many bidders go for positions in tourist-destination cities, when there are equally or more interesting and career-enhancing jobs available at lesser-bid posts.

**4. Have a backup plan.** If you insist on going after a heavily bid job, make sure you've got a Plan B ready in the likely chance you don't get your top choice(s).

**5. Small details matter.** Thanking deciders (after the fact) for an interview and keeping us updated on where we are on your list are small touches that can make a big difference.

**6. Competitive advantages aren't genetic—they can be developed.** Sometimes the path between you and your dream job runs through another position, one that will set you up for the job you really want. Gain experience, develop new skills, build contacts—then try again. ■



NATO Headquarters, July 2018.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

# Reinforcing NATO for the Future

**At 70, the Atlantic alliance is a unique triumph of inter-state cooperation. What should be its “to-do” list for the future?**

BY GEORGE ROBERTSON



*Lord Robertson of Port Ellen KT GCMG was secretary general of NATO from 1999 to 2003 and British defense secretary from 1997 to 1999. Before entering the House of Lords, he was a Labour Member of the House of Commons for 21 years. He was awarded the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2003 by President George W. Bush.*

**A**nother big anniversary for NATO. Another big opportunity for the critics and skeptics—be they in the White House, the Kremlin or in the media—to take to the megaphones. Millions of words will be written and broadcast about NATO. Occasionally they will be helpful and positive, as they should be. Others will follow a cynical pattern typical of past anniversaries.

In 2003 Professor Sir Michael Howard at the Royal United Security Institute cataloged the books on his shelf with titles like *NATO – The Final Crisis*, *NATO – The Impossible Dilemma*, *NATO – The Troubled Partnership* (by Henry Kissinger, no less, in 1965) and many others. He said his favorite was *The End of The Alliance*, written by Robert Steel in 1962.

Be ready, then, this year for more of the same. Yet the remarkable and durable alliance that is NATO deserves much better. In

the history of the world it is still unique and a triumph of interstate cooperation.

The first secretary general of NATO was Lord Ismay. In his autobiography he recounts being strong-armed by Winston Churchill (I know the feeling) to take on the infant alliance. After fighting a distinguished war and settling into a comfortable and interesting Cabinet position, he was persuaded to go to NATO headquarters in Paris. But he took to it and tells of his feelings when he left after five years: “We were utterly miserable. The Council had been like a large family, and the international staff had seemed like our children.”

In his farewell speech in Bonn in May 1959, Lord Ismay made points as relevant today as they were then. He spoke of the defensive shield that had been built up, “which, not yet as strong as might be wished, is an essential feature of the deterrent to aggression. Who would have thought that sovereign states would entrust their precious armed forces to the command of nationals other than their own in times of peace? But this is what has come to pass.”

Even more prophetically he said this: “And if at times we find the burden heavy, let us remember that the North Atlantic Alliance is not only an obligation which sovereign states have undertaken of their own free will, but an insurance against the unspeakable horrors of a war which would destroy civilization.”

As we contemplate a world wholly different from that of 1959, his words seem to echo what needs to be repeated as we commemorate NATO 60 years later. The unity still has to be ensured; the resolution has to be maintained; the capabilities have to be relevant and adequate; and the sense of purpose has to be appropriate to the new and novel threats we face today.

We are told that the present occupant of the White House, in NATO’s strongest nation, has been questioning U.S. membership in the alliance. Worrying as that undoubtedly is, it may have reminded other allies of both the value of NATO and their own responsibilities to “bear the burden” of its means. Nothing better underlines the importance of American leadership in the world than the thought of losing it.

Burden sharing has long been a theme of American politicians, including the cheerleaders for the alliance—and with good reason. But a complacency that America will always be there with its clout and resources has held back the investment required for Europe’s (and Canada’s) contribution to the common effort. Donald Trump has shattered that complacency and for that, if for nothing else, we should be grateful.

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## Nothing better underlines the importance of American leadership in the world than the thought of losing it.

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The uphill task of getting close, not just to agreed figures because they are mere indications, but to having the right capabilities and attitude, will not be easy. But if European populations are to be kept safe in an uncertain future, the

investment is not an optional extra.

So, what should be on the checklist for NATO at 70?

The time has come to go beyond publishing national gross spending figures on defence. Too often the attempt to meet the agreed 2 percent target involves shady financial engineering. The composition of the funding has also to be made public. What lasting value is 2 percent if it is made up of pensions and equipment for the last but one war?

Up to now we have been reluctant to name and shame on the real military spending figures. It was claimed that it might give our adversaries details they would exploit. In the era of mass surveillance and data collection, this is an outdated view. Publics have the right to know what is being spent, on what and to what end.

Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has highlighted what he calls the three Cs: “cash, capabilities and contributions.” In other words, we need forces which can go far, go fast, hit hard and stay long.

Much more emphasis has to be put on intelligence and cyber defenses. Quantifying spending on this crucial arm of defense needs to be a priority. We need to know what is being spent on this new and vital front line. A cyberattack on a nation or a city cannot be responded to with a main battle tank. And we have far too many of them and too little of the other.

European contributions are starting to increase and the September 2014 Wales Summit, by highlighting targets on readiness and equipment spending, has accelerated change. We need less talk now about “European armies” and “strategic autonomy.” These are empty buzzwords meaning little, and we need more of an emphasis on ending duplication and inefficiency in defense budgets. Fancy wiring diagrams—as I have often said—which are not connected to modern capabilities are for show, not shooting.

NATO needs to reinforce its partnerships.

As long as countries seek membership or a close relationship with all the facets of NATO, both military and civil, they should be encouraged. Membership standards, however, must be maintained. Military compatibility and democratic credentials are fundamental. There should be no short-cut to membership in such an elite organization. And adherence to those standards does not end with accession—there is a continuing responsibility.



The alliance will only matter in the future if it has the same cohesion and common purpose which was envisaged 70 years ago. Its vital deterrent value against new adversaries and new non-military threats will only exist if all nations contribute equally.

NATO is a powerful military organization, and Article 5 has the respect of any potential adversary. Spending may still be short of ideal, but it dwarfs all neighbors. That is why those who would challenge us look to the weak underbelly of our democracies. Splits are exploited, open elections can be affected, public debate can be hijacked, and electronic communications can be subverted. It is essential, therefore, that NATO's defenses are much more than military.

And in that collective deterrence which has kept the peace in the Euro-Atlantic area for 70 years is the crucial nuclear element. The American, British and French nuclear forces, along with other weapons on European soil, have been the backbone of a posture which has made conventional war unthinkable. They are as important today as they ever were.

Hard power is NATO's signature, but its soft power and politi-

cal role are often underestimated. The Partnership for Peace has achieved small, quiet miracles in cajoling and encouraging nations to modernize militaries and build democratic institutions. It has prepared nations for full membership and given others a practical forum for cooperation and progress.

Relations with Russia matter. The NATO/Russia Council, of which I was the first chairman, should be an important venue for dialogue. It was created in a time of rare amity but was intended for tough times, as well. The urgency of talking with the big eastern neighbor is manifest. We should reinvigorate the council.

It is now 18 years since I stood at the old NATO headquarters and invoked Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty on behalf of 19 nations following the 9/11 attacks on the United States. It was to be the first and only time in the history of the alliance, and it was a clear signal to the enemies of our democratic assembly of free nations that we meant business.

As NATO turns 70, the unity and determination it displayed after 9/11 has to be a rallying point—and a reminder of what the alliance needs to be in its next several decades. ■



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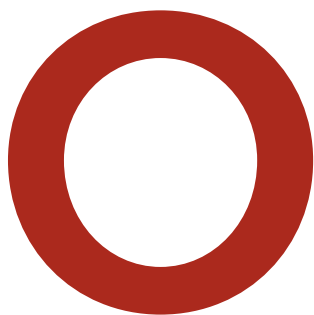
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# Global Shifts and American Political Will as NATO Turns 70



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On April 4 partners on both sides of the Atlantic will mark 70 years since the signing of the Washington Treaty and the founding of the NATO Alliance. What should be a momentous occasion to celebrate the stability and peace accompanying one of

the most successful alliances in history will be clouded by a difficult political reality, one that has complicated cohesion across the trans-Atlantic space.

For those who have studied the alliance's history, much of today's discussion will be familiar. It is a well-worn song whose current verses have been stuck in the heads of experts and offi-



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*Democratic Union/Christian Social Union Foreign Policy Working Group in the German Bundestag, as well as in the Eastern European and Eurasian research division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs in Berlin. Earlier he worked in the office of U.S. Senator John Thune (R-S.D.).*

**In a difficult moment, NATO's historical success, together with current operational advances, will once again see the alliance through.**

BY STEVEN KEIL

cially alike since the end of the Cold War. From NATO's strategic purpose to its capabilities gap, anyone remotely acquainted can hum along. But several discontents have grown sharper as the years have moved on. Today, discussions on burden-sharing and the role of the United States are particularly shrill.

At the strategic level, U.S. policy toward NATO will be one of the most defining factors for allies in the coming years, and it also poses some of the most serious questions. Will U.S. policymakers' patience with anemic European defense spending run out? How much longer will European governments suffer the tone of Washington's current rhetoric? Will U.S. disenchantment with multilateralism increase? These are just a few of the seriously challenging unknowns.

At the same time, there is an acute sense of growing geopolitical threats facing the United States and an accompanying irony in high-level U.S. rhetoric toward NATO. The importance of alliances has only grown as challenges and competitors proliferate in the increasingly multipolar international environment.

President Harry S Truman signs the Washington Treaty forming NATO on April 4, 1949, in Washington, D.C. Secretary of State Dean Acheson stands to his left with the document folder.

Current discontents do not indicate that NATO is on a path to imminent irrelevance; but they do demonstrate that strategic consensus will likely need to be temporarily offset by wins at the functional and tactical level.

Sustaining momentum and stewarding operational-level victories will be a critical task for diplomats, officials and experts engaging in alliance politics today.

## Old Storms and New Ones

For many watching U.S.-NATO politics as the 70th anniversary nears, there is clearly a sense of alarm. But history reveals that this is not the first difficult moment facing the alliance. Many NATO-watchers would cite the Suez Crisis or, more recently, the second Iraq War as moments of significant political turmoil. But as renowned historian Sir Michael Howard argued in his 1999 *Foreign Affairs* article evaluating the NATO alliance at 50, the two periods of most serious concern were those surrounding the Cuban Missile Crisis (1958-1963) and the Euromissile Crisis (1979-1984).

In both instances, the United States questioned the legitimacy of its own deterrent capability, and this fueled existential doubts across the alliance. As it happened, both situations were alleviated by strong U.S. leadership that held the Soviets in check and revived allied trust and confidence, allowing both the United States and the alliance to emerge stronger.

These examples are instructive because they demonstrate that strategic challenges facing U.S. NATO policy can be weathered in extremely difficult and strategically daunting circumstances. Moreover, the situation can be corrected by decisive U.S. leadership and determination in the interest of the allies.

These examples are also illuminating because they point to what is different in NATO politics today. The fundamental challenge facing U.S. NATO policy is no longer necessarily one of self-confidence, but of political will. This can be more problematic for the alliance because it suggests that U.S. policy could trend toward willful strategic estrangement. Moreover, it could happen even though that option is incongruous with the demands of the current global context.

Although today's strategic reality does not feature a unified collective angst directed at one strategic priority, as was the case

during the Cold War, it is not without significant challenges. In fact, it presents a complicated picture of new risks across regions in an era of shifting geopolitics. Gone are the days when many assumed that a new, cooperative and ever-expanding multilateral, democratic world that enhanced the security of all those willing to play by its rules was imminent. Instead, China's expanding geo-economic influence through Central Asia, Africa and now much of Europe signals an increased ambition to reset the rules of the road. Simultaneously, Russia is directly challenging a spectrum of post-Cold War assumptions, both in the post-Soviet space as well as in places like the Middle East. Adding to this, many within Europe and the alliance itself are calling into question some of the value-laden foundational elements of the Washington Treaty, leading to decision-making that departs from unified alliance interests (e.g., Turkey's decision to purchase Russia's S-400 missile defense system despite protest from allies).

For the United States, the growing multipolarity directly challenges the preponderance of U.S. capability and influence across the globe, and Washington's ability to effectively tackle a wide range of threats. Official U.S. policy documents over recent years recognize this reality. The most recent National Security Strategy claimed that: "The United States will respond to the growing political, economic and military competitions we face around the world. China and Russia challenge American power, influence and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity." And speaking to U.S. military capabilities, the document goes on to say: "U.S. advantages are shrinking as rival states modernize and build up their conventional and nuclear forces."

The document also points to unconventional threats challenging U.S. security policy that span domains and confuse traditional responses. A quick look at current trends show that much of today's geopolitical competition is happening at a sub-conventional level. Political warfare fought through economic coercion, cyber activity and propaganda is penetrating societies in Europe and the United States. To counter these threats, a robust and collective response is required.

As the United States and NATO face the most difficult geopolitical environment of the last 30 years, the alliance is staring down a significant and self-inflicted question of legitimacy. Specifically, for U.S. policy toward NATO, the key factor under-

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## While divisions exist, the alliance provides an essential platform for deliberation and debate on how to confront the many challenges facing the various NATO allies.

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mining fundamental confidence in the alliance is a question of whether the United States should continue to engage in the same fashion, not whether it is able to.

An added layer to this irony is the fact that this is occurring at a time when U.S. policy so acutely needs dependable, capable and strong allies to confront the variety of geopolitical threats facing the United States in a rising multipolarity. NATO is a venue for political engagement, as well as a defensive alliance. It can foster resilience within and across societies, and respond to new and asymmetric threats. As the organization enters its eighth decade, a strong dose of realism for NATO members—including the United States—would go a long way in helping realize the critical role the alliance will play in meeting today’s challenges. For example, allies have agreed to set up counter-hybrid support teams that will assist and advise member-states in responding to various hybrid attacks. This includes cyberattacks, disinformation and economic pressure, among others. Moreover, NATO has taken large steps to bolster alliance credibility in unconventional domains like cyberspace. In August last year, the alliance launched a Cyber Operations Center.

Beyond this, NATO continues to be a conventional force multiplier. NATO joined the global coalition to defeat ISIS, supporting the coalition’s information sharing capability and airspace management. NATO also started a training and capacity-building mission in Iraq to help counter terrorism in the region and bolster Iraqi forces. To counter Russian aggression in Eastern Europe, several NATO members stepped up to the plate with NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence, deploying a multinational deterrent presence in the Baltic states and Poland. Moreover, many nations began increasing defense spending in response to Russia’s blatant military aggressions against Ukraine in and since 2014.

Finally, NATO’s political advantages should not be dismissed. While divisions exist, the alliance provides an essential platform for deliberation and debate on how to confront the many challenges facing the various NATO allies across regions and domains. And because of its key role, NATO also provides a prominent space for American leadership in the world. Recent U.S. action on

the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and the support of NATO allies for the U.S. withdrawal notice, is indicative of this. When the decision was hastily announced, it was met with widespread outcry. However, after deliberation and diplomacy within the alliance, the United States was able to articulate a position that was supported by allies, which gave added weight to the U.S. position.

### It’s Not Just about U.S. Policy

The relevance of the alliance for the United States is clear. But it would be misguided to solely focus on this aspect of NATO politics and fail to address the real deficiencies within the alliance as it exists today. Certainly, capabilities gaps and burden-sharing challenges have contributed to the frustration of U.S. political will. As the geopolitical context has changed, impatience with these long-standing challenges has only further soured the American appetite.

Without question, defense spending remains at the top of the “to do” list for European counterparts in NATO. The United States benefits from its leadership role in the alliance, but the balance of current spending levels is not sustainable. And in the absence of a serious and sustained attempt to address meager European budgets, U.S. foreign policy officials and experts will continue to question whether the United States is getting a fair shake. It is in the interest of all NATO member-states to remove this talking point from alliance discussions, or at least greatly reduce it. Many NATO member-states, to their credit, began responding to an increasingly volatile security environment as early as 2014 by reversing course on the years of dwindling defense budgets.

However, European efforts should not just aim to address defense spending levels. NATO member countries must look at continued capability gaps and interoperability issues, as well. During the 2011 Libya mission some interoperability successes were a signal of confidence, but information-sharing hurdles and capability limitations facing key European allies were not. Increased investment over the past few years, as well as the new commands established after the last summit, should help. However, improvement in these areas must remain a priority. Moreover, NATO states that are also members of the E.U. must be sure they are not creating redundancies in similar E.U. initiatives, while leveraging those capabilities where possible (particularly in the realm of hybrid threats).

Finally, European NATO nations must move past the divide between eastern and southern member-states on threat perception, which leads to a false choice between either deterring Russia or fighting terrorism. NATO is a defensive alliance. Protecting

territory and providing deterrence against would-be aggressors is the mission. Nevertheless, the alliance must be able to address regional threats, threats that could destabilize and adversely impact member-states. NATO shouldn't have a knee-jerk reaction to act "out of area," but it also shouldn't believe it is insulated from instability in its southern neighborhood. Today the alliance is trying to tackle threats in both theaters, even if there is a lack of political consensus among member-states. However, to continue to properly confront these challenges, increased defense spending, capabilities development and interoperability across the alliance will be essential.

## Conclusion

As NATO ministers mark the signing of the Washington Treaty this spring, there will be much focus on political divisions and uncertainties. But there is much to celebrate, too. The last 70 years witnessed an unprecedented era of peace despite the tensions of the Cold War and the uncertainties of the post-Cold War era. Conflict in Central and Western Europe today may not be impossible, but it certainly stretches the imagination. This is in large part due to the security guarantee by NATO, underwritten by American

leadership, which afforded Europe a chance to seek a sustainable peace that has spanned several decades.

But it is not a foregone conclusion that what the alliance has been able to achieve in the past will continue into the future. Thankfully, as former Defense Secretary James Mattis said in an address last October: "In an unpredictable world, allies have renewed their sense of urgency." NATO is as important today as it has ever been in the post-Cold War world. But as high-level rhetoric from the United States clashes with a clear need for strong, capable alliances, the efforts of officials and experts at the working level of the trans-Atlantic relationship will be critical. Understanding the key role that NATO can play in addressing the many challenges to U.S. security today, the alliance can overcome the tumult it is currently experiencing, as it has in the past.

In the meantime, it will be critical for NATO nations to remember that in confronting today's challenges, no member is better off without the alliance. As NATO enters its eighth decade, a strong sense of the global challenges facing both sides of the Atlantic is crucial. And those who wish to see the stability of the last several decades extend into the future would do well to articulate this to their capitals and to their alliance counterparts. ■

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# Working with NATO to Address Hybrid Threats

**Globalization—the worldwide system of instant communication, finance and commerce—has given a dramatic boost to the phenomenon of hybrid threats, one of today’s central security challenges.**

BY CHRIS KREMIDAS COURTNEY



*Chris Kremidas Courtney is a senior consultant for Strategy International. He has previously served as the multilateral interagency engagement coordinator for U.S. European Command, as director of training and exercises for the Hybrid Center of Excellence, as political adviser to the commander, NATO Training Mission–Iraq and as assistant political adviser to the commander, Joint Forces Command Naples. He has also served as chief strategist for U.S. Joint Task Force North, NATO policy planner at the U.S. Delegation to NATO and as deputy defense policy adviser for the U.S. Mission to the European Union. Mr. Courtney served for 22 years as a U.S. Army strategist and intelligence officer and is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom.*

**T**oday, state and non-state actors are challenging nations, institutions and private companies through a wide range of overt and covert activities targeted at their vulnerabilities. Both NATO and the European Union refer to these as “hybrid threats.”

Hybrid actors generally use subtle, far-reaching and opportunistic methods that seldom have a return address. In some cases, the attacks can be more brazen but take place in a gray zone in which the targeted entity has few good response options short of escalating the situation into armed conflict. These types of threats have been in existence for centuries, of course. What makes them different today is the fact that we have instant global communications and a globally connected system of finance and commerce.

Though many refer to it as “hybrid warfare,” thus militarizing it, the phenomenon is much broader and more complex, requiring a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to address effectively. Since 2015 NATO and the European Union have begun to focus on this problem, which is already impacting the alliance.

## **An Attack on Governance**

Hybrid threats are best understood as an attack on governance, specifically democratic governance. As Prussian military philoso-



At NATO headquarters in January 2015, NATO and French flags fly at half-mast in honor of the victims of the terrorist attack at the office of the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine in Paris.

pher Carl Von Clausewitz wrote: “War is nothing but a continuation of politics by other means.” He also said: “The aggressor is always a lover of peace; he would prefer to take over our country unopposed.” In other words, hybrid threats are not only a continuation of politics by other means; they also create opportunities to weaken or even topple a government without firing a shot. As we’ve seen recently in Crimea and the South China Sea, a hybrid approach lowers the political price for aggression, making regime change and territorial annexation possible “on the cheap.”

One example of a hybrid threat is a disinformation campaign. Creating false news reports or spreading inaccurate information can be relatively easy; it allows for deniability and can produce effective results for the aggressor. Such campaigns can sow mistrust and confusion between segments of the population, as well as between the people and their government, targeting a society’s deepest historical wounds to make them bleed once again. Or an adversary may leverage organized crime elements or ownership of private entities (such as ports). Using these levers, an adversary can disrupt a critical port facility via benign sabotage: workers go on strike, blocking entrance to port berths and shore facilities. Such tactics could slow or disrupt NATO’s ability to deploy and provide logistics support to allied forces in time of crisis.

Governments and public and private institutions with weak governance tend to be more susceptible to hybrid threats. Corruption, low levels of public trust, weak public and private accountability, ineffective law enforcement, poor border and port security,

weak security protocols for critical infrastructure and a lack of cooperation between ministries, institutions and the private sector leave them vulnerable to these acts of aggression.

Not just public, but private entities may be targeted, as well. The majority of the world’s supply chain components, communication providers, financial systems and media outlets operate in the private sector. They are often the first targets of a hybrid campaign, and even when they are not the main target, their vulnerabilities can quickly threaten global economic security. For example, a cyberattack on the government of Ukraine in 2017 inadvertently affected Danish global shipping giant Maersk. As a result, Maersk’s global operations came to a halt as the company temporarily lost the ability to govern its fleet, and numerous other industries were also affected as the global supply chain was disrupted.

In many Western countries, 80 to 90 percent of all critical infrastructure is owned and operated by the private sector. Given NATO’s heavy reliance on the private sector to provide logistics and communications capabilities during a crisis, these vulnerabilities can have far-reaching effects.

### The First Steps

In the wake of Russian aggression in Ukraine in 2014, NATO developed and adopted a Hybrid Warfare Strategy in December 2015. In early 2016, the European Union adopted its Joint Framework for Addressing Hybrid Threats. Both documents call for



At a meeting of the European Union's Political and Security Committee (PSC) and the North Atlantic Council in September 2018, the European Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats led a scenario-based discussion on addressing hybrid threats. Author Chris Courtney, seated behind the NATO DSG and the PSC Chair, assisted with the deliberations.

working to improve resilience, security and continuity of governance. Both documents call for greater NATO-E.U. cooperation in addressing hybrid threats.

And since June 2016, both organizations have agreed on dozens of areas in which to focus their efforts. To their credit, neither organization has fixated on an exact definition of hybrid threats, but instead concentrated on identifying the changes to their working methods and approaches that will best allow them to effectively address them.

Within both NATO and the E.U. there is general consensus on four steps to addressing hybrid threats: detection, attribution, response and recovery. *Detection* refers to the ability to detect a hostile state action in time to react and minimize any potential damage. *Attribution*, the more complex follow-on to detection, is the ability to attribute an attack to a specific actor and to differentiate it from an accident, system failure or human error. *Response*, which is greatly dependent on accurate, timely and credible detection and attribution to allow for sound crisis decision-making, is to change security posture or retaliate against the actor to which the hostile action is attributed (in accordance with existing just war ethics). *Recovery* is the ability to restore functionality to the systems, capabilities or societal coherence attacked through the hostile action.

It is important to note that these steps are not sequential; for example, recovery can begin immediately after detection to “stop the bleeding,” and some internal response postural decisions can be made prior to attribution.

Within NATO it can be difficult to reach a consensus on Article 5 (collective defense) in the face of a hybrid campaign; however, a stricken ally can always bring its security concerns to the alliance via Article 4, under which allies can exchange

views and information and discuss issues prior to taking any action. Thus, Article 4 consultations are the most likely venue for the North Atlantic Council to first discuss options when facing hybrid aggression against an ally.

Within the European Union, Article 42 (7) of the Treaty of the European Union and Article 222 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union are the most applicable to hybrid threats. Though similar to NATO's Article 5 in that it is triggered by an armed attack on a member-state, Article 42(7) can also be applied to some situations below the threshold of armed attack. Article 222 (the Solidarity Clause) applies more broadly to natural or manmade disasters, terrorist attacks and situations that align more closely with a hybrid campaign. It is also tied to the E.U.'s Solidarity Fund, which can provide immediate funding to recovery and response efforts.

## A Process Approach

Each time we face a new security challenge, a defense or security contractor is waiting in the wings to sell us a solution. But in the case of hybrid threats, there is no system we can buy or new organization we can establish to mitigate these threats. Instead, everything we've learned since 2014 tells us that we must adapt our legal frameworks and working culture, and improve the connective tissue between ministries and organizations, to enable our own governments and organizations to better protect themselves.

Within the United States, our national security culture's dependence on buying solutions from contractors has hindered our ability to make more progress on this. Allies and partners such as the U.K. and Finland are farther ahead of us because they have taken a process approach to the challenge. So where to begin?



*First*, countering hybrid threats requires member-states to focus on internal resilience. This calls for a cultural shift from the expeditionary-only mindset, in which ministries of foreign affairs and ministries of defense have primacy, to one in which ministries of the interior and ministries of public protection often take a leading role. At the same time, the inter-state nature of hybrid threats, especially in the multilateral context, means that foreign ministries continue to take a leading role, albeit in a much broader whole-of-government effort.

In the expeditionary era NATO became accustomed to operating in other nations' territories, and its internally focused Civil Emergency Planning Committee and civil defense aspects atrophied. Today, NATO again sees national resilience as a critical element of collective defense, and since 2014 the CEPC has put renewed emphasis on working with allies to meet the NATO Resilience Baseline Requirements set at the Warsaw Summit in 2016.

The seven NATO resilience baseline requirements are:

- Assured continuity of government and critical government services
- Resilient energy supplies
- Ability to deal effectively with the uncontrolled movement of people
- Resilient food and water resources
- Ability to deal with mass casualties
- Resilient communications systems
- Resilient transportation systems.

In 2018, NATO allies and NATO headquarters staff conducted assessments of each member-state's ability to meet these requirements and identified shortfalls.

*Second*, member-states need to ensure that their legal frameworks eliminate gray areas of uncertain or nonexistent government authority. Hybrid attacks often take place in the gray zones between the authorities of different ministries. Several NATO allies and partners have conducted extensive internal reviews and tabletop exercises to identify gaps and vulnerabilities in their legal frameworks. Subsequently, they have worked with their parliaments to close legal gaps and clear up any potential confusion on roles and authorities.

*Third*, member-states must deepen their level of cooperation internally and internationally to build the trust and connective tissue necessary to counter hybrid threats. The two greatest challenges thus far have been attribution and crisis decision-making to determine appropriate and measured responses. Both require a high level of trust and familiarity between officials, ministries and institutions.

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## Countering hybrid threats requires member-states to focus on internal resilience. This calls for a cultural shift from the expeditionary-only mindset.

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### Enhanced Cooperation

Currently NATO and the E.U. are working together on enhanced cooperation in four areas: civil-military planning, cyber defense, information-sharing and analysis, and coordinated strategic communications. Since 2016, they have agreed on 74 areas of deeper cooperation, 20 of which relate to countering hybrid threats. The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, established in 2017 in Helsinki, effectively contributes to strengthening NATO-E.U. cooperation in this area. Both organizations' personnel have participated in a number of the center's activities.

In September 2018, NATO's North Atlantic Council and the E.U.'s Peace and Security Committee held the first-ever scenario-based discussion on hybrid threats, and subsequent parallel exercises have validated the improved cooperative working mechanisms being put into place at staff and senior levels. Also in late 2018, NATO adopted the concept of establishing Counter Hybrid Support Teams to give ad hoc assistance to allies in the event of a hybrid crisis. These teams are being fielded and exercised in 2019, and it remains to be seen how allies requesting assistance may integrate them into their own national processes.

In any case, determining attribution of potential hybrid attacks and decisions on responses to them (including any public announcements) remains a sovereign responsibility of the stricken nation. Internally, providing credible deterrence to hybrid threats is straightforward: building and maintaining resilient, credible and capable governance that raises the price of hybrid aggression and reduces its chance for success. To do so requires cooperation and collaboration from all entities.

Depending on the level of willingness of different actors to work together, there are three levels of national and multi-lateral cooperation that enable governments and societies to better address hybrid threats. First is a "whole-of-government" approach, in which all agencies and ministries from the national to local level cooperate, set broad common goals and share information. Second is a "whole-of-society" approach, which is similar to a whole-of-government approach, but also includes

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## Governments and public and private institutions with weak governance tend to be more susceptible to hybrid threats.

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engagement with the private sector, academia and civil society. And lastly, the “comprehensive approach” features like-minded groups or states working together with international organizations and entities. Each collaborates and coordinates to face challenges together—all while respecting each other’s roles and decision-making autonomy. In each of these cases, working together in staff-to-staff discussions, table-top exercises and scenario-based discussions is vital to building trust and interoperability between ministries, nations, civil society, international organizations and the private sector.

By focusing on overall governance instead of looking at

hybrid threats through a military lens, we gain a perspective more closely aligned with each nation’s own legal authorities and frameworks, yet one that does not necessarily exclude a role for military capabilities. Given the nature of these threats, the first to detect and respond are most likely to be civilian government or private entities. In turn, varying degrees of military capabilities may be required for support. This cooperation is vital because no government is in a position to pay for the same capabilities twice.

In the event of a possibly escalating situation, close civil-military cooperation and interoperability is necessary to ensure an appropriate response, accompanied by all necessary and available instruments of national and international power and influence. For this reason, comprehensive and whole-of-society approaches are vital. Through strengthening public and private governance, and seeking deeper and broader cooperation among institutions, nations and civil society, we can turn globalization and our greater interconnectedness from vulnerability into an advantage. ■



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# THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

# Perspectives on NATO

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### American and European Unity—1949

As the middle of the twentieth century approaches, the shores of a possible New Europe may be dimly seen. In the comparatively new city of Washington, representatives of twelve nations have signed the epochal North Atlantic pact; in the ancient city of Strasbourg, where Germanic and French culture meet, a Council of Europe, conceived in the age old hope of unity for Europe, will shortly convene; and at Berlin, the broken hub of the Continent, the stark symbol of a divided Europe is about to be lifted.

Since the war, Europe, reduced to the Western Peninsula, overshadowed by non-European power, has revived its secular aspirations for unity. ... The American relation to this trend will be vital. In its step-by-step progression the movement toward unity must presently come up against great problems, central to European destiny, but which are not entirely European problems. They begin with a recognition by America of the West Europe of the Twentieth Century; a Europe containing large areas of socialism and dirigisme; a Europe still in a state of shock; a Europe in debt for dollars for some time to come; a Europe which must be temporarily budgeted for in American budgets, and partly armed from American stocks; and a Europe as an essential outpost of American security.

—American Foreign Service Journal *Editorial*, May 1949

### The Future of NATO—1963

For a year or more statements have been coming from various French sources implying that the North Atlantic Treaty expires, or must be renewed, or must be modified, in 1969. None of these things is true. The Treaty is of indefinite or perpetual duration, although any party may withdraw after the Treaty has been in effect 20 years, i.e., after August 24, 1969.

... From the political rather than the legal point of view it is all too probable that as 1969 approaches there will be louder and more insistent threats from Paris to withdraw from the Treaty unless radical changes are made in its organization. Whether France would go so far as actually to withdraw unilaterally will depend upon many factors during the next three years, including developments in East-West relations, the attitude of various governments, notably the U.S., and whether or not [French President Charles] de Gaulle is still in power.

Whether more than one government would believe that its security and possibly eventual defense would be better served by less rather than more integration is highly questionable.

—Theodore C. Achilles, *FSO*, July 1963 *FSJ*

### The Resurrection of NATO—1968

Americans who work in international organizations are subject to a rather specialized affliction. They have to get used to reading every week or two that their organization is dead. I noticed this in the years I spent working on the United Nations; and when I arrived in Paris two years ago, I found the death of NATO was also being widely and prematurely reported. I don't propose to argue NATO's survival value. But I will talk about the transfiguration of NATO, which, unlike its death, has been inadequately reported.

When France left the integrated military system, each of the other fourteen governments had to decide whether to follow France's example or stick with its Treaty obligations. When the smoke cleared, the score was 14 to 1.

Western Europe still had to be defended; the Fourteen decided, if that had to be done for a while without France, that was politically tiresome but militarily tolerable. The NATO military headquarters, and their American and Canadian support units, moved out of France with truly miraculous dispatch. And the North Atlantic Council, NATO's political board of directors, decided on its own to move to Brussels.

But then something happened that nobody had predicted. With France standing aside, the Fourteen set up a NATO strategy council of their own; and the renewed political interest in NATO unity had a sudden and galvanizing effect on the quality of the NATO defense system.

—Harlan Cleveland, *FSO*, April 1968 *FSJ*

### France, NATO and Tactical Nuclear Weapons—1977

For the first time since General de Gaulle declared his independence of NATO, both the political needs of France and the military needs of the alliance may dictate a closing of the gap. Vehicles for increased cooperation could be the advent of the French tactical nuclear weapon, the Pluton, and NATO's own arguments about what to do about its tactical nuclear arsenal.

What sort of advantages can be drawn by U.S. and NATO

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planners from the current situation? Can France help us elaborate a more effective strategy for the defense of Western Europe involving tactical nuclear weapons? Can we assist the slow crabwise movement of France toward even closer cooperation with—if not integration within—NATO? And, specifically, can the Pluton be made of real practical value to NATO in a military sense, despite the seemingly conflicting requirements of French independence and NATO solidarity? I believe that the answer to all of these questions is “Yes.” But Western leaders will have to exercise imagination, patience and flexibility.

—John R. Countryman, FSO, May 1977 FSJ

### The Central Issue of European Security—1995

The constant tinkering with security pacts and organizations that began with the fall of the Berlin Wall will not be finished until Russia’s place in Europe is defined. This will be a long and difficult task, requiring a lot of perseverance to meet the many ups and downs of Russian democracy. If it can be done for Russia, the job of finding the right position for the states of Central and Eastern Europe will become far easier.

The Clinton administration endorses the approach of integrating Russia. But instead of focusing on the task of tying Russia into Europe, the administration, together with the new Republican congressional majority, has taken a dangerous detour. It is giving priority to expansion of NATO membership to a few central European states—Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and possibly Slovakia—as the main vehicle for its integration policy.

A healthy NATO remains essential for European security, but the concept of expanding its membership as a device for integrating the Eastern states is seriously flawed. If this idea brings about serious, enduring confrontation between Russia and the West, it may be the worst mistake in United States policy toward Europe since World War II.

—Jonathan Dean, FSO ambassador (ret.),  
in “Slowing NATO’s Growth,” August 1995 FSJ

### NATO and Afghanistan: Made for Each Other?—2008

At first glance, NATO and Afghanistan might seem made for each other. Faced with ongoing problems of insurgency despite the overthrow of the Taliban regime in November 2001, Afghanistan continues to require outside assistance to bring a modicum of security to the lives of ordinary people. NATO, for its part, faces the challenge of proving meaningful in a post-Cold War world where its role can no longer be to keep America in, Russia out and Germany down. So the advent of new threats was, at least in one sense, remarkably fortuitous.

Yet in significant respects, the Afghanistan experience has proved a testing one for both. The need to engage in serious combat operations—mercifully avoided during the period of the Cold War—has proved a notable practical challenge for NATO, exposing problems of political will and operational coordination. Afghanistan has also brought into sharp focus the questions of what kind of leadership from the United States will be politically acceptable in the context of a “Global War on Terror” that means different things to American and European observers and publics.

—William Maley, director of The Australian National University's Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy, July-August 2008 FSJ.

### NATO's Future: Taking a Fresh Approach—2008

NATO seems always to have enjoyed the status of a self-evident good thing—like old buildings among architectural historians or free trade among liberal economists. As a result, the question generally asked about NATO is how can we preserve it, as opposed to what is it good for.

Since the Soviet demise, does NATO really serve the national

interest of the United States? Asking that question pulls us away from the prevailing preservationist approach to a less sentimental, geopolitical stance. What are America's fundamental interests in Europe, and how can they best be protected? Does today's NATO serve those interests? Is it the right structure for organizing our participation in post-Soviet Europe?

The issue is not only whether preserving NATO in its present form suits the geopolitical interests of the United States, but also whether it suits the geopolitical interests of the Europeans. For countries like Poland, whose foreign policy horizon seems dominated by past conflict with Moscow, the answer seems self-evident: Defeated Russia should be hemmed in militarily. But for the major Western European countries, and from the perspective of the European Union as a whole, it is difficult to imagine a happy future for Europe without a stable and friendly relationship with Moscow. ■

—David P. Calleo, director of European studies at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, December 2008 FSJ

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# The Tragedy

## How Misguided Tropical Socialism Destroyed One of Latin America's Most Promising Countries

BY OLIVER GRIFFITH

In 1987, as a young diplomat, I was fortunate to be posted to the U.S. embassy in Caracas. It was a nice change from my first assignment, Rwanda, which, contrary to thriving Venezuela, was a basket case at the time. Little did I know that the two countries would soon take diametrically opposed paths to development. Both their longtime leaders—Hugo Chavez and Paul Kagame—had popular mandates of sorts; both became increasingly



*Oliver Griffith was an FSO from 1985 to 2007 with postings in Rwanda, Venezuela, Germany, the Central African Republic, Trinidad, France, Uruguay, Guatemala and Washington, D.C., mostly as an economic officer. After that he served as managing director of the American Chamber of Commerce in France for three years and head of communications and public affairs in Europe for the International Finance Corporation (World Bank Group) for six years. He now works as an adviser for the Arrica50 infrastructure fund and as a freelance consultant.*

dictatorial; and both used island nations as economic models.

The difference is that Chavez chose Cuba, a failed socialist state, while Kagame looked to Singapore, a highly successful free-market economy.

The results are clear: Venezuela went from being South America's richest country to one of the poorest, while Rwanda became the unlikely star of a continent plagued by the kinds of leaders that Chavez and his successor, Nicolás Maduro, became. In fact, in the country rankings by international organizations Venezuela now actively competes with Africa's least successful states for the bottom rungs, while Rwanda has soared to the top of African listings. Indeed, sound leadership from the top, whether fully democratic or not, has once again proven to be the key ingredient for successful development.

In 1987 Venezuela was still a blessed place. It was taking full advantage of its tremendous resources, not just oil and





Venezuelans protest the Maduro government on Feb. 2, 2019, in Caracas.

ALEXCCOPRO/CC BY SA 4.0

minerals, but also human, with thousands of young, well-educated Venezuelans returning from government-sponsored scholarships abroad ready to work, and international investors looking for opportunities in a growing and stable market. It was the paradigm of New World opportunity. Hundreds of thousands of working-class European immigrants—from Portuguese and Spanish fleeing dictatorships to Italians fleeing economic hardship—had been welcomed over the previous decades, helping to build a country that became a beacon of democracy and economic growth in Latin America.

Indeed, Venezuela seemed to have it all compared to most of Latin America. Interviewing dozens of visa applicants every day for an early career consular assignment, I quickly learned which Latin American countries were functioning well and which were not. The visa refusal rate for

Venezuelans was well under 10 percent, since few had any reason to stay illegally in the United States to do menial jobs. In fact, back then Venezuelan culture and cuisine were all but unknown in the United States—a source of annoyance for my Venezuelan wife—since there were so few immigrants from the classes that promote it. While the rich, Miami-villa-owning classes had always gone abroad, they had little interest in the foods, music and customs of the masses that define an ethnic culture. This was part of the problem, as I will explain.

By contrast, in the visa line the “huddled masses” of Latin America who had found refuge in Venezuela during the days of Cold War-inspired dictatorships had obvious reasons and plans to stay illegally in the United States, and so had to be denied visas. The Dominicans, Ecuadorians and Peruvians were fleeing economic distress; the Colombians were fleeing



Homes of the poor, called *ranchitos*, populate the steep hillsides of Caracas.

I saw the developing problems personally during the “Caracazo” of February 1989, when hundreds of people protesting a rise in Venezuela’s ridiculously low gasoline prices were killed.

murder and mayhem; and the Cubans, who got instant residency on touching American soil, wanted to join those who had fled Castro earlier on.

It is a tragic irony that it is now the turn of Venezuelans to flee to those very same countries because their own country’s economy and democracy have been destroyed. Even more galling is that the Chavistas—and so-called Boligarchs among them, who had a hand in the demise of Venezuela—are not emigrating to their much-loved Cuba, but to the *Imperio*: the United States.

### Warning Signs

As good as life was in sunny Venezuela in 1987, however, the warning signs were already there. Shortly before my arrival the currency collapsed to its real value—from about four bolivars to

the dollar to more than 20. This was great for young diplomats earning dollars, but a shock to the Venezuelan middle classes who had become accustomed to vacationing in Florida, and more so to the poor, who had no dollar reserves stashed abroad. Venezuelans’ refrain in Miami shopping malls—*esta barato, dame dos* (it’s cheap, give me two)—rang no more.

Already most available crevices along the streams flowing down into Caracas from the beautiful Avila Mountain range were filled with the shacks of the poor, and the *ranchitos*, as they are called, had started their inexorable march toward the coast. The divide between the rich eastern parts of the city and the poorer west was growing; and while the *ranchito*-dwellers may have had a better view than many of the rich in their sealed-off apartment complexes, their resentment was growing.

More ominously, Venezuela had a bad case of “Dutch dis-



# Corruption was less resented or hidden during Venezuela's relatively successful decades from the 1960s to the 1990s, especially when oil money was flowing freely and more people were getting a cut.

ease,” the natural resource curse wherein abundant resources sold internationally in dollars lead to a gross overvaluation of the currency and a collapse of other export sectors. This is usually accompanied by rampant corruption and, over time, tends to breed a certain economic lethargy among the general population, which comes to expect handouts from the state. So while Venezuelan policymakers could have used the country's ample resources—from land and minerals, to tourism and an educated workforce—to diversify its exports or build up manufacturing, the country exported little aside from oil (and a few Miss Universes) from the 1970s onward. This is fine when oil prices are high—and Chavez profited from a boom to remain in power—but deadly when they fall.

I saw the developing problems personally during the “Caracazo” of February 1989, when hundreds of people protesting a rise in Venezuela's ridiculously low gasoline prices and other “neo-liberal” economic measures were killed. It was a rude awakening for the leisure class that was followed in 1992 by Chavez's failed coup, and in 1993 by the impeachment for corruption of President Carlos Andrés Pérez.

Pérez was not the first corrupt leader who enriched his cronies and turned a blind eye to growing inequality. It is a well-trod path, not just in Venezuela and Latin America, but around the world. There are many formulas for stashing money, denying wrongdoing and clinging to power by suppressing detractors and subverting the political system. While Maduro has set new standards, taking Venezuela down to 169th out of 180 in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, the country has a long tradition of corruption, with colorful stories such as the dictator Perez Jimenez forgetting a suitcase stuffed with \$2 million on the runway during his escape in 1958.

Corruption was less resented or hidden during Venezuela's relatively successful decades from the 1960s to the 1990s, especially when oil money was flowing freely and more people were getting a cut. But it was always there in many shapes and forms—from outright theft, gifts to politicians, bank accounts in tax havens and apartments in Miami and Panama to Venezuela's omnipresent *palanca*. This system, whereby one gets

something done in a badly functioning administration through the “lever” of connections, seems to be part of Venezuelan culture, where family and friends often count more than society as a whole.

So throughout the 1980s and 1990s the scene was slowly being set for change. The poor were literally massing in the hills of Caracas ready to support a charismatic leader such as Chavez, whose upbringing, color and culture more closely represented their own than that of his white upper-class predecessors. A brilliant populist, he was the right man at the right time—his rise to power largely the result of the corruption and self-serving policies of his predecessors and the Venezuelan elites. While they were aghast at his election as president in 1998, which would have been unimaginable a decade earlier, it should not have been a surprise. Most commentators took a wait-and-see attitude. U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela John Maisto famously said: “Watch what Chavez does, not what he says.”

## Chavez in Power

Indeed, for the first two years Chavez did more or less the right things. While steadily drifting leftward in his rhetoric, he hired orthodox economists and courted the private sector, even visiting the New York Stock Exchange. His oil-fueled spending on the poor was effective enough to make a real difference in their lives and substantially lower poverty and inequality. Power and the pernicious influence of that puppet master, Fidel Castro, had not yet poisoned his thinking. In fact, he appeared to be a good man who had won a strong popular mandate to reform a system that no longer addressed the needs of most of its citizens. It was an incredible opportunity, and he had the money to make it happen.

I was fortunate to meet Chavez briefly in 1999 during a surprisingly informal visit to the statue of Simon Bolivar in Paris. His charisma was palpable and, far from attacking me as a Yankee imperialist—which became his byline later—he jokingly chided me for having abducted one of Venezuela's attractive women. Even then, however, all was not rosy. I was also present when

## A brilliant populist, Chavez was the right man at the right time—his rise to power largely the result of the corruption and self-serving policies of his predecessors and the Venezuelan elites.

he addressed a packed auditorium at the Sorbonne in Paris, reverting to time-tested leftist rhetoric, for which he received a rapturous reception from French leftists. In fact, the continued support of the champagne-sipping European left, parts of which still inexplicably worship Fidel Castro and accept Maduro, contributed to Chavez's detour into irrational economics.

As Lord Acton famously observed a hundred years earlier, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Chavez was a prime example. Though popularly elected, he increasingly undermined Venezuela's democratic institutions to become a de facto dictator, using the oil bonanza to all but buy votes. It would have been easy for him to follow the tactics of his peers in Bolivia (Evo Morales), Ecuador (Rafael Correa), Nicaragua (Daniel Ortega) and Brazil (Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva), who used leftist political rhetoric to keep their base engaged while hiring rational economy and finance ministers to (more or less) keep their economies on track. Instead Chavez, proud of having become the icon of the international left and increasingly manipulated by Castro, turned to bankrupt state-run, Soviet-era economic policies. While such dirigiste models might be feasible in certain Asian countries with a supportive history and social structure, in Latin America they have always failed. Venezuela is a tragic example.

Moreover, although Chavez' policies were well-intended and had some early success, they were increasingly run by cronies or ideologues, who had their own often-corrupt agendas and little experience. The state-run oil company, PDVSA, in charge of the world's largest oil reserves, is an example. Once one of the world's best-run oil companies, under Chavez it started spending its money on political projects instead of oil production; and when in 2002 employees went on strike in protest, 19,000 were fired. As a result, Venezuela's production slowed to a trickle, hardly enough to cover Chavez's lavish spending, including free oil for his friends like Cuba.

This kind of shoot-yourself-in-the-foot policy, which weakens your main revenue source, was unfortunately only one of many examples. Chavez also started mass expropriations of successful agricultural ventures and companies, mostly handing them to incompetent friends and military supporters. And a policy of multiple exchange rates enriched those with good access to

an obscene degree. It seemed that, while other countries were courting foreign investors, Chavez was doing everything possible to scare them away, depriving Venezuela of money and expertise.

In addition, his laudable social program "*Barrio Adentro*" and support for agricultural cooperatives were badly administered, circumventing established organizations. For example, my brother-in-law, who is a small-time farmer in the remote village where my wife grew up, applied to become a fish farmer. All went well at first, with a government agent giving him a refrigerated truck and measuring out the fish ponds. But that was it; the ponds were never dug, nor other supplies delivered. After 10 years of holding on to the truck and no follow-up, he finally sold it.

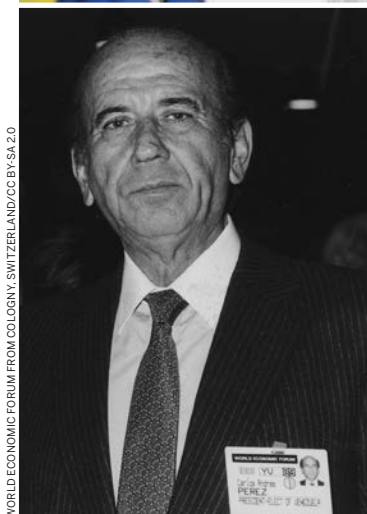
Such mismanagement accelerated after Chavez's death in 2013 when his chosen successor, the hapless Nicolás Maduro, came to power in a questionable election. In spite of falling oil prices, Maduro continued Chavez's discredited, state-run economic model, turning Venezuela into a textbook case of how *not* to run an economy. Currency and price controls stoked corruption and the black market; relentless printing of money raised inflation to more than one million percent a year; expropriations and lack of industrial inputs led to the exodus of world-class companies and killed investment; and the exploitation of PDVSA for political ends savaged government revenues.

Venezuela now ranks 188th out of 190 countries in the World Bank's "Doing Business 2019" report and has "won" the Misery Index (based on inflation and unemployment) every year since Maduro's election. After another stolen election in 2018, people have started voting with their feet, with well over two million fleeing their homeland. And in the last wave it is not just the better-off classes, but the very people the "Bolivarian revolution" was meant to help—the poor, whose numbers mushroomed under Maduro.

The "Socialism of the 21st Century" that Chavez proudly declared in 2005 after various attempts to remove him from power, has unfortunately been no more successful than the socialism of the 20th century that impoverished the Soviet Union, Cuba and others. It is a tragedy that Chavez, with such an incredible mandate to do good, did not stick with the more social democratic model of his earlier years. He was sidetracked not just into state-run socialism, but into badly managed



Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez with Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff in Brasilia, January 2011.



Venezuela's President-elect Carlos Andrés Pérez at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos in 1989.

Russia, who are rapaciously hoovering up Venezuela's resources in exchange for nontransparent loans, carry some of the present blame by continuing to finance the bankrupt Venezuelan state.

### The Way Out?

So what is the way out? Whether the opposition's present strategy of installing Juan Guaidó as acting president will work remains to be seen. However, even if it does not, Maduro's days seem numbered since Venezuela is increasingly cut off from the rest of the world—financially, politically and morally. China only wants resources and will eventually call in its loans; Russia and others mostly want to antagonize the United States; and some of the Latin American holdouts still supporting Maduro should eventually see the light.

Those who hope for a military intervention by the United States may be disappointed. The Trump administration might consider doing so if the lives of U.S. diplomats or citizens were

state-run socialism. That Maduro continues with this misguided illusion is hard to fathom, although the support of other strongmen in Turkey, Russia, China and Iran and the millions of dollars he has stolen must give him comfort. China and

threatened. Overall, however, Venezuela has little geopolitical or economic importance for the United States. Having become the world's largest oil producer through shale oil, the United States no longer needs Venezuela's piddling production, and politically Venezuela counts little without the oil money to buy opposition to America from desperate ministates in the Caribbean or elsewhere. Moreover, the U.S. administration knows that previous invasions or U.S.-engineered coups in Latin America have left deep scars and could be used by Maduro to justify his repression.

What about the destroyed economy? I am more hopeful than most. The first move under a new regime should be to peg the worthless bolivar to the dollar to kill hyperinflation. This was done with some success in other struggling Latin American economies such as Panama, El Salvador and Ecuador—the latter under leftist allies of Chavez! While such moves can wipe out the savings of a country's citizens, in Venezuela those savings evaporated long ago. For example, the rent on my apartment in Caracas is now well below one dollar a month, and it is worth a tenth of its pre-Maduro value. Price stability is the prerequisite for any economic reform. It will not cure everything, but nothing can be cured without it.

The second measure should be to reform Venezuela's horrendous business climate. This, too, is simpler than one might suppose, given the legislative vacuum and near total breakdown of enforcement of regulations. Countries with far fewer resources than Venezuela have had great success by unshackling

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Maduro continued Chavez's discredited, state-run economic model, turning Venezuela into a textbook case of how *not* to run an economy.

their private sectors and attracting the money and know-how of foreign investors. Some have simply imported the regulations of successful free-market economies such as Singapore.

At the same time Venezuela, which is nearly bankrupt, must find funding from more transparent sources than China and Russia. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund and other international institutions that Chavez spurned due to false pride or ideology are standing by, not only with loans but also with decades of experience in economic reform. This will be a delicate game, since at some point Venezuela will have to renegotiate the huge debts it has accumulated with Russia, China and others—much as Argentina has done repeatedly with its lenders.

Hopefully, signs of change will start to reverse the brain and financial drain that has seen Venezuela's most educated and well-off emigrate to find work or secure their savings. Many in Venezuela's talented diaspora are eager to return home, and the wealthy, even those with ill-gotten gains, could be enticed to invest if the risk-return ratio becomes more reasonable. There are examples on all continents of countries whose diasporas have contributed significantly to turning around their economies. They just need the chance.

But—and this is a big but—it all depends on politics. Bad politics usually breeds bad economics, and Venezuela is a worst-case scenario. Corruption has enriched many among Venezuela's interest groups—from its 2,000 generals and oligarchs, to prison and gang leaders, government-sponsored enforcers and food hoarders. They could well use Venezuela's ample firearms to further increase its world-leading murder rate before giving up their fiefdoms.

Often countries turn to strongmen for such drastic reforms—from the good and the bad to the ugly. Let's hope that Venezuela—after suffering from a good leader who went bad, and from a bad leader who got ugly—will make the right choice. The country has the human and natural resources to once again set the standard for Latin America. ■

The American  
Foreign Service Association  
**U.S. FOREIGN SERVICE  
COMMEMORATIVE COIN**



The AFSA U.S. Foreign Service commemorative coin is a timeless keepsake that recognizes the service of our members to the Foreign Service. The unique design will serve as a symbol of distinction that members will enjoy displaying and sharing with their foreign affairs contacts, family and friends. The silver finish, 1.75" diameter coin has the Great Seal on one side and the AFSA logo and slogan on the obverse.

To order, visit  
[www.afsa.org/coin](http://www.afsa.org/coin)

## AFSA Seeks Awards Nominations for 2019

Each year, the American Foreign Service Association recognizes members of the Foreign Service community whose contributions and leadership stand out. We are proud to bestow the only awards honoring constructive dissent in the federal government, having done so since 1968.

AFSA also honors outstanding performance. Awards will be presented to the recipients at a ceremony in October.

We welcome nominations for our four constructive dissent awards:

- **The W. Averell Harriman Award** for entry-level Foreign Service officers.
- **The William R. Rivkin Award** for mid-level Foreign Service officers.
- **The Christian A. Herter Award** for Senior Foreign Service officers.
- **The F. Allen ‘Tex’ Harris Award** for Foreign Service specialists.

We also invite nominations for our exemplary performance awards:

• **The Nelson B. Delavan Award** recognizes the work of a Foreign Service office management specialist who has made a significant contribution to post or office effectiveness and morale, both *within* as well as *beyond* the framework of her or his job responsibilities.

• **The M. Juanita Guess Award** recognizes a com-

### Which of your colleagues deserve recognition for constructive dissent or outstanding performance?

munity liaison officer who has demonstrated outstanding leadership, dedication, initiative or imagination in assisting the families of Americans serving at an overseas post.

• **The Avis Bohlen Award** honors a Foreign Service family member whose volunteer work with the American and foreign communities at post has resulted in advancing the interests of the United States.

• **The Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy** is bestowed on a member of the Foreign Service from any of the foreign affairs agencies, especially those at the early- to mid-career

level, serving domestically or overseas.

The award recognizes the promotion of American policies focused on advancing democracy, freedom and governance through bold, imaginative and effective efforts during one or more assignments.

Nominations for all categories are due by May 24. Please visit [www.afsa.org/awards](http://www.afsa.org/awards) for more information, or contact AFSA Awards Coordinator Perri Green at [green@afsa.org](mailto:green@afsa.org).

Please think about which of your colleagues deserve recognition for constructive dissent or outstanding performance—and send in a nomination! ■



The AFSA Constructive Dissent and Lifetime Achievement Award trophies.

## CALENDAR

March 20 - May 3  
FSJ Centennial  
Exhibit at the  
U.S. Diplomacy Center

April 10  
12:130 p.m.  
AFSA Book Notes:  
Ambassador William J.  
Burns –The Back Channel

April 11  
12:1:30 p.m.  
“Retirement Planning  
5 to 10 Years Out”

April 17  
12-1:30 p.m.  
AFSA Governing  
Board Meeting

April 29  
AFSA Governing Board  
Election Ballots Mailed

May 2  
11 a.m.-4 p.m.  
Foreign Service Day  
Programming at AFSA:  
• Open House  
• Complimentary  
Professional Head Shots  
• Advocacy Update  
• Next Stage:  
Foreign Service Writers  
• Workshop:  
Local Outreach

May 3  
Foreign Service Day  
• AFSA Memorial Ceremony  
• FS Day Reception at the  
U.S. Diplomacy Center

May 15  
12-1:30 p.m.  
AFSA Governing  
Board Meeting

May 24  
Deadline: AFSA Awards  
Nominations

June 12  
AFSA Governing Board  
Election Ballots Due/  
Ballots Counted



Views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the AFSA State VP.  
Contact: KeroMentzKA@state.gov | (202) 647-8160

## Foreign Service Furlough Stories

Over 35 days of uncertainty, AFSA members reached out to us to share their anxieties, concerns and disappointments about the longest government shutdown in history. People were rightly upset, and many of us felt like pawns in a struggle between the branches of government. Regardless of whether we were working with pay, working without it, or forced to stay away from the work we love, Foreign Service officers and specialists were stressed.

For many of us, the shutdown caused real financial trouble, and even with careful planning, paying bills became a stretch. Some members had already tapped into their “rainy day fund” after being forced to leave Mission Russia last year. Others had to juggle funds to pay tuition expenses or mortgages due in January. Unemployment benefits were not available to many members serving overseas. Single parents and tandem couples were hit particularly hard with the delay of first one paycheck, and then two.

We heard stories of how the shutdown affected our members’ work. For instance, at the National Defense University and other war colleges, Department of State students were locked out of lectures and prohibited from participating in seminars during

the shutdown. USAID war college students were designated “excepted,” so they could continue attending class. Students from State should have been “excepted” as well. There’s no reason why the U.S. government’s investment in a yearlong master’s degree program for its future senior leadership cadre should be torn apart midstream.

A mid-level officer at a small post in Africa reported that she was busier than ever, covering for her furloughed colleagues, planning events only to cancel later as the shutdown dragged on. As days turned into weeks, and then surpassed a month, morale plummeted. After all, as she said, who wants to work for an organization that consistently understaffs and overworks its team? She wonders if her enthusiasm for what is increasingly becoming a thankless job will ever rebound. Along the same lines, another FSO reported that he joined a newly created Facebook group dedicated to former and transitioning FSOs.

At one large mission in Asia, all State Department employees were required to report to work regardless of pay status. These people could not do any public-facing work and could not contact their counterparts at other posts or the department (since they were all fur-

### One member wonders if her enthusiasm for what is increasingly becoming a thankless job will ever rebound.

loughed), but were required to report to work in a non-pay status. It did not make sense. As many members noted, furlough decisions should be made in a central and transparent manner. Though none of us expected the shutdown to last so long, better contingency planning could have helped.

We’ve heard from many members asking if they can participate in class-action lawsuits being brought against the U.S. government for requiring employees to work without salary. There is no legal prohibition against Foreign Service officers joining class action lawsuits against the department or the government in general, but these lawsuits claim that the government violated the Fair Labor Standards Act. Most members of the Foreign Service are exempt from FLSA, although there are exceptions for some specialists and untenured generalists serving domestically.

Indeed, all employees working overseas are exempt from the provisions of FLSA. If you are not FLSA-exempt, and you wish

to discuss your options, please contact AFSA’s Labor Management team to discuss your particular circumstances. We’re here to help.

The hardships went well beyond juggling work requirements and paying bills. One second-tour specialist was hospitalized and needed to medevac to the United States immediately. The shutdown delayed the processing of the medevac funding request; due to the shutdown and short staffing, it took 10 days to get the person on a plane.

As always, AFSA worked hard as the shutdown dragged on, doing what we do best: conducting quiet diplomacy within the department, on Capitol Hill and with our members. We heard your pain—we felt it, too. We kept the pressure up.

At this point, we don’t know if or when we’ll be shuttered again, but we remain hopeful, and we know the department’s leadership is doing all it can to keep us working, and paid. And that, after all, is what we need to keep bringing our best to the jobs we love. ■



## Government Shutdowns Shut Out U.S. Farmers

Uncertainty has always been one of the greatest threats facing farmers. USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service plays an important role in reducing uncertainty through our global agricultural market intelligence and commodity reporting. We provide American farmers and traders with unbiased, up-to-date data and forecasts for world agricultural production and trade, which help farmers make informed planting and business decisions ... unless the U.S. government is shut down.

The U.S. farm sector has been reeling from trade wars with China and other countries, and it looks to FAS weekly U.S. export sales reports to understand the overall level of export demand and assess the relative position of 40 U.S. commodities in foreign markets. The reports serve as an early alert on the

impact of foreign sales on U.S. supplies and prices, and the shutdown left farmers in the dark.

To make informed planting decisions about which crops are most likely to generate the highest profits, farmers seek information on competitor production and trade. FAS attaché reports take center stage as the primary source of insight and analysis of global agricultural production and trade.

To produce these reports, we study new and upcoming seed varieties; follow weather patterns; track pest and disease outbreaks; observe satellite imagery and conduct crop travel to ground-truth the data; assess the impact of infrastructure development and logistical challenges; monitor clearing of new land for agricultural development; analyze crop rotations and shifts to alternative crops;

**We provide American farmers and traders with unbiased, up-to-date data and forecasts for world agricultural production and trade, which help farmers make informed planting and business decisions ... unless the U.S. government is shut down.**

examine changes in stocks and consumption; and calculate losses.

We meet with local farmers, government officials, seed developers, private statistical companies, commodity sector representatives, traders and anyone else involved in the sector. We keep abreast of potential policy changes and analyze their direct and indirect ramifications.

We use all of this information to develop unbiased, well-informed, globally respected, up-to-date forecasts, which are published on the FAS website for

public consumption. These reports feed into USDA's monthly world agricultural supply and demand estimates reports, and provide farmers with a comprehensive global forecast of supply and demand for major crops.

During the 35-day partial U.S. government shutdown, these reports were suspended, and it took weeks thereafter to catch up on the backlog. As they made their planting decisions, American farmers were burdened with unnecessary uncertainty, and only time will tell the extent of the damage. ■



### AFSA Governing Board Meeting, February 22, 2019

#### Management Committee:

It was moved "that the Governing Board amend the performance assessments section on page 22 of the AFSA Employee Handbook as follows:

- Striking "calendar year" and inserting "budget cycle."
- Striking "January" and inserting "October."
- Striking "December" and inserting "September."
- Inserting after "retention": "Staff reporting directly

to the president and CEO or constituent VPs in election years will be reviewed by their supervisor at the end of June, and then their new (if changed) supervisor in September. The ratings of the outgoing supervisor will account for two-thirds of the FJP score, with the incoming supervisor accounting for one-third."

The motion was adopted.

By unanimous consent, the board also approved an application for an associate member to join AFSA. ■



## Advocacy in a Divided Congress: Transcending Party Lines

Congresses with a majority-party divide between the chambers have historically been the least productive in history.

According to the Library of Congress, the 115th (2017-2018) and 114th (2015-2016) Congresses passed 428 and 329 bills into law, respectively. However, if you look to the last instance of a divided Congress—the 113th Congress (2013-2014)—it passed only 296 laws and the divided Congress before that just 283. The current 116th Congress, with its Democratic House majority and Republican Senate majority, is expected to be no different.

While you wouldn't know it from the daily headlines, members of Congress do want to propose bipartisan legislation that can easily pass both chambers of Congress and be signed into law. Examples include bills that demonstrate its constitutional oversight and appropriations authority, bills that restore faith in Congress' ability to do its job, and bills that give productive wins to members who want to highlight their political might.

The 116th Congress and the desires of its politically diverse members present the perfect opening for AFSA to demonstrate that our 2019 priorities for strengthening the Foreign Service appeal across partisan lines.

At the start of the new Congress, AFSA worked to solidify the gains made for a field-forward Foreign Service. Specifically, AFSA reminded lawmakers of the line item tied to sending FSOs abroad, Overseas Programs, in the final Fiscal Year 2019 appropriations package.

AFSA celebrated the increase of \$84 million for this line item in the final 2019 appropriations package (enough to cover the overseas support costs of shifting nearly 300 mid-level FSO positions from Washington, D.C., to embassies and consulates overseas). Until this package was passed into law, it was particularly difficult for Congress to focus on discussions for future fiscal years. The partial government shutdown exacerbated the strain.

AFSA's advocacy team made strides on individual pieces of legislation affecting the Foreign Service, including the Championing American Business Through Diplomacy Act. This bill, sponsored by House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Michael McCaul (R-Texas), draws attention to State's role in creating an enabling environment for U.S. businesses abroad and documenting foreign economic competition.

The bill complements AFSA's "Economic Diplo-

**The focus this spring has turned to maintaining the congressional firewall against any proposed cuts to State/USAID and protecting the international affairs budget.**

macy Works" initiative, and we will continue to work with congressional staff to mold this legislation into a bipartisan win that is in the best interest of the United States and the Foreign Service.

Meanwhile, focus this spring has turned to maintaining the congressional firewall against any proposed cuts to State/USAID and protecting the international affairs budget. Remember that Congress was the key defender in preventing the administration's proposed cuts of more than a third the past few years, even as the 2018 Bipartisan Budget Act put limits on non-defense discretionary funding.

In the absence of a budget deal that protects non-defense discretionary funding, State and USAID are vulnerable. There will be many priorities fighting for a diminishing piece of the same funding pie. The fear is that a decrease in the non-defense discretionary cap will cascade into a severe cut to the 302(b) allocation for the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations bills set by the appropria-

tions committees.

Thus, AFSA needs to continue to make an argument that transcends party lines if we are to protect the international affairs budget, as we did successfully with the Economic Diplomacy Works initiative. This requires meeting with seasoned lawmakers, with those moving up the ranks in our congressional committees of jurisdiction, and with the freshmen lawmakers new to Capitol Hill.

AFSA seeks to strengthen a solid bipartisan majority in favor of a budget that does not undercut non-defense discretionary funding or completely gut non-defense Overseas Contingency Operations funding without an offsetting increase to base funding—a clear challenge in the divided Congress we currently face. ■

—Kim Greenplate,  
Director of Congressional  
Advocacy



## AFSA Retirees: From International Careers to Local Engagement

As part of AFSA's outreach effort we connect with retirees all over the country who generously volunteer their time to share the story of the Foreign Service.

This year, the Foreign Policy Association's Great Decisions program includes the topic "State of the State Department and Diplomacy." This is an opportunity for retired AFSA members to not only share their expertise on important global issues included in the curriculum, like global migration or the rise of populism, but also to pull the curtain back on the people involved in international diplomacy and development.

AFSA has shared its packet of talking points for "State of the State Department" with members from all over the country who are leading and participating in Great Decision groups—let us know if you'd like to use it for your upcoming events.

A great way to get involved and make local connections is by joining the Foreign Service Retiree Association (visit [afsa.org/retiree-associations](http://afsa.org/retiree-associations) to find out if there is one in your area). There are many other internationally minded organizations at the local level, including World Affairs Councils (which often host Great Decisions discussions), Global Ties, United Nations Associations and Sister Cities.

AFSA member and retired

FSO Mary Curtin, currently on the graduate faculty at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, got involved with Global Minnesota, a leading host organization for the International Visitor Leadership Program, shortly after retiring from the Foreign Service in 2011. Through Global Minnesota, she has been active in the Great Decisions program, and does eight to 10 presentations a year for retirement communities, church groups, high schools and other organizations.

Ms. Curtin volunteers her time because she finds it, as she says, "inspiring to see citizens of all ages make the effort to learn about these issues beyond the headlines." She says that retirees should not be shy about signing up to speak—even if an issue wasn't their specialty in the Foreign Service, they can still add to the discussion. Remember, she says, many people outside of the D.C. area have never met a member of the Foreign Service and lack awareness about the work we do.

Another AFSA member, Alan Van Egmond, is active in the Great Decisions program with the Naples Council on World Affairs in Naples, Florida. Since retiring from USAID in 2017, Mr. Van Egmond has spoken to more than 25 groups on a range of topics highlighting the work of the Foreign Service.

When he retired to Florida, Mr. Van Egmond put the word out among friends who connected him to organizations interested in locating speakers. Since then, he has been invited to speak at schools, churches, local business organizations and groups like Rotary Club and the American Association of University Women. He gave the keynote address last year to hundreds of students at the Model United Nations conference.

Asked what motivates him, Van Egmond said that his area has a tremendous diversity of experience and attitudes, and he finds satisfaction in leaving people with a positive impression of the importance of the work American diplomats do. He encourages fellow retirees to use AFSA as a resource for talking points and keeping up to date, citing the Daily Media Digest as a "gold mine."

On the opposite coast, retiree Bill Taliaferro volunteers with the University of Oregon's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, which offers continuing education to seniors. He helps to coordinate a discussion group on international relations. By incorporating Skype and other teleconferencing technology, he has been able to tap into his network of foreign policy professionals, and he has turned to the AFSA Speakers Bureau to find expert presenters for the twice-monthly sessions. The group has



COURTESY ALAN VAN EGMOND

Alan Van Egmond addressing students at a Model United Nations conference.

grown from 20 to almost 75 participants.

Mr. Taliaferro says he enjoys staying engaged in foreign affairs through this effort, tracking down old friends and colleagues as expert presenters. Finding OLLI members to be "curious, informed, active and interesting people," he has been gratified to see their "thirst for expert perspective on foreign affairs" and enthusiasm for the content. He recommends seeking out an organization like OLLI as a conduit to meet people and share our foreign relations experiences and expertise with the broader community.

Have you connected with a local group since retiring? Please share your work with us: <http://www.afsa.org/telling-foreign-service-story>

—Christine Miele,  
Manager, Retiree Outreach  
and Engagement

## Change Your Health Plan? Members Weigh In

There was a lot of talk during the last open season on whether or not to change your Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) plan. Financial and retirement advisers often exhort us to review our health plans, but few of us relish the process. However, some of the members of the AFSA Online Community have done their research, and we asked them for their input. Here is what we learned:

One member with a serious autoimmune disease warns that if you are taking expensive specialty medication that is covered by your present plan, you should be careful about changing plans. His prescription medications are expensive, he writes, and insurance companies typically force the

patient to take less-expensive medications before approving the specialty medication. This is something the insurance companies call “step therapy” but critics call “fail first.”

This member considered changing to the Foreign Service Benefit Plan (FSBP) because it was less expensive than Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS), but changed his mind when he discovered that FSBP would not automatically allow him to remain on his specialty medication, and that he would have to again prove that the less expensive medications don’t work for him.

Another member tells us why a high-deductible plan works for his family, although it might only be right for careful planners. He

**If you are taking expensive specialty medication that is covered by your present plan, be careful about changing plans.**

writes: “I’ve been through several health care providers within FEHB but have been happiest—particularly overseas, where local providers often cost less—with the Government Employees Health Association (GEHA) High Deductible plan for family.”

It is not for everyone, he notes, because while catastrophic or more expensive issues are covered, many common health care costs come straight out of pocket. In that sense, he explains, it operates much more like car or home insurance, but with one huge benefit: you can invest part of the premium and add a separate amount in a Health Care IRA.

For those interested in crunching numbers, this member recommends first reading what others have done. He likes the Bogleheads forum, named after the recently deceased founder of Vanguard, John Bogle, who was famous for creating the low-cost index fund, and he pointed our members to one example of a typical exchange at [www.bogleheads.org/forum/viewtopic.php?t=264554](http://www.bogleheads.org/forum/viewtopic.php?t=264554).

Finally, quite a few

members reminded us of the value of staying put. One member writes: “We retained our FEHB plan. FEHB worked effectively and had dealt with our pre-existing conditions to our maximum benefit. As a result, we did not want to play with our success in hopes of making marginal, if any, improvements.”

Thanks to our members for sharing their experiences and knowledge on this complex subject. If other members have insights to share, please contact AFSA Retirement Benefits Counselor Dolores M. Brown at [brown@afsa.org](mailto:brown@afsa.org).

The next FEHB open season will start in late 2019, at which time AFSA will provide access to Checkbook’s *Guide to Health Plans*, which compares and contrasts all FEHB plans in a digestible manner. ■

### NEWS BRIEF

#### PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT

On Feb. 5, AFSA hosted a webinar featuring Retiree Vice President John Naland, “Reviewing Your Retirement Plan.”

About 80 retirees from around the world registered and joined the webinar. During the webinar, participants were able to submit their questions on a wide range of issues including social security, updating the designated beneficiary for FEGLI, survivor benefits, considerations around long-term care insurance and TSP withdrawals. Participants also sought additional clarification on the decision of when and if to enroll in Medicare Part B.

For those who missed it, a recording of the discussion is available at [www.afsa.org/video](http://www.afsa.org/video). ■



## AFSA Welcomes Newest Foreign Service Officers

On Feb. 27, AFSA welcomed the members of the 197th A-100 class to its headquarters building in Washington, D.C.

Table hosts included Ambassador (ret.) Jay Anania, AFSA State Vice President Ken Kero-Mentz, State Representative Lilly Wahl-Tuco and Retiree Representative Philip Shull. Hosts—including Member Accounts Specialist Ashley Dunn, above—talked to the newest Foreign Service members about the functions of AFSA in its dual role as a professional association and labor union.

More than 75 percent of this class joined AFSA.

Welcome to the Foreign Service! ■

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# HONOR A COLLEAGUE

Nominations for AFSA's 2019 Constructive Dissent and Exemplary Performance Awards Are Now Being Accepted

## DISSENT AWARDS

- The W. Averell Harriman Award For an Entry-Level Foreign Service Officer.
- The William R. Rivkin Award for a Mid-Level Foreign Service Officer.
- The Christian A. Herter Award for a Senior Foreign Service Officer.
- The F. Allen "Tex" Harris Award for a Foreign Service Specialist.

## PERFORMANCE AWARDS

- The Mark Palmer Award for the Advancement of Democracy.
- The Nelson B. Delavan Award for a Foreign Service Office Management Specialist.
- The M. Juanita Guess Award for a Community Liaison Office Coordinator.
- The Avis Bohlen Award for an Eligible Family Member.
- The Post Rep of the Year Award for an Outstanding AFSA Post Representative.

MORE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE AT [WWW.AFSA.ORG/AWARDS](http://WWW.AFSA.ORG/AWARDS).  
THE DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS IS MAY 24, 2019.

Questions? Contact Perri Green, Awards Coordinator, at [green@afsa.org](mailto:green@afsa.org) or (202) 719-9700.

## FS Day: Letters to the Editor Are Back

As in previous years, AFSA is encouraging retired members to place a letter to the editor in their local paper during the week of April 29, which includes Foreign Service Day. You'll find the basic template below—we'll also send it to retirees by email—and we hope those willing will edit the letter to fit their personal circumstances and local community. As always, let us know if a placement was successful by emailing us at [press@afsa.org](mailto:press@afsa.org).



To the Editor:

As someone who retired from [agency] after [xx] years of service, and as a resident of [city/town], I am proud to have been a member of the U.S. Foreign Service. However, I'm sometimes surprised at how little is generally known about America's diplomats. We serve at 270 posts around the world, often in hard and sometimes dangerous places, working to protect America's people, interests and values.

In 1996, the United States Senate designated the first

Friday in May as "American Foreign Service Day." It is on this day that members of the Foreign Service around the world and here at home come together to recognize and celebrate the thousands of people who commit their lives to serving the U.S. abroad and the impact their work has on us all. This year, that day is May 4. This week is therefore an ideal time for anyone interested in what diplomats do and why it's important to learn more about the 16,000-member strong United States Foreign Service.

I consider myself lucky that my colleagues are hard at work around the world, constantly seeking to promote U.S. policies, level the playing field for U.S. businesses, open markets for U.S. agriculture, and achieve wins for America. With all the threats to U.S. security and prosperity out there, I hope my fellow citizens appreciate the U.S. Foreign Service and agree that, in order to maintain American global leadership, we must field a top-notch diplomatic team, or risk forfeiting the game to our adversaries.

Name  
City

## AFSA Greet's Newest Foreign Service Specialists

On Feb. 7, AFSA welcomed the members of the 151th Specialist Class to its headquarters building in Washington, D.C.

Twenty-three class members have joined Diplomatic Security, while another 15 are office management specialists. The remaining class members are split among various other specialist tracks.

Table hosts included former Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security Greg Starr, retired

Senior Foreign Service Specialist and Special Agent Steve Kruchko, Ambassador (ret.) Jay Anania and AFSA Foreign Commercial Service Vice President Dan Crocker. Hosts talked to the newest Foreign Service members about the functions of AFSA in its dual role as a professional association and labor union.

More than 80 percent of this class joined AFSA.

Welcome to the Foreign Service! ■



Diplomatic Security Special Agent (ret.) Steve Kruchko talking with new DS agents.



AFSA FCS Vice President Dan Crocker chatting with class members.

## A Master of Process

### Kissinger the Negotiator: Lessons from Dealmaking at the Highest Level

James K. Sebenius, R. Nicholas Burns and Robert H. Mnookin, Foreword by Henry A. Kissinger, HarperCollins, 2018, \$28.99/hardcover; \$17.99/paperback; \$14.99/Kindle, 411 pages.

REVIEWED BY HARRY W. KOPP

If encounters with car salesmen, real-estate agents or divorce lawyers leave you feeling like a chump, there are plenty of books that claim to offer help. Some are good (*Getting to Yes* by Fisher and Ury), some are so-so (*You Can Negotiate Anything* by Herb Cohen) and some are entertaining trash (*The Art of the Deal* by you-know-who).

**During negotiations, Kissinger would repeatedly “zoom out” to re-examine objectives in light of shifting conditions, and “zoom in” to particular issues and individuals that required attention.**

But if your encounters are with the likes of North Korea, the Group of Seven, representatives of the Taliban, the countries with claims in the South China Sea, the Venezuelan opposition, the Palestinian Authority or the U.S. agencies responsible for trade policy, you need more serious advice. You will find no better teacher than Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, as deciphered, demystified and distilled in this work of 400 pages.

Kissinger, national security adviser (1969-1975) and Secretary of State (1973-1977) under Presidents Richard M. Nixon and Gerald Ford, led the most complex and far-reaching negotiations of the mid-20th century. Over his eight years in government, the talks he led held in balance hundreds of thousands of human

lives and the fate of nations. The results of his efforts, as this book acknowledges, are even now subject to fierce debate.

Results, however, hold little interest for the authors of *Kissinger the Negotiator*. Skilled negotiators, they say, may produce bad results, either through faulty assumptions (“Any negotiation depends on the quality of the assumptions that led to undertaking it in the first place”) or flawed intent (“Technical virtuosity says nothing about whether the objectives of the negotiator are good or evil, wise or foolish”).

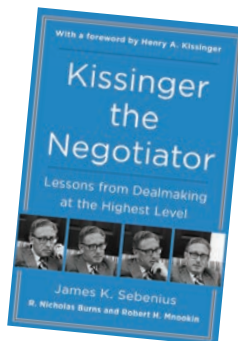
They draw their lessons from Kissinger’s failures as well as his successes. Their real interest is in process, and their

regard for Kissinger as a master of process borders on awe.

This is an academic, specifically a Harvard, book. Henry Kissinger was a doctoral student at Harvard and a member of the faculty for 15 years before entering public service. The three co-authors, James K. Sebenius, R. Nicholas Burns and Robert H. Mnookin, are professors at Harvard’s schools of business, government, and law, respectively.

Professor Sebenius has top billing on the title page, but the spirit and diplomatic sensibility of Ambassador Burns, Foreign Service officer (retired) and former under secretary of State, are evident on every page.

The authors infer Kissinger’s methodology from detailed analysis



of the common elements in a number of very different negotiations, including those with Israel and its Arab neighbors; with China and the Soviet Union; with North Vietnam; and, most interesting and informative, the little-remembered talks in and about Southern Africa in 1976 and 1977. The authors confirmed and deepened their conclusions in discussions with Kissinger himself.

### Kissinger’s Method

In these days of chaos, impulse and posturing, Kissinger’s preparation and discipline refresh and astound. Negotiations began with an objective or set of objectives, carefully elaborated at the presidential level and part of a general strategy for America in the world. The authors cite Brent Scowcroft, the Air Force general who followed Kissinger as national security adviser: “[Kissinger] could balance a whole lot of disparate issues and interrelate them all a year or two on. Several years later, all the strands would come together.”

The objective might be narrowly drawn (e.g., prevent a Soviet-backed guerrilla “race war” in Rhodesia and South Africa), or it might be quite broad (e.g., position the United States to be closer to both China and the Soviet Union than either was to the other).

From the objective, Kissinger “mapped backward” to design a sequence of steps leading to the desired result. He conducted deep, meticulous research to understand the interests and motivations of the parties involved, the personalities and psychology of the principal actors, and the way these elements might interact.

He relied for this work on professional

staff. In preparation for talks in southern Africa, for example, the authors say he “rebuilt the State Department’s Bureau of African Affairs, staffing it with trusted diplomats.” And Kissinger himself wrote in his memoirs: “[W]hen I came to Washington, I assembled a group [of] ... really young, able, dedicated people. I would meet with them several times a week, preferably daily, asking the question, what are we trying to do? What is our strategy in the world?”

Kissinger drew his staff mainly from the Foreign Service, academia and established foreign-affairs think-tanks.

During negotiations, Kissinger would repeatedly “zoom out” to re-examine objectives in light of shifting conditions, and “zoom in” to particular issues and individuals that required attention. At the negotiating table, he was able to combine empathy and assertiveness to convey that he had a clear understanding of his interlocutor’s position and political needs, while remaining insistent on his own desired outcome. He was quick to adapt to changing circumstances: the authors offer the maxim, “Think strategically, but act opportunistically.”

He paid “special attention to the close relationship of force and negotiation.” The authors quote Kissinger’s 2016 interview with Jeffrey Goldberg: “Diplomacy and power are not discrete activities. ... The opposite number in a negotiation needs to know there is a breaking point at which you will attempt to impose your will. Otherwise there will be a deadlock or a diplomatic defeat.”

The threat of force depends in large part on credibility, another of Kissinger’s touchstones. “Simply put,” say the authors, “one’s credibility is the belief by others that one’s threats and promises will be carried out.”

**It is impossible to come away from this book without a deeper appreciation of the seriousness, complexity and consequential weight of diplomatic negotiations.**

### The Role of Secrecy

Away from the table, Kissinger often worked with third parties to broaden the scope of the negotiations and change the calculus of risk for the primary participants. During talks with North Vietnam, for example, Kissinger tried, tirelessly but in vain, to bring about Soviet pressure on Hanoi to accommodate U.S. needs.

He tried, as well, to shore up domestic support for his negotiating positions, an effort seriously hampered by his strong preference for conducting his most important negotiations in secret.

Secrecy excluded not only the public but also the U.S. government below the level of the president. Kissinger understood the costs of maintaining secrecy, among them the risk of exposure, which could lead to charges of duplicity and bad faith; a loss of technical expertise; and confusion when (as occurred during disarmament talks with the Soviet Union) secret negotiations and back-channel messages came into conflict with positions taken in parallel discussions under way in normal diplomatic channels.

But secrecy gave Kissinger agility and personal control. So long as he held the president’s confidence, secrecy allowed him to move quickly and decisively, exploring lines of inquiry that would never have survived an interagency clearance process. The trade-off, he judged, was worth it.

*Kissinger the Negotiator* seems intended for classroom use. The authors from time to time break their narrative to insert a bulleted list, box or diagram to

explain, summarize and drive home the points they particularly want the reader to absorb. The techniques and principles they describe, they say, extend beyond diplomacy “to business, legal and any other subjects characterized by complex negotiations,” although they offer no examples.

They close the book with a handy list of 15 one-sentence LESSONS [sic], which offer help even for that dread encounter with the car salesman: “LESSON 12: Reconsider the traditional ‘start high, concede slowly’ approach.”

Do not be put off by this blatant pedagogy, or by the authors’ deliberately amoral analysis. *Kissinger the Negotiator* rewards close study. It is impossible to come away from this book without a deeper appreciation of the seriousness, complexity and consequential weight of diplomatic negotiations and, if one is a diplomat oneself, a deeper gratitude for the opportunity to be entrusted with their conduct. ■

---

*Harry W. Kopp, a former Foreign Service officer, served as deputy assistant secretary of State for international trade policy in the Carter and Reagan administrations. He is the author of several books on diplomacy, including (with John K. Naland) Career Diplomacy: Life and Work in the U.S. Foreign Service, recently published in a third edition by Georgetown University Press, and Voice of the Foreign Service: A History of the American Foreign Service Association (FS Books, 2015). He is a frequent Journal contributor and a member of the FSJ Editorial Board.*

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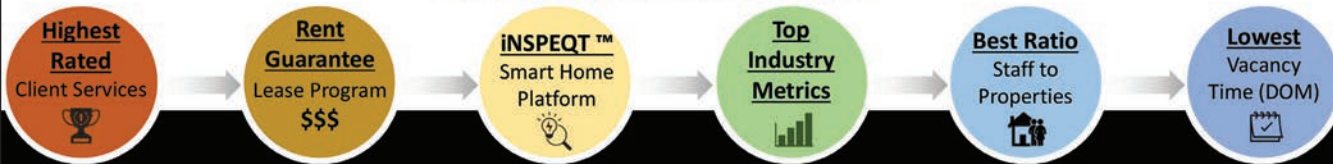
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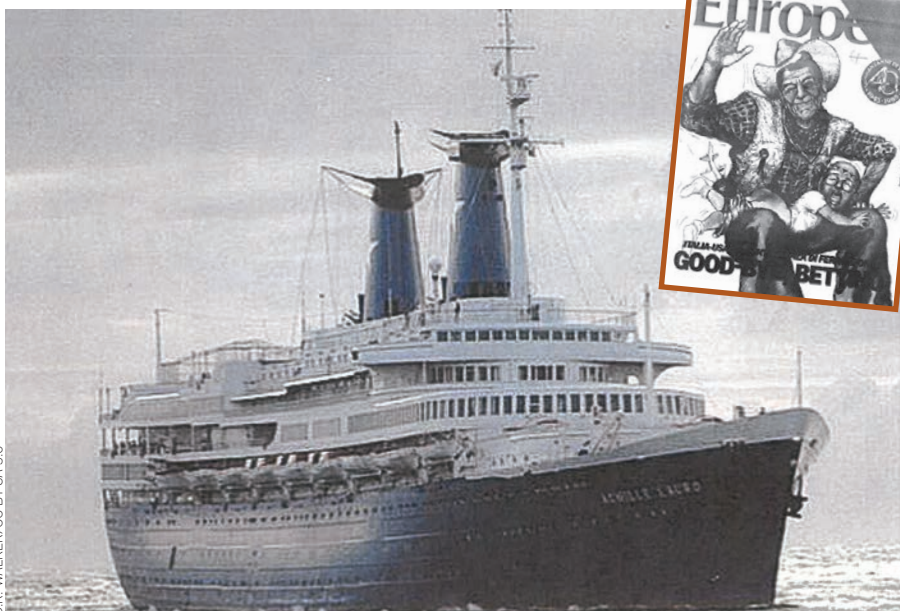
# The Achille Lauro Affair, 1985

BY TOM LONGO

In late 1985 Italy was crucial in NATO negotiations with the then-Soviet Union on the issue of Intermediate-range Nuclear Force missiles in Europe. Essential was Italy's commitment to deploy some INF (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force) missiles on her soil for NATO to counter the Soviets' installation of SS-20 missiles in Western Europe. Italy's site for the missiles was a former abandoned World War II air base in southeastern Sicily near the town of Comiso.

At the time I was head of the State Department's Italy desk. As such, I was the everyday point person in Washington for both U.S. Embassy Rome, headed by Ambassador Maxwell Rabb, and the Italian embassy in Washington under Ambassador Rinaldo Petrignani.

In October 1985 four Palestinian terrorists hijacked the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro in the Mediterranean. They killed an elderly American passenger, Leon Klinghoffer, and threw him and his wheelchair overboard. Days later the ship docked in Egypt, and the hijackers and their ringleader were being flown to safety aboard an Egyptian state airliner when, with no advance notice to the Italians, U.S. Navy jets intercepted the airplane over the Mediterranean and forced it to land at an Italian NATO base in Sigonella, Sicily, some 100 kilometers north of Comiso.



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COURTESY OF THOMAS LONGO

Above: The Achille Lauro. Inset: "Good-Bye Bettino." Reagan spansks Craxi on the cover of a leading Italian newsweekly. Such polemics roused Italy's democratic parties to fear and anger and encouraged the Communist Party of Italy to try to seize the moment.

Moments of high drama followed in Washington. I hurtled into the State Department at night to interpret on the telephone between then-Secretary of State George Shultz and his Italian counterpart, Giulio Andreotti, and then at the White House between President Ronald Reagan and Italian Prime Minister Bettino Craxi.

At the White House I helped to defuse an extremely tense situation at Sigonella, where American commandos and Italian Carabinieri surrounding the Egyptian

airliner containing the hijackers were brandishing weapons around each other. The United States had sent the commandos to Sigonella to grab the hijackers and fly them to the United States for prosecution since they had killed a U.S. citizen.

Citing constitutional and legal reasons—since the ship was Italian and at Sigonella the culprits were now within Italian territorial jurisdiction—Craxi refused, begging Reagan's understanding. I can still hear Craxi's voice quavering at the prospect of Americans and Italians shooting at each other on the runway. Reagan and Craxi agreed the Italians would assume custody pending a legal extradition request from Washington through diplomatic channels. The issue was calmed for the moment.



*D. Thomas Longo Jr. was an FSO from 1969 to 1993. He served in Ankara, Budapest, Düsseldorf, Palermo, Ottawa and Washington, D.C. Before joining the Foreign Service, he served in the Navy from 1963 to 1967. He received a State Department award for "exemplary performance to keep U.S.-Italian relations on course during the Achille Lauro affair."*

More than just interpreting, at the White House and afterward I explained to the Americans the stress and fear in Craxi's voice and the political backdrop in Italy. There was another mess a few days later when the Italians, for mysterious reasons, let the ringleader, Abu Abbas, go. (Abbas masterminded the plot but was not one of the four actual hijackers on the ship, whom the Italians did prosecute.) Everyone from the president on down was white-hot furious. The Italians reciprocated in kind and both countries embarked on ascending spirals of bitter rhetoric.

There was a real risk that events would spin out of control so as to give an unprecedented political opportunity to the large pro-Soviet Italian Communist Party,

whose leadership was salivating at the prospect. And this just as Italy's willingness to host U.S. medium range nuclear missiles on her soil (ironically, just a short distance from Sigonella) was absolutely critical to the later success of INF negotiations with the Soviet Union.

I had excruciating conversations with the anguished Italian Ambassador Rinaldo Petrignani. Other doors in town were totally closed to him. Extraordinarily, the ambassador asked me directly about the acceptability of certain top Italian political figures to Washington. I had been told only to listen and report back what Petrignani had to say, and I was on the spot to reply. I said I was without instructions but, speaking personally, I was sure the United States would respect

whatever leadership decisions sovereign Italy made.

I reported to superiors the desperation Amb. Petrignani's inquiries reflected, that one sovereign NATO ally would seek pre-approval of another for his country's internal leadership choices. The drama helped me make the case with my superiors that we had other enduring, especially NATO, interests with Italy, and that we should not allow our justified anger "to throw the baby out with the bath water."

As an Italian-American boy from Boston and the grandson of immigrants from Sicily, the Italy desk job was especially meaningful for me. I approached it with humility. Helping resolve the Achille Lauro crisis brought a special sense of fulfillment. ■

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**T**his photo shows a woman drawing water from a well in the abandoned stone village of Jiu Xian on the outskirts of Guilin, in southern China. Guilin is best known for its impressive karst rock formations, which are featured on the back of the Chinese 20-yuan currency note. ■

---

*Andrea Nagy recently returned from a two-year posting in Chengdu. She joined the Foreign Service in April 2016 with the 141st specialist class and is currently on her second tour, as an office management specialist in the Regional Security Office in Brasilia. She took this photo with a Nikon D5200.*

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