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Let's Get It Right This Time

BY ERIC RUBIN

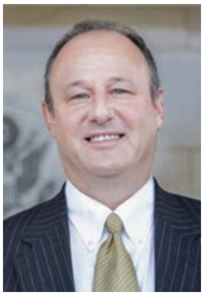
We are overdue for a serious debate about America's role in the world.

When I joined the Foreign Service in 1985, near the end of the last phase of the Cold War, the United States had a relatively clear set of goals and a relatively clear purpose in its foreign and security policies.

Of course, hazy nostalgia for a bygone era of bipartisan consensus on foreign policy is by no means justified. In the early 1980s, we had only recently put the tragic, divisive 20-year U.S. war in Vietnam and Southeast Asia behind us, and we found ourselves in an accelerating nuclear arms race with the Soviets and a widening global ideological division that would soon lead to proxy wars on three continents.

Our record during that "long twilight struggle" against tyranny that President John F. Kennedy referred to in his 1961 inaugural address is not error-free. We made many mistakes as a country as we battled Soviet communism and its imitators. But there is also much to be proud of—including the peaceful outcome of that struggle, which ended mostly on our terms.

I was privileged to be part of the diplomatic team that helped manage the U.S. response to the breakup of the USSR and its East European empire. I know from personal experience that those heady days had a downside: We were so swept up in the euphoria of ending the Cold War that we failed to make crucial decisions about our country's future.



This failure was exacerbated by an understandable desire to reap a "peace dividend" after so many decades devoting much of our national wealth to the Cold War.

That in turn led directly to "doing more with less," "reinventing government," abolishing the U.S. Information Agency and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and significantly pulling back from foreign engagement and commitments across the globe.

This was not a complete pullback, of course. But in real terms, we began to cut both our outlays and ambitions to the point that today spending on diplomacy and foreign assistance is roughly half (in real dollars) what it was at the end of the Cold War—all while we are seeking clear motivating principles and goals for our foreign policy.

In the early 1990s, everything seemed to be going our way, and it appeared likely to continue without much effort or investment on our part. The "Washington consensus" encouraged us to believe that liberal, free-market democracy was the only game in town—and everyone would now have to follow it.

In many respects, things have not gone our way. I don't need to lay out all the reasons why. I do hope, however, that we will consider the present time as a chance for us to think through what role we as Americans should play in the world, how much we are willing to pay for that role, and what the expectations are for other countries who want to share the journey with us.

We also need to recognize that U.S. global leadership in the 2020s cannot be a re-creation of our role in the past. We need to ramp up our global engagement, this time with the understanding that, as at home, there is no free lunch in world affairs.

AFSA is advocating that Congress provide more resources for the U.S. Foreign Service. We cannot keep doing more with less: We need to do more with more. We also need to temper our reengagement with a heavy dose of humility, recognizing that our country is going through a painful period of strife and division and that the world has changed. "Because we say so" is no longer a viable talking point, if it ever was.

We are overdue for a serious debate about America's role in the world and what we need to do to achieve our goals. A clearer sense of national direction combined with adequate funding and staffing—and the resulting improvement in morale—would give the Service an opportunity to end the current decade in a much stronger place.

As always, I welcome your thoughts and recommendations. Please send them to us at member@afsa.org.

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

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Finding the Power Paradigm for Today

BY SHAWN DORMAN

The United States emerged from the long era of the Cold War as the undisputed global superpower. It was called a "unipolar moment." The subsequent decade of drift on the seas of what many referred to as the "New World Order" ended abruptly with the events of Sept. 11, 2001. Within weeks of 9/11, U.S. national security strategy and foreign policy were refocused, launching a new era: the "Global War on Terror."

Fifteen years on, it became apparent that nonstate terrorists were not the only important actors on the international scene. The Obama administration's 2015 National Military Strategy included a priority to work to defeat "potential state adversaries … challenging international norms."

The Trump administration made the return of "great power competition" (GPC), acknowledged in 2015, the centerpiece of its 2017 National Security Strategy and 2018 National Defense Strategy. And by 2019, GPC was dominating the narrative.

Yet scholars, foreign policy experts and diplomats continue to debate whether GPC is an adequate construct for U.S. foreign policy and national security strategy. Can international relations be reduced to "competition"? What is the goal? What is the strategy?

The discussion involves not only how to characterize the current international environment but how to define the U.S. role within it. Is the United States "back at the table" as one of many "great" (and less great) powers, or does it seek to be, some say need to be, at the head of the global table?

This month's edition explores aspects of current international dynamics through the lens of U.S. diplomacy—how the U.S. is, or should be, addressing central geopolitical issues.

We begin with what is certainly one of the most significant arenas for global competition and conflict today—cyberspace. U.S. Cyber Command strategist Emily O. Goldman (who has also served at the National Security Council and in State's Policy Planning Office) offers a particularly timely take on "Cyber Diplomacy for Strategic Competition." She argues for a more proactive, anticipatory approach to cyber competition.

Robert S. Wang, a retired FSO now with the Center for Strategic and International Studies and Georgetown University, urges an unambiguous U.S. policy of support for Taiwan and its democracy in "Countering China's Intimidation of Taiwan."

Robert Griffiths, who lived and worked in China for 14 years, asks the provocative question: "Engagement with China: Was It a Mistake?"

Ambassador (ret.) Robert E. Hunter reviews the importance of the trans-Atlantic partnership in "Hello, Europe—America Is Back."

Finally, two Senior FSOs, Alexis Ludwig and Ambassador Kelly Keiderling, offer contrasting takes on the concept of "Great Power Competition" and its utility today.

Shawn Dorman is the editor of The Foreign Service Journal.

In the Feature, "Whatever Happened to Microfinance? A Cautionary Tale," Thomas Dichter looks at how what was once a darling of development programs has done over time.

In the Education Supplement, education consultant Rebecca Grappo considers "The Impact of COVID-19 on FS Kids," pointing to the unique challenges they have faced and offering recommendations for parents and for the State Department.

Recent changes in the Special Needs Education Allowance program are spotlighted in Family Liaison Office Education and Youth Director Charlotte Larsen's interview with the staff of the Office of Child and Family Programs.

In Speaking Out, Ambassador (ret.) Edward Peck makes "The Case Against Political Ambassadors."

FSO (ret.) Jonathan B. Rickert learns about the sensitivities of small countries in his Reflection, "The Mouse That Roared."

In AFSA News, you'll find photos and news of the expanded and renovated Memorial Plaques honoring members of the Foreign Service who died in the line of duty.

In April, the FSJ Editorial Board said goodbye to two wonderful members, Dinah Zeltser-Winant and Christopher Teal, who both brought insight, ideas and wisdom to our discussions. They will be missed. We were excited to welcome new members Jane Carpenter-Rock (State) and Bronwyn Llewellyn (USAID) in May.

Please keep in touch. Send responses to this issue, and new submissions, to journal@afsa.org.

The Way We Were

Among many FSOs there is a (half) joke by which we note with some wonder how interesting we all were as individuals when we joined the Foreign Service X years ago, and how somehow over the years we have melded into the same type of person.

Keith Mines' "State's Influence on Foreign Policy: Is This Really as Good as It Gets?" (March *FSJ*) takes it out of the realm of a joke and poses some serious questions about our culture of conformity and lack of boldness (and toughness)—and the extent to which it contributes to our losing opportunities to lead in foreign policy.

If we have learned anything over the past handful of years, it is that we should be speaking up more, not less. Our Service has taken a beating, but we are still an incredibly talented group of professionals.

The Mines article should be mandatory reading for all interested in how we can seize this window of opportunity—with a president, vice president and Secretary of State who take us seriously and want to build us up.

Mr. Mines argues that we should not just be one member at the table of foreign policy decision-making, but *the* key member, leading interagency meetings.

His overall thesis and "six suggestions we could do to get out of our own way and secure a seat at the adult table of policy development" also bump up against our goals on diversity, equity and inclusion, in my view.

I have had bright and talented young officers of color ask me if they can truly be themselves, try to develop their innovative ideas—or if by doing so they'll get labeled as "x" and stymie their careers. That is a difficult question to answer honestly.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could nourish those qualities that made us so interesting back when we joined—and those qualities we see now in our incoming and entry-level officers, including, or especially, officers of color?

Could we believe that by keeping some of that, we could actually be a bolder and stronger Foreign Service and ultimately more useful to foreign policy and to our country?

Kristin M. Kane
Chargé d'affaires
U.S. Embassy Lisbon

A Note on the Notes

Some of the "Notes to the New Administration" (March *FSJ*) were very interesting. Others, well…

I was particularly startled by a retired colleague's suggestion that in addition to passing the written and oral exams, candidates should have either a 4/4 in a world language or a 3+/4 in a hard language.

My Foreign Service class consisted of 34 very intelligent and accomplished officers. Maybe five of them would have been language-qualified. I suspect the situation would be even worse today.

My first four overseas tours required Serbian, Russian and Dari. How many officers come into the Service today knowing any of those languages? Not many, I suspect.

Already knowing languages is, of course, very desirable. But the real problem, as always, is devoting adequate resources to language and other training programs for those already in the Service.

In my day, the U.S. military program for training foreign attachés was a good example of how to do things right, although it did require specialization—in other words, the opposite of nearly every personnel program in the Foreign Service for the past 50 years.

Maybe we should take a look at that system.

James Schumaker
FSO, retired
San Clemente, California

On Testing Positive for COVID-19

It was the road trip of unintended consequences. Seven months after arriving in our new home of Kyiv, as part of the U.S. diplomatic community, our family of six decided to take a break from the monotony of pandemic life in our post-Soviet neighborhood.

Instead of opting for PCR COVID-19 tests, international travel, and sunny, warm weather, we decided to simply drive west for a change of scenery and fresh mountain air. No airports. No flights. Masked up. Exploring our new home.

Several days into the trip, after an afternoon of snow tubing in a park 10 hours' drive from Kyiv, I started having congestion and body aches. A few days later, I lost my sense of taste—a discovery made while I was feeding my 2-year-old M&Ms during the last hour of our drive home to Kyiv.

Once home, I took a big spoonful of good old American peanut butter and gave it a try: no taste. That's when I knew I was screwed. And most likely my husband and four children in my wake.

So there I sat. A positive COVID test in Ukraine. Where health care is not good. Where hospitals were edging to capacity.

Where ventilators were almost nonexistent. Staring down the face of a virus that has killed millions. And how did I feel? Well, that's complicated.

I was at war with myself. How could I let this happen? How could I have prevented this from happening? Why us?

We had made it almost one full year through an international move and life in two countries where the pandemic rages. And just that day, one day after a positive COVID test, the State Department announced it would be vaccinating its diplomats and their families overseas in short order. Too little, too late.

My feelings ran the gamut.

What did I feel most acutely? An overwhelming sense of shame. A scarlet letter will now hang from the door of my home, the one that has been open—outdoor space only, mind you—to my kids' friends in our neighborhood bubble through the thick and thin of a frigid Eastern European winter.

Now we're the house that brought the pandemic into the neighborhood, a once-safe space to now be avoided. While we were hardly the first Americans at the U.S. embassy to test positive, the community will start to gossip about who was irresponsible. And this time, the gossip will be about us. And then there will be shaming. Because that has been the lot of others who have fallen victim to this unrelenting virus.

How did I know that would be the reaction? Because I've been that person. I have judged. And I know that it's not right to judge, but deep down, I think it's human instinct. And now I'm judging myself. Hard. So judge away. I expect it.

The second wave of emotion? Anxiety. As an expat, you do not want to get really sick in Ukraine. How bad would this get for us? How many of my children would suffer from COVID-19? Does the embassy have a medical emergency evacuation plan for us should we need oxygen? There's a rabbit hole of scary thoughts you go down once you test positive, and I was in it.

And then, there's relief. I was so tired. So tired of dodging this damn virus for the past year. So terrified that one of us would bring it home. That my kids would not have their masks on properly every single time we undertook an outing. That that one chance encounter with an Uber driver or passerby would do us in.

Well, eventually it did. Now we don't have to worry anymore. Weight lifted. For a while, at least.

The feelings of finding out you are COVID-positive are many and strong. Some will be shocked by the way I felt; maybe some will find refuge in feeling or having felt the same way. Some will try to preach that I never should have left my doorstep. Some may have sympathy.

So many will come at me; I could only imagine what they'd say.

But have you lived this? Is this your reality? Paranoia. Add that to the list of positive COVID-19 emotions. You think others care so much more about your diagnosis than they actually do. ■

Loren Braunohler
FS family member
Former FSO
U.S. Embassy Kyiv

Submit letters to the editor: journal@afsa.org

TALKING POINTS

State Names First Chief Diversity Officer

Acknowledging that the State Department has much work to do to develop a more diverse and inclusive workforce, Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced on April 12 that Ambassador (ret.) Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley will serve as the State Department's first chief diversity and inclusion officer.

"The truth is this problem is as old as the department itself. It's systemic," Secretary Blinken said. "It goes deeper than any one institution or any one administration, and it's perpetuated by policies, practices and people to this day."

Amb. Abercrombie-Winstanley will report directly to the Secretary, who said she will "be entrusted with aligning and advancing diversity and inclusion efforts across the department. And she'll do it transparently, in a way that holds all of us accountable—including senior leadership, including me—which hasn't happened in the past."


U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ambassador (ret.) Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley delivers remarks at the State Department on April 12.

Amb. Abercrombie-Winstanley, who joined the Foreign Service in 1985, served as ambassador to Malta from 2012 to 2016. Her article, "Creating a Culture of Inclusion at State," appeared in the September 2020 *FSJ*. She recently co-chaired the task force that produced the report "Transforming State," released by the Truman Center in March.

She is "a diplomat who knows there are times when you shouldn't be diplomatic," Secretary Blinken said. "She won't be afraid to tell me where we're coming up short. And when she does, it's on us to listen and act."

"I believe that we, the Department of State, should and can become in the field of inclusion a leader," Amb. Abercrombie-Winstanley said on April 12. "Indeed, we have the talent to become the model for diversity, equity and inclusion in the workforce."

"We are at a particular time in America, and the world is watching us," she added. "As the Secretary said, we all share in the responsibility to ensure that each of us feels that we are not only having the opportunity to excel, but we are expected to reach our full potential."

Nominations and Appointments

The United States Senate confirmed the nomination of Wendy Sherman as Deputy Secretary of State by a vote of 56-42 on April 13. And on April 21, the Senate confirmed Samantha Power as USAID Administrator by a vote of 68-26.

President Joe Biden nominated the following people for more top State Department positions on April 15:

Career FSO Marcia Stephens Bloom Bernicat, Director General of the Foreign Service and the chair of the Board of the Foreign Service.

Political appointee Karen Erika Donfried, assistant secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs.

Career FSO (ret.) Barbara A. Leaf, assistant secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.

Career FSO Mary Catherine Phee, assistant secretary of State for African Affairs and member of the Board of Directors of the African Development Foundation.

Career FSO Michele Jeanne Sison, assistant secretary of State for International Organization Affairs.

Career FSO (ret.) Gentry O. Smith, assistant secretary of State for Diplomatic Security.

Political appointee Anne A. Witkowsky, assistant secretary of State for Conflict and Stabilization Operations and coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization.

Career FSO Todd Robinson, assistant secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

Political appointee Monica Medina, assistant secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs.

Career FSO Daniel Kritenbrink, assistant secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

Career FSO Rena Bitter, assistant secretary of State for Consular Affairs.

On April 15 President Biden also nominated nine career members of the Senior Foreign Service to serve as ambassadors.

Contemporary Quote

We know from history that if and when the Americans retreat and retrench, they leave behind a vacuum that will be filled by the bad guys. That's exactly what we are seeing right now, that's why with Putin of Russia, President Xi Jinping of China, Kim Jong-un of North Korea, Assad of Syria, are flexing their muscles. They have got more room of maneuver.

I think the Americans must realize, America is destined to lead; you cannot escape your fate; a superpower is not going to retire.

—Former Prime Minister of Denmark and NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, keynote speaker at the Meridian Diplomacy Forum, April 16.

Human Rights Report Released, Commission Disbanded

Unveiling the State Department's 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices on March 30, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the trend lines on human rights continue to move in the wrong direction in every region of the world.

He cited the "genocide" against Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang, China; attacks on and imprisonment of opposing politicians and journalists in places like Russia, Uganda and Venezuela; and arbitrary arrests and beatings of protesters in Belarus, Yemen and Burma.

"All of these alarming trend lines are being worsened by COVID-19, which autocratic governments have used as a pretext to target their critics and further repress human rights," he said. "Plus, COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted the individuals and groups in our societies who were already subject to abuse, to discrimination, to marginalization."

Secretary Blinken also used his speech to announce that he was disbanding the Commission on Unalienable Rights, which was established by former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. The commission sought to reframe U.S. interpretation of human rights to move away from what Pompeo called a "proliferation of rights," arguing that reproductive and LGBT+ rights were outside the scope of "foundational" rights.

"One of the core principles of human rights is that they are universal," Secretary Blinken said. "All people are entitled to these rights, no matter where they're born, what they believe, whom they love, or any other characteristic. Human rights are also co-equal; there is no hierarchy that makes some rights more important than others."

"Past unbalanced statements that suggest such a hierarchy, including those offered by a recently disbanded State Department advisory committee, do not represent a guiding document for this administration," he added. "At my confirmation hearing, I promised that the Biden-Harris administration would repudiate those unbalanced views. We do so decisively today."

Affinity Groups Spell Out Diversity Measures

Seventeen employee affinity groups sent a white paper to Secretary of State Antony Blinken on March 26 making specific recommendations on the "most urgent steps" the department should take to advance diversity and inclusion.

AFSA has been in close contact with affinity groups about these issues.

"As public servants representing the United States of America, we are most effective when we draw on the diverse characteristics we each bring to work," the groups wrote in a letter to the Secretary.

While applauding the Biden administration for its "commitment to strengthening diversity, equity, inclusion and racial justice within our workforce," the affinity groups made specific requests in 12 areas.

The department should take a more comprehensive approach to diversity data, they said, publishing a quarterly diversity analysis by bureau, post, Civil Service and Foreign Service, grade, ethnicity/race, disability and gender.

They also recommend that the department hire a third party to conduct exit interviews of employees who leave the department.

The groups asked the department to "integrate curriculum on managing workplace flexibilities and leave, supervising remote teams, and how to practice allyship and mentorship into all existing Foreign Service Institute courses on leadership and management."

They call on the Bureau of Overseas Building Operations to ensure all embassies are accessible to people with disabilities and include separate prayer/reflection and lactation rooms. All housing pools should have at least one accessible housing unit, they say.

Noting that about 70 countries do not accredit same-sex spouses or family members of LGBT+ diplomats, the groups say the department should use diplomatic engagement and other tools to make sure these families have the same rights as others.

They also urge the department to make sure that all employee evaluations for Foreign Service and Civil Service employees are gender-blind and redact the employee's name.

Vaccine Diplomacy

Former USAID Administrator Gayle Smith has been appointed as the State Department's coordinator for global COVID-19 response and health security. Smith helped lead the American response to the Ebola crisis under the Obama administration.

Announcing her appointment on April 5, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the Biden administration is looking for ways to share more vaccines with other countries.

The United States faces two challenges, Smith said. The first is to shorten "the lifespan of a borderless pandemic that is destroying lives and livelihoods all over the world." The second, she added, is ensuring "that we can prevent, detect and respond to those future global health threats we know are coming."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Coordinator for Global COVID-19 Response and Health Security Gayle Smith.

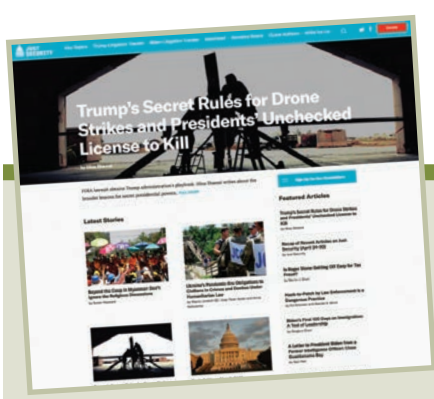
"We have a duty to other countries to get the virus under control here in the United States," Blinken said in announcing the appointment. "But soon, the United States will need to step up our work and rise to the occasion worldwide because, again, only by stopping COVID globally will Americans be safe for the long term."

He noted that the United States has provided vaccines to Canada and Mexico and plans to work with global partners to make sure there will be "enough vaccine for everyone, everywhere."

The New York Times reported on April 26 that the Biden administration would ship as many as 60 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine to other countries, including India—which the *Times* says may be experiencing the worst crisis of any country since the pandemic began.

But some critics say that is not enough.

U.S. diplomatic staff in India have been hit hard by the latest outbreak there. Four locally employed staff have died from COVID-19 in recent months, and more than 100 people in the embassy community have tested positive for the virus, according to multiple media reports.



Site of the Month: Just Security
justsecurity.org

Just Security, founded in 2013 at the Reiss Center on Law and Security of New York University's School of Law, bills itself as an editorially independent online forum for the rigorous analysis of law, rights and U.S. national security policy. It publishes several articles a week on "key topics" such as racial justice, immigration, war authorization and the coronavirus, and features "litigation trackers" for both Donald Trump and President Biden.

The website strives to promote "principled and pragmatic solutions" to national security problems. Its Board of Editors includes individuals with significant government experience, civil society attorneys, academics and other leading voices, and its advisory board features four retired U.S. ambassadors.

Just Security offers two email newsletters. Early Edition, sent at the start of each business day, features up-to-the-minute news developments at home and abroad. Today on Just Security, sent at the end of the day, features all content published in the previous 24 hours.

OIG: Pompeo Violated Ethics Rules

Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and his wife, Susan, directed State Department employees to carry out tasks of a personal nature for them more than 100 times, violating ethics rules, the department's Office of the Inspector General said in an April 16 report.

Some of the favors included picking up personal items, caring for pets, planning events unrelated to the department's mission and mailing personal Christmas cards.

The OIG opened the investigation into possible ethics violations in 2019 after a whistleblower complaint. In May 2020, the Trump administration fired State Department Inspector General Steve Linick on the recommendation of Pompeo, who denied the move was retaliatory.

50 Years Ago

Embassies and Ambassadors

Traditionally, ambassadorships in many U.S. missions abroad had been viewed by the party in power as political plums with which to reward its most generous campaign contributors. This practice was hard to defend even in the relatively quiet past when our involvement in world affairs was marginal. In a world buffeted by unpredictable new political forces, the choice of ambassadors on this basis would be totally irresponsible. I had discussed with Kennedy the need to strengthen our overseas missions and found that he shared my views. Although Kennedy naturally left the door open to make a few appointments on personal grounds, he and to some extent even Rusk agreed that recruiting a new breed of envoy should be at the top of our agenda; I was given primary responsibility for recruitment. …

I decided that the abilities of all Foreign Service officers qualified for ambassadorial posts should be carefully reviewed. This review should include outstanding employees of the United States Information Agency and the Agency for International Development, which, while closely associated with the State Department, had previously been bypassed in regard to ambassadorial appointments. We needed to place particular emphasis, I thought, on the younger officers. At that time no one under fifty held the rank of career minister or career ambassador. (I once startled President Kennedy by remarking that under the existing Foreign Service promotional system the highest grade he could expect to achieve at his age, forty-three, was an FSO-3, a little more than halfway up the promotional ladder.)

—Excerpted from an article by the same title by former Ambassador Chester Bowles in the June 1971 FSJ.

The OIG recommended that the Office of the Legal Adviser update its guidance to the Office of the Secretary on the use of department funds to pay for gifts to U.S. citizens and the use of department employees to arrange personal dinners and entertainment.

It said the Bureau of Diplomatic Security should update its Protection Handbook to include examples of what to do when agents receive inappropriate requests for tasks of a personal nature.

The OIG report also recommended that the Under Secretary of Management issue guidance on what employees should do when they are asked to do personal tasks for someone.

The State Department concurred with OIG's three recommendations.

Pompeo blasted the report in a statement. "Every American should fear that their government can traffic in lies and deception in order to smear them and ruin their reputation because they disagree with their political positions," he said.

U.S. Troops Will Withdraw from Afghanistan

President Joe Biden announced on April 14 that the United States will withdraw remaining U.S. troops in Afghanistan by Sept. 11, two decades after the United States went to war there to root out al-Qaida.

"It's time to end the forever war," Biden said. "I'm now the fourth United States president to preside over American troop presence in Afghanistan: two Republicans, two Democrats. I will not pass this responsibility on to a fifth."

On April 15, Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and other Afghan leaders in Kabul, and said U.S. support for the wartorn country will continue even after Sept. 11. "I wanted to demonstrate with my visit the ongoing commitment of the United States," Secretary Blinken told President Ghani. "The partnership is changing, but the partnership itself is enduring."

Secretary Blinken said the United States will continue to pay the salaries of Afghan security forces, support Afghanistan's counterterrorism abilities and provide substantial development assistance.

Many in Afghanistan expressed anxiety over the U.S. decision to withdraw.

"My views are very pessimistic," said Naheed Farid, an Afghan parliament member who chairs a committee on women's issues and met with Secretary Blinken.

"No matter how you slice it, the withdrawal announcement will be hard for many Afghans to accept. There's no way to sugarcoat a policy decision that's quite likely to worsen instability in a country that has been at war for 40 years," Michael Kugelman, an Afghan scholar at the Wilson Center, told *The Washington Post*.

In testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee on April 14, CIA Director William Burns said the withdrawal comes with "significant risk" of a resurgence of terrorism in the region.

Biden Recognizes Armenian Genocide

On April 24 Joe Biden became the first U.S. president to officially recognize the Turkish massacre of Armenians more than a century ago as genocide, CNN reported.

"Each year on this day, we remember the lives of all those who died in the Ottoman-era Armenian genocide and recommit ourselves to preventing such an atrocity from ever again occurring," Biden wrote in a statement commemorating the 106th anniversary of the start of the massacre. "One and a half million Armenians were deported, massacred or marched to their deaths in a campaign of extermination."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan demanded that Biden reverse his declaration, Reuters reported on April 26, declaring: "The U.S. president has made baseless, unjust and untrue remarks about the sad events that took place in our geography over a century ago."

After Biden's statement, Turkey summoned U.S. Ambassador to Turkey David Satterfield. In Armenia, meanwhile, it was officially welcomed as a step toward "the restoration of truth and historical justice."

In 1981 President Ronald Reagan made a passing reference to the Armenian genocide during a statement about the holocaust, but it was not followed by a formal recognition by the U.S. government.

The United States has long seen Turkey as a critical ally in the Middle East. But relations have deteriorated in the past several years.

State Department Wins Disabilities Award

For the second straight year, *CAREERS & the disABLED Magazine* has recognized the State Department with its Government Employer of the Year Award. The magazine announced the award in its Winter 2020 issue.

In acknowledging the award, the State Department said it is "dedicated to advancing workforce diversity" and cited its new Access Center, a 2,400-square-foot space in Columbia Plaza near the State's SA-1 Building in Washington, D.C., that opened in 2020. The center offers employees with disabilities the chance to test cutting-edge assistive technologies.

A February 2020 *State Magazine* feature about the center notes that nearly 24 percent of full-time American workers suffer from a disability. At State, people with disabilities make up 12.2 percent of the workforce.

Americans Confident in Biden Foreign Policy

A majority of Americans are confident in President Joe Biden's handling of foreign policy as he started his term, according to a Pew Research Center survey released Feb. 24.

Pew found that 60 percent of American adults have confidence in Biden on foreign policy, but this varies sharply by party. Among Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents 88 percent expressed confidence in Biden, compared to 27 percent of Republicans and those leaning Republican.

The Pew survey of nearly 2,600 Americans also found that 69 percent of respondents think Biden's leadership will make other countries view the United States favorably. Nearly two-thirds also say the United States benefits from participating in international organizations such as the World Health Organization, NATO and the United Nations, and 78 percent say they want the United States to share a leadership role in the world.

The foreign policy priorities for Americans include protecting the jobs of American workers, reducing the spread of infectious diseases and protecting the United States from terrorist attacks, Pew found.

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

HEARD ON THE HILL


JOSH

A Crucial Time for Diplomacy

This is a crucial time for American diplomacy. From competition with China and the threat of climate change, to record numbers of displaced people and backsliding of democracies, the challenges our nation faces are daunting. But solving them is made even more difficult by our nation's crumbling infrastructure of diplomacy. First and foremost, the State Department and the Foreign Service. Although some of the issues at the State Department predated the Trump administration, they were made much worse over the last four years. In short, I believe we're facing a generational crisis in American diplomacy. That's why I began to focus on how we can renew U.S. diplomacy by rebuilding our State Department to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

—U.S. Rep. Joaquin Castro (D-Texas), at the Meridian Diplomacy Forum, April 16.

Nominations Hearings

I have spoken often about the pivotal foreign policy challenges facing our country and the State Department, and this hearing will be no different. If confirmed, both of you will confront serious issues and challenges at a department in need of repair and rebuilding. I'm heartened by the Biden administration's emphasis on nominating knowledgeable and seasoned leaders with rich foreign policy experience.

—Senator Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, at an April 28 nominations hearing.

Rebuild Trust

It is also critical that this administration recognize the interdependence between arms control and nuclear modernization, as explicitly codified in the ratification of the new START treaty. Trust must be rebuilt between Congress and the executive. To rebuild this trust, the Biden administration must commit to a full modernization of the nuclear triad and nuclear weapons complex. This is vital to reassure our allies who have forgone developing nuclear weapons and instead rely on our nuclear umbrella that we provide for them. Dismantling our capabilities while our adversaries build their stockpiles is inherently destabilizing and undermines international security.

—Senator James Risch (R-Idaho), ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, at an April 28 nominations hearing.

The Case Against Political Ambassadors

BY EDWARD L. PECK

The United States is the only developed nation clinging to a discredited practice of sending large numbers of novice ambassadors—chosen for their political donations or because of who rather than what they know. The following criticism of that concept should not in any way be read as ignoring or denigrating the character, achievements or abilities of political ambassadors—that is not the issue.

Most countries no longer sell military rank, having learned that commanders tend to do better if they know the work. The same principle obviously applies to ambassadors; yet America ignores this otherwise universal truth.

Lack of training and background in the complicated processes of advancing America's interests abroad is nothing to be ashamed of, but it clearly disqualifies anyone for an ambassadorship. Want ads all show why. Except at the entry level, every job has one essential requirement: experience.

At managerial levels, the fixed prerequisite to qualify is extensive, job-related experience. The rationale is clear: You must know the work yourself if, as ambassadors must, you are going to direct others who are doing it.

The vast reach of our international concerns, amplified by instant communications, has made ambassadors far more important—not less—than ever before, even if many Americans do not fully comprehend what the job entails.

We have significant interests and objectives in virtually every country, including supporting and protecting Americans; political and economic developments; human rights and democratization; trade promotion; military and economic assistance; narcotics; science and technology; environment; visas, refugees and immigration; internal stability; regional cooperation and multilateral affairs; intelligence; and the major management issues of staffing, budget and security for U.S. missions overseas.

By law and by presidential directive, ambassadors are required to direct and coordinate the activities of every American agency present in the country where they are serving. To do so effectively, they must have sufficient experience to supervise and support all the agencies in carrying out their responsibilities promptly, properly and efficiently.

This requires a solid grounding in the highly complicated processes by which foreign policies are formulated in Washington, as well as detailed knowledge and understanding of the mandates and objectives of the many agencies involved in implementation.

To expect a nonprofessional to deal with all this is to fail to understand what "professional" means.

To expect a nonprofessional to deal with all this is to fail to understand what "professional" means. Organizations spend months training people to serve capably at the bottom of an organization chart, decades for service at the middle and upper levels. Outsiders cannot possibly serve effectively at the top, despite their abilities or desire; an apprentice ambassador is just that, and most issues will be handled by those who are familiar with the work.

To understand, visualize an absolute beginner attempting to run a newspaper, a machine shop, a payroll unit, an architectural firm or the organization where you are employed. It simply will not work. He or she may have a high level of intelligence and energy and accomplishments in other fields, but all of it is

Edward L. Peck, a Foreign Service officer from 1956 to 1989, served as chief of mission in Mauritania and Iraq. Other overseas assignments included Sweden, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt. On retirement, Ambassador Peck served as executive secretary of the American Academy of Diplomacy, where for three years he prepared assessments of the qualifications of noncareer nominees for ambassadorships using the background materials nominees sent to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which shared those materials with the academy. More recently, he has traveled the world on cruise ships giving lectures on topics such as "Thinking About Our World" and "Representing a Superpower—What American Ambassadors Do, and Why They Should Be Professionals."

irrelevant. At most, the novice can deal competently with only a very small fraction of an ambassador's total job; others, by necessity, have to do all the rest.

Career Foreign Service ambassadors are not necessarily more capable, effective or intelligent than novices, but they have one shatteringly compelling and undeniable advantage: experience. They know the players, the machinery, the procedures, the cultures, the history. In short, they know the work.

Political ambassadors, neither capable of being engaged in nor necessarily even aware of many of their nominal responsibilities, seldom find the obligations (as they understand them) overly burdensome. As John Kenneth Galbraith, President John F. Kennedy's ambassador to India, said: "There were many, many days when, if I didn't do anything that my staff could do as well or better, I could finish my activities in an hour or two." Walter Mondale, offered an ambassadorship by President Bill Clinton, declined, saying: "I prefer to pay for my own vacations."

Despite the irrefutable logic of relying on professionals, the present spoils system has supporters. Their ranks inexplicably include some FSOs, otherwise proud of their careers, who do not appear to understand the impact on the concept of their profession of suggesting that amateurs could perform the top jobs just as well.

The following arguments in defense of political ambassadors are often put forward:

The president can nominate anyone. True, but the Founding Fathers, in a far less complicated world, required the Senate to consent after considering nominees' qualifications. In theory, the only criterion would be national interests; but political nominations reflect the importance of money, friendship and patronage, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has long since abandoned its constitutional responsibility. The committee has also abandoned the requirements and restrictions included in the 1980 Foreign Service Act written by Congress, rubber-stamping all but the most egregious candidates, knowing that their party will have its turn.

Other nations welcome political ambassadors. Wrong. No government wants a rank beginner, especially from a superpower. Governments seldom publicly criticize a nominee, who is certain to be confirmed; but editorials in Australia, Spain, Italy and Switzerland, to name a few, have blasted nominations of novices as indicating that we consider the job, and therefore the relationship, unimportant. Some political appointees are famous, or even popular, which has nothing whatsoever to do with their qualifications or effectiveness.

Political ambassadors can raise issues directly with the president. Maybe, but is that good? Few of them are close enough to count on getting through, let alone raise a subject the president may not have been following. Far more important, it is not in our national interest to have any ambassador bypass the national security system; nor should the system stand for it.

Noncareer appointees can provide fresh perspectives. Right, but that describes inexperience as a qualification. There is no substitute for experience, especially when contentious economic, cultural or political differences are involved. A lack of background in the thorny issues of relations and the competing interests of sovereign nations can make fresh perspectives irrelevant, or far worse.

The same concept applies in civilian control of the military. Wrong. Civilians are never given direct command of troops, planes or ships, the military equivalent of embassies.

Speaking Out is the *Journal*'s opinion forum, a place for lively discussion of issues affecting the U.S. Foreign Service and American diplomacy. The views expressed are those of the author; their publication here does not imply endorsement by the American Foreign Service Association. Responses are welcome; send them to journal@afsa.org.

Many large organizations hire outsiders at the top. Right. But only at the strategic level—CEO, Secretary of State—never at the operating level (regional representative, plant manager, ambassador). At that level, the person in charge must know the what, why and how of the tasks, as well as the organizations that carry them out.

There have been some excellent political ambassadors. Right. The fact that the statement must be made, however, underlines the basic problem: They are hardly ever chosen because of anticipated excellent performance. Financial, political and social connections are the determining forces, not experience or qualifications, producing a vastly larger number of highly marginal performers and far more than a few genuine embarrassments.

Amateur ambassadors only need a good embassy staff to do an effective job. Sophistry. The phrase accurately, painfully, describes a figurehead, whose most meaningful contribution is to keep out of the way. In that case, why bother having an ambassador at all?

The Cold War is over, but our involvement with the rest of the world clearly is not. As recent experience has shown, that involvement can suddenly become profound and complex, and in unexpected places. There is far too much at stake to place the always complicated, significant and sometimes critical responsibilities of ambassadors in the hands of well-meaning but unqualified political nominees.

America requires and deserves far better than that. ■

FOCUS ON GREAT POWER COMPETITION TODAY

Cyber Diplomacy for Strategic Competition

Fresh thinking and new approaches are needed on diplomacy's newest frontier.

BY EMILY O. GOLDMAN

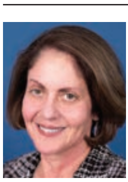
Cyber diplomacy is the use of diplomatic tools to address issues arising in and through cyberspace. Those issues span a range of security, economic and human rights topics including international cybersecurity standards, internet access, privacy, internet freedom, intellectual property, cybercrime, state-sponsored cyber conflict and competition, the ethical use of digital technologies and trade.

Cyberspace now undergirds the prosperity, security and future of America and its allies in ways impossible to fathom only a few years ago. It is central to the ability to transport commodities and information, to generate and store wealth, and to coordinate and carry out functions essential to the order and operations of modern economies, societies and governments. This is why cyberspace—and the broader digital environment—has become a major arena for strategic competition.

For this reason, new thinking on cyber diplomacy is necessary. The diplomatic focus on cooperation among like-minded states to reduce the risk of conflict and to respond collectively after the fact is valuable; but it misses where the strategically consequential cyber action has been occurring for the past decade—in the competitive arena outside of armed conflict. The time has come to up the diplomatic game for cyber competition. But that cannot occur unless and until core assumptions about the evolution of norms and the applicability of a strategy of deterrence to competition in cyberspace are set aside.

Strategic Rivalry

Over the past decade, adversaries have been bypassing territorial boundaries by operating in and through cyberspace to gain strategic advantage against America and its allies without risking armed conflict. Sophisticated campaigns of disinformation and propaganda undermine trust and confidence in economic institutions and create doubts about the authority, competency and integrity of democratic processes. Exploiting cyber vulnerabilities enables theft of wealth, intellectual property and personal information. Emplacing malware into



Emily O. Goldman, Ph.D., is a strategist at U.S. Cyber Command and a thought leader on cyber policy. She served as cyber adviser to the director of policy planning at the Department of State from 2018 to 2019. From 2014 to 2018 she directed the U.S. Cyber Command / National Security Agency Combined Action Group, reporting to a four-star commander and leading a team that wrote the 2018 U.S. Cyber Command vision, "Achieve and Maintain Cyberspace Superiority." She has published and lectured widely on strategy, cybersecurity, military innovation and organizational change.

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect official positions of the Department of Defense or any U.S. government entity.

Over the past decade, adversaries have been bypassing territorial boundaries by operating in and through cyberspace to gain strategic advantage.

critical infrastructure demonstrates our vulnerabilities and holds us at-risk for potential future coercive actions. Penetrating defense networks distracts and impairs U.S. governmental and military operations, requiring time and resources to respond and recover.

The competition is not just about power, however; it is also about values. Cyberspace has emerged as a major arena of conflict between liberal and illiberal forces across the globe. The internet arose in America under mixed public-private governance and grew alongside an ideology of personal freedom. For this very reason, autocratic regimes feared that digital-age capabilities would empower civil society and undermine their hold on power. The Arab Spring confirmed these fears and demonstrated the existential threat posed by information freedom. Those regimes responded by proliferating tools, ideas and technologies to undermine the values and rules-based international order that democratic countries have sought to establish.

Regimes in China and Russia oppose an open internet and protections against state interference with individual liberties. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton warned a decade ago that they are creating censored networks that erode civil society and imposing authoritarian rules of information exchange and exploitation. Beijing is determined to bring technology ecosystems in line with the Chinese Communist Party's authoritarian values, shaping mandates and agendas in standards bodies and international organizations; employing economic tactics that undermine competitors to their technology companies; and redefining cybersecurity as protection from unwelcome news and views. Meanwhile, both Russia and China exploit open networks and platforms to erode democratic institutions in the West.

These challenges will only grow as emerging digital technologies—sensors, information and communication technologies, artificial intelligence tools and quantum tools—become new focal points for strategic competition. That competition pits against each other two models of world order (democracy and authoritarianism) and two competing visions of the digital space (information freedom and information control). Competition to shape the strategic environment and gain relative advantage is continuous, persistent and dynamic. It is calibrated to remain below the level of armed conflict.

U.S. cyber diplomacy needs the organizational structure, resources and mindset to ensure the diplomatic tools of national power are fully leveraged for strategic cyber competition.

Proactive Approach Needed

There has been much discussion about the State Department's organizational and resource gaps in addressing cyber issues. Congress recently reintroduced the Cyber Diplomacy Act, originally passed in 2019, calling on the State Department to establish a cyber bureau led by an ambassador with the rank and status of an assistant secretary of State. A similar recommendation was made last year by the bipartisan Cyberspace Solarium Commission. The global interconnected domain of cyberspace, according to the commission's final report, requires an integrated, whole-of-nation approach, assisted by the State Department's focusing on cyber issues in a single bureau.

Cyber issues will continue to pervade the interests of every State Department bureau, of course; but the distinctive technological, economic, legal and military features of cyberspace demand dedicated expertise and resources over and above the efforts currently underway in State offices. A strongly integrated organization can serve as a focal point for cyber issues at the department and a resource for all the bureaus as particular matters arise.

New form without new substance is not enough, however. What stands out most in recent legislation (as well as in the commission's recommendations) is an emphasis on approaches that have not garnered success. Indeed, we should be concerned about a dearth of new thinking on critical issues that the new cyber bureau will address.

For example, the State Department has long led U.S. outreach to promote an open, interoperable, secure and reliable information and communications infrastructure. State has worked in international fora for decades to build consensus around a framework of responsible state behavior in cyberspace, principally through the voluntary, nonbinding norms recommended by the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts (GGE).

State has developed and advocated a "cyber deterrence initiative" to promote collective attribution of cyberattacks and collaboration among a like-minded coalition of governments to impose swift, costly and appropriate consequences for misbehavior by bad actors. Unfortunately, well-intentioned efforts to respond to significant incidents and to "establish" norms by outlining broad, voluntary rules (with no enforcement attached to them) have stalled. Collective attribution and *post facto* cost imposition, chiefly through sanctions and indictments, have not deterred state-sponsored actors from harming their neighbors and rivals in and through cyberspace. A renewed commitment to the same approaches will not produce different outcomes.

The current environment of strategic competition need not alter America's vision for cyberspace (i.e., a global, open, interoperable arena for discourse and trade that supports democratic values and protects privacy). Yet the global competition nevertheless demands we change our approach to achieve that vision.

A diplomatic strategy for the future must adopt a competitive mindset because the vision of a free, open and resilient cyberspace now faces a rival (and well-resourced) techno-authoritarianism. Dictators are defending their virtual borders by reaching into the societies of their rivals to intimidate opposition and weaken democratic institutions with diplomacy, development programs, and military and intelligence operations.

The United States must leverage diplomacy more effectively to compete and set favorable conditions for security in cyberspace, transforming what has been a permissive environment for our adversaries into one in which the U.S. is actively and persistently competing on behalf of that vision of a global and open cyberspace.

Cyber diplomacy must reinvent itself to gain the initiative. This requires: (1) an active, rather than a reactive, mindset; (2) a focus on setting security conditions rather than changing adversary motivations; and (3) on-the-ground efforts with partners to construct norms by persistently contesting adversary cyber campaigns of disinformation, sabotage, propaganda, political interference and theft.

Eschew Deterrence, Embrace Competition

The focus on deterrence and response is deeply ingrained in national security thinking. It is telling that the Cyber Diplomacy Act in its current iteration calls on the State Department to "lead United States Government efforts to establish a global deterrence framework for malicious cyber activity; … to develop and execute adversary-specific strategies to influence adver-

What Every FSO Should Know About Cyber Issues

The State Department and the Foreign Service should watch the developing debates over cyberspace policy, strategy and norms with a few thoughts in mind:

• The cyberspace strategic environment is one characterized by strategic competition; its norms are contested. That's why cyberspace has evolved away from the laudable vision of an open, worldwide internet that promotes global civil society.

• Competition is occurring along ideological fault lines between liberal democracies and techno-authoritarian regimes that do not share that earlier vision.

• Cyberspace operations have become a standard tool of diplomacy and competition, with continuous campaigns of nonviolent operations in and through cyberspace calculated to avoid provoking armed responses.

• What works to deter catastrophic cyberattacks will not dissuade adversaries from routinely operating in and through cyberspace for strategic gain.

• Adversaries are adaptive at exploiting the seams in our laws and institutions, and in international law, achieving strategic gains without the risks of war.

• We should expect states and even nonstates to continue experimenting in cyberspace, whether we respond or not.

• We need not be passive; we have demonstrated that we can preclude and disrupt state-sponsored cyber intrusions and interference without escalating to armed conflict.

• Relying on redlines and responding to incidents after the fact have not stemmed malicious cyberspace activity, and there is no reason to believe such measures will suddenly dissuade authoritarian sponsors of cyberattacks.

• In cyberspace the rewards for misbehavior are cumulative. Thus, it is insufficient to concentrate on stopping individual incidents or deterring catastrophic attacks that produce "significant" consequences.

We need to operate at the speed and scale commensurate with the cyberspace challenges we face. This requires a coordinated and sustained focus of energy and resources—across the U.S. government and with allies and partners—to achieve unity of effort and a whole-of-nation-plus (with allies) approach.

—Emily Goldman

The more anticipatory we can get, the more we can inoculate our systems and thwart adversary aggression before it compromises U.S., allied and partner networks.

sary decision-making through the imposition of costs and deterrence strategies; … [and] promote the building of foreign capacity to protect the global network with the goal of enabling like-minded participation in deterrence frameworks."

While applicable to the physical domains of conflict and to imposing proportional costs for potential cyberattacks that cause death and destruction, deterrence as a strategic approach has not stemmed the onslaught of cyber aggression *below* the level of armed conflict. Adversaries continue to design their intrusions and disruptions around the "redlines" that we define only after we have endured earlier incidents. Such redlines are notoriously difficult to define in cyberspace, and relying on them leaves us one step behind and always reacting while opponents set the timing, tempo and terms of competition.

This does not mean we should not respond to costly cyber incursions into our society and economy. Rather, it suggests that partnership for developing "response options" must be pursued in tandem with collective efforts that thwart cyberspace aggression before it harms our nations. Being proactive does not mean being aggressive. Inaction, however, is unwise and even provocative, for it cedes the initiative to those who wish us ill.

What is destabilizing is restraint in the face of continuous probes and intrusions that might be individually trivial, but cumulatively are shifting the global distribution of power and influence, creating new norms antithetical to our interests. Cyber diplomacy should mobilize partners not only for response, but to preclude and contest adversary cyber misbehavior before it breaches U.S., allied and partner networks.

Change Conditions, Not Adversary Motivations

Entwined with the deterrence mindset is the belief that we can quash the adversary's interest in cyber aggression by imposing costs through consequences for misbehavior. Such costs typically involve sanctions, indictments and naming and shaming or "attribution diplomacy." Yet response per se does not deter; only responses that outweigh benefits can change a motivated actor.

Cyberspace is replete with vulnerabilities that adversaries can exploit for strategic gain without ever crossing a threshold that calls for a self-defense response under international law. Sanctions and indictments for bad behavior are useful, of course, because they constrain an adversary's freedom of maneuver. Nonetheless, by themselves such responses do not deter. Cyber diplomacy, thus, will be more effective if it aims at changing the conditions for exploitation rather than trying to change adversary motivations. That means focusing less on imposing costs and more on working with partners to preclude opportunities for exploitation before they occur.

This is an area where diplomacy and development can complement ongoing initiatives in other departments. One example is the Department of Defense's Defend Forward strategy with its operational approach of persistent engagement. DOD recently pivoted away from restraint and response to action during day-to-day competition in order to disrupt or halt malicious cyber activity close to its source. The Cyberspace Solarium Commission applauded this step, urging its application across the federal government.

A key element of persistent engagement is partnering with other countries to discover adversary activity on their networks and neutralize the tools that adversaries use to harm our partners. By going where adversaries are operating, cyber teams can "hunt forward" to discover intrusions, alert foreign partners, help secure their networks and share information with the global cybersecurity industry to develop mitigations.

The more anticipatory we can get, the more we can inoculate our systems and thwart adversary aggression before it compromises U.S., allied and partner networks. The State Department can build partnerships with other countries and help set the conditions for persistent engagement and hunt-forward operations. Diplomatic priorities must lean more toward building coalitions that can expose, contest and defend against adversary cyberspace campaigns.

Construct Norms Through Action

Congressional leaders have called on the executive branch to establish cyber norms—what is acceptable and unacceptable in cyberspace. But policymakers must accept that we are currently in a phase of "norm construction" in that realm, and the United States is not in a dominant position to establish norms through political discussions alone. Moreover, U.N. GGE reports offer voluntary and nonbinding recommendations. Although the U.S. can try to enforce them unilaterally, they are not subject to U.N. sanctions unless nonadherence violates international law.

Meanwhile, multilateral bargaining at the United Nations to establish norms has stalled, and arguably backtracked, with China working to promote "cyber sovereignty" as the organizing principle of cyber governance and Russia organizing an alternative norms-establishing forum to the U.N. GGE process, the so-called U.N. Open-Ended Working Group.

Why this is happening is not difficult to discern. Much of the behavior that we consider unacceptable is producing benefits for its sponsors that far outweigh the costs they incur. Norms emerge through practice, and they mature through political and legal discourse. To achieve a convergence of expectations around the behaviors we deem advantageous, we must engage in this norm-construction competition. This requires explicitly linking the promotion of norms of responsible behavior with cyberspace diplomacy and operations that expose and contest behavior inconsistent with such norms.

Cyberspace has emerged as a major arena of conflict between liberal and illiberal forces across the globe.

Forging a coalition of partners for agile collaboration and continuous pressure against authoritarian adversaries has the best chance of producing a convergence of expectations on acceptable behavior. Only then can we define a framework of responsible state behavior and consequences for irresponsible acts.

Countering China's Intimidation of Taiwan

Why a firm stand against Beijing's intimidation and coercion of Taiwan is both timely and important right now.

BY ROBERT S. WANG

On the first weekend following President Joe Biden's inauguration, Taiwan's Defense Ministry reported back-to-back incursions by two large fleets of Chinese military aircraft into Taiwan's self-declared southwestern air defense identification zone. On Jan. 23, the fleet comprised eight nuclear weapon–capable Chinese H-6K bomber planes, four J-16 fighter jets and one anti-submarine aircraft. This was followed the next day by another fleet of 12 fighters, two anti-submarine aircraft and a reconnaissance plane. Beijing repeated these exercises several times in the subsequent months.

Since the election of Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen in 2016, Beijing has markedly stepped up military pressure on Taipei. According to Taiwan, Beijing sent warplanes into the same area on at least 100 days in 2020. In January 2021, Chinese military planes flew into that zone 26 out of the first 30 days. Previously, such flights were usually conducted by one to three reconnaissance or anti-submarine warfare aircraft. According to Bernard Cole, a professor at the National War College, the latest incursions "demonstrate the People's Liberation Army Air Force's ability to put together a multiplane strike, which we would likely see in the event of a hot war against Taiwan." Additionally, Taiwan's defense minister informed its legislature last October that nearly 50 Chinese aircraft had crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait in the first nine months of 2020.

Analysts have concluded that the latest intrusions are specifically intended to pose a direct challenge to the Biden administration regarding its future policy toward Taiwan and the region. On Jan. 23, for example, a spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office asserted that these exercises are designed as warnings to "separatists" in Taiwan and "external forces" who intend to interfere in China's affairs. Following the exercises, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman told reporters: "The United States frequently sends aircraft and vessels into the South China Sea to flex its muscles. This is not conducive to peace and stability in the region."

In response to the exercises, the State Department issued a press release: "The United States notes with concern the pattern of ongoing PRC attempts to intimidate its neighbors, including Taiwan." State added: "The United States will continue to sup-

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port a peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues, consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people on Taiwan" and "to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability." It concluded: "Our commitment to Taiwan is rock-solid and contributes to the maintenance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and within the region."

Just How Solid Is the Commitment?

Despite such official statements, Richard Haass and David Sacks at the Council on Foreign Relations note in a September 2020 *Foreign Affairs* article that the U.S. government has maintained a policy of "strategic ambiguity" over the past four decades that "resisted answering the question of whether the United States would come to Taiwan's defense if China mounted an armed attack." They note that the Taiwan Relations Act only calls on the United States to "provide Taiwan arms of a defensive character" and "to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan."

While acknowledging that this policy has maintained cross-strait stability thus far, Haass and Sacks argue that ambiguity is "unlikely to deter an increasingly assertive China with growing military capabilities." They recommend that the U.S. government "introduce a policy of strategic clarity: one that makes explicit that the United States would respond to any Chinese use of force against Taiwan" while clearly stating its adherence to the one-China policy. They warn that the failure of the United States to respond to such a Chinese use of force would undermine U.S. credibility among its allies, such as Japan and South Korea, across the region.

Following publication of this article, other foreign policy analysts raised alarms about the proposed change in the U.S. policy of "strategic ambiguity." Some contend that a change was unnecessary because China, despite its provocative military exercises, is still unlikely to attack Taiwan. Others argue that Beijing's increasing pressure on Taiwan could be seen as a reaction to provocative U.S. and Taiwanese policies. Some are concerned that such a commitment would demand a much larger defense budget than the United States could afford. Above all, these analysts express concerns that a policy of "strategic clarity" with respect to Taiwan could actually provoke Beijing into launching an attack on Taiwan.

Putting aside the merits of these arguments for the moment, this open debate has highlighted questions about the credibility of U.S. commitments to Taipei. Does the United States view the step-up of Chinese military exercises against Taiwan as justifiable or as a "form of coercion"? If the former, would the United States intervene to help defend Taiwan? If the latter, does the U.S. government currently have the political will or capacity to help defend Taiwan? In a recent survey by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, while a majority of American opinion leaders favored the use of U.S. troops to support Taiwan in a Chinese invasion, only about 40 percent of the general public favored such action. It thus appears that there is still significant uncertainty among Americans as to whether the United States should or will actually defend Taiwan against an increasingly powerful Chinese military.

> **Does the United States view the step-up of Chinese military exercises against Taiwan as justifiable or as a "form of coercion"?**

A Moment for Clarity

President Biden has underscored repeatedly that he considers the promotion of democracy and human rights values abroad as one of his highest foreign policy priorities. He indicated that in his first year in office, the United States will host a global Summit for Democracy to, as he put it in an article in the March/April 2020 *Foreign Affairs*, "renew the spirit and shared purpose of the nations of the free world" and "bring together the world's democracies to strengthen our democratic institutions, honestly confront nations that are backsliding, and forge a common agenda to fight corruption, defend against authoritarianism and advance human rights." With reference to Taiwan, Biden wrote in an Oct. 22, 2020, opinion piece in the *World Journal* (a Taiwanese Chinese-language newspaper published in America) that the United States will "stand with friends and allies to advance our shared prosperity, security and values in the Asia-Pacific region. That includes deepening our ties with Taiwan, a leading democracy, major economy, technology powerhouse—and a shining example of how an open society can effectively contain COVID-19."

President Biden has made clear that he sees China as currently posing the top foreign policy challenge for this administration.

President Biden has also made clear that he sees China as currently posing the top foreign policy challenge for this administration. In his first media interview in February, Biden said that, while needing to avoid conflict, he expected "extreme competition" with China. According to a White House readout of his phone conversation with China's President Xi Jinping, "President Biden underscored his fundamental concerns about Beijing's coercive and unfair economic practices, crackdown in Hong Kong, human rights abuses in Xinjiang and increasingly assertive actions in the region, including toward Taiwan."

In his confirmation hearing, Secretary of State Antony Blinken labeled China's internment of an estimated 1 million minority Uyghurs as "genocide," and said in a subsequent interview that the United States will be "building stronger alliances, standing up for our values, investing in our people, and making sure our military is properly postured." Similarly, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said in an event hosted by the U.S. Institute of Peace that the United States will "speak with clarity and consistency in regard to China and other foreign policy issues." Specifically, he said this includes "being prepared to act as well as to impose costs for what China is doing in Xinjiang, what it's doing in Hong Kong, and for the bellicosity and threats that it is projecting towards Taiwan."

Given the above, it seems this is a critical moment as well as an opportunity for President Biden to underscore his foreign policy priorities by increasing the clarity of U.S. commitment not only to defend Taiwan but, more pointedly, to defend its democracy against China's blatant resort to military and other forms of coercion "to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means." In their recent public statements, President Biden and his team have called out Beijing for its coercive actions, emphasizing that any cross-strait agreement must be "consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people on Taiwan." In mid-April, former Senator Chris Dodd, accompanied by former Deputy Secretaries of State Richard Armitage and Jim Steinberg, traveled to Taiwan and met with President Tsai Ing-wen to deliver a personal message from President Biden reaffirming U.S. support for Taiwan on the 42nd anniversary of the Taiwan Relations Act. The recent deployment of U.S. aircraft carrier groups to the region and transits through the Taiwan Strait have further underscored U.S. commitment.

With or without an explicit security guarantee, it is thus essential that the United States continue to affirm and demonstrate U.S. political will and capacity to counter Chinese military pressure against Taiwan. Congress should pass the Taiwan Invasion Prevention Act to demonstrate bipartisan support and provide authorization to use military force, if necessary. The United States also needs to move quickly to expand bilateral trade, social and cultural ties (e.g., inviting Taiwan to the Summit for Democracy) and negotiating a trade agreement, to strengthen the relationship. This will help build more support among Americans for the need to defend Taiwan and underscore to Taiwan and our allies, as well as such strategic competitors as China and Russia, that the United States is committed to the principles of democracy and human rights, and intends to impose costs and undertake risks to defend democracies and advance the values of the rules-based liberal international order.

Countering Beijing's Strategy of Intimidation

According to China's Xinhua news service, Xi Jinping warned Biden in their call that "in matters concerning Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity," referring to Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan, "the U.S. side should respect China's core interests and act with caution." Thus, the Biden administration should expect Beijing to escalate military pressures to continue to test U.S. resolve. As it has done in the cases of the East and South China Seas and in Hong Kong, Beijing will justify these actions as a response to foreign interference against China's core interests.

Nonetheless, I believe Chinese leaders are fully aware of the tremendous costs that would result from an armed conflict involving Taiwan. This situation is entirely different from those in Xinjiang or Hong Kong, where Beijing has full control, and the United States has little to no leverage. To begin with, Beijing would be facing a modern and well-armed Taiwan military in entrenched defensive positions that would exact a heavy toll on an invading force, even if it could not ultimately win the fight. A full-scale armed conflict would destroy vital cross-strait economic ties and disrupt critical global supply chains, which will in turn have a debilitating impact on the large but still developing Chinese economy that is heavily dependent on international trade and investments.

It would also be impossible to avoid collateral damage that would endanger the lives and interests of a sizable foreign population in Taiwan, thus forcing a widespread global response. Under these circumstances, it would be difficult to imagine the U.S. military in the region remaining uninvolved. While some in China may initially support such an invasion, there would almost certainly be substantial domestic opposition, including from those who have visited or have family and business ties to Taiwan, questioning the necessity of the conflict, especially as Chinese casualties and economic repercussions mount. Hence, an armed invasion of Taiwan would be Beijing's very last resort because its tremendous costs would far outweigh any possible benefit China could derive even from a "successful" invasion.

Thus, as I see it, Beijing's increasing provocations do not necessarily suggest that it is currently preparing for an armed conflict. Rather, these actions are designed to intimidate and to create and fuel doubts about U.S. commitments to Taiwan and, increasingly, to isolate and undermine the morale of the people of Taiwan. Beijing's ultimate goal, in the tradition of China's war strategist Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, is to use military intimidation to divide and coerce the people of Taiwan into accepting Beijing's formula for political reunification, which, as in the case of Hong Kong, it can then discard after assuming greater control. In short, Beijing is seeking to win a war through intimidation and without the actual use of force.

To counter this strategy, the United States must stand firm and counter China's intimidation tactics. It should demonstrate its commitment to help defend Taiwan and its democracy, and deepen the bilateral relationship in ways that bind our interests and values. In confronting China, the United States should be prepared to accept greater risks and be prepared to defend Taiwan against a Chinese invasion, if necessary. The objective should be to convince Beijing that the use of military intimidation and coercion against Taiwan will only backfire, making China's goal of political reunification even more difficult, if not impossible. At the same time, the United States should also make clear that it welcomes dialogue and a peaceful resolution of cross-strait ties that fully respects the wishes and interests of the people of Taiwan.

At the same time, the United States must make it very clear to the people of Taiwan that we "have your backs"; and we need to work with Taiwan to bolster our joint defense capability. The United States needs to assure the people of Taiwan that our commitment is not transactional, and that we will defend their freedom to determine their own political future in cross-strait negotiations without fear of Chinese intimidation. The United States should make clear to all that it is committed to ensuring that, as mandated in the TRA, "the future of Taiwan will be determined by peaceful means" and not through the use of force or coercion.

There are risks to maintaining the strategy of ambiguity as Chinese military power builds up in the coming years.

Strategic Ambiguity and Its Risks

There are risks to maintaining the strategy of ambiguity as Chinese military power builds up in the coming years. First, this strategy will not reduce Beijing's increasing assertiveness toward Taiwan and the region. From my own involvement in many years of negotiations with Chinese officials, it is my view that Beijing will see a U.S. effort to hang on to this strategy simply as a sign of weakness and fear, not clever diplomacy, and will seek to exploit this weakness by increasing the pressure and pushing for concessions from both Taiwan and the United States. I believe we are seeing this play out today. In time, the lack of a clear U.S. commitment will allow Beijing to succeed in sowing doubts about U.S. credibility—not only among the people of Taiwan, but in the region and the world as a whole.

Second, as the people of Taiwan sense a relatively weakened U.S. commitment, many more will succumb to Chinese pressures and seek a cross-strait compromise that does not reflect their own values and interests, but their fears. For others, especially in the pro-independence camp, this could result in greater frustration and even desperation that could lead to an open push for Taiwan independence to force the hands of both Beijing and the United States. This would create a serious dilemma for the United States either to defend Taiwan or simply accept a Beijing-imposed reunification solution along the lines of Hong Kong's "one country, two systems." The former could lead to an armed conflict, while the latter would essentially destroy Taiwan's democracy and U.S. international credibility for the foreseeable future.

Beijing will continue to escalate its military pressure as it senses uncertainty and weakness on the part of the United States.

Finally, a strategy of ambiguity raises the probability of miscalculation because Beijing will continue to escalate its military pressure as it senses uncertainty and weakness on the part of the United States. This could create situations in which the two militaries misinterpret each other's intentions in particular cases that result in an accidental military conflict. To avoid this, as National Security Adviser Sullivan has said, the United States must "speak with clarity and consistency in regard to China and other foreign policy issues."

Can the United States Deliver?

Addressing the Munich Security Conference in mid-February, President Biden announced to the world that "America is back." On China, he said: "We must prepare together for long-term strategic competition with China. How the United States, Europe and Asia work together to secure the peace and defend our shared values and advance our prosperity across the Pacific will be among the most consequential efforts we undertake. Competition with China is going to be stiff. That's what I expect, and that's what I welcome, because I believe in the global system Europe and the United States, together with our allies in the Indo-Pacific, worked so hard to build over the last 70 years."

It seems to me that how the United States confronts Beijing's increasing military threats and coercion against Taiwan and its democracy will be the key test as to whether the United States can deliver on its global commitment.

FOCUS ON GREAT POWER COMPETITION TODAY

Engagement with China
Was It a Mistake?

U.S. expectations may have been unrealistic, but there is much to remember and learn from our previous dealings with Beijing.

BY ROBERT GRIFFITHS

“The world cannot be safe until China changes,” Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a July 2020 talk at the Richard Nixon Library and Museum, quoting the 37th president. In the 53 years since Nixon wrote those words, China has changed in immeasurable ways, but not in all the ways the West had hoped. Indeed, Pompeo said that the engagement policy the U.S. has pursued for decades has been a failure.

Was the United States wrong to have engaged China? Could things have turned out differently?

In the decades following Nixon’s breakthrough in 1972, U.S. policy toward China was rooted in optimism and enjoyed bipartisan support. We knew that the payoffs for a successful relationship would be enormous for both sides, and many signs were encouraging. But history sometimes turns on bad luck, as well as policy intentions and misassessments.

We were not wrong to have given the relationship a good shot, and the story has not ended.

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The Path Taken

There was a time when if a foreigner wanted to learn about China, he or she had to go to Taiwan. I was part of that generation who, in the 1960s and 1970s, learned Chinese from those who fled the mainland after defeat in the civil war in 1949. These were people who were proud of their Chinese roots, eager to preserve Chinese culture, and with whom I spent many hours trying to master Chinese calligraphy with long brush and ink stone. Life in Taiwan for young foreigners was invigorating and filled with as much fun as you can get riding an underpowered motorcycle with a date on the back.

When mainland China began to open up in the 1980s, it was very exciting. Foreigners could, with a little effort, visit all the places we had read about in the history books. But even greater than the thrill of discovery was the thrill of anticipation. China was changing. What would it become? What would life be like for our Chinese friends?

In the intervening years, from the 1980s to today, incredible things have happened. Hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of poverty. China has become the world’s largest trading nation. World-class skyscrapers, high-speed trains and scores of vast new college campuses demonstrate that when given a chance, the Chinese want the best. The collapse of communism as an economic and social system gave rise to all sorts of ways to find greater meaning and opportunity in life. Vast riches came for some; a materially better-off life for nearly all.

Interaction with the outside world increased profoundly, and we could imagine the day when the Chinese would enjoy all the

In the late 1990s, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji was boldly dismantling the centrally planned Chinese economy.

things that we felt make life meaningful. As Americans, we were eager to share; and the Chinese seemed eager to learn. It was exhilarating to be part of it all.

Yet today we find ourselves in very different circumstances. There is a general bipartisan consensus in Washington, D.C., that China's unbalanced trade, suppression of political freedoms and human rights, and advocacy of authoritarian government requires a new and less-engaging approach.

Some Things to Remember

Consider some of the things that occurred along the way.

1. Tiananmen Square. Dial back to 1989. Thousands of students and everyday workers in Beijing, including from many government offices, were peacefully protesting. They sought an end to corruption and reforms in governance. While there was no U.S. government involvement in the protest itself, America's influence was evident in the construction of the protesters' symbolic "Goddess of Democracy," an obvious takeoff on the Statue of Liberty.

That influence was possible because in 1979 the United States and China had re-established diplomatic relations, and communication between the two societies was rapidly expanding. The head of the Communist Party, Zhao Ziyang, was sympathetic to the protesters and arranged for a meeting between their leaders and the full top national leadership. That meeting could have gone well. The protest could have ended peacefully, and China could have embarked on a path that involved some political, as well as economic, liberalization.

The meeting, however, did not go well. And the rest—the tragic killing in Beijing on the night of June 3—is history.

2. Examples in the Neighborhood. There was more history going on among China's neighbors. In the 1980s and 1990s, two bastions of Confucian culture—South Korea and Taiwan—transformed themselves from authoritarian regimes that brooked no political opposition into vibrant democratic societies. It seemed that this change was facilitated by economic growth, in particular a rise in per capita GDP. It made sense that once people were well enough off economically, they would seek a greater say in how they were governed.

Again, the U.S. government was not directly involved in these dramatic political transformations; but the United States did promote the development of civil society, and the example of U.S. political openness and stability was a shining light. It was a good bet that China, also rooted in Confucian values, would follow a similar path once there was a sufficient level of economic prosperity.

3. WTO and the Belgrade Bombing. In the late 1990s, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji was boldly dismantling the centrally planned Chinese economy and breaking the "iron rice bowl"—the socialist system that was famously egalitarian but kept the nation mired in poverty.

In its place, private enterprise would drive China to decades of phenomenal economic growth, fueled in part by foreign investment; and U.S. companies with the best business practices were particularly sought after.

Following years of intense international negotiations, during which no one was more tough on China than the United States, the PRC got the green light to become a member of the World Trade Organization in December 2001. As a WTO member, China agreed to subject itself to global trade rules and allow other nations to sue it for unfair trade practices. Since that time, China has sued and been sued many times and has won and lost cases.

What a tragedy of history that in the buildup to this remarkable engagement, U.S. planes participating in the war in Bosnia mistakenly bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. To a man, the top Chinese leadership believed that the bombing on May 7, 1999, had to have been intentional. And ever after it would prove difficult for American interests and values to gain traction in Chinese leadership deliberations.

4. An Explosion of Communication and Exchange. As technology, especially the internet, developed rapidly in the 2000s, China was not far behind the United States in the growth of social media and an explosion of information exchange. This was accelerated by the exposure of hundreds of thousands of Chinese students studying abroad, nowhere more than in the U.S., to political, social and cultural ideas they never would have encountered back home.

International journalists began reporting from China in droves as Chinese journalists spread around the world and began educating their compatriots on what was going on outside China. International nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) began setting up operations in China, even as homegrown NGOs were promoting environmental, charitable and social causes.

Religions, including Christian churches in places like Zhejiang province, were adding millions of converts. There was an explosion of academic exchanges, with thousands of American and other Western scholars presenting at conferences in China on business, political, and technical and scientific topics.

Eventually, all this proved too uncontrollable for Beijing's leaders; but at the time it seemed that such activities were tolerated, even welcomed, for China's development.

5. Acknowledging International Norms. Beginning some 40 years ago, China began a tentative, though never warm, embrace of international legal and political norms. The Chinese put human rights protections into their constitution and professionalized their legal system. They signed existing international conventions. Prompted by business concerns, they tightened up contract law and established legal studies programs based on Western models. At the behest of the United States, in particular, they set up specialized courts to deal with cases of intellectual property theft.

The Chinese also began to hold elections broadly at the village level and began "experiments" with wider district elections. They began holding public hearings on local issues and, before implementing new regulations, put proposed policies out for public comment. No one commented more than U.S. entities, and their comments often changed the policies substantially.

Reviving a revered historical practice, ordinary citizens were allowed to petition local, provincial and national leaders for redress of grievances. Party membership was greatly expanded to include former "enemies of the state," such as business owners and landlords. And the president of the country was limited to two five-year terms, leading in 2002 to the first peaceful and willing transfer of power in China's history when Jiang Zemin gave up control of the country to Hu Jintao.

During Hu's terms in office, his Premier Wen Jiabao publicly looked forward to the day when China would enjoy greater democracy. Another peaceful transfer of power took place in 2012 when Hu turned over the reins to Xi Jinping. Xi has since pulled back many of these political and legal reforms, promoting instead greater personal and Chinese Communist Party control; but he was not expected to, and nothing forced him to do it.

Indeed, in a move no one foresaw, Xi has set himself up as ruler for life, apparently turning back to imperial China—where there are only loyalists and traitors—as a guide for governance in the 21st century. Forced assimilation of the Uyghurs became so brutal that the United States judged it violated the U.N. genocide convention. Toleration for political differences in Hong Kong was ended, casting a deep chill on hopes for peaceful reunification with a willing Taiwan. And military capabilities that could have been promoted as reasonable protection for Chinese assets are now used to intimidate in the South China Sea and elsewhere.

Disappointment of Our Own Making

If only things had turned out differently! Yet our disappointment is of our own making. With now-clear hindsight, we can see that the idea that the West was going to adopt China into its ranks was fanciful.

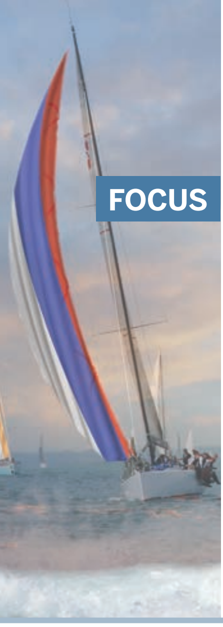
China's rise is China's story, not ours. You do not have to be in China very long before you learn how proud the Chinese are of their long history and deep culture. Even if the "5,000 years" of history they often claim is hard to document, what is well documented is certainly impressive. What if the Roman Empire and its control of most of Europe had continued until today? What if Latin had more native speakers than any other language, and Roman poetry and philosophy had been written and matured for more than 2,000 years?

From the Chinese perspective, that would be comparable to what China and its culture are today. That such a nation was humiliated for a hundred years before 1949—forced to legalize opium for the profits of foreigners, allow foreign militaries almost free rein within its borders and be "carved up like a melon," in the words of Chinese historians, by Western colonial powers—leaves the Chinese with a powerful imperative today: Regain China's place in the world and the respect it is due.

Our expectations for China's future were wrong and hubristic, but Beijing's current expectations for its own future may turn out to be wrong, too. History is like that; there is nothing inevitable about it.

Was our engagement of China during the past 50 years a mistake? No. Had we not embraced the Chinese nation, anticipated the best and welcomed its people to our land and our values, but instead obstructed China's development despite its great promise in so many areas, history would have judged us very harshly.

Still, it is a different world now. As the Biden administration contemplates how we might best deal with a newly powerful and emboldened China, we should remember the ways in which our engagement has united us, not only what now divides us.



FOCUS ON GREAT POWER COMPETITION TODAY

Hello, Europe — America Is Back

The trans-Atlantic agenda goes beyond undoing Trump. Here is a sober look at the issues from a veteran diplomat.

BY ROBERT E. HUNTER

Joe Biden's election as U.S. president was greeted with great relief by almost all Europeans. His first major foreign policy speech, at February's virtual Munich Security Conference, added to European confidence as he declared, "America is back."

There is much to be coming "back" from. Allied concerns about America under President Donald Trump stemmed only in part from his blustering style and retreat from American commitments abroad, including the World Health Organization, the Paris Climate Accord, the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and work on the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

At least as important, if not more so, "America is back" is welcomed in Europe as repudiating Trump's refusal to say he would honor the core U.S. commitment to European allies: the Washington Treaty's Article 5, which declares that an attack on one signatory will be considered an attack on all. Ironically, if any ally had been attacked, it was virtually certain that Trump would have responded militarily, as being in America's irreducible security interests; uncertainty, however, is the enemy of both confidence and deterrence.

Further, Trump had decided to reduce U.S. military forces in Germany. This was not particularly important in terms of combat power (given U.S. and other NATO allies' military deployments in Central Europe), but symbolically it was immense. Biden immediately put that decision on hold.

Yet "America is back" only takes the United States, the alliance and U.S.-European relations so far. In his Munich speech, Biden said: "We are not looking backward; we are looking forward, together. It comes down to this: The trans-Atlantic alliance is a strong foundation—*the* strong foundation—on which our collective security and our shared prosperity are built. The partnership between Europe and the United States, in my view, is and must remain the cornerstone of all that we hope to accomplish in the 21st century, just as we did in the 20th century."

An excellent beginning, but only that. There is an extensive trans-Atlantic agenda; meeting it is not just a matter of undoing Trump. The world has moved on.

Robert E. Hunter served as U.S. ambassador to NATO (1993-1998), director of West European and then Middle East affairs at the National Security Council (1977-1981) and foreign policy adviser to Senator Edward Kennedy (1973-1977), among many other positions in trans-Atlantic relations. Ambassador Hunter is currently a member of the Ambassador Partnership and the Executive Committee of the American Academy of Diplomacy.

The U.S. "Big Three"

Particularly important for Biden administration relations with Europe are the three big areas of U.S. concern about challenges to its security and other interests: Russia, Iran and China.

Russia. NATO will hold a summit on June 14 in Brussels. A key focus is the most recent alliance review, "NATO 2030," a comprehensive study of NATO's strategic environment and a long list of recommendations. Yet Russia will be the summit's centerpiece, including European desires to help shape Biden administration attitudes and policies toward Moscow. The summit's deliberations will ratify commitments and actions to reassure allied states, especially those nearest to Russia, and to make clear to Moscow that, on the fundamentals, the allies "do not divide." The alliance will also take on all Russian power-projection challenges, including cyber security, emerging and disrupting technologies, and interference in Western democratic politics.

Still, formal allied agreement on opposing Russian ambitions in Europe (and elsewhere) is not as straightforward as it may seem—certainly not as clear-cut as during the Cold War or even immediately following Russia's 2014 seizure of Crimea and incursions into other parts of Ukraine, with intensified threats this year. During the last several years, the U.S. approach to Russia has been drifting, on a bipartisan basis, toward lasting confrontation, if not an actual cold war.

Trump took a progressively tougher line toward Moscow as he came under political attack for coddling Vladimir Putin. The possibilities for cooperation that Trump and Putin discussed at their July 2018 summit in Helsinki went nowhere when the U.S. media focused only on a belief about a cozy Trump-Putin relationship. President Biden has himself taken a hard line toward Russia, even though he has acknowledged the value of cooperating when possible and proposed to meet with Putin. (On the critical nuclear arms control agreement, New START, the two sides did agree in February to a five-year extension.)

The bottom line is that the United States is the only country with the weight to deal with Russia, and all the allies know it. Thus, keeping America "in" is still critical insurance and will continue to be so indefinitely. Yet the allies are not united in attitudes toward Russia. As a rule, the farther an ally is physically from the Russian frontier, the more flexible is its national position. Otherwise, in a significant difference with Washington, Germany plans to continue with the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline under the Baltics from Russia, which Biden and the U.S. Congress have opposed, with the latter authorizing sanctions on firms working on the pipeline.

"Anti-Russia" will not suffice as glue for trans-Atlantic relations, even with understanding of U.S. preeminence in dealing with Moscow.

In the end, U.S. differences with some European countries on Russia and Vladimir Putin won't pose a fundamental threat to ties across the Atlantic; but "anti-Russia" will not suffice as glue for trans-Atlantic relations, even with understanding of U.S. preeminence in dealing with Moscow. In the NATO combination of "deterrence plus dialogue," Biden and his team have inclined more to the former, many Europeans to the latter. In the United States, domestic opposition to attempts to build a different future with Russia remains formidable, and there is so far no evidence that Putin would respond positively. For Biden, getting Russia policy right will entail considerable efforts with allies and other Europeans, as well as with Russia.

Middle East (focusing on Iran). Perspectives within the NATO alliance and the European Union, including between the United States and most European allies, diverge on some other "outside of area" matters. The Middle East and environs are the focus of at least two differences. The first is general: As the Biden administration seems to be following the Trump administration in wanting to reduce the U.S. footprint in the region (beginning with departure of U.S. and allied troops from Afghanistan by Sept. 11), it is likely to want Europeans to assume more responsibility for promoting Western interests in some other parts of the region. That will not be popular with most Europeans.

The second is specific. Ever since Trump in May 2018 withdrew from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran—a signal achievement of the Obama administration and a major contribution to regional security and stability—most Europeans have worried that the risks of crisis or even conflict would increase, especially when Iran subsequently began moving away from some JCPOA-agreed limitations on its nuclear program.

Few, if any, European states will sign on to the full U.S. agenda in dealing with China.

President Biden has consistently declared his commitment to rejoining the JCPOA, and this is popular in Europe. Like his predecessors, he has also expressed a desire to deal with other Iranian behavior beyond the "nuclear file," notably Iran's ballistic missile program, support for regional proxies from Yemen to Lebanon and what many Americans believe to be its leading role in promoting terrorism (largely ignoring Saudi Arabia's role). Yet both Biden and his top officials long argued that, before the United States rejoins the JCPOA or reduces U.S. sanctions on Iran, the latter must first return to compliance with the agreement. In particular, Tehran must reverse uranium enrichment undertaken since May 2018.

Iran takes the opposite position: that the United States, having quit the JCPOA, must move first. Arm's-length negotiations did start in March; but if they do not lead to a breakthrough, and America keeps its full sanctions regime in place, there will be major European misgivings because of the growing risks of a deepening crisis.

China. A further potential long-term problem for trans-Atlantic relations is China. There are already stresses within the alliance because the United States is "pivoting" significantly to Asia, as the Obama administration inelegantly put it, in order to face Beijing's rising power, position and ambitions. Greater U.S. preoccupation with China than with Europe is a natural evolution of geopolitics and geoeconomics, even with Russia factored in. But the China issue will have an additional impact on U.S. relations with its European allies because, like its predecessor, the Biden administration expects the Europeans to follow the U.S. lead.

There is also a "do no harm" aspect—namely, U.S. concern over increasing Chinese economic penetration of European countries (and the European Union), as part of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative. This was underscored by the E.U.-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment concluded two days after Biden's inauguration. The Biden administration also wants the Europeans to support all elements of U.S. confrontation with China. Fortunately for Western comity, there is virtual unanimity on the need for the "Western" organization of international economic relations and rulemaking to prevail over any Chinese alternative. But few, if any, European states will sign on to the full U.S. agenda in dealing with China.

It was one thing for the alliance to send troops to Afghanistan after 9/11, when neighboring Russia was supine, to make sure the United States would not lessen its strategic interest in Europe. It would be quite another to give open-ended support for U.S. efforts to contain China, a major power that poses no security threats (e.g., terrorism) in Europe. Except where a clear common interest is established, the Biden administration will find few, if any, European takers.

Values and Interests: Nonmilitary Trans-Atlantic Issues

In addition to securing U.S. interests abroad, the Biden administration also wants to promote democracy, a second-order U.S. priority since the Obama administration. This has a values and ideology dimension, but it also has a geopolitical purpose, with China, Iran and Russia as key targets. To try building a common front with allied and partner countries, Biden has proposed a summit of democracies. At this writing, it is not clear that this idea has been thought through, including who gets invited and who does not (not a trivial matter!), what the agenda would be and what "deliverables" there would be in addition to rhetoric. Thus, a democracy summit contains risks, including in trans-Atlantic relations, if comity is not more or less guaranteed in advance.

Since the end of the Cold War, both security in Europe and trans-Atlantic ties have increasingly moved beyond NATO's preeminence, although it remains the key institutional link across the Atlantic and is highly popular with the American people and Congress. Except for challenges and threats posed by Russia since 2014—significant in themselves—nonmilitary factors have become increasingly significant.

Since early 2020, COVID-19 has been most important, and cooperation across the Atlantic has in general been positive: President Biden's clarity and commitment on COVID-19 have been most welcome in Europe. But the same cooperation across the Atlantic (other than by Canada on the North American side) cannot be said about the dramatic rise in immigration to Europe from Africa and especially the Middle East, the latter to a great extent the result of the ill-conceived 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Immigration has proved to be the most important source of political and social stress ever since within the E.U.

Burdened with its own immigration issues, the United States has done virtually nothing to help, and that continues true under Biden. Yet it is a key factor in one of the most important challenges facing the Western community as a whole: the falling away from democratic practice by some European countries, notably Poland and Hungary—ironically, two of the first three new NATO allies when the alliance began enlarging in 1999.

A suggestion made at the time that NATO create a mechanism for counseling laggards in democracy was rejected by the Clinton administration. And it is not possible to threaten these countries and their democratic leaders with expulsion from NATO; there is no provision for doing so.

NATO and the European Union

The European Union has major roles to play in European security in the broadest sense, including economic and political development in Central Europe and climate change.

The matter of how security burdens and responsibilities are to be shared is significant.

Yet relations between NATO and the E.U. remain woefully inadequate, despite evidence that "security" has to be seen holistically and that institutional North American–European ties must have a strong economic dimension (beyond the deep integration of much of the private sector on both sides of the Atlantic). Moreover, America's links to the European Union, to which it does not belong, can't compete with its NATO membership.

NATO obviously needs a robust relationship with the

President Biden has a chance to demonstrate renewed U.S. leadership; but also important is engaging European efforts, which are far from guaranteed.

European Union. But this has advanced at a snail's pace since, as U.S. ambassador to NATO in 1993, I coined the following aphorism: "NATO and the European Commission are two institutions living in the same city on separate planets." Franco-American cooperation did lead to some ties between NATO and the Western European Union, now the Common Security and Defence Policy; but these have hardly progressed since then.

Notably, at the February Munich Security Conference President Biden made only one brief reference to the E.U.: "The United States will work closely with our European Union partners and the capitals across the continent—from Rome to Riga—to meet the range of shared challenges we face." Meanwhile, although NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg had little new to say on this subject, the "NATO 2030" report has sensibly proposed, as a beginning, a summit-level meeting between NATO and the E.U. countries—an idea I have pressed, without success, for every NATO summit since 1999. President Biden and the Europeans have a chance to get this right.

A cooperative and task-sharing relationship between NATO and the E.U. that recognizes the comprehensive, interconnected nature of security needs to be high on the agenda—not a "security" based on one or another "tool," but an encompassing method with overall commitments and activities, both public and private.

The Issue of Burden-Sharing

The matter of how security burdens and responsibilities are to be shared is significant. Not surprisingly, given the Trump administration's attitudes toward Europe, the decades-old idea of an independent European defense force gained added support. Two years ago, French President Emmanuel Macron asserted that NATO is experiencing "brain-death," and that the E.U. should gain "military sovereignty" separate from NATO. As demonstrated by fledgling efforts in the 1990s, the two institutions can reinforce each other. Yet no one doubts that, if there were a military threat to Europe (i.e., from Russia), only NATO and the United States could act.

U.S. (and NATO) reluctance regarding separate European defense ambitions continues, as reflected in Stoltenberg's comments at Munich: "Any attempt to weaken the trans-Atlantic bond will not only weaken NATO, but it will also divide Europe; so we have to have Europe and North America together in NATO. That's the best way." This concern should have been overcome long ago, both to help meet U.S. demands for greater European NATO burden-sharing and to lessen worries about U.S. steadfastness. Joe Biden has dramatically lessened European doubts fostered by Donald Trump; but what happens with the next U.S. president?

In the meantime, there will be renewed American appeals to get allies to "pull their weight" in defense spending. At its 2014 Wales Summit, NATO set a goal for each ally to spend at least 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) on defense, although it is certain that not all the allies—maybe not even a majority—will meet that goal by its putative deadline of 2024, despite overall allied spending on defense going up significantly. The goal was problematic from the outset: It said more about "inputs" than about "outputs," and it failed to understand adequately that "security" in Europe is about many factors, of which military strength is only one. A far better goal would be, say, 3 percent of GDP—but with a significant part going to economic development of Central European countries, a key underpinning of the continent's security.

Leadership Is a Two-Way Street

Secretary of State Antony Blinken has stressed the role of American leadership: bringing countries together "because they trust us to lead, and no one can unite others like we can." This is an ambitious project, but it does not command automatic support in Europe. This is particularly so when it comes to "outside of area" engagements.

During the months ahead, President Biden has a chance to demonstrate renewed U.S. leadership; but also important is engaging European efforts, which are far from guaranteed. Biden's earning renewed trust in the United States is the most basic facet of "America is back," but it's also true that "leadership," cooperation and compromise are a two-way street. Both America and Europe need to take note.

GPC— Meaningful Concept or Misleading Construct?

In this thought piece, two Senior FSOs offer contrasting takes on the phrase widely used to frame foreign policy today.

BY ALEXIS LUDWIG AND KELLY KEIDERLING

TAKE ONE

GPC: National Security Strategy's "Deep Structure"

BY ALEXIS LUDWIG

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Kelly Keiderling is a Senior Foreign Service officer who recently served as deputy commandant at the National War College. She was U.S. ambassador to Uruguay from 2016 to 2019. During her 30-year career, she's been assigned overseas to Latin America, post-Soviet Russia, and Anglophone African countries. In Washington, D.C., she has served in the bureaus of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Near Eastern Affairs, Global Talent Management, and Education and Cultural Affairs.

The views in this article are the authors' and do not necessarily represent those of the Department of State, Department of Defense or the U.S. government.

The reemergence early in the 21st century of so-called "great power competition" (GPC) as the central organizing principle for U.S. engagement with the world is yet another instance of there being nothing new under the sun. It amounts to the resurfacing of what might be called the "deep structure" of national security strategy, a structure that has shaped and informed much of the conduct of international relations throughout history. GPC has expressed itself in diverse forms—with different players competing in different ways in different parts in the world—but it has never really gone away.

The great power competition of today is characterized by the dramatic rise of Xi Jinping's People's Republic of China as a peer competitor of the United States and, to a lesser extent, by the revanchism of Vladimir Putin's Russia. Napoleon's Delphic prophecy is telling from the vantage point of our own time: "When China rises, the world will tremble" (Quand la Chine s'éveillera, le monde tremblera). The slow-moving shock waves associated with China's undeniable rise and accompanying geopolitical assertiveness are a manifestation of competition that is already well underway.

A Constant in History

"Great power competition" made its inaugural appearance in the first formal work of Western history ever written. In *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides describes the prolonged competition and clash between the city-states of Sparta and Athens more than 2,500 years ago. Closer to our age, full-blown great power competition flowered in Europe in the

China's rise as a comprehensive peer competitor of the United States became an incontrovertible fact with the ascension of President Xi Jinping to power in 2013.

early 19th century when Napoleon's France took the continent by storm, overreached and then was forced into retrenchment by its great power rivals Britain, Russia and Prussia. Following the unification of German states under Bismarck, World War I and World War II reflected, at the most fundamental level, the reverberations of great power competition between a rising Germany and its continental rivals, most notably France, Britain and Russia. The world wars also marked the definitive rise of the United States as a new great power on the block.

The Cold War, which remains the central geostrategic reference for the baby boomer generation in power today, was characterized by the U.S.-led democratic West against the Communist East bloc, led by the Soviet Union. That Moscow explicitly sought, as a matter of ideology and policy, to destroy the Western system and to replace it with global communism, turned Cold War GPC into a kind of life-or-death struggle that shaped nearly every aspect of our engagement with the world.

The collapse of the USSR and the emergence of the so-called "new world order" saw the United States suddenly—and temporarily—thrust into the role of sole remaining superpower. In the absence of clear great power competition and, by extension, a clear set of strategic priorities, it became a time for recalibration and reconfiguration—more disorder than order. The 9/11 terror attacks unleashed the "global war on terror," which played a stopgap role in organizing our global engagement for the balance of this transition.

Reemergence of Overt Great Power Competition in the 21st Century

China's rise as a comprehensive peer competitor of the United States became an incontrovertible fact with the ascension of President Xi Jinping to power in 2013. Xi ended China's long era of low-profile strategic patience (the so-called "peaceful rise"), unmasking Beijing's broader ambition to equal and even to overtake the United States across all dimensions of power by 2049. China's deeply ambivalent approach to the U.S.-led liberal international order—using elements of that order to achieve its more narrow national aims, while also building parallel structures of its own—only reinforced the fact that GPC was upon us. At the same time, Russia's provocative behavior as a wounded power intent on reasserting its sphere of influence, undermining the liberal international order and harassing the United States and its allies, signaled a broader reversion to historical mean.

Former President Donald Trump's 2017 National Security Strategy marked an overt, even bare-knuckled recognition of this fact. The document described a "competitive world" in which "China and Russia challenge American power, influence and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity. They are determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence." The NSS further emphasized: "The competitions and rivalries facing the United States are not passing trends or momentary problems. They are intertwined, long-term challenges that demand our sustained national attention and commitment." Whatever one's view of the nuances and subplots, GPC had returned in earnest.

The Biden administration is unlikely to alter this underlying structure, even as it seeks to open the strategic aperture to include critical global issues—climate change being the central one—that will require great power *cooperation* as well as *competition*. This is because there is now broad consensus across the U.S. political spectrum about the implications of China's rise and Russia's continuing effort to find its footing after the breakup of the USSR, and the challenges they (separately and together) pose to the liberal international order, in particular, and to democracy and freedom more broadly.

The Biden administration's Interim National Security Strategic Guidance document, published in March, underscores this basic policy continuity: "China, in particular, has rapidly become more assertive. It is the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system. Russia remains determined to enhance its global influence and play a disruptive role on the world stage."

Summing up, the Biden strategic guidance document proceeds to set forth an agenda that "will strengthen our enduring advantages and allow us to prevail in strategic competition with China and any other nation."

GPC as Artifact, Frame and Spur to Action

Whatever the historical context, "great power competition" is an artifact of human political imagination, not a manifestation of political geology or nature. It is anchored in an assessment about what matters most to the survival, well-being and interests of a state, or what ought to. This assessment and the decisions that flow from it are intended to shape and inform national strategy—to ensure that national efforts, resources and instruments of power are orchestrated and directed to core priorities based on a clear calculation of national interests.

It is important to emphasize here that great power competition does not necessarily mean great power confrontation or conflict. That, too, is a political choice, not a historical inevitability. Moreover, competition itself is a great engine of human motivation, effort and accomplishment. The United States has enthusiastically embraced competition as a core value and ideal across nearly all spheres of human activity. Competition compels us to work harder and smarter, with a keener focus and a clearer objective in mind, enabling us to achieve greater things than we might have done in the absence of worthy competitors.

Would we have marshalled the kind of concerted collective effort needed to "land a man on the Moon and bring him safely back to earth" were it not for the Sputnik challenge in the context of Cold War competition with the Soviet Union? Might we expect similar positive results from the great power competition with China unfolding today? If not, why not?

While it is wise to avoid Pollyannaish thinking, it is equally unwise to bet against the United States of America. Whatever the vulnerabilities of our more open democratic system and the advantages of our competitors' centrally controlled autocratic alternatives, this is a time to double down on our strengths: more open, free-wheeling and democratic, more resilient and resourceful, more innovative, nimble and able to adapt to new threats and opportunities. This is a time to become—as journalist James Fallows argued in a related context just over a generation ago—"more like us."

GPC is a useful frame to engage the world collectively for constructive benefit, repelling threats and seizing opportunities. But if there's a more useful one, we should welcome it.

TAKE TWO

"Great Power Competition": A Phrase that Simplifies and Confuses

BY KELLY KEIDERLING

At least since President Donald Trump issued his National Security Strategy in December 2017, the national security community has been obsessing about great power competition (already shortened to GPC). GPC is framed as a great-power struggle mostly with the People's Republic of China, with Vladimir Putin's Russia participating as a spoiler.

GPC is a comfortable frame for the baby boomer leaders across our interagency community who began their careers during the Cold War. It is an elegant frame for the grand strategists who want a unified theory of everything. It is a favorite of our academic and practitioner colleagues whose principal foreign affairs lens is realpolitik, the balance-of-power geopolitics in which great powers throughout history have maneuvered to gain more security and prosperity at the expense of other great powers. GPC also works as clarifying shorthand for American compatriots who have little time for foreign affairs and who may be more easily galvanized to support international competition against the PRC.

GPC is a simple slogan for understanding international relations, but it confuses more than it clarifies. On the "forever" front in which our State Department lives—that international horizon that exists whether Americans are paying attention or not, that perpetual-motion machine of sovereign states, international organizations and nonstate actors—the world is much more complex.

COURTESY OF KELLY KEIDERLING

Ambassador Kelly Keiderling uses this "foreign policy wheel" to identify the five essential U.S. foreign policy goals since World War II.

The World Is More Complex

So much of our State Department's work doesn't fit neatly into competition with the PRC (and Russia, which is often included in the GPC framework). Our engagement in the Western Hemisphere has the most impact on the average American's security and prosperity, regardless of the PRC's presence in our hemisphere. The African continent is moving fast into its future, powered by young, professional Africans. We want to partner with those dynamic Africans, regardless of how many infrastructure projects the Chinese build on the African continent.

Our European, Japanese, South Korean, Australian, New Zealander and Canadian allies are important not just to counterbalance the PRC but also, mostly, because those alliances form the bedrock of American security and prosperity and the engine for making this world more democratic and just. If our international relations are defined by "Are we beating the Chinese in Africa?" we will tell our partners around the world that they hardly matter unless the PRC is making them an offer. We will miss a great number of opportunities to advance U.S. interests and values. Our allocation of national security resources will be weighted toward anything-PRC. Our foreign affairs work is just not reducible to competing with the PRC and fending off malicious Russian designs.

Besides, GPC describes a dialectical process, not a strategic goal. GPC is about the United States accumulating raw economic, military and cultural power: economic output, volume of international trade and investment, size and reach of armed forces, number of patents and number of entertainment products, media outlets and footprint of U.S. Big Tech, for example. Concerned about balancing the PRC's economic might, the U.S. then needs to convert our raw power into global influence to—what, precisely?—perhaps to become even more powerful, to be perceived by other great powers as more powerful, to increase the prestige and standing of the United States. How do we measure that power? When can we stop accumulating power? When is U.S. global influence and prestige sufficient? When have we been successful in our competition with the PRC?

Focus on U.S. Strategic Goals

We need a lens focused on U.S. strategic goals rather than on GPC. Toward that end, I offer a "foreign policy wheel" to help frame broad U.S. foreign policy goals. I propose that, since World War II, to a greater or lesser extent, the United States has advanced on five essential foreign policy goals: 1) understanding global affairs and creating a world order based on rules, 2) increasing U.S. security, 3) enabling U.S. prosperity, 4) advancing democracy, and 5) defending human rights and helping create more just, equitable human societies.

For each country, for each region, let us create dynamic strategies with specific, more measurable foreign policy goals that address the most pressing of these five goals. For Southeast Asia, primary U.S. goals would include (among others) freedom of navigation through the South China Sea, improved democratic governance in the Philippines and economic partnership with Vietnam. In Ukraine, for example, we would focus on strengthening the country's democracy, economy (by fighting corruption) and security against Russian intervention, in part to sustain a global order in which sovereign borders and territorial integrity are respected.

Finally, the overarching strategic threats facing humanity in the 21st century—climate change, global pandemics, an internet awash in mis- and disinformation—require *cooperation* with the PRC, Russia and other powers big and small. GPC will distract us from pursuing tailored policy goals more likely to yield measurable success. An obsessive focus on GPC will detract from strengthening carefully calibrated partnerships that we need with each country and international organization.

Our national security enterprise is filled with professional, dedicated, analytical public servants across many agencies. Comforting, familiar and simple as it might be for us in the interagency community to default to "great power competition" to explain our missions, let's take the extra analytical step to explain to Congress and the American people the challenges we face on the forever front.

Let's be more precise in explaining how we've converted our diplomatic, informational, military and economic power in each corner of the world to buttress a rules-based world order, to secure the U.S. from global threats, to find opportunities to increase U.S. prosperity, to advance democratic governance, and to defend human rights and foster better, more just societies. ■

FEATURE

Whatever Happened to MICROFINANCE?
—A Cautionary Tale—

The success or failure of any development program depends on a thorough grasp of the context in which it is being implemented.

BY THOMAS DICHTER

Microfinance, the provision of financial services to the poor, burst onto the world stage as a solution to underdevelopment in the 1970s. The basis of its popularity was the idea that once such services, especially credit, are made available to the poor, they will invest in small businesses that will lead them out of poverty.

Muhammad Yunus, whose Grameen Bank in Bangladesh started the movement in the mid-1970s, claimed that "credit is a human right." And by the late 1990s microfinance had so much momentum that 3,000 people from more than 140 countries gathered at a Microcredit Summit in Washington, D.C., in 1997 to hear its praises sung by Queen Sofia of Spain, First Lady Hillary Clinton, Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin and the presidents of Peru and Uganda. In 2006, Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Yet after a decades-long run, the numbers tell the story of a fading fad. The 1997 summit had predicted 100 million borrowers by 2005 and continued growth, as the huge number of "unbanked" people began to avail themselves of microfinance services. As of 2019 there were 140 million borrowers worldwide (80 percent of them women), for a total gross loan portfolio of $124 billion. But measured against the reality that there are 1.7 billion people in the world who are "unbanked" (22 percent of the world population), the expected demand for microfinance services has simply not materialized. In fact, the rate of growth in new clients in the last decade has been going down.

Moreover, there is no evidence that access to financial services, especially microloans, has a *significant* effect on poverty, much

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It is a mistake to assume that before aid efforts came along, the poor had not already figured out how things work in their world and how to optimize that knowledge.

less forms a sustainable basis for economic development, or that "financial inclusion" (the term used today to encompass microfinance services) is even a real need. Microfinance practitioners have largely ignored such findings, beginning with the conclusions of a 2009 randomized controlled trial in Hyderabad's slums conducted by MIT's Poverty Action Lab. Blinkered by their narrow focus on getting financial services to the poor, microfinance organizations, especially the nonprofits, see only the short-term effects: a roadside seller whose daily profit grows from $1.00 a day to $1.45, a woman who can now put a sheet of corrugated iron on her hut's roof, etc. They blot out the all-important contexts in which their clients live—contexts that are layered with complexities that, especially in the poorest parts of the world, account for barriers that microloan programs can do little to surmount.

Yet a rigorous examination of the context for microfinance and the poor it seeks to reach is exactly what should have been done from the beginning. A review of just some of the contextual issues offers a cautionary tale of how important (and challenging) it is to understand them.

1. *Position* counts more than *condition*—the sociocultural context of poverty.

Most microloan recipients in the poorest countries are subsistence farmers or petty traders selling out of a small space on the ground or from a rickety table on a roadside or in the ubiquitous markets of sub-Saharan Africa, parts of South and Southeast Asia and some parts of Latin America. These largely informal sector "jobs" constitute the bulk of economic activity for most people in those countries. A woman selling spices by the 10-gram packet or razor blades by the unit sits in a row of others with similar goods. She takes a microloan of $20 and, in theory, buys more product, thus increasing her inventory and potentially raising her profit.

But studies by economic anthropologists, sociologists and field workers like myself (since the 1980s, I have evaluated scores of such programs) reveal that having more inventory in a low-margin economy actually increases risk by reducing the flexibility to shift to other products or other locations as demand changes. In the best-case scenario—let's say that the spice seller has great natural selling skills—she does manage to raise her net income, say from $1.50 per day to $2.35. This is a meaningful increase for her, but it is not enough to move her out of poverty. Instead of being very poor, she is now merely poor; she can add a piece of corrugated roofing to her shack, but because of her lack of resilience her improved status may be temporary.

In short, her *condition* has changed in the short run, but her *position* in society has not; she is not on the ladder to economic growth. This important distinction between condition and position is largely ignored in the microfinance community. For, as we're now relearning about "structural racism" in the United States, it is people's position in society (determined by complex historical, sociocultural factors and, often, hidden arrangements in the political economy) that counts, not immediate or short-term changes in their "condition."

Such contextual complexities are specific to each country or region. They include but are not limited to: local and national history, custom, law, beliefs; the particulars of location, transportation and communications infrastructure; land tenure and labor arrangements; the differing economizing strategies of a variety of social units such as the household, clan or tribe; how political controls are exerted; the durability of social capital; ethnic, religious and class competition; the ways in which kinship bonds often underlie economic activities; and the possibility in many developing societies that the economic return of an activity (production, trading) is only one of many goals.

Not least among the contextual variables is the level of economic development, including the degree to which governance, legal and financial regimes and the rule of law are developed. If these institutions are "underdeveloped," there is less stability, less equality of opportunity and more corruption, and people have less trust in government.

In short, in many of the developing country environments where microfinance has been applied, its potential as a poverty solution is severely diminished. Those who are supposed to benefit end up, at best, "all dressed up with no place to go."

2. Human nature—money is fungible.

A founding assumption of microfinance was that loans would be invested in a business. In fact, much of microcredit instead goes to "consumption smoothing," softening the peaks and valleys of the cash-flow graph so it looks more like a ripple than a roller coaster. Such smoothing makes it easier to get over a cash crunch or to enable the purchase of medicine or the financing of a wedding. While this is of value to a poor person, in business terms it does not generate the money to pay back the loan.

Yet many microfinance programs report repayment rates greater than 90 percent, something any big bank would die for. What we don't see as clearly is whether such rates are sustainable; nor do we see the myriad ways borrowers use to repay (including borrowing from another microfinance program). Moreover, as loan size grows, it is more likely that payments will be delayed, or loans will not be repaid at all.

We are well advised to acknowledge a good dose of humility about how far, really, we have come, and how much, really, we know about poverty.

3. The poor of the developing world already have complex financial systems of their own.

Since the 1950s, when Sol Tax did fieldwork in the markets of northwestern Guatemala and coined the phrase "penny capitalism," anthropologists and others have studied markets all over the world. They strongly suggest, first, that it is a mistake to assume that before aid efforts came along, the poor had not already figured out how things work in their world and how to optimize that knowledge.

In reality, poor people in agrarian and bazaar economies have long understood risk, resilience, credit, debt and savings—despite not being "financially literate" from our standpoint. Most important, in their terms, they may not want or need our interventions. The international development community that backs much of the financial inclusion agenda makes a simple zero-sum calculation: If you are not formally included, you are excluded. But the literature shows that a significant portion of the poor already *are* included in financial services that take many forms, albeit not formal modern ones.

Traditional societies have always had forms of savings—in land, livestock, jewelry, even cloth. And the poor in many societies have always had ways of acquiring lump sums of cash. Informally organized ROSCAS (rotating savings and credit associations)—called "susu" or "round robins" in parts of Africa, or "arisans" in Indonesia—are common throughout the world.

As for small business loans, trade credit (aka supplier credit) is also common. For example, say a trader buys samosas to sell along with her tea. She'll get 30 samosas or so at a reduced per-item rate and not have to pay until later in the day when her tea business is over. But the most common source of business start-up capital is friends and family. In fact, most of the storied entrepreneurial successes in the United States (from Walt Disney to Subway and Amazon) began with loans from friends and family, not from banks.

To emphasize the point that "unbanked" people are not necessarily clamoring to be "banked," there are cultures where wealth accumulation is not even a legitimate goal. In such cultures there are leveling mechanisms designed to prevent any one person or group from gaining wealth greater than the others in the society. While the potlatch of the Northwest Coast Native Americans (in which valuable goods are routinely destroyed) is long gone, similar mechanisms exist all over the developing world—such as a public feast or an expensive wedding, or the redistribution of grazing animals when a family comes into wealth.

All of this is not to say that poverty in the developing countries is a happy state, or that the poor have no desire to improve their lot—clearly they do. The point is that we outsiders need to be careful not to assume that our interventions are the right ones or the right starting point.

4. There is a difference between entrepreneurs growing the economy, and people generating income.

One of the pillars of microfinance was its assumption that the poor are entrepreneurial. With all our advantages in the advanced economies, it is obvious that only a small percentage of people are entrepreneurs. The rest of us are content to be employees or freelance gig workers. Similarly, the average petty trader or subsistence farmer selling products in a roadside market did not choose to be an entrepreneur, but rather to generate enough income to survive.

As for economic growth, a critical determinant of economic potential is the question of whether a small trader or farmer has the room to expand or grow even with an injection of credit. Almost by definition, the barriers to entry into the market are low for a petty trader or small farmer. Anyone can set up shop. Since the small trader is often part-time (e.g., fishermen's wives or farm people in slack season), they move into the market and add another degree of saturation to an already crowded field, often made more crowded by the presence of microfinance. And since the opportunity costs and the barriers to entry are low, higher technical knowledge is generally lacking, profits (and risks) are low because transactions are small (sometimes at the level of selling sugar by the cube) and the duration of transactions is short.

In short, most of the characteristics of real enterprises and entrepreneurs are missing. In these bazaar types of economy (as opposed to the firm-based economies characteristic of the advanced industrial countries), goods flow, as anthropologist Clifford Geertz once put it, "in hundreds of little trickles, funneled through an enormous number of transactions," and the trader "is perpetually looking for a chance to make a smaller or larger killing, not attempting to build up a stable clientele or a steadily growing business."

First, Invest in Understanding

Since there has always been a social purpose to microfinance, its greatest fault is its almost willful ignorance of the social, cultural and economic complexities of the many systems in which its clients operate and live. Context is key, and if the contextual conditions are not conducive to a generally rising tide, then poverty remains and can even grow. Ironically, it is only now, after three-quarters of a century of post–World War II growth in the advanced economies, that we see how vulnerable most people in our own privileged world are to context. We are well advised to acknowledge a good dose of humility about how far, really, we have come, and how much, really, we know about poverty.

What Henry George said in 1879 in his famous book *Progress and Poverty* remains true today: "This association of poverty with progress is the great enigma of our times. It is the central fact from which spring industrial, social and political difficulties that perplex the world, and with which statesmanship and philanthropy and education grapple in vain. From it come the clouds that overhang the future of the most progressive and self-reliant nations. … All important as this question is, pressing itself from every quarter painfully upon attention, it has not yet received a solution which accounts for all the facts and points to any clear and simple remedy."

In the enormously challenging project of poverty alleviation in the developing countries, therefore, the starting point must not be an urgent jump into action, but first an investment in understanding.

AFSA Renovates and Expands Memorial Plaques

In May, AFSA completed a once-in-a-generation expansion of its memorial plaques. The $50,000 project added 10 new or replacement plaques in the C Street lobby of the Harry S Truman Building.

The first AFSA memorial plaque was installed in 1933 in the State, War and Navy Building (known today as the Eisenhower Executive Office Building) next to the White House. It memorialized American diplomatic and consular officers who died in circumstances distinctive to overseas service since the founding of the republic.

Moved to its current location on the west wall of the C Street lobby in 1961, its last open space for inscribing a name was filled in 1967. AFSA placed a second large plaque on the east wall of the lobby, but it was full by 1988. AFSA then added four side plaques which, as of March, had only eight remaining spaces.

Even while space for future inscriptions was running out, several AFSA members conducted diligent research over a period of years, identifying 56 early diplomats and consular officers dating back to 1794 whose deaths were unknown when AFSA unveiled the original plaque plus 13 FS members who died between 1938 and 1971 not commemorated at the time (see "America's Overlooked Diplomats and Consuls" by Jason Vorderstrasse in the November 2020 *Foreign Service Journal*, p. 66).

Noting these two developments, AFSA Retiree Vice President John K. Naland proposed adding six new plaques on the lobby columns and replacing the four existing side plaques with reinscribed versions. These included the 69 newly identified historical names to provide a chronologically coherent, dignified commemoration of our fallen colleagues.

Naland also proposed reinstituting the practice—discontinued in 1965—of inscribing the cause of death. The AFSA Governing Board approved the project in August 2020.

The work was carried out by R.S. Kinnaird Memorials of Thurmont, Maryland. John Kinnaird has inscribed names on AFSA's plaques in the C Street lobby since the late 1990s.

He has also completed large projects at Arlington Cemetery, the Smithsonian,

Continued on page 50

JOHN NALAND

TOP: Master stone mason John Kinnaird (left) and his team install a replacement side panel beside the original 1933 AFSA memorial plaque on the west end of the C Street lobby of Main State. Reinscribing the side panels allowed the 69 new historical names to be incorporated with the existing names in chronological order.

LEFT: One of six new panels installed on columns in the C Street lobby.

CALENDAR

Please check www.afsa.org for the most up-to-date information. All events are subject to cancellation or rescheduling.

June 10
8 a.m.
Governing Board election deadline for ballots to be received at AFSA

June 15
1 p.m.
Diplomats at Work: Reopening the U.S. Consulate in Greenland

June 16
12-2 p.m.
AFSA Governing Board meeting

July 5
AFSA offices closed in observance of Independence Day

July 15
New AFSA Governing Board takes office

Contact: YazdgerdiTK@state.gov | (202) 647-8160

Telework: Productive and Family Friendly

Years ago, many people at the State Department viewed teleworking as somehow less than real work. Supervisors were sometimes hesitant to approve telework agreements.

Department leaders and supervisors had the lingering feeling that employees who teleworked were not being productive enough.

However, the pandemic has led to dramatic changes in how work is done and where, and has shown us on a national level that the traditional workplace will never be the same, and that employees who telework can be at least as productive as those who come into the office.

Citing a Department of Defense Inspector General report, the April 5 *Government Executive* found that nearly 90 percent of Pentagon employees said they were as productive, if not more so, when teleworking rather than working from the office.

At State, the results of surveys conducted department-wide and by individual missions and bureaus tell much the same story. After some initial technical issues with access, the vast majority of employees—Foreign Service, Civil Service, locally employed staff, contractors and eligible family members—have been able to log in to OpenNet and other applications and work productively.

Reimagine Telework Pilot. In December 2020 AFSA received a briefing from members of the department's Reimagine Task Force on its pilot Telework Eligibility Framework Initiative, which began in October 2020. The task force looked at which State positions lent themselves to telework.

Pilot results showed that 54 percent of bureau employees were actively teleworking. The team drew on data collected across 10 bureaus covering 532 positions to create a "Telework Eligibility Score" as guidance in determining eligibility for telework.

The team found that more positions than anticipated lent themselves to some form of telework, with bureaus such as Educational and Cultural Affairs garnering higher telework scores, while other bureaus, such as Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor scored comparatively lower, as they typically deal with classified information.

The team also found that supervisors were surprised at the ease of scoring positions and the number of telework options available, and that they themselves could telework.

Use of the program framework was mandatory in determining eligibility, but the scores were then used only as guidance, which allowed supervisors to retain flexibility concerning positions "on the cusp" that did not reach the qualifying score.

While Senior Foreign Service positions tended to move away from telework eligibility, one of the team's top priorities is to find ways to increase teleworking among those who require access to classified information. The team expressed confidence that this would be achievable over the next three years.

Guidance on balancing telework within an office has been drafted and an implementation guide is currently being prepared. But initial plans to share the initiative's results in a January town hall event and complete bureau assessments identifying employee needs (with projected implementation in late February or March) have been delayed.

AFSA hopes this initiative will pick up steam in the near future so that more bureaus and offices are included, and we all can see the results for ourselves.

AFSA's Position. AFSA strongly supports this initiative, not only because telework has proven itself, but because such initiatives can help change the work culture at State. Changing this culture will no doubt pay dividends in increased productivity and help with retention.

Indeed, the results of the AFSA retention survey conducted last winter indicated that among all survey respondents, the number one work concern was impact on family. Among those who actually left the Service, family was the top reason cited. And we know that having work flexibility, including telework, will promote strong families and work-life balance.

That is why AFSA has included in its recommendations to the Biden administration the adoption of clear policies in domestic and overseas environments that permit appropriate telework and remote work arrangements.

This includes modernization of Foreign Affairs Manual policies on technology and security to better support mobile/remote work and a technology subsidy for all employees to support blended work environments and remote work.

Next Steps. We will work with the department to build on the success of telework and make it an integral part of our work culture so that State can better compete with other government agencies and the private sector.

At a recent meeting with AFSA leadership one high-level department official asked if people would ever come back to work. Of course, at some point, most of us will physically return to the office.

But the more important question is: How can we use the experience of the pandemic to make the workplace more attractive so that being both a productive employee and caring family member are not mutually exclusive propositions?

We look forward to hearing your views at member@afsa.org. ■

USAID VP VOICE | BY JASON SINGER

Contact: jsinger@usaid.gov | (202) 712-5267

Words of Thanks

Spring has sprung as I write this in mid-April. Birds are chirping, flowers are blooming and the administration's budget, which suggests a healthy increase for USAID, is out. And, thankfully, people are being vaccinated.

I would like to build on the gratitude I feel and take a moment to express deep and strong appreciation to USAID colleagues for their service, strength and commitment throughout the pandemic. And I'd like to extend a few shout-outs along with a few words of hope.

Each Foreign Service officer has a unique story of joining USAID. Each can describe the specific spoonful of bureaucratic alphabet soup that nourished the hiring process (e.g., IDI, NEP, DLI, C3).

We all remember our initial supervisors, mentors, posts and colleagues. But take a moment and think of our newest FSO colleagues, hired and onboarded during the pandemic, assigned to posts that are overstretched and operating beyond capacity. What stories these will be!

As we all know, our success doesn't just happen. And so, I want to use this column to say "thank you."

Thank you to our Office of Human Capital and Talent Management colleagues, who didn't start from the premise that, "Well, we can't hire under COVID-19—that won't work." Rather, in true USAID fashion, they figured out *how* to continue recruiting, onboarding and hiring.

This wasn't just a matter of switching to a Google Meets interview platform. There are laws, rules, forms, paperwork, processes, oversight and engagement that our HCTM colleagues had to adhere to and address—all the while supporting our current employees in the midst of a pandemic (not to mention a reorganization!).

And a special shout-out to HCTM's Foreign Service Center—you know who you are! Thank you for your dedication, your care of colleagues and your commitment. And thanks to those beyond HCTM who also play critical roles in bringing new FSOs on board and into the FS family.

Thank you to all the backstop coordinators, assignments and career counselors and individuals across bureaus and independent offices, missions and beyond—including implementing partners who help the whole process. All of you are committed colleagues who serve as formal and informal supervisors, allies and supporters. Often you do this above and beyond your "day jobs."

Joining the Foreign Service goes beyond just adapting to a new job—it involves getting used to a new way of life. The collective support and care from formal and informal mentors are critical to ensuring the success and integration of new FSOs and their families.

A special thank you to all our Foreign Service National colleagues, as well. I know that you often find yourselves working with new FSOs who have less embassy and mission experience, and quite often less technical experience, than you.

I know many of you serve as mentors and invaluable colleagues, helping new—and seasoned!—FSOs learn the ropes, the forms, the rules and, of course, the culture, political economy and complexities of your countries and governments.

I know this because I benefit from your expertise each time I go to a new post. Thank you.

Last but not least, a sincere thank you and welcome to all of our new FSO colleagues. You chose to become Foreign Service officers at a complex time both for USAID and for development. There will be excitement and rewards for you, along with challenges.

Thank you—and your families—for committing to USAID and its mission at this critical juncture. And know that the agency and AFSA are here to support you.

Looking ahead, we all need to keep up our mutual support and gratitude. President Biden's discretionary request seeks resources for "strengthening a diverse and inclusive diplomatic corps by increasing the size of the Foreign Service and Civil Service for the Department of State and USAID, along with the technology and training to revitalize these agencies' national security workforce."

In this spirit, we will—hopefully—continue to welcome new Foreign Service officers and build USAID's future together. ■

NEWS BRIEF

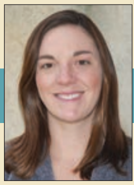
AFSA RETENTION AND INCLUSION RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the past six months, AFSA invited our members to complete two surveys: one on bias in the workplace, and another on retention.

Using the feedback we received from those surveys and from an extensive round of consultations with employee affinity and resource groups, AFSA has identified a list of priority advocacy items to promote improved retention, diversity, equity and inclusion in the Foreign Service.

We believe our recommendations would, if implemented, arrest the growing problem of declining retention and restore and repair morale in the U.S. Foreign Service.

View AFSA's retention, diversity, equity and inclusion recommendations at bit.ly/afsa-inclusion. ■



AFSA ON THE HILL | BY KIM GREENPLATE

Seizing the Moment: Expand the U.S. Foreign Service

In the upcoming 2022 federal budget process, AFSA plans to take advantage of recent Biden administration and congressional calls for more State and USAID resources to advocate expansion of the U.S. Foreign Service.

The aim is to be able to field a full team of diplomacy and development professionals overseas and at home. Specifically, AFSA is seeking 1,000 new State Department positions and 650 new USAID positions.

The fact that the Fiscal Year 2022 budget and appropriations process is off to a slower start than normal gives us an opportunity to make the case for the Foreign Service more thoroughly on Capitol Hill.

The slowed budget process is a result of a new administration crafting the president's budget request, as well as the bipartisan reintroduction of "community funding projects" (formerly known as earmarks) in the process of addressing the ongoing pandemic.

At the same time, the idea of adequately equipping our foreign affairs agencies is alive and well on the Hill. Congress is sympathetic to AFSA's request for more positions and has shown its desire to use the Foreign Service as the first line of defense.

This new perspective on federal funding for diplomacy and development got a powerful boost last spring, at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. The unprecedented repatriation operation carried out by the State Department impressed members of Congress from both parties who had constituents needing to get back home.

The Biden administration has hinted at its support for increasing the budget for international affairs and increasing the size of the Foreign Service already, ahead of the full budget request.

In a March 16 letter, four legislators called for a $12 billion increase in the international affairs budget. "It's time to stop trying to solve non-military problems with military tools, and actually give agencies like the State Department and USAID the resources they need in the 21st century," wrote Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) and Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) and Representatives David Cicilline (D-R.I.) and Ami Bera (D-Calif.).

It is up to AFSA to capitalize on such calls for expanding resources.

Creating and filling 1,000 new State Department positions and 650 new USAID positions for the Foreign Service in FY 2022 will help accomplish three major things.

First, it will create a training float so members of the Foreign Service can take advantage of professional training and be better prepared for their jobs.

Second, it will allow expanded intake from an increasingly diverse U.S. population.

And third, it will enable the State Department and USAID to meet growing mission requirements. The United States is facing a variety of new threats and concerns diplomats did not have to reckon with even 10 years ago.

Seizing the moment also applies to Congress's consideration of authorization bills, not just the budget and appropriations process. For example, Congress has demonstrated an appetite for passing a State Department Authorization Act, which is expected to be considered later this year as part of a bigger legislative vehicle. It is also considering a broader 21st Century Foreign Service Act.

Larger-scale authorization bills like this present opportunities for more permanent policy changes to improve morale and retention in the Foreign Service career, creating an environment ripe for expansion.

Memorial Plaques
Continued from page 47

Theodore Roosevelt Island and elsewhere. Bennett Varghese of the Department of State's Bureau of Administration coordinated the installation logistics.

The 10 plaques are made of black granite with deep-cut sandblasted inscriptions in gold lettering.

With this expansion completed, the AFSA memorial plaques now honor 321 colleagues and provide space for 102 future inscriptions.

If the sad toll of deaths of Foreign Service members in the line of duty continues at the same rate it has since 1990, the new plaques will be full in 50 years.

The plaques could fill up more quickly, however, if archival research continues to uncover additional historical names, so AFSA will honor any newly identified early colleagues on a virtual AFSA memorial plaque on the AFSA website. That will save the remaining open space on the physical plaques to honor contemporary and future Foreign Service members.

AFSA owns and manages the memorial plaques, which a joint resolution of Congress in 1933 authorized for placement on government property.

Criteria for inscription are on the AFSA website under the Awards & Honors tab.

For a history of the plaques and their inscription criteria, see "The Foreign Service Honor Roll" by John K. Naland in the May 2020 *Foreign Service Journal* (p. 44).

AFSA Editorial Board Welcomes Two New Members

COURTESY OF BRONWYN LLEWELLYN

Bronwyn Llewellyn

STATE DEPARTMENT

Jane Carpenter-Rock

The Foreign Service Journal is excited to welcome two new members to its Editorial Board: Bronwyn Llewellyn and Jane Carpenter-Rock.

Llewellyn is a second-generation USAID FSO: her father, Charles Llewellyn, served as a health officer for USAID and retired in 2010, almost a year to the day before Bronwyn was sworn in.

She is an environment officer and has served in Washington, D.C., Nepal and Tibet. She currently serves as a congressional liaison officer for USAID's Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs.

Foreign Service Officer Jane Carpenter-Rock has been with the State Department for 19 years. She joined the National Museum of American Diplomacy in July 2018 as deputy director for museum content and became acting director of the museum in January.

Previously, she served as deputy director of the Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs in the Bureau of African Affairs. She has also served in Bogotá, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Washington, D.C.

Prior to joining the State Department, Carpenter-Rock held several museum fellowships including the Sara Roby Fellowship in 20th-Century American Realism at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. She is the author of the book *Betye Saar* in the David C. Driskell Series of African American Art (Pomegranate, 2003).

Editorial Board members Dinah Zeltser-Winant (USAID) and Chris Teal (State) are moving on after four years and two years, respectively. Thank you to Dinah and Chris for their service and for their consistently thoughtful guidance and contributions to the discussions about and direction of the *Journal*.

AFSA Governing Board Meeting, April 21, 2021

LCAD Award: The Governing Board unanimously adopted the Awards and Plaques Committee recommendation for AFSA's 2021 Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy award.

AFSA Memorial Plaques: The Governing Board approved the addition of two names to the virtual memorial plaque on AFSA's website (afsa.org/virtual-afsa-memorial-plaque).

Associate Member: The Governing Board approved the application of an associate AFSA member.

New AFSA Editorial Board Members: The Governing Board approved two new members to serve on the Editorial Board: Foreign Service Officer Bronwyn Llewellyn of USAID, and Jane Carpenter-Rock, the acting director of the National Museum of American Diplomacy and a Foreign Service officer with the State Department.

AFSA Welcomes Franny Raybaud as Membership Coordinator

Franny Raybaud

Originally from the Lower East Side in Manhattan, Frances "Franny" Raybaud (they/them/theirs) is excited to join the team at AFSA after a few years working with service-disabled veterans and military families.

As a USAID aspirant with two former peacekeeper parents now in the United Nations Civil Service, Franny looks forward to serving AFSA's almost 17,000 members across the globe. They have previous experience with the federal government as a 2017 Department of Defense Boren Scholar to Morocco.

Franny holds a bachelor's degree in political science and Arabic from Macaulay Honors College at Queens College-CUNY. With a background in studying ethnic conflict and racial relations coupled with a passion for human rights, they are eager to learn from others and lend some classic New Yorker humor to the Foreign Service community.

Franny lives in Washington, D.C., and loves learning languages. They speak Arabic, Spanish and French. Mandarin Chinese is next on the list!

USAID Office of Security Briefing

Foreign Service officers are familiar with Diplomatic Security and with the Regional Security Office at post. But how much do they know about USAID's own Office of Security (SEC)?

John Vorhees, director of SEC, offered an overview in an April 6 Zoom call with 75 AFSA members.

In the presentation, "Session for Security," Vorhees explained that SEC consists of four divisions, each of which has a unique mission and responsibilities to support USAID. They are as follows.

• *The Personnel Security Division* grants security clearances to USAID employees based on the results of completed background investigations.

• *The Intelligence, Counterintelligence, and Information Security Division (ICI)* provides a defensive counterintelligence capability. It supports secure development operations, informs policy and educates employees to recognize, report and prevent counterintelligence threats.

• *The USAID Command Center (AIDCC)*, which includes 24/7 email and phone monitoring, communicates and responds to issues affecting the safety and security of USAID personnel, facilities and partners.

• *The International Security Program* provides supplemental resources to Diplomatic Security to support USAID Missions. These include operational security guidance, office building security, armored vehicles, emergency communications systems and security advice and assistance to USAID disaster response teams and to agency operations in high-threat environments.

"We are an email or a phone call away. We are here to enable you to do your jobs," Vorhees emphasized. "Call us before you need us. Reach out and ask us questions you have about security clearances, conduct or other issues."

AFSA Webinar

The Basics of Long-Term Care and Life Insurance

AFSA hosted "A View of Long-Term Care and Life Insurance from the Private Sector," its third webinar of 2021 on retirement benefits, on April 13. Nearly 200 people attended the Zoom event.

The presenters were Stuart Seldowitz, who spent 28 years in the Foreign Service before retiring in 2011, and Michael Gregson.

Seldowitz, now a New York Life Insurance Company agent, talked about the pros and cons of different kinds of life insurance, how much life insurance is enough, and the strategies for using different types of insurance to meet different needs.

Gregson, also with New York Life and a long-term care consultant, discussed what long-term care covers and does not cover and how it interacts with Medicare, health insurance and social security.

Three Types of Life Insurance

Life insurance has a simple goal, Seldowitz said: to help a family overcome the impact of the loss of one of the breadwinners. We all live in a world of uncertainty, and things can happen, he said, adding that life insurance is not for everybody. The important thing is to plan.

He discussed three main types of life insurance: term, permanent and universal.

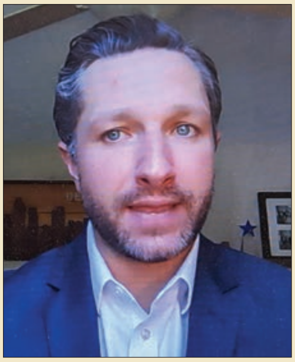
Term insurance has the advantage of being relatively inexpensive, he said, like renting an apartment compared to buying a house. You sign a lease and get a certain fixed benefit that doesn't change. But when it expires after 15 or 20 years, it is entirely up to the insurance company to set the terms for renewal.

Term insurance is used for two main reasons, he said. Some people have limited resources and don't want to pay the higher cost of permanent insurance. Others might purchase it if they have a temporary need, such as 15 more years to pay off their mortgage and want their spouse to be able to do so should something happen to one of them.

Permanent insurance, in contrast, is like buying property, he said. It's more expensive in the short-term. But like buying a home, people who buy permanent life insurance are building equity; also, the premium is fixed over time.

The policy also has a cash value, which you can withdraw or borrow against to buy property, pay down debt—whatever you want.

Permanent life insurance is also not reachable by divorce or financial predators, he said, and universities are prohibited from considering the cash value of life insurance when making decisions about financial aid.



SCREEN CAPTURE

Michael Gregson

SCREEN CAPTURE

Stuart Seldowitz

Universal life insurance is a flexible product that can be used for estate planning or for special needs children, he said.

Ins and Outs of Long-Term Care

Long-term care has become more expensive over the years, Gregson said. People are living longer lives; and as a result more people are experiencing dementia and other health problems for longer periods of time. And by the time people who are now planning for long-term care need it in a few decades, the costs will be a lot greater, he said.

In the New York City area, one year of home health care costs $52,000 on average, he said, while a year in an assisted living facility costs $80,000, and a year in a semi-private room in a skilled nursing facility averages $143,000.

"My advice is to educate yourself on what the options are," he said. "Everybody does something different. It's not a one-size-fits-all situation." The goals are to protect assets and to make sure family members don't need to become caregivers.

People can buy coverage for a specific number of years' worth of benefits, and a specific amount of benefit.

On average, he said, women who receive long-term care benefits from New York Life use them for 3.7 years. For men, it is 2.5 years. That includes the range from home care to nursing home care.

Taking questions from the audience of nearly 200, Gregson said that Foreign Service officers with a pension probably won't qualify for Medicaid long-term care. For people who retire abroad, most plans will cover about 100 days of care overseas. A hybrid life insurance/long-term care plan does cover a year of long-term care overseas.

Members can view video of the webinar at afsa.org/video.

FSGB 2020 Annual Report

Cases Are Up for the Foreign Service Grievance Board

The Foreign Service Grievance Board is the sole independent grievance appeals body of the Foreign Service and ensures the fullest measure of due process for FS employees.

The Foreign Service Grievance Board closed 66 cases in 2020. That's about the same as were resolved in 2019, despite the pandemic, according to the FSGB's 2020 annual report. At the same time, the board received 64 new cases in 2020, 10 more than it received in 2019.

About two-thirds of board members are experienced Foreign Service annuitants who have served in the various foreign affairs agencies, and about one-third are legal professionals, primarily retired judges, lawyers and arbitrators.

AFSA's Labor Management staff assist members with agency-level grievances, as well as with appeals to the FSGB. Currently, LM is assisting members with 281 grievances at either the agency or board level.

The person filing the grievance has the burden of proof in all cases except where the agency in question is trying to take disciplinary action. In those cases, the agency has the burden of proof.

Staffing of the FSGB was complicated in 2020 by delay in the reappointment of the board's senior adviser and two annuitant members, and delay in the appointment of five new board members, by then–Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. (Secretary of State Antony Blinken reappointed the exiting members and appointed the new members shortly after taking office this year.)

A Look at the 2020 Numbers

The FSGB closed 15 financial, eight discipline, 17 evaluation/performance and 16 separation cases, among others, in 2020.

In these cases, the FSGB affirmed the foreign affairs agency decision 42 percent of the time, while it reversed agency decisions nine percent of the time.

Twenty-four percent of cases were settled, while the FSGB partially affirmed and partly reversed agency decisions in eight percent of cases.

In 2020, the FSGB resolved 17 cases in which employees claimed errors in Employee Evaluation Reports and other aspects of the Official Performance Folder. In six decisions, the relevant foreign affairs agency was affirmed and in three decisions, the agency was reversed.

Five cases were settled and withdrawn, while one was dismissed as moot after the agency voluntary granted relief while the case was pending. Two were dismissed on jurisdictional grounds.

The FSGB resolved eight discipline cases in 2020, half of which involved Visa Lookout Accountability violations. The FSGB upheld the agency's discipline determination in three of those VLA violation cases, while reversing the agency's letter of reprimand in a fourth case.

The board resolved two cases involving unwanted sexual contact, affirming the agency's decision in one case and partially reversing the agency's decision in the other.

The FSGB closed 16 cases involving separation for cause, "time in class" expiration or denial of tenure. In four cases, the board affirmed the agency's decision, while in five cases, it reversed the decision.

Five cases were settled or withdrawn before the board reached a decision, and two were dismissed in their entirety.

The board resolved 15 cases in 2020 involving financial claims. Issues included debts resulting from overpayment by the agency; per diem disputes; initial salary determination; discriminatory fine for damages; and disability retirement calculations.

The FSGB affirmed the agency's decision eight times and reversed the decision once. Four cases were settled or withdrawn; one was dismissed for lack of timeliness; and one was remanded to the agency to await a decision by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on parallel issues.

Established in 1976

The FSGB was established by Congress in 1976 after years of AFSA advocacy. Each member is appointed by the Secretary of State from a list of nominees jointly submitted by AFSA and the agencies utilizing the Foreign Service personnel system. Terms of office are two years, subject to renewal.

Visit afsa.org/grievance-guidance to learn more about common types of grievances and about the grievance process.

The annual report features descriptions of numerous cases, without naming complainants. Visit fsgb.gov to learn more about the board and to read the full annual report.

Boosting AFSA's Social Media Presence

Social media engagement is a vital element of AFSA's public outreach strategy. It's a useful tool to extend our reach beyond our traditional audience to broaden the domestic constituency for the U.S. Foreign Service.

By increasing our activity on social media, we raise AFSA's profile and name recognition, which is, in turn, critical to our success in introducing the Foreign Service to new audiences throughout the country.

Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook allow us to easily connect and share information with our members and current partners, as well as future partners and supporters.

More and more people are looking to social media to stay updated on events and latest developments, and we want to capitalize on that.

We have been working to develop engaging messages, interesting content and compelling graphics, and over the course of the last three months, have already seen some good results in the form of more followers and more engagement with our content. For example, from January 1 to April 1, we saw a five percent increase in Twitter followers. On Facebook, we saw the engagement rate on our posts increase from three percent to nine percent.

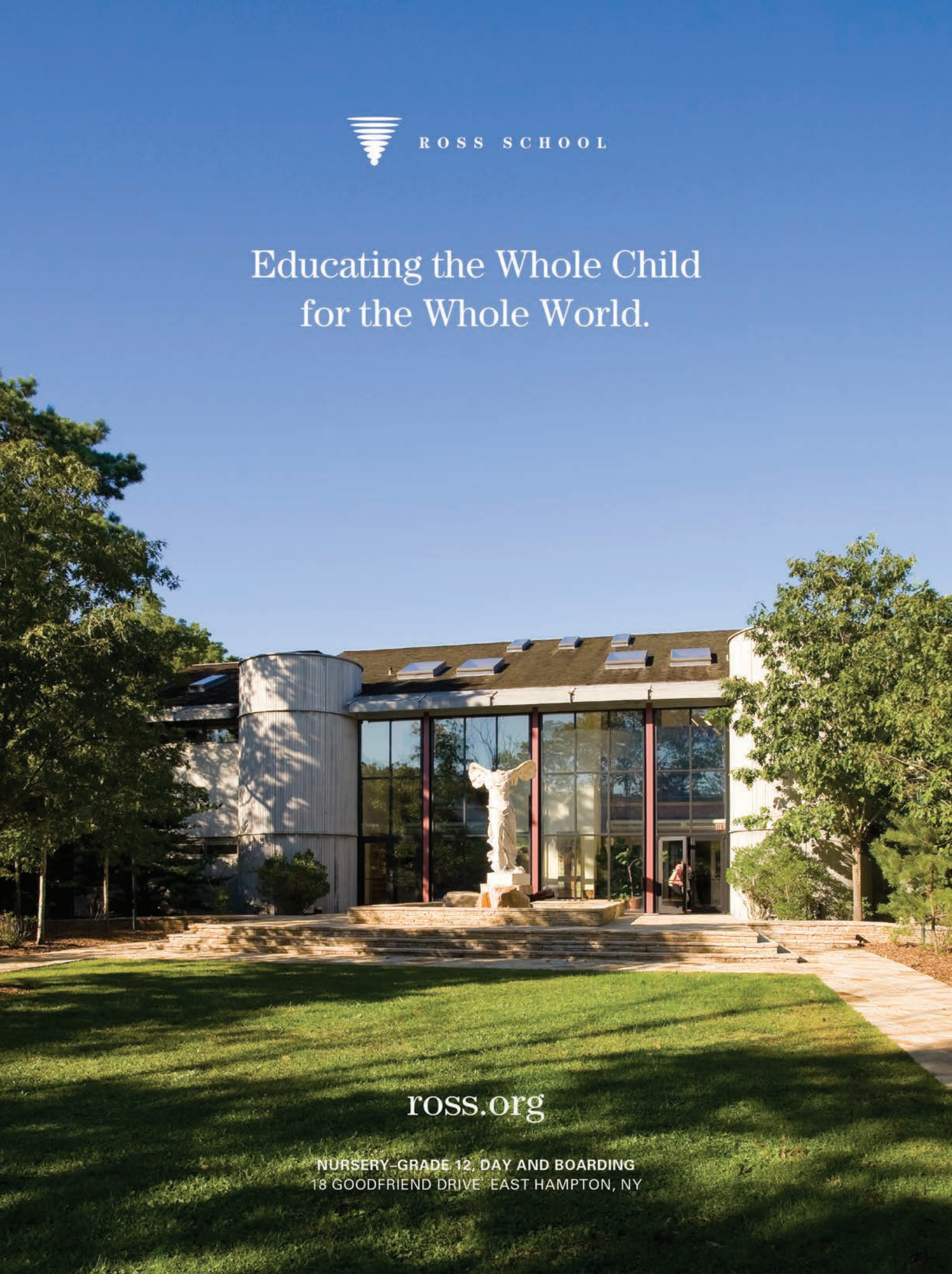
AFSA members can help us. You can follow and repost the FS stories, event information and articles on social media. Share our messages and invites with friends and online communities!

Not yet active on social media? We can help! See AFSA's social media toolkit for ideas and sample messages: it's on the member outreach resources page: afsa.org/first-line-defense. Reposting content is an easy one-click process.

With your help, we can reach many more people throughout the United States to let them know about the important and varied work of the Foreign Service and its role in keeping America prosperous and secure.

Please start by following us on Twitter (@afsatweets) and Facebook (facebook.com/afsapage).

As always, if you have any questions about our outreach efforts or, specifically, about our social media engagement, please contact AFSA Strategic Communications and Outreach Manager Nadja Ruzica at ruzica@afsa.org.


ROSS SCHOOL
Educating the Whole Child for the Whole World.
ross.org
NURSERY–GRADE 12, DAY AND BOARDING
18 GOODFRIEND DRIVE EAST HAMPTON, NY

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 On FS Kids TIPS AND THOUGHTS

FS children face unique challenges in the best of times. How are they faring during the pandemic?

BY REBECCA GRAPPO

Books will be written, and Ph.D. theses will be defended, about the impact of COVID-19 on society. But few will probably ever interview, let alone study, one group of people: the children of the Foreign Service.

Members of the Foreign Service are highly trained professionals who take on worldwide assignments and serve courageously amid threats of war, terrorism, natural disasters—even pandemics. Let's take a look at how their children fare.

The Pandemic Strikes

Not many people could have imagined the seismic impact a global pandemic would have on their professional or personal lives—and especially those of their children. Far-reaching, this pandemic has affected just about every single person on the planet.

It caused a global diaspora of Foreign Service families. About 13,000 children are dependents of American diplomats in more than 230 posts around the world. Unless they were infants and blissfully unaware of what was happening, all of them have been affected.

Some families left posts under authorized or ordered departure; others stayed throughout the pandemic, but remained locked in their homes, unable to go out for months at a time. To say that it played out differently according to the country would be an understatement; experiencing the pandemic in Sweden was not the same as experiencing it in Brazil or Manila. But no matter where they were posted, no one has had it easy.

Schools began to shut down amid the growing crisis in March 2020. Students anticipated being back at school after spring break, only to find that they couldn't return for the rest of the academic year. It would be impossible

Rebecca Grappo, M.Ed., has been connected to the Department of State for 35 years, as both a former employee and Foreign Service family member. She is the founder of RNG International Educational Consultants, LLC, which specializes in helping students around the world with the college application process as well as boarding school and therapeutic placements.

It would be impossible to quantify the many interrupted rites of passage and milestones missed.

to quantify the many interrupted rites of passage and milestones missed.

In international schools, many students moved back to the United States, unexpectedly, or on to new countries. Those who did not move, the “stayers”—a term coined by child psychologist Dr. Doug Ota, who studies attachment in international school transitions—had their struggles, too, as they witnessed their friends and teachers suddenly depart, leaving them behind.

“The Washing Machine of Transition”

For many Foreign Service kids, there was no chance to say goodbye at the end of the school year, leading to a tremendous sense of loss without closure. What’s more, few students and families possessed the language to talk about transition.

As one international school counselor commented in a recent webinar for school personnel, those personnel living in the international school world were all experiencing “the washing machine of transition” at the same time their students and families were.

FS kids who were stateside at the start of the pandemic endured the sudden scramble to figure out how to put entire educational systems online, a heroic effort by teachers and administrators. Students were heroic as well, as they struggled to adapt and faced canceled games, proms, performances and other much-anticipated events.

Many counseling professionals were concerned, though, about the students’ loss of attachment to those in a school community whose role is to help kids feel safe and secure. Such a sudden transition from what was considered "normal" can expose the strengths and weaknesses of a school community, as well as be a factor in a child's or adolescent's resiliency.

Many boarding schools were able to create safe bubbles through quarantining, and those students had a relatively normal year. Yet many still felt the disruption, and could not reunite with their families overseas (as of this writing, some have been separated from their families for more than a year now), or faced forced quarantines on return to campus.

Academic Impact

In addition to the emotional costs, many students and families have reported that the last year has brought about other losses in academic achievement. Not only were there lost learning opportunities, but students who struggle with executive functioning or other learning differences have faced additional challenges staying on track.

The structure and extra support they have depended on have not always been available through Zoom at the level needed, leading to learning gaps. Even something as seemingly mundane as internet connectivity, which can vary widely based on where one lives, made it difficult for some families to be online for school and work remotely all at the same time.

Standardized tests such as the SAT, and even AP and IB exams, were affected, and this resulted in even greater anxiety about the college application process among many students and their parents.

Perhaps the greatest negative impact, however, was on the students who were caught moving from Country A to Country B, at times with an indefinite evacuation stop in the U.S. It has not only been extremely difficult for these students to catch up academically—and feel caught up—but also to make new friends and feel connected to the new school community.

Nevertheless, some students have enjoyed learning at their own pace and not feeling the stress of rushing to school or enduring long bus or taxi rides across traffic-clogged cities. One parent reported her son was "living his best life!"

Parents Talk About the Loss of Connection

As one parent puts it: "It's difficult enough to be a teen moving from a comfortable and secure place, where you have a great group of friends and you know your surroundings well, to a place that is not as comfortable or as secure. But then add COVID-19 where the opportunities for kids to build relationships with other kids in the new post is almost completely absent. I think that is the biggest impact COVID-19 has had."

Another parent shares: "PCSing [moving to a new post] is challenging always, and one of the big priorities arriving in a new post for both adults and kids is making new friends and finding community. Transitioning to a new post with a severe COVID-19 situation meant this stage effectively did not happen."

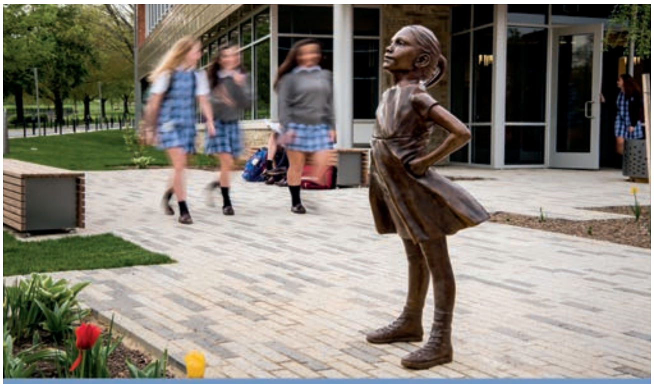
And yet another parent serving in a country that has been particularly hard-hit writes: "I think for us and many people, the hardest thing was dealing with unknown health risks and social distancing requirements placed upon us by the pandemic. The local kids and their parents are much more permissive regarding staying out late, social distancing, etc., than we are. Thus, our son continues to struggle with his conservative parents."

Recommendations for Parents

Many parents remain anxious about the cumulative effect of both the pandemic and the additional stressors that can come with Foreign Service life, and naturally wonder if their kids are going to be OK. Here are a few tips that other FS parents and experts have offered.

Communicate, empathize and validate your children's feelings and concerns. Model for your children that it is OK to be sad and reassure them you are there for them. Be wary of toxic positivity—i.e., being overly positive without acknowledging the difficulty.

Ruth Van Reken, co-author of *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, 3rd ed. (Nicholas Brealey, 2017), says it is important to offer comfort before encouragement. Acknowledge the pain, loss and disappointment of the past year so that they feel seen. Then the words of encouragement can follow.



Provide the language your children and teens need to describe their emotions and what's going on. An excellent book for elementary-age children is *Emotional Resilience and the Expat Child* by Julia Simens (Summertime, 2011).

Use your school counseling team as a resource. Communicate with the school counselor if you are encountering difficulty at home. Ask if they have resources for helping to develop social-emotional intelligence and resilience. What can you reinforce at home? The International School Counselor Association has been developing resources, so encourage your school to become a member if it has not already.

Encourage your children to practice the pillars of good health—sufficient quality sleep, proper nutrition and exercise—and maintain structure in daily life.

Be creative in celebrating rituals at home and recognizing milestones. These may become some of your most cherished memories.

If the plan changes, allow your children to deviate from their intended path, if needed. It might be healthy to reassess the plan. Does that mean switching schools? Taking a gap year? Changing their college plans? Help them to think it through and then offer support.

Help your kids to see the future and know that this period is not going to last forever. Encourage them to think and plan for future events such as travel, college, and time with loved ones.

Recommendations for the Department of State

Some parents have also offered their suggestions for how the department can better support families during this time.

Find ways to support parents. Whether employees or not, all parents are juggling a lot right now. It might be working across time zones, fulfilling professional obligations while simultaneously needing to help (multiple) kids with online learning. Single parents, in particular, have shouldered huge responsibilities.

The Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR) was written for "normal" times, not a pandemic. When possible, give the most generous possible interpretation to a regulation if it will help to support students and their families. Find a way to say yes, and if you can't, then explore and act on how to change the regulation.

Travel allowance. Parents who send their children back to boarding school face the decision to have their children travel solo, or (since all are not able to travel alone) accompany them. Boarding schools now have new quarantine requirements, at times requiring a hotel stay off-campus. There is no allowance for this.

Education allowance. If families determine it is in the best interest of their child to repeat a year because of the learning difficulties accrued during the pandemic, find a way for the education allowance to cover it. Parents and their children do not make such decisions lightly—trust them.

Stories of Resilience

Dr. Robert Brooks, a psychologist who has spent his career researching resilience in kids, states that "islands of competency" can be a great predictor of flexibility and tenacity in young people.

That is, do they have hobbies and interests they can pursue? Where do they excel? Do they have a portable skill or talent that allows them to connect with others? Is there a way to translate their favorite extracurricular activity into something that works even in a pandemic?

Stories abound of FS students who have led clubs and organizations in schools, performed theater and musical ensembles online, created studio art projects, engaged in service projects and political activism, raised money for those in need, volunteered, stepped up to help out family members, took courses online, learned a new skill, got paying jobs or internships—and more.

Though the pandemic created personal challenges our kids have never experienced before, the way so many have persevered and risen to the occasion is nothing short of inspirational.

RESOURCES

Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds
By David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken

Raising Global Teens: A Practical Handbook for Parenting in the 21st Century
By Dr. Anisha Abraham

Emotional Resilience and the Expat Child: Practical Storytelling Techniques That Will Strengthen the Global Family
By Julia Simens

Raising Kids in the Foreign Service
By Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (Author), Leah Morefield Evans (Editor)

The Emotionally Resilient Expat: Engage, Adapt and Thrive Across Cultures
By Linda A. Janssen

"Promoting Your Child's Emotional Health," *The Foreign Service Journal*, June 2011, Semiannual School Supplement, p. 73.

International School Counselor Association Website: **https://iscainfo.com**

Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence: **https://www.ycei.org**

American School Counselor Association: **https://www.schoolcounselor.org**

EXCERPT FROM THE DECEMBER 2020 *FSJ* EDUCATION SUPPLEMENT

Leaving Campus Behind

BY SEAMUS GORMAN

For me, the beginning of March is when COVID-19 transitioned from a frightening story in the news to an event with profound personal consequences…

I'm a Foreign Service family member, and the rest of my family was about 5,000 miles away, in Russia. Because of COVID-19 travel bans, getting back there would be extremely difficult—and I wasn't even sure whether to make the attempt….

Ultimately, I decided that the worst case, if I got very sick, would be much easier to handle if I were with my family in Moscow. My State Department connection created a difficult situation because I was separated from my family. But strangely, it also provided a solution: Eventually, through the Operational Medicine program I was able to get on an OpMed flight back to Moscow. And after a 14-day quarantine, during which I did not write this essay as I'd planned, I was finally reunited with my family…

My situation isn't easy—I'm away from close friends and had to put my college career on hold. But I realize I am also extremely fortunate to have the opportunities that being connected to the State Department has given me. I'm living in my parents' basement, yes, but it's a pretty interesting place to be.

Seamus Gorman is a Foreign Service family member who has lived in Moscow, Yerevan, Almaty, Beijing, Amman and Northern Virginia. He is currently a junior at James Madison University.

EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

Go to our webpage at www.afsa.org/education.

School	Page Number	Enrollment	Gender Distribution M/F	Percent Boarding	Percent Int'l.	Levels Offered	AP/IB◆	TABS common application	Accept ADD/LD◆◆	Miles to Int'l. Airport	International Students Orientation	Holiday Break Coverage◆◆◆	Annual Tuition, Room & Board (US $)
ELEMENTARY/JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH													
Fairfax Christian School	72	330	50/50	15	20	PK-12	AP	N	Limited	3	Y	Y	60,000-67,620[abdefg]
Fay School	71	475	50/50	32	17	K-9	NA	Y	Limited	30	Y	Limited	70,420-77,480[b]
Garrison Forest School	69	520	All Girls	30	8	PK-12	AP	N	Limited	20	Y	N	62,015-66,810[b]
Ross School	56	360	50/50	45	47	PK-12, PG	AP	N	Limited	90	Y	Limited	82,215[abe]
Stuart Hall School	4	326	52/48	24	23	PK-12	AP	Y	Y	143	Y	Y	55,000[bd]
JUNIOR HIGH/SENIOR HIGH													
Grier School	61	275	All Girls	85	40	7-12	AP	Y	Y	120	Y	Limited	57,900[ad]
New England Innovation Academy	62	64	NA	NA	NA	9-12	NA	N	Y	35	Y	Y	42,500[bdef]
Oak Hill Academy	73	140	60/40	100	10	8-12	AP	Y	Y	90	Y	N	36,900[ab]
St. Margaret's School	4	101	All Girls	70	22	8-12, PG	AP	Y	Y	50	y	Y	42,240-52,250[abd]
Wilbraham & Monson Academy	75	415	56/44	49	30	6-PG	AP	Y	Y	28	Y	Limited	62,300[b]
SENIOR HIGH													
Besant Hill School of Happy Valley	63	100	50/50	80	50	9-12, PG	AP	Y	Y	90	Y	N	57,750-64,155[bde]
Christchurch School	66, BC	210	60/40	70	25	9-12	AP	Y	Y	50	Y	Y	55,900-56,900[d]
EF Academy New York	59	450	53/47	98	95	9-12	IB	N	Limited	40.5	Y	Limited	58,500[a]
Kimball Union Academy	60	340	55/45	75	25	9-12, PG	AP	Y	Y	125	Y	Limited	68,700
The Madeira School	77	320	All Girls	51	15	9-12	AP	Y	Limited	16	N	N	64,500[be]
New Hampton School	75	336	55/45	75	20	9-12, PG	AP/IB	Y	Y	95	Y	Limited	64,700[b]
St. Timothy's School	60	175	All Girls	70	30	9-12, PG	IB	Y	Limited	20	Y	N	35,800-62,900[bde]
OVERSEAS													
American Overseas School Rome	63	560	50/50	NA	70	PK-12	AP/IB	N	Y	20	Y	Y	12,460-32,923[bc]
Berlin Brandenburg International School	58	720	50/50	10	70	K-12	IB	N	Y	22	Y	N	48,000[c]
Carlucci American International School of Lisbon	70	689	48/52	NA	78	PK-12	IB	N	Limited	18	Y	N	10,490-22,232[abc]
EF Academy Oxford	59	185	42/58	100	100	11-12	IB	N	N	48	Y	Limited	56,000[ac]
Frankfurt International School	77	1,800	50/50	NA	80	K-12	IB	N	Limited	12	Y	N	28,760[bc]
John F. Kennedy School Berlin	76	1,617	50/50	NA	47	K-12	AP	N	Limited	15	Y	N	None

◆Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate ◆◆Attention Deficit Disorder/Learning Disabilities ◆◆◆Dec. 25-Jan. 1 NA, Not applicable
BC, Back Cover IBC, Inside Back Cover [a]Sibling discount [b]Financial aid available [c]Dollar value subject to exchange rate
[d]Aid for federal employees [e]Gap year [f]Need-blind admissions; will meet full financial need [g]Host families

EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

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OVERSEAS (CONTINUED)													
Leysin American School in Switzerland	69	300	50/50	100	85	7-12, PG	AP/IB	N	Limited	75	Y	N	99,000[abd]
St. Stephen's School	73	294	47/53	15	64	9-12, PG	AP/IB	N	Y	12	Y	N	44,380[b]
TASIS The American School in England	67	620	50/50	27	41	Pre PK-12	AP/IB	N	Limited	8	Y	N	68,000[bcd]
SPECIAL NEEDS													
The Gow School	72	140	80/20	93	10	6-12, PG	NA	N	Y	30	N	Limited	72,500[b]
The Lab School of Washington	65	375	59/41	NA	1	1-12	NA	N	Y	26	Y	N	54,000[b]
DISTANCE LEARNING													
ASU Prep Digital	71	4,000	50/50	NA	5	K-12	NA	N	NA	NA	Y	Y	0-7,200
TTU-K-12 (Texas Tech)	77	1,970	48/52	NA	54	K-12	AP	N	Limited	NA	N	NA	3,000-4,600
HIGHER EDUCATION													
ASU Thunderbird School of Global Management	IBC	388	53/47	13	45	NA	NA	NA	NA	19	Y	Y	70,000-110,000[b]

OTHER

School	Page Number	
AAFSW	79	Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide: Publisher of *Raising Kids in the Foreign Service*. A volunteer organization that supports Foreign Service employees, spouses, partners and members of household. Visit www.aafsw.org; FSHub.org.
FLO	79	Family Liaison Office: Information and resources for Foreign Service families. Contact FLOAskEducation@state.gov.
FSYF	78	Foreign Service Youth Foundation: A support network for U.S. Foreign Service youth worldwide. Go to www.fsyf.org.

◆Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate ◆◆Attention Deficit Disorder/Learning Disabilities ◆◆◆Dec. 25-Jan. 1 NA, Not applicable
BC, Back Cover IBC, Inside Back Cover [a]Sibling discount [b]Financial aid available [c]Dollar value subject to exchange rate
[d]Aid for federal employees [e]Gap year [f]Need-blind admissions; will meet full financial need [g]Host families

EDUCATION SUPPLEMENT

WHAT'S NEW WITH Special Education Allowances?

The Family Liaison Office Talks with the Office of Child and Family Programs

BY CHARLOTTE LARSEN

Bidding on one's next assignment can be a daunting task for any Foreign Service family. It can be even more complex when education options in overseas settings for children with special needs are a part of that decision.

The State Department's Office of Child and Family Programs (known as CFP) under the Bureau of Medical Services (MED) works together with parents and overseas MED medical staff members to ensure children's psychological, behavioral health and special educational needs are identified and appropriately assessed. The goal is to have an effective treatment and education plan established in advance of and during overseas assignments.

Once the need for special education services is determined, families can apply for the Special Needs Education Allowance (known as SNEA). In the past, parents have faced challenges with this process; thanks to their advocacy, the department has put in place new procedures and updated guidance to improve application processing time, added staffing with geographical responsibilities, improved electronic reimbursement procedures and adopted a new appeals process.

The Bureau of Global Talent Management's Family Liaison Office's education and youth team (E&Y) works closely with CFP and can assist parents in navigating the SNEA process. Recently, FLO spoke with CFP to discuss available resources, previous challenges and new procedures to better serve all FS employees under chief-of-mission authority and their families.

In April, as education and youth program officer of the Family Liaison Office, I conducted a written interview with Deputy Chief Medical Officer for Mental Health Programs Charles J. Lilly, M.D., of the State Department's Bureau of Medical Services. We discussed new staffing and procedures in support of the Special Needs Education Allowance.

—Charlotte Larsen, FLO

Charlotte Larsen, who has been a Foreign Service family member at six overseas posts over the last 25 years, joined the Family Liaison Office as education and youth program officer in 2020. She served previously as a global employment adviser and a community liaison office coordinator in Asia and Europe and, prior to joining State, taught in international and Department of Defense schools.

It Takes a Team

Charlotte Larsen, FLO: *The CFP team has recently expanded. Can you tell us about the team and their roles?*

Dr. Charles J. Lilly, MED: The MED CFP team currently consists of one part-time child psychiatrist, two clinical psychologists, one education program specialist, one social worker, a nurse liaison and administrative support. The clinical psychologists, education program

specialist and social worker have all been assigned geographic regions to support development of a knowledge base of available resources in their respective regions.

The nurse liaison and education specialist positions were new for CFP in 2020. The education specialist has brought a wealth of knowledge and experience regarding special educational programs and services in U.S. public school systems. The nurse liaison provides a primary point of contact for all referrals and SNEA applications, and will help CFP focus on how we can best serve the needs of families overseas.

***FLO:** What was the impetus for the expansion?*

CFP: Through the combination of staff attrition and the hiring freeze that began in 2016, CFP had dwindled to one full-time social worker and one part-time psychiatrist. During this period, the program continued to receive a similar number of SNEA applications and educational and mental health clearance consultation requests.

This led to significant processing delays and related dissatisfaction. While the staffing issues caused significant problems, they also gave CFP the opportunity to reevaluate how the program was operating and to build a more diverse team of professionals.

***FLO:** You mentioned the addition of the "nurse liaison." What specific role will the nurse liaison play in assisting families through the SNEA process?*

CFP: The new nurse liaison position is intended as a primary point of contact for clinicians and families currently serving or planning to serve overseas. Prior to this, communication with CFP had been much more disparate. The nurse liaison position has allowed CFP to work directly with families, helping them to understand the SNEA process and obtain required support documentation, thus streamlining the process.

***FLO:** How does CFP look at information parents obtain from their own research? For example, if a parent finds a school, therapist or other resource at a*

post that is not currently on CFP's radar, will CFP consider that information in approving the post or allowing the parent to make use of those services?

CFP: We always welcome the involvement of parents in helping us make the most informed clearance recommendations or SNEA authorizations for their children. This includes the family providing the names, credentials and contact information for schools, therapists or other resources from their own research.

In collaboration with our overseas medical staff, including regional medical officers (RMOs), regional medical officer psychiatrists (RMO/Ps), other health care providers and the Office of Overseas Schools' regional education officers (REOs), we will then seek to understand the qualifications of any clinicians or capacities of schools overseas to manage the children's needs.

Because of the wide variability in expertise and capacity of some of these resources overseas, we may not be able to approve them for use in every case.

***FLO:** The clinicians now have regional responsibilities that mirror those of the REOs from the Department of State's Office of Overseas Schools. What is the benefit of this?*

CFP: The regional assignments will allow the CFP clinicians to develop a much deeper understanding of resources in each region and work more closely with their counterparts in the OOS. We hope that when travel restrictions relax, our CFP clinicians will have the opportunity to meet school officials and provide education and guidance regarding CFP and SNEA funding to schools, health units and embassy communities overseas.

Simplifying Things

***FLO:** I understand that the SNEA referral process was recently simplified. How will this benefit FS families?*

CFP: The CFP nurse liaison has been central to improving our processes by addressing all requests and inquiries, following up with families, assisting with gathering required documentation, assigning SNEA cases for review when all the documentation has been submitted, monitoring and tracking any incomplete requests, and elevating any inquiries to

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The MED/CFP team. From left, Dr. Charles Lilly, Michele Schurtz, Nancy Kelly, Dr. Barbara George and Monique Perry. Not pictured: Dr. Ruth Imershein, Emili Kuchler, Dr. Tera Ford and Salma Zaki.

the MED/CFP SNEA adjudicators when further guidance is necessary.

When families identify a problem or potential problem with a child's education while overseas, CFP strongly encourages them to discuss this with the embassy health unit staff, who will then schedule an appointment with the RMO/P. If, through that discussion, SNEA seems an option, we have simplified the RMO/P referral process.

In the new process, we only ask for basic eligibility criteria as described in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. We specifically ask, "Does the child have an actual or suspected diagnosis in one of the 13 categories defined by the statute; and if so, how does the diagnosis adversely affect the child's progress in school?"

Additionally, we want to understand what, if any, school interventions or supports have been helpful or are being requested.

The simplification of the SNEA referral process identifies children with needs and gets their families in contact with CFP as quickly as possible, rather than waiting for parents, schools, clinicians and the RMO/P to gather required documentation prior to submitting the SNEA referral.

The CFP nurse liaison then works directly with families to assist in gathering required documentation.

FLO: *What is being done to reduce the lengthy list of required paperwork for parents? Are there other ways to simplify things, particularly for those who have already established long-term needs for their children in the past?*

CFP: CFP recognizes this is a problem, and we are working to streamline the clearance consultation and SNEA application processes to make them more efficient and easier for our families. Families do not need to forward duplicate documentation for consideration in clearance and SNEA processes. We actively try to anticipate future needs and work with parents ahead of time to identify what documentation will be required to avoid a difficult rush to obtain required information.

If families have questions regarding the clearance referral and SNEA application processes, or are having difficulty obtaining requested information, please notify the CFP team at MEDCFP@state.gov.

FLO: What is being done to ensure that information resources on the State Department's intranet site reflect the latest guidance?

CFP: The CFP team recently updated the DoS intranet site and are in the process of updating the internet site. We anticipate the CFP internet site will be available by early summer.

We continue to actively collaborate with the Office of Overseas Schools, Family Liaison Office, the Office of Allowances, and our overseas medical teams to define and present the most up-to-date information possible in a way that will be most useful.

FLO: How does CFP work with the Office of Overseas Schools?

CFP: CFP meets monthly with OOS to exchange information on related concerns. This has helped CFP clinicians develop a more detailed understanding of the overseas environment.

The recent pandemic highlighted the fragility of some of the resources we relied on in some overseas environments that quickly became unavailable as many schools saw dramatic reductions in enrollment. The OOS maintains much closer and more frequent contact with these schools and was able to communicate with CFP as these changes were occurring.

Through their frequent contact with embassy communities and families serving or planning to serve overseas, OOS also brings to CFP many of the concerns and questions that they receive regarding our services. The REOs' educational expertise, firsthand knowledge of their regions and collaboration with schools overseas continue to be fundamental in determining post resource capabilities for special education.

For additional information, visit the OOS website or email OverseasSchools@state.gov.

The Nitty-Gritty

FLO: *What are the basic eligibility criteria for a student to receive SNEA?*

CFP: The basic eligibility criteria include a medical diagnosis or learning disability that has a significant impact on the child's ability to access a general education curriculum.

These are not the only criteria, however. As per the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, on which we base CFP processes, we also require the child to have an individualized education plan (IEP), which details services required to access the general curriculum. Examples of these services include speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and specialized educational instruction, among others.

The services must be defined as required in the IEP; and the IEP must detail the metrics used to evaluate the child's progress in the various deficiencies the services are intended to address. Many schools overseas do not have experience developing a detailed IEP. CFP recognizes this and will provide guidance to families when equivalent documentation is needed.

To grant SNEA, CFP must understand what services are required, how the school and external specialists will provide the services, and how progress will be measured.

FLO: *Timely responses are paramount for families while bidding. What can families realistically expect from your office in terms of getting their inquiries answered?*

CFP: When families contact the CFP mailbox, MEDCFP@state.gov, they receive a response within five business days. With SNEA applications, the nurse liaison will maintain communication with families until required documentation is compiled. The case is then assigned to one of the CFP specialists to complete adjudication.

Processing times vary based primarily on the time required to compile the necessary documentation. Possible delays may occur because of incomplete documentation, pending identification

of external providers, or if it is not clear which requested services will be provided at extra cost (above basic tuition).

Once the case is assigned to a CFP clinician to complete adjudication, the family can expect a response within two to four weeks. This timeline varies based on the complexity and construction of a complete application.

Now that we are fully staffed, we hope to be able to assess response times more accurately and identify which aspects of the process require the most time. Families are encouraged to contact CFP with questions or problems, including delays in obtaining requested documentation.

***FLO:** What is the difference between a partial- and a full-year SNEA cable?*

CFP: Beginning in 2020, CFP, in collaboration with the Office of Allowances, developed a partial-year services cable. The partial-year cable is an option families can choose that allows for continued reimbursement of required services defined in the learning plan from the prior school year when there is a delay in developing and receiving an updated learning plan for the current year.

Some of our FS families have selected this option when moving to a new post, or if the current school is delayed in developing an updated learning plan for the current school year.

All partial-year SNEA cables will cover school tuition for the full school year and will list SNEA-authorized educationally required services that are at cost above tuition for the first half of the school year.

Once the new or updated plan is created, families forward this information to CFP, and our specialists review and then amend the cable to reflect the eligible services and supports described for the remainder of the school year.

***FLO:** Can you tell me more about the new E2 reimbursement process for SNEA claims? Why was it created?*

CFP: The E2 Local Travel module in the E2 travel system allows employees to scan and upload their paid receipts for SNEA-eligible services and submit these for reimbursement. The new SNEA voucher process centralizes the initial "approver" role for reimbursement claims to the CFP clinicians who authored the cables detailing SNEA-eligible services and expenses, thus increasing the efficiency of the process.

Using E2 in this way also provides families much greater privacy and control over a reimbursement process that previously involved much more interaction with nonclinicians. The claims will first be routed to MED/CFP for review and approval; then to the post finance office for fiscal data and verification of funds under the allowance; and finally, to the post support unit for certification.

FLO: *Is there a formal appeals process? How do families appeal a SNEA denial?*

CFP: MED established a SNEA appeals process in 2020. When a family receives an adverse SNEA decision (either complete or partial denial of requested services), they are informed of the appeals process.

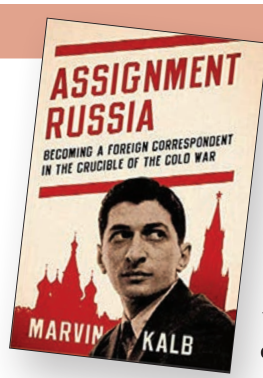
If desired, the family requests to begin the appeals process by contacting the Medical Review Panel chair. The family provides a detailed, written description of the reasons for appeal to the MRP chair, who passes this information to the panel members, including two overseas RMO/Ps and one domestic or overseas RMO who have not had any prior contact with or direct knowledge of the case.

A CFP specialist presents the case to the panel and answers any questions members have. Panel members then vote, and their recommendations are presented to MED's chief medical officer who issues a final determination. The MRP chair then notifies the family.

For More Information. When families begin the process of navigating SNEA, FLO wants them to have a clear idea of how things work and where to go for answers. We encourage anyone with additional questions to reach out directly to the CFP team and to FLO for continued support and resources.

Contact the FLO E&Y team at FLOAskEducation@state.gov, by phone at (202) 647-1076 or online at www.state.gov/flo/education.

Families may find it helpful to read through the 3 FAM 3280 SNEA and the DSSR 271 Education Allowance.



Through a Journalist's Eyes

Assignment Russia: Becoming a Foreign Correspondent in the Crucible of the Cold War
Marvin Kalb, Brookings Institution Press, 2021, $24.99/hardcover, e-book available, 352 pages.

Reviewed by Eileen A. Malloy

Marvin Kalb has written a memoir that is difficult for the reader to resist binge-reading straight to the end. I had expected to find myself at home with this book, sharing with the author a longtime fascination with Russia, and I looked forward to seeing Moscow in all its 1950s Soviet glory through the eyes of a young journalist.

Assignment Russia was that and more. Particularly fascinating were Kalb's insights into the changing world of news journalism, from the time when radio was king to the early days of television news' ascendency. Before he could be a successful foreign correspondent, he had to learn how to be a journalist.

Recruited by Edward R. Murrow—acknowledged as the best of his day—Kalb lived and breathed Murrow's mantra that "a reporter's job was not to make news, but to cover it—with honesty and humility, with fairness and dignity." The book details his early work at CBS in radio news, his first exposure to production of a television documentary, and his determined efforts to become the recognized Soviet expert at CBS.

Along the way, Kalb worked with, supported and admired journalists such as Walter Cronkite—the man who ultimately became the most trusted journalist in America. Kalb proved his worth by offering CBS' star journalists background information on the USSR, in general, and, in particular, on the thinking of then–Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, whom Kalb had met during an assignment as a translator to the U.S. embassy in Moscow.

The relationship of the United States and the USSR during the 1950s, and the danger of a nuclear confrontation, made Kalb's perspective invaluable to CBS. Readers who came of age in the late 1990s or later may find Kalb's description of the USSR as being of "burning contemporary relevance" a bit overdramatic. But those of us who grew up in the 1950s and '60s—and can remember practicing drills for a possible nuclear attack—will agree with his assessment.

Eventually Kalb got his coveted assignment to Moscow, just in time to represent CBS at the ill-fated Paris Summit on the Berlin crisis. Kalb's reporting on his one-on-one discussions with Khrushchev early on the morning of the summit gives the reader a wonderful sense of Khrushchev's propaganda approach to the 1960 U-2 shootdown fiasco.

While we already have access to a number of sources describing President Dwight Eisenhower's thinking on the impact of the shooting down of the U-2, most recently in Susan Eisenhower's 2020 book, *How Ike Led*, firsthand reporting on the Soviet leader's thinking is much less accessible.

Once on the ground in Moscow, Kalb and his wife, both fluent Russian speakers, took every opportunity to talk with Soviet citizens, from high-level bureaucrats to lowly taxi drivers, in an effort to understand the health and prospects of the Soviet state.

Kalb personally believed that the alliance between the two communist superpowers—China and the USSR—was unraveling. Both countries, he believed, "were guided primarily by their national needs, which led inexorably to differing interpretations of communist ideology." He saw the upcoming split long before key players in the White House and the Department of State.

One of the more remarkable scenes Kalb witnessed was the unofficial funeral for Boris Pasternak, author of *Doctor Zhivago*. Kalb was one of the few, if not the only, Western journalists to attend the Peredelkino event. He filmed the mourners, observing those artists and writers brave enough to ignore the Soviet government's attempts to keep people away from the funeral, including the poet Voznesensky, and watched the contrasting behaviors of Pasternak's girlfriend and his wife. Makes one wish to have been a fly on the wall!

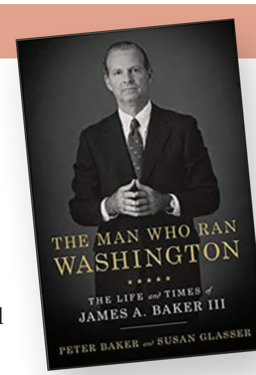
I very much enjoyed *Assignment Russia* and look forward to the next in Kalb's series of memoirs. Into his 90s now, he has a great story to share.

One of the more remarkable scenes Kalb witnessed was the unofficial funeral for Boris Pasternak, author of *Doctor Zhivago*.

Eileen Anne Malloy, a career Foreign Service officer from 1978 to 2008, served in the U.K., Canada, Ireland, Australia, Russia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Washington, D.C., where she held multiple assignments. The U.S. ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic from 1994 to 1997, she was appointed senior adviser on Russia and the former Soviet Union for Energy Secretary Bill Richardson in 1999.

Remembering a Power Broker

The Man Who Ran Washington: The Life and Times of James A. Baker III
Peter Baker and Susan Glasser, Doubleday, 2020, $35/hardcover, e-book available, 720 pages.



Reviewed by Joseph L. Novak

For his smooth, Machiavellian ways, James A. Baker III was called the "Velvet Hammer." *The Man Who Ran Washington* makes a convincing case that he was the power broker of his era, as well. A deeply sourced account of Baker's consequential life, it also provides a window on a time when Washington was less polarized and government more effective.

Best known for his tenure as the 61st Secretary of State (1989-1992), Baker also served as Treasury secretary and twice as White House chief of staff. He played key roles in five presidential campaigns and was George W. Bush's lead lawyer during the 2000 Florida recount.

The husband-and-wife authors are well placed to tell his story. Peter Baker (no relation to James Baker) of *The New York Times* and Susan Glasser of *The New Yorker* are highly regarded journalists with many years of Washington experience. They spent 70 hours interviewing Baker, who remains active from his home base in Houston at age 91.

The narrative arc is somewhat sprawling as it richly details the dimensions of Baker's long and varied career. The book is written with verve, however, and the pages move quickly. Arranged chronologically, it sets out in-depth background on Baker's privileged upbringing and how, after service in the Marines, he returned to Texas and focused on his legal career.

Along the way, he met George H.W. Bush, then entering Republican politics. The authors make clear that this is the turning point in which Baker, emulating his friend Bush, became overtly ambitious and began to disregard his father's stentorian advice to "keep out of politics."

Years later and with considerable irony, Baker tapped into this fatherly admonition by using it in the title of his folksy 2006 autobiography, *Work Hard, Study … and Keep Out of Politics!*

The authors cogently relate how Baker, following George H.W. Bush to Washington, quickly gained respect even while managing two losing presidential campaigns (Ford in 1976 and Bush in 1980). He reaped additional accolades for his service as Ronald Reagan's first chief of staff. As a reward, Reagan named Baker Treasury secretary in 1985. Although he had "nothing more than an undergraduate course in economics," as the authors put it, Baker was effective at Treasury.

Wheeling and dealing with Democrats, he led the successful effort to rewrite the tax code; and in exhaustive negotiations with fellow foreign ministers, he reached grand bargains on currency policy. The authors astutely note that Baker's act of recommending Alan Greenspan as Federal Reserve Board Chair in 1987 had an especially long-lasting effect, given that Greenspan served until 2006.

The chapters detailing Baker's service as Bush's Secretary of State are particularly absorbing. The authors shine a spotlight on Baker's starring role in ending the Cold War, in easing the way for German unification, and in managing the U.S. response to the breakup of the Soviet Union.

The authors examine how Baker led the all-out diplomatic effort to form the international coalition that countered Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait in 1990. They highlight the impressive metrics: Baker, in making the case, traveled some 100,000 miles crisscrossing the globe for meetings with more than 200 leaders and foreign ministers.

Baker's incisive thinking and self-discipline in conjunction with his support for bipartisan consultation, policy planning and multilateralism produced numerous accomplishments, the authors underscore.

The Man Who Ran Washington is not a hagiography. It points out Baker's flaws, including his tendency to transform into a tough-as-nails campaign operative whenever election time rolled around.

The authors characterize the Bush 1988 campaign's use of the "Willie Horton" television advertisement as a step over the line. They trenchantly observe that the ad became "a metaphor for racially coded campaign tactics, aimed at dividing Americans for political benefit." Like a cage fighter in a Savile Row suit, Baker has never expressed regret.

Sir Isaiah Berlin in his celebrated 1953 essay identified two types of thinkers: the "hedgehog," rigidly focused on a single path forward, versus the "fox," flexibly willing to go in many different directions. Within this duality, Baker—a technocrat "in whom drive is more important than destination"—was the classic fox.

Even though he operated without much of an overarching vision, Baker was "the most important unelected official since World War II," according to one commentator. The authors contend that Baker personified "an era when serious figures could put aside their differences in a crisis, bargain and lead." After reading *The Man Who Ran Washington*, it's hard to disagree with those assessments. ■

Joseph L. Novak is a Foreign Service officer serving with the Bureau of International Organization Affairs at the State Department.

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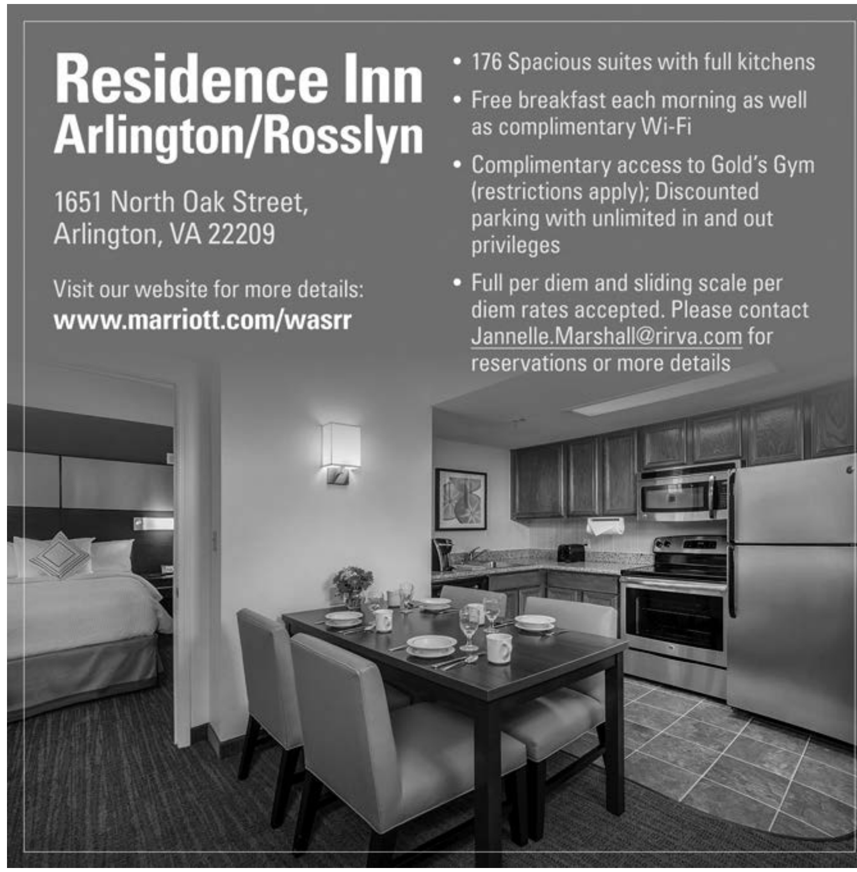

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The Mouse That Roared

BY JONATHAN B. RICKERT

One of my duties as the political/labor officer at our small embassy in Port of Spain, Trinidad, in the late 1970s, was to deliver démarches to the Foreign Ministry. For anyone unfamiliar with the term, a démarche may be defined as an official position (or protest) presented through diplomatic channels, generally in person.

During the Carter administration, Washington frequently instructed us to make routine démarches to the host government on all sorts of issues, especially votes at the United Nations and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, or in hemispheric organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank.

The instructions usually came via cables directed to *all* diplomatic and consular posts, and not infrequently were of little interest to or relevance for Trinidad. It seemed that I was weekly (or even more often) trudging over to the ministry, a somewhat rickety, converted Victorian mansion overlooking the Queen's Park Savannah, with such démarches.

During these forays, I was always received politely and informally, if noncommittally, by the lower-level Trinidadian officials with whom I usually met. (Although the small ministry staff included desk officers for Trinidad's relatively few major partners, I recall that they also had one for ROW, which stood for "rest of the world.")

One day the Foreign Ministry called, requesting that I come at a specified time to meet with the number three official there, Trevor Spencer, an acquaintance with whom I dealt infrequently. Although the request was unusual, I of course complied.

When I arrived and was ushered into Spencer's office, I noticed immediately that, contrary to the usual practice, he was flanked by two female stenographers, who appeared ready to record every word uttered.

After a minimal exchange of pleasantries, Spencer read a statement to me. In essence, it said that Trinidad and Tobago was a sovereign, independent state that followed policies in its interests and of its own choosing. His government did not appreciate being told by the United States or anyone else what it should or should not do.

The démarches that I was continually delivering on behalf of my government were not welcome, being both irritating and demeaning, even if they came from a country with which Trinidad maintained good relations. The unmistakable message was that they wanted the démarches to cease.

Once Spencer had finished, I asked to respond. In brief, I replied that I and the U.S. government had great respect for Trinidad's sovereignty and independence. Everything I had ever said or done, on instructions, regarding his ministry had been intended to inform and persuade, not dictate, and certainly not to offend.

We considered démarches to be part of the normal currency of diplomatic practice, I explained. I assumed, indeed hoped, that Trinidad's embassy in Washington was approaching our State Department in a similar way on issues of importance to his government.

Spencer did not reply to any of my points, simply reiterating the position he had already expressed. While he was professional about it, he seemed not to have any flexibility to deviate from his prepared text and to be somewhat ill at ease with the whole exercise.

I promised to report his remarks to my superiors at the embassy and thanked him for stating his government's position so clearly. Though I had numerous occasions to deliver démarches to the Foreign Ministry thereafter, for whatever reason, I was never called in and chastised again.

The main lesson I learned from this whole experience was the sense of vulnerability that small countries may have in their dealings with large, powerful ones, no matter how friendly the latter may be. Just as an undersized person may feel intimidated, even helpless, in the presence of someone more imposing physically, small countries may react similarly.

I interpret Spencer's remarks to me as reflecting that pervasive sense of vulnerability. As I once heard Trinidadian Foreign Minister John Donaldson say—regardless of whether elephants make love or war, it is the grass that suffers, clearly equating small countries like his own with the grass. ■

Retired Senior Foreign Service Officer Jonathan B. Rickert spent the majority of his 35-year career in or dealing with Central and Eastern Europe. His final two overseas posts were as deputy chief of mission in Sofia and then Bucharest.

BY ANGELIQUE MAHAL ■ SAFED DARA, TAJIKISTAN

On a wintry Saturday morning, these stunning mountains at the Safed Dara Ski Resort (*Safed Dara* means white valley) in the Varzob region of Tajikistan glint in the bright sun. Walking in the snow and cold, crisp air with a colleague, surrounded by the majestic Pamir mountains, was a refreshing break from continual telework at home in Dushanbe. Skiing, ice skating, snowboarding and snowmobiling were all in progress just out of range of the camera's lens. ■

Angelique Mahal, a USAID Foreign Service officer, is acting deputy mission director at USAID Tajikistan. She loves the winter season and has been enjoying the snow and cold weather. Angelique joined the Foreign Service in 2015; her previous posts were the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Afghanistan. She used her iPhone 6s to take this photograph in January.

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