

# THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

DECEMBER 2014



## THE WAY AHEAD IN AFGHANISTAN

COLLEGE RANKINGS: BOON OR BANE?  
EDUCATION SUPPLEMENT



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**On the cover:** Some of the 6,000 spectators who filled the newly built Afghanistan Football Federation stadium to watch the home side defeat Pakistan 3-0 on Aug. 20, 2013. Less than a month later, the national team defeated India to capture the 2013 South Asia Football Federation Championship. The success of the soccer team has been one of the bright spots and a point of pride and national unity for the country. Credit: Casey Garret Johnson. More of his photos are at caseyjohnson.photoshelter.com.

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# The Departed

BY ROBERT J. SILVERMAN

The Foreign Service has taken more deaths in the line of duty, on a percentage basis, than has the U.S. military officer corps, and none of us more so than our Diplomatic Security colleagues. Since Diplomatic Security was formed in the closing days of World War II, 93 of its personnel have been killed in the line of duty, including local guards and contract employees. The majority have died in the last 10 years in either Iraq or Afghanistan.

Diplomatic Security colleagues supervise Marine Security Guard detachments and local guard forces, and they must remain nimble to adapt to constantly shifting local environments, including the political environment in Washington. Their overall mission has also changed over time so that it now includes as a top priority the protection of personnel as well as classified information and physical facilities.

Local guard forces, in particular, face dangers since they stand watch on the lines where the embassy meets the public. We should thank them every day for doing this job. I want to tell one or two of their stories this month.

Mustafa Akarsu had been a member of Embassy Ankara's guard force for 22 years



when he stopped a suicide bomber from entering the embassy on Feb. 1, 2013. Mustafa had just waved an embassy employee

into the compound, and was joking with her when he sensed there was something wrong with the next visitor. He planted himself between the visitor and the front door to the compound. When the bomb was set off, Mustafa was standing directly against the bomber. The blast that instantly killed him was contained by his body and the compound door, saving the lives of others on the other side of the door and those walking in the area.

Mustafa is remembered fondly as an outgoing member of the embassy, greeting employees every morning as they headed into work. His wife and two children attended embassy holiday parties and community events. The family was hoping to immigrate to the United States in June; Mustafa had applied for a

## Local guard forces in particular face dangers since they stand watch on the lines where the embassy meets the public.

Special Immigrant Visa and was awaiting its approval. Since this visa is tied to the employee, his death cut off that prospect.

There are other recent examples of similar sacrifice, unfortunately. For example, on Sept. 29 of this year, Abdul Rahman of Embassy Kabul was killed by a suicide bomber while he was meeting with Afghan police at the Kabul airport.

What can we do to help the families of these heroes? Diplomatic Security colleagues contacted Representative Michael



Mustafa Akarsu (far right) and colleagues at Embassy Ankara.

McCaul, Republican of Texas, who chairs the House Homeland Security Committee. McCaul has sponsored the Mustafa Akarsu Local Guard Force Support Act, which AFSA actively supports. This bill would provide Special Immigrant Visas to the surviving spouses and children of U.S. government employees killed abroad in

the line of duty. Democratic co-sponsors of the bill include Representatives Gerry Connolly of Virginia and David Cicilline of Rhode Island.

Stay tuned as AFSA updates you on the status of this bill in the 2015 Congress. You can help get this bill enacted into law by joining AFSA in advocating for it.

Wishing you and your families a happy and healthy New Year,

Bob

[Silverman@afsa.org](mailto:Silverman@afsa.org) ■

*Robert J. Silverman is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.*

# Engagement

BY SHAWN DORMAN

Afghanistan is at a turning point, again. This month signals the official end of coalition combat missions there and the continuation of the draw-down of U.S. forces. A new government is in place following a contentious and contested, but ultimately successful, transfer of the presidency from Hamid Karzai to Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai. What does this new leadership landscape, including some not so new faces, mean for the U.S.-Afghanistan relationship? What does a diminishing role for the U.S. military mean for U.S. diplomacy? Can Afghanistan succeed?

This month we feature various views on the way forward for Afghanistan and, in particular, the proper role for the United States there. In September, we brought you a look at what it's like to serve at Embassy Kabul from FSO Bill Bent, and in October, an article on U.S. work with Afghan women by FSO Sandya Das, "Learning from Women's Successes in Afghanistan."

We reached out to a number of experts inside and outside government to bring a variety of perspectives to this issue, with the aim of answering the question, "What should we know about Afghanistan today?"

What we got back was not entirely expected, and might well be of interest to those inside the U.S. government, as well as those outside, who are looking for better



Shawn Dorman is the editor of The Foreign Service Journal.

understanding of the ground realities and issues at play.

The articles offer three different takes on the state of Afghanistan and its relationship with the U.S., with varying degrees of pessimism and hope. While each author comes to the topic from a different vantage point by a different path, each comes to the same conclusion—that the U.S. *must* remain engaged with Afghanistan.

First is the "glass half empty" narrative from Ed McWilliams, retired FSO and former special envoy to Afghanistan from 1988 to 1989, with "Will History Repeat Itself?" He offers a look back to 1989 and a primer on the players then and now, and cautions that "it is critical that the United States not walk away, as it did in 1989."

Next, the glass is half full with David Sedney, who has years of U.S. government experience working on Afghanistan and visited that country as recently as October. In "Five Things We Can Still Get Right," he points to serious challenges for Afghanistan, while also highlighting signs of progress. We'll call him the cautious optimist. Acknowledging the mixed record of U.S. involvement there, he lays out recommendations for the right way for the U.S. to engage going forward.

And finally, in "What U.S. Policymakers Should Know About Afghanistan Today," Scott Smith of the U.S. Institute of Peace shows us that we might need to look at another glass altogether. He describes Afghanistan today not through

a U.S. lens but through the lens of Afghan cultural tradition and transition.

This month's book reviews look at two important books on Afghanistan, *The Wrong Enemy* by Carlotta Gall and *The Wars of Afghanistan* by Peter Tomsen.


We would like to offer special thanks to photographer Casey Garret Johnson—a senior program officer for USIP who has lived and worked in Afghanistan since 2008—for sharing his spectacular photos, which illustrate this month's focus section.

In his President's Views column this month, "The Departed," Bob Silverman invites readers to join AFSA in supporting the Mustafa Akarsu Local Guard Force Support Act that, if passed, will help the families of locally employed Diplomatic Security colleagues killed in the line of duty.

Continuing on our theme of engagement is the official call for nominations for the 2015-2017 Governing Board in AFSA News. AFSA invites members to consider running for office or nominating someone else who is ready to take an active role in working for the Foreign Service through AFSA.

This month's Speaking Out is a pitch for another type of engagement, the virtual kind. In "Twitter Is a Cocktail Party, Not a Press Conference (or, Social Media for Reporting Officers)," Wren Elhai makes a strong and bold case for why Twitter can and should help reporting officers do their jobs. Tweet or email us your thoughts on this month's issue, or take quill to paper. Your choice, but we hope you'll join the dialog. ■



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt, is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is holding chopsticks and lifting a piece of green leafy vegetable from a large metal pan filled with food. The background is a blurred restaurant setting with warm lighting.

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## More Diversity on FSJ Pages, Please

I read with interest the September issue of *The Foreign Service Journal*, in particular AFSA State Vice President Matthew Asada's article on diversity. The efforts of AFSA and the State Department to promote greater diversity both abroad and inside the department are commendable.

One of the unique aspects of the United States, our culture and history, is that we value diversity for its own sake and believe that including people from all walks of life will make a team, an organization and a country stronger and better.

Nevertheless, I noted that, ironically, the September issue itself exhibited very little demographic diversity. All four officers featured on the cover—the winners of this year's dissent awards—were from the same demographic group (white males). Nearly every author, some of whom receive cash honoraria for their contributions, was also from that same demographic.

I congratulate the winners of the dissent awards for their efforts, and commend the authors of the articles, as well—because anyone who can squeeze the considerable time it takes to produce a publishable article out of our busy days deserves praise.

But there is something not quite right when the bulk of awards, public recognition and voice go to predominantly one demographic group, no matter which one it is.



Fixing this is tricky. Maybe we could each recognize that we are going to be biased in favor of our own demographic, then make an effort to mentor, guide and nominate for awards those who are not like us. Otherwise, we will probably continue to be an organization that pays lip service to diversity without making any concrete difference.

*Rachel Schneller*

*FSO*

*Consulate Toulouse, France*

## FMOs: More to the Story

The October issue of the *Journal* contained a very good recap of life in the Foreign Service for specialists.

However, as a financial management officer for 18 years, I found the job description for FMOs to be incomplete, and I suspect other job descriptions were, as well.

The FMO description could have included participating in the staffing rotation as duty officer and frequently serving as acting management officer. It also could have included routine coverage as either a human resources officer or general services officer.

Most FMOs have to be at least minimally qualified in these other duties, and will have to function in those jobs accordingly during their careers.

*Jim Maher*

*FMO, retired*

*Royal Palm Beach, Florida*

## About FS Lab Scientists

Speaking as a regional medical laboratory scientist, I would like to point out that your October article, "The New Specialists," contains an outdated description of the work regional medical labora-

tory scientists perform. For starters, we no longer maintain X-ray equipment.

While the article does mention that we perform routine visitations to regional area health units to evaluate performance of local laboratory staff and manage the laboratory at post of assignment, there is no mention of our other responsibilities.

Those include assessments of local healthcare facilities and local blood products, food sanitation inspections, training in food-handling and blood-borne pathogens, medical waste management and monitoring water testing for bacterial contamination.

Perhaps in the future an article can feature our small group of 10.

*James R. Adams*

*Regional Medical Laboratory Scientist*

*Embassy Addis Ababa*

## Correction:

An astute reader points out an error in the article, "The New Specialists," regarding titles for office managers. The article states: "Office management specialists become office managers, or OMs, when they reach FS-3 or FS-4 or are assigned to chiefs of mission."

However, the title change actually occurs at the FS-5 grade level. As a Bureau of Human Resources document on benefits and compensation, "Titling Practice," posted on the HR/RMA intranet page, says:

"The official title for positions classified in the 9017 skill code is office management specialist (OMS). The approved title for OMS positions at the FP-06 grade level and below is Office Management Specialist; for OMS positions at the FP-05 grade level and above the approved title is Office Manager." ■

## **J. KIRBY SIMON FOREIGN SERVICE TRUST**

### **AN INVITATION TO PROPOSE PROJECTS FOR FUNDING**

### **BY THE J. KIRBY SIMON FOREIGN SERVICE TRUST IN 2015**

**T**he J. Kirby Simon Foreign Service Trust is a charitable fund established in the memory of J. Kirby Simon, a Foreign Service officer who died in 1995 while serving in Taiwan. The Trust is committed to expanding the opportunities for professional fulfillment and community service of active Foreign Service officers and specialists and their families.

The principal activity of the Trust is to support projects that are initiated and carried out, on an entirely unofficial, voluntary basis, by Foreign Service personnel or members of their families, wherever located. The Trust will also consider projects of the same nature proposed by other U.S. government employees or members of their families, regardless of nationality, who are located at American diplomatic posts abroad. Only the foregoing persons are eligible applicants.

In 2014, the Trust made its 18th round of grant awards, approving a total of 34 grants that ranged from \$950 to \$3,750 (averaging \$2,240) each, for a total of \$76,168. These grants support the involvement of Foreign Service personnel in the projects described in the Trust announcement, "Grants Awarded in 2014," which is available at [www.kirbysimontrust.org](http://www.kirbysimontrust.org). To indicate the range of Trust grants, the following paragraphs set forth a sampling of projects supported by the Trust in recent years.

**Education Projects:** School supplies for refugee and other conflict-afflicted children and for orphanages; English-language learning material for high school students; day-care facilities for underprivileged women learning marketable skills; specialized education equipment for the disabled; kitchen and other equipment for occupational training programs.

**Additional Projects for Young People:** Playground and sports training equipment, educational toys, furnishings, household appliances, and toilet and shower facilities for special needs schools and orphanages; clean-ups to improve sanitation and care of play spaces; school fees and food for abandoned children; materials for a re-entry program for returning Foreign Service teens.

**Health- and Safety-Related Projects:** Dental care for impoverished children; staff training for crisis shelters, health care equipment and improved sanitation for maternity clinics and orphanages; a visual impairment survey among HIV-positive children; rebuilding homes of earthquake victims; photo documentation of murdered women set on fire by husbands or in-laws.

**Revenue-Producing Projects:** Machines and materials for income-generating programs for sick and disadvantaged children and adults, including abused women, migrant workers, refugees, Roma and victims of sex-trafficking; a cooperative for deaf carpenters.

The Trust now invites proposals for support in 2015. It is anticipated that few of the new grants will exceed the average size of the 2014 awards, and that projects assisted by the Trust will reflect a variety of interests and approaches, illustrated by the foregoing list of past grants and by the website description of 2014 grants.

Certain restrictions apply: (a) Funds from the Trust cannot be used to pay salaries or other compensation to U.S. government employees or their family members. (b) The Trust does not support projects that have reasonable prospects of obtaining full funding from other sources. (c) The Trust will provide support for a project operated by a charitable or educational organization only where the individual applicant(s) play an active part in initiating and carrying out the project apart from fundraising. (d) The Trust will support only projects in which each applicant's role is clearly separate from the applicant's official responsibilities.

A proposal should include a description of the project, its aims and the role to be played by the applicant(s); a budget; other available funding, if any; and a brief biography of the applicant(s). Proposals should be no longer than five double-spaced pages (exclusive of budget and biographical material). Please follow the grant application format available at [kirbysimontrust.org](http://kirbysimontrust.org) or contact the Trust (see below).

Proposals for projects to be funded during calendar year 2015 must be received by the Trust no later than March 1, 2015.

Proposals can be submitted by mail, by fax or (preferable) by email to:

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Email: [kirbysimontrust@gmail.com](mailto:kirbysimontrust@gmail.com)

Further information about the Trust can be found at [www.kirbysimontrust.org](http://www.kirbysimontrust.org).

## New DS High Threat Directorate Struggles to Gain Traction

The State Department's Office of the Inspector General has released its report on the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's High Threat Programs Directorate, the new unit established in the wake of the Benghazi attack investigations.

In the September 2014 report, the OIG found that the two-year-old directorate "suffers from significant staffing gaps and position shortages," and that while it advocates for high-threat posts in the department, "it does not have the authority to cause peer bureaus to implement its recommendations."

The report was not all bad news, however. The IG also found that the directorate was successful in creating a culture of shared responsibility for security within the department. It had "forged strong partnerships with regional security officers and counterparts in regional and functional bureaus."

The High Threat Programs Directorate was established in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2012, attacks on the U.S. facility in Benghazi, and is consistent with recommendations made by the Accountability Review Board assembled by then-Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to investigate the facts and circumstances surrounding that event.

The directorate is responsible for 30 high-threat posts in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. The other 190 posts where embassies operate are still under the supervision of the Diplomatic Security Bureau's International Program Directorate.

"No formal mechanism exists for realigning staff responsibilities between the two directorates," the OIG report found, and the fact that the department has not published the directorate's For-

eign Affairs Manual chapter has led to confusion as to the two directorates' respective authorities.

Overall, according to the Homeland Security Policy Institute at The George Washington University, the report "paints a picture of an office whose leadership is doing the best that it

can," as it tries to address ongoing threats to U.S. missions overseas while "working within a large and often slow-moving bureaucracy."

The institute says it is "critical" that the high threat directorate gets the support that it needs, "in terms of personnel, authority and intra-departmental coordination."

The State Department is working on implementing the IG's recommendations. As spokesman Alec Gerlach told *The Washington Post*, "This is a timely snapshot of the progress being made, and we welcome and agree with the IG's further recommendations for diplomatic security."

—Editorial Intern Trevor Smith and Associate Editor Debra Blome

## What Do You Need to Know About Ebola?

The 2014 Ebola epidemic is the largest since the deadly virus was identified in 1976 and is primarily affecting a number of countries in West Africa. Information, and misinformation, on the crisis and the virus can be found all over the Internet. We've compiled a directory of useful and credible resources to consult



Members of USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team Josh Kearns and Doug Ebert with one of the hygienists at Island Clinic in Liberia.

when looking for answers and guidance.

**State Department Alerts and Warning.** The Department of State issues travel alerts at its [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) site, which, among other things, warn travelers of the potential implications for U.S. citizens of screening procedures, travel restrictions and reduced flights due to the outbreak of the disease. The site's "Ebola Fact Sheet" offers detailed information and updates.

**USAID: Fighting Ebola.** In response to the Ebola outbreak, USAID has deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team (known as DART) to West Africa to coordinate the U.S. government's response to the outbreak. The agency's "Fighting Ebola" web pages contain the latest news, fact sheets on care and information on ways you can help. The USAID Impact blog, "On the Front Lines of the Epidemic," features stories and photographs that highlight how the United States is mobilizing to fight Ebola.

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.** The Ebola pages on the CDC site aim to educate people on basic facts about the virus. It explains what to look for if you think you may have contracted

Ebola, how the disease is spread, who is at the greatest risk of exposure, techniques for preventing transmission and how Ebola is treated. The site offers videos, audio clips and infographics on what is being done by the CDC to combat the disease.

**Doctors Without Borders.** Doctors Without Borders (Medecins sans Frontieres) was one of the first organizations to respond to the Ebola crisis in the early months of this year. The organization currently employs 270 international and about 3,000 local staff in West Africa. It operates six Ebola case management centers, with approximately 600 beds.

Its website includes the latest news, updates on a vaccine and a comprehensive analysis of data compiled from their work in West Africa. From the start of operations in March until press time, the group has confirmed 23 staff members have been infected with Ebola,

seven of whom have recovered.

**Science Magazine.** In its “Special Collection: The Ebola Epidemic,” *Science* magazine has put together a special collection of resources for those interested in the research, as well as the news, on the virus. It includes links to top stories from its Ebola coverage, updates on vaccine research and scholarly articles on the virus itself.

**International SOS.** This global medical and travel security services company offers “local expertise, preventive advice and emergency assistance during critical illness, accident or civil unrest.” In addition to news, educational materials, prevention tips and facts about the virus, International SOS’s “Ebola in West Africa” website features a comprehensive compilation of travel restrictions covering Africa, the Americas and other countries. It also lists travel and flight restrictions by country and airline.

—Trevor Smith, Editorial Intern

## What’s In a Name?

Since the terrorist group that calls itself the Islamic State and declares its intent to establish a new caliphate began grabbing headlines earlier this year, news organizations, government public affairs offices and editors around the world—*Journal* staff included—have been wrestling with its proper designation: ISIS? ISIL? Da’esh? Islamic State?

When the group first surfaced a couple of years ago, it was commonly called the “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria” or ISIS. But as its name in Arabic suggests—Al-Dawla Al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham, or the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham—the group’s aims go far beyond what we know today as Syria.

Al-Sham refers to the region stretching from southern Turkey through Syria to Egypt, and including Lebanon, Israel, the Palestinian territories and Jordan, known historically in English as “the Levant.”

In the interest of precision, the White



This map, which has gone viral on the Internet, was created to counter the mistaken perception that the continent of Africa is synonymous with Ebola.

## Contemporary Quote

“The end of the Cold War was just the beginning of the path towards a new Europe and a safer world order. But instead of building new mechanisms and institutions of European security and pursuing a major demilitarization of European politics, as promised, by the way, in NATO’s London Declaration, the West, and particularly the United States, declared victory in the Cold War. Euphoria and triumphalism went to the heads of Western leaders. Taking advantage of Russia’s weakening and a lack of a counterweight, they claimed monopoly leadership and domination in the world.”

—Former Soviet president and general secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev, speaking at a symposium near the Brandenburg Gate on Nov. 8 in celebration of the fall of the Berlin Wall 25 years ago.

## SITE OF THE MONTH: *Ebola Deeply*



As the name suggests, [www.eboladeeply.org](http://www.eboladeeply.org) takes a deep and thorough look at the Ebola crisis. It is a fascinating site with a fresh approach. Not just a collection of resources, *Ebola Deeply* says it seeks to add “context to content,” with the goal of “greater clarity, deeper understanding and a more sustained engagement” on issues.

Produced by a team that includes foreign correspondents with experience in Africa, data scientists and software developers, the site also features the reporting of local journalists in affected countries.

Beautifully designed and user friendly, *Ebola Deeply* aims to tell the whole story, including the back story, of the crisis in a compelling way. If you feel you have come into the issue at the midpoint, the site offers the Ebola Files, a collection of text and interactive materials covering the history of the virus, the science and search for a cure, survivor stories, a glossary of terms and a “reading room” of links to additional resources.

If you just want the latest news, you can find that in a constantly updated Executive Summary, which gives an overview of the latest developments.

The site includes a case map, tracking the number of infections by country around the world. Community Op-eds features opinions by an assortment of local voices and journalists. The site also features Recent Videos and Recent News, as well as its latest Twitter messages.

*Ebola Deeply* describes itself an “independent digital media project that integrates expertise in science, health and public policy with a range of voices on the ground.” It is the second “deep look” at a current issue produced by *News Deeply*, a new media startup and self-described “social enterprise” based in New York. The group aims to advance “foreign policy literacy through public service journalism.”

The journalists and technologists of *News Deeply* design and build single-issue websites that combine news, live events, information design and social media. *News Deeply*’s flagship site, *Syria Deeply*, went live in late 2012 and covers the evolving conflict in Syria in same the in-depth manner.

—Debra Blome, Associate Editor

House, the Pentagon, the State Department, USAID and the British Foreign office, among others, settled on “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant” or ISIL. The Associated Press, Reuters, Agence France-Presse and Al Jazeera, along with NBC and *Politico*, followed suit.

*The New York Times* stuck with ISIS, arguing in a June 18 article that the term “Levant” has French colonial associations and “something of an antique whiff

about it, like ‘the Orient.’”

Da’esh or DAISH, the acronym of the group’s original Arabic name, is used widely in the Arab world. Close to the Arabic word “daes,” meaning to tread underfoot, trample or crush, the appellation is not a favorite of the Sunni militants.

In June, however, the political implications of the issue became more apparent. Having captured large swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq, and very

publicly and spectacularly beheaded two Western journalists and two aid workers, the terrorist organization proclaimed it was rebranding itself with an eye to recruitment. The group demanded that the world refer to it henceforth as simply the “Islamic State.”

Although many news organizations picked up the easier, more headline-friendly IS, or continued with ISIS or ISIL, the AP, whose stylebook is an authoritative industry standard, was among those who caught on to the propaganda war at hand. In mid-September, it abandoned its preferred ISIL in favor of the phrase, “the Islamic State group.”

“Propaganda has been one of the core strategies of the Sunni militant group in Syria and Iraq that today calls itself the Islamic State—and its name is very much a part of that,” wrote Vivian Salama explaining the move. AP’s recommended terminology aims to deny the group political and religious legitimacy.

Others, such as National Public Radio, add “so-called” or “self-declared” to underline the point. NPR’s policy is “to initially call the group ‘the self-declared Islamic State’ or some equivalent phrase, use ISIS in later references and, when necessary, explain that ISIL is another widely used acronym.”

Like much of the Arab world, the French government uses Da’esh. On Sept. 18, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius appealed to journalists and media organizations to reject the term “Islamic State.”

Fabius stated: “This is a terrorist group and not a state. I do not recommend using the term Islamic State because it blurs the lines between Islam, Muslims and Islamists.”

Speaking for many Islamic and other leaders around the world at the Sept. 24 United Nations Summit on Terrorism, United Nations Secretary General Ban

Ki-moon delivered a broadside against the terrorist movement, calling it the “Un-Islamic Nonstate.”

*The Foreign Service Journal* generally follows AP style and, accordingly, will refer to the organization as “the Islamic State group.”

—Susan B. Maitra, *Managing Editor*

## 50 Years Ago

In truth the Service has never made up its collective mind about the proper role of dissent and open discussion. We are schizoid on the question. On one hand, we are dedicated to the proposition that we are loyal servants of constituted authority. This principle is never seriously attacked. On the other, we feel that as career officers, we know, or should know, more than anyone else about how the Service should be run, and that we have a duty to indicate the path to those charged with making decisions.

In controversial and important matters it comes down in the final analysis to a judgment as to where the dividing line lies between constructive comment and obstructionism. We have generally resolved the dilemma by dissenting only on trivia, or in such cautious terms that our dissent is all but inaudible. This accomplishes nothing.

The central truth, however, seems to me to be another—namely, that little can be expected to result from isolated expressions of opinion, no matter how well founded or how skillfully phrased. They may point to the existence of problems, but they can do little to resolve them. (How many of the splendid letters to the *Journal* have any effect?)

What the Service needs for the long term is an institutionalized approach, a prestigious group, immune from censorship, and recognized as having not only the right but the duty to study and to express itself, if need be in public, on all questions relating to the strengthening of the career principle. If such a group had existed in the past, many of our current problems might have been avoided.

The Foreign Service Association is on the right track when it announces the intention to establish a committee to “deal systematically with the career service principle and the relationship of current policy and administration to the strengthening of the Foreign Service as an instrument of foreign policy.”

This is a hopeful beginning. Let us hope it does not die aborning.

—“On Dissent” by Foreign Service Officer William E. Knight, FSJ, November 1964.

## State Ends Transgender Exclusions in Employee Health Plan

The State Department is taking the lead within the federal government when it comes to offering health insurance to transgender employees and family members. At the department’s



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request, its largest health insurance program has eliminated the “transgender exclusion” from its plan.

Most health insurance policies offered under the Federal Employees Health Benefits program exclude services “related to sex reassignment.” But starting in January 2015, insurance plans offered by the American Foreign Service Protective Association, the department’s largest insurer, will no longer exclude those benefits.

According to *The Washington Post’s* “Federal Eye” column, the State Department has asked all of its plans to remove

ment and, in addition to being brave and strong, they’re just good officers. Why should they have it any different when it comes to health care?”

—Debra Blome, Associate Editor

## Comedian Takes on Diplomat in Twitter ‘War’

Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright verbally sparred with late-night talk show host and comedian Conan O’Brien via Twitter in late October. The battle, which Albright later described on Twitter as “all in good fun,” began with O’Brien taking the first shot.



the transgender exclusion. AFSPA, which covers almost 30 percent of State Department employees, is the first to comply.

The State Department has identified as a priority the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons worldwide.

In a statement to the *Post*, Secretary of State John Kerry explained that the change is “about fairness and respect for our employees, but it’s also about showing the world we mean what we say and say what we mean.”

Kerry continued: “It’s tough to tell other countries to provide equal opportunity if we’re not living that out ourselves. So this matters in many ways. I’ve met transgender colleagues in the depart-

On Oct. 23, O’Brien tweeted “I picked out my Halloween costume. I’m going as ‘Slutty Madeleine Albright.’” Albright didn’t let that pass. “I’m considering going as hunky Conan O’Brien—but that might be too far-fetched,” she responded.

The exchange went viral on Twitter and beyond to the mainstream media. It continued with a few more tweets between the two.

Albright warned O’Brien: “Never get into a word war with a diplomat. We talk even more than comedians.” And O’Brien conceded: “Damn—whenever I go toe to toe with @Madeleine Albright, she always wins.” ■

—Debra Blome, Associate Editor



# Twitter Is a Cocktail Party, Not a Press Conference (or, Social Media for Reporting Officers)

BY WREN ELHAI

Shortly before I arrived at my current post, I read a column by AFSA President Robert Silverman (“Are Social Media Overrated?” March *FSJ*) in which he cautions against an overreliance on social media, especially if it reduces time spent on the “proven, effective work of direct outreach to key contacts and audiences.”

In my experience, social media have become some of the best tools we possess for exactly the sort of contact work Silverman describes.

While public diplomacy officers have embraced Twitter and Facebook around the world as outreach tools, it’s time reporting officers learn to use them in our own work.

I fear the word “media” may confuse people who associate that word with the world of journalism—and thus, with press and public diplomacy work.

By that logic, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube are the online equivalents of newspapers, radio and television, and our statements there are the digital equivalent of press releases.

I believe a different metaphor, one that “traditionalist” diplomats may find more familiar, is closer to the mark.

## A More Appropriate Metaphor

Think of these platforms as the world’s largest cocktail parties, where everyone is invited and guests kindle conversations and relationships, just as in real life.

This metaphor should make it easy to understand why, as a reporting officer, I consider my Twitter account essential to doing my job. We’re paid to get to know people, to build relationships with the influencers and information gatherers who can help us become better informed. Almost universally, these people are out in force on social media.

Those on Twitter are by no means a representative sample of any country’s population. However, the universe of people writing on Twitter is vastly more



diverse than the set of people who typically attend diplomatic receptions.

I’ve connected on Twitter and Facebook with people I would never have met otherwise. I’ve met youth activists, journalists from cities in our consular district too distant to visit and documentary filmmakers working on topics relevant to our reporting work. And like a good reception, the vibe online is such that you can dive straight into friendly conversation in a way that is hard to do in a “cold” telephone call.

In most cases, I “meet” people online by stumbling across interesting things they’ve tweeted or articles they’ve published. I follow them on Twitter and may tweet something at them—a question, comment or compliment. In the cocktail party metaphor, this is the equivalent of stepping into a conversation.

If the conversation is productive, I’ll exchange contact information over direct message, the equivalent of

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*Wren Elhai is a Foreign Service officer currently serving in the political-economic section of Consulate General Karachi. He served previously at Embassy Moscow in the consular section. Prior to joining the State Department, he worked at the Center for Global Development, a D.C.-based thinktank, as a policy analyst. There, he also ran the Center’s Twitter and Facebook pages and helped senior research staff become more comfortable with Twitter. The views expressed in this article are the author’s own and not necessarily those of the State Department or the U.S. government.*

## Direct outreach to key contacts is still the heart of our profession. Social media can help us be better at this important work.

exchanging business cards at a real-life party. Often, a virtual first interaction leads to a real-life meeting. In other instances, people I know only from Twitter have referred me to others in their real-life social network.

If the conversation isn't productive—for example, when other users' comments are hostile or aggressive, or when a journalist is pressing for information you shouldn't share—the best

course of action (online as in real life) is to stay civil and leave the conversation.

### Regulation Roadblocks

Direct outreach to key contacts is still the heart of our profession. Social media can help us be better at this important work. Unfortunately, however, for all the talk of “digital diplomacy,” the State Department's regulations stand in the way.

Current Foreign Affairs Manual

regulations require any State Department employee posting anything to a social media site that relates to a matter “of official concern” to go through the same clearance process that would govern a media appearance or a published op-ed.

This is a shockingly vague rule, one that I have been told in training covers even posting quotes from official State Department statements or links to articles that support U.S. policy. It is a rule so vague that any diplomat with a Facebook account will confirm that nearly every one of us violates it on a daily basis.

If you think of Twitter as the digital equivalent of a newspaper, then it makes sense to try to maintain control

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**We are paid to know U.S. foreign policy, to present and defend our positions, and to not embarrass ourselves when we open our mouths in public.**

over what diplomats say there. However, if Twitter is a digital cocktail party, that's an untenable position. No one would even consider asking diplomats to pre-clear everything they say to people they meet at public events—let alone to seek press office clearance before starting a conversation with a potential contact.

We are paid to know U.S. foreign policy, to present and defend our positions, and to not embarrass ourselves when we open our mouths in public. We are trusted to speak tactfully and to know what topics are best discussed in other settings.

Our policy should treat our interactions online and in the real world on an even footing. Yes, there will be rare occasions when diplomats speak undiplomatically and, just as when this happens in the real world, those diplomats should face consequences.

But just as we don't limit ourselves to talking about the weather at receptions, we should be able to present U.S. policy and engage with contacts online. To meet people, we need to show up for the party. ■

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FOCUS ON AFGHANISTAN

# WILL HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF?

**Afghanistan is at another turning point. Though the challenges are great, the nation cannot afford to cycle back into civil war.**

BY EDMUND MCWILLIAMS

**F**or the second time in a quarter-century, Afghanistan is in the midst of a historic transition. As in 1989, when Soviet troops left the country after a decade of occupation, the international community is in the process of ratcheting down its security presence and its foreign assistance levels.

This pullback comes as Ashraf Ghani Amadzai, Afghanistan's new president, and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah grapple with the same challenges that confronted Hamid Karzai's administration. As Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John Sopko noted in a Sept. 12 speech at Georgetown University, the country "remains under assault by insurgents and is short of



*Edmund McWilliams, a retired Foreign Service officer, served as special envoy to Afghanistan from 1988 to 1989. He joined the Foreign Service in 1975 and retired in 2001, having served in Vientiane, Bangkok, Moscow, Kabul, Islamabad, Managua, Jakarta and Washington, D.C. As chargé, he opened embassies in Bishkek and Dushanbe after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Since retirement, he has been volunteering with U.S. and foreign human rights nongovernmental organizations.*



Casey Garret Johnson

Postcards for sale in downtown Kabul in 2012 depicting former leaders and resistance fighters, many of whom died violent deaths and have polarizing legacies today.

domestic revenue, plagued by corruption, afflicted by criminal elements involved in opium and smuggling, and struggling to execute basic functions of government.”

Fighting continues in 18 of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces, and the key province of Helmand, a center for opium production and trade (which the United Nations reports is at record levels), is particularly vulnerable. Much of the Afghan middle class, which has grown over the past decade as a direct consequence of the large foreign presence, could abandon the country in short order should the security environment deteriorate further. Such an exodus would rob the Ghani administration of the cash, resources and talent vital to creating a stable Afghanistan.

Though the challenges are significant, as spelled out in the following pages, it is critical that the United States not walk away, as it did in 1989. The security and future stability of Afghanistan and the region will depend on Washington’s thoughtful engagement over the long term.

## Parallels Between 1989 and 2014

When Moscow ended its military occupation of Afghanistan 25 years ago, the ensuing drawdown of Western engagement was abrupt and essentially total. U.S. arms and other resources that had flowed to the mujahedeen, principally via Pakistani channels, ceased within months—as did U.S. interest in the political and economic fate of the country.

Happily, the impending departure from Afghanistan of the International Security Assistance Force, comprised of troops from the United States and NATO, will be more gradual, and far less dramatic. The presence of 9,800 U.S. troops for at least two years, and pledges of significant international financial support for 2015 and beyond, contrast sharply with the virtual abandonment of Afghanistan in 1989.

Strong Western political engagement and diplomatic support will be critical in preventing, or at least delaying, a collapse of the Kabul government and staying the meddling hand of Pakistan and other foreign powers. This approach appears similar to the Soviet effort to sustain the regime of President Mohammad Najibullah in Kabul in the wake of its troop withdrawal. Moscow continued to render significant financial, military and diplomatic support, enabling him to cling to power for more than two years.

Najibullah was eventually ousted in 1992 as a result of direct and indirect military pressure from Pakistan, combined with harassment from the mujahedeen, all underwritten financially by Saudi Arabia and other Arab sources. Afghanistan then suffered through several years of multisided civil war among mujahedeen-affiliated parties and chaos before the Taliban, again with support and direction from Islamabad, seized control of Kabul and most of the country in 1994.

Several key warlords, including Abdul Rashid Dostum, a powerful Uzbek, were able to hold off the Pakistani-backed Taliban onslaught in the north. These largely non-Pashtun ethnic elements played a critical role in the successful U.S. assault on the Taliban in late 2001, and were rewarded with key positions in the successor government organized under the aegis of the December 2001 Bonn Conference.

## Trouble at the Top

Delegates to that 2001 convention chose Hamid Karzai, a Durrani Pashtun from the Kandahar area, to lead an interim administration. Six months later, a national conference (loya jirga) of Afghan tribal leaders named him president.

Though brilliant, Karzai turned out to be a poor choice to lead his country on several counts. First, though he was a deputy in a mujahedeen group, he had no combat experience

## When Moscow ended its military occupation of Afghanistan 25 years ago, the ensuing drawdown of Western engagement was abrupt and essentially total.

and never fought the Taliban. (He did show bravery by entering Kandahar to oppose the Taliban after 9/11, but had to be rescued by U.S. forces.) Moreover, Karzai had lived and worked in Pakistan for many years, raising suspicions about his loyalties in some quarters.

For that reason, his selection to lead the post-Taliban administration, a decision strongly pressed by the United States and ultimately accepted by other participants in the December 2001 Bonn Conference, necessitated some surprising diplomacy. Afghan Tajiks at the conference, in particular, strongly resisted Karzai's elevation, and only agreed under heavy pressure from their principal patron, Iran, which worked quietly behind the scenes with the United States at the conference. The deal was facilitated by assurances that Mohammed Fahim, successor to Ahmad Shah Massoud (a key resistance leader whom the Taliban assassinated just days before 9/11), would be the second-most powerful figure in the administration.

The resulting government was an unwieldy alliance, under nominal Pashtun leadership but with northern ethnic (Tajik and Uzbek) control over the critical security sector. Tajiks held most leadership positions in the military and police forces, with Pashtuns filling in the ranks. The administration also included some of the most fundamentalist mujahedeen, such as Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, who exercised a pernicious influence in the justice sector.

### The Dostum Dossier

Reliance by the Karzai administration, and the U.S. military, on Abdul Rashid Dostum—who is now Ashraf Ghani's vice president—created a significant problem that endures to this day. Dostum is credibly believed to have carried out one of the greatest war crimes in Afghanistan's bloody history: the torture and execution of some 2,000 Taliban members who had surrendered to his forces at a place called Dasht-i-Leili in November 2001. (Documentary evidence exists that also implicates U.S. military personnel in the massacre.)

When I was in Kabul in March 2002, on a personal mission intended to assess human rights concerns, Afghans with

whom I was in contact there, as well as nongovernmental organizations, journalists and Mary Robinson, who chaired the United Nations Human Rights Commission and was visiting Afghanistan, all independently told me the charges of a massacre at Dasht-i-Leili were very likely true. Critically, Pashtuns, even those who supported or were part of the Karzai administration, reacted viscerally to accounts of the massacre.

Dostum was deeply feared and hated among the Pashtuns I met. Though his positions in the Karzai administration were largely ceremonial, he wielded considerable power behind the scenes, so his mere presence constituted a barrier to negotiations with the Taliban, who have not forgotten how many of their members he butchered.

Now that he is vice president, President Ghani will find it difficult to engage Pashtun support for his leadership or pursue negotiations with the Taliban. Ghani will also presumably have to deal with the growing international calls for justice and accountability in the matter of the Dasht-i-Leili massacre.

### Karzai 2.0?

That is far from the only problem the Ghani/Abdullah administration has inherited from its predecessor, of course. For starters, it will be populated by many of the same ineffectual, divisive figures.

Moreover, like Karzai, Ashraf Ghani brings an administrative/technocratic background to the position of president. These non-combat credentials afford him little personal credibility with the small-to-major mujahedeen warlords who retained their positions of influence throughout the Karzai interregnum and who control much of the Afghan political world outside Kabul. Ghani will doubtless have to rely on the same system of patronage that Karzai employed to retain the loyalty of these figures. It should be underscored that the creation of that system precluded development of any system of state institutions except in the area of health and education.

The role of Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, effectively as prime minister, is another critical challenge facing President Ghani. Transition to a more parliamentary system would offer



A graveyard of Soviet military equipment in the Panjshir Valley. The Soviets were never able to take the Panjshir, and their destroyed tanks, artillery, Scud missiles and other equipment still litter the landscape.

## **The tortured post-presidential election saw intense public recrimination between Ghani and Abdullah, each alleging broad fraud against the other in the election.**

some hope of a more stable political system, along the lines of the pre-1978 Afghanistan, which had seen substantial democratic progress and political and economic stability. It is not at all clear, however, that Abdullah's executive role will entail the emergence of a genuine parliamentary system in which Afghanistan's myriad ethnic and tribal elements could find genuine representation. That possible transition awaits a putative *loya jirga* that is to convene sometime in the next two years.

Moreover, the long years of stability, respect for human

rights and democratic progress of the pre-1978 period was in large measure due to the unity ensured by the long-reigning, popular head of state, King Zahir Shah. Though respected, Ghani in no sense has the stature of the former king.

The tortured post-presidential election period saw intense public recrimination between Ghani and Abdullah, each alleging broad fraud against the other in the election. It is by no means clear that the personal relationship between these two leaders—in a unique, untested political power-sharing

## **Ultimately, Afghanistan's future depends on benevolent, detailed and credible involvement by the United States and its allies for the foreseeable future.**

arrangement engineered by the United States—will withstand the inevitable tensions that forthcoming political challenges will generate.

Among these tensions will be the power struggle between two key political figures, Vice President Dostum and General Mohammed Atta, who controls the key northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif, previously Dostum's power base. Dostum is allied with Ghani, while Atta is allied with Abdullah. That internal political conflict will be a particularly difficult early challenge for the Ghani-Abdullah partnership.

### **Economic and Governance Constraints**

The Ghani government inherits an Afghanistan that essentially lacks a sustainable national economy. The pre-war Afghanistan economy, based on agriculture, small industry, mining and tourism no longer exists. Under President Karzai, the Afghan economy remained a dysfunctional, war-devastated basket case, transformed as it was into an unsustainable model dependent on opium growing and smuggling, and servicing of the massive foreign and civilian military presence. While the transportation network, destroyed by the three-decade war, was to some extent restored with significant foreign assistance over the past decade, it remains hostage to the security threat posed by the Taliban.

Even if international assistance were to continue to flow to the Ghani government, by no means a safe bet, the new government will barely be able to maintain payments for its half-million civil servants, its large security forces, or sustain payments to warlords who are vital to the government's rule and reach beyond Kabul. The health and education sectors, which saw marked improvement under Karzai, also are and will continue to be dependent on foreign funding.

It also seems very unlikely that the Ghani administration will make progress in curtailing opium growing and smuggling, especially given the reduction of the international presence. That illicit trade provides significant revenue to the Taliban and other elements within Pakistan whose objective is the downfall of the Kabul government.

Prospects for building internal and external trade, developing resources such as mining or re-establishing agriculture are all dependent on significantly improved security—which, given the currently increasing Taliban insurgent activity, seems beyond this government's grasp at least in the near to mid-term.

In addition to inheriting vast economic constraints, Pres. Ghani also must address the challenges posed by systemic corruption and malfeasance which characterized the Karzai administration. Ghani's reputation and campaign rhetoric suggest he will focus on this fundamental challenge to Afghanistan's future. But because corruption forms the basis of the Karzai-created patronage system on which government control outside of Kabul also significantly depends, it is unlikely that Ghani can make more than symbolic progress on this front anytime soon.

### **A Continuing Western Role**

Ultimately, Afghanistan's future depends on benevolent, detailed and credible involvement by the United States and its allies for the foreseeable future. This involvement entails training and some direct support of security forces, as well as reliable financial assistance.

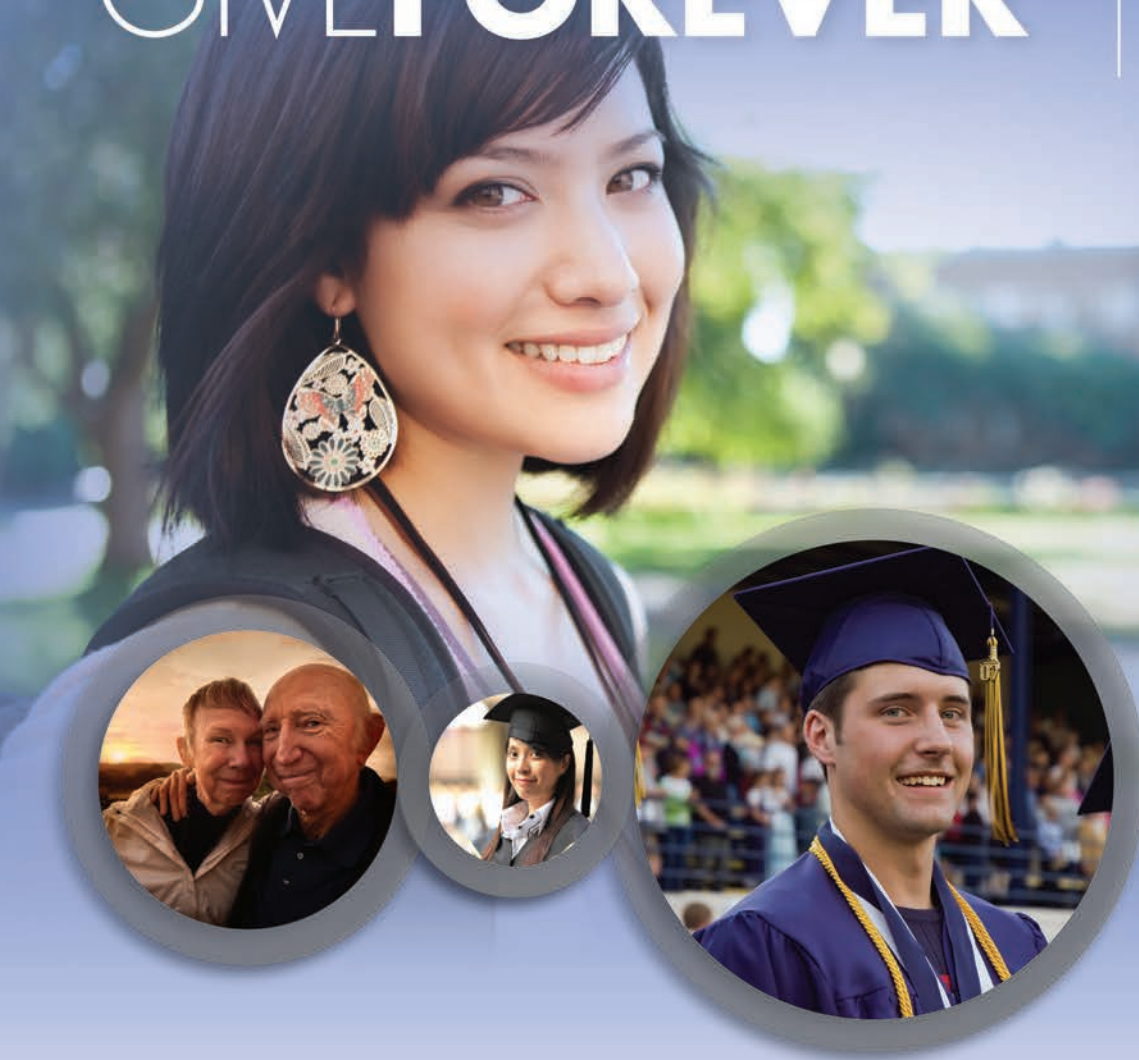
Afghanistan will also need political advice to ensure domestic policies and politics do not take on the divisive character that was allowed to develop in Iraq after the 2011 U.S. withdrawal there.

In addition, the United States must play a continuing strategic role to preclude the pernicious meddling of foreign powers in Afghan affairs—particularly Pakistan. Islamabad's involvement with the Afghan Taliban and with other anti-Kabul insurgents such as the Haqqani network and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezbi Islami, has long undermined security and unity in Afghanistan.

A stable Afghanistan that does not cycle back into civil war is strongly in the interest of the United States and its allies, most neighboring states and, most importantly, the long-suffering Afghan people. ■



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# FIVE THINGS WE CAN STILL GET RIGHT



**Effective U.S. leadership is more important than ever in Afghanistan. What policies should we adopt to help as Afghans take the reins of their own country?**

BY DAVID SEDNEY

**A**fgghanistan has changed profoundly since the United States went into that country in the fall of 2001. We have kept the country from being used again as a base to launch attacks on the United States, and made a decent start on building a new, professional Afghan Army. In addition, Afghans are much better off today in many sectors, ranging from health and education



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Casey Garrett Johnson

Fans go wild after Afghanistan scores its second goal against Pakistan in the home side's 3-0 victory in August 2013. The team's success has been a bright spot and point of pride and national unity for Afghans.

to women's and children's rights.

Still, our overall record is mixed, and a great deal remains to be done. We have built roads that are falling apart, set up schools without teachers and failed to help Afghans build institutions of good governance. We have enriched some of the country's most corrupt actors through poor contracting practices; failed to deliver progress in such key security sectors as air power and intelligence; and squandered our political capital on misguided

efforts to get a secret bilateral deal with the Taliban (while ignoring the key internal political dynamics of Afghan society). And we have killed and humiliated far too many Afghans and damaged too much of their country in the pursuit of our counterterrorism policies.

Despite our mistakes and failures, however, we have much to be proud of and most Afghans still want us on the ground as partners. After a tense period, the millions of voters who surprised the world by their massive election turnout now have a reform government with a true mandate. Afghans take pride in their accomplishments on the world stage—like the soccer and cricket teams that have surged into prominence—and want to be part of the global community. For that to happen, though, Afghans themselves must take the lead.

The good news is that they are already doing so. Their soldiers and police are now fully responsible for fighting the Tali-

## After a tense period, the millions of voters who surprised the world with their massive election turnout now have a reform government with a true mandate.

ban, and are acquitting themselves well. Afghan women and young people are blazing new paths as they take advantage of their newfound access to education to build free and vigorous media and start new businesses across the country.

But for Afghanistan to achieve the kind of enduring success it deserves, the United States must continue to stand by our partner. As we have seen in Iraq, Libya and too many other places, when America stands aside—when we abandon what we started, and leave things half-done—the chances of failure increase dramatically and new, worse problems emerge. Pretending that the world will do what we want when we do not lead, and are not exemplars of our own values, is the definition of irresponsibility.

### Immediate Challenges

The country's new president, Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, has started off well. His post-election personal outreach to multiple sectors of society seeks to identify the government with the interests of the people, rather than as an instrument of power brokers. He has also recast Kabul's relationship with the United States and NATO by living up to his campaign promise to sign security agreements that give the permissions necessary for the United States and NATO to assist Afghanistan's security forces beyond 2014. And he is moving rapidly to shore up Afghanistan's finances in anticipation of a potentially destabilizing revenue crunch.

Still, the new government faces severe, immediate challenges. Security throughout the country faces growing threats as a messy, too-rapid pullback of international forces is leaving major gaps. Both the Afghan military and civilians continue to suffer high casualties, and the Taliban is preparing to carry out a major military offensive next year. (Sadly, the agreements President Ghani signed allow the U.S. and NATO to help, but actually promise nothing concrete in terms of troops or assistance.)



Casey Garret Johnson

Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division and a Department of State field officer board a Blackhawk after a meeting with elders and government officials in central Zhari District, Kandahar province. Today the area is patrolled by Afghan local police and Afghan National Army units. Despite extensive surge operations in central Kandahar in 2010 and 2011, the area remains volatile, with neither the government nor insurgency exerting full control.

The Afghan economy is still reeling from the drop-off in foreign investment that followed President Barack Obama’s “zero option” announcement last spring, exacerbated by post-election tensions. The Afghan people need jobs; economic growth requires capital investment; and current assistance models are not sufficiently focused and effective.

Recent events in Pakistan have strengthened the position of military hardliners there, who see the Afghan Taliban as a useful geopolitical tool to counter India and are hostile to the development of a strong, successful Afghanistan. The United States has placed too much faith in empty rhetoric from Islamabad, and failed to respond to actions that have strengthened the Afghan Taliban’s safe havens in Pakistan.

Finally, as in the rest of the Islamic world, the rise of the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq has injected a major new dynamic that no one was prepared for, least of all a fragile Afghanistan. The extremists’ message is attracting some young Afghan

males, and the group is reaching out to the Taliban to seek a union under the banner of establishing an anti-Western caliphate.

### The Path Ahead

So how should the United States lead in Afghanistan? What

policies should we adopt to help the Afghans as they seize the reins of their own country? And how can we correct errors that we have made and ensure history sees America as the kind of country we know it should be? Here are five recommendations.

#### 1. Make a clear, long-term political commitment to the

**Afghan people that allows for conditions-based flexibility in our current withdrawal timelines.**

Already, neighboring states, the Taliban and other actors are ramping up efforts to fill the vacuum we have created. As a result, the security situation is getting worse and, as documented by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, more people are dying. By adjusting the United States’

**Already, neighboring states, the Taliban and other actors are ramping up efforts to fill the vacuum we have created.**

## Afghanistan also needs a continuation of the robust intelligence support that has made our military efforts so effective.

current timetable for withdrawing its forces—a timeline set to satisfy U.S. political concerns, without an evaluation of the effects on the ground—we can change everyone’s strategic calculus.

Shifting from a timeline-based approach to a conditions-based approach would also have a huge positive economic impact, giving those making investment and assistance decisions greater confidence in the country’s future.


### 2. Revise our approach to assisting the Afghan Security Forces to ensure that they acquire and maintain the kinds of capabilities they need today and into the future.

This will require us to address the dangerous weaknesses in air power, intelligence, logistics and institutional and leadership development built into our current plans. For example, the Afghan Air Force needs fixed-wing transport and close air support aircraft, as well as transport and attack helicopters. For the decade or so it will take to develop these capabilities, or until the Taliban insurgency ends, we should continue to help provide those assets.

Afghanistan also needs a continuation of the robust intelligence support that has made our military efforts so effective. I visited the country this fall as we pulled down the tremendously capable aerostats that protected Kabul and most major population centers. These and other technical capabilities were huge multipliers for the Afghans’ excellent human intelligence, and played a major role in ensuring that the Taliban did not disrupt the elections.

With these capabilities gone, Taliban attacks will become more lethal and have greater reach into Afghan cities. This is already happening. But with a minor adjustment of our force levels, we could give Afghans time to acquire the necessary expertise to operate these systems themselves—something they are eager to do.


Weaknesses in logistics, institutional development and



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ISAF Joint Command / U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Logan Tuttle

Afghan National Army commandos stand in formation during the graduation of the ANA's 7th Commando Kandak on Jan. 21. The commandos were trained by Afghan instructors and mentored by U.S., French, Canadian, Jordanian and United Arab Emirates special operations forces to provide a rapidly deployable light infantry unit to the Afghan National Security Force.

leadership are the Achilles' heel of the Afghan forces now fighting bravely and successfully to defend their country. These weaknesses will not lead to a near-term dissolution of the Afghan military; we have done a good enough job for the Afghan forces to survive for at least several years. But our original plans never envisioned a complete U.S. pullout by 2016, as is now projected, and did not account for the continued strong support the Taliban is getting from inside Pakistan.

Over the longer term, without our technical assistance and support, the Afghan Security Forces will deteriorate from an effective national defense force into fragmented, abusive units that threaten the success of everything the Afghan people have achieved. Toward that end, we should carry out an immediate review to identify what capabilities and equipment Afghan forces need for the actual threats they will face in coming years.

### **3. Change the way we provide assistance to Afghanistan to focus on direct aid to Afghan institutions.**

Pres. Ghani, who has worked at the World Bank and was the first post-Taliban finance minister of Afghanistan, is intimately familiar with the way international assistance has traditionally been delivered and the problems created when it is done the wrong way. His 2008 book (co-authored with Clare Lockhart),

*Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World*, explains that giving aid directly to foreign governments, even taking into account corruption and other risks, is often more effective than funneling it through expensive third-party organizations. In most cases, nongovernmental organizations excel at delivering material and issuing reports, but do not foster the local institutional capacities necessary to work assistance givers out of their jobs.

We need to consult and cooperate with Pres. Ghani's government to put these lessons into practice. This will be hard and will require cooperation from our Congress and our bureaucracies in ways they have not done before. But we have a historic opportunity to make our aid truly effective.

### **4. Develop mechanisms to right the wrongs we inflicted in the name of counterterrorism.**

Particularly during our early years in Afghanistan, when our strategy centered on bombing and conducting "in-and-out" special forces raids, we routinely killed noncombatants; needlessly injured, imprisoned and humiliated many Afghans; and damaged homes, businesses and the very fabric of society in ways we still don't understand very well.

More recently, especially when General Stanley McChrystal was in command there, we reversed many of these practices

## We have a historic opportunity to make our aid truly effective.

and put the Afghan people first. Yet even when we finally began making some restitution to Afghan civilians after raids, our payments were erratic and often never reached those who were most damaged. As a result, those families would often go over to the Taliban and become our enemies.

This is a difficult area that runs right up against hard-and-fast legal principles that underpin the American way of war and our interpretation of the international law of armed conflict. But the fact remains that for many Afghans, American actions not only did not make them safer; they made them more vulnerable.

It is not too late for us to rethink our approach and rectify these injustices. True, doing so will require legislative action, which would undoubtedly spawn strong opposition from many quarters. But if the American experience in Afghanistan is to live up to what we claimed—that we are not like other foreign powers who came only for their own ends—then it is a task we should undertake, both for the Afghan people and for ourselves.

### 5. Undertake a serious effort to educate the American people about the reality of Afghanistan and what we have achieved there.

None of the above will be possible without the support of the American people. Sadly, today's polls show most Americans believe we were wrong to go into Afghanistan in the first place. But not too long ago, the answer was the opposite.

What changed? Is it war weariness, as so many armchair pundits opine? Or is it something more? In my discussions with a range of Americans over the past year, I have found a different answer: Americans are “failure weary.” They see Afghanistan and Iraq as similar failed efforts, where violence and depravity are the norm. They do not understand what has really happened on the ground in Afghanistan.

Nor do most Americans understand what we undertook there. They see a failure of “nation-building”—notwithstanding the fact that both President George W. Bush and President Obama explicitly rejected “nation-building” as a goal, and never devoted enough resources to get anywhere close to achieving it. Some go so far as to assert that we have failed by not defeating the Taliban, even though Pres. Obama spe-

cifically disavowed that goal when he announced the 2009 “surge.” Instead, he declared that our aim was to degrade the Taliban, so that the Afghan Security Forces could handle the threat it still poses, with some help from us.

When I and others in the administration wanted to use the word “win” in documents, we were told not to by White House officials who insisted that our objective was limited to degrading, not winning. Somewhat understandably, most Americans never understood that distinction.

The explanations for Americans’ astonishing ignorance about Afghanistan are many, starting with a media fixated on violence, failure and scandal that also suffers from a kind of “groupthink” that makes it unfriendly to stories that challenge the prevailing narrative. Perhaps most important, however, is the lack of leadership on Afghanistan from the very top—across two administrations. Whatever the reasons, we need to come up with an approach that delivers accurate information



A money changer makes a flower out of Afghanis and greenbacks at a streetside stall in Kandahar city.



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## The explanations for Americans' astonishing ignorance about Afghanistan are many.

to the American people early on, so they can decide on the basis of facts, not armchair opinions.

We can start by inviting many more Afghans to visit and study in our country to deliver that message. Only a handful of Americans know about the bustling streets of Herat and Kabul, or the major advances being wrought by a new generation of educated young Afghans. They have never heard of Afghan software entrepreneurs, artists and scientists. But when Americans meet Afghans, particularly young people and women, and learn the reality of their country, their views change.

Finally, the dedicated diplomatic and development professionals of the Foreign Service who have served in Afghanistan should be traveling all over our country to tell people what they have seen firsthand there: a country that, despite massive problems and huge challenges, has made immense progress, and wants to be our partner and ally. They can make the case that Afghans appreciate the sacrifices Americans have made on their behalf, and will be on our side for generations to come if we reorient our policies toward success—for both of our nations.

### Larger Goals


Fulfilling our repeated statements of commitment to continue supporting the Afghan people, particularly women, will help us achieve larger goals: namely, ensuring that Afghanistan does not return to the chaotic conditions that allowed al-Qaida to attack our country on Sept. 11, 2001, and stabilizing a region where extremism, nationalism, nuclear weapons and terrorism are a volatile mix that could reach out to threaten us in new ways.

These goals mesh with the kind of future the Afghan people voted for, and which the new government of President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah seeks to bring about.

In helping to achieve them, we will prove to the world (and ourselves) that when America undertakes a mission, we not only accomplish it, but do so in a manner that lives up to our fundamental values. ■



# WHAT U.S. POLICYMAKERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT AFGHANISTAN TODAY



Primary school is in session in the Mohmand Dara district of Nangarhar province in eastern Afghanistan.

Casey Garret Johnson

**Afghanistan's emergence as a modern nation will involve negotiating a cultural transition that integrates enduring traditions with viable change.**

BY SCOTT SMITH

**T**hree themes have endured throughout Afghanistan's long history. Its central government has always been weak; it has always had a strong and independent society; and its people have always been somewhat mistrustful of outsiders. Notwithstanding those traits, over the past 13 years U.S. policy in Afghanistan has aimed to build a strong state and change and modernize society through outside assistance and expertise.



*Scott Smith is the director of Afghanistan and Central Asia programs at the U.S. Institute of Peace. Prior to joining USIP in April 2012, Smith spent 13 years at the United Nations, focusing primarily on Afghanistan and democratization issues. An adjunct professor at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, he is the author of Afghanistan's Troubled Transition: Politics, Peacekeeping and the 2004 Presidential Election (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), as well as a number of articles and book chapters.*



Burkha-clad women window-shop for jewelry at the gold market in Herat city.

The messy political transition that Afghanistan underwent this year revealed the continuing influence of deep-seated political realities that constrain the country's political modernization. ("Political modernization" is a broad term, but the best definition is still probably the one provided by Samuel Huntington in *Political Order and Changing Societies*: rationalization of authority, differentiation and specialization of political functions, and popular participation.)

If we are to make the most of our investment in Afghanistan, the task now is to identify the traditional features of Afghanistan that endure, and to distinguish the tangible and substantive changes that will redirect Afghanistan's political destiny from those that are merely superficial.

In the following pages I offer some pointers to assist in that task.

### Three Pillars

For most of the 20th century, Afghanistan was a poor, tranquil, slowly developing country. The three pillars of stability were a moderate form of Islam that regulated daily life, a tribal organization of society based on norms of traditional leadership and a state dominated by royalty that had two essential functions: to represent Afghanistan to the world as an independent and Islamic entity, and to mediate internal conflicts when necessary.

Each of these pillars was fundamentally transformed by Afghanistan's clash with modernity in a way that turned them from bases of stability into sources of conflict. The clash, which began with the 1973 coup by Mohammed Daoud Khan against his cousin, King Zahir Shah, became irreversible with the communist coup of 1978.



Casey Garret Johnson



Casey Garret Johnson

A young girl accompanies her mother into a voting booth in a secondary school in Kabul during the second round of the 2014 presidential elections.

## Each of these pillars was fundamentally transformed by Afghanistan's clash with modernity in a way that turned them from bases of stability into sources of conflict.

The ensuing policy of emptying rural areas, which the historian Louis Dupree describes as “migratory genocide,” undid the tribal structure of authority. The new structure made no sense in Afghanistan’s rural or urban areas, or in the refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran to which millions of Afghans fled. It led to an Islamist reaction, which radicalized politics and religion, taking the latter far beyond its traditional function of regulating daily life.

The influx of arms and the formation of Islamist mujahedeen groups during the resistance to the Soviet occupation created new sources of power and even more radical ideologies. This also transformed Afghans’ traditional, quasi-ceremonial use of violence to resolve conflicts between communities into a pattern of atrocities. The defeat of communism temporarily legitimized the Islamist factions, but was insufficient as a governing ideology or a means of uniting these factions.



Posters of presidential contenders Ashraf Ghani Amadzi and Abdullah Abdullah above a street market in Gardez, the capital of Paktia province in southeastern Afghanistan.

Casey Garret Johnson

## The bruising 2014 presidential election—particularly the manner of its resolution—was perhaps the final decisive act in the struggle for modernity and order.

The rise of the Taliban in the mid-1990s was both a reaction to the chaos and a search for order by a new generation nostalgic for tradition (especially in Pashtun communities), but fundamentally uprooted and unable to replicate it.

Thus, Afghanistan’s violent political struggles are less a question of typical tribal unruliness than a chaotic search for political order amid the remnants of the pillars of stability smashed by Afghanistan’s clash with modernity. This search has been frustrated by the lack of any commanding political figure, as well as by the interventions of outside actors. Further, the failure to find political consensus has created habits that actually make the search for consensus more difficult.

### The Post-2001 Disposition of Power

Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the failure of Afghan leaders to take advantage of the opportunity offered to them in 2001. The toppling of the Taliban regime by U.S. forces and the massive infusion of resources to back a new political

order created political space for both order and modernization for the first time since the 1960s.

This space was, however, threatened from the beginning by the gradual re-emergence of two older and more destructive political movements. First, the Taliban began to reconstitute itself within sanctuaries neighboring Pakistan provided. At the same time, powerful figures who had emerged during the jihad and civil war also began to reconstitute their informal power. They were participants in the new political order to the extent that it provided them resources, but they were also threatened by it—either because a genuine democratic order might exclude them, or because they lacked the ability to operate effectively in a regime based on law and constitutionality.

This reconstitution of informal power tested the confidence of the United States in the system it was promoting. Facing threats of instability from these power brokers, Western policymakers sought accommodations in the name of stability. As Afghanistan expert Thomas Ruttig observed, “After 2001, the

U.S. made possible an unconditional comeback by those warlords and commanders who had allied with them in their fight against the Taliban. Without any accountability for war crimes and massive human rights violations, they were integrated into the new political system.”

The resulting combination of formal and informal power, wielded at the national and subnational levels, ended up delegitimizing the formal power structures. This, in turn, made the Taliban an increasingly attractive alternative. For a local leader who ended up on the wrong side of a dispute because his rival used his formal position to prevail, the Taliban offered a means of resistance or revenge, regardless of how one felt about sharia. Threatened from within and from without, the modernization project faced long odds.

### The 2014 Political Transition

The bruising 2014 presidential election—particularly the manner of its resolution—was perhaps the final decisive act in the struggle for modernity and order. There was a genuine democratic activism in the lead-up to the election, in particular among Afghanistan’s massive youth bulge (according to the United Nations Development Program, 68 percent of the nation’s population is under the age of 25). There was also a significant amount of fraud, which political elites both perpetrated and used to delegitimize the process.

Unhappy backers of the losing candidate, Abdullah Abdullah, threatened to use their informal power against the state. This forced the Obama administration to intervene directly to broker a compromise. As happened earlier, this intervention again privileged accommodation for stability over the logic of modernization.

Afterward, Ambassador James Dobbins, a former special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, ruefully noted: “Democracy is not sufficiently developed [in Kabul] to the point where a winner-take-all system, in which the losers retire and organize for the next election but don’t share any power following their loss, is really a workable solution.”

After months of negotiations between the two camps and an unprecedented audit of every ballot box, a power-sharing government finally took office in September. But by acquiescing to runner-up Abdullah’s request not to release the results of the official audit—which showed he had decisively lost—Washington not only locked traditional leaders into the institutions of governance, but institutionalized their rivalries.

The Taliban, meanwhile, took advantage of Kabul’s power vacuum during the dangerous summer of the election to launch a series of debilitating attacks, taking on Afghan forces

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Casey Garret Johnson

Nargis Nehan, director of Equality for Peace and Democracy, gives a press conference in February during a seminar on women and elections in Kabul. The seminar brought presidential contenders, including eventual winner Ashraf Ghani, together to field questions from leading women's rights advocates and civil society representatives from around the nation.

## The key to managing the traumatic transition was always to inject as much certainty as possible into an uncertain situation.

closer and closer to the capital. Though there is no imminent danger that Pres. Ghani's government will be militarily defeated, the struggle has significantly weakened it at the outset. There is a sort of stability; but there are also huge governance challenges for an administration that is more divided and less legitimate than it should have been.

### Keeping the Process on Track

The key to managing the traumatic transition was always to inject as much certainty as possible into an uncertain situation. The election was an essential part of this strategy, intended as it was to ensure the continuity of the 2004 constitution—which, for better or worse, set out rules for power that were at least superficially accepted by powerful elites.

This confidence was shaken by two developments. First, Afghan President Hamid Karzai announced in December 2013 that he would not sign any new Bilateral Security Agreement with the United States. Then, after energetic diplomacy failed to

budget Karzai, President Barack Obama announced in May that the U.S. would leave just 9,800 combat troops in Afghanistan in 2015, which would be withdrawn by the end of 2016.

Pres. Ghani's government has now signed the BSA, but the Obama administration still plans to remove nearly all troops before leaving office. Looked at in the most positive light, this can be a forcing mechanism for Afghan leaders to develop sufficient cohesiveness to function on their own. The jury is still out on whether they are capable of it.

In the meantime, U.S. policymakers and diplomats must develop new habits of their own. Afghan "rentierism" means that money from outside has always had an outsized influence on Afghan domestic politics. This has prevented Washington from having a typical bilateral relationship with Kabul. At a conceptual level, the relationship has been defined, especially since the mid-2000s, by U.S. rhetoric pushing Afghan leaders to "take the lead"—even as Washington continues to invest billions of dollars without much to show for it.

As Western troops withdraw and aid flows are reduced, Afghanistan's dealings with the United States will need to become more like traditional bilateral relationships. This will entail confronting several thorny dilemmas, however. For instance, the Ghani administration has listed making peace with the Taliban as a key priority. Washington will need to decide to what extent it can allow Kabul to reach whatever accord it can with the Taliban and Pakistan, even if such arrangements undermine interests that the United States has up to now described as critical, such as the guarantee of civil and political rights to all Afghans.

In confronting these dilemmas, U.S. policymakers will be burdened by the massive investment they have made in rebuilding and protecting Afghanistan, and the high hopes it once had for the country's future. They will also have to start treating their Afghan counterparts as colleagues rather than clients. The danger is that, if not managed well, frustration on the U.S. side may lead to temptations to disengage non-strategically. Instead, the Obama administration should use these next two years to pave the way for a relationship characterized by different expectations and different means of leverage than before.

### Reasons for Optimism

Whatever the unachieved hopes since 2001, America's involvement in Afghanistan has transformed the country in ways that are not yet fully apparent. As an older generation of disappointing political leaders fades from the scene, a younger, more urbanized population is emerging. Since they are, for the most part, reluctant to forgo those elements of modernity that the international presence has offered, they are likely to favor good relations with the West.

At the same time, both the Taliban and a generation of rural youth have had more traumatic interactions with the international presence. Like their urban peers, many of them have used technology to engage with the modern world. But this has exposed them to globalized jihadist ideologies like al-Qaida and the Islamic State group.

The future in Afghanistan lies not between the old generation and the emerging one, but between the cities and the towns—between an urban-rooted state struggling to assert itself and a rural-based society that remains suspicious of state power. While these old patterns endure, Afghans' clash with modernity has already had irreversible consequences.

A modern Afghanistan will not look exactly like the one that was imagined by international policymakers a decade ago. But neither will it look like the society of the past. ■

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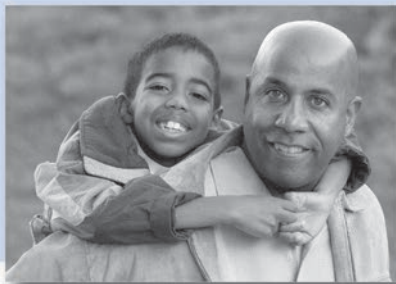
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## Call for Nominations: 2015-2017 AFSA Governing Board

**ADD YOUR VOICE TO THE 'VOICE OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE'**

Do you want to represent your colleagues, contribute to a stronger Foreign Service and make sure its voice is heard on the Hill and around the country? Do you want to participate in the management and modernization of a multimillion-dollar organization with a large staff and real impact in Washington?

If so, consider joining the next AFSA leadership team by running for a position on the 2015-2017 AFSA Governing Board.

### Election Call

*Election of AFSA Officers and Constituency Representatives.* This election call, issued in accordance with Article VII(2)(a) of the AFSA bylaws, constitutes a formal notice to all AFSA members of the opportunity to participate in the nomination and election of a new Governing Board.

### Call for Nominations

#### Available Positions.

The following positions will be filled in this election:

#### Officers

- President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Vice President for State
- Vice President for USAID
- Vice President for FCS
- Vice President for FAS
- Vice President for Retirees

#### Constituency Representatives

- State Department Representatives (11)
- USAID Representatives (2)
- FCS Representative (1)
- FAS Representative (1)
- IBB Representative (1)
- APHIS Representative (1)
- Retired Member Representatives (4)

The positions listed above have two-year terms beginning July 15, 2015. AFSA bylaws require that all Governing Board members must be resident in the Washington area within 60 days of taking office on July 15, 2015, and must remain resident in the Washington area throughout their term in office.

The president and State, USAID, FCS and FAS vice presidents are full-time positions detailed to AFSA. These employees are assigned over complement and are eligible for time-in-class extensions. The active-duty representative positions are not full time, but they are given a reasonable amount of official time to attend

meetings regarding labor management issues. Governing Board members are required to attend monthly lunchtime board meetings and may volunteer to serve on additional committees. To see position descriptions for all officer positions, see the AFSA website: [www.afsa.org/governing\\_board.aspx](http://www.afsa.org/governing_board.aspx).

### Nomination Procedures

#### Nominating Candidates.

Any AFSA regular member in good standing (i.e., a member whose dues are automatically deducted or who has paid dues as of February 2, 2015) may nominate any person (including themselves) for any of the available positions for which the nominee is eligible. The following requirements apply to nominations:

1. No member may nominate more than one person for each officer position or more than the number of representatives established for each constituency. No member's name may appear on the ballot for more than one position.

*Continued on p. 52*

### Important Dates:

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| February 2, 2015  | Deadline for nominations                           |
| February 16, 2015 | Committee on Elections announces candidates' names |
| April 15, 2015    | Ballots and candidate statements mailed            |
| June 4, 2015      | Ballots counted                                    |
| July 15, 2015     | New Governing Board takes office                   |

## CALENDAR

December 3  
12-2 p.m.  
**AFSA Governing Board Meeting**

December 11  
2-5 p.m.  
**AFSA Holiday Party HST 1251**

December 24, 25, 26  
**Christmas: AFSA Offices Closed**

January 1  
**New Year's Day: AFSA Offices Closed**

January 7  
12-2 p.m.  
**AFSA Governing Board Meeting**

January 19  
**MLK Day: AFSA Offices Closed**

February 6  
**Deadline for Applications: AFSA Merit and Community Service Awards**

March 6  
**Deadline for Applications: AFSA Financial Aid Scholarships**



# Proposed Bylaw Amendment to Rightsize AFSA Governing Board

**Attention AFSA Members:**

The Governing Board has conducted a review of the AFSA bylaws in accordance with its 2013-2015 strategic plan. The Board is proposing one bylaw amendment that, if passed by the membership, would take effect in 2017.

Membership last approved bylaw amendments in 2012 to facilitate electronic voting, to modify the Board eligibility requirements and to make a technical change to the name of the Scholarship Committee. The process of amending bylaws requires notification to the AFSA membership, a 45-day period for submission of statements in opposition, a vote of the membership and two-thirds approval of those voting. The full process is found in Article IX of the AFSA bylaws at [www.afsa.org/](http://www.afsa.org/) bylaws. It is the responsibility of the AFSA Committee on Elections to conduct polling. The following schedule has been set:

Statements in opposition to the proposed bylaw amendment must be signed by not less than 10 AFSA members in good standing and must be received by close of business on January 16, 2015. They must be sent by mail to: Chair, AFSA Committee on Elections, 2101 E Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20037, or by fax to (202) 338-6820 or by email to [election@afsa.org](mailto:election@afsa.org).

**Explanation of Proposed Changes from the Governing Board**

Following review, the Governing Board found one issue for bylaw reform, which, if approved by the membership, would necessitate amending two sections of the bylaws. At its November 5, 2014, meeting, the Governing Board voted to solicit member feedback through *The Foreign Service Journal* of a bylaw amendment to reduce the size of the Governing Board from 29 to 19 members.

The Governing Board recommends members support the amendments to Sections 4 and 5 of Article V as proposed.

**Size of Governing Board Background**

The current bylaws state that each AFSA constituency is allotted one representative to the Governing Board for each 1,000 constituents, or fraction thereof, who are members of AFSA. According to this formula, the current AFSA Board has a total of 29 members. The reform envisioned by the Governing Board would change the formula and reduce the number of members to 19.

The Governance and Executive Committees have discussed at length the inefficiencies posed by a large governing board. It is hoped that a proposed reduction of the number of members might help to alleviate some of the difficulties associated with a large board and bring it back to the more manageable levels of past

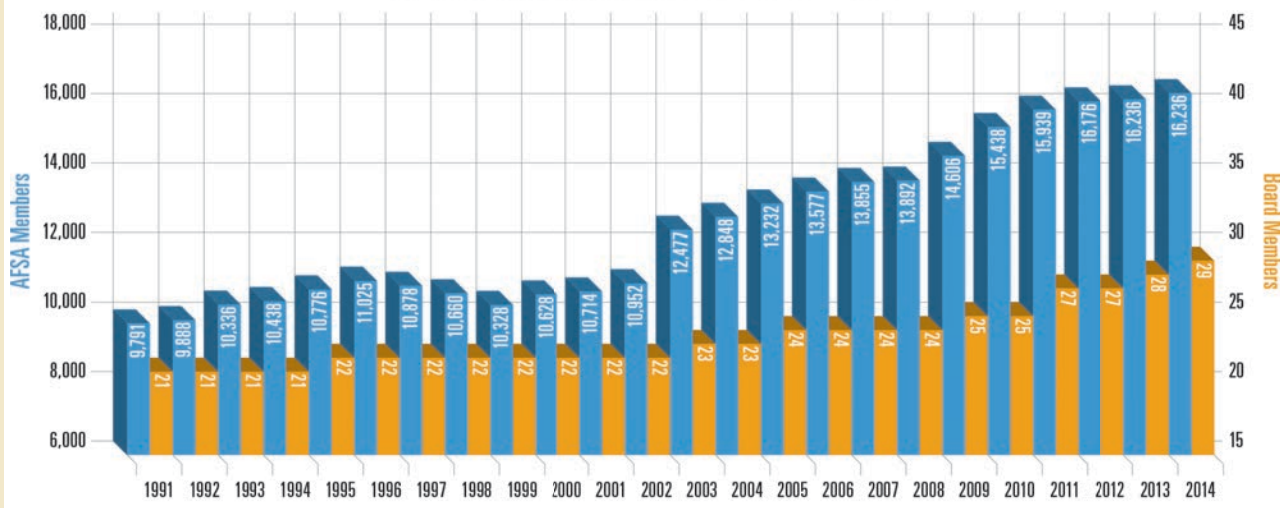
years. The size of the board, the high frequency of its meetings, and the resources required to staff and run it were highlighted as problem areas in an outside consultant's 2012 review of AFSA governance and operations. In the report, the outside consultant recommended reviewing the organization's governance, noting that the previous two Governing Boards had commented on the Board's large size.

The board has grown from eight members in 1974 to 21 members in 1991 to 29 members at present. During the same period, the membership of AFSA has grown from 7,000 in March 1975 to 16,450 today. The Board's growth outpaces growth in membership and has resulted in a Governing Board of record size. Note:

Dates	Action
December 1, 2014	Proposed amendments announced to membership
January 16, 2015	Deadline for statements in opposition to proposed changes
Mid-April 2015	Sending of ballots, together with any statements for or against the proposed amendments by mail and email
June 4, 2015 July 1, 2015	Bylaw amendment ballots tabulated Governing Board endorses results of bylaw poll reported by the Committee on Elections

	Current Board	Proposed Board	Reduction
President	1	1	0
Treasurer	1	1	0
Secretary	1	1	0
Agency VP	4	4	0
State	11	6	5
USAID	2	1	1
FCS	1	0	1
FAS	1	0	1
IBB	1	1	0
APHIS	1	1	0
Retiree (Incl. VP)	5	3	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>

AFSA Membership and Board Growth, 1991-2014



AFSA is a union as well as a professional association, a hybrid that requires special considerations. Each AFSA agency constituency, regardless of size, must be allotted at least one vote on the board.

Most of the Board's growth has occurred in the last two years. The Foreign Service, primarily at State and USAID, grew extraordinarily in the first decade of the 21st century due to the large hiring increases associated with the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative, Diplomacy 3.0 and the Development Leadership Initiative (see graph above). These large personnel increases have ended and are not likely to resume in the current budget climate. Meanwhile, AFSA also began representing Foreign Service employees at APHIS, which resulted in an additional seat on the Governing Board. Because elected officials have a duty to represent their members' interests, each

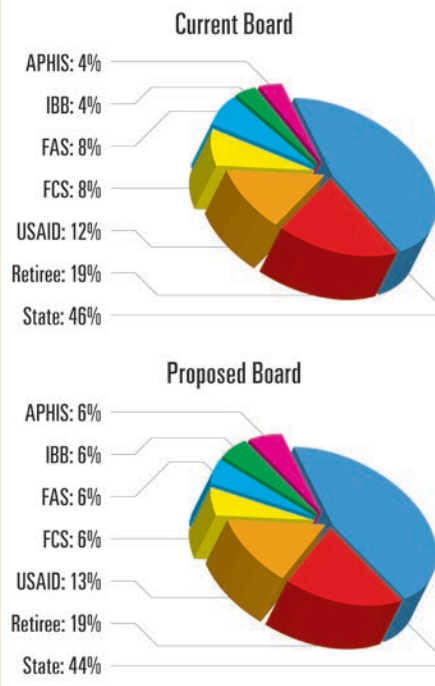
agency must have at least one representative on the Board.

*Proposal to Rightsize*

A new Governing Board is proposed with 19 positions. This would bring the board back in line with historic averages while still allowing for some agency and retiree growth. The reduction would impact all agencies equally and **preserve approximate relative voting strengths**. It would **take effect in the 2017 Election Cycle** and no current board member would be affected. It also provides for an **alternate representative without voting rights for FAS and FCS**.

Two bylaw articles would need to be amended to accomplish a new board size. Article V, Section 4 (b) would

Proposed Voting Strength



tion is greater than half, and ensure the election of an alternate representative without voting rights for FAS and FCS.

Article V, Section 5 (b) would have to be amended as well to reflect the fact that the alternate FAS and FCS representatives would only vote in AFSA Governing Board meetings in the absence of the respective constituency Vice President. (Exact changes in language are spelled out in the box on p.54)

The constituency voting strength is based on the relative weights of constituencies as compared to the size of the Governing Board less the three AFSA-wide elected positions (President, Treasurer, and Secretary). These three positions theoretically can come from any constituency and thus are not

have to be amended. The amendment would increase the representation ratio to one representative for every 2,000 members or fraction thereof, so long as the frac-

*Continued on page 54*



## Mental Health and the Foreign Service

Today, more colleagues are serving at more high-threat, austere and significant hardship posts than ever before.

AFSA is working to ensure that members receive the language and security awareness training necessary to safely and effectively engage while overseas, and the mental and physical care they need while there and when they return.

In 2013, Mental Health Services—under the Office of Medical Services umbrella—was reorganized to focus more attention on the mental health needs of employees and their families. The Employee Consultation Service was split into the Employee Assistance Program and the Deployment Stress Management Program, and a separate Child and Family Program.

### Deployment Stress Management Program

In 2007, Congress directed the State Department to establish a unique program for Foreign Service members en route to or returning from high-threat, high-risk posts. The result is the Deployment Stress Management Program, which covers the entire deployment cycle.

In September, AFSA discussed with Employee Consultation Service staff their outreach efforts and employee assistance programs. At that time employ-

ees could receive prolonged exposure treatment consisting of 8 to 10 in-house sessions.

This intensive treatment, coupled with a six-month reintegration program, ensured that employees received in-house assistance from practitioners familiar with Foreign Service employment. Each year, approximately a dozen or so employees have availed of this in-house assistance.

Utilizing best practices and guidelines recommended by the American Psychiatric Association and the Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for PTSD, the Office of Medical Services is improving the comprehensive diagnosis and treatment of employees with deployment stress-related medical, neurologic and psychiatric conditions.

MED is developing referral networks for employees, both in the Washington, D.C., area and at other nationally recognized centers of excellence.

AFSA encourages MED to continue to review these changes and their impact on the quality of care for employees. We believe it is important that employees have access to the best resources, whether in house or through external partners, to address “the sacrifices and strains of the work we’ve all chosen to do together”—as Secretary of State John Kerry wrote in his May 2013 letter to employees.

### Clinical Social Workers

In March, while visiting colleagues in Kabul and Islamabad, I had the opportunity to meet with a Foreign Service clinical social worker.

The Service currently has five social workers on limited non-career appointments serving in Baghdad, Kabul and Islamabad, in addition to the regional medical officers and regional medical psychiatrists covering the region.

These medical professionals serve on the front lines ensuring that employees receive the mental care and assistance required. The department introduced the social workers in 2005, and they have been well received by post management, employees and MED.

AFSA welcomes these new members to the Service and encourages the department to consider expanding their presence to the other high-threat, high-risk posts. Moreover, if and when posts go through authorized or ordered departures (or, as in the case of Baghdad, a “temporary relocation”), MED and AFSA strongly support mission management’s inclusion of these individuals on the minimal staffing lists.

It is exactly in those more stressful situations that their services are most needed.

### Medical and Security Clearances

Employees often ask about potential negative consequences of disclosing mental health issues. However, the medical and security clearance processes are conducted completely independently of one another.

Counseling is provided on a confidential basis, with a disclosure exception for employees believed to be a danger to self, others or our national security.

As Sec. Kerry has stated, “No one at the department has lost a clearance because he or she sought mental health counseling or treatment.”

See “Mental Health” in the October 2010 edition of *State Magazine* ([www.bit.ly/StateMag1010](http://www.bit.ly/StateMag1010)) for more on mental health and security clearances.

The Foreign Service is unique, and AFSA is working to ensure that we have access to the best in-house and external resources necessary to support our employees.

Moreover, in the event that an employee is physically or mentally injured overseas, he or she must know that the State Department will do everything it can to provide the protections, care and administrative leave authorized in department regulations (3 FAM 3464.5). ■

*Next Month: Marijuana Decriminalization, Legalization and the Foreign Service*



## USAID Promotions, ‘Promo-gate’ and Progress on Transparency

About this time last year I wrote an article for the December 2013 *FSJ* titled “USAID Needs a Transparent Promotions Process.” In it, I focused on the importance of clear agency communications regarding the promotion process.

The lack of transparency and published statistics leads employees to doubt the integrity of the entire procedure and gives rise to unrealistic expectations. Eventually, this leads to disillusionment and declining morale.

It’s only logical that these factors, in turn, cause a drop in productivity and a higher turnover of USAID’s workforce, as employees look for more mutually beneficial and respectful work environments.

After that article was published, feedback from USAID’s Office of Human Resources was inspiring. They seemed to “get it” and were committed to better communications, to publishing promotion data and to developing career paths for USAID’s Foreign Service officers.

In a perfect world, I’d be writing about the plethora of information and helpful points of contact now available to assist the agency’s FSOs with the logistics of their career. With this in place, our FSOs would feel confident that their agency is fair and transparent and that it values their dedicated service, thus free-

ing them to focus on the work they were hired to do.

Unfortunately, things went terribly wrong this last promotion cycle. The USAID Foreign Service promotion list that was released included the names of 12 FSOs who were ineligible for promotion. At the same time, it omitted the names of nine FSOs who should have been on the list. The mistake was caught early, but not early enough to prevent the roller coaster ride of anguish and disillusionment over such negligence.

It is perhaps necessary to repeat: if employees are to believe the promotion process is fair, the integrity of the process is extremely important; and the belief that the promotion process is fair is of utmost importance to employee morale, loyalty and retention.

In March 2013, Administrator Rajiv Shah welcomed a new human resources team, which included a Civil Service director, a Civil Service deputy and a Foreign Service deputy. This was a controversial move because the HR director position had previously been filled by a Foreign Service officer. The main argument for this change was that bringing in an HR professional would better serve USAID’s talent force.

Development professionals know better than anyone that change doesn’t happen overnight. They are also intimately

familiar with the magnitude of the reporting, justifying and tracking required on USAID projects.

From a professional perspective, it’s clear that if HR were a USAID program, it would be time to start seeing progress.

I feel a mixture of sadness and anger as I wonder how USAID can take its greatest asset for granted, which is what is suggested by the negligence that resulted in what many have called “promo-gate.”

I cling to the hope that we are still heading in the right direction for two reasons. One is that the most common and often most difficult challenge to organizational growth is establishing the necessary processes and structures to accommodate that growth.

With the recent hiring of roughly 60 percent of our workforce, it would not be irrational to predict that things could get worse before they get better. Burnout (and associated errors) in this transition stage before sufficient

resources, processes and procedures are put in place, should not be unexpected.

The other reason for hope is that HR accepted the blame. You can learn from a mistake only after you admit you made it. The fact that the new HR leadership team put aside its pride, and both publicly apologized and individually reached out to those affected, is encouraging.

If the HR leadership has the integrity and fortitude to admit its mistakes, it may also have the integrity and fortitude to see envisioned improvements through to fruition.

HR has informed AFSA that as a result of the December 2013 article, they have been in the process of gathering statistics with the intent to publish promotion data that mirrors that published by the State Department. If that is the case, then by the time this column is published, USAID promotion statistics should be available.

It’s time to start seeing progress and results. ■



### AFSA IS NOW ON FLICKR

This summer, AFSA joined the photo-sharing social site Flickr in an effort to make photos from AFSA events more widely available. Flickr makes it easy to download copies of photos directly from the site, and social sharing is also available. You can even comment on photos, and help us identify anyone pictured. Feel free to browse the selection at [www.flickr.com/americanforeignservice](http://www.flickr.com/americanforeignservice).



Views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the AFSA Retiree VP.  
Contact: lawrencecohenassociates@hotmail.com or (703) 437-7881

## It's That Gift-Giving Time of Year Again

Like most parents and grandparents, I am concerned about the financial security of my kids. The challenge they face is no secret. A smaller and smaller share of government budgets goes to the younger generation as spending on the elderly, especially on healthcare, crowds out other expenditures.

As Catherine Rampell noted in the *Washington Post*, an increase in the share of elderly in any jurisdiction correlates to a significant reduction in education spending per child. And thanks to the baby boomers, we are seeing more elderly around.

Meanwhile, millennials are increasingly saddled with unsustainable student loan debt. Their wages, if they receive any, are often stagnant. Ever-increasing housing costs may make any kind of home ownership out of reach for many. Pension plans are almost extinct in the private sector.

Meanwhile, retirement plans for new federal employees are significantly less generous than the plans we currently enjoy. Without help, our children and grandchildren confront steeper climbs than we faced to a comfortable retirement.

I offer a suggestion for parents and grandparents. Take a step back from ordinary holiday consumption and make a real investment in their future. In a calen-

dar year you can give up to \$14,000 to any person and not be subject to the gift tax.

My mother recently gifted each of her 10 grandchildren \$5,000. But there was a stipulation: the money could be used for either paying down student loan debt and/or placement in an IRA, preferably a Roth IRA. (Note: to be eligible to contribute to an IRA, the person must receive earned income/compensation equal to or greater than the amount of the IRA contribution.)

Think about it. With a Roth IRA, a child of 25 will accrue four-plus decades of tax-free earnings on the account by the time he or she retires. An investment of \$10,000 in year zero yields \$217,200 after 40 years at just an 8 percent return rate.

Suppose you are about to have a grandchild. Setting aside just \$1,000 in an investment returning 12 percent—an ambitious target, certainly—would accrue \$1.6 million when the child turns 65. Talk about a gift that keeps on giving!

If the child has no earned income, consider contributing to his or her 529 Education Savings Plan. The cost of a college education will no doubt continue its inexorable climb. For those who are reluctant, remember 529 plans have a unique advantage. While the value of the account is removed from your

taxable estate, you retain full control over the account, including the right to get your money back.

As the account owner, you designate the beneficiary—be it a child or grandchild, a niece or nephew, or even yourself!—and you retain complete control over the funds in the account, including distribution.

You can change the beneficiary whenever you choose. Once you set up a 529 college savings plan, other family members and friends can also contribute. This is a great way for families to come together to help give the gift

of a college education.

Remember, 529 funds grow tax free. If the funds are withdrawn before being used for the beneficiary's education expenses, they become taxable.

Finally, in addition to investing in family members, consider investing in another worthy cause, the AFSA Scholarship Fund.

A donation to the fund enables Foreign Service high school students to continue their academic achievement as undergraduates. More information about this can be found at [www.afsa.org/scholar](http://www.afsa.org/scholar). ■

### ANNOUNCEMENT

#### REMINDER: NOMINATIONS FOR DISSENT AWARDS

AFSA proudly recognizes constructive dissent within the system with four separate awards.

The **W. Averell Harriman Award** is for entry-level (FS-6 through FS-4) officers; the **William R. Rivkin Award** is for mid-level (FS-3 through FS-1) officers; the **Christian A. Herter Award** is for Senior Foreign Service officers; and the **F. Allen "Tex" Harris Award** is for Foreign Service specialists.

Recipients receive prize money and travel expenses to attend and be honored at a ceremony in June in the Benjamin Franklin Diplomatic Reception Room at the State Department.

Nominate someone—or yourself!—for one of these awards. The nomination deadline is Feb. 28, 2015. For more details on the awards, and to submit an online nomination, visit [www.afsa.org/dissent](http://www.afsa.org/dissent). Please contact Special Awards and Outreach Coordinator Perri Green, at [green@afsa.org](mailto:green@afsa.org) or (202) 719-9700, for more information.

## AFSA ON THE HILL

## AFSA Advocacy for Ambassadorial Nominees Builds Relationships on the Hill

As the “Voice of the Foreign Service,” AFSA addresses issues of importance to our members working around the world. These advocacy efforts include such issues as overseas comparability pay, safety and security, U.S. state taxes and pet travel policies.

AFSA’s staff and elected leadership work diligently to clearly communicate our positions on Capitol Hill and with local officials, as well as with the White House and the leadership of the foreign affairs agencies.

As diverse as the issues are, so are the ways we seek to resolve them—through meetings and negotiations, by partnering with other organizations to amplify our message, through calls to action where we ask members to express their concern on particular issues, or through bringing public attention to a problem. We use the approach that will produce the best possible outcome for the Foreign Service.

Earlier this year, one issue on our list of concerns captured media and public attention: the backlog of career ambassadorial nominees awaiting confirmation in the United States Senate.

As AFSA regularly tracks the nominations and confirmations for these positions, we noticed the ballooning number of unfilled ambassa-

dorial-level positions. We also heard from our members, both nominees themselves and those serving at missions around the world, about the impact and scope of the problem.

AFSA took this opportunity to remind senators and their staff of the importance of the work done by ambassadors—as leaders of embassy staff, as representatives of the American people and as diplomats.

We felt strongly that we could not allow the importance of these positions to be called into question, which was the effect of delaying confirmations. A chief of mission is the highest ranking executive at post and one of the most senior positions to which members aspire.

Over the last several months, we’ve had numerous meetings with U.S. Senators and their staffs, during which we’ve made the following points:

- Though our members work diligently in the absence of a confirmed ambassador, the strain is great. We’ve heard from many of you about the stress and disruption this has caused.

- While waiting for the new chief of mission, many initiatives—and the officers working on them—find themselves in a holding pattern, which, over time, may have a negative impact on embassy

morale.

- Our members know better than anyone the importance of building relationships with host-country counterparts and conversely, the damage done by the message sent by vacant chief-of-mission positions.

As foreign affairs experts, our members know how important it is for the U.S. to have its full complement of diplomats when addressing the major issues in a crisis, ironing out details of a trade agreement or building an alliance to contend with a common enemy. They spend much time trying to explain to host country interlocutors why they don’t have an ambassador but can’t overcome the skepticism.

- Our members also watch as other countries with ambassadors get the access they may not be able to get; and as other countries’ businesses and investors go on the offensive. (China, Russia, Brazil build key business relationships in growing economies in Africa, while we stand on the sidelines.)

- Failing to act on these nominations suggests that our country’s leadership does not value the contributions of those at the top ranks of the Foreign Service or the importance of diplomacy.

In our meetings on the Hill we have also made clear that

this cannot become “the new normal” for confirmations, and that these positions—and the career nominees chosen to fill them—cannot be used as political pawns.

We do believe, however, that because of the strong support the Foreign Service has enjoyed from both sides of the aisle, the situation will be resolved.

AFSA has used the opportunity presented by this public discussion to build important relationships on Capitol Hill, as well as with new partners in the business community and the military.

These relationships will have a long-term, positive impact for our members as we move forward on this and many other key issues by building AFSA brand awareness and enhancing the understanding of the crucial work done by the women and men of the Foreign Service.

Advocacy is cumulative and holistic. Communication and advocacy work hand-in-glove to represent the interests of our members. Should you have any suggestions or questions, or if you are interested in knowing more about or taking action on this or other topics impacting members of the Foreign Service and their families, please contact us at [advocacy@afsa.org](mailto:advocacy@afsa.org). ■

—Javier Cuebas,  
Director of Advocacy  
Kristen Fernekes,  
Director of Communications

## Reflecting on AFSA's Good Stewardship in Its 90th Year

BY IAN HOUSTON, AFSA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ring in a new year is conducive to goal setting, but there must be a clear moment of reflection just as a year comes to a close. As I reflect over the 90th anniversary year, I see an organization that continued to be a good steward of financial and staffing resources.

AFSA remained committed to promoting innovation, deepening services and advancing issues of direct interest to the membership. Of course, there is always room for improvement, and a healthy organization must always seek to identify weaknesses so as to strengthen those areas. It was not unusual for the great golfer Ben Hogan to go out and practice at the driving range only hours after winning major championships.

In reality there are many demands on AFSA, and, consequently, there can be constant pull to reach beyond the fundamentals of who we

are and why we exist. What the 90th year allowed me to do was to reconnect with our past and the many individuals who have committed so much energy to building the organization we know today.

Both the history of AFSA and the Foreign Service must inform the mission going forward. We cannot effectively achieve goals if we are not willing to defend and honor our past and those on whose shoulders it rests. And so for me there is great joy and inspiration in being able to listen to firsthand accounts of those early days when AFSA became the official representative of the Foreign Service.

Especially during this season, allow me to express devout thanks and gratitude to the many who have built AFSA and have protected the integrity of the Foreign Service over decades. It is a pleasure to serve you and play a modest role in building on your vision. ■

### ANNOUNCEMENT

#### CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: SINCLAIRE AWARDS

We are now accepting nominations for the 2014 Matilda W. Sinclair Language Award, which recognizes outstanding accomplishment in the study of Category III or IV languages and their associated cultures. Nomination deadline is Dec. 24.

AFSA is proud to recognize Foreign Service employees for dedication and hard work in the study of foreign languages.

Candidates may be nominated by their language-training supervisors at FSI, instructors in the field schools or post language officers. Recipients receive a \$1,000 prize and certificate of recognition.

For further information, please contact AFSA's Coordinator for Special Awards and Outreach Perri Green at [green@afsa.org](mailto:green@afsa.org) or (202) 719-9700. Go to [www.afsa.org/sinclair](http://www.afsa.org/sinclair) for more information.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

#### AFSA LAUNCHES THE 2015 ESSAY CONTEST

AFSA is pleased to announce the 2015 National High School Essay Contest. The contest was established in 1999 and encourages students to think critically about the key role diplomacy plays in the world.

AFSA sees the contest as a way to inspire and empower the next generation of diplomats and development professionals.

Students who are U.S. citizens and whose parents are *not* in the Foreign Service are eligible to participate if they are in grades 9 through 12 in any of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. territories, or if they are attending high school overseas.

The winner will receive \$2,500, a trip to Washington, D.C., to meet the Secretary of State and a full-tuition scholarship for a Semester at Sea voyage. The runner-up will receive a full scholarship to participate in the International Diplomacy program of the National Student Leadership Conference.

The deadline for entry is 11:59 p.m. EST on March 15, 2015. Details and this year's essay topic can be found at [www.afsa.org/essaycontest](http://www.afsa.org/essaycontest). For more information, please contact AFSA's Coordinator for Special Awards and Outreach Perri Green at [green@afsa.org](mailto:green@afsa.org) or (202) 719-9700.

Please Join AFSA for its  
**Holiday Open House**  
**at the Department of State**  
Thursday, Dec. 11, 2014 • 2 to 5 p.m.  
Harry S Truman Building, Room 1251

Happy Holidays



## President Silverman Addresses Local Groups



Carolina Friends of the Foreign Service attendees from left: Ambassador David Litt, Betsy Malpass, Sue Lefes, Linda Jay, Ambassador Frank Crigler, Ann Sides, AFSA President Robert Silverman, Bill Lefes, Sharon Epstein, H.R. Malpass, June Kunesman, Eric Kunesman, Calista Moon, and Bart Moon.

AFSA President Robert J. Silverman spoke with regional retiree and other interest groups about the state of the Foreign Service and the work AFSA is doing on its behalf.

On Sept. 24, Silverman launched the 2014-2015 speaker season for the Foreign Affairs Retirees of Northern Virginia group. Silverman addressed FARNOVA on AFSA's efforts on the Hill, including its work to get the backlog of ambassadorial nominees confirmed and its advocacy for Overseas Comparability Pay funding.

He also discussed AFSA's efforts regarding the administration's proposal to replace the Consumer Price Index for pension adjustments with a "chained CPI," which AFSA calculates would reduce the average Foreign Service pension by \$17,000 over 20 years. AFSA helped defeat this proposal in 2013, but it may return.

Silverman commended

retiree AFSA members for their volunteer commitment to the organization. He spoke of AFSA's efforts to advocate for reform of the Reemployed Annuitant (WAE) program and make it more transparent.

With a total of 16,500 members, AFSA counts nearly 80 percent of active-duty and one quarter of all retiree Foreign Service members as members.

Silverman also addressed the Carolina Friends of the Foreign Service in Durham, N.C., on Oct. 23. The CFFS is dedicated to promoting a better understanding of foreign policy-related issues. Its members include present and former Foreign Service members, as well as military and other government employees and others interested in foreign affairs and public diplomacy. ■

—Debra Blome  
Associate Editor

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## AFSA Acts to Protect Integrity of FS Assignments System

BY MATTHEW ASADA, STATE VP

AFSA is concerned by recent State Department actions that undermine the integrity of the Foreign Service Assignments System, specifically its violation of the procedures governing the pilot Overseas Development Program negotiated between AFSA and the department.

In October, AFSA sent a message by telegram (State 11312), AFSA email and Department Notice calling on the department to list the FS-2 Iran Watcher position in London during the current bidding season because the position does not fit the criteria governing the Overseas Development Program.

As of publication, the department had not yet listed the position in the summer bid list despite the fact that there are a number of qualified Foreign Service employees, several of whom already have the required language proficiency and regional experience.

### Some Background

Two years ago, AFSA agreed to the State Department's proposal to establish a two-year pilot Overseas Development Program. This program would designate a small number (20) of overseas Foreign Service positions for one-time fills by Civil

Service employees without requiring a "certificate of need."

A certificate of need, which states that there is no qualified Foreign Service employee with required knowledge, skills and abilities available to fill the par-

ticular position, is normally a pre-requisite for placing a Civil Service employee in a Foreign Service position (see sidebar).

AFSA has consistently supported this pilot program for Civil Service employees as a way to provide them with overseas experience to strengthen their Civil Service careers.

In accordance with the ODP agreement, AFSA approves each and every position before the department may designate it as an

ODP position. In return, the department does not require a "certificate of need" for the pre-approved positions.

AFSA has applied consistent criteria in evaluating positions for inclusion based on position uniqueness, language designation, responsibilities, and overall Foreign Service position supply and demand.

The Foreign Service Act provides that positions designated as Foreign Service positions "normally shall be filled by the assignment of members of the Service to those positions." Over the years AFSA has negotiated the FAM provisions governing the assignment of persons from outside the Foreign Service to FS positions overseas (see 3 FAM 2293).

These provisions protect the integrity of the assignments process and ensure that the department complies with the requirements of the Foreign Service Act.

AFSA monitors the number of assignments, overseas and domestic, and the number of bidders to ensure that there are enough opportunities to meet the personal and professional development needs of members of the Service.

### The London Iran Watcher Position

At its Oct. 1 meeting, AFSA's Governing Board passed a unanimous motion strongly objecting to the department's decision regarding the FS-2 Iran Watcher position in London

*The Foreign Affairs Manual regulation regarding the Certificate of Need clearly states that the department must provide AFSA, which is "the Foreign Service's exclusive representative," with a signed Certificate of Need before the selected non-Foreign Service candidate is paneled.*

#### 3 FAM 2295 CERTIFICATE OF NEED

(CT:PER-726; 04-18-2014)

(State Only)

(Applies to Foreign Service and Civil Service employees)

a. A Certificate of Need is required when the Department fills a position with an exceptional circumstance candidate or fills a volunteer cable position with a Civil Service employee.

b. The Certificate of Need must:

(1) Describe the measures taken to find Foreign Service candidates to fill the position;

(2) Acknowledge that no bids were received from members of the Foreign Service when the position was advertised for 15 days or, alternatively, provide an explanation by the Director General as to why he or she determined the Foreign Service bids received were not from suitable bidders; and

(3) Explain why the Director General found that the selected candidate was best suited to fill the position.

c. The Department will provide the signed Certificate of Need to the Foreign Service's exclusive representative two working days in advance of the selected candidate's being paneled into the position.

(IROG Position Number 67700008).

The Iran Watcher program was launched, in part, to develop a cadre of Farsi-speaking Foreign Service employees to staff our overseas missions and in anticipation of any potential re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Iran.

In AFSA's view, this position should be available to all eligible Foreign Service bidders. It is not an appropriate position to include in the Overseas Development Program because of its uniqueness, its Farsi-language designation and the significant number of interested, qualified Foreign Service bidders for the position.

The London slot is the only Iran Watcher position in an English-speaking country. Moreover, from a taxpayer's perspective, it is a better return on investment for the U.S. government to provide

the one year of language training to an employee who can take a three-year assignment and has the possibility of additional overseas language-designated assignments in the future (i.e., a Foreign Service officer), rather than choose an employee who is limited to a single two-year overseas assignment (i.e., through the Overseas Development Program).

AFSA is working on an implementation dispute regarding a breach of contract on this matter. AFSA also reminds the department of its obligation to abide by the merit principles governing the Foreign Service and Civil Service personnel systems and the prohibition of any candidate pre-selection. Any Overseas Development Program position that is properly listed should be subject to free and fair competition. ■

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### APPLY FOR AFSA YOUTH SCHOLARSHIPS

The children of AFSA members (active duty or retired) can apply for college aid! Graduating high school seniors can apply for \$2,500 academic and art merit awards, and current undergraduates can apply for need-based financial aid scholarships ranging from \$3,000 to \$5,000.

The merit award program submission deadline is Feb. 6, 2015, and the need-based financial aid scholarship submission deadline is March 6, 2015. Not all who submit an application will receive an award.

Visit [www.afsa.org/scholar](http://www.afsa.org/scholar) for details, or contact AFSA Scholarship Director Lori Dec at (202) 944-5504 or [dec@afsa.org](mailto:dec@afsa.org).

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**Web site: [www.mytaxcpa.net](http://www.mytaxcpa.net)**

*Call for Nominations • Continued from page 41*

2. All nominations must be submitted in writing by letter, cable, fax or email. To be valid, they must, without exception, be received at this address no later than 5 p.m. on February 2, 2015. All written nominations must be addressed to the AFSA Elections Committee, 2101 E Street N.W., Washington, D.C., 20037. Members overseas can send “AFSA Channel” cables marked for delivery to the AFSA Elections Committee. Email nominations can be sent to [election@afsa.org](mailto:election@afsa.org). Faxed nominations can be sent to (202) 338-8244.

3. Nominations must be accompanied by evidence of eligibility (i.e., dues paid as of February 2, 2015).

4. Nominations may be submitted individually or in slates. To qualify as a slate, a proposed slate must have a minimum of four candidates from at least two constituencies. Slate designations will be noted on the ballot.

**Qualifications for Governing Board Membership.** Individuals meeting the following qualifications are eligible for nomination to one of the available positions:

1. The individual must be an AFSA regular member in good standing by February 2, 2015, and remain in good standing through the election process and, if elected, for his or her term of office.

2. The individual must not have a conflict of interest as defined in Section 1017(e) of the Foreign Service Act. Please see the “Conflicts of Interest” section below for more information.

**Conflicts of Interest.** Section 1017(e) of the Foreign Service Act restricts employees serving in certain positions within their agencies from participating in labor-management issues while serving on the Governing Board. Management officials and confidential employees, as well as those in positions that may raise or appear to raise a conflict of interest (as defined below) when the new Governing Board takes office on July 15, may not participate in Governing Board discussion, deliberations or decisions relating to labor-management issues. They may participate in AFSA Board activities that do not relate to labor-management issues. The Foreign Service Act also imposes a two-year pre- and post-AFSA “cooling off” period on employees who occupied or will occupy positions within their agency that involve labor-management relations or the formulation of personnel policies and programs of a foreign affairs agency.

a. Section 1017(e) of the Act, 22 USC 4117(e) states: “Participation in labor organizations restricted. (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this subchapter—(A) participation in the management of a labor organization for purposes of collective bargaining or acting as a representative of a labor organization for such purposes is prohibited under this

subchapter - (i) on the part of any management official or confidential employee; (ii) on the part of any individual who has served as a management official or confidential employee during the preceding two years; or (iii) on the part of any other employee if the participation or activity would result in a conflict of interest or apparent conflict of interest or would otherwise be incompatible with law or with the official functions of such employee; and (B) service as a management official or confidential employee is prohibited on the part of any individual having participated in the management of a labor organization for purposes of collective bargaining or having acted as a representative of a labor organization during the preceding two years. (2) For the purposes of paragraph (1)(A) (ii) and paragraph (1)(B), the term ‘management official’ does not include - (A) any chief of mission; (B) any principal officer or deputy principal officer; (C) any administrative or personnel officer abroad; or (D) any individual described in section 4102(12)(B), (C), or (D) of this title who is not involved in the administration of this subchapter or in the formulation of the personnel policies and programs of the Department.”

b. Section 1002 (12), 22 USC 4102(12) of the Foreign Service Act defines a **management official** as “an individual who: is a chief of mission or principal officer; occupies a position of comparable importance to chief of mission or principal officer; is serving as a deputy to the foregoing positions; is assigned to the Office of the Inspector General; or is engaged in labor-management relations or the formulation of personnel policies and programs of a foreign affairs agency.”

c. Section 1002 (6), 22 USC 4102(6) of the Act defines a **confidential employee** as “an employee who acts in a confidential capacity with respect to an individual who formulates or effectuates management policies in labor-management relations.” Employees who may have a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest include those who are “engaged in personnel work in other than a purely clerical capacity” (for example, employees assigned to non-clerical positions within the HR Bureau) and “employees engaged in criminal or national security investigations of other employees or who audit the work of individuals to ensure that their functions are discharged honestly and with integrity” (such as employees assigned to DS investigative units or those assigned to the OIG). See Section 1012(1) and (2), 22 USC 4112(1) and (2) of the Foreign Service Act.

As discussed above, the Foreign Service Act precludes these categories of individuals from participating in labor-management issues while serving on the Governing Board.

The Foreign Service Act also imposes a two-year pre and post “cooling off period” which restricts the movement of Foreign Service employees between certain positions on the AFSA Governing Board and certain Washington-based positions.

- **Pre-AFSA restrictions:** Any individual who has served: 1) in a management position in Washington in which he or she has engaged in labor-management relations or the formulation of personnel policies and programs; or 2) as a confidential employee to one of these management officials within two years prior to taking office in AFSA, is precluded from participating in labor-management issues while serving on the Governing Board.

- **Post-AFSA restrictions:** Employees who have participated in collective bargaining while serving on the AFSA Governing Board may not serve: 1) in a management position in Washington that involves labor-management relations or the formulation of personnel policies and programs; or 2) as a confidential employee to such management positions, for two years after leaving AFSA. Members should consider these restrictions before deciding whether to run for AFSA Governing Board positions covered by these restrictions.

Please direct questions regarding this issue to Sharon Papp, General Counsel, by email: [papps@state.gov](mailto:papps@state.gov). All other election-related queries should be addressed to the Committee on Elections by email: [election@afsa.org](mailto:election@afsa.org).

In addition to the above, due to AFSA efforts to educate Congress on issues related to Foreign Service conditions of employment, legislative proposals and other issues directly impacting the Foreign Service, employees serving in congressional fellowships may not serve on the AFSA Governing Board. A conflict or potential conflict of interest exists between their position in AFSA and their official duties. AFSA members serving as congressional fellows may run for the AFSA Governing Board provided their fellowship ends before the incoming board takes office on July 15, 2015.

## Accepting a Nomination

1. A nominee can indicate his or her acceptance of a nomination by written response to the Committee on Elections (using the same addresses indicated above under "Nominating Candidates"). Following receipt of nominations, an authorized representative of the Committee on Elections will promptly communicate with each nominee (excluding members who nominate themselves) to confirm their willingness to be a candidate. Nominees must confirm their acceptance in writing (using the same addresses indicated above under "Nominating Candidates") to the Committee on Elections no later than 17:00 EST on February 13, 2015. Any nominee whose written acceptance of nomination is not received by the Committee on Elections by this time will be considered to have declined candidacy.

2. All candidates accepting a nomination must identify the position or positions they have filled for the past two years prior to accepting the nomination. All candidates not seeking

a full-time AFSA position (President, State VP, USAID VP, FCS VP, FAS VP) must also identify the agency position they will be serving in beginning on July 15, 2015, when the Board takes office. This information is necessary to ensure compliance with section 1017(e) of the Foreign Service Act.

## Campaigning

1. **Campaign Statements.** All candidates will be given the opportunity to submit campaign statements for dissemination to AFSA members with the election ballots. Further information regarding such statements and editorial deadlines will be contained in the "Instructions to Candidates," which will be posted by the Elections Committee on the AFSA website ([www.afsa.org/elections/](http://www.afsa.org/elections/)) by December 12, 2014.

2. **Supplementary Statements.** Should candidates wish to mail supplementary statements to the membership, AFSA will make its membership mailing list or address labels available to the candidate upon request and at their expense. Further information on this and other campaign procedures will be included in the "Instructions to Candidates" mentioned above.

3. **Other Methods of Communication.** Department of Labor requirements prohibit individuals from using government resources (including email accounts) to campaign for AFSA positions.

## Voting

Ballots will be distributed on or about April 15, 2015, to each regular AFSA member as of March 16, 2015. Candidates or their representatives may observe the ballot distribution process if they so desire. Each member may cast one vote for President, Secretary, Treasurer and, in addition, one vote for a constituency Vice President and each Representative position in the member's constituency.

Regular members may cast their votes for candidates listed on the official ballot, or by writing in the name(s) of member(s) eligible as of March 16, 2015, or by doing both. To be valid, a ballot must be received by 8:00 a.m. on June 4, 2015, either (i) at the address indicated on the envelope accompanying the ballot or (ii) by online vote. More detailed balloting instructions will accompany the ballots.

## Vote Counting and Announcement of Results

On or about June 4, 2015, the Elections Committee will oversee the ballot tabulation and declare elected the candidate receiving the greatest number of votes for each position. Candidates or their representatives may be present during the tally and may challenge the validity of any vote or the eligibility of any voter. The committee will inform candidates individually of the election results by the swiftest possible

*Continued on page 54*

Call for Nominations • Continued from page 53

means and will publish the names of all elected candidates in the next issue of *The Foreign Service Journal*. The elected candidates will take office on July 15, 2015, as provided in the bylaws.

The Committee on Election members and supporting staff members may be reached at [election@afsa.org](mailto:election@afsa.org).

**Elections Committee Members**

Hon. Robert W. Farrand, Chair  
 Jenna Bucha  
 Mort Dworken  
 Russell Knight  
 Andrea Strano

**Staff Members**

Ian Houston—  
 Executive Director  
 Sharon Papp—  
 General Counsel  
 Janet Hedrick—  
 Director, Member Services ■

Proposed Bylaw Amendment • Continued from page 43

**Language for Changes on Board Size and Composition**

**Article V**

The Governing Board

Section 4. Manner of Election:

Each constituency having a minimum of 100 members as of the end of the month prior to the issuance of the call for nominations shall be entitled to a constituency vice president. In addition, each constituency shall be entitled to one representative for every 2,000 ~~each 1,000~~ members or fraction thereof, *so long as the fraction is greater than half*, as of the end of the month prior to the issuance of the call for nominations, provided that any constituency that for three consecutive months has a membership which would on that date have entitled it to an additional representative shall have an additional representative, who shall be appointed by the board. *Every agency shall have at least a Vice President, or if the minimum is not reached, a representative on the Board. Agencies with only a Vice President shall elect an alternate representative who may vote and participate in the absence of the Vice President as designated.*

Section 5. Meetings and Voting:

(b) Voting: *Each board member shall have one vote, with the exception of the alternate representatives described in Section 4, who may only vote and participate in the absence of the Vice President as designated.* A majority of the members of the board shall constitute a quorum and must be present for any vote. Board members who will be outside the Washington area for a board meeting may leave a written proxy with another board member who shall vote that proxy in accordance with the wishes of the absent member or, absent indication of such preferences, in accordance with his or her own preference.

*Note: The language of the proposed amendment has been indicated in strikethrough text and italics.*

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

**REMINDER:  
 NOMINATIONS FOR  
 PERFORMANCE AWARDS**

AFSA is now accepting nominations for one of its five awards recognizing exemplary performance.

The **Nelson B. Delavan Award** recognizes the work of a Foreign Service Office Management Specialist.

The **M. Juanita Guess Award** is conferred on a Community Liaison Office Coordinator who has demonstrated outstanding leadership.

The **Avis Bohlen Award** honors the volunteer accomplishments of a family member of a Foreign Service employee at post.

The **AFSA Achievement and Contributions to the Association Award** is for active-duty and retired members of AFSA.

The **Post Rep of the Year Award** is for the AFSA post representative who demonstrates sustained and successful engagement with AFSA membership at post.

Recipients are presented with a monetary prize and are honored at a ceremony in June in the Benjamin Franklin Diplomatic Reception Room at the State Department.

Deadline for nominations is Feb. 28, 2015. For details on the awards and to submit an online nomination, go to [www.afsa.org/performance](http://www.afsa.org/performance). Contact Special Awards and Outreach Coordinator Perri Green, at [green@afsa.org](mailto:green@afsa.org) or (202) 719-9700, for more information.

included in voting strength calculations.

For example, the current voting strength of the State constituency is calculated by dividing the total number of constituency votes (11 + State Vice President = 12) by the size of the Board less the three at-large officers

(29 – 3 = 26). Similarly, the voting strength of the State constituency under the new proposal would be calculated by dividing the total number of constituency votes (6 + State Vice President = 7) by the size of the Board less the three at-large officers (19 – 3 = 16). ■

## Why Ethics Matter in the Foreign Service

On Oct. 9, AFSA hosted an event on “Why Ethics Matter in the Foreign Service.”

Anthony J. Gray, the president and chief executive officer at the Institute for Global Ethics in Camden, Maine, spoke on professional ethics writ large and how they apply to the Foreign Service.

Gray outlined the points to consider: Is having an ethical framework necessary for a profession? Should the Foreign Service have a separate and uniform code of ethics? How would it be applied and enforced?

Before joining the Institute



Anthony Gray, president of the Institute for Global Ethics, addressed AFSA in October.

for Global Ethics, Gray served as global compliance officer at Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation, where he significantly

improved the global compliance culture within the organization.

AFSA's Committee for the

Foreign Service Profession and Ethics recently released the results of a survey it undertook to assess FS members' thinking in regard to ethical decision-making in their profession.

More than 70 percent of the 1,300 respondents support developing a code of ethics for the Foreign Service. To read the full report, go to [www.bit.ly/FS\\_Ethics](http://www.bit.ly/FS_Ethics).

Gray's talk, as well as the question-and-answer session that followed, can be viewed at [www.bit.ly/EthicsTalk](http://www.bit.ly/EthicsTalk). ■

—Debra Blome, Associate Editor

### NEWS BRIEF

#### AFSA SHARES FEDERAL HEALTH PLAN OPEN SEASON GUIDE

AFSA is pleased to provide online access to the *2015 Consumer Checkbook Guide to Federal Health Plans*. This member benefit can be accessed at [www.afsa.org/retiree](http://www.afsa.org/retiree). Click on the banner at the top of the page, and you will be directed to AFSA's Consumer Checkbook page. There is no need to log in, as the link is specific to AFSA for all our members. The link is now active and will remain so for the duration of Open Season, which runs through Dec. 8.



### ANNOUNCEMENT

#### JOIN AFSA'S SPEAKERS BUREAU

AFSA's long-running Speakers Bureau is always looking for new recruits. The bureau acts as a placement service of sorts for Foreign Service members who are interested in speaking opportunities in their communities.

Groups from all over the country—World Affairs Councils, Rotary/Kiwanis/Lions clubs, church and civic groups, universities, etc.—contact AFSA to request a speaker in their area on international affairs topics. AFSA then acts as a go-between, connecting the organization with potential speakers who fit the bill.

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# American College Rankings

## HOW THEY WORK AND WHAT THEY MEAN

This in-depth look at U.S. college rankings offers a fresh perspective on the high school student's college search and a wealth of resources to help find the "right" school.

BY FRANCESCA KELLY

**J**ust as your high school student begins his senior year, guess what pops up on the newsstand? That's right; it's the *U.S. News & World Report* annual special issue of America's top colleges.

Started 30 years ago, this list of ranked colleges has become a huge phenomenon among high school seniors, their parents, alumni, and the colleges and universities themselves. Although newer lists now exist, published by *Washington Monthly* and others, the *U.S. News* rankings are still the most popular.

But how helpful are they? Let's take them apart to see how they work. Then we'll look at some alternative lists of U.S. colleges that may be more useful in finding the right school.

### **U.S. News & World Report's Golden Egg**

*U.S. News* began ranking colleges back in 1983, based on a simple questionnaire sent to college presidents asking which colleges they considered "the best." In 1987, the publication became a stand-alone, annual issue of the magazine, and colleges began to take notice and demand more objective methodology. *U.S. News* then expanded its opinion survey to include deans and administrators, and added criteria such as SAT scores of applicants and the colleges' retention rates.

Over the years, the magazine's editors have met regularly with college officials, guidance counselors and others in an effort to respond to criticism, revise their methodology and expand their market.

Since the "Best Colleges" list was first

published, it has become enormously successful, and *U.S. News* has expanded rankings to include high schools, graduate schools and other institutions, as well as a new "Best Global Universities" list. Their Education Web page receives 30 million visits per month.

*U.S. News* offers a list of about 1,800 colleges and universities, which constitute roughly half of the total number of higher learning institutions in the United States.

These are divided into four categories:

- National liberal arts colleges
- National universities
- Regional colleges (North, South, Midwest and West)
- Regional universities (North, South, Midwest and West)

### **What's In the U.S. News Ranking?**

The following factors go into determining a college's score, and hence, its ranking. Each factor's weight is given as a

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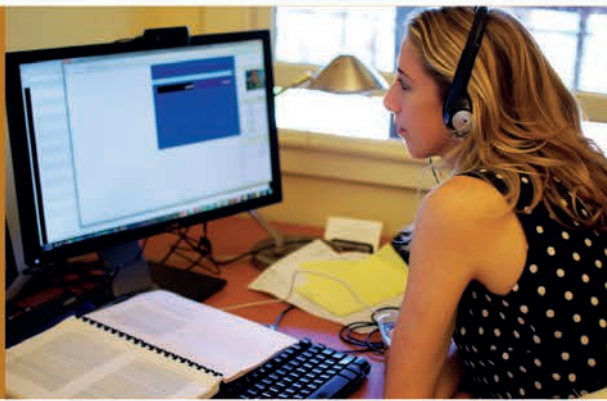
*Francesca Kelly is a freelance writer, editor and college application tutor. She served as AFSA News editor from 2009 to 2012 and is a frequent contributor to the Journal. She is married to Ambassador Ian Kelly, an FSO since 1985.*



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## The success of the U.S. News rankings has spawned other ranking indexes from other publications, news entities and college-related organizations.

percentage of the score.

**Academic Reputation (22.5 percent).** This is based on peer assessment, with surveys collecting data from college administrators and faculty, as well as high school guidance counselors.

**Retention (22.5 percent).** Eighty percent of this factor is based on the six-year graduation rate, and 20 percent on the freshman retention rate.

**Faculty Resources (20 percent).** One of the most complicated factors in

determining rank, this comprises several components: average class size and faculty salaries, as well as student-faculty ratio, highest degree in field, etc.

**Student Selectivity (12.5 percent).** Also using multifaceted methodology, student selectivity incorporates SAT and ACT scores for an entering freshman class (65 percent), as well as class rank, with a higher standard for national than for regional entities. The acceptance rate is also a factor in selectivity.

### Financial Resources (10 percent).

This is not about how much money a college has, but how much it spends on each student for instruction, research and student services. Spiffy dorms and Olympic-sized swimming pools don't factor into this measurement.

**Graduation Rate Performance (7.5 percent).** This is a relatively new factor, only in its second year. What this specifically measures is a class's actual rate of graduation compared to what was predicted for that class six years earlier. Students' test scores and financial aid are factored into the equation, since these have an effect on the timeliness of graduation.

**Alumni Giving Rate (5 percent).** This is considered an indication of alumni satisfaction.



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Colleges that choose not to take part in the rankings may still end up on the list: *U.S. News* footnotes them as “non-responders,” but gathers data on them from other sources, including the American Association of University Professors, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the Council for Aid to Education and the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics.

**Other College Rankings**

The success of the *U.S. News* rankings has spawned other ranking indexes from other publications, news entities and college-related organizations. And, of course, college guidebooks like *Fiske*, *Peterson*, *Princeton Review* and others that have been around for decades are

now online, as well. Here is a selection of some of those resources. Varying widely in methodology and focus, they are listed alphabetically.

*Fiske* is available as a printed guidebook and also as a useful college search website where you can search colleges by different categories and do a self-survey to help narrow down choices.

*Forbes* has ranked colleges using a methodology that is based more on outcomes than on applicant qualifications. Calling the *U.S. News* rankings “abstract” and “wasteful,” *Forbes’* list is centered on return on investment, with student satisfaction and post-graduate success among the biggest factors.

*Kiplinger* focuses its attention on “best value” institutions, divided into private

universities, private liberal arts colleges and public universities. There are charts detailing average amount of debt after graduation by school, for example.

*Money Magazine* recently introduced rankings that measure which schools give you the most bang for your tuition buck, focusing on quality of education, affordability and outcomes.

*The New York Times’* Upshot section ventured into alternative college rankings earlier this year, focusing on colleges that enroll students who are economically diverse.

*Niche’s* education portion of their website (formerly College Prowler) offers rankings that are based on student assessments and cover a variety of factors.

*Peterson’s* has been providing college

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From the *FSJ* Education Supplement June 2014

### The Revamped SAT: A Much-Needed Overhaul or Cosmetic Surgery?

BY FRANCESCA HUEMER KELLY

If you're a student, a parent or even a grandparent, most likely you've encountered the SAT. For much of its century-long existence, this multiple-choice test that aims to assess academic readiness for higher education has been one of the keys to college admission.

While a student's high school grade-point average is still the most important part of the college application, colleges also use SAT results in evaluating applicants.

Once called the Scholastic Aptitude Test, then the Scholastic Assessment Test, it's now simply the SAT™. For decades a two-part (Reading and Mathematics) test, the SAT incorporated a mandatory Writing section in 2005.

Recently, the College Board, the nonprofit corporation that oversees the SAT, announced that the biggest revamp in its history will be implemented in the spring of 2016. The SAT will reflect more of what is actually being learned in America's schools, and the College Board will make test preparation accessible to students of all income levels.

Here are the details:

- The entire process will be more transparent. The College Board is moving away from using obscure texts, tricky questions and unfamiliar vocabulary.
- The writing portion will become optional, and scoring will return to its pre-2005 potential total of 1,600 rather than 2,400. Each of the two required sections, Evidence-Based Reading

and Writing, and Math, will offer the traditional score range of 200-800. The optional essay score will be added separately. The optional essay will require more text-based analysis than in the past.

- Vocabulary words will be more familiar, less arcane. The College Board stresses that the test will emphasize a student's interpretation of the meaning of the word in context.
- America's important founding documents and meaningful texts will be used as a part of every SAT exam.
- The Mathematics section will be more focused, drawing from fewer math sub-genres. The College Board has renamed the three subsections of the Math component "Problem-Solving and Data Analysis," "The Heart of Algebra" and "Passport to Advanced Math." The focus will be on real-life math skills such as calculating percentages and ratios, along with a few representative geometry and trigonometry questions.
- Wrong answers will no longer be penalized.
- Free SAT test preparation will be available immediately through a joint venture with the Khan Academy.

*Francesca Huemer Kelly, a Foreign Service spouse, is a writer and college essay tutor living in Highland Park, Illinois. She writes frequently on education issues and is a former editor of AFSA News. To see the complete article, including a resources list, go to [www.afsa.org/education](http://www.afsa.org/education)*

**Although the media are making a fuss over the new U.S. News global rankings, London-based Times Higher Education has also been ranking global universities for years.**

search information for a long time, and its website offers practical college search tools, such as colleges listed by geography and major.

*Princeton Review* has a list for everything: best campus food, best professors, etc. Both their books and their website are student-oriented.

*Washington Monthly* came up with alternative rankings a few years ago, touting a list that “asks not what colleges can do for you, but what colleges are doing

for the country.” *Washington Monthly’s* website states: “We rate schools based on their contribution to the public good in three broad categories: Social Mobility (recruiting and graduating low-income students), Research (producing cutting-edge scholarship and Ph.D.s) and Service (encouraging students to give something back to their country).” This year, they also included a list of worst colleges.

*Wintergreen Orchard House*, one of the main compilers of statistics for institu-

tions of higher learning, is a destination for data-heads and guidance counselors who want a complete library of college data and statistics.

**What About Global Rankings?**

In late October, *U.S. News* released a new ranking index of the 500 top universities worldwide. Although many of the criteria used in the methodology remain subjective, such as “global reputation,” some of the U.S.-centric factors simply do not work when ranking schools in other countries, often because data such as selectivity are not measured by foreign universities.

*U.S. News* relied heavily on Thomson-Reuters’ Academic Reputation Survey, which measures such factors as number of



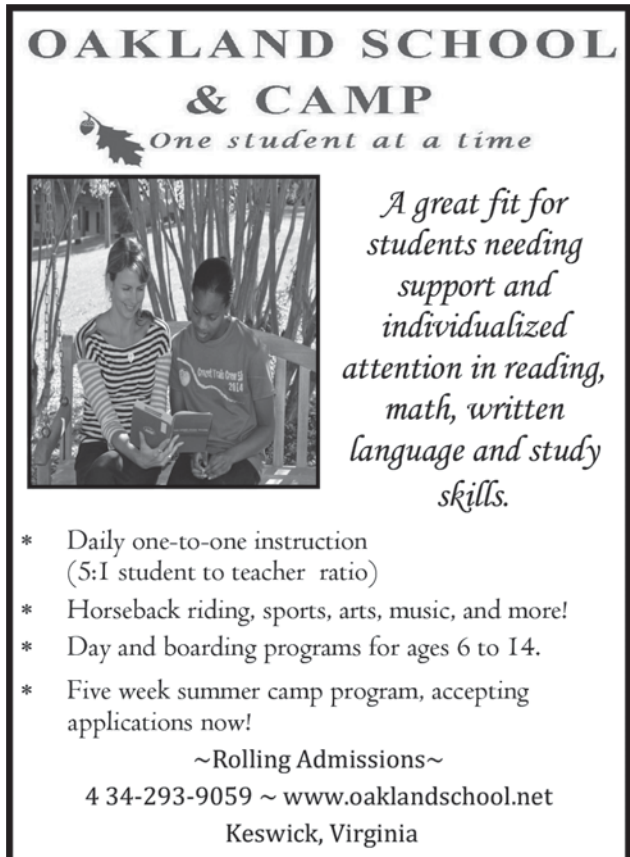
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doctorates awarded, number of publications from faculty, etc.

Interestingly, while Princeton often gets the sought-after number one spot on the U.S. rankings list, Harvard came out on top in this index, followed by three more U.S. institutions: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Berkeley and Stanford. Oxford and Cambridge are also in the top 10, as well as Caltech, UCLA, the University of Chicago and Columbia University.

Because research and publications are heavily weighted, small American liberal arts colleges don't stand much of a chance of getting ranked here.

Perusing this list may be of value to the Foreign Service dependent who wants to expand his or her educational opportunities beyond the United States. It also spot-

lights those American universities that may have a better reputation worldwide.

Although the media are making a fuss over the new *U.S. News* global rankings, London-based *Times Higher Education* has also been ranking global universities for years. Seven out of the top 10 schools on their list are American universities.

Sound familiar? Note that its reliance on Thomson-Reuters for data means that the *U.S. News'* new global list is more or less identical to the *THE* list. Other lesser-known lists of global universities can be found online, as well.

### Putting Rankings in Perspective

So you live overseas, and you've got to narrow down your choices for college without a whole lot of knowledge.

Wouldn't college ranking indexes be a good place to start?

The answer is a very qualified yes, as long as you understand that rankings are only a small part of a much bigger picture.

Mona Molarsky, an education and arts writer who also counsels students as the online "College Strategist" explains: "College rankings are mostly used by people who aren't very familiar with the educational landscape in the United States. If you consult these rankings with the understanding that the numbers are really just crude, ballpark estimates, you can get a general idea of a school's reputation."

Molarsky admits that using the rankings as a basis for comparison between schools might encourage a student to "dig further," but cautions against taking the

From the *FSJ* Education Supplement December 2013

## The Revised Common App

BY FRANCESCA KELLY

The Common Application, or "Common App" ([www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)), was designed 35 years ago by a group of 15 colleges as a way to streamline the American college application process. Since then, it has grown steadily in popularity each year, and more than 520 member institutions now utilize the application. A tool like the Common App makes sense: applications to colleges have increased exponentially in the past decade; today most high school seniors apply to seven or more schools.

The new Common App includes the following sections, each of which can be filled out online and saved until the application is complete:

- Profile (contacts, demographics, geography)
- Family (household, parent/guardian, siblings)
- Education (current school, history, academics)
- Testing (results of college entrance and other exams)
- Activities (10 slots maximum, a new limitation)
- Essay (250-650 words in answer to one of five questions, or "prompts")
  - Explanations (a way to explain disciplinary actions, criminal activity or interruption of education)
  - Additional Information (optional, where you can provide information not covered in the rest of the application)

- College Page One (general information needed by the colleges you are applying to. There will be one of these pages for each of your colleges.)

- College Page Two (an additional writing supplement if required by your selected colleges)

Although the Common App has been offered online since 1996, until this year it was also available in paper form for those who eschewed the online process. But the current (2013-2014) application season marks the start of a paperless, completely Web-based process.

With this change have come a number of other changes to the application. Of these, the most important are in the new Writing section, including revised prompts and a more generous essay word length.

That's the good news. Unfortunately, the new Common App is also full of glitches—some merely inconvenient, others more serious. More about those later. ...

*Francesca Kelly, a Foreign Service spouse, is a writer and college essay application tutor who writes frequently on education issues. She is a former editor of AFSA News. To see the complete article, with detailed pointers for FS students in particular, go to [www.afsa.org/education](http://www.afsa.org/education)*



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## One way the rankings can be helpful is to allow students to compare their transcripts and admissions test scores with those of the “typical student” at a certain university.

rank of any particular college seriously: “Should you base your college decision on the fact that *U.S. News* ranked Williams College #1 among national liberal arts colleges this year, while they ranked Haverford College #8? Absolutely not.”

Many experts agree that rankings or “top college” lists are probably not a good way to make a college decision, and some believe they are, in fact, harmful. In a recent article in *Forbes* (yes, the same

magazine that publishes its own college rankings), writer Andrew Kelly explains that colleges can manipulate their standing in the rankings by raising tuition and rejecting more applicants, thus making them more selective.

He adds: “As long as we continue to define ‘the best colleges’ as those that enroll the best students—as opposed to those that teach their students the most or deliver the best return on investment—

rankings competition will do little to expand educational opportunity.”


### Lies, Darn Lies, and Statistics

Colleges can manipulate rankings in many ways—some ethical, some not. For example, if a college wait-lists applicants whom they would ordinarily accept but are not sure will attend, those students will not count as “accepted students” unless they decide to enroll.

As a result, the “percentage of accepted students who enroll” statistic, also known as yield, which is used by many indexes, stays high for that college. Every college wants to be considered its students’ top choice, after all.

Other ways of manipulating statistics over the years have included offering




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[www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1958.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1958.htm)



incentives to admitted students to retake SATs to get a higher score; not admitting students with lower scores until later in the year after data is submitted; and, of course, encouraging as many students as possible to apply, even if they have no hope of being admitted, simply so the school can reject more of them, upping its selectivity.

Some schools have been found to conveniently “leave out” SAT and other admission test scores of their international applicants, as non-native English speakers tend to do poorly on these tests. Other schools have reported as an applicant anyone who had completed even part of their application, even if that student never actually applied.

When colleges have been discovered to have deliberately falsified data, as Claremont-McKenna did a few years ago, they have been “punished” by being left off the list for a year. In the latest *U.S. News* “Best Colleges” list, Claremont-McKenna is back, with a coveted number-eight ranking among national liberal arts colleges.

Even though *U.S. News* and other ranking indexes rely on independent data services to a certain extent, most of the data they receive is from the colleges themselves. Flagler College in Florida is the latest college among a growing list to have admitted to inflating data such as SAT scores for the *U.S. News* rankings.

### The Pressure of Rank

As mentioned earlier, some colleges have chosen not to take part in ranking indexes. Reed College is perhaps the most notable, yet *U.S. News* still ranks it #77 of national liberal arts colleges, based on data gathered elsewhere—a rank some experts feel is meaningless. (Reed provides its own data on its website.)

But most colleges do take part in at



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least some ranking indexes, devoting time and resources to fill out surveys and questionnaires from data-compiling agencies. As cumbersome as it is to participate, opting out may hurt a college or university's standing in the rankings, or even disqualify them altogether.

In fact, not answering just one question can keep a school from getting a rank. Kristin McKinley, associate director of research administration at Lawrence University, a small liberal arts college on the banks of the Fox River in leafy Appleton, Wisconsin, explains: "For a school to be ranked in *U.S. News Best Colleges* (2015 edition), there was a single question determining eligibility: Does your institution make use of SAT, ACT or SAT Subject Test scores in admission decisions for first-

time, first-year, degree-seeking applicants? A school that answered 'no' was listed as 'Unranked.'"

Because methodology varies among ranking entities, some colleges fare better with one index than with another. For example, among the data collected by many ranking indexes, graduation rate is perhaps the most common factor and tends to be weighted the highest.

"Yet even this figure varies based on type and calculation," says McKinley. "At our institution, we focus on a six-year rate, given we have a double-degree program and many of our students have more than one major."

In other words, if a ranking index uses a four-year rather than a six-year graduation rate, it would tend to work against

a school that offers double majors or combined degree programs.

### What's Missing?

"College rankings are poor guides with regard to the one thing that should really matter: Will this particular student find this school to be an optimal learning environment? No ranking can answer that question," argues George Leef, director of research for the John William Pope Center for Higher Education.

Decrying the idea of "elite" schools that appear to offer a better education than schools low on the ranking list, Leef points out that many students learn more and better at small colleges whose professors are more dedicated to teaching than to big-name research.

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Indeed, there are certain components to a successful college experience that are not going to appear in ranking indexes: for example, mentoring opportunities, whether the college is a “commuter school” and empties out on weekends, or is near or in a city with a rich cultural environment.

Factors that are especially important for Foreign Service kids, such as how close the college is to stateside relatives, the cost of overseas airfare and how many international students there are on campus don’t show up in a ranking. Yet these are vital issues; they require more research than just looking at a number on a list.

### What’s Good about Rankings?

According to Northwestern University Associate Provost for University Enrollment Michael Mills, ranking indexes can be useful “if they measure meaningful aspects of the undergraduate experience, and are used in conjunction with all the sources of information about individual colleges.”

Determining which experiences are meaningful is up to the individual, but Mills posits that they may include “small class sizes, academic credentials of entering freshmen (learning from peers) and success rates (retention and graduation rates).”

One way the rankings can be helpful is to allow students to compare their transcripts and admissions test scores with those of the “typical” student at a certain university. That will give a clearer idea of their chances of admission.

Students can also use the lists as a jumping-off point, and then find the specific indexes, using the sites listed above and others, to assess factors like geography, size or specific programs in certain majors.

Reading guidebooks and using websites such as *About.com*’s college search sec-

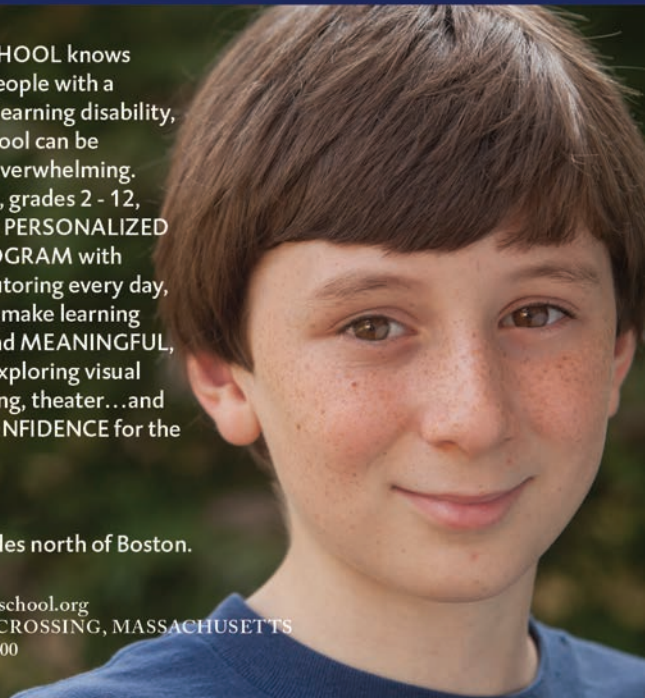
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tion allow a student to delve deeper than simply perusing single lists of college rankings.

**On Prestige**

For better or for worse, in some circles there is still importance attached to prestige. Going to a “name” school, or at least one that most people have heard of, may open certain doors, and students need to consider that.

Yes, we all know there are plenty of wonderful colleges out there where students get a fabulous education. But if prestige is important to a student, then the rankings do show what college administrators regard as the most elite institutions.

Yet prestige isn’t everything. Loren

Pope, author of *Colleges That Change Lives*, and *Washington Post* education columnist Jay Mathews, author of *Harvard Schmarvard*, have argued along with others that a college’s name is not enough to guarantee a good education, or at least, the right education for every individual.

Pope’s very popular *Colleges That Change Lives* inspired the nonprofit organization by the same name. CTCL is dedicated to the advancement and support of a student-centered college search process. Founded in 1998, it hosts information sessions nationwide and coordinates outreach efforts with high school counselors and college counseling agencies to educate families on the importance of understanding an

individual student’s needs and how they “fit” with the mission and identity of a particular college community.

The CTCL website provides valuable information, news and resources on current issues in higher education, as well as common misperceptions about the college search process.

Says one Foreign Service parent whose child went to a Virginia public university, “I went to a ‘name’ school, basically hated it, lived on bagels and ramen, worked 20-plus hours a week the entire time, and came out of it in debt.”

And parent Victoria Hess, whose son Andrew attended the University of Wyoming (ranked #161 on the *U.S. News* list of national universities), says, “To graduate, he had to pass a rigorous national

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engineering exam. He would have had to pass the same exam at Johns Hopkins (ranked #12), where he also was accepted, but which he rejected due to cost. And at Wyoming, Andrew found a mentor—someone who really cared about him.”

### Are Rankings Changing?

In a 2013 speech at the State University of New York-Buffalo, President Barack Obama declared a crisis in college affordability and the need for restructuring, including a new ratings system for colleges based on return on investment. *Washington Monthly*, which started “alternative” rankings in 2005, immediately welcomed this news as in line with their own philosophy.

The trend toward value for money in college ranking indexes is on the upswing. *Washington Monthly's* methodology, for example, favors more public institutions than elite private ones, and applauds colleges like Berea College, which awards every admitted student a scholarship covering tuition.

Other college rankings indexes are starting to shift their focus to value of investment, as well. And why shouldn't they, when college expenses run into the tens, even hundreds of thousands of dollars?

For that reason and others, choosing a college is generally the first major decision a young adult makes. And it's a very personal decision. A short glance over the rankings can be helpful. But you can lose perspective quickly and buy into the too-prevalent idea that an “elite” college is the only worthwhile place for your education.

As college strategist Molarsky says, “It's important to take all these numbers with a big grain of salt, because it's really impossible to quantify the quality of an education.” ■



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Bement School, The	66	219	49/51	17	14	K, 1-9	NA	Y	N	53	Y	N	51,360
Fairfax Christian School, The	83	330	50/50	20	30	K-12	Y/N	N	N	10	Y	N	26,500*
Hampshire Country School	85	25	All boys	100	5	3-12	N/N	N	Y	65	N	N	53,500
International School of Minnesota, The	72	330	51/49	6	35	PS-12	Y/N	N	N	16	Y	Y	35,500

**Junior High/Senior High**

Grier School	81	307	All girls	85	50	7-12	Y/N	Y	Y/Y	120	Y	N	48,800
Saint James School	73	225	64/36	75	25	8-12	N/Y	Y	Y/Y	65	Y	N	42,600
St. Andrew's School – Rhode Island	59	222	63/37	40	23	6-12, PG	Y/N	Y	Y/Y	17	Y	N	51,500
St. Margaret's School	68	130	All girls	80	30	8-12	Y/N	Y	Limited	50	Y	Y	45,900
Stoneleigh-Burnham School	73	155	All girls	71	40	7-12, PG	N/Y	Y	Limited	100	Y	N	51,892

**Senior High**

Christchurch School	75	221	67/33	70	30	9-12	Y/N	Y	Y/Y	50	Y	Limited	45,600
Episcopal High School	70	435	50/50	100	14	9-12	Y	Y	Y	32	Y	N	49,700
George School	67	538	51/49	52	26	9-12	Y/Y	Y	N	40	Y	N	53,600
Madeira School	86	310	All girls	55	12	9-12	Y/N	Y	Y	12	Y	N	54,555
New Hampton School	65	325	60/40	80	30	9-12, PG	Y/Y	Y	Y/Y	50	Y	N	53,700
Putney School, The	81	228	44/56	77	18	9-12, PG	N	N	Y	90	Y	Limited	32,100-50,800
St. Mark's School	85	350	48/52	74	21	9-12	N/N	Y	N	30	N	N	53,000
Wyoming Seminary	83	451	55/45	41	27	9-12, PG	Y/N	N	N	10	Y	Y	46,800

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Gow School, The	79	150	96/4	89	33	7-12, PG	NA	N	Y	20	Y	Y	60,000
Kildonan School, The	66	80	65/35	60	8	2-12, PG	NA	Y	Y	90	N	N	69,000
Landmark School	71	471	60/40	35	3	2-12, PG	NA	N	Y	25	N	N	51,300-67,600
Oakland School	62	50	50/50	35	14	3-8	NA	N	Y	75	N	N	48,000

**Overseas**

American School of Bombay	63	760	50/50	N/A	88	EC3-12	N/Y	Y	Y		Y	N	
Berlin Brandenburg International School	79	700	55/45	20	65	K-12	Y/Y	N	Y	15	Y	N	46,000 <sup>a</sup>
Carlucci American International School of Lisbon	58	580	50/50	NA	50	PK-12	N/Y	N	Limited	22	Y	NA	9,344-21,790
Frankfurt International School	63	1,750	50/50	0	70	K-12	N/Y	N	Limited	19	Y	N	26,377
International School Frankfurt-Rhein-Main	67	950	50/50	NA	66	PK-12	Y/Y	N	N	6	Y	N	21,225
Jakarta International School	68	2,650	50/50	NA	85	PK-12	Y/Y	N	Limited	30	Y	N	12,960-20,900
John F. Kennedy School Berlin	65	1,650	50/50	NA	50	K-12	Y/Y	N	Limited	15	Y	N	None
Leysin American School in Switzerland	87	340	53/47	100	80	8-12, PG	N/Y	Y	Limited	75	Y	N	88,000 <sup>a,b</sup>
St. Stephen's School Rome	83	274	49/51	14	61	9-12, PG	Y/Y	Y	N	12	Y	N	46,410
TASIS The American School in England	77	740	50/50	26	46	PK-12	Y/Y	N	Limited	8	Y	N	59,000 <sup>a,b</sup>
TASIS The American School in Switzerland	77	740	50/50	67	75	PK-7, PG	Y/Y	Limited	N	3	Y	N	83,000 <sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Dollar value is subject to exchange rate. <sup>b</sup> Scholarship/Aid for federal employees.  
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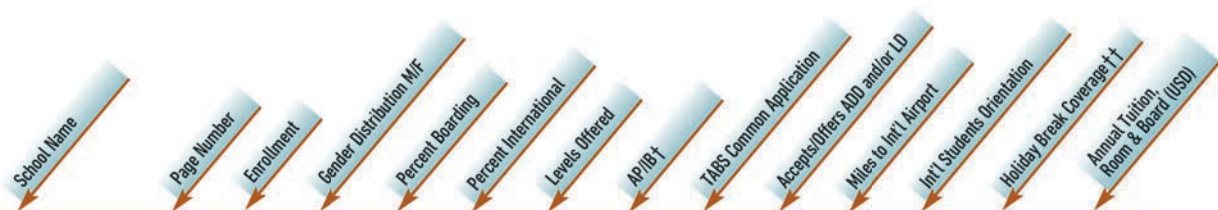
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Hargrave Military Academy	69	310	All boys	92	10	7-12, PG	Y/N	N	N	76	Y	N	33,795
Missouri Military Academy	71	247	All boys	95	42	6-12, PG	Y/N	Y	Y/Y	90	Y	N	33,100

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**Other**

DACOR	67, 75	DACOR Bacon House Foundation offers Dreyfus scholarships to children & grandchildren of FSOs attending Yale or Hotchkiss. <a href="http://www.dacor@dacorbacon.org">www.dacor@dacorbacon.org</a>											
Family Liaison Office Department of State	68	Information and resources for Foreign Service families. Contact <a href="mailto:FLOAskEducation@State.gov">FLOAskEducation@State.gov</a>											
Foreign Service Youth Foundation	84	A support network for U.S. for Foreign Service Youth worldwide											

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# Have You Considered Boarding School?

The boarding school option has much to offer Foreign Service kids.

BY LAWRENCE JENSEN

**N**ews of an overseas posting brings much excitement and planning for a diplomatic family. When children are part of the equation, a discussion about educational options invariably begins: What are the schools like in our new country? What about college placement? How safe will life be for my child in our new post? Will my child be comfortable in his or her new environment? Are we ready, as a family, to consider other educational options?

Continuity and social stability for teens in the family is often a major concern, one that drives lots of dinner-time discussion. “Another move? You’re kidding me, right?” one student recalls exclaiming to his parents at news of an upcoming post change. “It was just too much,” he added. “I really felt divided. Living abroad was appealing, but at the same time, I wanted to stay stateside.”

For this student, the discussion had

less to do with the excitement of going abroad with his family, than it did with his ability to maintain a measure of constancy in his life. Like many other children with parents working abroad, this student chose an American boarding school.

## An International Atmosphere

The Association of Boarding Schools lists tens of thousands of students in member schools, most of them in the United States. Nearly half of the boarding students in these schools are from countries outside the U.S., and many of the students who carry American passports are the children of parents working abroad.

The international “feel” of a boarding school campus offers a measure of familiarity to diplomatic dependents, because their worldviews give them the ability to adapt to their new surroundings quickly and easily, and to make friends anywhere.

A senior prefect at his Virginia board-

ing school, Alex Moreno feels that his international experiences have helped him to understand the angst of being the new kid in school: “I know that adjusting to new surroundings is sometimes not easy for some kids, and I like to reach out and use what I’ve learned about settling in. Living in different cultures has helped me to be open-minded and flexible.”

Student Max Monical has had a similar experience. Because many cultures and nationalities can be found on a single dormitory hall, Max believes, “anyone can fit in. I tend to try to bring different cliques together as much as I can. I feel safe and confident, because the teachers encourage us to pursue our interests.”

Max’s sister Samantha led the way to boarding school, arriving a year ahead of him. When it was his turn, he confesses to having had some reservations about boarding school life: “To be frank, I dreaded the idea, because I thought it would be strict and that I would have no freedom. I couldn’t wait to get back to school this year.”



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## The ABCs of Education Allowances

BY PAMELA WARD

Employees of government agencies assigned overseas are granted allowances to help defray the cost of an education for their children in kindergarten through 12th grade, one equivalent to that provided by public school systems in the United States.

In most cases, posts abroad are served by one or more English-language, American curriculum schools. The majority of these are nongovernmental, nonprofit, nondenominational, independent schools, usually with a board of directors establishing policy and a superintendent, headmaster or principal as the senior administrator. Even though these schools may be called American, they are not entities of the U.S. government and space is not guaranteed for U.S. embassy children.

Some receive government grants for specific purposes, but these grants represent a small percentage of their overall budget. Children of many nationalities attend these schools—including, in most schools, a significant percentage of host-country students.

The allowances for a specific post are determined by the fees charged by a school identified as providing a basic U.S.-type education. Parents may use this allowance to send their children to a different school of their choice—say, a parochial or foreign-language institution—as long as the cost does not exceed that of the “base” school. If the alternative school is more expensive than the “base” school, the difference would be an out-of-pocket expense for the parents.

An allowance covers only expenses for those services usually available without cost in American public schools, including tuition, transportation and textbooks. Fees for lunches,

field trips, computers or school uniforms are not covered, even if required by the school.

Parents may also elect to home-school their children while at post, using a home study program or a virtual online educational program. They will receive an allowance to purchase materials and services while posted abroad, but this allowance will not be continued if they are reassigned to the United States.

If a foreign country does not have a secular, English-language school with an American curriculum, or has such a school that goes only through certain grades, an away-from-post or “boarding school” allowance is provided. A lump sum, varying from post to post, is allotted to cover the estimated cost of tuition, room, board and travel to post during school vacations. Parents may choose the boarding school they prefer.

There is no special funding for parents or students to visit schools in advance of application or for an interview, even if one is required. Some schools will agree to do an interview via Skype or Facetime. The allowance will not be paid for a child to attend a school in the United States if there is a parent (natural, adoptive or step) residing there, because the assumption in that case is that the child could attend a public school.

The U.S. government does not provide an allowance for college or other post-secondary education. However, one round-trip per year to post is provided for students studying at universities in the United States through the Educational Travel Allowance. In 2006, Congress amended the statute to offer this allowance to students studying at universities abroad. Also allowed is the shipment of 250 pounds of unaccompanied air baggage or the equivalent cost in storage for each college or

boarding school student.

All funding for education is processed by the financial management officer at the post where the employee is assigned. At some posts the embassy or consulate works very closely with the school or schools, and the billing is handled directly. In other instances, the employee will pay a school fee, or pay for an airline ticket or storage, and then submit bills to the FMO for reimbursement. Although a student may start school at the beginning of a semester if a parent has been officially assigned to a post, the parent may not be reimbursed for any school expenses until he or she arrives at post.

There are several offices in the Department of State prepared to help you understand how the educational allowances work, and what choices you have for your children. These include the Office of Overseas Schools ([www.state.gov/m/a/os](http://www.state.gov/m/a/os)), the Office of Allowances ([www.state.gov/m/a/als](http://www.state.gov/m/a/als)) and the Family Liaison Office ([www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1958.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1958.htm)).

We hope that you will get in touch with us if you have any questions about your situation. Although these offices are part of the Department of State, the same allowances apply to most civilian federal employees under chief-of-mission authority overseas. For information or assistance contact [FLOAskEducation@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskEducation@state.gov) or call (202) 647-1076.

*Pamela Ward is a former regional education officer in the State Department's Office of Overseas Schools. She served previously as the education and youth officer in the Family Liaison Office. Her article, originally published in the June 2007 FSJ, has been updated to reflect developments since then.*



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His point of view is an interesting one, but not that unique: he loves the personal independence he has found in boarding school, but at the same time he misses some of the freedoms of life at home. “My days are structured and busy,” he notes, “but in my free time, I can hang out with my friends, work out in the fitness center, go on weekend shopping trips and to dances at other schools.”

In an exhaustive study of boarding school students, graduates and their parents, TABS found that 87 percent of boarding school alumni report being “very well prepared” for college. In

addition, the study found that boarding school students spent twice as much time outside of class with teachers and coaches than did students in public schools.

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Not surprisingly, 86 percent of boarding school students report being “very satisfied” with their family lives, even though they did not live at home. Clearly, the sense of community, the academic rigor and the dedication of the adults in boarding schools are all valuable.

Schools that are primarily boarding institutions will tend to offer more

features and services for students whose parents live far away. An international student office, or a dean charged with boarding student management, is decisive in creating and maintaining programs that are important to a boarder.

Weekend activities, health care, supervision, dormitory and food all head the list of topics of interest for boarding students, but especially for those for whom the campus is their home away from home.

When Samantha arrived at boarding school, she was uncertain about how—and even whether—the “day” students (those who live locally, and do

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### From the *FSJ* Education Supplement June 2011 **Promoting Your Child's Emotional Health**

BY REBECCA GRAPPO

Despite the spread of globalization and the sharp increase in the size of the American expatriate population around the world, a clear understanding of the emotional and psychological demands and implications of an internationally mobile lifestyle—for children, in particular—is still at a premium.

And, at one time or another, most Foreign Service parents ask themselves the same questions: What am I doing to my kid? Is this globally nomadic lifestyle a good thing or a bad thing?

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions; but there are ways to protect and promote the emotional well-being and resilience of internationally mobile children.

*This is excerpted from the article by the same title by Rebecca Grappo, an FS spouse and certified educational planner. The complete article can be accessed online at [www.afsa.org/educationarticles](http://www.afsa.org/educationarticles).*

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## Many boarding schools have some sort of host-family program that connects day families with boarding students.

not board) would interact with boarders. “Many of my friends are day students, and they are just great,” she smiles.

Many boarding schools have some sort of host-family program that connects day families with boarding students. Such host families can be excellent resources for boarders, welcoming them into their homes during short breaks and weekends and attending plays and sports contests to cheer on the boarders. They can also be an important link between

boarding and day students.

An adviser who is up-to-date about various aspects of the boarding students’ lives is another important element, as well as the teachers who live on campus, and whose focus is the well-being of the boarders.

All three students say that they miss their parents, but feel supported and inspired by a community that is focused on their progress and success. “Anyone who can go to boarding school really

should consider it,” says Alex, with Samantha and Max nodding in agreement.

If you are considering boarding school for your child, contact the Family Liaison Office’s Education and Youth team at the U.S. Department of State. Leah Wallace, FLO’s Education and Youth Officer, encourages all families under chief of mission authority to contact FLO. Wallace adds, “FLO can happily assist with your boarding school selection and navigation through the allowance regulations.”

For more information, email [FLO-AskEducation@state.gov](mailto:FLO-AskEducation@state.gov) or visit FLO’s website at [www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo). ■



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*Telepractice: Answers to the Special Ed Puzzle Overseas*  
by Erin Long

From the *FSJ* Education Supplement June 2013  
**Thinking Through Educational Options  
 For Your Foreign Service Child**

BY REBECCA GRAPPO

It's hard to predict how a teenager will react to the idea of an international move. Some see it as a grand adventure and look forward to the change of lifestyle with eagerness and enthusiasm. Yet many parents worry that they might face the opposite reaction: open mutiny, complete with accusations of ruining the child's life. Of course, the reaction could also be somewhere in between—or both, depending on the day.

Each teenager is different, but one thing is universal: choosing a school is not only about feeding the mind, but also feeding the young person's appropriate social and emotional development. That makes it a doubly important decision, one for which consideration of the child's resilience is essential.

Though there are many benchmarks for determining the suitability of a school, it is important to keep in mind that every individual has their own needs. A school that is great for one student may be a disaster for another.

Here are some of the things to consider:

- Size
- Curriculum
- Extracurricular activities
- Peer group
- School culture
- College counseling
- Safety

*For a full discussion of each of these aspects of choosing a school, as well as a discussion of the types of schools and alternative approaches that are available to meet the particular needs of FS kids, go to [afsa.org/educationarticles](http://afsa.org/educationarticles) to access the complete article.*

*Rebecca Grappo is a certified educational planner and the founder of RNG International Educational consultants, LLC. Married to a retired career Foreign Service officer, she has raised their three children internationally.*

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- June 6—register by May 8

These dates are tentative.

Please note that in some countries, you must register for an SAT test date — about 10 days earlier than the above registration dates — through an international representative. Check the College Board website for more details.



**ACT (register online at [www.act.org](http://www.act.org))**

- Feb. 7—register by Jan. 9
- Apr. 18—register by Mar. 13
- June 13—register by May 8

Only some of the ACT test dates offer an optional writing test.

Whether you take this test depends on the requirements of the colleges you are interested in. If you are a good writer, it's advisable to take the ACT that offers the writing test.

Please note that the ACT is not offered on all dates in all countries. Plan well ahead of time!

From the *FSJ* Education Supplement December 2013

**A Parent's Guide to Psychoeducational Evaluations**

BY CHAD C. NELSON

As parents, we strive to help our children as much as possible. Despite our best efforts, however, we may see our children struggling in areas.

These struggles may occur early in a child's development, manifested as difficulty understanding directions, learning to read or managing social interactions. For others, the challenge may arise as a child progresses in age, whether it involves reading comprehension, completing tests in the allotted time period, attending to tasks or organizing tasks and materials.

Despite assistance, these struggles may persist, leaving parents, children and teachers feeling frustrated or helpless. Under those circumstances, psychoeducational evaluation may open the door to a greater understanding of the child for everyone involved and help point the way toward solutions.

For Foreign Service families, in particular, psychoeducational evaluation may help identify academic intervention and accommodations that may be necessary for children entering or continuing on in American and international schools around the world, as well as transitioning from one school to the other. For FS children who are beginning to make the transition to college, evaluation may help identify accommodations that may be necessary in college. Evaluation can also help students prepare for higher education by identifying the ways in which they learn most efficiently.

*Chad C. Nelson is a licensed psychologist in private practice in the Lutherville, Md., area. To see the complete article, go to [www.afsa.org/education](http://www.afsa.org/education).*



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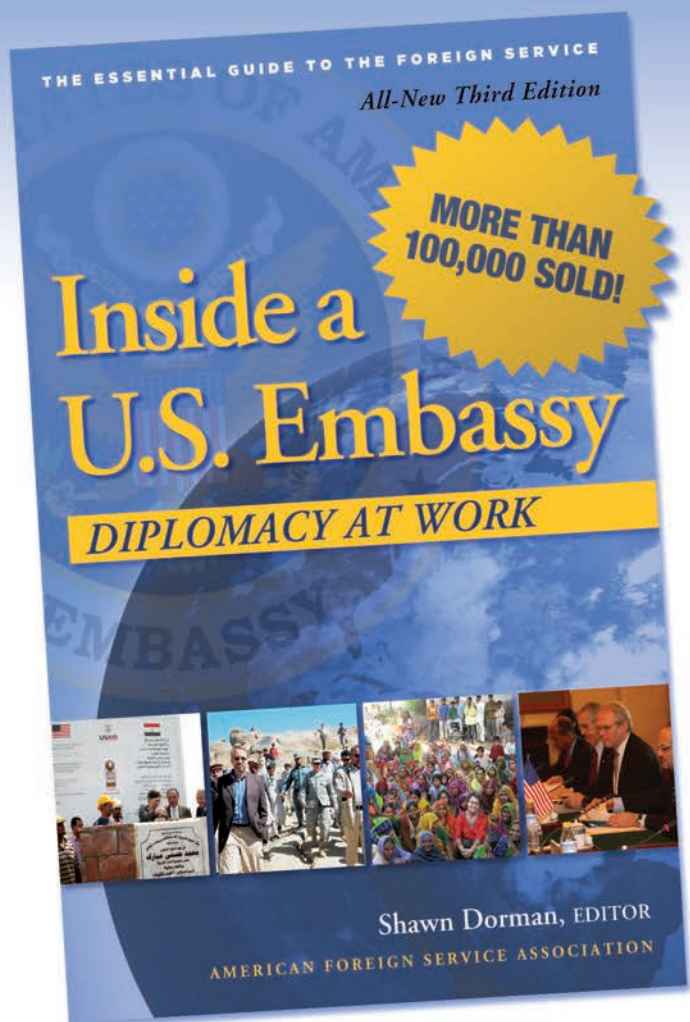
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## Still Ours to Lose

### The Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan, 2001-2014

Carlotta Gall, Houghton Mifflin, 2014 \$28.00/hardcover; \$9.24/Kindle, 329 pages.

REVIEWED BY KEITH MINES

Among the plethora of books coming out on Afghanistan, Carlotta Gall's stands out for two reasons.

First is the length of time she has put into covering the story—starting just after 9/11 as a full-time *New York Times* journalist, but also in some ways going back another generation. Her father, Sandy, published *Afghanistan—Travels with the Mujahideen* in 1988 and gives credit “to my daughter Carlotta, who processed the words.” Carlotta's understanding of Afghanistan spans the better part of three decades, and she has stayed with the story while others have moved on, developing a true affection and respect for the Afghan people while coming to terms with their contradictions and flaws.

Second is her emphasis on Pakistan. The book's central thesis comes from a conversation with the late Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, who coined the phrase that is its title: “We may be fighting the wrong enemy in the wrong country.”

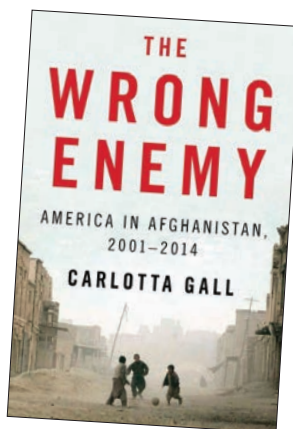
Gall is not alone in stressing this point. Ambassador James Dobbins wrote in 2008 that unless Pakistan can be persuaded to stand down from its militant meddling in Afghan affairs “there is little likelihood that Afghanistan will ever be capable of securing its own territory,” and Bing West covered similar ground in *The Wrong War: Grit, Strategy and the Way Out of Afghanistan*.

Gall, however, uses her uncanny

access to follow the story in detail back and forth across the border, making explicit the linkages that others have merely extrapolated. She appears to have spent almost as much time in Pakistan as Afghanistan, citing in very comprehensive detail how Islamabad has for decades supported militant proxies in Afghanistan and India to keep its enemies off balance.

This is the government, she writes, “that famously formed seven different Afghan mujahedeen parties to fight the Soviet Union, so that none dominated the resistance.”

She delves into Pakistani politics with sensitivity and depth, outlining the tragedy of missed opportunities to develop a true civilian government, capably



**Gall's understanding of Afghanistan spans the better part of three decades, and she has stayed with the story while others have moved on.**

led, and how the default of support for Islamic militancy played out, with frequent negative blowback for Pakistan itself.

She writes of the sanctuary in the tribal areas, and how the Taliban recruited and pushed hundreds of young men to their deaths in Afghanistan while its leaders directed their affairs from villas in Peshawar.

Gall doesn't spare the coalition's many missteps, reporting in painful detail the civilian casualties; the underfunding of the operation and the diversion of resources to Iraq; the cultural misunderstandings and miscommunica-

tions; the support for the new Afghan army (late) without a parallel building of capacity in the civil service and police; and meddling in elections.

She also points out the “lost opportunity” when, just after the stunning collapse of the Taliban government in 2001, “many Taliban members could have been persuaded to rejoin Afghan society if they

had not been pursued and arrested.” She adds, “Some of their leaders could have been used to bring the bulk of the Taliban movement to a negotiated peace.”

It was a heavy read, and as an Afghan veteran I was looking forward to the end.

But then, after the truly depressing story (when considered against the backdrop of Pakistani complicity) of the

demise of Osama bin Laden, Gall takes an unexpected turn. In the final chapter, she relates how whole Afghan districts turned against the Taliban in the spring of 2013, starting in Panjwayi, the movement's birthplace.

The now-functioning Afghan security forces were anchoring the shift in attitude that had been sparked in large measure by Taliban excesses, and the government was finally starting to work.

“I had always believed the Afghans in southern Afghanistan did not want the Taliban and one day would stand up against them,” Gall writes, describing a Taliban movement that, as a result of the

surge and drone strikes, “was rotting at its core.”

She closes, even more unexpectedly, by marveling at “the changes the American intervention has wrought: the rebuilding, the modernity, the bright graduates in every office.”

No Pollyanna, she also notes that at the end of it all, the fundamentals of Afghanistan’s predicament remain: “a weak state, prey to ambitions of its neighbors and extremist Islamists.”

But to Gall it is anything but lost. “Counterinsurgency is slow work,” she says matter-of-factly. “The United States and its NATO allies are departing with the job only half-done. A comprehensive effort to turn things around only began in 2010. The fruits were only starting to show in 2013, and progress remains fragile.”

Then she makes a statement that, given the rise of the Islamic State group, is prescient and haunting: “Militant Islamism is a juggernaut that cannot be turned off or turned away from. Pakistan is still exporting militant Islamism and terrorism, and will not stop once foreign forces leave its borders. The repercussions of the U.S. pullout are already inspiring Islamists, who are comparing it to the withdrawal of the Soviet Union after its debilitating war in Afghanistan. They are the real enemy in this war and they have not finished fighting. They fully intend to reclaim Afghanistan and have set their sights on horizons beyond.”

In addition to the United States and NATO staying to see the mission through, her message is that Pakistan must “stand up to its responsibilities as a nuclear power and one of the world’s largest Muslim countries and stop spreading terrorism and fanaticism around the world.”

In my final cable from Mazar-e-Sharif

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in the spring of 2013 I wrote the following: “As I complete a year as senior civilian representative to the nine provinces of northern Afghanistan, I see a region that continues to struggle to find its footing economically, whose security is still tenuous, and which is fighting to find a place in the nation’s political milieu.

“Nothing here is set. But everything is moving in the right direction, and some things could have actually passed the point of no return, all with a future marked by temporary setbacks, not collapse. I would be very surprised to return in five years and find anything other than another solid block of hard-won progress.”

I was writing from the much more hopeful north. If Gall, writing almost exclusively from the south, sees that this contest is still in our interest to win, and is still ours to lose, that is about as close to hopefulness as one gets in this part of the world, and probably worth heeding.

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*Keith Mines is political counselor in Tel Aviv. He served in Kabul during the 2002 loya jirga and was the U.S. senior civilian representative in Mazar-e-Sharif from 2012 to 2013. His previous postings include San Salvador, Port-au-Prince, Budapest, Ottawa, Mexico City, Al Anbar (Iraq) and Washington, D.C.*

## Illuminating the Present

### **The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts and the Failures of Great Powers**

*Peter Tomsen, Public Affairs, 2013, \$25.99/paperback; \$14.99/ebook, 853 pages.*

REVIEWED BY THOMAS H. EIGHMY

As Afghanistan, yet again, enters a confused and critical phase, a longer-

term view may be helpful. Fortunately Peter Tomsen’s work is now widely available as a republished paperback and in ebook format with a revised final chapter.

*The Wars of Afghanistan* is a timeless, great, meaty tome. And that is a compliment. Its author did more than his share of rotating in and out of difficult posts as an FSO, lastly as ambassador to Armenia. But, from 1989 to 1992 he was George H. W. Bush’s special envoy to the Afghan resistance. In his early retirement, it is to Afghanistan that he returns and digs in.

Those who wish to understand the present situation there could do no better than to dig into this book. First, sniff around the edges a bit: Contents, Maps and Photos, Introduction, Cast of Characters, the Index.

Then begin reading, concentrating on areas of particular interest. As you probe through the chapters, check the extensive endnotes. The author has done his homework. His personal perceptions are well buttressed.

Too much detail? Read on. After the nail-biting Chapter 1 (*Padshahgardi* or “ruler rotation”), you may become unexpectedly captivated. The texture of minutiae gives weight to the fabric of the whole book.

The book contains 25 chapters in four major parts (Tribal Incubator, Fission, Mission to the Mujahidin, and America and Afghanistan) extending from distant history to current events. The author accessed important open-source materials, as well as recently declassified State Department and CIA documents, and materials made available from former



Soviet sources.

The historical narrative illuminates the present. But many readers will turn directly to the latter sections covering the period from the Soviet invasion of 1979 to the very recent past.

There is disarray on the Afghan side throughout the 1980s—Khalq (Peoples) and Parcham (Flag) wings of the Soviet-installed People’s Demo-

cratic Party of Afghanistan brutally assassinate each other. Factions of the seven Pakistani-anointed resistance parties and those outside them routinely snipe at more than fight their Soviet and PDPA opponents. Afghan disarray is matched on the U.S. side by reactive and intensive shuffling of agencies and individuals.

Only Pakistan is consistent. It uses a policy of playing both arsonist and fireman inside Afghanistan. Islamabad never lacks direct cross-border engagement, but is always fronted by preferred actors—first Hezb-i-Islami (Gulbuddin Hekmatyar), then, after the Soviet withdrawal and ultimate PDPA defeat, tilting to Taliban (Mullah Omar) and the Quetta Shura.

The closer the author comes to the present, the more questions arise concerning the relationship between State and CIA; CIA and Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence directorate (and CIA’s role as “mailman” to the latter); Pakistan’s animus against India; and, finally, Pakistan’s implausible denial of support for the Taliban.

Much of this is current history in the making. Still, Tomsen’s book is the best grounded guide through the thickets.

Readers today may jump to the revised last chapter, “The Way Ahead.” Tomsen has written previously that a

peace negotiated by outsiders will never hold, but there is a role for the United States. Here he posits admittedly idealized profiles of Pakistan and Afghanistan in 2020. There are modest but achievable measures that will assist in achieving these outcomes.

First, Tomsen urges the United States and its allies not to abandon Afghanistan to anarchy. The Ghani government's

**Only Pakistan is consistent. It uses a policy of playing both arsonist and fireman inside Afghanistan.**

signing of the Status of Forces Agreement and Bilateral Security Agreement, with continued salary support of Afghan national security forces, could be the first of these measures.

Tomsen calls for reduced U.S. presence in a lower-level anti-terrorism campaign primarily run by Afghans. Here, also, the SOFA and BSA will be helpful. In a better world, a portion of current U.S. and allied funding could be turned to development assistance delivered more by Afghans than by U.S. troops. But such assistance is not viable in an insurgency. The issue remains security.

Second, Pakistan must end its support for radical Islamists on both sides of the border. The considerable military, development and humanitarian assistance Islamabad has received from the United States has had little influence on Pakistan's actions. But the violence Pakistan has fomented in Afghanistan, long after the Soviet withdrawal and the collapse of the PDPA, now envelops Pakistan itself.

Third, chronically divided Afghan moderates and their followers need to submerge long-standing ethnic and

political grievances and unite behind national and local administrations committed to good governance.

The recent trilingual imbroglio over election results, audit procedures, criteria for vote disqualifications, and the roles of the president and the chief executive officer could be just a new example of these potentially disruptive grievances. At the moment, there seems some, but

perhaps not enough, positive movement on the latter two issues.

Analysts may judge if the United States and its allies will find the right mix of steps to the idealized Afghanistan and Pakistan of 2020.

Old Afghan hands, pre-9/11 and those with more recent experience, will relish a good read, and place a well-thumbed copy of Peter Tomsen's *Wars of Afghanistan* in an honored place on their bookshelves next to another book of a similar weight, Louis DuPree's classic, *Afghanistan*. ■

---

*Thomas H. Eighmy served as a geographer and associate chief of party in the Ministry of Planning for USAID's Afghan Demographic Survey from 1971 to 1975. As a USAID Foreign Service officer, he was a health, education and regional affairs officer in Islamabad and Peshawar for the Cross-Border Humanitarian Assistance Program from 1988 to 1992, which overlapped with Tomsen's tour as special envoy to the Afghan resistance. He assisted in reopening the USAID mission in Kabul in 2002, and was an adviser to the International Foundation for Election Systems there in 2003.*

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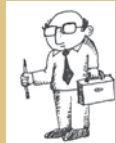
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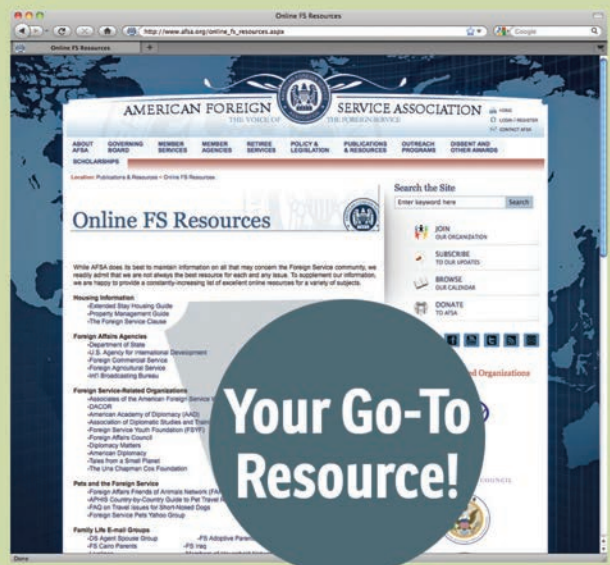
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# Unpacking Memories

BY DOUGLAS E. MORRIS

Packing up, moving, then unpacking and settling into a new place are all part of the globally nomadic life. This time, however, while unpacking boxes in our apartment in Washington, D.C., I ended up uncovering more than just stuff. Lurking in the crumpled paper, hiding behind the bubble wrap, were some things I had not been expecting: memories.

When I opened the boxes labeled “Polish Pottery” I thought I was simply unwrapping a set of dinnerware we picked up in Brussels. But once I started peeling the paper off each plate, tea cup, saucer, bowl and serving platter, I was reminded of the afternoon my partner and I shared at the Place du Jeu de Balle, an eclectically rustic daily flea market made famous in the Tintin books, as well as the recent film “The Secret of the Unicorn” (directed by Steven Spielberg).

Kelly and I had been looking for formal dinnerware for a number of years, but nothing seemed to catch her eye. That weekend, however, in the middle of this bustling square, on a blanket spread out on the ground, a dinner set captured her interest.

The seller clearly thought we were wide-eyed novices,

---

*Douglas E. Morris is the partner of a Foreign Service officer.*

*He has published eight travel guides, including the latest revision to his book, Open Road’s Best of Italy.*

and the price he quoted was ridiculous. Little did he know that Kelly was one of the United States’ key negotiators at NATO.

The poor guy did not know what hit him and, as a result, the price started dropping dramatically. Eventually we got this lovely set of Polish porcelain dinnerware for less than half of the initial offering.

In and of itself, that makes for a fine memory—Kelly bargaining a professional market seller into submission. But that’s not the end of the story.

In this age of the Internet, once we got home, we decided to check out what it was we had actually purchased. Noting the maker’s mark at the bottom of each piece, we popped it into a search engine and, after sifting through some Web-based detritus, eventually stumbled on some

informative sites that filled us in on the provenance of our pottery.

The mark on our dinnerware (Tielsch Walbrzych—Made in Poland) indicated that it had been crafted in the seven-year period between 1945 and 1952 in a factory town in Poland (Walbrzych). But during World War II, it turns out, that town had had a different name (Altwasser) and was a part of a different country (Germany).

More startling was the discovery that the factory in question had been run by slave labor during the war. At that time they put out porcelain with a completely different mark (Tielsch Altwasser—Germany). Thankfully, that was not the mark on the bottom of our porcelain.

The tale then took another interesting twist when we found out that at the end of the war, as part of what they perceived as their rightful reparations, the Russians had forcibly removed much of the factory equipment and carted it back home.

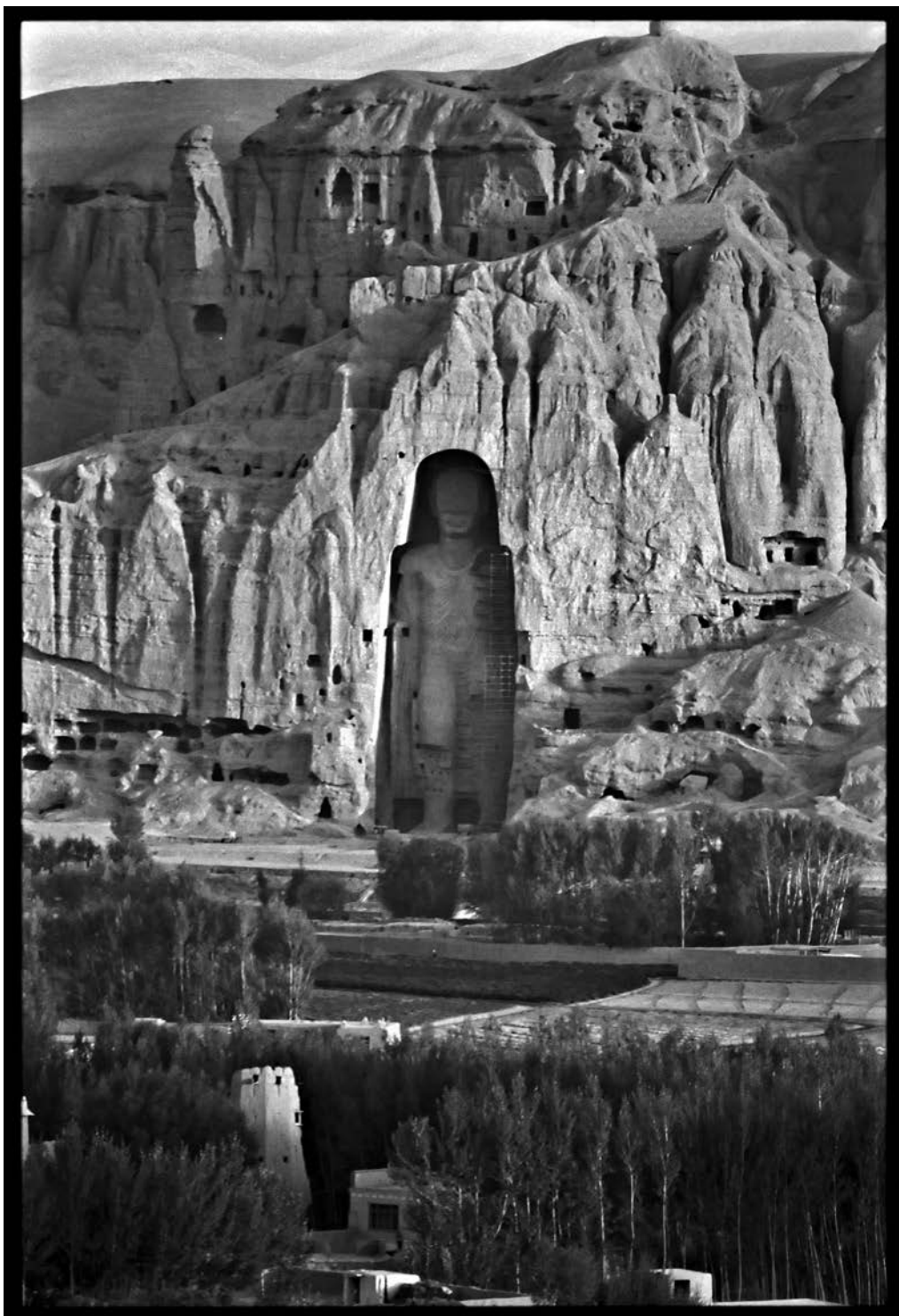
However, showing incredible initiative, some of the former German slave laborers, working in concert with the Polish owners, were able to cobble together enough resources to keep the factory running. It seems that the pottery we picked in the Place du Jeu de Balle is the product of that creative and enterprising ingenuity.

Though moving from place to place can get tedious at times, periodically we uncover something much more important than the objects we cart around the world: the precious memories with which they are imbued. ■



A good find at the Place du Jeu de Balle in Brussels.

Douglas E. Morris



The Buddhas of Bamiyan were two monumental statues of the standing Buddha carved during the sixth century into the side of a sandstone cliff in the Bamiyan valley in the Hazarajat region of central Afghanistan at an altitude of more than 8,000 feet. I took this photo of the larger, central statue—which was some 150 feet tall—in August 1977. I had taken a jeep trip from India, where I was posted, that took me up through Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, the Khyber Pass and Jalalabad, and into Kabul. There, after hearing about the Bamiyan Buddhas, I caught what I recall as a rickety flight to see them.

Tragically, these magnificent statues were dynamited and destroyed in March 2001 by the Taliban, on orders from leader Mullah Mohammed Omar, after the Taliban government declared that they were idols. ■

*Bob Tetro, a retired FSO with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service, served in India, Thailand, Denmark and Sweden—the latter two including responsibility for Norway, Finland, Estonia and Latvia—in addition to Washington, D.C. Following retirement in 2002, he has learned how to take photographs in the digital environment and has converted many slides and negative images from his extensive, international portfolio to digital formats.*

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