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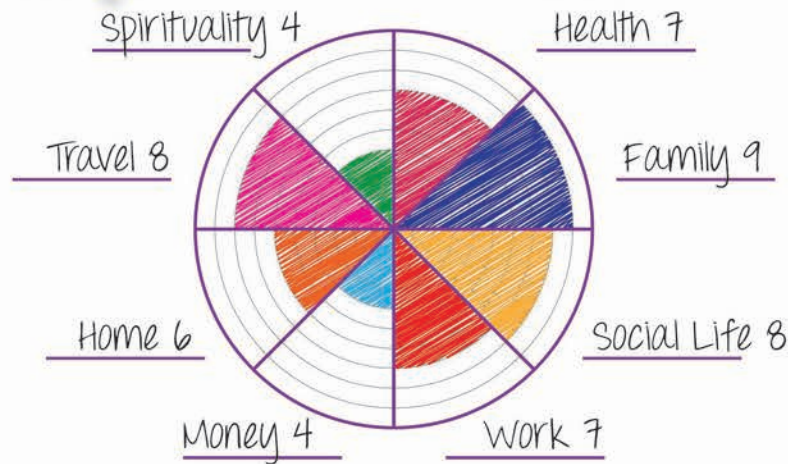


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THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

March 2021 Volume 98, No. 2

Focus



19

Changing a Risk-Averse Paradigm at High-Threat Posts Abroad

Risk aversion is undermining diplomats' ability to do their jobs.

It's an urgent problem, says an experienced panel that is proposing a solution.

*Greg Starr and
Ronald E. Neumann*

22

State's Influence on Foreign Policy: Is This Really as Good as It Gets?

How to "get out of our own way" and secure a seat at the foreign policy table.

By Keith W. Mines

26

Public Diplomacy: Re-engaging the World

Eight steps to rebuild U.S. credibility as a world leader and a society worthy of emulation.

*By Sherry L. Mueller and
Joel A. Fischman*

28

Notes to the New Administration

Members of the U.S. Foreign Service brief the Biden team, briefly.

Feature

58

The Legacy of Jackie Robinson

Through baseball diplomacy the youth of Romania and Uganda learned important lessons.

By Ronald E. Hawkins Jr.



FS Heritage

62

Like Father, Like Son: The Francis Ambassadorships

Although John M. Francis and son Charles are not well known, they share an important distinction: Both served as ambassadors—in the same countries.

By Stephen H. Muller



THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

Perspectives

7

President's Views

What We Need Now

By Eric Rubin

9

Letter from the Editor

Foreign Service Suggestion Box

By Shawn Dorman

16

Speaking Out

On State Reform

By Dennis Jett

66

Off-Road with the Foreign Service

One Morning in Nuuk

By James P. DeHart

96

Reflections

Diplomacy and Arms Reduction:
A Personal Story

By William H. Hill

98

Local Lens

Yangon, Myanmar

By Lee-Alison Sibley



Departments

10 Letters

12 Talking Points

81 In Memory

88 Books

Marketplace

91 Real Estate

94 Classifieds

95 Index to Advertisers

AFSA NEWS

THE OFFICIAL RECORD OF THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

69 AFSA at Work Through the Pandemic

69 AFSA Meets with Secretary of State Blinken

70 State VP Voice—AFSA Needs a
Second Full-Time Position at State

71 USAID VP Voice—A Clash of Bureaucracies

72 Retiree VP Voice—FSGB Appointments:
Mike Pompeo's Dereliction of Duty

72 AFSA Governing Board Meetings,
Dec. 16, 2020, and Jan. 21, 2021

73 Where We Stand—Data-Driven
Decisions in Foreign Policy

74 AFSA on the Hill—AFSA Advocacy: Year in Review

75 AFSA Treasurer's 2020 Report

76 Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccine

78 AFSA Partners with American Diplomat Podcast

78 AFSA High School Essay Contest

79 Apply for AFSA College Scholarships

79 Briana Odom Joins AFSA's
Labor Management Team

79 Carson Relitz Rocker Joins AFSA Governing Board

80 AFSA on Dissent

On the Cover—Illustration by Jeremy John Parker. Image adapted from Shutterstock.

What We Need Now

BY ERIC RUBIN

By the time you read this column, the Biden administration will be in its second full month, and many of the top jobs in our foreign affairs agencies should have been filled with the consent of the Senate.

AFSA has had extensive contact with the transition teams in all the foreign affairs agencies, and we have already had the opportunity to speak with the Secretary of State and other confirmed officials. If previous transitions are a guide, it will be late summer or early fall before most positions are filled.

We hope that they all will be filled: the previous administration chose to leave a vast number of key jobs vacant, at great detriment to our institutions and our country's interests.

So far, initial signals are positive that the Biden administration is ready to engage and consult with career employees in a way the previous administration did not. AFSA does not intend to be complacent, however.

We will be pushing hard on all fronts for major, visible steps to return the Foreign Service to its rightful place at the center of foreign affairs and foreign assistance policymaking. We will be engaging with Congress and the administration to urge more funding for our people, programs and operations.

We will engage enthusiastically on proposals to reform, modernize and reinvigorate our Service, while also

insisting on protecting the most important elements of our career corps.

Expanding the Foreign Service is critical to addressing our most important challenges, including advancing diversity. An expanded Service with a larger overseas presence will enable new approaches to recruitment and hiring—and will raise morale and retention. The Service has lost enormous ground in recent years and needs to turn things around fast.

Expanding the Service is essential to respond to the legitimate criticism that FS careers include far too little long-term training and professional education. We cannot fulfill the vision first voiced by former Secretary of State Colin Powell 20 years ago of a real training float—and benchmarks for professional education—without having more positions and more employees.

China now has more embassies and consulates, and more overseas diplomatic personnel, than we do. If the United States abandons its role as the world's leading diplomatic power and falls back solely on its strength as the world's leading military power, we are going to have to use that military power more often, and our national interests will suffer severely.

The U.S. cannot maintain a world-leading diplomatic corps if our best and most successful colleagues are unable to aspire to and rise to senior leadership positions. The staffing crisis during the previous administration—with zero Senate-confirmed career assistant secretaries of State and the highest percentage of political appointee ambassadors in modern his-

tory—led to an exodus of talent and diversity from the Senior Foreign Service.

The SFS is now close to 90 percent white and two-thirds male, and it is significantly less experienced than in previous generations. This does not just affect retention, but also recruitment. If the best applicants don't see a career path to senior leadership positions in the career Service, they will conclude that the only way to achieve such jobs is as political appointees.

We need to staunch the bleeding now and return our Service to health. We look to the new administration to show confidence in our members and their abilities.

AFSA knows that the new administration will appoint a mix of career and political appointees to ambassadorships and senior domestic positions. If the proportions are (at a minimum) returned to historical norms of 70/30 career/political ambassador appointments, and a high bar is set to ensure that all political appointees are truly qualified, our system will be well positioned to deliver the best results for the president, his administration and the American people.

Qualifications may be in the eye of the beholder, but we know them when we see them, and when we don't. This is too important and dangerous a time to entrust our country's vital interests to anyone other than those who have demonstrated the ability, experience and judgment to get the job done.

As always, I welcome your suggestions, comments and concerns. Please write to member@afsa.org. ■



Ambassador Eric Rubin is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.

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Foreign Service Suggestion Box

BY SHAWN DORMAN

In December we asked for recommendations from the field on how the Foreign Service can best serve and advance America's foreign policy interests going forward. We were quite thrilled by the outpouring of input. More than 75 members of the Foreign Service community submitted their ideas, many of which point to recurring themes captured in this illustrated suggestion box.

Some of these ideas have already been picked up by the administration and acted on, which is a great sign of synergy and potential for renewal and reform of the Foreign Service. Many are not new—e.g., stop giving ambassador posts to political donors (come on, now!)—but could gain traction in the coming months.

There is room for hope that the foreign affairs agencies will regain a leadership role in the interagency after years of being sidelined, and that U.S. diplomats will play the primary role in bilateral and multilateral relations. The Foreign Service is ready to work with the new team and excited to revitalize

U.S. diplomatic connections worldwide.

Ambassador (ret.) Ron Neumann and Greg Starr lead the focus section with a



ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINE FULLER

Hawkins Jr. tells the story of baseball diplomacy in Romania and Uganda. In FS Heritage, retired FSO Stephen Muller brings us the story of John and Charles Francis, a unique father and son who served as ambassadors, one generation apart, in the same two countries.

Retired FSO William Hill recounts working with Russia to remove military weaponry from Moldova

challenge to the new administration to change the risk paradigm for diplomacy. They argue that to effectively engage, diplomats must manage and mitigate risk rather than try to eliminate and avoid it altogether.

Keith Mines, a recently retired FSO now at the U.S. Institute of Peace, writes on "State's Influence on Foreign Policy," offering ideas for boosting diplomats' leadership in the interagency.

In a look at "Re-engaging the World" through public diplomacy, Sherry Mueller and Joel Fischman propose steps to rebuild U.S. credibility.

Ambassador (ret.) Dennis Jett, in *Speaking Out*, reminds us that there is nothing new under the sun by recalling a 2001 *FSJ* look at how to reform the Foreign Service, but offers insight into how this time could be different.

In this month's Feature, "The Legacy of Jackie Robinson," FSO Ronald

20 years ago. For the *Local Lens*, FS family member Lee-Alison Sibley captures a beautiful image from Myanmar.

We convinced former FSJ Editorial Board Chair, and current U.S. Coordinator for the Arctic Region, Jim DeHart to submit some of his favorite photos from a day off in Greenland, for another edition of *Off-Road with the Foreign Service*.

This occasional feature offers a chance to spotlight some of the great adventures our members have while living in and traveling to the far corners of the earth. We are seeking more of these submissions, so please send in photos (with narration) of your latest foray off the beaten path.

As always, we're thankful for your engaged readership, and we'll look forward to your responses and involvement in keeping the conversation going about the future of the Foreign Service. ■



Shawn Dorman is the editor of The Foreign Service Journal.

American Diplomacy: A Partner in Strengthening U.S. Diplomacy

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the e-zine, *American Diplomacy*. Founded by retired diplomats in North Carolina in 1996, it was the first digital magazine to focus on foreign affairs and the U.S. Foreign Service.

For the past few years, *American Diplomacy* and *The Foreign Service Journal* have been partners in outreach to all who are interested in developments, reports and trends in American diplomacy.

Together, we have weathered the recent years of disdain and professional abuse toward the value of our profession. We here at *American Diplomacy* especially applaud the forthright editorial stance of *The Foreign Service Journal*. We are your sisters and brothers in arms.

American Diplomacy has been in continuous publication since its founding and is a forum for commentary and analysis related specifically to U.S. diplomacy—including scholarly research, stories of Foreign Service experiences, reviews of books and comments from readers.

Each year we receive more than 150,000 views worldwide, and our archives contain more than 2,000 articles. We are on Facebook, and our Twitter account is @Amdiplomacy.

Our subscriptions are free and provide alerts to new content. Our target audience includes foreign affairs professionals, active-duty and retired; scholars, educators and students; and others interested in foreign policy and the practice of diplomacy.

As we move forward to help restore American diplomacy to its place as an indispensable instrument of national

power and international influence, we compliment *The Foreign Service Journal* for your superb voice and look forward to further collaboration.

W. Robert Pearson
Ambassador, retired
President, American Diplomacy Publishers, Inc.
Pittsboro, North Carolina

Up or Out: The Bigger Picture

In the September 2020 *Foreign Service Journal*, Mr. Ted Craig questioned the Service's long-standing policy by which FSOs must (involuntarily) retire after 27 years unless selected into the Senior Foreign Service.

In addressing only the time limit of 27 years, however, Mr. Craig's focus was too narrow.

The situation is more complicated, as I can attest from my own experience in 1993, when I was retired after only 24 years of service. I had benefited from quick early promotions to FS-1, but then was caught by the six-year window for advancement into the SFS.

On Sept. 30, 1993, the day before I was involuntarily retired at the age of 51, I broadly circulated a "Valedictory Open Letter to the U.S. Department of State and the Foreign Service." I observed in that letter: "The Foreign Service personnel system operates in major ways disconnected both from persons' performance and their willingness under Service discipline to accept more obscure, less-attractive assignments by dint of needs of the Service."

The factors affecting my situation were the following:

- A senior officer surfeit, with attendant forced early-outs for other rising good officers under the wasteful, morale-sapping, up-or-out promotion mechanism.

- A performance evaluation and promotion system debased by ratings inflation on the one hand and, on the other, constrained by relatively few promotion opportunities, especially into the Senior Foreign Service.

- Attractive assignments made more on the basis of corridor

politics and cronyism than objective qualifications and documented performance.

- Gender- and minority-preference factors.

- Artificially narrow, even farcical, application of the multifunctionality concept.

- Absence of loyalty downward.

- Fervent capitulation by top department leadership to budget strictures and the "do more with less" rubric, rather than fighting for justified resources.

- Micromanagement by Congress and by executive order.

- Adversarial labor-management relations.

How many of these factors still prevail in the real life of the Foreign Service today?

And how do they degrade the concept of a Foreign Service supposedly predicated on performance-based merit principles, as envisaged in the Foreign Service Act?

D. Thomas Longo Jr.
FS-1, retired
Lawrenceburg, Indiana



Seeking FS Family Stories, Memorabilia

I have so admired the *FSJ*'s digital archive special collections, in particular the section dedicated to the stories of Foreign Service families. Congratulations on bringing to life the contributions of these unofficial diplomats.

These contributions are precisely the subject of my Una Chapman Cox Fellowship. I am seeking stories and photos/videos of memorabilia from your family's life in the Foreign Service for inclusion in a digital multimedia exhibit that will go live in summer 2021.

My aim is to showcase the contributions of families as "diplomats behind the scenes," to reveal and record their compelling and challenging journeys. Souvenirs may include invitations, postcards, scrapbooks, paintings, drawings, sculpture, jewelry, textiles, costumes, musical instruments, videos, photos and other tangible items that bring to life the contributions of Foreign Service families.

I welcome receiving photos/videos of these mementos.

Please share this invitation widely with other Foreign Service friends and colleagues to ensure an inclusive and diverse representation of the Foreign Service experience.

I can be reached at uccfellow@gmail.com and look forward to hearing from you!

Claire Smolik

FSO

Washington, D.C. ■

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A Pledge to Show Up

During his Jan. 19 Senate confirmation hearing, Antony Blinken, now the 71st Secretary of State, said that he would work to reinvigorate “by investing in its greatest asset: the Foreign Service officers, civil servants and locally employed staff who animate American diplomacy around the world.”

Blinken testified that he is committed to “building a diplomatic corps that fully represents America in all its talent and diversity” by hiring, retaining and promoting skilled officers “who look like the country we represent.” He said he would demand accountability, starting with himself, to build “a more diverse, inclusive and nonpartisan workplace.”

He also pledged that the new Biden administration would “revitalize American diplomacy” by showing up again in international forums.

“American leadership still matters,” he said. “The reality is that the world doesn’t organize itself. When we’re not engaged, when we don’t lead, then one of two things happen: either some other country tries to take our place, but probably not in a way that advances our interests or values. Or no one does, and then you get chaos. Either way, that does not serve the American people.”

Secretary Blinken also said that the United States would take on a humbler tone: “Humility and confidence should be the flip sides of America’s leadership coin. And humility because most of the world’s problems are not about us, even as they affect us. Not one of the big challenges we face can be met by one country acting alone—even one as powerful as the U.S.”

But the United States will still act with confidence, he said, because “America at its best still has a greater ability than any country on earth to mobilize others for the greater good.”

“And in everything we do around the world, we can and we must ensure that our foreign policy delivers for American working families here at home,” he added.

Blinken in the House

Following his Jan. 26 confirmation by the Senate, Secretary Blinken was welcomed back to the State Department on Jan. 27 by a small, socially distanced group of employees. He said he will rely on the career staff and work to rebuild morale and trust.

In stark contrast to the previous administration, he said: “I’ll seek out dissenting views, and listen to the experts, because that’s how the best decisions are made. And I will insist that you speak, and speak up, without fear or favor, and I will have your back.”

Biden’s Other Top Foreign Policy Picks

President Joe Biden nominated Wendy Sherman for Deputy Secretary of State. She previously served as under secretary for political affairs during the Obama administration, as

counselor under Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and assistant secretary for legislative affairs under Secretary Warren Christopher.

Ambassador (ret.) Victoria Nuland was tapped to serve as under secretary of State for political affairs. She has served as the assistant secretary of State for European affairs, ambassador to NATO, a deputy national security adviser to then-Vice President Dick Cheney and State Department spokeswoman.

Ambassador (ret.) Linda Thomas-Greenfield has been nominated to be U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Brian McKeon, a longtime foreign policy adviser to Biden, is the president’s choice for deputy secretary of State for management and resources.

Former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power is Biden’s pick for USAID Administrator, and he plans to elevate the USAID Administrator to a spot on the White House National Security Council.

Former senior diplomats Bonnie Jenkins and Uzra Zeya were selected for under secretary of State for arms control and



With no large gathering possible due to COVID-19, Secretary Antony Blinken’s welcome to State was socially distant and broadcast online to employees worldwide on Jan. 27.

international security affairs and under secretary of State for civil security, democracy and human rights, respectively.

Ambassador (ret.) William Burns, an FSO for 33 years and a former Deputy Secretary of State, is Biden's choice to head the Central Intelligence Agency. As many around the world asked "Who Is Bill Burns?" the two interviews he did with the *FSJ* (November 2014 and May 2019) have been viewed hundreds of times and quoted and linked to by many media outlets, including Fox News, *Indian Express*, *Asia Times* and Russia Matters.

Biden Administration Brings Sweeping Changes

President Biden made good on a campaign promise by rejoining the Paris Climate Accord on his first day in office, Jan. 20. In 2017, then-President Donald

Contemporary Quote

“What Joe Biden is proposing and what I am reinforcing as the national security adviser is that every element of what we do in our foreign policy and national security ultimately has to be measured by the impact it has on working families, middle-class people, ordinary Americans.”

—National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, in a Dec. 30 NPR interview.

Trump had pulled the United States out of the accord, which was adopted in 2015.

Biden has made combating climate change a central task of his administration. He appointed former Secretary of State John Kerry as his special presidential envoy for climate, a new cabinet-level position.

Also within his first days in office, Biden signed an executive order reversing Trump's 2020 decision to pull out of the World Health Organization.

Additionally, the State Department instructed U.S. embassies and consulates that visa restrictions on more than a dozen Muslim-majority and African countries “are no longer applicable,” *The Washington Post* reported on Jan. 21, reversing policies set by Trump.

Among more than 30 executive orders during his first week in office, Biden reversed Trump's ban from last September on federally funded diversity training.

[Secretary of State nominee Antony Blinken] inherits a great department and many men and women who have dedicated their lives to the security of the United States of America. They are representing this country and literally risking their lives to do so. It is his job, and he understands it, to thank them for their efforts and to make sure that the morale is at the highest level so that America continues to be well represented around the world.

—Senator James Risch (R-Idaho), then chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, during the Jan. 21 confirmation hearing.

Mr. Blinken is just the right person to rebuild and reassert America's national security prerogatives on the national stage and reestablish the first instrument of American power: diplomacy.

—Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer on Jan. 26, just ahead of the vote to confirm the new Secretary of State.



I am confident that, if confirmed, you will do everything you can to repair and restore American leadership abroad. Foundational to that effort will be rebuilding and reinvigorating the State Department itself. As you well know, our career foreign and civil servants are incredibly talented and dedicated. Over the past few years, however, they have been treated with disdain, smeared and forced out of public service. There has been a stunning loss of expertise, steep declines in morale, little accountability for those at the top, and the State Department still has not achieved a workforce that comes close to reflecting the diversity of our country.

This state of affairs has impacted relationships across the globe, the department's ability to engage in the interagency process, and its relationship with Congress. So, the challenges you will be facing are immense, but I have confidence in your experience and expertise.

—Senator Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), then ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, during the Jan. 21 confirmation hearing.

Pompeo's Flurry of Activity on Way Out

Mike Pompeo issued a series of actions in his final weeks as Secretary, in some cases setting up potential obstacles for the Biden administration.

Just a day before President Biden took office, the State Department made the declaration the Chinese government is committing genocide and crimes against humanity against Uighur Muslims and other minority groups in the northwestern region of Xinjiang. Incoming Secretary of State Antony Blinken, when asked during his Jan. 19 nomination hearing, said he agreed with the designation.

In response, China imposed sanctions on Secretary Pompeo and 27 other former Trump administration officials over “crazy actions that have gravely interfered in China’s internal affairs,” the Chinese foreign ministry said on Jan. 21, according to an NPR report. Secretary Pompeo and the other officials are banned from entering China, Hong Kong or Macao, and companies associated with them are banned from doing business with China.

On Jan. 11, the Trump administration designated Cuba as a sponsor of terrorism, five years after the Obama administration opened diplomatic relations with Havana.

Secretary Pompeo also designated Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthi rebels as a foreign terrorist organization. U.N. officials are concerned the move could exacerbate Yemen’s humanitarian situation.

Meanwhile, Pompeo, posting from his official State Twitter account, issued scores of self-congratulatory tweets in his final weeks about his tenure as Secretary of State.

50 Years Ago

Automation

The technology of automation will profoundly influence the work of the Foreign Service in the 1970s. The key elements of this change will be: 1) Fast, cheap, direct satellite communications; 2) Large computer data banks in Washington, and in a few regional posts abroad; 3) Simplified and low maintenance computer terminals and classified Long Distance Xerox (LDX) facilities or similar equipment linking the Department with most posts.

Some traditional and important Foreign Service functions such as representation and public relations functions are not likely to be much influenced by automation. On the other hand, “new areas of encounter” such as pollution, environment control, various scientific fields of development, technology and others will represent areas of growth in overseas activities. It is still too early to predict what precise form these changes will take, but their influence is likely to be significant.

—Excerpted from an article by the same title by former Political Officer
Thomas M. Tracy in the March 1971 FSJ.



“The Pompeo tweet-a-thon will surprise no one who has followed his tenure,” the *Los Angeles Times* wrote on Jan. 19. “He condemned journalists, hailed Trump’s achievements and posted photographs of himself traveling the world. The tweets generated an intense amount of rebuttal, even ridicule.”

In one Jan. 19 tweet, Pompeo spoke out against multiculturalism, raising the ire of many diplomats: “Woke-ism, multiculturalism, all the -isms—they’re not who America is. They distort our glorious founding and what this country is all about. Our enemies stoke these divisions because they know they make us weaker.”

On Jan. 21, using his personal account, Pompeo tweeted “1,384 days,” a countdown to the 2024 election.

Attack on U.S. Capitol

Foreign diplomats serving in Washington were stunned by the attack on one of America’s most important democratic institutions, CNN reported on Jan. 7. “Appalling and so very sad-denning,” one told CNN, adding: “The U.S. was the benchmark of democratic governance and peaceful transitions of power.”

Dozens of State employees signed two dissent messages, one criticizing the State Department guidance on how to respond and one urging then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to denounce Trump’s role in the insurrection attempt. Both were leaked to the press. Secretary Pompeo, in Jan. 6 tweets, condemned the violence without naming Trump.

U.S. Ambassador to Uganda Natalie E. Brown on Jan. 8 issued a powerful statement on the attack, and the importance of nurturing democracy—both in the United States and around the world. It read, in part: “After Wednesday’s events, many people may question America’s right to speak out on issues of democracy around the world, and they are entitled to their perspective.”

“As we know well,” Brown continued, “America’s democracy is not perfect, and the United States is not without fault. As protests across America this past summer demonstrated, much work remains to align our ideals with the everyday reality of many American. ...

“While our work begins at home, we will continue to share the lessons we have learned from our own experience as we look outward toward the world around us.”



Podcast of the Month: *Diplomatic Immunity* (<https://diplomaticimmunitylibsyn.com>)

Georgetown University’s Institute for the Study of Diplomacy has launched a podcast, *Diplomatic Immunity*. It features frank conversations with foreign policy experts about the issues facing diplomats and national security decision-makers around the world.

Produced by ISD Case Studies and Publications Editor Alistair Somerville and Director of Programs and Research Kelly McFarland, *Diplomatic Immunity* promotes ISD’s mission “to learn from the past and to connect academics and policymakers in search of solutions to emerging diplomatic challenges.”

The podcast launched on Oct. 7, with an interview with former Deputy Secretary of State Bob Zoellick. Season 2 started January 27.

USAGM Leadership Sent Packing

In December we reported that Michael Pack, then chief executive officer of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which oversees the U.S. Agency for Global Media, had continued to fire and sideline career staff at the Voice of America and other networks, replacing them with Trump administration loyalists.

But on Jan. 20, only hours after he was inaugurated, President Joe Biden ousted Pack; the following day, he removed Robert Reilly, whom Pack had just tapped to head VOA the month before, as well as Elizabeth Robbins, Reilly’s deputy. Those appointments, facilitated by the involuntary reassignment of career VOA staffer Elez Biberaj, had been part of a frantic effort in the waning weeks of the Trump administration to embed loyalists in key bureaucratic roles throughout the federal government.

The last straw appears to have occurred

on Jan. 11, when Reilly not only invited Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to speak at VOA but decreed that all agency channels would carry those remarks live, worldwide. Citing COVID-19 concerns, Reilly banned outside media from covering the indoor event, but required VOA staff to attend. That prompted the Government Accountability Project to send a letter on behalf of VOA whistleblowers, calling the event “a violation of law, rule and policy.”

Secretary Pompeo bitterly complained about that critique during his presentation, which extolled the Trump administration’s successes. He did not mention the pandemic, the violence that had rocked the Capitol just days before, or President Trump’s role in encouraging the chaos.

Instead, he lectured his captive audience for “demeaning America” instead of telling foreign audiences that the United States is still “the greatest country in the world.” Pompeo also endorsed Pack’s bizarre claim that 40 percent of all VOA journalists have never been properly vetted, adding that he saw no reason VOA should hire non-U.S. citizens to “tell America’s story.”

No questions were allowed after the remarks or the brief on-stage conversation with Reilly that followed. Patsy Widakuswara, who covers the White House for VOA, was reassigned just hours after the event for trying to engage with Pompeo, who refused to respond to her.

President Biden has tapped Kelu Chan, a journalist who has worked at VOA for nearly 40 years, as Pack’s interim replacement. Chan, in turn, named Yolanda Lopez, another longtime VOA journalist, as that network’s acting director. And Widakuswara was put back on the White House beat. ■

This edition of Talking Points was compiled by Cameron Woodworth, Steve Honley and Shawn Dorman.

On State Reform

BY DENNIS JETT

It's enough to leave one with a sense of what Yogi Berra once called "déjà vu all over again." The January-February issue of *The Foreign Service Journal* was devoted to a series of articles about how to reform the State Department. Not quite 20 years ago the May 2001 edition of the *FSJ* did the same thing.

One of the recommendations in 2001 urged the crafting of a clear plan of action to modernize the State Department, including the transformation of its outdated culture, the embrace of new technology and managerial techniques, better resource management and a compelling case for new resources to reinvigorate the institution. In other words, 2021 sounds a whole lot like 2001, leaving one to wonder whether State, like Chicago politics, will ever really be ready for reform.

Despite the passage of two decades, the department's dysfunction is described in much the same way. State does not have enough resources, people or technological savvy. It is out of touch with Congress and the American people; it doesn't provide leadership; and it lacks management skills.

In response, in both 2001 and 2021 the



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American Ambassadors and other books. In 28 years with the State Department, he served as ambassador to Peru and Mozambique and deputy chief of mission in Liberia and Malawi, among other postings.

The selling of ambassadorships, a thinly veiled form of corruption, remains a regular American exercise that no other developed democracy practices.

Journal published a number of proposals for reform. Unfortunately, some of them would only make things worse. In 2001, for instance, the elimination of most functional bureaus was proposed. Fortunately, that didn't happen; with globalization spreading problems around the world with complete disregard for national borders, a global rather than a geographic approach is often called for.

While there are many similarities between the proposals of 2001 and 2021, two of the latest recommendations stand out as different and some are misguided. And, there is one additional proposal that was not made that merits consideration.

Promoting Diversity

The first difference in the 2021 recommendations is the call for greater diversity. It is not that diversity was not a problem 20 years ago, but today awareness of the problem is much greater. The deaths of George Floyd and others, and the Black Lives Matter movement they inspired, have ensured that the problem of systemic racism can no longer be ignored.

But there is a difference between being determined to deal with a problem and effectively addressing it. One of the reform plans suggests that all promotions in the Foreign Service should be dependent and contingent on whether the person has

mentored someone and has worked to advance the cause of diversity.

No one would argue against the idea that greater diversity will create a stronger and more representative Foreign Service, and anyone who opposes it should not get promoted.

But it will be hard for officers at every promotion level to demonstrate the things suggested. Whom does a junior officer mentor, and based on what experience do they provide the advice such a role requires? And just how does the average FSO, who has nothing to do with hiring, show evidence of support for diversity?

While expanding the Pickering, Rangel, Payne and Diplomats in Residence programs is essential—and is, in fact, happening—further work will be required to come up with practical measures to improve retention and deliver the desired result. Denying promotions to those who don't have the opportunity to demonstrate their seriousness about diversity is not one of those measures.

Political Ambassadors

The second significant difference is that the 2001 reform proposals did not speak about political appointee ambassadors, even though it was not a new problem back then and remains an issue today. The 2021 suggestions include

limiting political ambassadors, and the Harvard Belfer Center report calls for a 10 percent cap on them.

The Foreign Service Act of 1980 tried to address this question by stating clearly: “Contributions to political campaigns should not be a factor in the appointment of an individual as chief of mission.” That stipulation brought about only a very small reduction in the percentage. None of the presidents since Richard Nixon have adhered to it, and the selling of ambassadorships, a thinly veiled form of corruption, remains a regular American exercise that no other developed democracy practices. This needs to stop.

Since 1980 the percentage of political ambassadors generally hovered around 30 percent, with the exception of the Reagan administration, which bumped it up to 38 percent by sending noncareer ambassadors to places like Malawi and Rwanda. During the Trump era, it reached a post-World War II high of 43 percent. So who the president is matters.

A numerical limit on the number of political appointees would be hard to get through Congress, however. It might not withstand a challenge to its constitutionality; nor does it address the quality problem. A better approach would be to ensure more transparency and accountability when it comes to ambassadors—both political appointees and career officers.

The certificates of competence the State Department sends to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for each nominee to be ambassador, and puts on the department’s website, should include all political donations by the nominee and his or her immediate family for the last 10 years. The certificate should also include test scores from the Foreign Service Institute to demonstrate the degree to which the nominee can speak the local language.

And it should describe in detail how

the nominee acquired “knowledge and understanding of the history, the culture, the economic and political institutions, and the interests of that country and its people,” which is also required by the 1980 act. That would at least provide more transparency.

Accountability could be achieved if State’s inspector general sent a short email questionnaire every year to all Americans working in every embassy asking how well the mission is run. Those ambassadors with low scores would get a quick visit from a pair of senior inspectors, who would then write up a report with recommendations for how to improve the situation.

Like embassy inspections (which only happen once every 10 years even though they are supposed to happen every five years), those reports would be posted on the IG’s website for all to see. If aspiring ambassadors knew that their performance will be judged in a very public way, fewer of those whose only qualification is their wealth would apply.

Another way to improve the performance of noncareer ambassadors would be to insist they actually spend some time learning about the State Department, the people who work in an embassy and the problems they will face in their countries. Currently they attend a three-week “charm school,” and then they are off to post. Why not require them to spend four to six months taking courses at FSI, especially those with no experience in government or the military and little to no ability in the local language?

Solutions Seeking Problems

Some 2021 suggestions are not well thought out. Consider the proposal to establish a program modeled on the military’s Reserve Officer Training Corps. The military selects students as they enter

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college, provides funding for part or all of their undergraduate education, and requires training courses taught on campus by military officers as well as military training in the summer. Upon graduation the student receives a commission as a second lieutenant (or ensign) and has a five-year obligation to serve in the U.S. armed forces.

Such a program applied to State would be expensive, and it would produce junior officers with far less education, experience and maturity than those who are currently selected. Average entrants into the Foreign Service today are in their 30s, have a master’s degree and six years of work experience and, often, have also served in the Peace Corps or the military.

State rightly does not want to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars bringing people on board and training them, only to have them arrive at their first post and decide they don’t like the life they have found. An 18-year-old college freshman does not have anywhere near enough of a record to enable State to make a judgment on whether they are right for the Foreign Service or not.

Moreover, what problem is a ROTC-type program trying to solve? The number of applicants to take the Foreign Service exam was down in recent years, no doubt because of President Donald Trump’s contempt for government service in general and the State Department in particular. But that will change under the Biden administration, and there will



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I'M STICKING
WITH THEM."**

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State will again be faced with picking a few hundred good candidates from tens of thousands of applicants, making an ROTC program unnecessary. If the goal is diversity, that can be better accomplished by expanding programs already in place than by trying to create a new one that won't be cheap or effective.

Midlevel Entry? Abolish Cones?

Another solution in search of a problem is the idea of establishing a midlevel entry program, as suggested in the Belfer report. That can only result in current entry-level officers waiting years longer before they can expect a promotion. And since these midlevel entrants would have so little experience at State, they would be at a major disadvantage in competing to enter the senior ranks.

The justification is to enable the recruitment of people with expertise in the cyber world, artificial intelligence, data analytics and financial technologies. Does the State Department really need 500 people with résumés laden with hi-tech buzz words? How many posts are there where those skills are needed? Would anyone with such talents want to work in a job where their specialized skills could not be used? It would also not be a good way to attempt to achieve a shortcut to diversity.

The department already has several fellowship programs for scientists and engineers. It would make far more sense to expand them, and provide a path through them to midlevel entry into a career Civil Service position in a job in Washington where those skills can be used.

Another bad idea is the proposal to abolish the cones, which divide FSOs into five career tracks (political, economic, public diplomacy, management, consular). This would supposedly end the

caste system in which roughly 50 percent of career ambassador slots go to political officers and 20 percent to economic officers, with the remaining three cones getting about 10 percent each. The justification for eliminating cones is the assertion that one shouldn't be an ambassador "unless you can run and understand every part of your mission."

But how is an officer going to effectively spend a tour in a consular job, then one in a general services slot followed by an economic reporting position? FSOs are skilled and adaptable, but the experience obtained in one cone does not mean one is ready to take on all the others. And a multiconed ambassador would still lack experience in all the other agencies in the embassy, so that is not the key to good management of a mission.

To end the caste system, it would be better to create more interfunctional positions, be more flexible about out-of-cone assignments and task the committee that selects deputy chiefs of mission with more carefully considering officers from other cones.

One Missing Proposal

Finally, here is a suggestion that I did not see in any of the reform plans. One of the perennial observations about the Foreign Service is that neither Congress nor the public understand the importance of what it does. To expand that understanding and support, how about vastly increasing the Pearson program to get more FSOs on Capitol Hill and out into the heartland?

Serving in a Pearson assignment, or taking a tour as diplomat in residence recruiting people for State, should be a requirement for promotion to the senior ranks. That would help achieve more diversity, and it would put the State Department much more in touch with the country it represents. ■

Changing a Risk-Averse Paradigm AT HIGH-THREAT POSTS ABROAD

Risk aversion is undermining diplomats' ability to do their jobs. It's an urgent problem, says an experienced panel that is proposing a solution.

BY GREG STARR AND RONALD E. NEUMANN



Retired FSO Greg Starr, who had a 29-year career in diplomatic security, is the director of the American Academy of Diplomacy's "Changing the Risk Paradigm for U.S. Diplomats" project. He retired in 2017 after serving as director and then assistant secretary for the

Bureau of Diplomatic Security. He also served at the United Nations as under secretary general for safety and security from 2009 to 2012.



Ambassador (ret.) Ronald E. Neumann is president of the American Academy of Diplomacy and serves as chair of AAD's risk management project. He served as U.S. ambassador to Algeria, Bahrain and Afghanistan, among many other high-profile assignments.

During the first 20 years of this century, America's diplomats have been tasked to serve in more dangerous and highly threatened assignments than perhaps at any time since World War II. Both the executive branch and Congress saw the need to have a U.S. diplomatic presence in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen and Libya, even while wars were still being fought there and insecurity was rampant. Assignments to dozens of other high-threat posts continued throughout this period, as well.

The U.S. diplomatic establishment stood up and answered the call—officers from the Department of State, USAID and other foreign affairs agencies volunteered to leave their families behind and serve at our most dangerous and strategically important posts. Such service continues at many high-risk posts. Unfortunately, while serving in these tough circumstances, our officers too often operated with one hand tied behind their back.

With support from Congress, the State Department made great progress during this period replacing old, insecure and highly vulnerable facilities abroad with safe and secure embassies and consulates. The risk of losing an entire diplomatic platform and suffering massive loss of life and heavy injuries was greatly reduced. Though rocket attacks, complex assaults using car bombs and heavily armed attackers, and

Risk aversion at higher-threat posts obstructs the performance of the most basic functions of a diplomat abroad.

violent demonstrations were all too frequent, they were generally ineffective because of the new facilities.

Congress generously funded additional security assets such as security officers, armored vehicles and bodyguards to enhance mobility and travel outside our secure platforms. State has a remarkable record of conducting literally millions of moves outside the secure perimeter at our highest-threat posts with few losses, albeit using helicopters or heavily armed and armored convoys.

Despite these successes, at critical and high-threat posts members of the Foreign Service are rarely allowed to travel to meet sources, colleagues, counterparts or development partners in less than fully secured areas; nor are they allowed to move to unscheduled locations or travel to sites that are not fully secured. Thus, their ability to meet discreetly with subjects and sources or review remote programs is often very limited, as is their ability to observe and report on a country they are supposed to know with a high level of expertise. This is not the case with our U.S. military partners or members of the intelligence community. They, like the FBI and Drug Enforcement Agency, among others, all have different requirements for managing accountability and risk than the foreign affairs agencies have.

This disparity has led many officers—senior, midlevel and entry-level alike—to conclude that the call to make the security of our officers the highest priority has seriously undermined our ability to carry out what should and must be our highest priority—namely, fulfilling the national security and foreign affairs goals of the United States. They believe this is a problem that needs to be addressed urgently.

Risk Management Evaluated

The American Academy of Diplomacy pulled together an advisory group of senior retired officials to look specifically at this issue and established the project on risk management. The advisory group is led by many former senior diplomats with extensive experience in high- and critical-threat missions, as well as two other former assistant secretaries for diplomatic security.

Based on their previous experience as ambassadors and assistant secretaries in the Department of State, advisory group members report that chiefs of mission (COMs), deputy chiefs of mission (DCMs) and regional security officers (RSOs) operate today on the assumption that decisions made to allow travel outside the mission in high-threat environments that then result in death or serious injury will be judged in terms of accountability, with the presumption that someone erred in their judgment.

Too frequently, they note, the decision by COMs, DCMs and RSOs at critical-threat posts is to avoid risk by denying a travel request. The deciding officials feel compelled to be able to demonstrate that the purpose of the travel outweighs the risk of injury. Approving travel to a location that is anything other than a fortified compound, usually a host-government compound for meetings with host-government officials, is difficult to justify when the risk is high and security protocols cannot be met. When the travel is to locations that are not secured, for meetings with individuals who are not host-government officials—what we would categorize as important but normal diplomatic and programmatic activities—a request is virtually impossible to approve under current conditions.

The result, in short, is that the formulation and execution of national security policy is hindered by the lack of access to foreign contacts. While acknowledging that there are increased threats and dangers for staff operating in high-threat countries, the security versus risk equation for travel outside our missions is too heavily weighted toward eliminating risk to our personnel. Underlying this assessment is a basic judgment that the first function of our diplomats is to serve American national interests and policy goals. Diplomats are not soldiers, and every effort should be made to mitigate risk. But when security is defined as the *first priority*—as it too often has been—they are unable to perform their mission, and the basic purpose of having diplomats abroad is undermined.

Risk aversion at higher-threat posts obstructs the performance of the most basic functions of a diplomat abroad. Those functions—to influence host governments and other foreign interlocutors; to explain, defend and advance U.S. policies and objectives; and to gain the information and access needed to analyze political, social, economic and programmatic developments based on firsthand contacts and observations in a foreign country—all require personal contact.

Diplomacy is an incremental business in which numerous contacts and observations contribute over time to generate larger results. Diplomats are analysts, policy influencers, persuaders and negotiators. Secure telephone technology

and advances such as video calls and video conferencing can supplement traditional meetings. But they cannot substitute for building personal relations and trust with foreign contacts, without which real understanding of sensitive issues is not possible. This is particularly true when the sensitivities concern internal foreign political concerns.

There are reasons for this state of affairs, but AAD believes that change is needed. In discussion, we agreed that one of the major factors in keeping diplomats cloistered is the language and structure of the Accountability Review Board provision in the Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Antiterrorism Act of 1986. That law is widely interpreted within the Foreign Service as possessing an overriding requirement to find someone at fault if there is a security incident involving serious injury or loss of life; the first determination after identifying whether injury or loss of life is a security issue is whether the security systems and procedures at that mission were adequate. Since the systems in place when life is lost are almost never deemed “adequate,” this formulation leads inevitably to the issue of “who was accountable.”

In 1986, when the act was passed, there was a view in Congress, shared by many in the Foreign Service, that the State Department was not taking security sufficiently seriously. Since then, however, much has changed. Security has been greatly improved. At the same time, today effective diplomacy to meet national interests requires finding a way to engage more broadly, even in high-threat locations. We believe it is possible. Progress will need change in three areas simultaneously.

Three Areas for Change

First, the language and structure of the Accountability Review Board mandated in the Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Antiterrorism Act of 1986 must be reformulated. AAD does not equate the levels of acceptable risk for the Foreign Service abroad with the levels of risk acceptable for U.S. military assets engaged in combat operations. However, Foreign Service officers are frequently assigned to high-threat diplomatic missions abroad, and they understand there are risks that must be accepted. Currently, embassies are hampered by an out-of-date accountability process that is essentially at odds with the current requirement to take reasonable risks in the performance of duty.

AAD recommends a reformulation of the law to put in place a system similar to that of other executive agencies. In the event of a serious security incident, such a system would call for an internal review to evaluate precautions taken against known

risks and to evaluate lessons learned in a report to the Secretary of State who would, in turn, inform Congress of the results. This review would take into account the need to take reasonable risks balanced against the understanding of threats known at the time.

This would bring the process more in line with that used by the Department of Defense and the intelligence community. Equally important, it would be a tangible message to the U.S. Foreign Service that Congress understands and supports the need to take reasonable risks in the performance of diplomatic and foreign aid operations abroad. It would signal that Congress wants to assist in developing a culture where the security of our personnel remains important, but the priority must be implementing the foreign affairs policies and operations of the United States.

Second, the Department of State must identify best practices and new techniques on how to operate in high-threat locations. Certain cadres of officers—including political officers, consular officers, USAID field and project officers, and others—would receive required training in advanced operational techniques and procedures to allow them to operate as safely as possible while accepting increased levels of risk. This will take a joint effort by the Foreign Service Institute, the Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) and other agencies to determine best practices. In addition, management officers at various levels will require additional training in managing threats and risk.

Finally, the culture of risk aversion that has taken hold in the foreign affairs agencies over years must be addressed to implement legal changes and improved tactics and procedures. This will require both education and hard skills training. Senior and midlevel officers serving domestically and in overseas positions will require improved education in how to identify and manage threats and risks while balancing the need to fulfill foreign affairs goals and objectives. Decision-makers responsible for approving operations abroad that entail higher risk (normally DCMs and RSOs) must have more than just new tools and training. They must also have confidence that the foreign affairs agencies and Congress understand that the highest priority is fulfilling major national security priorities, not solely keeping people safe.

Careful judgment of the importance of individual policy objectives balanced with risk and threat mitigation measures will always be necessary and never clear-cut in the process of approving a plan or activity. All aspects of the problem—importance of the goals, risk and mitigation—must be part of the judgment when things go wrong. ■

State's Influence on Foreign Policy **IS THIS REALLY AS GOOD AS IT GETS?**

How to “get out of our own way” and secure a seat at the foreign policy table.

BY KEITH W. MINES



*Keith W. Mines is director for Latin America at the U.S. Institute of Peace. He retired from the State Department in 2019 as director for Venezuelan affairs after a career including posts in Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and South Asia. His recently released book, *Why Nation Building Matters: Political Consolidation, Building Security Forces, and Economic Development in Failed and Fragile States* (Potomac Books, 2020), recounts his experiences in peacebuilding and postconflict stabilization.*

Since I entered the Foreign Service three decades ago, I have heard the constant refrain that State's influence in foreign policy is eroding due to the entry of other players, mistrust by political leaders, its own institutional weaknesses and its failure to keep up with the accelerating pace of information. This perception even led some of my colleagues to leave the Service early in search of that greater influence. I'm not sure they found it.

The idea that State's influence has eroded is, in part, a result of misplaced nostalgia. In fact, there are no consistent “glory days” in State's past. Harry Kopp and John Naland write in *Career Diplomacy: Life and Work in the Foreign Service*, 3rd edition (Georgetown University Press, 2017) that Woodrow Wilson had an absolute disdain for the State Department and “key foreign policy decisions ... were all made without regard for the secretary of state and his department.” *Congressional Quarterly* reported in 1968 that in neither the Cuba missile crisis nor in Vietnam “has the State Department played a dominant role.”

Both cases reflect the simple truth, as former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski writes in *Power and Principle* (Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1983), that “ultimately every decision-making system is a creature of the President and each President has his own distinctive style.” But both of these cases are also surrounded by other periods in which State’s influence was central: Following World War II, State was “present at the creation” of the postwar world; and it would be difficult to dismiss the influence of State on policy at all levels, for example, during the George Shultz and Madeleine Albright tenures, when empowered Secretaries of State in turn empowered their subordinates in the interagency.

So if the reality is more of ups and downs than a steady or precipitous decline, how does State better limit the downturns and ride the waves? Former Deputy Secretary of State William Burns, the Biden administration’s pick for CIA director, writes in the March 2020 *Atlantic* that while administrations of both parties have intensified the drift in American diplomacy, the State Department—“sluggish, passive-aggressive, and risk-averse”—has often gotten in its own way.” I would suggest six things we could do to get out of our own way and secure a seat at the adult table of policy development.

1. Exert the power of the pen. While always fighting hard against giving up too much influence on policy to those lower down the food chain, Henry Kissinger nonetheless suggests in an essay in *The American Encounter* (Basic Books, 1997) that there is a “disproportionate influence to subordinate officials who prepare the initial memorandum.” If there is one thing the State Department does well, it is writing. Brzezinski takes it a step further, suggesting that coordination is power, telling of how “through coordination of the SALT decision process, I would have a major input on our policy toward the Soviet Union.” State should never shirk taking the pen or leading the coordination when the opportunity arises in the interagency process (or even when it does not).

And this is not just the case in Washington interagency meetings; it has an overseas corollary. According to one former National Security Council director, the power of State’s influence eroded considerably after the Wikileaks incident (“Cablegate”) of 2010; in response, much of what had once been front channel reporting imbibed by the entire interagency community has now become emails seen by a very few. If State is not contributing from the field, why pay it much attention in Washington? He urges a return to the kind of analytical and judgment-laden front channel reporting that has so often defined the State Depart-

Leadership in the interagency starts with sending leaders there to do State’s business. There is a risk in allowing for the strong wills that make the sixth floor nervous, but there may be an even greater risk in crushing those strong wills in the first place.

ment, arguing that it brings a gravitas to policy discussions that will otherwise be lost.

2. Leadership is charisma. State Department culture is understandably influenced by the craft of diplomacy, which is often the art of saying very little in the most understated way possible. It reflects even in our fashion, a sea of unmemorable solids sprinkled only by Secretary Albright’s pins. But we weren’t always that way.

As I advanced in my career, I started to notice something troubling. I saw officers coming into the Foreign Service with rich personalities and opinions, fresh styles, expressive and interesting. Over the years the culture of the department seemed to crush those personalities—knowing the need for conformity, these individuals just kept quiet or developed other “safer” interests. Later, when they’d reached the mid-ranks, the department tried to train them to be leaders, but by then much of what would have helped them to be effective leaders was gone.

The philosopher and historian Hugh Nibley said at a commencement address in August 1983 at Brigham Young University that “leaders are movers and shakers, original, inventive, unpredictable, imaginative, full of surprises that discomfit the enemy in war and the main office in peace.” He cites Rear Admiral Grace Hopper’s version of the J.A. Shedd adage: “A ship in port is safe, but that is not what ships were built for.” Nibley concludes: “True leaders are inspiring because they are inspired, caught up in a higher purpose, devoid of personal ambition, idealistic and incorruptible.”

Real dominance in the agency process belongs to those who can articulate clearly where the money will come from for an initiative.

Leadership in the interagency starts with sending leaders there to do State's business. There is a risk in allowing for the strong wills that make the sixth floor nervous, but there may be an even greater risk in crushing those strong wills in the first place.

3. Get tough. One of the stranger moments on the road to my State Department career was when I was mentored on the Foreign Service oral assessment. "When you get to the group exercise, just remember you are not there to win, but to be collegial. They will reward you for giving up your position to someone else to show that you are a team player," I was told. And we wonder why we are often excluded from high-level negotiations.

I worked closely with one of the more effective interagency players in the department several decades ago; he was also among the toughest. He entered the interagency process detached from personal interest and ego, concerned solely with getting to the right place for the country and its interests, and allowing no one to bully him in the pursuit of that goal. Beyond good preparation and leadership, sometimes it just takes getting tough.

4. Master the budget and strategy cycles. One of my very early mentors in the interagency process was the late Ambassador Mike Sheehan, and one of his early mentors was former Assistant Secretary Richard Clarke. Sheehan explained to me once that Clarke's strength in the interagency came from a studied and unusual understanding of the budget process—where the money was and how to get to it.

Real dominance in the agency process belongs to those who can articulate clearly where the money will come from for an initiative and to proposals for which funding is clearly spelled out. State might not always have money, but it can still benefit from knowing who does.

Running parallel to the budget cycle is the development of country strategies. As with the budget process, a better understanding and some real training on strategy development (the kind the Army spends months learning at Fort Leavenworth)

would go a long way to establishing a cadre of officers who dominate the interagency development of strategic policy. From my experience most other agencies would welcome, not resist, State expertise in this area.

5. Strengthen relations with the military. The "militarization of foreign policy" is a common refrain these days because of the larger resource base of the Defense Department and its often more extensive presence overseas. While there is undoubtedly some truth to this claim, one former ambassador who oversaw U.S. policy during five conflicts thinks it is overblown. The Pentagon, he believes, will defer to the State Department on most issues of policy, except in rare instances when State believes Defense should involve itself in something the Pentagon opposes.

While the alphabet soup of agencies participating in the interagency may now make the larger meeting rooms at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building a hot commodity, the State-Pentagon relationship is in a category all its own. The big issues, those that will define a presidency, are of war and peace; by assiduously nurturing a close relationship on policy with the Defense Department, State will add weight to its own position, and its influence will rise.

6. Unleash the bold ideas. Kopp and Naland believe that "a Service that favors errorless consistency over risk-taking leads presidents and secretaries of state to go outside for creative policy advice." I heard recently from a midlevel colleague who was working on one of the thorniest issues in the department, a seemingly intractable problem, which a team of extremely talented officers had been galvanized to solve. He expressed frustration that while they were outwardly encouraged to think outside the box and given some outlets for such thinking, the team's limits were quickly established when someone was accused of leaking. At a certain point in the process, they were told to stop spending so much time on new ideas and get back to executing the current policy.

New policy approaches come with risks—the risk of appearing unsupportive, the risk of "leaking" and, to many leaders, the simple risk of unwanted attention. But without risk, there won't be any new policies. The recent Belfer Center report, "A Diplomatic Service for the 21st Century," cited calls for "transforming the internal culture by incentivizing greater innovation, smarter risk taking ... and visionary leadership."

Getting to a place of more creative policies at State is itself something that will require creative thinking. Ambassador (ret.) Marc Grossman once said that the strength of diplomats is that they are optimists who "believe in the power of ideas."

They are mindful, as we all are, that exclusion of the organization that has had the most direct connection with the issues

There is a good amount of rebuilding to be done, and some risks to be taken; but, meanwhile, we should keep our dish right side up and grab the opportunities for greater policy influence as they come. As George Kennan put it: “If State doesn’t take the initiative, others will.” ■

25

Public Diplomacy RE-ENGAGING THE WORLD

Eight steps to rebuild U.S. credibility as a world leader and a society worthy of emulation.

BY SHERRY L. MUELLER AND JOEL A. FISCHMAN

While international faith in America's global leadership is much diminished, there is residual affinity around the world for our values, goals and democratic heritage. The Biden-Harris administration faces many global challenges and will need to reinvent and revitalize the instruments of American statecraft. In this connected age, the public dimension of U.S. global leadership will be decisive, because publics abroad are indispensable players in policy.

As it restores America's global relationships, the new administration should emphatically embrace U.S. public diplomacy (PD). Through purposeful interactions with foreign publics, public diplomacy conveys American values and helps our leaders

understand the range and roots of global opinion. It provides tools and platforms to rebuild critical relationships through effective programs and dialogues that build trust.

We respectfully recommend that the administration invest considerable thought and resources to reinvigorate U.S. public diplomacy within the State Department. Here are the priorities:

Build consistent leadership. Appoint a respected under secretary for public diplomacy and public affairs who (1) *understands* both foreign policy and communication, (2) *can navigate* the department and the interagency environment, (3) *enjoys* the evident confidence of the president and the Secretary of State and (4) *intends to stay* in the job. After the Secretary of State, this is the second most important appointment in the State Department.

Open doors. Eliminate recently erected barriers to international education and exchanges, notably the proposed federal rulemaking on "duration of status" that would have an enormously negative impact on U.S. higher education, and the June 22, 2020, White House proclamation halting issuance of several categories of nonimmigrant visas. America's academic and business communities will be vocal allies on these issues.

Coordinate international communication. Strengthen the Department of State's strategic public diplomacy planning and support for major global policy initiatives (e.g., managing the pandemic, climate change). The Bureau of Global Public Affairs is best positioned to manage substantive development of international public communication together with regional and



Sherry L. Mueller is president of the Public Diplomacy Council, a U.S.-based nonprofit committed to promoting excellence in professional practice, academic study and advocacy for public diplomacy.



Joel A. Fischman is president of the Public Diplomacy Association of America, a nonprofit, voluntary association for public diplomacy professionals.

functional bureaus within the State Department and relevant interagency representatives.

Engage the American public. The American people, and especially our youth, are the president's finest diplomats. Devise programs on compelling topics (e.g., climate, race, public health, the arts) that involve both travel and an ongoing virtual component. Long-term U.S. interests will be served by encouraging more young Americans to engage with the world.

Restore broadcasting. Restore protections for U.S.-funded international broadcasting against politicization, enabling it to perform its true function: to inform, engage and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.

Expand counter-disinformation efforts. Attacked by propaganda on steroids, America has fought back with aspirin. There is a pressing need to: coordinate the Global Engagement Center and public diplomacy's social media work with the intelligence community and Department of Defense information operations; fully document hostile disinformation efforts mounted by foreign governments; and assist nongovernmental organizations and

Reinvigorate and update public diplomacy staff training.

the private sector to inoculate susceptible groups and individuals against the appeals of national adversaries and violent extremists.

Enhance professional culture. Reinvigorate and update public diplomacy staff training, including opportunities to pursue advanced degrees and "excursion tours" in the private sector. More PD training should be provided to all department officers. These expanded opportunities will attract talented officers.

Augment resources. To fuel this process of more effectively engaging with the world, reenergizing the public diplomacy function and attracting top talent, substantially increase resources for all elements of PD, and reinforce the "firewall" that protects exchange funding. Part of this effort should be a review of PD staffing abroad that assesses the potential need for expanded presence. ■





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Notes to the New ADMINISTRATION

Following the U.S. presidential election and by way of welcoming the new administration, *The Foreign Service Journal* invited Foreign Service members to share their suggestions for how diplomacy and development practitioners can best serve and advance America's foreign policy interests during the coming months and years.

In December AFSAnets, we asked for concise answers to these questions: "How can the new administration reinvigorate U.S. diplomacy and development through the Foreign Service, and what are your specific recommendations?" The response was tremendous.

Here, presented alphabetically by the author's last name, are suggestions we received from active-duty and retired members of the U.S. Foreign Service. The authors' views are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the *Journal* and the American Foreign Service Association.

Our thanks to all who contributed to this compilation.

—The Editors

Look to What We Have in Common

Sometimes it takes a global pandemic to remind us how much we have in common rather than spending time, energy and resources on all that (we think) divides us. Our humanity, both its physical vulnerability to viruses like COVID-19, as well as the strength of the human spirit that binds us to one another and the natural world, should be a core part of our foreign policy.

For most of our history, American values have been synonymous with freedom, democracy and the promotion of human rights. It's time to remind the world of this, and we have many foreign affairs agencies and dedicated employees ready to sharpen the tools at their disposal.

Filling leadership positions with official and confirmed appointees is, of course, the first step. In this we should favor career employees (over political appointees), showcasing their well-earned experience and knowledge and discrediting the "Deep State" conspiracies.

Second, we must continue to diversify our personnel, at all levels and in all agencies. The strength of our "melting pot" is another American value that needs reviving. But rather than focus on recruitment, we must also invest in retention and promotion of minorities. This may require significant organizational changes, and for that we may need to dig deep.

Last, the new administration should give careful consideration to greater use of soft power. We need to invest more in tools such as educational and cultural programs, the use of social media at the local level and foreign aid if we wish to not only regain our international stature but also compete with rival nations, including China and Russia.

Marcia Anglarill is a cultural affairs officer in the State Department's Venezuela affairs unit.

Initiate a Top-Down Mandate on Compassion

I believe the new administration has an opportunity to reinvigorate U.S. diplomacy by injecting constructive kindness into the Foreign Service Institute's consular training courses and thereby into each nonimmigrant and immigrant visa interview globally.

On balance, visa officers set the community tone at any given post for thousands of foreign nationals each day. The sheer volume of interactions provides visa officers with a unique opportunity to bolster host-nation trust, promote American hospitality and preserve international civility.

Rapid-fire visa interviews instill fear, distress and despair in the majority of applicants. The consequence of 60-second interviews (the cornerstone of efficient "visa mills") conducted by exhausted consular officers during an insensitive administration could well be the reduction or even the annihilation of an applicant's dignity.

I believe that the new administration should initiate a top-down mandate on compassion, championed and promoted by the Secretary to help capitalize on the considerable diplomatic value of concerted graciousness through consular work.

While I cannot recall more than a handful of the approximately 50,000 nonimmigrant and immigrant interviews I have conducted, I suspect that each of the 50,000 applicants can recall me. For many, especially those from rural villages and with little knowledge of the English language, I was likely the first American they met and possibly the only American they may ever speak to. And I hope that—with or without a visa—each thinks of the United States kindly.

Brianna Bailey-Gevlin is a State Department consular officer in Bridgetown, Barbados.

Get the State-Defense Relationship Right

There is no better U.S. government partner for the Foreign Service than the military in reinvigorating U.S. diplomacy and development.

Getting the State-Defense relationship right starts in the field, where U.S. embassies and combatant commands can share assessments, plans and activities. Cooperation between Foreign Service and Special Operations Forces personnel can provide useful pilot programs and lessons learned to build and deepen solid synergies and results. Initial focal points could include the following.



Ending forever wars by finding ways (in the words of then candidate Joe Biden last March) to "be strong and smart at the same time." We can be strong in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere through credible diplomacy and precise special operations. We can be smart by encouraging FS-SOF teams to design more coherent solutions that secure ever-stronger support from host countries.

Countering competitors by using FS-SOF cooperation to deter U.S. adversaries and competitors for regional and global influence. Adversaries such as China, Russia, Iran and North Korea cannot compete with the advantages of U.S. diplomatic and military professionalism and innovation. At the same time, successful FS-SOF work against nonstate actors sets useful terms for stable and fair economic and other competition, and strong potential exists for similar results against state actors.

Reimagining friendships by deepening and expanding past FS-SOF successes with allies, friends and partners to build solidarity and increase coordination. Shared and complementary dialogues, training and actions can yield new access in host countries, including access to military medical and logistical expertise against COVID-19 and activities monitoring and improving sanctions enforcement.

Getting resources right by building off the shared FS-SOF truth that "humans are more important than hardware." For example, a \$13 billion increase to the State budget could be justified as another national security "enabler," citing that the Department of Defense spends a similar amount on Special Operations Forces. The same \$13 billion equals roughly 2 percent of DOD's FY2021 budget, a seemingly appropriate amount to help ensure a successful transition from "forever wars" to "sustainable peace."

David Bame, a retired FSO, is a consultant in San Diego, California.

Address the Refugee Crisis and U.S. Visa Policy

More than 80 million refugees and displaced persons inhabit our planet, and that number grows daily. The United States must regain its position as the leader in alleviating this crisis.

Third-country resettlement can at best accommodate a small portion of these people, but the United States has shamefully reduced the number of refugees we have welcomed to our shores. We should increase the number we are willing to accept to at least 100,000.

More important than resettlement is the protection of vulnerable refugees living in appalling conditions, while inspiring other nations to do the same. The greatest challenge will be cajoling the “sending” countries to alleviate the factors that cause people to flee. That would mean fighting corruption, striving for good governance and promoting education, health and opportunities for people to make an honorable living in their home countries.

The message from the new administration should include that refugees have historically contributed to the well-being of our nation enormously, and the programs we participate in abroad to make the sending countries less repressive contribute to our security and long-term economic growth.

In the past we have worked closely with like-minded nations to resolve refugee crises, and should do so again. Support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, World Health Organization and other international entities long involved in this challenge is necessary.

In addition, it is universally acknowledged that the existing U.S. visa regime needs a comprehensive overhaul. However, the following immediate fixes can be made without legislation:

- Reinvalidate DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).
- Remove the ethnic, religious and geographic limitations created by false claims that they strengthen national security.
- End the crippling of our academic institutions and the richness of student life by returning to the student and exchange visitor visa policies of an earlier era.
- Continue the statutory requirement that immigrants establish that they will not become a public charge, but remove some of the factors recently added administratively to that calculation.
- Strengthen the anti-fraud aspects of visa considerations to include increased, meaningful cooperation between State and Homeland Security officers involved in the process.

Bruce Beardsley, a retired FSO in Naples, Florida, worked on refugee programs in Southeast Asia and the Balkans.

Strengthen the OIG and Professional Education

First, rebuild and fully staff the State Department Office of the Inspector General, which was marginalized under the Trump administration. In May 2020, State’s capable inspector general, in office since 2013, was fired.

Since 2017, inspections of U.S. embassies overseas and bureaus in the department, for decades the core function of the State OIG, have been reduced to a minimum, their place largely taken by audits of ancillary functions (e.g., “Audit of the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations Process To Execute Construction Closeout Procedures for Selected Capital Construction Projects,” 9/22/20).

Second, relaunch the Senior Seminar and generally enhance the role of professional education for Foreign Service officers, as advocated by former Secretary of State George Shultz in his eloquent commentary in the November 2020 *Foreign Service Journal*.

“My sense is that incoming members of the U.S. Foreign Service should be required to participate in a full academic year of professional education at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center. There might be a distinct part of the center that could be called ‘The School of Diplomacy.’ A diverse group of future American diplomats would benefit, I think, from the integrating effects of a common learning experience,” Secretary Shultz writes in the *Journal*.

“That said,” Shultz continues, “there should also be separate courses in area studies and languages. The common program should include a feature pioneered by the now defunct Senior Seminar, a course that gave diplomats an introduction to various slices of American life. Personally, I would like to see the common course include case studies in diplomacy and many opportunities for extended talks with senior American diplomats and with those of other nations, too. As a former teacher myself, of course I have an interest in curriculum, and so I would be pleased to meet with people who are giving serious thought to what is suitable for today’s realities.”

Robert M. Beecroft of Bethesda, Maryland, is a retired FSO and former ambassador.

Cap Political-Appointee Ambassadors

Make a public commitment that 85 percent of all ambassadors will be chosen from the career Foreign Service.

Randall Biggers is a retired FSO who lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Continue to Build Out America's Global Network

As the world becomes more complex with multiple political power poles, cross-country problems including climate change, political and economic inequality, and basics such as malnutrition that cripple minds as well as bodies, the U.S. government—USAID, in particular—needs to remain flexible and responsive. But it is the long-term vision and commitment that build the foundations of strong societies, not quick reaction.

To continue building a global network that strengthens our security and opens opportunities, we should:

- Maintain development agents separate from diplomacy and defense; each has a role, but they have different modes of working and different time horizons.
- Reinvest in basic and applied research addressing global and domestic issues—including in agriculture and health, effective pedagogy, digital economy and environment.
- Stretch to address what's current: urbanization and its management; mental health and nutrition, the new keys to economic growth and stability; male disempowerment, as well as female; growing inequality in life choices.
- Rebuild competencies to design and implement sustained support programs that help countries follow their path to self-reliance.
- Continue to provide immediate and transitional humanitarian response—but ensure that quick response does not cut loose the foundational institutions and systems that build a solid future.
- Support countries all along the development continuum, tailoring dollars and programs to their need. In India \$2 million of technical support can shape a \$1 billion urban infrastructure investment, yet \$90 billion of PEPFAR (the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) funding was required to turn the tide on HIV/AIDS.
- Staff USAID and assistance agents based on technical and policy opportunities, not just the volume of dollars managed; let staff be influence-makers as well as contract managers.
- Use contemporary tools—culture, arts, sports, dance, graphic books, social media—to influence.
- Evaluate rules and regulations through a risk management lens; don't compromise on-the-ground results.
- Recruit a new generation of bold thinkers, adventurers and visionaries, and give them room to explore.

Rebecca Black, a retired Senior FSO with USAID, lives in Corrales, New Mexico.



Recapture Lost Institutional Memory

The basic rules of diplomacy have been disrespected during the past four years, but the greatest harm to the Foreign Service has been the loss of institutional memory.

Institutional memory functions on several levels. Take subject matter expertise, for example: The socioeconomic and political status of a country cannot be truly understood from briefs; it has to be lived and experienced firsthand by FSOs in the field.

Relationships are another critical aspect of institutional memory. Entry-level officers meet their counterparts at the beginning of their careers. They have dinner at each other's houses, their kids play with the kids of their counterparts, and so on. Twenty years later, when the counterpart is a high-ranking official in the host-nation government, the FSO can return to that post and build on their early special relationships.

How to recapture this institutional memory?

- Rehire FSOs who were fired or forced into retirement across the board at all levels.
- Put in a firewall to protect career FSOs from in-house snitches, political manipulation, pressure and other demoralizing and destabilizing tactics that have been employed recently.
- Rescind promotions of any Foreign Service officers who were a party to the above tactics to advance their personal careers. They should not be rewarded ever again for this destructive, unbecoming behavior.

Nothing can replace institutional memory but the people holding the memory. This serious loss must be remedied to regain the United States' role in the world.

Marilyn Bruno, a retired FSO, lives in Encinitas, California.

Tips from the Engine Room

New (and returning) colleagues, welcome (back)! Transition season is upon us, and with it the quadrennial spate of news articles, think-tank studies, committee reports, op-eds and the like—each chock full of to-do lists for resuscitating the Department of State. Thank you for caring! Here are a couple of things to keep in mind.



DIVERSITY

An extraordinary reservoir of diverse talent already resides in the midlevels of the Foreign Service. We have honed our diplomatic skills for years and years—resolutely, patiently, under Democratic and Republican administrations—scoring foreign policy wins and securing U.S. interests in tough spots spanning the globe. Do not forget about us; we are your best asset.

While a few high-profile Foreign Service departees have eloquently described State's shortcomings from their soap-boxes, the rest of us—the engine of American diplomacy—have been busy in the field serving our nation day after day. Often operating with minimal resources and support, State's frontline diplomats are the best at what we do—persuading foreign governments and audiences to do things and think in ways they otherwise would not.

State is undeniably a struggling organization as you arrive ... but not only for the reasons you assume. Many of our most intractable institutional problems—aversity to risk, plodding action on attracting and retaining a diverse workforce, acceptance of mediocre leadership, focus on process instead of results, assignment and advancement systems that lack credibility and too often put the wrong people in the wrong places—pre-date 2017.

New initiatives and major reversals in the policy domain might help right the ship, but State will remain in long-term decline if you allow these organizational problems to continue festering.

Working on these unwieldy bureaucratic challenges behind the scenes might not offer the allure of globe-trotting diplomacy. Successfully doing so, however, will harness the full potential of our 75,000-employee-strong institution, especially our field-deployed Foreign Service personnel. Only then can State regain the ascendancy in formulating and executing U.S. foreign policy.

FSO Ben Canavan is a senior adviser in the State Department's Office of Management Strategy & Solutions.

Recognize Family Members as Diplomacy Resource

We encourage the new administration to recognize an untapped source of “diplomats” in addition to members of the Foreign Service—namely, their family members.

It is important to gain a better understanding of the roles and achievements of diplomatic family members, ranging from bravery during crisis and long separations due to unaccompanied tours, to outstanding professional, artistic and volunteer achievements abroad. Many of them engage in significant voluntary efforts in their host countries, which promotes understanding among peoples, demonstrates the highest American values and advances the cause of U.S. diplomacy.

Since 1990, with the direct support of then-Secretary of State James Baker and Mrs. Susan Baker, the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW) has managed the Secretary of State Awards for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad (SOSA).

These awards are presented each year to volunteers abroad, one from each of the six geographic bureaus, for projects that demonstrate public diplomacy at the grassroots level and show Americans at their generous best, demonstrating outstanding creativity and commitment to improving the lives of others in our host nations. Such dedication is especially striking in countries where volunteerism is not common.

In May 2015, at the annual Chiefs of Mission Conference held in Washington, D.C., SOSA received official recognition as a diplomatic “tool” for the first time. The final communiqué stated: “Publicizing SOSA projects to host-country populations can further Public Diplomacy goals by fostering a positive image of Americans and helping illustrate to the world who we are as a nation.”

At this point in our nation's history, we may need such publicity more than ever. Family members can contribute greatly to this positive image of our country.

Lara Center of Falls Church, Virginia, is president of AAFSW; Mette Beecroft of Bethesda, Maryland, is a past president of AAFSW, a nonprofit for Foreign Service family members and friends based in Arlington, Virginia.

Simplify EERs and Bidding

FSOs spend an enormous amount of time on employee evaluation reports (EERs)—easily 20 hours a year—and on bidding—easily another 40 hours a year. By simplifying those two processes, we can boost employee productivity and satisfaction while delivering more value to American taxpayers.

We should eliminate the current EER system, replacing it with an annual anonymous survey to all colleagues (peers, supervisees and managers) containing two questions: (1) On a scale of 1-10, how much did you enjoy working with X? (2) Would you work with X again? (Yes or No)

As for bidding, we should move the entire State Department to a directed assignment system, much like the one entry-level officers and the Bureau of Consular Affairs currently have. Employees would be able to state their priorities and parameters (e.g., special needs education or tandem bidding), and a team of dedicated staffing professionals would weigh equity and other considerations to place people into jobs. This would eliminate wasted time on lobbying, reduce cronyism and refocus employees on their work.

These two changes alone would enormously increase job satisfaction and improve retention in the Foreign Service, at very little cost to the department.

FSO Rongjie Chen is an economic officer on the Canada desk at the State Department.

Reimagine Foreign Aid

In a recent *Foreign Affairs* article, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates bemoaned the decline in development aid, warning that China was doing a much better job of courting countries to gain access to their natural resources. Unfortunately, Mr. Gates was talking about security aid, not development aid. The two are often confused. Some believe that security aid kills the two birds with just the one stone, but that's not true either. How could it be?

The U.S. Agency for International Development implements four distinct categories of foreign aid: development, security, humanitarian and public health. Defense handles a fifth: military.

USAID does a pretty good job with humanitarian and public health aid, primarily because it effectively segregates its workforce so that employees can more effectively specialize and are not distracted by competing objectives. Both humanitarian and public health departments are hamstrung, however, because of overlapping responsibilities—with State for refugees, and with both State and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for public health.

The workforces for security and development aid aren't segregated at all at USAID, which causes all sorts of problems. A State official once told me: "We don't have time for your five-year plans." The Trump administration proposed eliminating devel-

opment aid altogether in favor of security aid. A broad bipartisan alliance in Congress wisely and resoundingly declined his offer.

Instead, in partnership with Congress, do the following:

- Assign each aid type to a separate agency.
 - a. USAID: Development (incorporate MCC, USDA)
 - b. State: Security (incorporate USAID Economic Support Fund)
 - c. CDC: Public Health (incorporate USAID and State public health)
 - d. FEMA: Humanitarian (incorporate USAID disaster and State refugee)
- Assure either "security" or "development" aid is provided to a country, but never both.
- Assure sensible development aid planning with five-year appropriations.

Jeffrey A. Cochrane is a retired USAID FSO who lives in Washington, D.C.

Put State in Charge of Interagency Meetings

There is an interagency system to coordinate foreign policy issues. My recommendation is that interagency meetings be chaired by the appropriate assistant secretary of State rather than the senior director at the National Security Council.

Why? The NSC director is in a lonely situation, seeing all the cable traffic but talking to nobody during the day. The assistant secretary talks to ambassadors, U.S. embassies abroad, the press, office directors and desk officers, as well as counterparts in other national security agencies. The assistant secretary is at the center of U.S. activities in the region, while the NSC director is there only to watch what is going on to make sure the president's overall policy is being followed. That is not sufficient to enable the NSC director—who is, more often than not, junior in rank—to chair the interagency process.

Hank Cohen, a retired FSO and former ambassador, lives in Washington, D.C.

Choose Ambassadors for Their Skills

Past presidents have opted to fill ambassadorships with top donors, and we saw "ambassadorships for sale" at its worst during the Trump administration.

Please choose ambassadors for their skills, background and

leadership abilities. Among career diplomats (and retirees), there are many superb candidates.

For those former ambassadors who present their credentials this time, a good question to ask is: “What did you do to promote and advance the FSOs of color who worked for you?” That should help remove the chaff from the wheat.

Nicole Conn is a retired FSO who lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Let’s See the New Leadership

I would like to request that the new administration send out the official leadership photos as soon as possible. I will feel much better seeing these each day as I enter a federal building to work. The photos are symbols of democracy in action, of our commitment to support all changes of administration over my 32-year government career. I am so proud to be an American, proud of what we can do.

Diane G. Corbin is a Foreign Service office management specialist now working in the front office of U.S. Embassy Guatemala City.

Improve Implementation of “Deal Teams”

The concept of creating embassy “deal teams” to provide improved support to U.S. commercial and trade activities abroad is valuable, but implementation is fatally flawed.

Since retiring seven years ago, I have been the country manager in Mozambique for a large U.S. engineering and construction firm and worked for a private investment bank that focuses on power and infrastructure projects in Europe and Africa. In this work I have learned how little I understood about the needs and perspectives of U.S. business while on active duty.

I took seriously the charge in my letters of instruction from the president to promote U.S. business and achieved some significant successes. However, I now realize that I was underprepared to understand how the private sector thinks about investments, analyzes opportunities and risks, and reaches investment decisions. And I had no more than a vague grasp of the complexities of project finance.

I would recommend two specific steps to make the “deal team” concept more effective: First, an intense short-term course for all officers on foreign trade, foreign investment and project finance, including, if possible, a monthlong “internship” at the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, the Com-

merce Department, the Department of Agriculture, the Export-Import Bank of the U.S. or a private-sector financial institution.

Second, I recommend increased opportunities for one- or two-year “excursion tours” in the private sector or at one of the U.S. government trade and finance institutions. FSOs don’t have to become experts in these subjects, but they do need to be familiar with the basic concepts if they are to promote U.S. business effectively.

For these recommendations to take root, the promotion precepts must emphasize the value of this training and urge promotion boards to recognize it as an important element of demonstrating the ability to perform at higher levels.

Christopher Dell, a retired FSO, lives in Washington, D.C.

Emphasize Historical Literacy in Training

One specific recommendation for the new administration is to expand training to include greater emphasis on historical literacy for Foreign Service professionals before serving at overseas posts.

Generations of diplomats have underscored the need for more training. Take a look at how the military prepares its foreign area officers (FAOs), posting them, as the FAO program website describes, for “one year of in-country immersion at a site somewhere within their assigned region,” and requiring them to “attend a fully-funded graduate program and earn a master’s degree with a focus on their assigned region.”

Appeals for the equivalent Foreign Service education have gone unheeded, branded as too expensive. A training float is not new; it already exists for language learning. But no matter how important speaking in the foreign language is to conducting the breadth of diplomacy, it is not sufficient. In-depth background on the host nation is also essential. Yet beyond a short introductory area studies course that covers an entire region and all the current issues facing the United States, acquiring that is left to the individual.

Such training should specifically incorporate a greater focus on the study of history—of the events and people that shaped the identity of the country, of the relationship between the United States and that country, of competing historical understandings of significant events.

Far too many times throughout my career, I engaged foreign counterparts better versed than I was in the historical complexity of a situation, leaving me at a disadvantage in advocating U.S. interests. Far too often I encountered contentious incidents



whose underlying dispute emerged from either not knowing the history or knowing a different one altogether.

Providing background training is one way to strengthen historical literacy. The other is to expand the role of the Office of the Historian. Staff there prepare background papers, but far too few people in the field know of their existence. Even something as simple as a required briefing from the Office of the Historian on the way to post would go far in instilling a culture of historical awareness.

The strength of U.S. diplomacy overseas is understanding and interpreting the broad context in foreign environments to identify areas of common ground. Give us the tools to do this and serve the American people.

Retired FSO John Dickson was a public diplomacy officer from 1984 to 2010.

Make the Foreign Service an Official Profession

The new administration should transform the Foreign Service into a formal government profession by:

- Formulating and implementing a *code of professional conduct* for the Foreign Service.
- Mandating a *career-long, diplomatic educational continuum* expressly designed for the Foreign Service that includes diplomatic knowledge: for example, cross-cultural negotiating behavior, “measures short of war,” diplomatic persuasion, multilateralism, grand strategy and select areas of international law.

It is not enough for the Foreign Service to merely claim profession status. A profession—such as law, medicine or the military—is a distinct institution. Elements of a profession the Foreign Service lacks include a commitment to appropriate, defined values (found in a professional code of conduct) and career-long professional education. The Foreign Service Institute should be the repository and teacher of diplomatic knowledge, in addition to existing leadership, management, language and area studies training.

Foreign policy and diplomacy are fundamentally ethical. Every day Foreign Service personnel make ethical decisions not only related to strategic foreign policy recommendation and implementation, but also concerning consular and other operations. The Foreign Service should develop a code of professional responsibility and conduct that accounts for and amplifies its values. This professional code would be aspirational and practical. It would

not overlap with compliance ethics administered by the Bureau of Global Talent Management and Office of the Legal Adviser.

Such a code of professional responsibility would need to be fully inculcated by and within the leadership and the personnel of the Foreign Service. It would be studied throughout the careers of the professional Foreign Service at home and in missions abroad. Foreign Service personnel who came forward to testify in 2019’s impeachment proceedings did so on the basis of values they understood instinctually. They should have been able to articulate values expressed in a Foreign Service code of conduct.

The world is becoming ever more complicated. There has never been a greater need for a code to support the Foreign Service.

Retired FSO Robert William Dry is adjunct professor of diplomatic and Middle Eastern studies at New York University’s Graduate Program in International Relations.

Reverse the Centralization of Public Diplomacy

America’s image abroad has been damaged greatly by the Iraq War, the Great Recession and the Trump administration. To improve the situation, some policy experts would like to recreate the U.S. Information Agency. They are nostalgic for the agency’s independent role of telling America’s story without constraints imposed by the politics of the moment.

But this nostalgia ignores current realities: the declining budget for all diplomatic activities, the growing presence of the Pentagon in the gaps left by a receding State Department and the questionable viability of a small, independent agency being allowed by any administration to pursue a bipartisan approach to championing America’s virtues.

Without the expense and political battles needed to recreate USIA, however, we can reproduce its effectiveness by reversing the centralization of public diplomacy in the hands of Washington-based political appointees. Cloth-eared, Washington-controlled messaging has reduced the nimbleness, adaptability and effectiveness of State Department public diplomacy.

The new administration must have faith in the professionalism of its ambassadors and embassy teams. Ambassadors

must be given the authority to develop tactical messages that allow them the greatest flexibility in responding to local challenges. This task cannot be done under the existing centralization in Washington.

Gordon Duguid of Bethesda, Maryland, retired recently as a public diplomacy officer in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs with the rank of Minister Counselor.

State-Defense Career Track Alignment

Integrated operations at the country and area levels under the responsible ambassadors and National Security Council direction could be improved by encouraging parallel career tracks for the Foreign Service and military professionals.

The Foreign Service professionals that AFSA represents would benefit from career assignments that focus on the languages, cultures and economies of specific geopolitical areas. These areas should align generally with career tracks of military professionals.

To enable this alignment, the State Department must ensure clarity of responsibilities with existing military command areas. Aligning existing career paths between State and the Department of Defense could encourage individual professional advancement and strengthen professional competence for executing U.S. national security policies and managing diplomatic international relations.

Michael Dwyre is a retired USAID FSO and a captain in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve who lives in Miramar Beach, Florida.

Invest More in FSO Training, Tie Education to Promotion

To reinvigorate the Foreign Service's central role in the creation and execution of U.S. foreign policy, the U.S. government needs to invest more resources in higher education programs for FSOs.

The State Department can do this in three ways: (1) expand higher education opportunities beyond the war colleges and the Princeton/Harvard master's degree in public policy programs to include part-time programs and MBAs; (2) upgrade the Foreign Service Institute to a degree-conferring institution on par with the National Defense University, and expand course offerings to include policy analysis and formulation, management and

leadership courses taught by leaders in those fields; and (3) require FSOs to complete one of the master's degree options to be eligible for promotion from FS-2 to FS-1.

Currently, the amount of time spent in training by FSOs pales in comparison to the training courses offered by the Department of Defense and intelligence agencies. By forcing a narrative that requires constant time in the field, officers are discouraged from taking the time to develop new skills that will be essential to performing well at the next level. Requiring a one-year master's degree for promotion to FS-1 will reduce the "training penalty" in the promotion process, and the State Department will be clearly showing a desire to invest in the long-term skills of its workforce.

The United States is one of the few countries without a fully accredited diplomatic academy. Upgrading FSI would not only allow State to attract greater teaching talent and provide a wider array of courses and degrees; it would also allow for the development of more robust exchange programs with other diplomatic services. Exchange programs, particularly with emerging regional powers, could build the types of relationships that will pay dividends in the field.

Focusing on developing specific skills can also add a measure of objectivity to the promotion and assignments process. Our current system is based almost entirely on "corridor reputation," which leads to persistent biases against women and minorities. With more time in training and a wider range of courses, officers can clearly demonstrate the skills they have, and posts can apply more specific selection criteria.

FSO Amy Eagleburger is a political and human rights officer at U.S. Embassy Dushanbe.

Make Public Diplomacy a Priority

Returning the United States to trusted leadership standing in the world will require a strategy to explain what our country stands for, domestically and internationally, and to counter growing disinformation and propaganda. To do this effectively, experienced public diplomacy professionals are needed. With this aim, the new administration should do the following:

- Prioritize a robust, comprehensive public diplomacy program in the State Department.
- Ensure a mutually reinforcing relationship between making policy and preparing for its reception in foreign countries, one that will engage public diplomacy proactively at every stage. Public diplomacy should not be the caboose.

- Recognize the difference between informing the American people about foreign policy and persuading foreign audiences through public diplomacy. The language that trumpets a trade deal at home won't necessarily convince another nation's public that it is also a win for them.

- Pay attention to the cardinal tenet of persuasive communication: It's not what you say, it's what they hear. While most of the world is primed to welcome the new Biden administration, how the United States presents its return will matter.

- To avoid the all-too-frequent perception that the United States is tone-deaf, vet foreign policy speeches and statements with public diplomacy professionals who best understand foreign audiences.

- Use the full arsenal of public diplomacy. Information messaging alone, no matter how ably crafted and well placed through technology, does not necessarily build support. Combine the shorter-term informational goals with medium- and long-term building of relationships to address perception as well as knowledge.

- Show up. And not only at the highest-level international meetings. Participate in conferences and colloquia abroad. If the United States won't tell its own story, others are only too happy to do it for us.

- Recognize that optimal effectiveness of the department's PD operations requires the appropriate functional structure. Correct current PD organizational inefficiencies.

- Recognize that public diplomacy professionals have a distinct set of skills and expertise. Staff PD positions throughout the department with seasoned career PD professionals. This should start with the under secretary for public diplomacy and public affairs, with clear lines of authority over PD personnel and program resources.

Renee M. Earle is a retired public diplomacy FSO who lives in Durham, North Carolina.

Reinvigorate the Culture of FS Notetaking

As the incoming senior appointees prepare to fulfill President Joe Biden's charge for America to lead from "the head of the table" internationally, they should reserve a seat for a professional FSO at every engagement. We hope our experiences and institutional perspectives will be used to help shape policy.

As the new team takes the field, it should also commit to reinvigorating the culture of notetaking and the basic diplomatic



practice of formal reporting, which has witnessed a serious degradation in recent years. This is more than just commonsense compliance with regulations. Such a commitment would help rebuild the skill of America's diplomatic corps and restore confidence in American diplomacy among our foreign counterparts.

On the practical side, FSOs need to be involved in and report on the highest-level meetings if we are to faithfully carry out and force-multiply the new administration's policies. Writing suggested talking points for a principal is one thing; far more important for developing the next generation is witnessing how that principal deploys the points in a conversation.

Pandemic restrictions have accelerated the unfortunate trend of a decline in face-to-face diplomacy. But the routine participation in these engagements of everyone from ambassadors to entry-level officers will enhance greatly the effectiveness of our diplomatic efforts.

As a matter of principle, having a notetaker present in meetings or listening to phone calls also signals to our foreign interlocutors that the appointees and professional diplomats are part of one team, that diplomats are entrusted with the administration's confidence, and that these U.S. officials are doing the American people's business and operating in a system designed for internal transparency.

The habit of taking notes and distilling the key points of an engagement is essential to the historical record. What we do and what we say matters, now and in the future.

As Ambassador William Burns points out, America needs a new foreign policy that supports domestic renewal. This is not just about security and prosperity; it's also about strengthening the functional and honorable aspects of government work.

Reinvigorating a culture of notetaking and formal reporting will enhance accountability and good governance, while boosting the effectiveness of all of America's diplomats—appointees and professional—in service of the American people.

FSO David Fabrycky is deputy political counselor at the U.S. Mission to NATO in Brussels.



Time for a Rebirth of Democracy

Democracy is in crisis. It is under attack in the developed world, and in the United States, which has always thought of itself as democracy's cradle.

Democracy is the soul of America. We must support democracy abroad, or we cease to be who we are. But we must be thoughtful in how to proceed. First, we must recover democracy at home. Second, we must work very closely with democratic allies, recognizing that all democracies are under stress. And third, we must support democracy where it is under attack from authoritarians or weak governments. Yes, we should be humble, but our commitment should exceed our humility.

It is time for bold thinking and measures and breaking down some of the intellectual and bureaucratic walls between domestic and foreign affairs. To overcome authoritarian and populist trends, democracy must have a substantive meaning: It must lead to a better life for most citizens, who must feel invested in it. Many feel that democracy is only a broken promise, and those people are easily tempted toward populism and authoritarianism, which our adversaries know very well how to exploit.

The most important challenge is to address inequality, in which already distorted power relations are exacerbated by globalization, technology and policy. These imbalances lead to the perception, if not the reality, of public corruption, exclusion and conflict. Climate change and information technology deepen inequalities.

It is time for a rebirth of democracy, a New Democratic Deal based not only on the traditional liberal rights, but also substantive rights to health care, income and shared control over natural resources. This rethinking of democracy begins with our own example at home, and a vision from your leadership. Collaborate with your Foreign Service to make this vision a fundamental part of democracy and development.

José Garzón is a retired USAID Foreign Service officer currently in Kosovo, where his wife is USAID mission director.

Bring Back the Sounding Board

Years ago, a "best practice" from USAID called "Tip of the Day" was mandated at State. Every day we receive a pop-up ad that tests us. It used to be all about cybersecurity, but over the years it has become so much more. Because we see it every day, it has become pure background noise; moreover, it has drifted far from its original intent.

Around the same time, we had a wonderful webpage forum called "Sounding Board" on which anyone could post questions or concerns. And while some were less than serious issues (I never did find out why we had female urinals at Main State), it was a great place to share ideas and challenge conventional wisdom. Sadly, the Sounding Board went away a few years ago.

Please get rid of the Tip of the Day and bring back the Sounding Board. It may not be an earthshattering change, but it would make a difference on a granular, everyday basis.

Foreign Service Specialist Llywelyn C. Graeme is the assistant to the ambassador at U.S. Embassy Copenhagen.

Go Beyond the Status Quo

Renewed adherence to multilateralism is necessary, but the United States needs to go beyond a return to the status quo of earlier administrations.

In addition to rejoining the World Health Organization, the Human Rights Council and UNESCO, and playing an active role in those organizations, we must start paying our assessments to the United Nations and other institutions on a timely basis. While we ought not relinquish our veto and leadership in the Security Council, instead of dodging, we need to help craft a way forward to a reformed council that responds to the demands of most United Nations members.

Additionally, the United States should more fully recognize that resolutions in the General Assembly and other U.N. bodies carry visions of aspirations rather than specific requirements. Our approach has been too legalistic for too long. The Trump administration's rejection of any formulation related to women's reproductive rights is hopefully history. But the U.S. is equally stuck in the mud on dozens of other formulations; for example, those related to the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals set in 2015.

As a result, we are often viewed as an impediment to harmony and consensus rather than a leader or partner in achieving global solutions. This, in turn, hampers America's

ability to achieve success on matters of real importance. Active leadership by professionals in the front office of the U.S. Mission to the U.N. will provide opportunities to move forward; but we don't need to put lipstick on a pig, we need real change in America's policy approach.

Finally, we should have no political ambassadors, expand the Peace Corps and unleash USAID!

Robert E. Gribbin is a retired FSO and former ambassador in Springfield, Virginia.

Prioritize Values Over Politics

To reinvigorate U.S. diplomacy, the new administration should not permit politically motivated ambassadorial appointments. Ambassadors must have diplomatic experience.

Also, the administration should prohibit sales of weaponry and aid to countries that have declared they are against American values or have corrupt governments.

Noel Harrington, a retired State Department office management specialist, lives in Bend, Oregon.

Unleash the Power of Diversity

The Department of State's tremendous effort to broaden diversity within its workforce rightly encompasses a more expansive understanding of what it means to be an American, including the immigrant and refugee experiences of women and men for whom the United States is an adopted home.

To live up to the full potential of this effort, we have to leverage the talents, language abilities and historical perspectives of diaspora Americans within the department's ranks. Engaging substantively with State's collection of employee affinity groups is a great place to start. Here are a few recommendations for consideration:

- State's regional bureaus should establish regular and ongoing policy consultations with the affinity group(s) most closely aligned with their geographic focus.
- The policy planning staff should tap representatives from these groups to review and provide feedback on novel policy recommendations related to a specific region, conflict or bilateral partnership.
- The Dissent Channel mechanism should be revamped to encourage the contribution of policy inputs (not just disagreements with current policy) from representatives of the wider

workforce with linguistic, cultural and historical perspectives on a particular country, region or conflict, regardless of their formal portfolio.

- The department should champion and elevate the undeniable value of deep, contextualized knowledge about, or a personal connection to, a place, its people, its language and history. Too often, this degree of connection to a country or region is conflated with the concept of "clientitis," discouraging the development of real geographic expertise.

- The Bureau of Diplomatic Security should revamp its criteria in evaluating suitability for security clearances to expand opportunities for people with specific ethnic backgrounds to serve in those locations over the course of their careers.

Foreign and Civil Service officers, including myself, have roots in Armenia, India, Vietnam, Mexico, Egypt and elsewhere. Some of us were born in these places; others have parents who immigrated to the United States in search of the "American dream." Compartmentalizing this potent force or assuming we leave our personal identities at the door when we walk into the lobby of the Harry S Truman Building is neither realistic nor efficient. Finding mechanisms to tap into the full potential of the ethnic diversity within the Department of State will undoubtedly make U.S. international engagement and foreign policy formulation more effective.

FSO Ruben Harutunian is a senior adviser at the Foreign Service Institute.

Restore Presidential Recognition to the Foreign Service

Because the new administration promised to rely on diplomacy, President Biden should fill the top ranks of U.S. diplomacy from the Senior Foreign Service and reward the best performers with the Presidential Rank Award.

This award is the pinnacle of the system of executive incentives set up by Congress in the Foreign Service Act of 1980. The president can recognize exemplary service by annually awarding the PRA to just the top 6 percent of the Senior Foreign Service.

The PRA designates a member of the Senior Foreign Service as among the best—their service merits the nation's thanks. While the money that accompanies the award is welcome, it is recognition from the president that means the most.

From 2012 to 2017, the Senior Foreign Service did not receive the PRA, although the Senior Executive Service

(including at State) did (except for 2014, when all awards were frozen). The PRAs were awarded to the Senior Foreign Service in 2018 and 2019, but not in 2020. The PRA can be received only once in three years.

The Biden administration is committed to diplomacy. Getting the PRAs back on track reinforces that commitment.

Bill Haugh is a retired State FSO in Fairfax, Virginia.

Address Systemic Racial Disparities at State

The Thursday Luncheon Group proposes the following reforms to enable employees of color to successfully thrive and rise through the ranks of the Department of State.

FS Promotions. Add “diversity and inclusion effectiveness” as a fourth employee evaluation review tenet, and make the Foreign Service Institute’s “Mitigating Unconscious and Conscious Bias” training a prerequisite for promotion to the FS-3, FS-2 and FS-1 levels. Link senior performance pay to the promotion of diversity, inclusion and equity, and use anonymous 360-degree surveys as part of the SPP review process.

FS Selection Board Process. Mandate the inclusion of an affinity group representative on all selection boards, prioritizing the selection of TLG or Pickering and Rangel Fellowship Association members. A newly established senior adviser for diversity and inclusion should participate in the screening, vetting and selection of all board members.

Institutionalize the use of Virtual Selection Boards to expand the pool of available officers from affinity groups. Reestablish multifunctionality selection boards for officers competing at the FS-2 to FS-1 and FS-1 to FE-OC levels. This will promote greater transparency and fairness for officers serving in out-of-cone assignments. Exclude any Foreign Service or Civil Service officer facing an equal employment opportunity complaint of merit from serving on any selection board for two to five years.

FS Mentoring and Counseling Programs. Institutionalize a robust mentoring program and counseling services, administered by the Bureau of Global Talent Management and the Office of Medical Services, to support employees of color at every stage of their careers.

Formalize a leadership program for FS-3 employees of color, to be administered by FSI, to provide career guidance and hone their managerial and supervisory skills. This will create a stronger pipeline of officers prepared for future deputy chief of mission and chief of mission positions.

Develop a leadership program for FS-1 employees of color to coach and train them for executive leadership positions and pair them with senior mentors. Further, the Office of the Deputy Secretary should encourage senior-level colleagues to develop a sponsorship program to support employees of color as they attempt to cross over into the senior ranks of the department.

FSO Irvin Hicks Jr., currently serving in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, is president of The Thursday Luncheon Group.

Respect Expertise and Direct Experience

Push down decision-making power by allowing more autonomy of action at lower levels in Washington agencies and at embassies. Under the Trump administration, too many issues were pushed up to the seventh floor for decisions.

Rely more, as has been done in the past, on information flowing upward that provides analysis and indicates initial courses of action to be taken.

Be as inclusive as possible in allowing action officers to take part in deliberations and policy discussions to demonstrate respect for expertise and direct experience.

Andrew Hyde is a retired State FSO in Bethesda, Maryland.

Break Down Barriers to Interagency Effectiveness

The Biden administration has an immense opportunity to break down institutional barriers between government programs and agencies that will usher in a new era of policy effectiveness. While our government has relative mastery of interagency coordination processes, achieving meaningful *results* is frequently hobbled by corporate cultures, bureaucratic protectionism, systems incompatibility and perverse incentive structures.

The limitations of doing business as usual are increasingly apparent in international affairs and global competition in which government is relatively less influential than in the past. Both adversaries, such as China, and allies, such as the Netherlands, are comparatively more capable of mobilizing the capacities and capabilities of disparate government departments to support policy implementation and the needs of the increasingly influential private sector around the world.

The Biden administration must begin an overdue, ambi-

tious rethink of the way that America's public servants work together. The timing is right. Our international affairs community, for instance, now has more alumni of whole-of-government programs than at any time in our nation's history, and they've seen the light. One, Prosper Africa—developed by career public servants with bipartisan backing—is a fledgling example of a still-unrealized effort to permanently break down the institutional barriers of doing the business of government better.

The initiative is not a project in traditional terms; rather, it endeavors to change the way that U.S. government officials and the private sector jointly streamline information sharing across common work platforms while mobilizing the power of 16 U.S. government agencies. Though limited in its vision, Prosper Africa is an excellent example of what needs to occur across the entire U.S. government to increase American competitiveness, effectiveness and relevance in the 21st century.

Key aspects of a broader agenda to change the way we work together include realigned performance and promotion metrics and incentives; adaptive budgeting; more flexible human and financial resources that go beyond the equities of a single agency; greater accountability related to governmentwide strategic priorities; common working and technology platforms; cross-agency strategic management and accountability; and a recommitment to win-win public-private and international partnerships.

Sean Jones is a member of the Senior Foreign Service with USAID in Addis Ababa.

Put American Values Back in Foreign Policy

American soft power is far stronger than military force, sanctions and strong-arm tactics. The United States needs to stand up for the dignity of all people around the world. Let's strive for a more positive relationship with Iran and stop sanctioning its people for the actions of their government. Let's reengage sincerely in pursuit of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement that affirms the uncontroversial and fundamental notion that the Palestinian people are human beings who deserve the same rights as their Israeli cousins.

Let's stand up for the rights of people from China to Bahrain to Myanmar who deserve to live free. Let's reaffirm that living up to the values that we profess as Americans, and advocating the preservation of those values for people beyond our shores, is the single most powerful way to reestablish our credibility and influence abroad.

FSO Ravi Kaneriyi is a vice consul in Abu Dhabi.



MENTORING

Personnel Is Policy: Fundamental Change Needed

Changes are needed in structures, systems and processes in the Foreign and Civil Services to strengthen professionalism and advance diversity, equity and inclusion.

Value and empower career employees. State has 1 percent of the federal civilian full-time, permanent workforce, but 10 percent of the government's political appointees. Capping political appointees at 15 percent of ambassadors, under secretaries and assistant secretaries (with no political appointees at the deputy assistant level and below) will open the pipeline for professionals.

Strengthen chief-of-mission authority and update National Security Decision Directive 38. It costs \$400,000 a year to support one American posted overseas. The more people, the greater the security and safety risks and vulnerabilities. Agencies should use virtual meetings and periodic travel and designate a senior representative at post.

Slash the number of special envoy positions to reduce jurisdictional ambiguities and time spent on internal coordination rather than on external goal delivery.

Make overseas comparability pay 100 percent to put it on a par with other foreign affairs agencies and boost morale.

Adopt a diversity, equity and inclusion program with achievable five-year benchmarks; make State an attractive destination for minorities by rethinking recruitment. De-layer and push responsibilities downward.

Scrap the Foreign Service performance management and assignment systems and adopt state-of-the-art models; make professional education and training integral by building in one year at the first rotation after promotion.

Revamp the Foreign Service specialist program by ending the up-or-out model and adopting new salary structures that attract and retain high-value employees in high-demand technical fields.



Make the Civil Service an “excepted” service.

Revamp the security clearance system. It currently takes an average of 10 to 18 months to on-board a new hire.

Replace the grievance and discipline systems with ones that incorporate fair process, due process, full safeguards and timely decisions (not one year or more, as under current practice) so that employees have faith in their objectivity and equity.

Alex Karagiannis and Katherine Ingmanson are retired FSOs in Falls Church, Virginia.

Tap Existing Diversity

While diversity and inclusion at State must improve, I believe that the existing diversity within our Service must be used more effectively and strategically.

The American identity is a multicultural and multireligious one. As a U.S. Foreign Service officer, a child of immigrants and a woman raised in a Muslim household, I am an example of our multifaceted society. When I’m posted abroad, however, local citizens are surprised that I am a diplomat because of preexisting stereotypes about what it means to represent the United States.

Our Foreign Service should actively engage with communities abroad to credibly and purposefully communicate U.S. values and practices of religious inclusion, racial and ethnic diversity, gender and sexual-orientation equality, and tolerance.

To accomplish this strategic objective, I recommend having a centralized repository for outreach materials that include toolkits highlighting different groups in our Foreign Service community. For example, the Department of State already has affinity groups. Why not tap into this existing resource to create videos or other social media tools that speak specifically to their experience as an American?

Moreover, due to the global pandemic, the Foreign Service has seen the utility of virtual diplomacy, and we learned that “long-distance diplomacy” works. These toolkits can be used by posts around the world to have a more strategic and surgical approach to outreach, instead of relying only on the FSOs assigned to the post. The result will be a more targeted, inclusive and precise approach to outreach.

FSO Sadaf Khan is consular chief at U.S. Embassy Podgorica.

Require a Common Core of FS Professional Education

Before the Foreign Service can reinvigorate U.S. diplomacy, it must be rebuilt and reinvigorated itself. The first and perhaps easiest step in this direction is to provide a required common core of ongoing Foreign Service professional education and formation.

Almost 40 years after then-Secretary of State George Shultz helped create the National Foreign Affairs Training Center, today’s entering FSOs may have more college degrees, diverse backgrounds and first careers behind them, but they receive less diplomatic service professional education in common than when he was Secretary. Concerned, Shultz recently underscored the importance of “Trust” in a November 2020 *FSJ* article and called for the creation of a new School of Diplomacy.

However, another option exists: Focusing on what is within State’s control, we could rename NFATC to create the George P. Shultz School of Diplomacy, Leadership and Management. This would build on the best of NFATC’s considerable infrastructure and services, eventually bringing short-term offerings into greater alignment within a common professional framework that would include both longer-term professional education and short-term training.

A longer-term, continuing professional education framework for all levels of State Department employees could be established through careful development of a nine-month, graduate level, pre-commission professional formation curriculum and certification to be required of all entering officers. The framework of subsequent, continuing education curricula appropriate to mid- and senior career levels would focus on:

- Enduring stewardship requirements and responsibilities (history, foundational documents, values, ethics and ethos, grand strategy and international law, norms and institutions).
- New and emerging geostrategic challenges (political, economic, social drivers of change and global transborder challenges such as arms control and nonproliferation, climate change, trade

and investment, international health, emerging global technologies and media, criminal networks, cyberspace, and outer space).

- Best-practice tradecraft (integration of key policy, management and leadership skills and new technological challenges).

Once fully developed, the totality of professional education and formation schooling, completed over time, could eventually be accredited (in cooperation with a nearby university) for a master's degree in diplomatic service (MDS).

Eventually, the MDS would be a requirement to apply for entry into the Senior (Foreign and Executive) Services at State and other agencies, as appropriate.

Stephanie Smith Kinney is a retired member of the Senior Foreign Service in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Adequately Resource State and USAID in Africa

The new administration can reinvigorate U.S. diplomacy and development in Africa by properly resourcing the Department of State and USAID's operations on the continent, and by ensuring that diplomacy and development budgets are passed in a timely manner. Additionally, high-level officials, including the president and vice president, should consider traveling to countries off the beaten path in Africa to strengthen diplomatic relations with those who often feel neglected by the United States.

FSO LaSean Knox-Brown is a public affairs officer at U.S. Embassy Praia.

Revitalize Domestic Engagement

It will be difficult to reinvigorate U.S. diplomacy and development if public support for it is not simultaneously invigorated. Over the past several years, mistrust and misunderstanding of U.S. foreign policy, foreign assistance, international organizations and diplomacy in general seem to have grown.

Many Americans appear to believe this work is being done by unknown bureaucrats in unknown corners of the world to advance unknown or even nefarious ends. In many ways we are foreign to our own countrymen, which makes it easier for "deep state" rumors and misinformation to take hold. There is a lack of awareness of the ways America and Americans benefit from the work of the Foreign Service. While these challenges are not new, the domestic narrative on U.S. foreign policy, diplomacy and development has been lost in a twin deficit of trust and truth,

requiring something beyond a business-as-usual response.

The State Department should consider expanding connections between diplomats (both Foreign Service and Civil Service) and domestic audiences, whether through expanded use of fellowships, secondments, sabbaticals, Diplomats in Residence, the Hometown Diplomat program or other arrangements. Such efforts could allow diplomats to use their communication and development skills to, for instance, help state or local governments improve their post-pandemic work and public engagement while building awareness of, and connections to, the broader work of the department.

The overall goals should be to: expand in-person engagement between department personnel and domestic audiences, especially those more insulated from State's work; build understanding of the department's priorities and efforts and how they benefit America and Americans; and build trust in the individuals who are carrying out that work.

These tools largely exist already; but rethinking and expanding them may be necessary to help bridge the sizeable perception and information gap that has grown between what we do and those for whom we do it, and whose support is ultimately needed for that work to be sustainable.

FSO Joel Kopp is political and economic counselor at U.S. Embassy Monrovia.

Give Management Support to Public Diplomacy in the Field

I could go on about the importance of filling leadership positions as a key component of rolling back the damage done to the State Department and Foreign Service during the Trump years and, especially, the need to restore the 2/3 to 1/3 ratio of career ambassadors to political.

This note, however, proposes a critical adjustment to strengthen public diplomacy. Neglected since the integration of the U.S. Information Agency into State in 1999, the problem of proper management support for PD programs in the field has only intensified in recent years. Although integration increased the chances that PD cultural and research-based perspectives would gain a seat at the policy table, the management support to carry out our programs in the field has been devastatingly compromised.

We used to manage programming at the mission level, but today more and more of a post's public affairs section budget is doled out in discretionary grants that place a lugubrious demand

on officers' time and attention, completely inhibiting proper engagement with the local society and, thus, the ability to go the proverbial "last three feet." The paperwork involved and the training to do that management work suck the energy out of engaged, culturally informed strategic public diplomacy officers.

The lack of management support is the main reason we've lost the granularity and effectiveness of programming based on contact relationships.

Public diplomacy needs dedicated management in the field. One possible solution would be to embed in a public affairs section a dedicated management officer, trained in grant administration, budget and personnel systems, who has been cross-evaluated by the PAO and the management counselor. Another would be to revert to the USIA model of having a management specialist answerable to the PAO.

Peter Kovach, a retired FSO with the rank of Minister Counselor, lives in Bethesda, Maryland.

Merge State and USAID

USAID is an essential institution of our foreign policy, serving as an operational, on-the-ground unit under the policy direction of the State Department. For decades, USAID and State have jostled over the proper role of development assistance in foreign policy, often doing so from a common misunderstanding of their roles.

This is due in large part to USAID being viewed (wrongly) by State and other federal colleagues as a simple technocratic implementer of policy, one deficient in strategic vision and lacking a proper theoretical basis for its actions. As a result, USAID has been denied a permanent, senior position at the National Security Council or in policy discussions.

Officially merging USAID with State would solve a great deal of this disconnect, thereby bringing Senior USAID Foreign Service officers to the table, in the same building, on a routine basis with State, if not on occasion with Department of Defense colleagues.

Those who argue for a continued formal separation between State and USAID struggle to define exactly what differentiates them in practice. Similarly, those who are adamant about maintaining the "uniqueness" of USAID's functions fail to recognize that its specialties of development, humanitarian assistance, governance and conflict resolution cannot be properly implemented without a formal connection to other larger institutions, such as State and Defense.

In this age of nonstate actors, flexible views of a nation's sovereignty and forever-unfolding complex conflicts, USAID's influence and on-the-ground presence are needed more than ever.

USAID was formed during the height of the Cold War to advocate and create the conditions for a capitalist market system; we competed with another system that has been thoroughly discredited. We have won that debate. Let's now make sure USAID is present at the policy discussions and has a say in determining when and why we will engage in a country or region to shape and assist.

If we are an integral part of State, we will have a proper and regular forum in which to participate. If not, we will continue to be an afterthought.

Peter F. Kranstover is a retired USAID FSO in Cedarburg, Wisconsin.

Invest in Language Training

My advice: Carefully consider the positive benefits and competitive advantage of investing in language proficiency training, especially in esoteric or less widely spoken tongues.

Our Foreign Service Institute language school and commitment to training set us apart and open doors locally that would otherwise be closed. One Australian colleague in Laos, for example, expressed wonder at the extensive training our officers received in Lao. We used those language skills to gain local connections and insight, bolstering the United States' odds in geopolitical competition. (The Russians and Chinese certainly spend the time and money to train their diplomats in less common dialects.)

It might be tempting to look at the FSI budget and save money by cutting courses in Amharic, Bengali or Finnish. But that would be a mistake that hinders the long-term strength of our Service.

FSO Matthew H. Kustel is global affairs unit chief at U.S. Embassy Seoul.

Rely on Us for Substantive Policy

The new administration will face unprecedented skepticism concerning America's place in the world and the durability of U.S. foreign policy. But it can reinvigorate American diplomacy, utilizing the Foreign Service to develop substantive courses of action and policy execution. Here are a couple suggestions.

Speak globally and carry a positive message. Former President Bill Clinton famously said, “People are more impressed by the power of our example rather than the example of our power.” Climate change, pandemic response, global cybersecurity, arms control and managing the rise of China are areas that intersect with the interests of our many (admittedly boisterous) allies and offer opportunities for U.S. leadership.

While trade will remain contentious, the Biden administration can engineer win-win scenarios for American middle-class workers and international partners through vigorous business development efforts. Even when foreign governments are not synched with the U.S. position, we can proactively set the global agenda, offer viable alternatives, and create future negotiating space and momentum.

Missions overseas can contribute to policy formulation, bring foreign governments aboard, connect our private sectors, and communicate with elites and broad audiences.

Reconstitute the interagency process. Ad hoc approaches to policymaking or endless interagency debates can hamstring development of coherent lines of effort to advance U.S. interests, result in missed opportunities and drain the morale of our diplomats.

A slimmed down, efficient National Security Council can harness the talents of the interagency; provide broad policy guidance and an approved playbook for execution; and let departments and overseas missions implement without micromanagement.

Ambassadors and country teams should be front and center on these engagements to provide options to policymakers on how to advance American interests in foreign capitals or multilateral institutions.

The most important work starts at home. Let us recall the prophetic words of FSO George Kennan in his 1946 “Long Telegram,” which laid out a framework for containment of Soviet power: “Much depends on the health and vigor of our own society ... measures to solve internal problems ... are worth a thousand diplomatic notes and joint communiqués.”

As citizens and FSOs, we now face the challenge of our time.

Foreign Commercial Service Officer Michael A. Lally is serving as minister counselor for commercial affairs at the U.S. Mission to the European Union in Brussels.



Overhaul the Assignments Process

Evidence shows that diverse teams perform better, and a diverse diplomatic corps would more effectively formulate and implement policy in our national interest, build stronger relationships with foreign governments and their people, and promote peace and prosperity worldwide.

By harnessing America’s diversity, we gain competitive linguistic and cultural advantages compared to largely homogeneous societies. But while the State Department is relatively successful at recruiting women and minorities, it is not retaining this talent, which suggests our personnel systems need examination.

A key to retention is the assignments process. Landing top assignments opens doors, but sometimes it’s more about who you know than what you know that determines outcomes. Moreover, biases against women and minorities in leadership roles affect their selection for top assignments.

The current system is inefficient, labor-intensive, and exploits employees’ professional and personal time. It also advantages those skilled in the art of self-promotion or who have mentors or sponsors, and it is riddled with partialities such as senior leaders’ interventions and affinity bias in selection (our tendency to gravitate toward similar people).

The new administration can reinvigorate U.S. diplomacy by centralizing assignments in the Bureau of Global Talent Management, focusing on qualifications and potential rather than who you know. Employees submit bidding materials with professional, personal or medical considerations to GTM. GTM mitigates against biases by standardizing criteria and interview questions; anonymizing résumés and recommendation letters; conducting interviews with more than one interviewer through the same medium; using a scorecard; and creating a 360-degree feedback process (which can help eliminate a kiss-up, kick-down culture).

GTM then matches skills and scorecards to vacancies, using the Nobel Prize-winning solution to the stable matching problem, which finds matches given an ordering of preferences.



By overhauling the process, the department can tackle retention and morale problems, create an equitable and transparent system, save taxpayer money, address tandem couples' issues, and remove institutional barriers that prevent women and minorities from advancing. This will lead to a more diverse Foreign Service that will be better positioned to conduct foreign policy.

Christina T. Le is deputy political-military unit chief at U.S. Embassy Tokyo.

Trust the Existing Staff in the Transition

I was a USAID health and population officer during the transition from George W. Bush to Barack Obama. As director of the USAID/Bangladesh Health and Population Office, I had suffered personally and professionally from having to implement the Mexico City Policy and other disastrous population policies during the eight years of the Bush administration. I and many of my fellow officers were delighted with the arrival of the Obama administration and the prospect of designing and managing a more enlightened and effective reproductive health policy after so long.

Unfortunately, some new Obama administration leaders at USAID/Washington seemed to think that anyone who served in the Bush administration could not be trusted, and we were not consulted in the development and implementation of new policies. This adversely affected the morale of the Population Office and delayed the implementation of much-needed change.

Therefore, my recommendation to the new USAID managers is to carefully assess and utilize the wisdom of the existing Civil and Foreign Service professional career staff in improving the health and population policies of the last administration. Don't throw out the babies with the fetid bath water! I am sure that this is important in many other development fields, as well.

Charles Llewellyn is a retired USAID FSO living in Beaufort, North Carolina.

Reimagine Diplomatic Service

As we reimagine work in the aftermath of COVID-19, consider the green economy benefits and work/life balance benefits of integrating telework into the federal workforce in a more sustained fashion.

Consider establishing secure outposts for classified information in targeted areas to reduce congestion, relieve commute times, and improve health and housing choices for employees with limited financial resources.

As we reimagine diplomatic service, consider not only reforming the FS cone system, but also the wall between the Civil Service and Foreign Service. Civil servants should be granted more opportunities to serve abroad, and FSOs should be allowed to transition to the Civil Service (and back again) without significant financial penalties.

Both services would benefit from a more fluid separation between them.

FSO Tracy Lochbryn, a gender programs adviser for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs' Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan, is currently working from Gainesville, Florida.

Have Faith in Your Professionals

We have high hopes.

Please, have faith in your professionals.

Please, listen before acting.

Finally, expect to hear complaints and negative comments. Understand that many of them come from a place of pain and fear. People can heal better if they feel heard, even if their issue isn't "fixed" in the long run.

Phil and Jill Lundy McClendon are retired members of the Foreign Service living in Weatherford, Texas.

Trust the Foreign Service

Please trust the Foreign Service. That means: Don't just bring back retired FSOs or retired military to lead the State Department, comforting as that might seem. Current FSOs are up to the challenge.

Much has been written about how the new administration must rebuild the Service and repair morale. Please start by demonstrating faith in its current members.

Cameron Munter, a retired FSO and former ambassador, lives in Prague, Czech Republic.

Expand Trans-Atlantic Relations

Positive engagement with our NATO allies is critical. NATO has been central to maintenance of peace in Europe since 1949, and its expansion has led to greater and greater capability. U.S. foreign policy in Europe should leverage this history to strengthen the close and efficacious relationship, and expand it to new and candidate members. Sharing the burden of maintaining peace is a sure way to generate trust and goodwill.

NATO should not be seen exclusively as a military alliance, but an alliance of shared values. U.S. embassies in NATO and NATO-candidate countries should be encouraged to increase not only military-to-military engagement based on NATO ties, but also political and cultural engagements based on these shared values.

Trans-Atlantic relations should be centered on the already established cooperation generated by NATO. A strong diplomatic effort to highlight the advantages of NATO membership—including educational and cultural exchanges and preference in trade policies, as well as military-focused cooperation—would deepen this crucial alliance.

NATO has been, and I believe will continue to be, the most successful alliance system in history. U.S. foreign policy would be well served to not only work within this existing relationship, but work to expand it, increasing its capabilities and reach.

Michael P. Murphy is a vice consul at U.S. Embassy Podgorica.

Train Diplomats in the Declaration of Independence

U.S. diplomats must know America's founding tenets, and how to project them. Council on Foreign Relations and Harvard Kennedy School papers recommend new diplomatic education. Today that must cover more than international relations. Future U.S. diplomats should be immersed in the creed of the Declaration of Independence, and how it works in the world.

No expertise in the declaration's creed is codified, but several motifs illustrate some of its content: The declaration's truths define national identity; the Constitution defines the governing state. Many see "democracy" and "free enterprise" as American values, but those are particular interpretations of "consent of the governed" and "pursuit of happiness." The creed is America's common ground and is debased by partisan claims to its exclusive sanction.

No airy ideal, the creed is meant to flourish in a dirty world. Diplomats must reconcile, sometimes painfully, to pragmatic measures. Nuanced understanding is required to assert the con-

text of America's intentions and core identity around economic deals, moral compromises and wars.

Immersion in these ideas and nuances demands more than readings. Digestion of concepts and philosophies must occur alongside case studies and simulations that portray how the creed and the world affect each other. Dilemmas of pragmatic policy, questions of philosophy and morality, and burdens of an abstract creed must all be raised to test student-diplomats' commitments.

With this formative education, diplomats will constitute a Foreign Service of shared professional commitment. Knowing America's core, they can represent diverse administrations' shifting policies as acts of a united nation. They can digest chaos and form coherent policy where instructions are absent. CFR recommends a "de-layered" State Department and supportive culture; these enabled diplomats animate a "nimble" Service. In policy processes, they wouldn't be seen as representing "other countries' voices," but as stewards for America's creed.

No other agency is charged with this general national interest. While the Department of Defense provides national security, creedal expertise is as vital and real as expertise in armed force. State should become the "America Desk."

Implementing a curriculum takes time, and expertise in America's creed will only demonstrate its value as successive administrations contradict each other. But prescribing this expertise for the foreign policy apparatus today will signal that America knows its common ground.

George F. Paik is a retired State Department FSO in Newtown, Connecticut.

Four Ways to Reinvigorate U.S. Diplomacy

The incoming administration can reinvigorate U.S. diplomacy and development by advocating for and supporting passage of a new Foreign Service Act, enhanced health and environmental policy, and improved hiring and talent management.

First, a new Foreign Service Act should codify several changes. It should dictate minimum staffing numbers for the Foreign Service. It should mandate that political appointees fill no more than 10 percent of ambassadorial appointments, and that at least 70 percent of all assistant secretary and senior department positions be filled by career officers. It should also ensure a minimum floor of overseas FS positions and codify the importance of functional assignments.

Second, the Biden-Harris administration should prioritize science and health diplomacy by creating a separate environment, science, technology and health (ESTH) cone. It should support functional training for work in bureaus such as Oceans and Environmental Sciences, career development through exchanges, graduate training and meaningful work opportunities in other agencies.

In addition, increased coordination for a whole-of-government policy from State, USAID, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, Department of Defense, National Security Council and the intelligence community is essential to addressing challenges from anthropogenic climate change and epidemics and their links to poverty, political instability and social crisis.

Third, the administration should prioritize moral courage by entirely redesigning the employee evaluation report to reward risk taking and honest appraisal rather than compliance and risk avoidance. The department should support more flexible hiring mechanisms and opportunities to serve, such as midlevel hiring of FSOs, expanded eligible family member positions, a Foreign Service–Reserve Officer Training Corps program and conversion mechanisms between the Civil and Foreign Service. Effective support for diversity and inclusion is essential, not only to ensure that the department reflects the United States’ diverse heritage, but also by encouraging debate, respectful disagreement and data-driven analysis over clearance by superiors or Washington.

Finally, the department should transform the Foreign Service Institute to become a degree-granting diplomatic studies academy similar to the U.S. military service academies. Significant, rigorous training of no less than six months of full-time study or participation in seminars should be required at entry, mid- and senior levels as a prerequisite to promotion.

FSO Ian Parker serves at U.S. Consulate General Merida in Mexico.

Address Midlevel Entry and Assignments

In 2010 I was part of the 150th A-100 class of 82 people with an average age of 32. Ten of us were over 50, and to my knowledge we have all left the Service. Our reasons for leaving are similar and could be cured partially by some of these suggestions.

First, implement a midlevel entry program so that executives and otherwise experienced people age 50 or older could manage people and use their skills, perhaps as an FS-2 after A-100 and

additional specialty training. Combine this with eliminating the five “cones” of specialization, and evaluating preexisting skills brought into the Foreign Service rather than dismissing them as irrelevant. This suggestion gets at the heart of moving away from the internship approach and to a modern personnel paradigm where people with knowledge and skills are hired and then fully utilized.

Second, examine the entire structure of why and how FSOs rotate posts and, more critically, what FSOs do. Do we really need 10 political officers at an embassy writing cables that few read and contain information everyone could get from watching CNN? Perhaps, for example, economic officers and members of the Foreign Commercial Service should be merged, with a much greater focus put on creating jobs in America through increased foreign direct investment and networking.

Third, learn a language in country, not in Arlington, Virginia. We need to look critically at how languages are taught, evaluate which positions need to be language designated, and require a better return on investment than one year in country for one or two years studying a language full time.

Fourth, require a 360-degree review for employee evaluation reports. This reform alone, to have bosses reviewed by their employees, would revolutionize State. Senior and other supervisory FSOs would be held accountable for their leadership skills and for the performance of their sections.

Bob Perls, a former FSO, is a business owner and management consultant in Corrales, New Mexico.

Care for U.S. Diplomats

To reinvigorate U.S. diplomacy, the new administration must first reinvigorate U.S. diplomats. It is no secret that morale has steadily dropped in recent years.

Despite the professionalism of our nation’s Foreign Service officers, it is implicitly more difficult to advocate for the mission when one doesn’t feel a part of it. Reassuring old allies that the United States “is back” is important, of course, but it can be back only if the foot soldiers of diplomacy feel like they are back, too.

Diplomats need to be cared for, and—in turn—they will care for diplomacy.

FSO Kaleb Rogers is on temporary assignment to the State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

Leverage State's Greatest Asset—Its People

Here are some suggestions for the new administration's first 100 days.

Empower Foreign Service leadership. The new administration can turn a page in U.S. diplomacy by elevating more career diplomats to key leadership positions. The multifaceted experience of career diplomats will prove useful in navigating the multidimensional challenges of the world today.

Career diplomats will know how to shepherd the policies of the new administration and retain its institutional knowledge for continuity. Appointing career diplomats to leadership positions would also boost morale, as the men and women of the State Department see the professional rewards of embracing a lifelong career.

Lead with the face of America. To expand workforce diversity at the State Department, the incoming administration can begin with vertical and horizontal promotions of women and minorities already at the agency. This would be a pragmatic and feasible way to jump-start workforce diversity initiatives prior to implementing alternatives that may require more time and effort through legislation or executive order. By tapping into the State Department's diversity first, the new administration will begin to unlock the full depth of talent within the agency.

Staff national security missions to win. The new administration can signal strong support for diplomacy by prioritizing the staffing of diplomats at posts critical to U.S. national security (e.g., Iraq, Afghanistan). Though uncertainty will always prevail in countries characterized by weak stability and security, staffing fluctuations at these posts are sometimes the result of U.S. policy prerogatives rather than in-country crises.

Some of the missions, in countries deemed “unwinnable” by military means per U.S. military experts, have experienced downsizing/rightsizing exercises, cutting FSOs and ejecting them before or during their in-country service. Like many Foreign Service colleagues, I have experienced such policies and witnessed their unintended consequences.

Whether the new administration seeks to withdraw or surge U.S. personnel, it should, when possible, adopt a phased- or conditions-based staffing approach to minimize disruptions to missions working on U.S. national security matters.

FSO Felix Sanchez is currently on leave without pay.



Institute a Language Requirement for Entry

You don't need to know a foreign language to enter the Foreign Service. We will teach you.

The rationale for this policy goes back to the time of the Rogers Act of 1924 and after, when generally only wealthy Americans had the opportunity to learn foreign languages, and we wanted to draw officers from a broader pool. During the past century, as more and more people came to speak English, the need for a foreign language was apparently diminishing.

I think it is past time, however, to do what most other diplomatic services have always done, and that is to make language ability and knowledge a requirement for entry into the Foreign Service (in addition, of course, to the other requirements such as the written exam, oral interview, good health, etc.).

Specifically, to enter the Foreign Service, an individual must have at least a 4/4 in a world language or a 3+/4 in a hard language. Many more Americans now possess those levels of fluency in a foreign language, either because they are immigrants or the children of immigrants, because of service in the Peace Corps or because of study abroad.

A more than minimum level of fluency in another language will make them more effective diplomats and, in particular, will make it much easier to reach foreign nationals who do not speak English.

Retired FSO Robert E. Service is a reemployed annuitant in the State Department's Office of Management Strategy and Solutions.

Embrace Constructive Dissent

We write this note in defense of dissent, affirming our belief that it contributes to a stronger diplomatic corps—and a safer world. It is vitally important that the new administration promote constructive dissent for its value in the development and implementation of effective foreign policy.



First, constructive dissent drives innovation. The private sector knows this. *Forbes* magazine recently argued that one person's dissenting views can drive the creativity of an entire group, promoting divergent and unbiased thinking that enhances decision-making. Dissent is also an important part of working in teams, where each voice brings a unique perspective. For diplomats, our ability to give honest policy recommendations will only be as good as our ability to have honest conversations with each other and within our own institution.

Second, constructive dissent creates a safer, more open work environment. Dissent without fear of reprisal is crucial to generating new and different ways of thinking. When leadership encourages constructive dissent, employees understand that their ideas are valued and are more likely to contribute to the common good—especially diplomats from diverse backgrounds whom the department has had a chronic problem retaining.

Third, constructive dissent is a measure of the strength of leadership. The best leaders recognize and protect dissent because they understand that it allows them to shift some of the burden of decision-making from themselves to the strengths and talents of their team. It also prevents the irrational and dangerous phenomenon of “groupthink.” Being an effective leader means that you actively encourage individuals to speak their mind—a value that lies at the heart of our democracy.

Seeing dissent as a positive attribute and not a threat helps to create trusting partnerships between leadership and employees, and results in better workplace safety, more inclusive policies and higher ethical standards.

Organizations die from conformity, not dissent.

FSOs Amelia Shaw, Moises Mendoza, William E. O'Bryan, Roshni Nirody, Elena Augustine, Luke Zahner, Christina Le, Anna Boulos, Jefferson Smith, Thomas Wong, Wendy Brafman, Maurizio Visani, Kathryn Kiser, Cecilia Cho and Mariju Bofill are past winners of AFSA awards for constructive dissent.

Address Resources and Organization

To reinvigorate U.S. diplomacy, changes that are both internal and external to the State Department are necessary.

First, Congress should provide a consistent budget and timely annual financial flows. Period. No more continuing resolutions. The U.S. Foreign Service should be able to count on at least an annual budget and financial flows—even better, a real two-year budget. We all know that no business could remain viable if it operated the way our government has operated over the last 20 years. The financial fits and starts, or shutdowns, make it extraordinarily difficult to plan or implement anything.

Second, foreign affairs professionals should be leading U.S. foreign policy. The National Security Council and Department of Defense, as well as Congress, have taken on larger roles while State Department talent—which focuses all its time and effort overseas and is physically located around the globe—has been sidelined.

From a global operational perspective, several priorities stand out. First, the U.S. government needs to focus on building global trust and being a reliable, consistent partner. For the last 10 years (at least, and likely since 9/11), U.S. motives have been questioned, and we have not been able to sufficiently answer concerns, even from our strongest allies.

Second, we need to be able to effectively communicate in a world that is on 24/7. We need to ramp up our capacity and resources so that we can be a positive and strong influence and model in the global chat room. But we also need to ramp up our ability to meet face to face with the world. In other words, there should be increased emphasis on and resources for exchange programs. Current State Department exchange programs are the gold standard globally.

Finally, to develop and align personnel resources to be where they are really needed, the State Department's human resources systems should be completely overhauled, especially the evaluation, promotion and assignment processes. Professional development and training should also be more frequently required. Though State attracts great talent, its internal operations are often nontransparent and decades behind the rest of the country.

Susan Shultz is a recently retired State Department FSO in Arlington, Virginia.

Make Démarches Count

How to leverage the value added of the Foreign Service? Find and repeat one of former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering's first instructions to posts on assuming his position.

In that message, Pickering urged embassy officers to creatively modify, edit and craft démarches for maximum impact on receiving governments, not simply mechanically transmit démarches as received from Washington.

Neil Silver is a retired FSO in McLean, Virginia.

Create Diplomatic "Special Forces"

Reinvigorating the Department of State diplomatic corps requires new thinking and a commitment to grassroots, person-to-person engagements, including to traditional leaders, village chiefs, elders and influencers far from national capitals and host-nation state houses. We need to establish the equivalent of "diplomatic special forces" like the Green Berets.

Such "Diplomatic Expeditionary Field Teams" would accept Foreign Service volunteers willing to undergo rigorous physical and advanced operational training to allow small four-member groups to operate independently in the most unstable, remote and challenging environments. I have created much of this curriculum, elements of which are covered in my textbook, *Humanitarians in Hostile Territory: Expeditionary Diplomacy and Aid Outside the Green Zone* (University of Chicago Press, 2010).

Reactions at State to the concept of DEFTs range from "our FSOs already do this in places like Iraq" to "embassies don't have this mission." Yet our ability to engage in remote, deployed, grassroots diplomacy will determine future foreign policy success. And longer-term remote outreach missions require more specialized skill sets and resources than civ-mil and Foreign Affairs Counter Threat training currently provides.

This recommendation is based on my own experience—in Afghanistan three times and in Iraq four times under various auspices, most recently serving at Provincial Reconstruction Team-Anbar (2007-2008). In prior work at Firebase Anaconda in Tirin Kowt, Afghanistan, I engaged in shura councils and interviewed the local mayor in 2004 in Mullah Omar's birth-place. In Iraq in 2005, I deployed with Romanian special forces teams. In my assessment of each of these assignments, the need for a more robust diplomatic presence by specially skilled State Department officers was obvious and prominent.

Diplomatic special forces-type teams will greatly enhance

our engagement in nonpermissive areas of operation, providing reporting for policymakers with unique perspectives and assessments created well beyond U.S. fortress embassies. During one of my seminar briefings at the Defense Institute for Security Assistance Management, our military counterparts were enthusiastic about the DEFTs concept for diplomatic personnel. This would make FSOs much better partners for civ-mil cooperation.

It is time to formally add this "special forces" element to the Department of State's overseas arsenal.

Derrin R. Smith is a recently retired State Department FSO living in Alexandria, Virginia.

Let Us Imagine

Imagine the United States influencing other nations through dialogue, not dictate.

Imagine the United States presupposing mutual respect and understanding even when these two do not presume agreement.

Imagine the United States viewing reconciliation as a sign of strength rather than a sign of weakness.

Imagine the United States advocating a touch of humility in place of the heavy hand of hubris.

Imagine the United States putting itself in the shoes and bare feet of immigrants and their children.

Imagine the United States as a builder of bridges, not walls.

To achieve the above:

Imagine the United States with President Biden at the helm who reflects the above approaches to foreign policy.

Peter Spalding is a retired Senior Foreign Service officer in Washington, D.C.

Lead from the Front

The Biden administration should reserve judgment on reversing any of the Trump administration's foreign policy initiatives until it has had time to examine them closely, especially for issues demanding close coordination with allies and friendly powers.

For example, quickly rejoining the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action might be attractive to many of those former Obama administration officials reprising their service with a Biden National Security Council and State Department, but precipitous actions without involving allies and regional stakeholders would only compound the current difficulties of limiting Iranian ambitions regarding nuclear weapons. Likewise, for efforts to forestall

Russian destabilization efforts in Eastern Europe and even throughout the European Union area, consultations with allies should precede public statements of policy.

Most important, the United States must lead from the front, in consultations with its allies, but clearly as the leading power among a group of like-minded states. That is the natural position for the United States for this moment in history, as former Prime Minister Tony Blair put it in an address to Congress in 2003. As Shakespeare noted in “Twelfth Night” (Act 3, Scene 4), “Some have greatness thrust upon them.”

Edward Stafford is a retired FSO in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Improve Fluency in Africa's Indigenous Languages

Throughout sub-Saharan Africa we seek to counter malign influences and increase trade. All indications are that Africa will be the epicenter of growth and development over the next century. Yet we come to African posts linguistically hobbled, while China's diplomatic language school is steadily increasing the number of indigenous African languages taught. To be serious partners there, we must become more dexterous linguistically.

For historical reasons, we require FSO fluency in languages such as French and Portuguese. But we cannot conduct diplomacy today in the language and culture of the educated elites and marginalize or ignore the voices and concerns of the masses for whom colonial languages are not those of their dreams.

Currently a few of our officers receive instruction in Kiswahili, Hausa and Amharic, but an insufficient number are conversant in indigenous languages. Too many Africa posts rely on local staff to interpret media, be present at interview windows and make the deeper connections that are only possible when one engages in a person's mother tongue. Our local staff are excellent, but there is no substitute for our diplomats doing this work directly.

We need to have greater familiarity and fluency in major languages spoken across Africa's national boundaries, such as Swahili, Somali, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Fula and Oromo. And we should acquire skill in important country-specific languages such as Wolof, Zulu, Shona, Amharic and Lingala.

Sustainable exploitation of Africa's immense natural resources in land, forests and sea is key to addressing climate change and in countering other threats to economic and environmental security. For this, skill with indigenous languages is essential, especially outside the capitals.

With even basic vocabulary, our diplomats can convey

the respect required to build strong relationships, which continue even after the conversation has switched to the common Romance language. Becoming conversant in indigenous languages at post (in addition to FSI fluency) is also a great way to bring together the embassy community between and among FSOs and our local colleagues. Posts sponsor events with local food or crafts, and there people learn what everything is called. Such events also help address some of the class prejudice among locally employed staff of different backgrounds.

FSO Sherry Zalika Sykes is a senior-level career development officer in the Bureau of Global Talent Management at the State Department.

Engage American Audiences in Foreign Policy

The State Department needs a targeted, well-resourced strategic outreach plan for engaging domestic audiences on those issues of foreign policy that most affect American security, our economic well-being, and our ability to travel and engage successfully in the world. As each election year reminds us, a large part of the American electorate is either unaware of, or may not understand, the daily positive impact of U.S. diplomacy on their lives.

The State Department should invest in a data-driven, multiyear and targeted campaign to engage local and state communities across the United States on key foreign policy issues. It must be adequately resourced and separate from the department's public diplomacy funding used to engage foreign audiences. Polling should play a major role in identifying the areas for outreach and in measuring success. The outreach should focus on the issues that most matter to those particular voters, and how the work of the State Department supports their economic livelihood and security.

Managed from Washington, this campaign should enlist the support of retired colleagues around the country to visit local and state government officials, community town halls, and local universities and schools to make the case for American diplomacy. Other possible partners could be AFSA, the National Museum of American Diplomacy, local and international American Chambers of Commerce, Diplomats in Residence, universities with diplomacy programs, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

We could also ask the hundreds of young people who apply for virtual or in-person internships to be part of the effort, designing social media campaigns and serving as youth ambassadors for the State Department.

Department leaders should visit all 50 states with targeted messaging to select constituents, most importantly those most critical of U.S. engagement around the world. Ambassadors could be provided two weeks each year to spend time in their home states as part of this strategic campaign, with a required reporting cable on noteworthy themes and audiences engaged.

FSO Stephanie Syptak-Ramnath is deputy executive secretary at the Department of State.

Pursue Inclusion Intentionally

Aggressively recruit and assign employees of color to senior-level positions. The 2021 summer bid cycle was an opportunity to reverse past trends, yet FSOs of color were overlooked for senior-level positions. State Department senior leadership have the authority to reject short lists not representative of the workforce's diversity and to demand bureaus justify their inability to produce diverse slates prior to the final stages in the Deputy's Committee. Energetic recruitment should not be limited to overseas jobs, but adopted for deputy assistant secretary and office director-level positions.

Establish reporting mechanisms. State should establish a separate office to address toxic workplace dynamics and create reporting mechanisms for employees to disclose incidents falling short of the equal employment opportunity (EEO) threshold (i.e., microaggressions and discriminatory behaviors). These mechanisms should trigger a response from the overseas missions or bureau leadership to investigate and prompt timely mediation by a team based in Washington.

This office must exist outside of the EEO complaint process managed by the Office of Civil Rights and report directly to the Deputy Secretary. The Director General's Office should form a committee to determine consequences for the person displaying discriminatory behavior, including additional training to address supervisory skills, a formal letter of reprimand shared with the bureau's front office, denial of senior performance pay, or the inability serve in senior leadership positions for five years.

Institutionalize FS mentoring, coaching and counseling. State should institutionalize robust mentoring programs and counseling services particularly to support employees of color and those under the Pickering and Rangel fellowships at every stage of their careers. This requires bolstering existing staffing and budgetary resources for the Foreign Service Institute's Executive Coaching Program, Global Talent Management's Office of Continuity Counseling and Office of Medical Services' Employee Consultation Services.



✓ Resources

Starting at the entry level, support from these offices coupled with targeted mentoring and coaching programs will ensure employees have the resilience to pursue a successful career. State should formalize leadership programs for FS-3 and FS-2 employees of color on career navigation and managerial and leadership skills. This will strengthen a pipeline of officers who are prepared for future deputy chief of mission and ambassadorial positions. State should expand the newly created FS-1 leadership program to coach for executive leadership positions and pair them with senior mentors.

FSO Christina Tilghman served as president of the Pickering Rangel Fellowship Association in 2020.

Change the Name of the Foreign Service

Change the name of the Foreign Service to the "United States Diplomatic Service." If the new administration is serious about grounding foreign policy in the day-to-day concerns of our fellow citizens, then America's diplomatic corps should have a name that tells them what it is we do.

The word "Foreign" fails to communicate that and, unfortunately, reinforces the sense that something about our mission is not grounded in our own country. We know nothing could be further from the truth, but we also need to be honest that the name "Foreign Service" is not helping our cause with the American people.

Some will object based on tradition, but organizations must find ways to reinvigorate themselves over time or else become stagnant. Another objection will be that this is purely semantics and thus not worth the time and effort. But words do matter, as we diplomats know best of all.

And many will object by saying such a change is not needed, which can be tested by surveying a representative sample of the American people to see how many know what the "Foreign Service" is. Another means of testing the value of such a change could be to ask a survey group what a "foreign service" does and what a "diplomatic service" does. Certainly, we would expect the latter to be far more effective in conveying our mission.



Inter-agency

Americans overwhelmingly support diplomacy as the primary means of protecting our interests and security. Our Service should have a name that unambiguously tells them this is what we do.

Alexander Titolo is a public affairs officer at U.S. Embassy Santo Domingo.

Raise the Mandatory Retirement Age

More diplomats and specialists than usual retired earlier than planned during the Trump administration. By most reports, it will take “years” to rebuild the diplomatic workforce.

Consider raising the mandatory retirement age to match the Social Security full retirement age or, better, age 68. This can be phased in so that people who already have already served their 20, 25 or 30 years can still receive full benefits when they choose to retire under the age 65 rule.

The reality is that people are living longer and healthier. Our new president is 78 years young! Correcting the arbitrary forced retirement age of 65 will help fix the current talent gap in the workforce. Specialists with specific skills, such as IT and medical, are particularly difficult to recruit and retain. How about starting there?

Cynthia Townsend is a Foreign Service medical provider at U.S. Embassy Luanda.

Retire the “Ethos” Statement

We did not need a reminder to be “champions,” to support and defend the Constitution, or to serve with “unfailing” professionalism (as if we were at risk of failing unless reminded).

Indeed, the Ethos statement became a reminder that senior leadership did not act with “uncompromising personal and professional integrity.” Examples were frequent, significant and damaging to the department and to career employees. Violations of law and policy without consequence (e.g., the Hatch Act) had significant negative effects.

It is time to rebuild with genuine professionalism, integrity and diversity. We do not need an Ethos or vision statement to uphold those values.

FSO David Tyler is director of the San Francisco Passport Agency.

Put Diplomats Back “On the Street”

While the threat of terrorism and the security upgrades have limited how much Foreign Service officers can venture out into the cities and countryside in recent years, I want to encourage the new administration to put the focus back on diplomats having contact with ordinary people. When I served in the Middle East (Dubai, Damascus, Casablanca), many of the kudos I received for my reporting were the result of interacting with people “on the street.”

Talking to the elites may provide some window on how a government ministry is functioning, but the heartbeat of any economy and society lies in the workers and how they can carve out a living. Diplomats belong outside the walls of the embassy or consulate, having exchanges with students, union leaders, activists and the full range of a country’s social strata.

Michael Varga is a retired State Department FSO in Wilton Manors, Florida.

Prioritize Upgrading Technology

The Biden administration can reinvigorate U.S. diplomacy by investing in 21st-century technology to enable a more nimble and technologically capable diplomatic corps. COVID-19 has motivated the department to do some upgrading, but it needs to go further.

Diplomats need mobile phones with dual SIM cards and laptops to take from post to post. They also need continued investment in web- and cloud-based solutions that improve internal operations and enable modern interactions with external partners.

Significant department resources are wasted maintaining legacy systems that no longer serve the American people well and hinder the operations of diplomats overseas. The Bureau of Consular Affairs wastes serious amounts of money and employee hours on paper-based applications and out-of-date software systems. These inefficiencies restrict the speed at which officers can assist U.S. citizens abroad and assess foreign nationals requesting consular services.

By improving systems, fewer consular officers would be required abroad to support consular services. Thus, more officers

would be available to build relationships with foreign interlocutors and advance U.S. foreign policy objectives. Moreover, smart technology investments now will reduce staffing costs and improve margins for decades to come.

FSO Daniel Walsh is a vice consul at U.S. Consulate General Auckland.

Lead with FSOs

There are several good reports on strengthening (saving) the Foreign Service. They should be studied carefully and mined for good ideas. This is a medium-term approach.

But what the new administration can—and must—do immediately is appoint Foreign Service officers to leading positions in the State Department and abroad. Surely, there are more appropriate ways to reward large donors than making them ambassadors.

Barclay Ward, a retired FSO, lives in Brookline, Vermont.

Fix the Special Immigrant Visa Program

Devote the resources necessary to fix the Special Immigrant Visa program for the thousands of Afghan and Iraqi nationals who have supported the work of the United States. While many have already been granted visas and are now valued and productive residents and citizens of America, thousands more continue to live in constant and very real fear of violent retaliation for their work. Current events in both countries suggest that this danger will only increase over the next few years.

Evidence in a class action lawsuit *Afghan and Iraqi Allies v. Pompeo*, filed in June 2018, showed that the average Afghan and Iraqi SIV applicant was likely to wait more than four years for a visa. A February ruling in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., noted that more than 7,700 applicants have been waiting longer than the congressionally mandated nine-month response time. The judge ruled that such delays are unlawful.

A June 2020 Office of the Inspector General report on the SIV program noted that “the department’s management of resources and strategic planning for the Afghan SIV program is decentralized and lacks the focus needed to continuously evaluate the program and seek improvements.”

Thousands of State, Defense and other federal employees can personally attest to the bravery and dedication of our Afghan and Iraqi colleagues, and to the threats and intimidation they and their

families continue to face. We should honor their service and honor the intent of Congress by faithfully and diligently implementing the Special Immigrant Visa program.

FSO John Wecker is senior adviser for anti-corruption in State’s Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs.

Zero Tolerance for Jerks

No jerks. No tolerating jerks. No promotions for jerks. And most of all, no leadership positions for jerks—or those who enable them.

There is no excuse for Foreign Service generalists and specialists—a smart and selectively chosen bunch—to be or to tolerate jerks. Jerks include those with major conduct, suitability and discipline issues, such as criminal behavior, sexual misconduct, equal employment opportunity issues, and physical or emotional abuse of American and locally employed staff. Jerks are also those who are lazy, incompetent, extreme micromanagers, socially inept and excessively self-promoting. They lack empathy and take a kiss-up, kick-down approach to management and leadership. Jerk enablers and jerk ignorers are also jerks and should be treated as such.

Why do jerks matter? Because they make the workplace (and overseas, the wider FS community) unhappy, unhealthy, unproductive and unsafe, thus diminishing the effectiveness of U.S. foreign policy. No amount of (supposed) policy, programmatic or management “brilliance” warrants a jerk’s behavior. Jerks need to be identified and counseled, and issues with jerks need to be processed as appropriate (and required) within the system.

We need more carrots and sticks to confront jerks. The Bureau of Global Talent Management needs to come up with visible ways to recognize and award staff (especially entry-level staff and overseas local staff) who do the right thing. Today, staff who confront jerks see or hear little or nothing regarding resolution, at best. More often, they are ostracized and made to feel as if they have done something wrong.

More public naming and shaming of jerks would help. Jerks and those who enable them should be penalized with career demerits similar to security violations. If being a jerk or enabling one would severely limit assignments and promotions, stopping jerks would become the norm as opposed to the exception.

We hope the new administration will take a zero-tolerance approach to jerks and help us create a jerk-free environment.

FSO Matt Weiller is deputy executive director for the South and Central Asia Bureau for the combined Near East-South and Central Asia Executive Office.

Elevate USAID, Fine-tune Assistance

A successful effort to reinvigorate U.S. diplomacy will require deep reforms in the U.S. foreign assistance program, in particular elevating USAID and focusing its mission on the least developed countries (LDCs). USAID's workforce needs to be aligned with its mission and capable of designing and implementing its assistance activities independently.

A focus on fewer countries and a handful of sectors is necessary to achieve a lasting impact. U.S. assistance should give priority to the poorest countries.

The U.N. Development Program's annual Human Development Index can be used to identify these countries. As of 2019, 30 of the 35 countries in the lowest ranks of this index (of 189 countries) are in sub-Saharan Africa.

A rise in human development indices of these LDCs requires that most of their people have adequate levels of health care and education. Health care includes family planning, nutrition, sanitation and water. Education includes formal, nonformal, vocational and training needed to respond to the job market.

Development is a long-term process. Therefore, guaranteed funding commitments of 10 to 15 years are required. The U.S. Congress needs to pass legislation making all countries in the LDC category eligible for multiyear crisis funding.

The poorest countries cannot be helped effectively if the United States continues to adhere to a complicated bureaucratic process that can take many months from activity conception to actual implementation. In these countries, missions should be organized in a way that gives priority to assistance programs.

Redesigning U.S. assistance is part of an overdue revision of overall foreign assistance legislation.

Mark Wentling is a retired USAID Senior Foreign Service officer in Lubbock, Texas.

Seek the Advice of Senior Diplomats

Our frontline senior career diplomats have considerable experience, and look forward to sharing their perspectives with the White House and others guiding our foreign relations. An annual chiefs-of-mission conference with high-level administration officials to discuss perspectives and recommendations would be valuable and productive.

Here are some of my own recommendations to the new administration.

- Provide strong support for the Foreign Service, which is

forward deployed, serving on the front lines in 277 embassies, consulates and missions overseas.

- Underscore that engagement matters, including with fellow Americans. That is, indeed, why we are present overseas.

- Invest in the future through expanded programming for youth, girls and women, health and education.

- Maximize American soft power through the International Visitor Leadership Program, the Young African Leaders Initiative, the Humphrey and Fulbright Fellowship programs and the teaching of English—even if it is commercially available locally—to provide firsthand exposure to what we are and what we value.

- Recognize that while security is essential, it is a means toward an end.

- Note that Africa is being left behind among U.S. priorities; a second African Leaders Summit would go a long way toward demonstrating its relevance to us.

- Emphasize positivity regarding America and its unique strengths, rather than negativity about Russia and China.

- Regard alliances and coalitions as effective partnerships in addressing today's transnational challenges. They provide synergy while building strength through burden-sharing.

- Take advantage of the diaspora—of all nations—as important and worthy of our engagement and attention.

- Express America and the Foreign Service fully as the complex sociocultural mosaic that they are, and underscore the strengths that our rich diversity provide us.

FSO Eric P. Whitaker is the U.S. ambassador to Niger.

Morale and Welfare Issues

The Biden administration should look closely at two issues affecting the morale and welfare of its Foreign Service staff—first, the State Department's treatment of those who suffered some unknown type of attack in Cuba and China; and second, the high number of leadership positions unfilled at State.

The effects of the former were not adequately addressed by the previous leadership. The mistreatment of personnel after reporting their medical problems has been well documented in the media. The effect on staffing in China is impossible to ignore, and only firm action by the new administration can rebuild our shaken confidence.

We sign up knowing this job involves many hardships and risks, but the lack of support for those affected is offensive. It recalls the Cold War days when staff in Moscow were not told

that the embassy was being bathed in microwave radiation by the Soviets.

The second issue, the high number of unfilled leadership positions at State, is easier to resolve.

Brian Wilson is a Foreign Service information specialist at U.S. Embassy Berlin.

Step Up Engagement Outside Capitals

As we emerge from a global pandemic and reengage with partner governments and multilateral bodies to tackle challenges to U.S. and global security and prosperity, we also need to reinvigorate American connections to the people and communities these institutions serve.

Public diplomacy initiatives, exchange programs and commercial outreach help counter false narratives and amplify American soft power that truly sets us apart from competitors. Provided with training, technology and space for creativity, Foreign Service professionals overseas can step up engagement outside capitals to demonstrate the benefits of partnership with the United States to broader host-country communities.

The successful American Presence Post model can be expanded, in countries where local conditions allow, to deliver on-the-ground diplomacy to important regions and economic centers. Given basic embassy support and guidance, an APP consisting of an FSO and several local staff can achieve outsized impact at minimal cost and build enduring ties at the local and regional level.

FSO Toby Wolf is a team lead in the Office of Science and Technology Cooperation at the State Department.

Address Flaw in Assignment Restrictions Process

The Asian American Foreign Affairs Association has made significant strides with the State Department Bureau of Diplomatic Security to improve transparency and fairness in assignment restrictions. But more needs to be done to reform an archaic system that doesn't appear to value America's diversity as a strategic advantage.

Six weeks before departing for Japan, DS informed Yuki Kondo-Shah that she had an assignment restriction. DS cited her parent's country of birth, volunteer work done in Japan after



the 2011 Fukushima disaster and family visits as proof that she could not work on national security matters related to Japan, a country the United States considers one of our strongest allies in Asia.

As a result of AAFAA and others' advocacy and prior work to establish an appeals mechanism for restriction cases, Ms. Kondo-Shah was able to see the DS memo that accused her of showing "foreign preference" to Japan, counter each point and contest the decision.

While we appreciate the department's efforts to codify an appeals process to challenge questionable assignment restrictions, many employees, disproportionately of Asian American descent, are still trapped in a cycle of fighting perceptions of disloyalty because a major flaw remains: The appeals process is not independent from DS.

We recommend that State create an independent appeals process outside of the DS chain of command. We also recommend that the Bureau of Global Talent Management collect and publish data on the number of officers and their Equal Employment Opportunity Commission-protected backgrounds.

We are hopeful that Secretary of State Antony Blinken will engage with AAFAA and relevant bureaus to make meaningful change on this issue, as Deputy Secretary Blinken did in 2016, to ensure a more diverse, inclusive and transparent State Department. ■

Shirlene Yee, a management officer in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, is president of the Asian American Foreign Affairs Association.

Embassy
Bucharest staff
welcome guests
at the gate to
“Ebbets Field”
in 2017.



U.S. EMBASSY BUCHAREST/LUCIAN CRUSOVEANU

THE LEGACY OF Jackie Robinson

**Through baseball diplomacy the youth of
Romania and Uganda learned important lessons.**

BY RONALD E. HAWKINS JR.

America's first African American to play in Major League Baseball was the legendary Jackie Robinson, number 42. Known for his athletic prowess, Robinson demonstrated even greater skill and valor off the field. The first Black man to integrate into an all-white sport in 1947, he faced callous treatment and threats to him-

self and his family. Yet almost a decade before the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. appeared on the national stage, Robinson's response to all the insults, threats and mistreatment was principled nonviolence. The deliberate choice of nonviolence—not the lack of doing something, but the conscious act of choosing not to be violent in dealing with adversity—is central to Jackie Robinson's powerful legacy.

Preventing violent extremism is an important issue for the national security of the United States. While diplomats can lecture on the merits of peace and nonviolence, engaging host-country youth in an interactive and relatable way has been the best approach I have found during my recent tours as a public diplomacy officer for getting this message out.

In both Romania and Uganda, promoting nonviolence and inclusion was important to bolster democracy. Both nations



Ronald E. Hawkins Jr. is currently a student at the U.S. Army War College pursuing a master's degree in strategic studies. He served as the public affairs officer (PAO) in Kampala from August 2018 to July 2020. Previously, he was PAO in Bucharest and Khartoum. He has had assignments in Washington, D.C., Sarajevo, Reykjavik and Algiers.

had had experiences either with violence in the form of protests against corrupt elements in the government turning ugly or with the mistreatment of minorities.

I was delighted to find national baseball organizations in both countries that oversee the sport, field a national team, and have a network of schools and clubs across the country. Since baseball is one of America's best-known pastimes, the national organizations eagerly looked to us to help grow their sport. Though not our primary focus, seeing the sport grow was a nice residual outcome of our efforts. Our primary effort was to share the story of the great Jackie Robinson, who contributed so uniquely to the game of baseball and to America despite extremely challenging circumstances.

Jackie Robinson Day in Romania

In Romania in 2017, we partnered with their national baseball association to celebrate Jackie Robinson Day, April 15. We chose a Saturday as close to that date as possible and held an exhibition match between the national team of Romania and a pick-up team from the U.S. embassy. Each team donned a specially created jersey bearing Jackie's iconic 42. Hundreds gathered to watch the event, and the ambassador's remarks captured the theme we were messaging. Media coverage focused both on the event and the nonviolence messaging.

The U.S. embassy and the mayor of Constanta, the town on the Black Sea coast where the event was held, were so pleased with the outcome that it immediately became an annual event. The embassy also decided to make Jackie Robinson the theme of the Independence Day reception, and the embassy yard was turned into "Ebbets Field, April 15, 1947," complete with scoreboard, antique cars, baseball decorations and food, a pitching cage and a special guest of honor—Sharon Robinson, daughter of Jackie Robinson and an author and consultant for Major League Baseball.



With U.S. Ambassador Hans G. Klemm to his left, Romanian President Klaus Iohannes greets Sharon Robinson, daughter of Jackie Robinson, at the 2017 July Fourth reception at Embassy Bucharest.



Members of the Romanian National Baseball Team at the 2017 July Fourth reception.



U.S. EMBASSY KAMPALA/CHRISTOPHER LUEVEGA

A baseball clinic in Uganda in 2019.

Ms. Robinson spent a week there elaborating on her father's legacy, as well as sharing her newest book for young readers focused on her dad's life. She was joined by three retired Major League Baseball players, who worked with the national baseball association to hold clinics for kids throughout Romania. At all events the theme of nonviolence was paramount.

Baseball Clinics in Uganda

I did not expect to find baseball in Uganda, but there it was. The Ugandan national association was strong, and their national team almost qualified for the Tokyo Olympics. This time we designed the program a little differently. We held clinics throughout the country relying on the national association

to teach the basics of the sport, while embassy staff shared Jackie Robinson's story and the policy of nonviolence. It offered a fun way for young people to learn.

The top players from the various clinics held throughout the country were invited to a grand finale on Jackie Robinson Day in April. The culminating event was held at an athletic boarding school about an hour outside Kampala. The site was chosen because of its facilities, but also because the American philanthropist who

funds it had recently started a relationship with the Los Angeles Dodgers. Robinson had played for the Brooklyn Dodgers until 1956, and the team then moved to California in 1958 to become the L.A. Dodgers.

When we approached the school and the Dodgers officials about their collaboration, their answer was a resounding yes, saying: "We are Jackie's Team!" At the finale, the youth teams held a tournament followed by an exhibition game between the United States and Uganda. Their Olympic hopeful national team beat our ragtag band, but the day of healthy, friendly competition was well received.

The event was a big success. The audience was enthusiastic. Excellent media coverage was augmented on social media



U.S. EMBASSY KAMPALA/CHRISTOPHER LUEVEGA

Jackie Robinson Day in Uganda in 2019.

because of the participation of local celebrities. And the youth were fully engaged not only in baseball, but in talking about non-violence. The night before all were treated to a screening of the 2013 film “42,” a biopic about Jackie Robinson.

Because the film had not been widely shown in Uganda when it was released, we decided to organize an additional screening as a red-carpet affair a month after the grand finale of the baseball



U.S. EMBASSY KAMPALA/CHRISTOPHER LUVEGA

David Robinson, son of Jackie Robinson, visits the American-supported athletic training center near Kampala in 2019.

The youth were fully engaged not only in baseball, but in talking about nonviolence.

clinics to highlight the importance of this American’s life and legacy. Ugandan A-listers were invited, along with the media, to meet special guest David Robinson, son of the famed baseball player and a coffee grower in Tanzania. Though flight delays unfortunately caused David Robinson to miss the screening, in later interviews and group discussions the people of Uganda got a chance to interact with him.

Through baseball diplomacy, the youth of Romania and Uganda learned important lessons. With media amplification, the broader community heard the message as well, showcasing the U.S embassies’ concern for the youth of the host countries and our creative engagement on the prevention of violent extremism. ■

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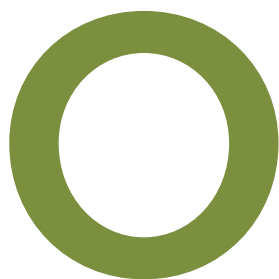
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Like Father, Like Son

The Francis Ambassadorships

Although John M. Francis and son Charles are not well known, they share an important distinction: Both served as ambassadors—in the same countries.

BY STEPHEN H. MULLER



Over nearly 250 years of American diplomacy, several pairs of fathers and sons (and, more recently, daughters) have served as ambassadors. Occasionally, they have even served as ambassadors to the same country. No doubt the most famous are John Adams and John Quincy

Adams in London. The December 2018 *Foreign Service Journal* carried the story of FSO Ronald Neumann and his father, Robert Neumann, in Afghanistan. Letters to the editor in the June 2019 *Foreign Service Journal* identified other examples.

But one father and son are truly unique in U.S. diplomatic history: John M. Francis (1823-1897) and son Charles S. Francis (1853-1911) of Troy, New York. They not only served as ambassadors in the same country; they served as ambassadors in the same two countries. John Francis served in Athens from 1871 to 1873, and later in Vienna from 1884 to 1885, while Charles

Francis served in Athens from 1901 to 1902 and in Vienna from 1906 to 1910.

Note that I am referring to the Francis^{es} as “ambassadors.” The United States did not begin to call the chief of a foreign mission an ambassador until after Charles Francis’ service. Technically, the Francis^{es}’ title was “minister,” and they headed a legation, not an embassy.

A Family Dynasty

Born in 1823 in the rural community of Prattsburgh, New York, John Morgan Francis began his career in publishing as an apprentice for the *Ontario Messenger* in New York’s Finger Lakes region. He subsequently became an editor for successively larger newspapers and, in 1846, moved to Troy—at the time, a booming transportation and manufacturing center at the confluence of the Hudson River and the Erie Canal—to become editor and joint owner of the *Northern Budget*. Five years later, he founded the *Troy Daily Times*, which became one of the city’s chief newspapers.

Yet Francis’ interests went beyond publishing. According to an obituary, “Mr. Francis became a member of the Republican party at its birth.” He was active in New York state Republican politics, which brought him to the attention of President Ulysses S. Grant and resulted in his diplomatic appointment to Greece in 1871. Following service as minister resident/consul general in Portugal from 1882 to 1884, he was appointed envoy extraor-

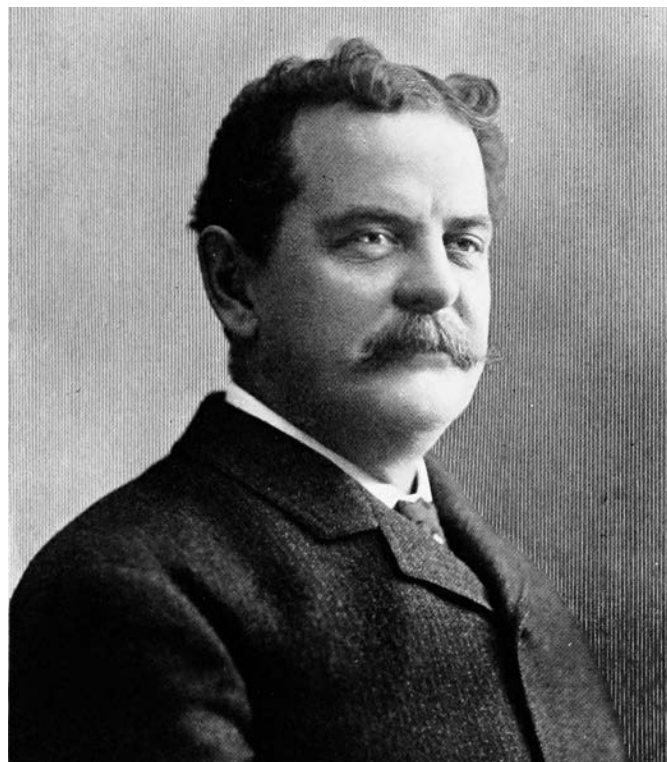


Stephen H. Muller had a 26-year Foreign Service career with the State Department, serving as an economic officer in Quito, Brasilia, Mexico City, Ottawa, London and Washington, D.C. He retired to Troy, New York, and has published two works on local history:

Troy, New York, and the Building of the USS Monitor (2009) and Washington Park, Troy, New York: A Social History (2017).



A portrait of Ambassador John M. Francis, father of Charles S. Francis who later followed in his footsteps.



Charles S. Francis, circa 1901, when he served as ambassador to Greece, where his father had served 30 years earlier.

dinary and minister plenipotentiary to Austria by President Chester A. Arthur in July 1884.

Born in Troy in 1853, Charles S. Francis would follow in his father's footsteps, literally and figuratively. He became proprietor of the *Troy Daily Times* on his father's death in 1897. And after serving as his father's secretary in Athens and Vienna, he returned to diplomatic service when President William McKinley named him minister to Greece in 1900. President Theodore Roosevelt named him ambassador to Austria-Hungary in 1906.

During their assignments in Greece and Austria, the Francisces dealt with many usual and some unusual matters of the day. The following snapshots of their diplomatic work are drawn from excerpts of official communications out of Vienna and Athens contained in the volumes of the U.S. State Department publication, *Foreign Relations of the United States*. All communications from an embassy go out over the name of the ambassador regardless of the author, so we cannot be sure if all the passages quoted were written by one of the Francisces. But given that both were in the newspaper business, it seems likely that they wrote their own diplomatic cables.

Navigating Religious Controversy

While serving in Vienna, John M. Francis supported the U.S. government's official anti-Mormon policy of the 1880s. The international aspect of this policy was to discourage immigration by Mormons recruited overseas. The Austrian govern-

ment was sympathetic. In a series of approving cables in 1884, Francis described measures that had been adopted by Austria "for the repression of Mormon proselytizing and recruiting in His Majesty's Empire for the purpose of securing accessions by emigration to the polygamous sect in the United States."

He also reported that Thomas Biesinger of the Utah Territory, chief agent of the Mormons for Austria, had been arrested in Prague and sentenced to one month's imprisonment and a fine of five florins "for encouragement of a religious creed not sanctioned by the state."

The Austrian government pointed out that Mormon proselytizing and recruitment were violations of Austrian laws that prohibited organized methods of inducing people to emigrate, and that it had instructed all regional governments "to keep a watchful eye upon them and to issue such orders to their subordinates as would suppress all possible recruiting for the Mormons by all lawful means."

Francis praised the Austrian position, telling Foreign Minister Count Szogyényi: "I am instructed by my Government to recognize the action referred to of His Majesty's Government, and to express its sincere gratification that such praiseworthy action has been taken."

In late 1901, Charles S. Francis described the violence that ensued in Athens following a seemingly innocuous event: the translation and publication of the Bible into common ("vulgar") Greek. Although this project had been approved by

Given that both [Francises] were in the newspaper business, it seems likely that they wrote their own diplomatic cables.

the Metropolitan (the head of the Greek Orthodox Church), “expressions were employed by the translators, which the Hellenes regard as unfit to be printed in the Holy Scriptures.” As a result, “Athens has been the scene of mob demonstration which ... almost assumed the proportions of a revolution,” Francis reported.

He continued, “Mass meetings were held in front of the university buildings on the afternoons of November 19 and 20, at which violent speeches were made in denunciation of the objectionable biblical translation and of all those identified with it.” Opponents of the project, led by university students and labor unions, called for a mass demonstration; the Greek authorities unwisely reacted by mobilizing military forces in the capital.

“Late in the afternoon the expected collision took place between the authorities and the aroused Athenians. The mob, now numbering over 25,000, proceeded to the ministry of finance and demolished the windows of the building. Thereupon, shots were fired upon the crowd by police officers and employees of the ministry. The rioters responded with pistols and stones and were only dispersed after a cavalry charge and several carbine volleys,” Francis wrote.

Eight demonstrators were killed and more than 60 wounded. “That the casualties were not greater may be explained by the fact that the soldiers were unquestionably in sympathy with the sentiments of the rioters, and did not direct their fire upon the crowds, the effective shooting being done by the police or gendarmes.” After these events, the Greek government and church capitulated. Two senior police officials were sacked, the Metropolitan resigned; and, as Francis reported,

“Priests read from every pulpit in Athens a [religious] decree ... which prohibits, on pain of excommunication, the sale or reading of any translation of the Bible.”

Protecting U.S. Citizens and Promoting Exports

Protection of citizens overseas has always been a priority of U.S. embassies. One particular issue facing naturalized U.S. citizens returning to Europe during the Francis ambassadorships in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was conscription into the armies of their birth countries. Many European armies were based on universal conscription, and some governments did not, as a matter of principle, recognize foreign naturalization as an exemption from conscription.

This was such a serious issue for Greece and Austria that in 1901 the State Department instructed the embassies in both countries to warn naturalized U.S. citizens that naturalization was not an automatic exemption from conscription. The instruction to Athens said: “The Greek Government does not, as a general statement, recognize a change of nationality on the part of a former Greek without the consent of the King, and a

former Greek who has not completed his military service and who is not exempt therefrom under the military code may be arrested upon his return to Greece.”

Charles S. Francis dealt successfully with at least one such case in each country where he served. In Greece, he secured the release of Louis (Leonidas) Economopoulos from the Greek Army in 1901, but it took two years of diplomatic struggle. In 1906

Francis similarly secured the discharge from the Austrian Army of Peter Szatkowski.

Unfortunately, he was not as successful in opening the Austrian market to U.S. meat exports, particularly of salt pork. A long series of cables from 1906 to 1908 describe U.S. efforts to get salt pork exports accepted by Austria, and the reasons why Austria refused. The fundamental issue was a dispute over sanitary standards; these kinds of disputes persist to this day between the U.S. and the European Union.



John M. Francis in his Troy study, 1889.

HARTQUETT MUSEUM, TROY, N.Y.

This was also a situation in which the embassy had no independent expertise and was basically relaying messages between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Austrian authorities. The Austrians insisted that a “certificate of microscopical inspection” accompany shipments of salt pork, while the USDA said it had discontinued this inspection because it believed the salt curing effectively killed trichinosis. The Austrians said that U.S. meat imports were already treated more favorably than imports from European countries; and furthermore, they had found trichinosis in some U.S. salt pork. The fact that Upton Sinclair’s exposé of the U.S. meatpacking industry, *The Jungle*, came out while this bilateral debate was going on probably did not help Francis’ case; the Austrians referred obliquely to the book in one of their communications.

Reporting

Another major function of embassies is to keep the State Department informed of major developments in the host country and the status of bilateral relations. Both Francis’ fulfilled these obligations.

During the Greek elections of early 1873, the second within the space of a year, John M. Francis reported that the results were favorable to incumbent Prime Minister Deligeorgis, who was popular with the electorate for resisting demands from France and Italy. He further commented that this election was “the most quiet one that has occurred in Greece in many years. The only disturbances thus far reported took place at Messenia, where, it is said, three murders were committed, and at Zirochori, in Eubœa, where mob violence prevailed to some extent; but these districts embrace disorderly elements that always appear in more or less tumultuous proceedings on election occasions.”

In May 1873 Francis set out on a brief tour of Greece, “deeming it desirable to acquaint myself by personal observation with the resources and capacities of the country outside of Athens.” He was accompanied by son Charles, as well as a New York congressman, an interpreter—and an escort of soldiers.

He reported on well-tended vineyards, olive groves and fields of grain, but noted the Greek “adherence to agricultural implements of the patterns used in the time of Homer.” He also remarked that Greeks had begun to cultivate cotton in response to the scarcity caused by the U.S. Civil War. He said all the villages he visited had schools for boys, but only one had a school for girls. He commented that he was received warmly by



The Charles S. Francis family, 1893.

HART CLUETT MUSEUM, TROY, N.Y.

Greeks everywhere, who expressed “gratitude to the American people for aid and sympathy to the Greeks in the hardships of their revolution.”

Charles S. Francis encountered the same warmth from Greece during his subsequent tour there, when President William McKinley was assassinated in 1901. He conveyed this message of sympathy from the Greek foreign minister to the State Department: “The sad news of the death of the President of the United States, victim of an odious crime, has caused the Royal Government profound feeling; and therefore, in its name, I pray you to accept my sentiments of keen sympathy. Greece joins in the profound sorrow which the people of the United States of America suffer on this sad occasion.”

The European squadron of the U.S. Navy visited the port of Piraeus in 1902. “The visit of the American war ships to Greek waters elicited much favorable comment,” Francis reported. The fleet admiral and his officers “were the recipients of marked social attentions during their stay here.” They were formally presented to the king and queen, who in turn visited the fleet’s flagship.



John M. Francis and Charles S. Francis may not rank among the more notable American ambassadors (but by all measures they performed their duties competently). They are, however, unique in having served in the same places, albeit at different times. ■

One Morning in Nuuk

BY JAMES P. DEHART



Despite our clean COVID-19 tests in Copenhagen, we were barred from official meetings in Greenland pending a five-day quarantine. Fortunately, we were allowed to go outside, so we booked a little yellow boat for a tour up one of the small fjords off Davis Strait.

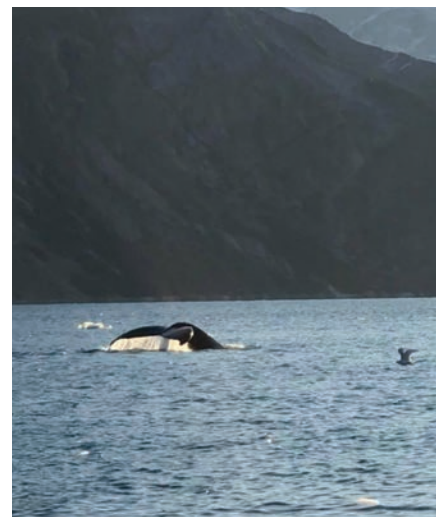


James P. DeHart, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with the rank of Minister Counselor, is the U.S. coordinator for the Arctic

region at the State Department. He served previously as senior adviser for security negotiations and agreements, assistant chief of mission in Kabul and deputy chief of mission in Oslo, among many other assignments. He took the photos during a September 2020 trip to Greenland. He is a former chair of the FSJ Editorial Board.



With our experienced Inuit captain, we weaved between ice floes at high speeds.



We stopped to study icebergs, search for seals and follow a cresting humpback whale.



An hour later we arrived in Qoornoq. In the 1950s, it had been a thriving fishing town with 1,400 workers. But now it was largely abandoned, reduced to a cluster of seasonal cabins.



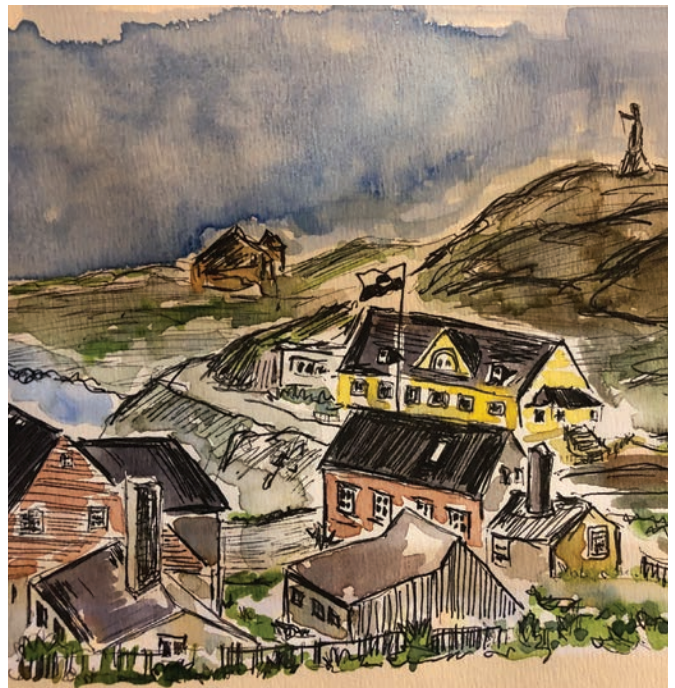
We walked the decrepit buildings where fish once hung in nets to dry, as icebergs floated by. A child's doll sat naked—inexplicably—in a rusted chair, watching our every move.



Back on the water, we fished for cod with rope and a spindle. My colleagues lowered four bare hooks and hauled up four fat fish. An underachiever, I only got three.



On the way back, we got a little too close to an iceberg as it imploded, leaving us bobbing in the waves. The locals on shore were only too happy to take a hundred pounds of fish off our hands. The next day we passed our second COVID test—free at last to do some work!



Here is my rendering of Nuuk in watercolor.

APPLY FOR AN AFSA SCHOLARSHIP



Past recipients of AFSA's Academic Merit and Community Service Awards

Nearly \$350,000 in Merit and Financial Aid scholarships will be awarded, in total.

Applications will be accepted starting **December 1, 2020**.

Deadline to apply is **March 15, 2021**.

For more information, visit www.afsa.org/scholar.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT | ART MERIT | COMMUNITY SERVICE | FINANCIAL AID

AFSA at Work Through the Pandemic

Nearly a year ago, on March 16, as the COVID-19 pandemic upended work routines across the globe, AFSA closed its offices and instructed its employees to telework.

"AFSA operations have gone remarkably smoothly during the pandemic. We all miss interacting personally with our colleagues and members, but the business of AFSA has carried on," says Executive Director Ásgeir Sigfússon.

"We moved our events online to great success, have adjusted to be able to onboard new members virtually and have continued our high level of member services, ranging from everyday requests to the assistance of our Labor Management team," Sigfússon adds.

Here is a look at how various AFSA sections have fared during the pandemic.

Labor Management.

AFSA's Labor Management office continues to work with members, many of whom are overseas, by phone or email,

according to Deputy General Counsel Raeka Safai. "The majority of our staff deals with grievances, and so they have managed to seamlessly transition to working from home with little disruption," she says.

LM has fielded many pandemic-related inquiries about authorized departure, the vaccine and other issues. But its regular caseload has remained steady, Safai says.

LM also attends Diplomatic Security investigations, which were moved to Zoom for months. That proved a challenge, Safai says.

"During these investigations, there is an advantage to 'reading the room,' the body language, and to sit next to your client to gauge how they are feeling and when it is time for a break or discussion," Safai says. "Obviously, we can't do that as easily via Zoom, but we have managed, and have sat in on numerous DS investigations during this past year."

Recently DS started conducting these meetings in person again.

Membership and Outreach. AFSA has moved all its membership recruitment efforts online, says Christine Miele, director of programs and member engagement.

AFSA has traditionally invited members of each incoming class to its headquarters for a luncheon with retired and active-duty members of the Foreign Service, including the AFSA president and staff. A high percentage of the attendees joined AFSA after these in-person lunches.

Because of the pandemic, AFSA shifted membership recruitment efforts to Zoom, but Miele says it has been harder to reach potential new members virtually.

"We continue to think of new ways to make virtual recruitment closer to the personal connect of in-person lunches, and we

Continued on page 77

CALENDAR

Please check www.afsa.org for the most up-to-date information. All events are subject to cancellation or rescheduling.

March 4
1-2 p.m.

Webinar: "The View from Washington"

March 10
12-1 p.m.

"The Dissent Channel: What You Should Know"

March 15
Deadline: AFSA Scholarship Applications

March 17
12-2 p.m.

AFSA Governing Board Meeting

April 5
Deadline: 2021 High School Essay Contest

April 21
12-2 p.m.

AFSA Governing Board Meeting

May 6
AFSA Foreign Service Day Virtual Programming

May 7
Virtual Foreign Service Day

May 13
12 p.m.
AFSA Governing Board Election Town Hall

May 19
12-2 p.m.
AFSA Governing Board Meeting

AFSA Meets with Secretary of State Blinken

AFSA President Eric Rubin and AFSA State Vice President Tom Yazdgerdi met with Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a virtual meeting on Feb. 1.

The new Secretary reached out to AFSA and

other unions in response to President Joe Biden's directive to restore and enhance cooperation with all federal workplace unions.

Also participating from the State Department were Acting Under Secretary for

Management Carol Perez, State Department Counselor Derek Chollet, the Secretary's Chief of Staff Suzy George, and Deputy Chief of Staff Tom Sullivan. ■



AFSA Needs a Second Full-Time Labor Management Position at State

The size of the Foreign Service has increased by more than 30 percent in the past 15 years—and has been growing since AFSA last negotiated its collective bargaining agreement in 1987.

Despite this increase, there is still only one full-time State Department Foreign Service employee in AFSA's Labor Management unit—the AFSA State vice president—to deal with the myriad issues confronting today's Foreign Service.

In 2019 AFSA obtained the State Department's agreement during periodic negotiations of its framework agreement to include a provision "allowing the right for AFSA to submit a proposal for negotiation to the Department's Chief Labor Management Negotiator requesting up to 100% official time for an additional representative for a definitive period of time."

The provision allows AFSA to engage in negotiations on this subject while the agreement is still in force, rather than having to wait until it is up for renewal on Aug. 31, 2022.

As of this writing, after receiving unanimous approval at the November 2020 AFSA Governing Board meeting, we have made a formal proposal to the department to establish this position.

Focusing on Specialists.

With an additional full-time position, AFSA would be able

to represent more effectively the more than 5,000 specialists at State, including 2,000 Diplomatic Security special agents and another 3,000 specialists spread across 19 other skill codes, including information management specialists, office management specialists, general services officers, medical providers and diplomatic couriers, to name a few.

These employees have unique skill sets and are subject to unique hiring and promotion rules. While we currently have two specialists serving as State representatives on the AFSA Governing Board, these individuals have full-time jobs in the department and, thus, do not have the time needed to work on these issues.

As the exclusive representative of FS specialists, AFSA needs to increase our elected bandwidth to more effectively assist our specialist members and represent their issues to department management.

AFSA needs to take a careful look—and engage extensively with members of each skill code—to ensure the present structure provides realistic advancement prospects and a meaningful career path. The one-size-fits-all approach may no longer be appropriate for a wide variety of skills, job descriptions and career paths.

As professional development plans are produced

for successive skill codes, a full-time State representative will have the opportunity to engage with members of that skill code and make certain PDPs make sense. These are just a few of the many specialist issues that arise.

AFSA would also be able to delve more deeply into the questions we consistently hear from our specialist members, such as why human resources officers apparently advance more quickly than general services officers, or why it is so hard to get promoted from FS-4 to FS-3 as an information management specialist, or why DS agents seem to get stuck at FS-3 or FS-2, or whether FS-4 is an appropriate level for the traveling diplomatic courier.

Surge Capacity. We are proud of the way AFSA has responded to the many issues affecting our members because of the COVID-19 pandemic. But another full-time position would likely have given us the wherewithal to master pandemic-related issues more quickly and comprehensively.

In the future we can expect other major threats to the well-being of our members, whether caused by a new pandemic or another global scourge. So, having this surge capacity would be a welcome addition to Labor Management's capabilities.

Next Steps. Unfortunately, it is too late to include this

position in the call for nominations for the 2021-2023 AFSA electoral period. We will nonetheless press forward with negotiations with the department on establishment of this full-time position.

Should the department agree to our proposal, AFSA would wait until one of the six State representative positions on the Governing Board became vacant and, as permitted by the bylaws, appoint someone to fill the vacancy.

Prior to doing so, AFSA would send out a message describing the position and inviting anyone interested to apply. We would establish in advance a group of individuals who will interview and vet candidates against transparent standards and then make a recommendation to the AFSA Governing Board for approval. AFSA would then include this position in the regular 2023-2025 electoral season.

Again, nothing is guaranteed. We must convince the department that this position is needed, if even for a trial period. In the meantime, we will keep you informed of our negotiations.

The bottom line is that we want to be as transparent and open about this initiative as possible. We welcome your thoughts and comments at member@afsa.org. ■



A Clash of Bureaucracies: Looking Back to Look Ahead

Getting ready for a new administration and USAID leadership inevitably leads to thoughts about the future.

But I want to highlight a 2010 paper that bears (re-)consideration for anyone interested in USAID as a development institution: Former USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios' "The Clash of the Counter-bureaucracy and Development" (see <http://bit.ly/cgd-essay>).

The paper reminds us of what we quickly learn as FSOs in the field: that "a central principle of development theory—that those development programs that are most precisely and easily measured are the least transformational, and those programs that are most transformational are the least measurable" is the reality of our work.

This idea flies in the face of the oft-repeated cliché "What gets measured, gets done," and it challenges the notion that compliance and accountability are the gold standards in development.

Yes, as Natsios puts it, "a point can be reached when compliance becomes counterproductive. I believe we are well past that point." And remember, he wrote this in 2010!

I urge you to read the entire piece as it gives some great history, perspective and insights far beyond the few I highlight here.

Natsios makes his case as follows:

1. The size of the career USAID staff is shrinking even as spending has rapidly increased. I have written about this sad phenomenon in previous *FSJ* columns. The agency needs a revolution in strategic workforce planning and an Office of Human Capital and Talent Management renaissance—along with far more career employees, both Civil Service and Foreign Service. The ongoing massive "Reorganization" is not going to fix what ails USAID in terms of its workforce.

2. A counter-bureaucracy is emerging, consisting of agencies charged with command and control of the federal bureaucracy through a set of budgeting, oversight, accountability and measurement systems that have built new layers of procedural and compliance requirements into existing ones.

At the working level, we have greatly improved our coordination and collaboration among contracting officers, controllers, resident legal officers, technical staff and program officers. But we operate in a broader bureaucratic context, where we often spend far too much time reporting on things that have little relevance to our programs while processing paperwork and queries that distract from field work.

We must continue to try to find the right balance between impact and accountability.

3. The counter-bureaucracy has what Natsios calls "a very bad case of obsessive measurement disorder, an intellectual dysfunction rooted in the notion that counting everything in government programs (or private industry and increasingly some foundations) will produce better policy choices and improved management."

Can we be honest and find ways to acknowledge that a project's goal may sometimes be nonquantifiable? That context matters and that project objectives and goals may change mid-stream?

USAID is improving on this front. Collaboration, Learning and Adapting, a part of the USAID toolkit, is a great start, but we must do much more.

4. Congressional oversight committees and their requests for ever more information, more control systems and more reports have diverted professional USAID staff from program work to data collection and reporting.

I have mixed feelings on this point. USAID is something of a creature of Congress. We not only seek annual programmatic budget resources, but our operating expenses as well come from Congress.

Committee and individual member interests in certain sectors and countries complicate budgeting, while

reporting requirements on a range of internal and programmatic processes take up far too much staff time. However...

There are real institutional challenges at USAID that date back decades across parties and administrators. Workforce planning. Transparent budgeting. Promotion processes and diversity. Use and misuse of employment mechanisms.

These are findings from decades of reports from outside stakeholders, including the Government Accountability Office and the Congressional Research Service. It is natural for a big bureaucracy to face challenges, and Congress should play an oversight role.

If Congress saw results and had faith and trust in USAID to address these issues, it wouldn't require such a high number and scope of reports. The new leadership must prioritize real internal reform.

Since Administrator Natsios wrote his paper, USAID has made progress. We are still the most respected and independent development agency.

With a new administration, we have the chance to take our agency to a new level, but this will require that the broader bureaucracy work together more effectively on behalf of the American people and not opt for the band-aid fixes of the past. ■



FS Grievance Board Appointments: Mike Pompeo's Dereliction of Duty

This may be the first column in the *Journal's* 102-year history written not for current readers but for future historians. My hope is that this column will turn up years from now in an internet search for "Mike Pompeo" so that the facts described herein are not lost to history.

During his final year in office, Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo failed to fulfill his statutory responsibility to make appointments to the Foreign Service Grievance Board.

As a result, nearly half of the FSGB member positions fell vacant and remained so until the end of the Trump presidency. Pending caseloads rose, and justice was delayed for employees who had appealed to the FSGB to review their cases.

Government efficiency was also harmed by the delay in case decisions that sometimes result in the separation of employees or the imposition of other sanctions.

The FSGB was created by Congress in 1980 to provide due process to Foreign Service members who believe they have been deprived of a right or benefit authorized by law or regulation. The board is supposed to be comprised of 19 distinguished citizens who serve in staggered, two-year terms.

Federal law charges the Secretary of State with mak-

ing FSGB member appointments. Unfortunately, Congress did not anticipate that a head of our nation's senior Cabinet department would refuse to fulfill that responsibility.

More than a month before the Oct. 1, 2020 expiration of the terms of eight members of the FSGB, career management officials of the agencies utilizing the Foreign Service personnel system (State, USAID, the Foreign Agricultural Service, the Foreign Commercial Service and the U.S. Agency for Global Media), along with AFSA (as the collective bargaining agent of the Foreign Service), unanimously selected a slate of nominees as required by law and submitted those nominations to Secretary Pompeo.

If Secretary Pompeo had adverse information on any nominees, he could have allowed the Foreign Service agencies and AFSA to submit replacement nominations prior to Sept. 30. Secretary Pompeo took no action, so the eight seats became vacant.

As the months passed, Secretary Pompeo neither acted nor explained his inaction. With no legal authority to compel action, AFSA issued a press statement on Dec. 14 calling on Secretary Pompeo to act.

The news media, strug-

gling to keep up with the chaotic events of the Trump administration's final months in office, did not report on the situation. Secretary Pompeo left office without acting on the nominations, leaving it to his successor to fulfill that responsibility. Secretary Antony Blinken did so within two weeks of taking office.

Perhaps by the time a future historian finds this column, Secretary Pompeo will have explained his failure to act.

But my impression today as the AFSA Governing Board member charged with overseeing the annual FSGB nomination process is that Secretary Pompeo's dereliction of duty was of a piece with the arrogance and contempt for the rule of law that he frequently showed to committees of Congress, the media and others.

Secretary Pompeo's passive-aggressive evisceration of the FSGB deserves to be recorded and remembered. ■



AFSA Governing Board Meeting, Dec. 16, 2020

WAE Caps: The Governing Board agreed to include removal of When Actually Employed caps as a policy priority with the new administration, on Capitol Hill and in meetings with transition teams.

Midlevel Entry: The Governing Board agreed that AFSA is opposed to midlevel lateral entry from outside the Foreign Service. ■



AFSA Governing Board Meeting, Jan. 21, 2021

AFSA Memorial Plaques: The Governing Board agreed to include one new name on the AFSA Memorial Plaques. ■



Data-Driven Decisions in Foreign Policy

I began writing this column on Jan. 7, the day after a violent mob stormed the U.S. Capitol Building to try to stop Congress from formally certifying the election of Joe Biden as the 46th president of the United States.

I am finishing it on Inauguration Day. In a few days, President Biden is expected to sign an executive order calling for more evidence-based decision-making in the federal government.

The Jan/Feb *Foreign Service Journal* covered four reports issued for the new administration that offer recommendations on how to reform our foreign policy processes and institutions.

In this column, I add one more report to those four—one that received much less attention but that I believe could have a profound impact on the Foreign Service's effectiveness, if even a small percentage of its recommendations are followed.

In the Sept. 8, 2020, report issued by the think-tank FP21, "Less Art, More Science: Transforming U.S. Foreign Policy through Evidence, Integrity, and Innovation," the authors argue for more systematic data collection, vastly improved knowledge management, more rigorous and evidence-based policy analysis, the routine use of lessons learned, and reformed personnel practices.

Adopting these points would boost the effectiveness

of both our foreign policy and our foreign policy practitioners.

The use of data analytics in Foreign Service agencies is uneven. In USAID and at the Department of Agriculture and its Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Foreign Service members more comfortably incorporate data into policy decisions.

Broadcast media and public diplomacy practitioners use survey results and polls to inform their work, and economic officers deal with data on a regular basis.

In a world that now runs on data and its uses, a more widespread understanding of, and responsible use of, solid and relevant data can only improve diplomatic effectiveness.

Progress, particularly at State, is slow. The searchable cable database is useful but clunky; late creation, in 2011, of the Office of the Chief Economist (USAID has had one for decades) was a step in the right direction. It should be revived and reoriented for use by the rank and file; the Center for Analytics at State could be potentially useful.

The Bunche library and the Office of the Historian are underutilized resources. It's still probably easier to look up Foreign Affairs Manual regulations on how much space is allotted for an ambassador's office than it is to quickly have relevant foreign policy case studies at hand.

Data Collection. The FP21 report calls on State and other agencies to develop classified and unclassified one-stop, easily searchable repositories for policy memos, research reports, data sets, academic articles, intel and historical analyses, diplomatic cables and record emails, diplomatic notes, after-action reports, treaties, MOUs and international agreements.

Each office or bureau should have a dedicated librarian to debrief outgoing employees, maintain files and capture lessons from current initiatives—a set of duties that could bring office managers closer to the policy process if they wished to take on that responsibility.

The report calls for creation of an Office of Social Research in State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research and a change to the mandate of the Office of the Historian to include policy.

More Rigorous Policy Analysis. The report recommends that foreign affairs officials have at least a basic knowledge of data analysis as a fundamental skill. For examining complex foreign policy issues, the report calls for agencies to create cross-regional and cross-agency teams to conduct analysis.

Incorporating Evidence into Policy Decisions. The authors endorse a revision of memo templates to reflect the incorporation of relevant, multisourced evidence in policy

recommendations and the addition of success metrics.

They also suggest a routine use of "red teams" to test foreign policy initiatives and responses. The Office of Policy Planning should remain focused on longer-term thinking and the Foreign Affairs Policy Board should be revived and feature a firmly bipartisan cast.

Learning and Accountability. The report's authors highlight the importance of making policy decisions with a keen awareness of the importance of monitoring and evaluation of policy. They look to the Defense Department's routine use of lessons learned, as well as intelligence community practices, to argue for the use of learning in future planning.

Valuing Diversity. The report urges officials to examine recruiting, hiring, performance evaluation and assignments processes to help ensure they are bias-free. Suggestions include redefining merit, evaluating employees in a more concise and quantitative way, using skills matching in assignments and using 360-degree reviews in some form to add sources of information on performance.

The use of evidence-based decision-making in government now has tailwinds. Let's take advantage of the opportunity to bring relevant, appropriate data fully into Foreign Service decision-making. ■



AFSA Advocacy: Year in Review

In a year of unprecedented challenges for all, including our nation's Foreign Service, AFSA continued to engage with Congress on the issues most important to our membership. Below is a summary of our congressional advocacy outcomes in 2020.

Last spring, Congress passed several rounds of emergency relief packages, together containing more than \$2.3 billion in funding to support the global response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The international affairs funding in these relief packages focused on the efforts of our diplomats to return Americans home and on strengthening disaster-response capabilities in developing countries.

Showcasing its support for diplomats in May, the Senate passed its first resolution recognizing Foreign Service Day since the original one in 1996, S. Res. 556. AFSA thanks Senators Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) and Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), the Senate Foreign Service Caucus co-chairs, for their efforts to introduce and pass this resolution.

Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee reiterated their appreciation by passing another resolution, S. Res. 567, which commends State Department career professionals for their work to repatriate Americans during the

COVID-19 pandemic.

After several months of negotiation, on Dec. 27, both a \$1.4 trillion Fiscal Year 2021 omnibus spending bill to fund the government through Sept. 30, 2021, and a \$900 billion COVID-19 relief package were signed into law.

The FY21 spending bill includes \$57.4 billion for the International Affairs Budget, an increase of 1.5 percent above the FY20 enacted level, and an additional \$5.3 billion in emergency funds.

Combined with strong support for emergency funding to aid the international pandemic response earlier in the year, Congress sent a signal that, on a bipartisan basis, its members support diplomacy and development—even in times when domestic concerns take center stage.

This COVID-19 relief package includes \$300 million in emergency aid for consular affairs (necessary due to funding gaps resulting from reduced worldwide travel during the pandemic), and authorities to move existing funding, as needed.

The package also includes direct payment of \$600 per individual and qualified child for those earning \$75,000 or less; and, in contrast with the earlier CARES Act, eligibility is extended to families in which only one spouse has a valid Social Security number.

Regarding the FY21

Congress sent a signal that, on a bipartisan basis, its members support diplomacy and development—even in times when domestic concerns take center stage.

omnibus, Congress included increased funding above the FY20 enacted level for State/USAID workforce diversity initiatives, along with requirements that specific reports on these initiatives be made to Congress directly.

Once again, Congress also provided language supportive of restoring midlevel Foreign Service officer positions overseas, knowing embassies lost Foreign Service positions to Iraq staffing during the mid-2000s.

The law will also allow those affected by the payroll tax deferral to pay back the deferred taxes throughout the entirety of 2021, providing 12 months instead of the original four to repay the previously deferred taxes.

Congress remained silent on a federal pay increase in the final omnibus, and the president signed an executive order finalizing a one-percent federal civilian pay raise in the first days of 2021.

By overriding a presidential veto, Congress was also able to pass the FY21 National Defense Authoriza-

tion Act for the 60th year in a row.

The final conference report for the FY21 NDAA includes language to expand long-term health care benefits to employees in other foreign affairs agencies who were injured in China or Cuba, a benefit that had been limited to State Department employees.

In 2021, AFSA's advocacy will push for policies that focus on three general categories: promoting the health of the Foreign Service as an institution; morale and retention in the Foreign Service career; and parity for the Foreign Service with the military and other government employees.

AFSA looks forward to working with the 117th Congress and the Biden administration to accomplish our policy goals. ■

AFSA Treasurer's 2020 Report

Despite the volatility experienced globally and in the markets in 2020, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Foreign Service Association is in excellent financial health at year end.

AFSA's financial reserves remain strong. The operating reserve fund stood at \$4.3 million at year end, compared to \$3.6 million at the end of 2019.

That level represents approximately 65 percent of AFSA's operating budget for 2021 and is a solid indicator of the association's sustainability. Some modest savings were realized from curtailed operational activities due to the pandemic. Investment gains were robust.

The ongoing financial support of our membership base and other contributors is critical to AFSA's advocacy and outreach on behalf of our members and their interests.

As we move into a new administration and out of the pandemic, there are likely to be significant opportunities. The AFSA team pledges to capitalize on those on your behalf.

Budget Operations

AFSA's \$5.2 million planned operating budget for calendar year 2021 is funded primarily from membership dues. AFSA's membership base stood at approximately 16,750 as of year-end 2020, a modest increase from 2019's 16,680. That number repre-



The 2019-2021 Governing Board is sworn in at AFSA headquarters on July 15, 2019. Front row (from left): Steve Herman, Kristin Michelle Roberts, Virginia Bennett, Eric Rubin, Jay Carreiro, Mary Daly and Tom Yazdgerdi. Back row (from left): Jason Singer, Joshua Archibald, John Naland, Ken Kero-Mentz and Tamir Waser. Not pictured: Michael Riedel, Lilly Wahl-Tuco, Holly Kirking Loomis, Matthew Dolbow, Lorraine Sherman, Mary Parrish, Jeffrey Austin and Philip Shull.

sents more than 80 percent of active-duty employees across the foreign affairs agencies, plus approximately 25 percent of Foreign Service retirees.

Members approved a modest baseline dues increase in 2020. Dues additionally increased by 1.4 percent for 2021, in line with consumer price index levels.

AFSA operations continued throughout the pandemic, but with significant workarounds and modifications. Reaching new Foreign Service members was a particular challenge, but sustained and extensive efforts to establish new member-

ships ultimately paid off.

AFSA has greatly strengthened its public advocacy and outreach over the past several years to highlight the contributions the career Foreign Service makes to U.S. national security, although the pandemic proscribed a number of larger-scale opportunities in this regard. AFSA leadership remained undeterred, however, and continued its outreach and visibility.

AFSA and its political action committee continued to advocate with Congress on a bipartisan basis for a sustained professional Foreign Service, as well as on issues of importance to members

during this election cycle.

Legal needs for some members, a hallmark of the second half of 2019, largely abated during 2020, although there remain certain unresolved matters.

Legal expenditures on behalf of members climbed from approximately \$135,000 at year end 2019 (net of December invoices) to \$472,000 at year end 2020 (again, net of December invoices).

The Legal Defense Fund received \$143,000 in donations by year end 2020 following 2019's approximately

Continued on next page

Treasury Report
Continued from p. 75

\$600,000 in contributions. Unexpended funds will remain in reserve.

Fund Operations

In 2020, AFSA maintained long-term investment discipline and kept sufficient liquidity to meet any unexpected cash flow needs related to the pandemic. AFSA's investment portfolios performed very well, appreciating 12.6 percent net of all investment-related expenses.

For 2020, the combined portfolio ended the year at \$16.99 million in comparison to 2019's \$15.25 million. Investment expenses totaled just over \$100,000 in 2020, the same as in 2019.

Operating Reserve.

AFSA's reserve fund was valued at approximately \$4.3 million at year end, a large boost over 2019's \$3.6 mil-

lion. This is consistent with AFSA's efforts to build up its operating reserves through prudent stewardship of all its resources, which will continue to be our aim.

Scholarship Fund. This 501(c)(3) entity was founded in 1924 to help the children of Foreign Service members pay for college. The fund has grown substantially over the decades, and at the end of 2020 stood at \$11.8 million, a significant increase over the \$10.7 million at the end of 2019.

The fund annually withdraws 4.5 percent of its 5-year average value to fund scholarships to Foreign Service children and partially underwrite the operating expenses of the scholarship program. Demand in the form of applications for scholarship monies has remained relatively flat over the years.

In 2020, the Scholarship Fund awarded \$217,000 in

needs-based financial aid and \$123,500 in merit scholarships. Although the fund's asset value increased significantly in 2020, the annual withdrawal amount did not. This practice is designed to ensure that any given year's applicants are not disadvantaged should there be a dramatic market decline.

Fund for American Diplomacy. The FAD's mission is to help educate the American public about the role of the Foreign Service and diplomacy as a tool of America's influence on the global stage. At the end of 2020, the FAD principal balance stood at \$454,934. The FAD is envisaged to provide sustained, dedicated support for continuing AFSA's public outreach, and AFSA and its leadership continue the effort to build up its principal value.

The approved 2021 AFSA operating budget dedicates approximately \$353,151 to

FAD activities, the costs of which will largely be underwritten by transfers from the operating reserve. That number compares to \$420,000 in the 2020 operating budget and reflects the realities of the pandemic.

AFSA strongly encourages donations to the Fund for American Diplomacy, which is organized as a 501(3)(c). Donations will assist AFSA's continued work to improve public knowledge about the vital contributions made by U.S. diplomats to preserving U.S. security and prosperity.

Sinclair Fund. AFSA also maintains the Matilda W. Sinclair Fund, which is intended to support excellence in language achievement. AFSA draws on that fund annually to pay for language achievement awards.

The Sinclair Fund ended 2020 with \$561,769. ■

—Virginia L. Bennett,
AFSA Treasurer

NEWS BRIEF

DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 VACCINE

Many AFSA members have been in contact with us concerning the COVID-19 vaccine and its distribution.

AFSA is aware that the vaccine's distribution is constrained by availability, but we have urged the State Department and the other foreign affairs agencies to ensure that, as vaccine production and distribution ramp up, all members of the Foreign Service and their families be prioritized.

That said, while we strongly encourage all employees to receive the vaccine in line with best-practice public health measures and in consideration of their colleagues, we recognize that this is a personal decision.

AFSA has also communicated to our contacts that Foreign Service members from all foreign affairs agencies who are scheduled to transfer or undertake other official travel should have the option to receive the vaccine from the office of medical services before they travel.

In addition, members have highlighted the sparse communication from the agencies on both the availability of vaccine doses and plans for its distribution. We have urged that more comprehensive information be provided at more frequent intervals.

AFSA appreciates the sensitivities and complexities around COVID-19 and vaccinations, but clear communication to those both domestically and overseas is vital, so that our members are informed and prepared. ■

AFSA and the Pandemic
Continued from p. 69

continue to reach out to new members of the Foreign Service who have not yet joined AFSA," she says.

AFSA's general outreach efforts—keeping members informed and engaging media, students and the American public—have shifted, as well. "We had to rework our outreach plans when COVID-19 first hit as the nation's attention was understandably focused elsewhere," Miele says.

"However, as we moved into last spring we recognized that the Foreign Service response to the pandemic—namely the repatriation of American citizens from overseas—was an important story to communicate because it demonstrated how the Foreign Service, with its presence throughout the world, can act quickly on behalf of Americans."

Professional Policy Issues. AFSA's advocacy efforts are aimed at supporting Foreign Service members and ensuring that sufficient resources are devoted to diplomacy.

Julie Nutter, AFSA's PPI director, says the pandemic has changed the way AFSA does business, with some upsides and some downsides. "We can now reach many more members via Zoom town halls and similar events than before," she says. "We can also invite members from multiple

U.S. embassies in the same region for events."

Last year, AFSA offered a series of virtual town halls about the pandemic and other issues by region and time zone, and nearly 500 AFSA members registered. "I consider this to be a major step forward in member engagement," she says.

At the same time, Nutter misses the in-person structured conversations that AFSA held before the pandemic. "The much smaller setting fostered very frank conversations and allowed members to meet AFSA President Eric Rubin and the agency VPs," she says.

Nutter adds that, post-pandemic, she hopes to be able to offer a mix of live-streaming and in-person events. "I think AFSA's work will be richer for it," she says.

The Foreign Service Journal. FSJ Editor-In-Chief Shawn Dorman says that while the FSJ team has missed being in the office together, the nature of publications work "has allowed us to continue to put the magazine out on time."

One of the biggest challenges during the pandemic was the loss for several months of the use of the diplomatic pouch to send magazines to members serving overseas. Thankfully, she says, we now are able to use the pouch again.

"While 2020 was one of the toughest years for AFSA and for the Foreign Service," Dorman adds, "we were able to produce some of our best issues, with spotlights on



AFSA has been conducting most of its business virtually since March 2020, including this staff meeting in January.

diversity and inclusion, the pandemic response, arms control, human rights, Russia and some deep dives into personnel issues."

Advocacy on The Hill.

Kim Greenplate, head of AFSA's advocacy section, says her toughest challenge has been Congress' lack of attention on the International Affairs Budget while it is focusing so much on domestic issues during the pandemic.

"Advocates have to fight hard for supplemental IAB funding and ward off harmful narratives about the money contained in the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act," she says. "AFSA must constantly remind Congress what diplomats do and why it matters."

Maintaining and creating new relationships with Hill staff has also been a challenge. "Connecting with people in person provides a back and forth that I believe is truly missing via video chat," Greenplate says. "For-

tunately, a virtual schedule has allowed members of Congress more time to meet with organizations like AFSA. This has been a definite benefit."

Awards and Scholarships. AFSA Scholarships and Awards Manager Theo Horn says that the pandemic has created challenges for his program.

"We've had to shift a lot of activities that have traditionally been done in person, such as judging of scholarships, essays and awards, online," he says. This has led AFSA to change the way it trains and accommodates its volunteers.

"Worse is having to cancel or delay events such as the Memorial Plaque ceremony, Performance and Dissent Awards and our Scholarship Award ceremony," Horn says.

"It's been a challenge, and all of our members and volunteers have been very willing to work through the changes. That is much appreciated," he adds. ■

AFSA Partners with American Diplomat Podcast

AFSA is pleased to announce a new 2021 partnership that will help in our efforts to introduce new audiences to the Foreign Service.

AFSA has stepped in as a financial supporter of the popular podcast “American Diplomat.” Hosted by Ambassador (ret.) Peter Romero and writer and director Laura Bennett, the podcast shares AFSA’s mission of generating public support for the U.S. Foreign Service and features American diplomats’ personal narratives.

The podcast releases new episodes weekly and enjoys a largely younger audience (age 25 to 44) in all 50 states and 156 countries.

AFSA joins other partners

in backing the podcast: The American Academy of Diplomacy, Texas A&M University, the Nelson B. Delavan Foundation, the Luther I. Replogle

Foundation and the Sisco Family Fund.

AFSA will work with the American Diplomat team to regularly feature AFSA



content, including interviews with authors published in recent issues of *The Foreign Service Journal*.

We also want to feature other stories from members. We encourage both active-duty and retired members to consider sharing your stories that illustrate the work of the Foreign Service.

If you have a good story and are interested in being a potential guest on the podcast, please let us know. Email Nadja Ruzica at ruzica@afsa.org.

AFSA will bring each week’s new podcast episode to members via the daily media digest. Check out amdipstories.org to explore earlier episodes. ■

AFSA High School Essay Contest

AFSA is now accepting applications for its national high school essay contest. The first prize winner is awarded \$2,500.

Eligibility: Students whose parents are not in the Foreign Service are eligible to participate if they are in grades nine through 12 in any of the 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories, or if they are U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents attending high school overseas.

Students may be attending a public, private or parochial school. Entries from home-schooled students are also accepted.

Previous first-place winners and immediate relatives of directors or staff of AFSA, the U.S. Institute of Peace, Semester at Sea and National Student Leadership Conference are not eligible to participate. Previous honorable mention designees are eligible to enter.

Prizes: \$2,500 to the

writer of the winning essay, in addition to an all-expense-paid trip to the nation’s capital from anywhere in the United States for the winning writer and his or her parents, and an all-expense-paid educational voyage courtesy of Semester at Sea.

The runner-up receives \$1,250 and a full tuition to attend a summer session of National Student Leadership Conference’s International Diplomacy program. Due to COVID-19 some prizes may

not be claimable immediately.

The application deadline is April 5, 2021.

Learn more details about the essay contest, including the essay topic, at afsa.org/essay-contest. ■

Briana Odom Joins AFSA's Labor Management Team

AFSA welcomes Briana Odom to its Labor Management team as a grievance counselor.

Ms. Odom is a 2020 graduate of The George Washington University Law School. While there, she served as a legal intern for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 2017, as a legal and policy intern for an international human rights organization in 2018 and as a law clerk for the American



Briana Odom.

COURTESY BRIANA ODOM

Red Cross in 2019. Most recently, she served as a law clerk for AFSA's Labor Management office from 2019 to 2020.

She also holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Temple University in Philadelphia, where she was on the women's gymnastics team. Originally from Maryland, she has been admitted to the Maryland State Bar. She currently resides in Arlington, Virginia. ■

Carson Relitz Rocker Joins AFSA Governing Board

Carson Relitz Rocker joins the AFSA Governing Board as a State representative. A career Foreign Service officer with the State Department since 2003, she became head of the Strategic Religious Engagement Unit in the Office of International Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C., in September 2019.

Before becoming SRE chief, Ms. Relitz Rocker was political and economic section chief at U.S. Embassy Tirana. Prior to that, she served as the senior Georgia desk officer in the Office of Caucasus Affairs and Regional Conflicts in Washington, worked on elections



Carson Relitz Rocker.

COURTESY OF CARSON RELITZ ROCKER

and counternarcotics in the Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and led the internal politics team at U.S. Embassy Kabul.

She has also served in Burundi, Ethiopia and Belarus, including tours as a general services officer and

a consular officer.

Before joining the Foreign Service, Ms. Relitz Rocker earned a master's degree in Bible and theology from Wheaton College in Illinois and taught English in Japan. She is an honors graduate of the University of Montana, with a bachelor's degree in history and political science.

She is married to Brent Rocker, a former Marine with expertise in security engineering and political science. They have one child and enjoy traveling the world together. ■

Apply for AFSA College Scholarships

Applications are now open for nearly \$350,000 in college aid to children of AFSA members.

Financial Aid. In 2021, AFSA will award \$220,000 in need-based financial aid to incoming or current college undergraduates. Last year, 60 students were awarded scholarships ranging between \$2,000 and \$6,000.

Merit Aid. In 2021, AFSA will award \$129,000 in merit aid to high school seniors. Last year, 158 students applied and 35 received grants. Most scholarships will amount to \$3,500 and will be made in four categories: academic merit, art merit, community service and best essay.

Please note that due to difficulties surrounding COVID-19 AFSA will not require students to have taken either the SAT or ACT tests to submit an application.

The AFSA Scholarship Program is made possible through generous bequests and donations from our partners at BlueCross BlueShield, DACOR and numerous donations from individuals. No AFSA membership dues are used in the AFSA Scholarship Program.

The application deadline is March 15, 2021.

For full details, visit afsa.org/scholar. ■



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AFSA on Dissent

The shocking January 6 insurrection at the Capitol has raised profound questions about how we—the Foreign Service and AFSA—should wield our influence as citizens in a democracy and about our responsibilities as professional public servants.

In the aftermath, two Dissent Channel messages with numerous signatures objecting to the State Department and Secretary of State's response to the insurrection were leaked to the media and published in full. This happened even before the messages were submitted through the Dissent Channel.

Support for dissent is part of AFSA's DNA, beginning with the 1968 creation of the AFSA Rivkin Award for Dissent—even before the establishment of the official Dissent Channel in 1971, in the midst of the Vietnam War.

In the ensuing years, the Dissent Channel was opened to all Foreign Service agency members, and AFSA established three more awards to recognize constructive dissent by specialists and generalists at every level.

"I believe that going forward, we should understand that to protect the Dissent Channel and for it to have its intended impact, we should use it wisely," says AFSA President Eric Rubin. "The Dissent Channel is intended for policy dissents only, and as a general rule should be

classified and kept to internal channels only."

There are numerous other ways to raise the profile of an issue, for example, publishing a "Speaking Out" column in *The Foreign Service Journal* (if the substance of the dissent is unclassified), sending letters to senior leaders with collected signatures, raising issues to AFSA for transmission to leadership, requesting meetings with senior officials or asking for a town hall (again, if the issue pertains to unclassified material).

If there is suspected malfeasance, Foreign Service members can contact the Office of the Inspector General or, if there are seriously deficient personnel practices, the Director General. In cases of illegal activity, members can decide to become whistleblowers and are protected by federal law.

Amb. Rubin recently hosted a Dissent Channel Zoom session for new Foreign Service entrants in which he used his experience to explain the uses and abuses of the Dissent Channel. AFSA also recently held a seminar on whistleblowing.

AFSA intends to keep offering these two programs, which we will open to all members, because we believe strongly that constructive internal dissent and whistleblowing help public servants fulfill their oaths to the Constitution. ■

■ **Alexander Akalovsky**, 97, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Nov. 26, 2020, in Bethesda, Md., from complications following a fall.

Mr. Akalovsky was born on Sept. 23, 1923, on the island of Rab in what is now Croatia. Though his first interest was music, his parents strongly urged him to study languages instead, a skill that served him very well. He spoke fluent Serbian, Russian, English, German and French.

As a young man, he developed a passion for architecture, but the university in Belgrade was closed because of World War II. In 1945, with the encouragement of family friends, Mr. Akalovsky went to the University of Heidelberg to study with hopes that he would eventually return to Belgrade to complete his architecture degree. He never did return but graduated from Heidelberg in 1949.

Thanks to his mother's cousin who sponsored the family's immigration to the United States, Mr. Akalovsky arrived in San Francisco in 1949. His first job was with the Southern Pacific Railroad, where he earned \$1 an hour as a "special diet aide" preparing special food orders and mopping floors.

He met his first wife, Maria, in San Francisco, and they settled down in Monterey. His first child, a daughter Irene, was born in Carmel.

Mr. Akalovsky taught Russian at the Army Language School (now the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center) in Monterey from 1950 until 1955, when he moved with his family to Washington, D.C., to study foreign language instruction pathology at Georgetown University.

He joined the State Department Foreign Service in 1956. That year, he and his wife had two more children, twins Elaine and Alexander Jr., and ultimately settled in Bethesda in 1959.

As an FSO and interpreter, Mr. Akalovsky served five U.S. presidents in high-level disarmament and national security negotiations.

He was adviser to the U.S. delegation to the U.N. Disarmament Committee in London (1957), the Test Ban Conference in Geneva (1958-1959), the Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee in Geneva (1960), the U.N. General Assembly (1961) and a member of the U.S. delegation to the 18-Nation Disarmament Committee in Geneva (1962-1963). He was senior political adviser for disarmament negotiations for U.S. Mission Geneva (1964-1965).

From 1965 to 1968, during secret talks with North Vietnam, Mr. Akalovsky was chief of the external branch of the political section at U.S. Embassy Moscow. He then served as special assistant to the ambassador at the U.S. Mission to NATO (1968-1970); chief of Eastern affairs at the U.S. Mission in Berlin (1970-1974); consul general in West Berlin (1971-1974); special assistant to the assistant secretary of State for international security affairs (1974-1975); and special assistant to the director for management operations at the State Department (1975-1976).

He was involved in such historic events as Vice President Richard Nixon's Kitchen Debate in Moscow; Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's visit to the United States and meeting at the White House with President John F. Kennedy; the U-2 crisis, when the Soviet Union shot down CIA pilot Francis Gary Powers; and the Cuban missile crisis.

Mr. Akalovsky received a Superior Honor Award from the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

He retired in 1978 as consul general in West Berlin but continued to serve the State Department as a consultant until 1997. As a longtime lover of the arts, Mr.

Akalovsky rarely missed performances of the Washington National Opera, symphony or ballet at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Mr. Akalovsky married Sharon Bagwell, a member of the Foreign Service, in 1977. She predeceased him in 2004.

He is survived by his three children: Irene McClendon (Daryl), Elaine Kallay (Thomas) and Alexander Akalovsky Jr. (Brigitte); and five grandchildren: Sasha Chan (Brian), Collin McClendon, Nicholas Akalovsky, Katherine Akalovsky and Michael Kallay.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his memory to the Kennedy Center.

■ **Elizabeth C. "Betty" Brook**, 101, a retired member of the Foreign Service, passed away peacefully on Nov. 13, 2020, in Sarasota, Fla.

Born Elizabeth Carothers Brook on Oct. 15, 1919, in Stronghurst, Ill., to John Cecil Brook and Maude Simonson Brook, she was the "baby" to five older siblings. She graduated from Stronghurst High School and continued her education at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill., graduating with a bachelor's degree in history. She was a lifelong member of TriDelta Sorority.

Following college Ms. Brook taught history for a year. But she was already thinking of travel, and during World War II she joined the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service), part of the U.S. Naval Reserve, and attained the rank of lieutenant (junior grade), serving in Washington, D.C.

After the war ended, Ms. Brook joined the State Department where she worked in various capacities for 28 years. She served in many of the hot spots of the day, including Nigeria, Venezuela, Turkey, Morocco, Kenya, Germany and

Vietnam. She said her favorite posting was Beirut, in the late 1940s. She would sometimes sum up her jobs with the Foreign Service with a smile saying, “We worked hard, and we played hard!”

In 1984 Ms. Brook retired to Sarasota, Fla., where she volunteered for several arts organizations and her sorority, and played golf and bridge. Friends and family remember her as lively, polite and elegant. She was an accomplished contract bridge player, they recall, who could be cutthroat when needed.

In 2013 she told a local reporter: “I spent 28 years traveling the world. Wherever I went, I found a nice group of people. I always had friends. I think it’s true in life that friends are the most important.”

Ms. Brook is remembered fondly by her many nieces and nephews, and is buried at the Brook family plot in Stronghurst, Ill.

■ **Gerald Bernard Helman**, 87, a retired Foreign Service officer and former ambassador, died on Oct. 16, 2020, in Alexandria, Va.

Mr. Helman was born in Detroit, Mich., in 1932, the son of Russian-Jewish immigrants. He attended the University of Michigan, where he met his future wife, Dolores “Dolly” Hammel.

At the university he was editor of the student newspaper, *The Michigan Daily*. After graduating from the University of Michigan Law School, he entered the Foreign Service in 1956.

Mr. Helman was posted to Italy, Austria, Barbados, Belgium and Switzerland. He also worked in United Nations political affairs and at NATO as deputy political adviser, and later served as deputy under secretary for political affairs.

He participated in negotiating the Outer Space Treaty and Camp David Accords, and was involved with Ameri-

can policy toward Afghanistan during the 1980s and the Gulf War.

From 1979 to 1981, he served as the representative of the United States to the European Office of the United Nations (Geneva), with the rank of ambassador.

In retirement, Ambassador Helman was involved in the field of telecommunications and global communications. In 1992 he co-authored, with Steve Ratner, an article, “Saving Failed States,” published in *Foreign Policy* magazine. He also became a beloved presence in the lives of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

He is survived by his children, Debbie Rowan and David Helman, siblings Eileen Aboulafia and Paul Helman, 12 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by his wife of 60 years, Dolly; his daughter, Ruth Helman; and his brother, Norman Helman.

■ **William “Bill” M. Howe**, 76, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Nov. 18, 2020, at home in Seattle, Wash.

Mr. Howe was born on Jan. 16, 1944, in Brooklyn, N.Y., to William John and Mary Ellen. One of two children, he graduated from Bishop Loughlin High School in Brooklyn. He then attended St. John’s University in New York City and graduated with a degree in economics.

After college, Mr. Howe volunteered for the Peace Corps in South India. He then joined the Urban Teacher Corps in Washington, D.C., but decided teaching was not for him. He served for two years in the U.S. Army.

Mr. Howe then worked for Catholic Relief Services, beginning in Kuala Lumpur, where he met his wife, Rosalind. He served with CRS in the Philippines and Cambodia.

After CRS, Mr. Howe pursued a successful career in the banking industry.

First working for Rainier Bank, he went on to become president of Sealaska Corporation. Mr. Howe had a deep love for Alaska; he worked with many native corporations and for a year as deputy state treasurer of Alaska. During his Alaska years, Mr. Howe enjoyed running, skiing, fishing, hunting and mountain climbing. His corporate career lasted from 1976 to 1995.

At the age of 50 Mr. Howe joined the Foreign Service, a new career drawing on his fascination with the economics, politics and culture of developing countries. His career with State covered 15 years in high-risk areas including Islamabad, Lahore, Lagos and Colombo. His last assignment was as chief of the consular affairs section in Jakarta.

Mr. Howe was a faithful Catholic and, in his retirement, volunteered with his church and Knights of Columbus. A two-time marathon runner and Hash Harrier runner, he also volunteered with the Seattle Marathon.

He later enjoyed time reading books on the porch of his cabin on the Skykomish River in Washington state and being a grandfather. He battled progressive supranuclear palsy for the last three and a half years.

Friends and family say Mr. Howe lived a fantastic life, filled with adventure.

Mr. Howe is survived by his spouse, Rosalind; sister Jayne Tompos (and two nephews); children Jennifer (Nick Kokkonis) and David (Shani Prentice-Crain); and three grandchildren, Eva, Dean and Arlington.

■ **Louis Elton “Lou” Kahn**, 86, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Aug. 26, 2020, in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Kahn was born on April 10, 1933, to Louis Elkus Kahn and Iva (Washburn) Kahn. He grew up in Napa, Calif., where

his father was a Boy Scout executive and his mother a public health nurse. As a youth, he earned the Eagle Scout Award.

Mr. Kahn graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, where he was a member of Alpha Phi Omega and the Arnold Air Society, and a flutist in the Cal Band and member of the Straw-Hat Band and Baton, the band honor society. He received his Phi Beta Kappa Award in 1954. After graduation, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and played the flute in an Army band.

Following Army service, Mr. Kahn traveled to Europe with the Cal Band, visiting Paris, Copenhagen and Brussels. Mr. Kahn found that his band uniform got him free admission to opera houses, and he saw “Tosca” performed by the renowned La Scala Company of Milan.

In 1958, Mr. Kahn joined the State Department as a career Foreign Service officer. He became a Turkish specialist based on his language skills, and served in Turkey several times, including assignments in Izmir, Ankara and Istanbul.

Also fluent in French, he was posted to Dakar. His final overseas post was to the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Vienna. He then returned to the State Department in Washington, D.C. In 1972 he received the State Department’s Merit Honor award.

After retiring from the State Department in 1988, he served at the Justice Department, where he planned the International Conference of Appellate Court Judges.

Following government service, Mr. Kahn spent 17 years as the education and programs director for the American Friends of Turkey. He organized educational programs on Turkey at the Smithsonian Institution in a partnership between the American Friends of Turkey and the Smithsonian Associates.

Mr. Kahn married the former Beverly Baldwin in 1967. They had one daughter, Melissa. Beverly died of cancer in 1974. He married Ruth Carlsen in 1984.

Music and the arts, particularly opera and classical music, were Mr. Kahn’s great loves. He also enjoyed reading and literature, following national and global politics, architecture and railroads.

Mr. Kahn is survived by his wife, Dr. Ruth Carlsen; a brother, Alan, of Yountville, Calif.; children Melissa (Jason) Richey, of Sewickley, Pa., Rebecca (Robert) Nesse of Rochester, Minn., Debra (John) Wilkinson of Zumbrota, Minn., Steven (Ann Marie) Carlsen of Bloomington, Minn., Dr. Susan (Michael) Baker of Elmhurst, Ill.; grandchildren Justin Richey, Logan Richey and Marcus Richey, John (Holli) Nesse, Lucas (Emily) Nesse and Sonja (Gabriel Eguia) Nesse, Robert (Nicole) Wilkinson, Laura (Maxwell) Wilkinson Behrens, Dr. Elizabeth (Dan) Wilkinson Cozine, Anthony Carlsen and Claire Carlsen, Dr. Evan (Jennifer) Baker and Katherine Baker; and 11 great-grandchildren.

Memorials may be sent to Washington National Cathedral, Washington, D.C., www.cathedral.org; DACOR, www.dacor-bacon.org; or Scouts BSA Troop 98, www.kahn.troop98dc.org.

■ **The Rev. Theodore L. “Ted” Lewis**, 93, a retired Foreign Service officer from Bethesda, Md., died on July 11, 2020.

A native of Long Island, N.Y., Rev. Lewis served in the Army during World War II, and then graduated from Haverford College and Harvard University.

As a Foreign Service officer, he was first posted to French Indochina, where he became a lay reader in the Anglican congregation in Saigon and began to discern a call to ordained ministry. He was later posted to Karachi, where he assisted the

local bishop in visitations to rural villages.

He prepared for the ministry at Virginia Theological Seminary and, following his ordination in 1964, served as curate of St. Columba’s Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C. He returned to Saigon in 1965, working to coordinate food importation for South Vietnam as the Vietnam War raged.

Rev. Lewis was then assigned to Kinshasa, where he started a small Anglican congregation and helped encourage creation of the first Anglican diocese there, in Boga.

He remained an advocate for the Congolese church for the rest of his life, coordinating sponsorship for advanced education for clergy and serving in more recent years as the church’s American commissar.

After Kinshasa, he was posted to Seoul and Vientiane.

Returning to Washington, D.C., he assisted in several parishes and, in recent years, was theologian-in-residence at All Saints Church in Chevy Chase, Md.

He focused on scholarly work in retirement, traveling regularly to Duke and Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, where he made many friends.

Rev. Lewis was the author of two books, *To Restore the Church* (1996) and *Theology and the Disciplines of the Foreign Service: The World’s Potential to Contribute to the Church* (2015), as well as many articles on Anglican Communion matters for several publications, including *The Living Church*. He also wrote for *The Foreign Service Journal*.

He is survived by his son.

■ **Charles “Chuck” Fredrick Keil**, 75, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Nov. 25, 2020, in Annapolis, Md., after a courageous two-year battle with head and neck cancer.

Mr. Keil was born on April 29, 1945, in Oakland, Calif., to Elizabeth Kingston and Charles F. Keil Jr. His father died in November 1954, and his mother married Joe Weaver, a beekeeper and farmer from Halltown, Mo.

In 1959 his stepfather retired and relocated the family to Seguin, Texas, where Mr. Keil graduated from Seguin High School in 1962. As a student at Southwest Texas State University, Mr. Keil played saxophone in a band that had some commercial success, so he moved to Austin where he found a job and enrolled in the University of Texas. He graduated in 1966.

Mr. Keil was accepted to the U.S. Navy's Officer Candidate School in Newport, R.I. Commissioned in June 1967, he reported to the destroyer USS *Theodore E. Chandler* (DD-717), in the Tonkin Gulf. He served there through May 1971 as the ship carried out three Western Pacific deployments and multiple combat missions during the Vietnam conflict.

After leaving the Navy, Mr. Keil enrolled in graduate school at the University of Texas with the goal of joining the U.S. Foreign Service. He met and married Dianne Lysne in 1973, and they welcomed their son, Joe, in 1974. Mr. Keil embarked on a 27-year Foreign Service career in 1975.

A fascinating first tour in Panama, during the canal negotiations, was highlighted by the arrival of son Matt, in 1977. That was followed by postings to Milan and Genoa; Guayaquil; the National War College in Washington, D.C.; Guatemala City; Tijuana; and a final tour as consul general in Rome. Dianne and the boys were key members of the Foreign Service team representing America.

After retiring to Annapolis, Md., in 2002, Mr. Keil did volunteer work and pursued active outdoors interests in

hiking, birding, travel and cycling. He and his wife enjoyed road trips to see the wonders of the United States.

The Keils' wanderlust was energized when son Joe moved to Beijing and Matthew remained in Rome. Family reunions in Italy and China afforded opportunities for bus tours, river and ocean cruises and a series of long-distance hikes in the U.K., France, Italy, Spain and Slovenia.

Friends and family members remember Mr. Keil thanking the good fortune and supportive people who made it possible for him to evolve from a potential juvenile delinquent in the Oakland "hood" to a rewarding life as a public servant representing the United States in the international arena.

He is survived by his loving wife of 47 years, Dianne; sister Martha (Jim); sons Joe (Eve) and Matt (Rania); grandchildren Soraya, Yasmine, Austin, Angie and Alex; brother-in-law Bruce (Diane); nephews Jonathan and Benjamin; nieces Jessica, Sharla, Jennifer and Cindy; and a global network of extended family, close friends and former colleagues.

Mr. Keil's generosity and spirit of service to community was evident throughout his life. In lieu of flowers, please consider contributions to his favorite charities: The Salvation Army, Boys and Girls Clubs of America or Médecins Sans Frontières International.

■ **John "Jack" Wellington Macdonald**, 91, a retired Foreign Service officer with USAID, died peacefully in Austin, Texas, on Nov. 25, 2020.

He was born on Nov. 14, 1929, in Grand Forks, N.D., to Donald C. Macdonald and Evelyn J. Salt. He was the oldest of three children. He served in the U.S. Army before he went to the University of North Dakota, graduating in 1953.

Mr. Macdonald worked on Capitol Hill

from 1953 to 1955, while taking courses at Georgetown University Graduate School and Law School. He worked for Prudential Insurance from 1955 to 1957 in New York City, then returned to Washington, D.C., where he reentered government service.

In 1965 Mr. Macdonald took his first USAID post in Lagos, with subsequent assignments in Saigon, Bangkok, Tunis, Damascus, Beirut, Amsterdam, Kinshasa and Baku.

Retiring from the Foreign Service in 1980, he moved to Easton, Md., where he was an active sailor, single-handing his 33-foot Swiftsure sloop until he was 80. He did volunteer work at the hospital, church and library and sold antiques in Easton. He also ran a portrait group at the Easton Academy of Art for 15 years and was a member of the English-Speaking Union, the Commonwealth Society and various art groups.

Following his move to Austin, Texas, in 2006, Mr. Macdonald joined the Austin Yacht Club and ran open studio art classes at the Austin Museum of Art.

Mr. Macdonald's passions were oil painting, sailing, bicycling, antique clocks, Byzantine art, classical music, his little dog, Holly, and, above all, books. His friends loved his sharp sense of humor, and his tremendous knowledge on all things arcane.

Mr. Macdonald is survived by his daughter and son-in-law, Pam and John Halter of Austin; his sister, Edith Anderson of Richfield, Minn.; four grandchildren, Kristin and Neil Macdonald of Bear, Del., Madeline and Katherine Halter of Austin; and great-granddaughter, Annabelle Tucker of Bear.

He is also survived by his former wife, Marie Robinson of Annapolis, Md.

He was predeceased by his brother, Neil Macdonald of Aspen, Colo.; his first

wife, Alexandra Macdonald of Athens, Greece; and a son, John Dimitri Macdonald, and grandson, John Daniel Macdonald, of Bear, Del.

■ **Bernard Norwood**, 97, a retired Foreign Service officer, died of kidney cancer on Nov. 13, 2020, in Austin, Texas.

Mr. Norwood was born in Boston, Mass. He earned a bachelor's degree from Boston University, and a master's and Ph.D. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

He served as a mortar man in World War II with the U.S. Army's 104th Infantry (Timberwolf) Division, participating in frontline combat against the German army for 195 consecutive days. He was wounded in the Rhineland and was awarded the Purple Heart.

Mr. Norwood served as an international economist at the State Department from 1949 through 1957. He became a Foreign Service officer in 1955.

In that capacity, he served as first secretary of the U.S. Mission to the European Communities in Luxembourg and Brussels from 1958 to 1962, a critical period in which the European Coal and Steel Community, the Common Market and Euratom were taking shape.

Mr. Norwood was a U.S. delegate to negotiations of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in Geneva from 1953 to 1967.

From 1963 to 1967, he served in the executive office of the president as chair of the trade staff committee in the Office of the Special Representative for Trade Negotiations. In this capacity he worked closely with the president's special representative, former Secretary of State Christian Herter.

Mr. Norwood was the senior civilian

member of the National War College class of 1967-1968. Then, not wanting to accept another overseas posting that would conflict with the career path of his wife, Janet L. Norwood, who rose to become commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics from 1979 to 1991, he left the Foreign Service.

From 1968 to 1975, Mr. Norwood was senior adviser to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. He then joined Robert Nathan Associates, a leading Washington, D.C., economic consulting firm, as principal associate from 1975 to 1994.

Mr. Norwood was predeceased by his wife of 71 years, Janet, in 2015.

He is survived by two sons: Stephen, a professor of history at the University of Oklahoma, and Peter, the Austin, Texas, site lead for Google.

■ **Charles "Pat" Patterson**, 77, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Sept. 18, 2020, in Chestertown, Md., after a long struggle with esophageal cancer.

Mr. Patterson grew up in Harlingen, Texas. As a boy, he had a pet armadillo, tended tropical fish and small livestock at a feed store, worked in a photography shop and, proudly getting his driver's license at age 14, drove to the Gulf of Mexico on solitary overnight fishing trips.

High school valedictorian, Mr. Patterson left Texas to attend the University of Michigan, where he majored in theater and literature, attended national poetry workshops and honed his acting skills.

After beginning a graduate program in theater, he volunteered for the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam conflict, serving as an electronic communications officer in Turkey and Italy. He continued his education in the military, earning a master's degree in international relations from Boston University.

Mr. Patterson resigned his commission to begin a long diplomatic career with the State Department, serving as a political officer in Italy, Lebanon, Tunisia, Kuwait, Israel, Malta, Nigeria and Barbados. An outstanding linguist, he won a Matilda W. Sinclair language award and spoke Spanish, Italian, French, Arabic and Hebrew.

In retirement, Mr. Patterson continued short-term assignments for the State Department. He participated in the Future of Iraq Project (an unsuccessful attempt to prevent hostilities after 9/11), worked to reestablish diplomatic relations with Libya and served as a political adviser at U.S. Embassy Sana'a.

He also covered the Far East for the Avian Influenza Task Force, which planned America's diplomatic response to a potential pandemic health event. This gave him a unique insight as the COVID-19 crisis developed.

Mr. Patterson reconnected with his life partner, Sheila Austrian, also a retired diplomat, after he retired to Washington, D.C., and soon made Chestertown, Md., his full-time home.

He was an avid golfer, taught a popular course at Washington College on current events in the Middle East and served in many capacities at his local community theater. He was also a committed "fixer," with a basement full of tools, batteries, glue, electronic gizmos and whatever else a house might need when things don't work properly.

Mr. Patterson is survived by his partner, Sheila; twin daughters, Meg and Beth Patterson; a granddaughter, Skye O'Keefe; an older brother, Tom Patterson; and his former wife, Margo Worthington. He asked that any donations in his memory be made to Church Hill Theatre, 103 Walnut Street, Church Hill MD 21623.

■ **Suzanne Rountree Phillips**, 97, wife of the late Ambassador William Manning Rountree, died on Nov. 30, 2020, at her home in Atlantic Beach, Fla.

Born in Fort Lewis, Wash., to Colonel and Mrs. John McDowall, she enjoyed a happy childhood at Army posts throughout the continental United States, Hawaii and the Philippines.

She attended the University of Utah for two years and graduated from Smith College in Northampton, Mass. She met William Rountree when they both served on the staff of the Anglo-American Committee on Palestine in 1946. They were married a short time later in Huntsville, Ala.

Ms. Phillips proudly joined her husband in representing the United States on his many diplomatic assignments, including Greece, Turkey and Iran, and later during his four ambassadorial appointments: Pakistan (1959-1962), Sudan (1962-1965), South Africa (1965-1970) and Brazil (1970-1973).

When Ambassador Rountree retired from the Foreign Service in 1973, the couple established residence in Gainesville, Fla. After his death in 1995, Ms. Phillips moved to Fleet Landing in Atlantic Beach, Fla.

Several years later she met and married Alva L. Phillips, a retired naval officer. They enjoyed 20 happy years together until his death in 2018. At Fleet Landing, she enthusiastically participated in numerous volunteer activities and greatly enjoyed her new life there.

Suzanne Rountree Phillips is survived by her deeply devoted family: her daughter, Susan Hanes Leonard, and her husband; two grandsons, Michael and Christopher, and their wives; and five great-grandchildren.

■ **Marilyn Ross Povenmire**, 88, a retired Foreign Service officer, passed away peacefully on Dec. 25, 2020, in Venice, Fla. The cause of death was respiratory failure.

Marilyn Ross was born in Lowell, Mass., in 1932, to Charlotte Irene (Harvey) and Hugh Alexander Ross. She grew up in Reading, Mass., attended Reading High School, and graduated summa cum laude from Tufts University with a degree in economics.

She met her husband, Dale Miller Povenmire, while he attended Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. They married in 1954 and set off on a lifetime of travel, living in countries around the world while serving the nation as U.S. Foreign Service officers. Early assignments included Santiago, Zanzibar, Asunción and Porto.

In 1972, Mrs. Povenmire took the Foreign Service exam and passed it for the second time, after the State Department changed the rules to allow both spouses of a married couple to be full-time FSOs. (She was a plaintiff in the class action lawsuit that resulted in this change of rules.)

She served as a consular officer in Venezuela, Cyprus, Portugal and Brazil, where she was chief of the consular section, and as deputy consul general at the U.S. embassies in Italy and the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Povenmire was the sole consular officer at U.S. Embassy Nicosia in 1975, shortly after the invasion of Cyprus by the Turkish army, and there she worked on both sides of the U.N.-patrolled "green line" separating opposing peoples.

She responded to terrorist activities conducted by Palestinian extremists in 1985, including the attack at the Rome airport that killed and wounded Ameri-

cans, among other casualties; and later, following the MS *Achille Lauro* cruise ship hijacking in the eastern Mediterranean.

In 1990, as the first Gulf War began, her consular team assisted hundreds of Americans as they transited London's Heathrow Airport from their residences in threatened areas of the Gulf to safety in the United States.

Between her assignments to Rome and London, she attended the National War College in Washington, D.C., for the 1987-1988 academic year, when she traveled to China with fellow officers for an orientation trip as guests of the People's Liberation Army.

Marilyn Povenmire retired from the State Department after serving as director of policy and coordination for the Bureau of Consular Affairs, where she worked with Assistant Secretary of State Mary Ryan.

She had a 20-year trailblazing career as a spouse in one of the first tandem couples of the U.S. Foreign Service, and took pride in helping American citizens abroad and representing her country overseas as a U.S. diplomat.

In retirement, the Povenmires settled in Venice, Fla., where they became founding members of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice. Mrs. Povenmire served as one of the first treasurers of the church during the purchase of land and construction of the church building. The couple continued to cherish many friendships at UUCOV and at Village on the Isle, where they resided over recent years.

Friends and family members recall Mrs. Povenmire's many accomplishments, generous spirit, love of classical music and joy of living.

She is survived by her loving husband of 66 years, Dale; and their four

children, Susan of Bluffton, S.C., Ross Mahlon of Haverhill, Mass., Carol of Manhattan Beach, Calif., and Elizabeth of Alexandria, Va.

■ **Harry G. Wilkinson**, 87, a retired Foreign Service officer with USAID, died on Nov. 30, 2020, at home in Greenville, S.C., of natural causes.

Mr. Wilkinson was born in Detroit, Mich., to Henry and Sybil (nee Cole) Wilkinson. His father owned an automotive shop, and his mother taught piano and voice.

He attended Redford High, where he played varsity football, and then spent two years at Michigan State where he was on the college gymnastics team. He spent one semester at the University of Hawaii to get away from the Michigan winter. Living a block from the beach, he surfed, took philosophy classes and came to love water sports.

In 1953 Mr. Wilkinson joined the military and was stationed at an Air Force base in England. On discharge, he finished his undergraduate studies at the University of Michigan and went on to the University of Chicago Law School, where he earned his J.D. in 1961.

While in law school, he married Dorothy McQuillan; the couple had three sons, Bruce, Stuart and Neal.

After graduating, Mr. Wilkinson moved to Washington, D.C., with his young family and worked as counsel to U.S. Senate subcommittees on migratory labor and constitutional rights, where he was the principal drafter of federal bail reform and VISTA (domestic Peace Corps) legislation.

He then moved to the Community Conciliation Service at the U.S. Justice Department, where he mediated community racial disputes, and later worked as the congressional liaison for the Sec-

retary of Labor, dealing with such issues as migratory labor, poverty programs and unemployment insurance.

He was also active in Democratic Party politics and performed advance work for the election campaign of President Lyndon Johnson in 1964.

In 1967 Mr. Wilkinson joined the Peace Corps as deputy director in Ethiopia and was later the Peace Corps director in Costa Rica. He stayed on in Costa Rica after leaving the Peace Corps to practice international law with a local firm.

In 1977 he returned to government service as a Foreign Service officer with USAID, serving in Nicaragua, Washington, El Salvador and South Africa. In South Africa he headed the Human Rights Office, supporting local human rights organizations in their struggle against apartheid. A high point was meeting Nelson Mandela.

In 1985 Mr. Wilkinson married Cecily Mango, who also worked for USAID. They had a son, Henry. After retiring from the government, Mr. Wilkinson worked for South Africa Lawyers for Human Rights and, later, as a consultant on human rights and democracy promotion for USAID in Indonesia and Jordan, where his wife was posted.

During retirement in Greenville, S.C., Mr. Wilkinson served on the board of directors of the South Carolina American Civil Liberties Union, continuing his lifelong passion to support human and civil rights. He also supported local performing arts groups, attended a variety of cultural events and participated in a range of sports.

Mr. Wilkinson was an avid reader of *The New York Times* and loved classical music. He told wonderful stories about his youth and time overseas and had a repertory of jokes he liked to tell.

He was also a talented handyman, who undertook major renovations of the various houses in which he lived and had a collection of classic BMWs and Mercedes.

He and his family spent their summers at a lakeside cottage in Hampstead, N.H., where they loved swimming and kayaking together.

Mr. Wilkinson is survived by his wife of 35 years, Cecily Mango; four sons, Bruce, Stuart, Neal and Henry; and five grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be sent to the ACLU of South Carolina, or other human or civil rights organizations of your choice. ■



If you would like us to include an obituary in In Memory, please send text to journal@afsa.org.

Be sure to include the date, place and cause of death, as well as details of the individual's Foreign Service career. Please place the name of the AFSA member to be memorialized in the subject line of your email.

A Country in Broad Strokes

China and the World

Edited by David Shambaugh, Oxford University Press, 2020, \$27.95/paperback, e-book available, 416 pages.

REVIEWED BY PHILIP A. SHULL

From economics and trade to military and cyber security to environmental degradation and human rights, the global impact of the People's Republic of China makes a basic understanding of the PRC imperative for governments, businesses and a well-informed citizenry. Prolific China scholar David Shambaugh deserves our thanks for providing a highly readable edited collection of essays on China and its foreign relations since 1949 in *China and the World*.

Shambaugh has assembled an impressive array of renowned experts to describe and assess modern China's evolving presence on the world stage. With vast experience in academia, think-tanks, diplomacy and defense, the authors summarize Beijing's key bilateral and regional relationships, its growing membership and influence in international organizations, and the role of domestic pressures and institutions in shaping its foreign policy and developments within what Shambaugh calls "domains of China's global interactions" (i.e., economic, cultural, governance and military-security).

Taken together, these chapters paint a mural of a country that has undergone an astonishing if stuttering metamorphosis—from the isolated, war-ravaged destitution of the 1950s to today's market-shaking, tech-savvy nuclear power that struts a blue water navy and the world's second-largest economy.

There are interesting details amid the brushstrokes. We learn, for example, that

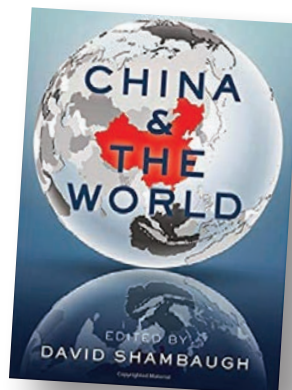
China comprised 18 percent of global GDP in 2018, that its manufacturing capacity is 50 percent larger than that of the United States and that its 14,000-mile border along 14 countries is the longest land border in the world.

We also learn that President Xi Jinping's popular but strategically targeted anti-corruption campaign launched in 2012 had by 2018 investigated 2.8 million party and state cadres, held 58,000 trials and punished 1.5 million people. Of course, this tally does not include the Xi administration's persecution and massive internment of Uighurs in Xinjiang. Shambaugh notes the international community's restrained response and postulates China's economic prowess has "successfully intimidated foreign governments into silence."

Shambaugh aims to provide the reader with a "broad and deep" exposure to China today. As with almost any single volume of such breadth, this one succeeds in spades on the former and in clubs on the latter. The essays are instructive and insightful, but many go only knee-deep into their topics, reminding this reader of the lovely Chinese *chengyu* (four-character saying), *qingping dian shui*, which translates roughly as "dragonfly flitting over the pond."

Some readers may chafe at a few of the generalizations and omissions. The chapters by Yale historian Odd Arne Westad (in which he argues, "China's present is determined by its past") and by distinguished former diplomat Chas Freeman Jr. ("China is both a civilization and a state") are excellent, but too short.

A few paragraphs contrasting Chinese civilization's myriad accomplishments,



inventions and unrivaled supremacy over millennia with the deeply scarring influence of the West's "gunboat diplomacy," treaty ports and Japan's brutal invasion that, taken together, brought the "death by violence" of at least 50-60 million Chinese" between the 1840s and 1940s would have added more power

and sharper relief to the single page on "The Century of Humiliation."

More importantly, deeper historical foundations could help readers better understand the PRC's approach to the world since 1949—an often baffling combination of paranoia and pride, swagger and insecurity, and open contempt for many of the international organizations it is now struggling so hard to lead.

Further, while valuable space is taken up recounting irrelevant events (e.g., President Xi's apparent limp during a 2019 visit to Europe), provocative assertions are left without the "why" explanations they deserve. Why is the current "adversarial, antagonistic" U.S.-China relationship cast as permanent and a closer China-Russia relationship deemed inevitable? And why frame the tensions in the U.S.-China bilateral relationship as "unfortunate" only for China? (I can think of about two million American farmers who would say the pain goes both ways!)

Finally, the book's lack of a single detailed map is a glaring oversight, especially in Phillip Saunders' important chapter on China's military-security interactions. Few Americans are aware that the official PRC "nine-dash-line" border varies starkly from the United Nations' map. Chinese actions to assert its sovereign claim to "historic territorial rights" in huge swaths of the South China Sea are a source of serious tension and potential conflict.

That said, authors do delve deeply

into certain subtopics. Barry Naughton on the Belt and Road Initiative, Katherine Morton and Srikanth Kondapalli on Beijing's use of current international organizations and its creation of new ones, and Michael Yahuda on the differing leadership styles of Deng Xiaoping and Xi are just a few examples.

Another is Shambaugh's own thought-provoking chapter on the key external challenges China will face in the next decade. His exploration of why a rising China has so little soft power is especially enlightening and is a phenomenon confounding to China itself.

"To really possess soft power a country's culture and values have to ... appeal beyond a country's borders," Shambaugh writes, providing examples of China's self-inflicted wounds that have kept most countries untrusting and aloof (such as the "debt traps" of some BRI loans and the assertion of "rule by law" over "rule of law" in international organizations and trade). He traces these actions to the Communist Party's tendency to treat other countries like it treats its people, believing "that by controlling narratives ... it can control behavior."

The sharp contrast between China and the United States in this area recalls President Dwight Eisenhower's simple but brilliant insight into how a great nation acquires soft power. In his 1961 farewell address, he said: "America's leadership and prestige depend not merely upon our unmatched material progress, riches and military strength, but on how we use our power in the interests of world peace and human betterment."

In sum, *China and the World* provides an excellent baseline survey of the PRC's foreign relations since 1949 and equips readers with the knowledge to better understand its future actions.

The overriding takeaways are two: the

fact that the shape and expression of future PRC foreign relations is critical but uncertain; and the hope that China will become comfortable enough with its prominence and strength to be a constructive and trustworthy partner in global affairs.

Such a transformation, if and when it comes, will be a very good thing—for both China and the world.

Philip A. Shull is a retired Foreign Service officer who served multiple times in China and Hong Kong, including as minister counselor for agriculture at U.S. Embassy Beijing (2014-2016). Prior to joining the Foreign Service, he taught English in Taiwan and at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou. He is a retiree representative on AFSA's Governing Board.

Looking Beyond the Balance of Terror

"Toward a More Proliferated World? The Geopolitical Forces That Will Shape the Spread of Nuclear Weapons"

A Report by Eric Brewer, with Ilan Goldenberg, Joseph Rodgers, Maxwell Simon and Kaleigh Thomas; Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Center for a New American Security, September 2020, 58 pages.

REVIEWED BY WALTER E. NORTH

"Nuclear threats are increasing, and regional security environments are becoming more tense, thereby creating proliferation pressures." That is the fundamental conclusion and the first of seven significant trends spotlighted in this insightful but sobering report by Eric Brewer and his co-authors.

We should all be worried. That is especially so in the wake of the presidential election in a year of cascading

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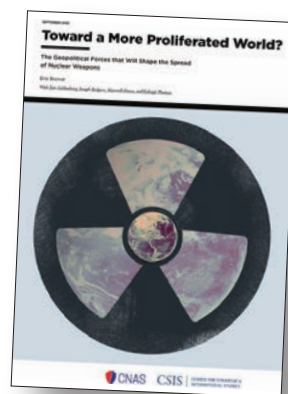


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Trends of pulling back that began before the Trump administration and waning influence have accelerated, which is deeply unsettling to our allies.



crises, where there was limited discussion of foreign policy—in particular, the growing risks of nuclear proliferation.

The report begins with an update on the faltering multilateral system that works to retard, roll back or prevent proliferation and to cap the number of nations with such weapons. The authors abjure the demonization around the lightning-rod cases of North Korea and Iran.

Rather, they step back to focus on the underlying changes that might accelerate broader proliferation. They cogently review the current system, point out some of its successes and suggest how it is unraveling. In doing so, they identify seven broad interacting trends, and proceed to evaluate three countries—South Korea, Saudi Arabia and Turkey—against them.

The trends include increasing regional tensions that drive proliferation pressures, waning faith in America's reliability, a retreat from disarmament by the United States and Russia, a multiplicity of providers of civil nuclear technology, the eroding strength of economic sanctions, and more competitive relationships between the United States, Russia and China.

Given such factors, other potential breakout candidates come to mind, such as Taiwan, South Korea and Japan. They face an increasingly assertive neighbor in China. Egypt, led by an authoritarian leader with regional ambitions, is another.

Since the end of World War II, a patchwork of arrangements used incentives and deterrents to retard proliferation. Carrots helped states access peaceful nuclear uses with the major powers promising to roll back stockpiles. Missile and weapons technology know-how was tightly controlled by applying or threatening sanctions, using various human and technical verification approaches and, most importantly, with America offering an “umbrella” of protection.

This system mostly worked, but there were serious failures (e.g., Pakistan, India, Israel, North Korea) and near-catastrophes such as the Cuban missile crisis. The efficacy of this architecture was higher during the Cold War, especially in bilateral arms reduction agreements between the United States and Russia—the so-called balance of terror.

The report teases out newer destabilizing factors. China is one—more aggressive, an economic powerhouse and growing its military capabilities. Russia is another—less economically successful, but rearming and reassertive.

And then there is the United States. Trends of pulling back that began before the Trump administration and waning influence have accelerated, which is deeply unsettling to our allies. They worry that they can't count on our shield.

That anxiety encourages hedging strategies that could include nuclear weapons. Bilateral arms control agreements with the Russians have been

unravelling. A new and more expensive arms race is on. The United States spends about half of the global military budget. But size may not be a good proxy for safety.

Russia, too, has a large program. These asymmetries complicate trilateral disarmament efforts. A dangerous dynamic is unfolding that dramatically increases the risks of accidental miscalculations and war.

While those factors stew, there are other challenges. Many new systems have dual uses, which makes verification oversight harder, although some technology enables better monitoring. Other sticks are losing their efficacy. Authoritarian leaders can work around sanctions and oversight. America's edge in the market for peaceful uses, a lever for restraining tech transfer, has withered.

The authors see no easy paths going forward. But they do make an eloquent argument for U.S. engagement. America alone is not a sound foundation for our national security. Possible lines to explore require flexibility, respect for adversaries and allies, a willingness to keep talking to them, even in the face of sometimes unfortunate acts, and a recognition that suboptimal agreements may be as good as they can be for now. That buys time to work to alter the underlying adverse dynamics.

The alternatives are grim. The new administration would benefit from studying this report and acting on its findings. Diplomats and other citizens need to keep attention focused on these critical issues. ■

Walter E. North is a retired USAID Foreign Service officer and a former ambassador.



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AD INDEX

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

AFSA Scholarship / 68

FSJ Annual Retirement Section / 61

CLASSIFIED LISTINGS

Classifieds / 94, 95

EDUCATION

AFSA Scholarship / 68

Church Schools in the (Episcopal) Diocese of Virginia / Inside Back Cover

FINANCIAL PLANNING & TAX SERVICES

MCG Financial Planning / 80

Windecker Financial Planning / 80

INSURANCE

AFSPA – Cigna / 27

AFSPA – Dental / 4

Clements Worldwide / 3

Federal Employee Defense Services / 18

Starr Wright USA / Back Cover

MISCELLANEOUS

Address Change / 93

AFSA Retiree Membership / 61

FSJ Digital Archive / 89

FSJ Gift Subscription / 25

REAL ESTATE, HOUSING & PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Chambers Theory Property Management / 93

Corporate Apartment Specialists / 93

FSJ Guide to Property Management / 92

Promax Management / 91

Property Specialists, Inc. / 11

Residence Inn Arlington / 11

Richey Property Management / 92

Washington Management Services / 92

WJD Management / 91

RETIREMENT PLANNING & SERVICES

AFSA Retiree Membership / 61

Washington Retirement Planning Specialists /

Inside Front Cover

Diplomacy and Arms Reduction: A Personal Story

BY WILLIAM H. HILL

When the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s, large numbers of Soviet troops and vast stores of arms and ammunition were left scattered around central and eastern Europe. Over the next decade and a half, the United States and many European allies cooperated with Russia and post-Soviet states to withdraw former Soviet forces back to Russia and eliminate large portions of the military stockpiles.

The results of this effort reduced the conventional military confrontation on the European continent to a level that had not been seen, arguably, for a couple of centuries. Since it was the outbreak of war in Europe that involved the U.S. in the two global conflicts of the 20th century, and the competition with the USSR over Europe that drew America into more than 40 years of global cold war, this deep reduction in the danger of military clashes in Europe was a major plus for U.S. security.

Much of the USSR's arms and ammunition needed to fight a southwestern front in a third world war was stored in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, which after the dissolution of the Soviet

In roughly six months more than 20,000 metric tons of ammunition were removed to Russia and fully verified under the procedures negotiated in 2000.

Union became the independent Republic of Moldova. A brief war in 1992 divided Moldova, with a de facto separatist entity on the left (east) bank of the Dniestr River, better known as Transdniestria. The bulk of the former Soviet military assets was located there, guarded by a small contingent of Russian troops, some of whom also served as peacekeepers.

From the outset, the Republic of Moldova demanded the Russian troops be withdrawn, but the presence of the enormous stocks of arms (well over 500 tanks, armored personnel carriers and heavy artillery) and ammunition (some 42,000 metric tons) complicated the situation.

The international body charged with negotiating a political settlement to the Transdniestrian conflict—the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or OSCE—was also mandated to assist with the withdrawal of Russian troops, arms and ammunition. The Russians agreed in principle, and by 1999

decent progress had been made in troop withdrawals, but relatively less in reducing the stocks of arms and ammunition.



I arrived in Moldova as head of the OSCE mission, lent to the organization by the U.S. Department of State, a few months before the November 1999 Istanbul OSCE Summit gave a major boost to efforts to get the Russian soldiers and arms out of Moldova. In signing a new deal on conventional arms control throughout Europe, Russia agreed to withdraw its military from Moldova by the end of 2002. This marked one of the high points of post-Cold War U.S.-Russia cooperation.

There may have been a high-level agreement on Russian withdrawal from Moldova, but plenty of practical issues needed to be worked out to make it happen. I developed close working relations with the Russian commander in Transdniestria and senior Russian defense officials in Moscow, but the withdrawal was going to cost plenty, and Russia was very short on funds after the economic crash of 1998.

My American counterpart at OSCE headquarters in Vienna helped establish a voluntary fund to which governments could contribute to assist in the Russian withdrawal. The United States made a



William H. Hill is a global fellow at the Wilson Center. A retired Foreign Service officer, he is an expert on Russia and the former Soviet Union, East-West relations and European multilateral diplomacy. He served two terms—January 2003-July 2006 and June 1999-November 2001—as head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, where he was charged with negotiation of a political settlement to the Transdniestrian conflict and facilitation of the withdrawal of Russian forces, arms and ammunition from Moldova.

substantial contribution, and I traveled to many European capitals in a successful effort to raise some \$30 million for the effort.

Getting the money was only part of the problem, however. I then had to negotiate an agreement with the Russians on how they would receive and use the funds. The donor states understandably wanted to make sure their contributions went for the designated purpose, not just into the Russian state budget.

We also had to agree with the Russians on innumerable specific questions (e.g., how much would we pay to destroy a tank, or to ship it back to Russia?). Finally, we needed to agree on how the process would be inspected, so that accomplishment of the task could be properly verified.

I spent almost a week in Moscow in late 2000 negotiating a comprehensive agreement. The Russian Foreign Ministry gave me the use of an office on the sixth floor of its headquarters, along with a computer. I met regularly with about two dozen officers and lawyers from the ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs. We agreed on prices, timing and inspection, using personnel from the OSCE mission to Moldova and—in Russia—international staff from NATO's arms control unit, all under the auspices of the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe.



As the effort began in earnest in 2001, we had to overcome significant local resistance from the Transdniestrian authorities. Some opposed the Russian withdrawal because they believed it would leave them with less protection in their dispute with the recognized government of Moldova. Others probably hoped to gain financially by selling some of the military equipment.

Both the Russian commander and



The separatist enclave of Transdniestria in Moldova.

I were hanged in effigy by angry crowds in Transdniestria, but strong intervention from the Russian deputy minister of defense and former Prime Minister Evgeniy Primakov, Putin's special representative for the Transdniestrian conflict, helped to overcome the local resistance.

By the end of 2001, more than 500 pieces of heavy military weaponry were destroyed or removed from Moldova, along with far greater stores of non-combat and logistical equipment and supplies. Russia received a one-year extension at the 2002 OSCE Summit, and in early 2003 efforts began in earnest to withdraw the ammunition from the Russian base in the village of Colbasna on the border with Ukraine.

Contrary to some prognostications, in roughly six months more than 20,000 metric tons of ammunition were removed

to Russia and fully verified under the procedures negotiated in 2000.



Unfortunately, a dispute over the failure of a proposed political settlement negotiated unilaterally by Russia in November 2003 halted ammunition withdrawals in early 2004, and they have not resumed. A negligible Russian force of 1,500 troops remains in Moldova's Transdniestrian region.

Nonetheless, I do not consider this effort from 1999 to 2003 a failure. The major Russian weapons were all removed, as were many of the troops. The danger of armed conflict, especially accidental conflict with Russia, was greatly reduced. With the involvement and leadership of American diplomats, this region—and, as a result, Europe and the United States—was a bit safer for a time. ■



The Shwedagon Pagoda, with its 367-foot golden spire, dominates the skyline of Yangon (once Rangoon).

Also known as the Golden Pagoda, the gilded Theravada Buddhist stupa is a “must-see” for all visitors to Myanmar. During our recent three years at the U.S. embassy in Yangon, we visited the iconic site countless times.

The best time to go is at night when the lights are brilliant and the air cooler. We always asked our guests to figure the weekday of their birth so they could go to the correct shrine within the complex and be blessed by pouring water over various symbols. We were often approached by Burmese wishing to practice their English, and they were always surprised to learn that we were residents there.

This photo was taken during our final visit, just before the COVID-19 shutdown, early in 2020. I used my iPhone 11X Pro. ■

A performing artist, teacher and author of Jordan's Jewish Drama Queen, Lee-Alison Sibley has joyfully followed her husband, Senior Foreign Service Officer George Sibley, from their first posting, Jakarta in 1989, to their current post, North Carolina, where George is diplomat in residence and Lee-Alison is working on her second book, a novel about India.

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