THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

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DECEMBER 2017

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TIME TO ASK WHY

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THE OFFICIAL RECORD OF THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

On the Cover: Images of diplomacy at work—Top, from left: U.S. Ambassador Mark C. Storella, Zambian Minister of Finance and National Planning Situmbeko Musokotwane and Minister of Health Kapembwa Simbao shake hands on signing the PEPFAR framework in November 2010; U.S. Chargé d'Affaires James P. DeHart with Norwegian Defense Ministry Director Mette Sorfonden signing a contract to purchase Boeing maritime patrol aircraft in March 2017 (Photo: Asgier Spange Brekke); U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia Lynn Pascoe (left) and USAID Director Bill Frej load supplies for Aceh after the tsunami in December 2004. Second row, from left: General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and U.S. Ambassador John R. Bass attend a meeting with Turkey's senior military leadership in Ankara in November 2016; U.S. Consul General Rena Bitter, of CG Ho Chi Minh City, and U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Ted Osius at a temple restoration project in April 2016; Yezidi refugees who escaped from the Islamic State group talk with FSO Refugee Coordinator Matthew Johnson in Mardin, Turkey, in December 2014. Cover design by Caryn Suko Smith.

Time to Ask Why

BY BARBARA STEPHENSON

I open this column as I closed my last one, with a reminder that we, the members of the career Foreign Service, have an obligation as stewards of our institution to be effective advocates for why diplomacy matters. That requires some skill in explaining how diplomacy works—the focus of this month's edition of *The Foreign Service Journal*.

While raising awareness of and appreciation for the Foreign Service is a long-standing goal, one AFSA has pursued with renewed vigor and impact over the past couple years, the need to make the case for the Foreign Service with fellow Americans and our elected representatives has taken on a new urgency. The cover of the *Time* magazine that arrived as I was writing this column jarred me with its graphic of wrecking balls and warning of "dismantling government as we know it."

While I do my best, as principal advocate for our institution and as a seasoned American diplomat, to model responsible, civil discourse, there is simply no denying the warning signs that point to mounting threats to our institution—and to the global leadership that depends on us.

There is no denying that our leadership ranks are being depleted at a dizzying speed, due in part to the decision to slash promotion numbers by more than half. The Foreign Service officer corps at State has lost 60 percent of its Career Ambassadors since January. Ranks of Career Ministers, our three-star equivalents, are down from 33 to 19. The ranks of our two-star Minister Counselors have fallen from 431 right after Labor Day to 359 today—and are still falling.

These numbers are hard to square with the stated agenda of making State and the Foreign Service stronger. Were the U.S. military to face such a decapitation of its leadership ranks, I would expect a public outcry.

Like the military, the Foreign Service recruits officers at entry level and grows them into seasoned leaders over decades. The talent being shown the door now is not only our top talent, but also talent that cannot be replicated overnight. The rapid loss of so many senior officers has a serious, immediate and tangible effect on the capacity of the United States to shape world events.

Meanwhile, the self-imposed hiring freeze is taking its toll at the entry level. Intake into the Foreign Service at State will drop from 366 in 2016 to around 100 new entry-level officers joining A-100 in 2018 (including 60 Pickering and Rangel Fellows).

Not surprisingly, given the blocked entry path, interest in joining the Foreign Service is plummeting. I wrote with pride in my March 2016 column that "more than 17,000 people applied to take the Foreign Service Officer Test last year," citing interest in joining the Foreign Service as a key indicator of the health of the institution. What does it tell us, then, that we are on track to have fewer than half as many people take the Foreign Service Officer Test this year?

As the shape and extent of the staffing cuts to the Foreign Service at State become clearer, I believe we must shine a light on these disturbing trends and ask "why?" and "to what end?"

Congress rejected drastic cuts to State and USAID funding. The Senate labeled the proposed cuts a "doctrine of retreat" and directed that appropriated funds "shall support" staffing State at not less than Sept. 30, 2016, levels, and further directed that "The Secretary of State shall continue A-100 entry-level classes for FSOs in a manner similar to prior years."

Given this clear congressional intent, we have to ask: Why such a focus on slashing staffing at State? Why such a focus on decapitating leadership? How do these actions serve the stated agenda of making the State Department stronger?

Remember, nine in 10 Americans favor a strong global leadership role for our great country, and we know from personal experience that such leadership is unthinkable without a strong professional Foreign Service deployed around the world protecting and defending America's people, interests and values.

Where then, does the impetus come from to weaken the American Foreign Service? Where is the mandate to pull the Foreign Service team from the field and forfeit the game to our adversaries? ■

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

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Diplomacy Needs Diplomats

BY SHAWN DORMAN

International diplomacy needs professional diplomats. This is not a controversial statement. It is something so obvious no one would think to say it. And yet today, we must say it. We must defend diplomacy and reiterate the importance of our U.S. Foreign Service.

Each month I wait until the *Journal* is finished and all page proofs checked before writing my letter to frame the issue, briefly highlight its contents and put a bow on it. This time something extraordinary happened.

On Nov. 7 AFSA shared an advance copy of the December President's Views column—three weeks before the issue was released—in an AFSAnet to the membership.

In "Time to Ask Why," Ambassador Barbara Stephenson spells out concerns and questions regarding State Department Foreign Service staffing cuts, wondering aloud on behalf of an uneasy Foreign Service constituency that she represents—what is going on and why?

Within hours, the story began to be picked up by media outlets. Within a day, it was making headlines around the country, and the world. ABC News was first, followed by *Foreign Policy*, *The Hill*, *Vox*, *Time*, CNN, *Government Executive, The Guardian, Fox News, The New York Times, The Washington Post* (Nov. 12 editorial), *Newsweek* and many others.

Amb. Stephenson was interviewed about the column on the PBS NewsHour on Nov. 8. The next day, Rachel Maddow devoted the first 20 minutes of her show to the column, reading most of it aloud on the air, with a flag-draped "Time to Ask Why" graphic on-screen throughout the segment.

The column points to concerns about the depletion of the leadership ranks at State and the severe slowdown on intake at entry level, and asks why. This is an important question, yet the State Department issued a statement Nov. 8 dismissing the column's claims about cuts, saying essentially: "nothing to see here."

There are still more questions than there are answers. Why were promotion rates cut drastically this year? Why is the hiring freeze still in place at State and USAID? Why has this bidding season been, by many accounts, "the worst ever"? (One FS-1 officer described it this way: "It's like musical chairs with 100 people, but they've taken away 40 chairs.")

Why were POLAD, war college and other detail jobs taken off bid lists? Even though POLADs were put back on, the continuing chaos means the right people may not get the right jobs.

Why are so many of the best career officers, who have served faithfully under both Republican and Democratic administrations, being shown the door?

Why are senior positions not being filled? State's Nov. 12 announcement that it will offer $25,000 buyouts to employees (just days after denying drastic cuts) reinforces the idea that reducing staff at State is a primary goal of this administration.

Which brings us to the rest of the December *Journal*. I want to particularly draw your attention to the first installment of our new Diplomacy Works collection, "First Person Stories from the Field," because it offers a ground-level look at why diplomacy matters.

There are still more questions than there are answers.

Told by members of the Foreign Service out in the field working on behalf of the people of the United States, these stories illustrate the critical, everyday work of the Foreign Service around the world, from the smallest success no one outside of post would ever hear about, to big, headline-grabbing accomplishments.

They help to answer the question of why we need a strong U.S. Foreign Service. The response to our call for narratives was so great that we will be publishing Part II next month.

Every one of you has a story to tell, whether about yourself or a colleague, and we invite you to continue to submit your experiences that show how diplomacy works for the United States. Help AFSA tell the story of the Foreign Service.

It's a tough time for the Foreign Service, no doubt about it. If this all feels too heavy, then please go to page 60 for adorable FS pet photos.

Next month, we take a look at "What Does U.S. Global Leadership Look Like?" We wish all our readers and the entire Foreign Service community a peaceful holiday season. ■

Shawn Dorman is the editor of The Foreign Service Journal.

Dissent in a Time of Crisis

The *Journal* has long provided a platform for those advocating constructive dissent and, specifically, use of the Dissent Channel as a means of questioning policies and practices. Harry Kopp's thoughtful commentary, "The State of Dissent in the Foreign Service" (September), is the latest example of responsible discussion of Foreign Service dissent in your pages.

Kopp concludes by urging that "for the good of the Service as an institution, dissent must remain confidential." I believe, however, that this assessment of dissent in the Trump-era Foreign Service fails to appreciate the gravity of the threat posed to U.S. foreign policy and to the Foreign Service itself.

I joined the Service in January 1975, at a time when U.S. foreign policy had been buffeted by dissent and even rancor in the ranks for almost a decade. Much of this came to a head in the early months of 1975, when U.S. Embassy Saigon sought to deny the reality that the government of Nguyen Van Thieu was doomed.

In earlier years, Foreign Service officers had questioned and protested the manner in which our Indochina policy was formulated, the policy itself and the very purpose of the Vietnam War.

FSOs, frustrated by their inability to report honestly, sometimes turned to the press. In the spring of 1975, some acted without orders, for example, to ensure that trusted Vietnamese allies and their families were able to exit Vietnam before the maelstrom enveloped the country. These individuals were heroes and role models for many of the junior FSOs of that day.

I believe the Trump era presents the Foreign Service with a challenge as daunting as that which earlier led FSOs to courageous acts that went beyond "confidential" dissent.

This administration's assault on the Foreign Service is reflected in its refusal to provide leadership to the State Department, which lacks senior officials or even nominees at home and abroad. Moreover, critical functions, including consular, may be taken away from the department and extraordinarily deep budget cuts have been proposed.

Internal, "confidential" dissent is simply inadequate in the context of this unprecedented crisis, as it was during the Vietnam War era and, some might add, the Iraq War era.

It is not sufficient for senior officers simply to retire, as many are doing. These officers owe the Service—and particularly the mid-level and junior colleagues they leave behind—more than their silence. They must speak out. They must explain to the American people, to their elected representatives and to the media why they are abandoning careers of service and sacrifice.

Edmund McWilliams
Senior FSO, retired
White Oaks, New Mexico

The Blood Telegram

In his fine article in the September issue of *The Foreign Service Journal*, "The State of Dissent in the Foreign Service," Harry Kopp cites "The Blood Telegram" as the first message in the Dissent Channel.

As drafter of that telegram on behalf of other officers of ConGen Dacca (now Dhaka) who were appalled by our government's lack of response to the carnage inflicted on then East Pakistan by Pakistan's military, I would like to clarify that the telegram, to which Arch Blood so courageously appended his own comments, was not the first Dissent Channel message.

At the time we sent it, the Dissent Channel had not been established, although there was talk about increased "openness" in the State Department and Foreign Service. Our message was intended for an internal audience, not to be leaked.

In our naiveté we classified it "confidential," assuming that would protect the information. When it reached the Operations Center, Watch Officer David Passage, an FS classmate of mine, realized it was sensitive and added a LIMDIS caption to restrict its distribution. But it leaked, nevertheless.

Perhaps there is a causal link between the Blood Telegram (subject of a lauded book by Professor Gary Bass of Princeton University) and the Dissent Channel. That would be a fitting tribute to Arch Blood, who honored his profession by honest reporting, despite the costs to his career.

W. Scott Butcher
Senior FSO, retired
Potomac, Maryland

Integrity First

In June 2016, *The Foreign Service Journal* focused on the topic of combating corruption as a central task of U.S. foreign policy. As a retired FSO who now chairs an anticorruption organization called the Coalition for Integrity, I welcome this attention to an important issue.

We believe the United States needs

to enforce the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, encourage other major trading and investing nations to enforce their similar commitments under the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Anti-Bribery Convention, and urge countries like China and India to become signatories of that agreement.

Toward that end, the United States needs to organize its foreign assistance programs so that bribery and corruption do not despoil the very economic development they try to promote. We also need to curb the bribery and corruption that can undermine our military and political efforts to defeat terrorism in places like Afghanistan.

The challenge for our country and our foreign policy is even more fundamental, however. Corruption is essentially about the abuse of entrusted power. Americans entrust power to government officials, and we expect these officials to use that power to promote the public interest, consistent with the promises they have made and the oaths they have undertaken. Unfortunately, for some time now the majority of Americans across the political spectrum have believed that their government officials are untrustworthy.

The United States is the most powerful country in the world. Through our alliances and the international institutions we established, the United States has pledged to exercise our power in a manner consistent with the promises we have made. People count on us. When

we keep our promises and show ourselves to be trustworthy, our reputation and our power grow. Putting integrity first is the best way to put America first.

On Nov. 29 the Coalition for Integrity extended its 2017 Integrity Award to Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.), a most deserving recipient for many reasons. We have also launched a nonpartisan "integrity challenge" for candidates in the state of Virginia. We asked all candidates in Virginia's 2017 elections to support basic principles regarding financial disclosure, restrictions on gifts and disclosure of campaign contributions.

Beginning in 2018, we would like to see candidates in elections across the United States accept this challenge and discuss how they will ensure that they and their administrations will be trustworthy.

U.S. diplomats, military and international professionals represent American interests and values with courage and integrity. I encourage readers still in government service to reflect on how they can do more to combat corruption and epitomize integrity as they carry out their duties. And I encourage those who have retired from government service to consider how you can continue to be a part of this fight, perhaps by working with organizations like ours.

Alan Larson
Ambassador, retired
Washington, D.C.

Threats to Retiree Re-employment

I am writing about a subject I trust I am not the first to raise: protecting the future of re-employed annuitants (formerly known as WAE, When Actually Employed, personnel) at the State Department.

I know I am not alone among active AFSA retirees who have found working part-time on projects where personal interests and various offices' perceptions of our individual aptitudes overlap to be incredibly fulfilling work.

The threat, as I understand it, can ultimately be laid at the feet of some of our senior Civil Service colleagues in management. When the White House asked them for a list of potential cuts to save money and eliminate bodies (for a document going to the Office of Management and Budget), they essentially threw us under the bus rather than taking an honest look at truly wasteful employment practices like contracting.

Here are a few concrete reasons to keep this important program alive:

• *REA status is not an entitlement.* The State Department carefully chooses who they want to re-employ under this status.

• *We are cheap.* We work for an hourly wage in the mid-level federal range, nothing more—no benefits, no pension contributions, nothing. Our salaries are probably just a quarter of what the department would have to pay inexperienced contractors to replace us.

• *We are competent and tend to know the work we are used for inside and out.* As a bonus, we bring a strong sense of a program or function's history to our work.

• *REAs lead from below*, a perspective not often associated with the department. Although re-employed annuitants tend to have had long Foreign Service careers, we are hired for our experience and perspective, not our former rank.

Speaking personally, I was in the Senior Foreign Service for more than half of my career. People *had to* listen to me. Now I work as a GS-14 graybeard. I naturally put my ideas out there, often advising the front offices of the embassies where I fill in and my current managers in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

If an approach I put forward is adopted, it's because it makes sense, not because I am senior in a hierarchical organization. If such an approach or idea evokes counter-arguments, laughter or derision, so be it. I love that "leading from below" angle.

In addition to AFSA defending a sensible version of the REA/WAE status, I urge all readers who care to write to their members of Congress. Elimination of the status will almost certainly be part of the debate over the FY 2018 budget and continuing resolution(s).

Be steadfast in these unsettled days.

Peter Kovach
FSO, retired
Bethesda, Maryland

Soft Power and the Lessons of History

The recent PBS series on the Vietnam War offers a cautionary tale for the Trump administration as it attempts to slash the budgets of the State Department and other soft-power programs. Unfortunately, the president has little interest in history.

Many factors contributed to the Vietnam tragedy: failure to consider the advice of experienced foreign-area experts, hubris, over-reliance on military superiority in a world of asymmetrical warfare, domestic political fear of appearing "soft," measurement of success by inappropriate metrics (e.g., "kill ratios"), denial of facts and lying to the public. Sound familiar?

In his landmark book about the Vietnam War, *The Best and the Brightest*, David Halberstam noted that President John F. Kennedy and his closest advisers "made the most critical of decisions with virtually no input from anyone who had any expertise on the recent history of that part of the world, and it in no

way factored in the entire experience of the French Indochina War."

Thus, reliance was placed on U.S. military firepower without due consideration for Vietnamese hearts and minds, the history of Vietnam's nationalistic resolve against foreign intervention, or the guerrilla tactics of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese.

Today the Trump administration is making many of the same crippling mistakes. The president's principal foreign policy advisers are military men, while the State Department, with all of its expertise, experience and relationships abroad, has often been sidelined.

Recently, President Trump even publicly stated that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was "wasting his time" by attempting to negotiate with the North Koreans.

But even Secretary Tillerson has supported the proposed draconian budget cuts to his own State Department prior to the outcome of a reorganization study the Senate Appropriations Committee worries has been "predetermined."

And Tillerson has walled himself off behind a small group of loyalists he's brought in with him. Predictably, Tillerson's and Trump's long experience with private corporations, where profits measure success, offered little preparation for the policy and relational worlds of government, foreign affairs and diplomacy.

Meanwhile, Pres. Trump raises falsehood and the denial of fact to alarming levels as he panders to his domestic political base. While waving the flag of "America First" to project strength abroad, the president's insults, threats, impulsivity and termination of international agreements have antagonized allies and adversaries alike.

A reduction in soft-power capabilities undermines U.S. efforts to further global justice, prosperity and peace through promotion of relationships, cooperation, mutual understanding, democracy and assistance abroad.

Such power builds bridges, not walls. It combats and contains the root causes of militancy. As General James Mattis observed in 2013: "If you don't fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition ultimately."

The urgent need for soft power was stated eloquently last year by former Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Richard Lugar: "In this century, the ability of nations to communicate and work with each other across borders will determine the fate of billions of people. The effectiveness of our response to pandemics, nuclear proliferation, environmental disasters, energy and food insecurity, and threats of conflict will depend foremost on the investments we have made in knowledge, relationships and communication."

John A. Lindburg
Foreign Service Reserve, retired
Former General Counsel, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
Washington, D.C.

Share your thoughts about this month's issue.

Submit letters to the editor: journal@afsa.org

TALKING POINTS

AAD Opposes Nomination for Director General

In an unprecedented move, the American Academy of Diplomacy sent a letter to the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Oct. 30 urging them to oppose the nomination of Stephen Akard as Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources at the State Department.

"We have concluded that Mr. Akard lacks the necessary professional background," write AAD Chairman Ambassador (ret.) Thomas R. Pickering and AAD President Ambassador (ret.) Ronald E. Neumann. "His confirmation would be contrary to Congress' longstanding intent and desire to create a professional American diplomatic service based on merit."

The American Academy of Diplomacy is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that is dedicated to strengthening U.S. diplomacy. Its membership includes former senior ambassadors and leaders in foreign policy.

Akard was nominated for the top personnel management position at State by the Trump administration on Oct. 16. He has served as a senior adviser in the Office of the Under Secretary for Economic Growth since January.

Historically, the Director General position has gone to a senior Foreign Service officer who has served as an ambassador and has decades of diplomatic experience. The DG heads the Bureau of Human Resources, handles training and promotions, advises the Secretary of State on management and personnel, and manages internal issues with diplomats abroad.

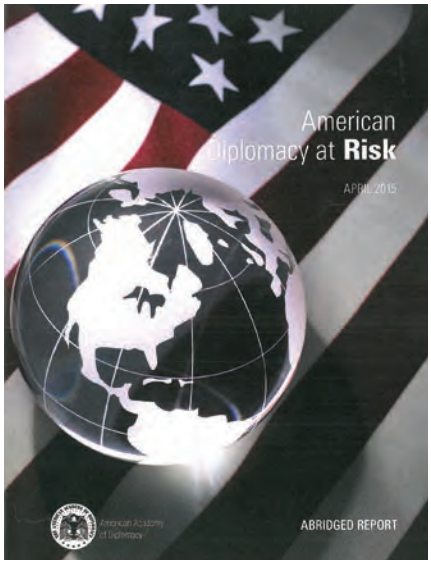
In 1980, under the Foreign Service Act, Congress mandated the presidentially appointed position be given to a current or retired Foreign Service officer to guard against politicization while elevating the position to require Senate confirmation.

Akard was an FSO for eight years, serving in Belgium and India and as a staff aide to Secretary of State Colin Powell. He left the Foreign Service in 2005 to work on economic development for the state of Indiana.

"While Akard is technically eligible for the position under the Foreign Service Act," states the AAD, "to confirm someone who had less than a decade in the Foreign Service would be like making a former Army Captain the Chief of Staff of the Army, the equivalent of a four-star general."

AAD argues: "He does not have the experience necessary to advise the Secretary on the Department's most senior appointments or the management of the 75,000 Foreign Service, Civil Service, and Locally Employed staff employed by the State Department."

"As good and decent a person as Mr. Akard may be," the AAD adds, "his confirmation as the Director General would be another step to further weaken the State Department, whose Foreign Service and Civil Service employees loyally serve the President, the Secretary of State and the United States of America."



In 10 years as head of the organization, AAD President Neumann told *Foreign Policy*, he hasn't sent such a letter, adding that he can't recall if it's *ever* been done in the organization's 34-year history.

The letter includes a chart of previous Directors General that indicates, among other things, the ambassadorships and senior-level positions they held before being named DG, and also spells out the association's criteria for the DG position.

For a full discussion of AAD's views on the challenges facing American diplomacy, see their *American Diplomacy at Risk* (2015).

What's Going on with Support for Families with Special Needs Children?

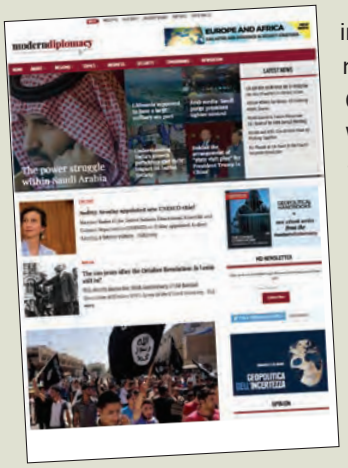
Concerns about support for Foreign Service children with special needs that began to arise during 2015 were spotlighted in the *Journal*'s January 2016 focus on mental health care in the Foreign Service. We heard from parents frustrated by what they saw as increasing difficulty obtaining support and, in particular, obtaining access to the Special Needs Education Allowance.

In June 2016, the *Journal* ran a compilation of comments from FS family members regarding mental health and special needs support for FS children, along with a June 2016 Speaking Out column by Foreign Service authors Maureen Danzot and Mark Evans.

Danzot and Evans pointed to confusion surrounding the SNEA allowance and recommended that the department work to engage parents in policymaking, separate the medical clearance pro-

SITE OF THE MONTH: *MODERNDIPLOMACY.EU*

We know you all read *The Foreign Service Journal* religiously. And you probably also keep on top of *Foreign Policy* and other U.S. sites that follow the world of diplomacy. *Modern Diplomacy* is another site for foreign affairs professionals and students, based out of Athens, Greece.



Modern Diplomacy describes itself as "a leading European opinion-maker with far-reaching influence across the Middle East, Africa and Asia." The site's editors claim not to espouse any one agenda or school of thought, instead welcoming writers across a broad range of backgrounds.

Their board, which includes former ministers and secretaries-general from across Europe, as well as academics and other professionals from Central Asia, Indonesia, Brazil, Russia, El Salvador, Malaysia, Japan, Australia and the United States, strives to be "politically, generationally and geographically diverse."

Board members include former Secretary General of the Council of Europe Dr. Walter Schwimmer; former Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Erzhan Kazykhanov; Ernest Petric, a justice with the Constitutional Court of Slovenia; and Major Rejane Costa of Brazil's Ministry of Defense.

Recent topics have included "Trump-Russia Collusion: The Story So Far," a feature about the questions that are arising as Saudi women gain access to sports stadiums in that country and an article about how Africa's rapid urbanization can lead to industrialization.

Modern Diplomacy's Twitter handle is @presscode.

cess from the use of SNEA and "ensure transparency in the SNEA eligibility process." AFSA also raised these concerns in meetings with officials in the Bureau of Medical Services.

On Oct. 29 these concerns broke into the national news when *Washington Post* reporter Jackie Spinner talked to parents of special needs children and interviewed AFSA State VP Ken Kero-Mentz for a story about the State Department's restrictions on financial support for diplomat families with special needs children.

Parents interviewed by Spinner said they fear that the limitations MED has put on their families will force them out of the Service. Multiple families told the *Washington Post* that services previously provided are now being denied without explanation, despite the fact that such services would be provided in public schools in the United States.

The situation has deteriorated to the point where, according to the *Post*,

Contemporary Quote

Rex Tillerson came in and made an initial very positive impression. He appeared to reach out to the workforce of the Department of State, and so people were very optimistic. That optimism did not last long, however. ... We got word that senior people were being fired without any notice or any justification. ...When the decision came that our budget was going to be cut by one third or that a chokehold was going to be put on our recruitment programs, people started to ask questions. Why is this happening? Why are these things being done? And no answer was provided—or no coherent answer.

...My budget was cut. I was told that I could not hire anyone, even when I had vacant positions. I could not transfer people within my organization or from elsewhere inside the State Department. ...I was also told that I could make no reference to the policies of the prior administration. There was a political appointee sent out to the Foreign Service Institute who reviewed our training materials and objected when there was reference to American foreign policy under the Obama administration.

Our response was that we were not rewriting history. We would indeed continue to teach our diplomats what policy under all previous presidents had been, and that when the Trump administration developed a policy toward different parts of the world, we would teach that as well. ...

I decided to leave in June of this year. I went through a period of weeks and months of soul searching, of consulting with family and trusted friends, of talking with colleagues. ...None of us—myself and others who have left or are in the process of leaving—we didn't want to leave. We wanted to continue to serve our country, but we had to stay true to our values.

—Ambassador (ret.) Nancy McEldowney, former director of the Foreign Service Institute and now director of the Master of Science in Foreign Service program at Georgetown University's Walsh School of Foreign Service, speaking to Michael Barbaro on the Oct. 20 edition of The Daily *podcast from* The New York Times, *"The State of the State Dept. under Rex Tillerson."*

"administrators of a Yahoo group used by diplomat parents to trade resources and advice kicked the medical team off."

"It is, simply put, not in our national security interest to prevent these experienced, trained, talented officers from serving where the American people need them most, whenever possible," AFSA State VP Kero-Mentz told the *Post*.

In addition to the June Speaking Out column, *The Foreign Service Journal* ran a story about SNEA by Dr. Kathy Gallardo, MED's deputy director for mental health programs, in the September 2016 issue.

Responses to questions the *Journal* posed to MED can be found on the State Department website's Office of Child and Family Programs page. The *Journal* plans to take a look at the SNEA story in greater detail in the March 2018 focus on FS families.

On-Again-Off-Again Hiring at State and USAID

Every day, it seems, the hiring situation at State and USAID changes. From the eligible family member hiring freeze, covered in *The Foreign Service Journal* in both the July/August 2017 and September issues, to the cancellation and reinstatement of the Pickering and Rangel fellowship program, covered in the September *FSJ*, the situation is constantly in flux.

In late October, word came that the State Department was rejoining the Presidential Management Fellows program. In July the department had abruptly withdrawn from that prestigious program, which aims to recruit top college graduates into the federal government, causing confusion among program finalists who were in the middle of their job applications and had not been told.

According to an Oct. 30 story in *Government Executive*, State has decided to rejoin the program, but it is uncertain how many fellows they plan to hire—one State Department official told *Government Executive* that "future PMF hiring decisions will be considered as part of the department's overall strategically managed hiring plan, in line with the department's redesign efforts."

Tough times for applicants aren't just limited to the State Department. Over at USAID, 97 applicants who were in the pre-employment process recently received emails informing them that the positions for which they had applied no longer exist. According to an Oct. 31 devex.com report, these applicants will have to start over from the beginning of

the application process if they hope to find work at USAID.

According to another Devex story, when pressed about the decision at a Nov. 1 House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs hearing, USAID Administrator Mark Green told Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.): "We have not eliminated positions. We are still under a hiring freeze. ...Before I arrived at this position, we had asked for an exception for that class that was involved, and it was denied."

Lowey stated that she is "extremely concerned" about the decision, saying "I have been working on these programs a long time. I have never experienced anything like this."

Former Secretaries of State School Haley

In October, when two former Secretaries of State took the stage with current U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, both took the opportunity to speak about the importance of diplomacy. The panel discussion on American leadership, which was sponsored by George W. Bush's presidential center, was covered in the Oct. 20 edition of *The New York Times*.

Haley, a former governor who had no foreign policy experience when she was selected for the job of ambassador to the United Nations, listened as Condoleezza Rice and Madeleine Albright explained the importance of the State Department budget, with Rice pointing out that the budget goes to support global women's

50 Years Ago

A Poignant Reminder

The death of Gustav Hertz in Viet Cong captivity brings a poignant reminder that a total of 13 AID officers have lost their lives in Vietnam.

Statistically the number is small in relation to the sacrifices made by our military men and is not to be compared to the sufferings endured by the Vietnamese civilian population. Yet there is a particular pathos in the thought of unarmed non-combatants losing their lives thousands of miles from home. We think the families and friends of our fallen fighting men will understand our calling special attention in this *Journal* to the losses of our AID associates.

In doing so, we remember again that another officer serving with AID is still held prisoner by the Viet Cong, virtually incommunicado and enduring unknown hardships for endless months since being kidnapped in January 1966.

We honor them, the prisoners, the dead, and their colleagues who risk a similar fate every day in the pursuit of an epic national effort. We draw strength from the example they have set for us.

—Excerpted from an editorial of the same title in the December 1967 Foreign Service Journal.

Heard on the Hill

What is clear is the bipartisan support for continued investments in soft power, particularly at a time when diplomatic and development challenges have grown not only in number but complexity.

—Chairman Harold "Hal" Rogers (R-Ky.), at the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs, Nov. 1.

USAID is an essential component of our national security. And I am confident that you believe as do I that international development is critical to maintaining U.S. global leadership and protecting our national security.

—Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.), at the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs, Nov. 1.

We have all chosen to be here because we do deeply understand that the ideals of USAID and America's very generous commitment to try to solve humanitarian problems—because we benefit both economically and culturally, but also it creates international stability—is essential for our national security.

—Rep. Jeff Fortenberry (R-Neb.), at the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs, Nov. 1.

The reality is, the United States has to lead. A lot of people resent that, but it's just the truth. If we don't lead, who in the world will?

—Rep. Chris Stewart (R-Utah), at the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs, Nov. 1.

groups, fight HIV/AIDS and finance election monitoring—all of which advance U.S. interests.

The two former Secretaries also explained why nation-building, international trade and a free press are all critical to our success as a nation. "Nation-building is not a four-letter word," Albright bluntly told the ambassador, while Rice took the opportunity to promote the importance of international cooperation.

The conference provided an increasingly rare opportunity for bipartisan discussion on the topic of defending democratic and free-market principles.

Buyouts? What Buyouts?

Rumors about a buyout offer at the State Department have been swirling for months, even as the department has denied that a major staff reduction is in the works. The amount was going to be $40,000, then $25,000.

In September, the Senate Appropriations Committee rejected the administration's proposed 30 percent budget cut for State and USAID in September, and called for the department to maintain 2016 staffing levels.

Responding to AFSA President Ambassador Barbara Stephenson's December column, "Time to Ask Why" (which was shared ahead of publication; see pages 7 and 9), the State Department told media outlets that suggestions of drastic cuts to the Foreign Service are not accurate.

The deparment's statement pointed to the "employee-led" redesign effort: "The goal of the redesign has always been to find new ways to best leverage our team's brains, ingenuity, and commitment to serving our nation's interests. AFSA and other employee groups are important partners in the redesign effort. As has been said many times before, the freezes on hiring and promotions are only temporary while we study how to refine our organization."

Then on Nov. 10, *The New York Times* reported that the State Department "will soon offer a $25,000 buyout to diplomats and staff members who quit or take early retirements by April." *Government Executive* reported on Nov. 13 that the State Department had confirmed the buyouts, citing a need to "reduce unnecessary supervisory levels and organizational layering." ■

This edition of Talking Points was compiled by Donna Gorman, Dmitry Filipoff, Shawn Dorman and Susan Maitra.

Religious Diversity Benefits the State Department

BY PHIL SKOTTE

Religious diversity matters to the work of the State Department. In this brief essay I will provide some critical personal examples of that fact, but let me start with an introduction and some background information about why having a faith can matter.

I was raised in a family that had a strong Christian faith, and we attended our Swedish Baptist church twice on Sundays and on Wednesday nights, too. Missionaries came to our church and showed slides of faraway places, and sometimes we even hosted them in our home. Above my bed was a "monkey rug" (made from the skin of nine monkeys) brought from Ethiopia by my missionary uncle. My mom put her wedding ring in the offering plate after a particularly compelling presentation by a visitor from Africa (my Dad said it was OK).

Having completed university, I went to Princeton Theological Seminary with the intention of becoming a minister or a missionary myself. However, life took some unexpected turns, and instead I joined the Foreign Service—but not before serving as a volunteer aboard the Christian service vessel MV Logos as a ship's carpenter. It was there that I met my wife. For many years, I taught Sunday school (although not as faithfully as Jimmy Carter), and my wife and I participated in Bible studies and tithed (gave away 10 percent of our income).

Religion can be every bit as important as race, gender, sexual orientation and other aspects of our identity.

Many of my State Department friends and colleagues find my background a little unusual and, in fact, unintelligible. But when I joined the Foreign Service in 1993, I brought this identity and these commitments with me. Even though the State Department does not, at this writing, have any religion-based affinity groups, religion can be every bit as important as race, gender, sexual orientation and other aspects of our identity.

Now, after almost 25 years serving mostly as a consular officer, I can look back and see how my identity as a Christian person has been of great value to the State Department and its mission. Here I offer a few examples as evidence that religious diversity matters to the work of the State Department. I am sure many others from various faiths could offer their own examples of the value that faith-based people bring to diplomacy.

Education and Assistance

From the outset of my career, I sought out missionaries abroad for friendship and mutual encouragement. They educated me and showed me parts of foreign countries I would never have seen in my capacity as a diplomat. For example, a missionary in Manila took me on her nightly rounds working with glue-sniffing street children. Another introduced me

FSO Phil Skotte has served in the Philippines, the Vatican, Hong Kong, Budapest and Moscow. Domestically, he has worked as a foreign policy adviser for special operations at the Pentagon and director of American Citizen Services worldwide; he currently serves as the Bureau of Consular Affairs' liaison with the intelligence community. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, he worked as a commercial fisherman in Alaska, a schoolteacher, an athletic director and a ship's carpenter, and earned master's degrees from the National Defense University and Princeton Theological Seminary. He is the author of Why Jesus Won't Go Away—A Diplomat Reflects on Faith *(WestBow Press, 2014). Phil and Maribeth have three daughters. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and not necessarily those of the U.S. government.*

As anyone who has served in West Africa will tell you, a lot of health services in the region are delivered by faith-based providers.

to Muslim families in Quiapo and took me to the Golden Mosque.

In Rome, my various church contacts housed the legal permanent residents (LPRs) we had evacuated from Albania but could not assist with onward travel from Italy. When the management at the Holiday Inn complained about those LPRs bedding down in the hotel hallways at about 10 p.m., I called Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Mormons and Baptists. Every church took in some of the evacuees until all could be housed.

In Hungary, I began to identify local resources to assist U.S. citizens in ways that the consular section could not. Many of those resources were graciously given by persons and institutions of faith. On one occasion, I had responsibility for a number of American prisoners undergoing two full years of pretrial detention. It would be difficult to visit each of them monthly.

Clergy Visits

With that in mind, I asked each prisoner if they wanted visits by clergy. Two said yes—one a Baptist and the other Jewish. The rabbi who agreed to visit the Jewish prisoner did such a fantastic job that the other Jewish prisoner among the group eventually also asked for clergy visits. These visits were so important to the well-being of these prisoners that I vowed to make the offering of clergy visits to prisoners by consuls a universal practice, if I ever had the chance.

That opportunity came when I became director of American Citizen Services back in Washington, D.C. The Bureau of Consular Affairs agreed immediately to my proposal to add the offer of clergy visits to the prison visit checklist for consuls worldwide.

CA agreed, not for the purpose of propagating religion, which would be inappropriate, but to offer added and critical support to our imprisoned citizens. I estimate that about one third of prisoners, if asked, will opt for clergy visits. This additional support to imprisoned citizens abroad costs the U.S. government nothing.

On another occasion, an American citizen experienced a serious medical issue in Budapest at a moment when I was both consul general and the control officer for a U.S. presidential visit event on Castle Hill.

I asked the patient if he wanted a visit by clergy, and he said yes. The clergy member and his expatriate church stepped in and brought the American food and a television, and even picked up his family from the airport and housed them.

They took great care of this recovering citizen, and it cost the U.S. government—you guessed it—nothing! I was able to focus on the president's visit knowing that this citizen was in good hands.

Identifying Service Providers

In the Philippines, Rome, Hungary, Russia and Hong Kong, we relied on local resources for our citizens in need (e.g., free food, shelter, counseling and more). I worked hard to build strong relationships with the providers of these essential services; to discover new service providers, and to close gaps where they existed. Not surprisingly, many of these providers were and are people of faith.

Many of our wardens, it turns out, are also people of faith. When the Marine Security Guard on duty in Moscow passed me a call from a distressed American at 2 a.m., I reached out to an ACS contact, a pastor, who met me with his car at the embassy 20 minutes later. We took the American to church-funded lodging, and I gave him McDonald's coupons. Three days later, he flew home.

As director of American Citizen Services, I worked to systematize our tracking of local resources worldwide and to strengthen the warden network. These initiatives were folded into Secretary of State John Kerry's MissionOne program, and served to strengthen our protections and services to our citizens at no cost to the government.

Some of the energy for these ideas came from my extensive interactions with resource providers, who often had a faith-driven service mentality. As a person of faith, I was always comfortable with these people, whether they were Christians, Muslims or Jews.

Evacuating Ebola Victims

On a Sunday afternoon in 2014, when State's Bureau of Medical Services called to say that we needed to urgently evacuate an American missionary with

active Ebola from West Africa, it was no coincidence that I already knew the mission involved. I also knew the administrator of the mission compound where most of the Ebola treatment in West Africa would take place. As anyone who has served in West Africa will tell you, a lot of health services in the region are delivered by faith-based providers.

The State Department, especially MED and personnel at the embassies, did a great job evacuating American Ebola victims from West Africa. I am sure they would have done so without me and regardless of anyone's faith, but the connections already made on the basis of religious interest proved to be useful when the emergency came.

As I approach the end of my Foreign Service career, I can say with appreciation that the State Department, although appropriately secular in orientation, values the contributions of its religiously diverse workforce. I did not wear my faith on my sleeve in the workplace; never had a Bible on my desk or religious posters on the walls. But I brought a faith-based commitment to this career that has, in my opinion, benefited the department, its mission and our citizens.

Committed Muslims, Baha'is, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus and other Christians will have their own stories to share, and should do so. Their stories will help ensure that the State Department continues to understand and welcome the contributions that faith-based people bring to this institution and to our mission abroad.

The Making of an Effective Diplomat
A Global View

How do diplomatic services around the world ensure their governments have a steady supply of the most effective professional envoys?

BY ROBERT HUTCHINGS AND JEREMI SURI

Diplomatic services around the world face many similar challenges: nurturing officers who are globally aware and still deeply connected to their nation; managing the growing centralization of foreign policymaking in the offices of presidents, prime ministers and chancellors; engaging a growing array of non-state actors with whom they must do business; and widening their scope of expertise to include commerce, climate change, terrorism, energy and cybersecurity, among other issues.

With such challenges in mind, and thanks to funding and guidance from the American Foreign Service Association, the two of us led a project at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs during the 2016-2017 academic year aimed at examining the practices of diplomatic services in other major countries to see what lessons we might draw that would be helpful in improving the effectiveness of American diplomacy.

We worked with a team of 15 talented graduate student researchers on a comparative study of the development and operation of diplomatic services in eight countries: Brazil, China, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, India, Russia and Turkey. Our research focused on the recruitment, training, organi-

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Jeremi Suri is the Mack Brown Distinguished Chair for Leadership in Global Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, where he is a professor in the LBJ School of Public Affairs and the Department of History. Suri is the author and editor of nine books. In September he published his newest, The Impossible Presidency: The Rise and Fall of America's Highest Office *(Basic Books, 2017).*

The graduate students who researched and wrote the report on which this article is based ("Developing Diplomats: Comparing Form and Culture Across Diplomatic Services," a report by the Policy Research Project on Reinventing Diplomacy at the University of Texas-Austin's Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs) are: Bryce Block, Evan Burt, Catherine Cousar, Adam Crawford, Michael Deegan, Daniel Jimenez, Joel Keralis, Joshua Orme, Zuli Nigeeryasen, Maria Pereyra-Vera, Zachary Reeves, Annika Rettstadt, Marne Sutten, Jessica Terry and Leena Warsi. The report is available at bit.ly/DevelopingDiplomats.

Bernt Rostad [CC BY 2.0] via flickr (https://www.flickr.com/photos/brostad/2774305451)

Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on Smolenskaya Square in Moscow.

zation and promotion of diplomats in each country. It included a careful reading of published accounts of diplomatic training, interviews with diplomatic personnel in Washington, D.C., and discussions during a January meeting of the Austin Forum—an intensive three-day workshop for rising American, European and Latin American diplomats.

Assembled in country teams, the researchers asked a series of questions: What is your country's diplomatic culture and professional ethos? How does an individual get chosen for the diplomatic corps in your society? What is the content and duration of initial training? What is your country's budget for its diplomatic service in relation to other priorities? What are the expectations for early postings and career advancement? How are diplomats organized—by region or issue area? What are the opportunities and expectations for mid-career training? What is the trajectory for a typical diplomatic career? What role does your diplomatic service play in foreign policymaking, and how is this role changing?

The result was a series of case studies containing valuable insights about different diplomatic services. Of course the information was more accessible and detailed for those in democratic societies (e.g., the U.K., France and Germany). Information was harder to acquire for more closed countries (e.g., Russia and China).

The final report, completed in May, is available from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs and online. Though dealing with non-American countries, it identifies some "best practices" in the field of diplomacy that may contribute to reforming and improving our own distinguished U.S. Foreign Service.

We discuss some of the potentially valuable findings below, including presenting highlights on specific countries, following a brief review of the history of U.S. diplomacy.

Educating Russia's Future Diplomats

Russian diplomats are known for their strong professional training and deep linguistic and cultural knowledge of assigned regions.

The principal pipeline for new diplomats remains the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), which conducts rigorous training in diplomatic theory, area studies and foreign languages. Entry-level officers are expected to have mastery of at least two foreign languages, and they generally focus on one region of the world, moving from post to post while rising slowly through the ranks.

While the Service is still a prestigious and valued institution in Russia, it has faced challenges in recent years that have lowered its prestige, including competition from higher-paying private-sector jobs and complaints of limited autonomy and agency. Further, while in the past the vast majority of those attending MGIMO were specifically pursuing careers in the foreign ministry, this is no longer the case. A survey published in 2011 suggested that the ministry had failed to adapt to the needs of the post-Soviet generation.

—From "Developing Diplomats: Comparing Form and Culture Across Diplomatic Services," Country Report: Russia, pp. 117-135.

Manfred Bruckels (own work) [CC BY-SA 2.0 de], via Wikimedia Commons

Entrance of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany in Berlin.

German Diplomatic Culture

German diplomatic culture derives from the combined legacies of geography, history, tradition and philosophy. Although Germany did not achieve statehood and national unity until 1871, it has an extensive history and rich diplomatic tradition that long predates unification.

Its contemporary diplomatic style reflects the competing 19th-century traditions of Klemens von Metternich and Otto von Bismarck. The tradition of Austrian Foreign Minister Metternich was characterized by the maneuver and compromise needed to hold together the multiethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire, whereas the tradition of Prussian Chancellor Bismarck was that of *machtpolitik* (power politics) employed to unite Germany's disparate principalities into a modern nation-state.

Trained as a diplomat himself, serving as ambassador to Russia and later to France, Bismarck created the modern diplomatic corps and left behind a tradition of urbane, well-prepared diplomats. The Auswärtiges Amt (foreign office) at Wilhelmstrasse 76 was a highly centralized and rigid operation, organized along military lines and tightly controlled by the chancellor, who once declared that "if an ambassador can obey, more is not required."

—From "Developing Diplomats: Comparing Form and Culture Across Diplomatic Services," Country Report: Germany, pp. 78-96.

The American Diplomatic Tradition

On Oct. 26, 1776, less than four months after signing the Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Franklin set sail from Philadelphia to France, where he became the first American diplomat. Franklin was a cosmopolitan inventor, businessman, politician and writer. He was also a skilled representative of his new nation, negotiating the first American alliance with France.

Franklin and his contemporaries understood that international diplomacy—the cultivation and management of relations with other states—was crucial for national survival and prosperity. He was part of a broader trans-Atlantic community of learned, wealthy gentlemen who used their personal skills to manage relations between rival governments in an era of aggressive empires. Diplomacy was not an alternative to war or peace, but instead an essential part of eliciting support from potential allies and, when necessary, balancing against potential foes in a complex international system.

For Franklin and his many successors foreign relations meant a mix of cooperation, competition and negotiations to maximize the emerging power of the United States and minimize its weaknesses. In a complex world with diverse actors, no country could go it alone. Diplomacy facilitated survival through interdependence and the pursuit of the national interest through direct communication, intelligence gathering and, when necessary, manipulation. The founders and successive generations concentrated their foreign policy activities on the work of diplomats, not the military, and the most talented American statesmen served their country in this capacity, following Franklin's footsteps.

The 20th century was, in some ways, an era when this vision came to fruition. The United States and its counterparts on other continents expanded their diplomatic services, placing greater emphasis than ever before on sending some of their most talented and best-trained citizens abroad to negotiate treaties, manage daily relations and report on potential dangers. Embassies proliferated around the world, diplomatic conferences became more numerous and specialized, and organizations (especially the League of Nations and the United Nations) turned intensive diplomatic deliberations into a form of global governance. On the eve of World War II, the United States possessed a small, divided military (the Army and Navy were entirely separate) and would soon have a growing, highly educated and increasingly active Foreign Service. The diplomats largely deter-

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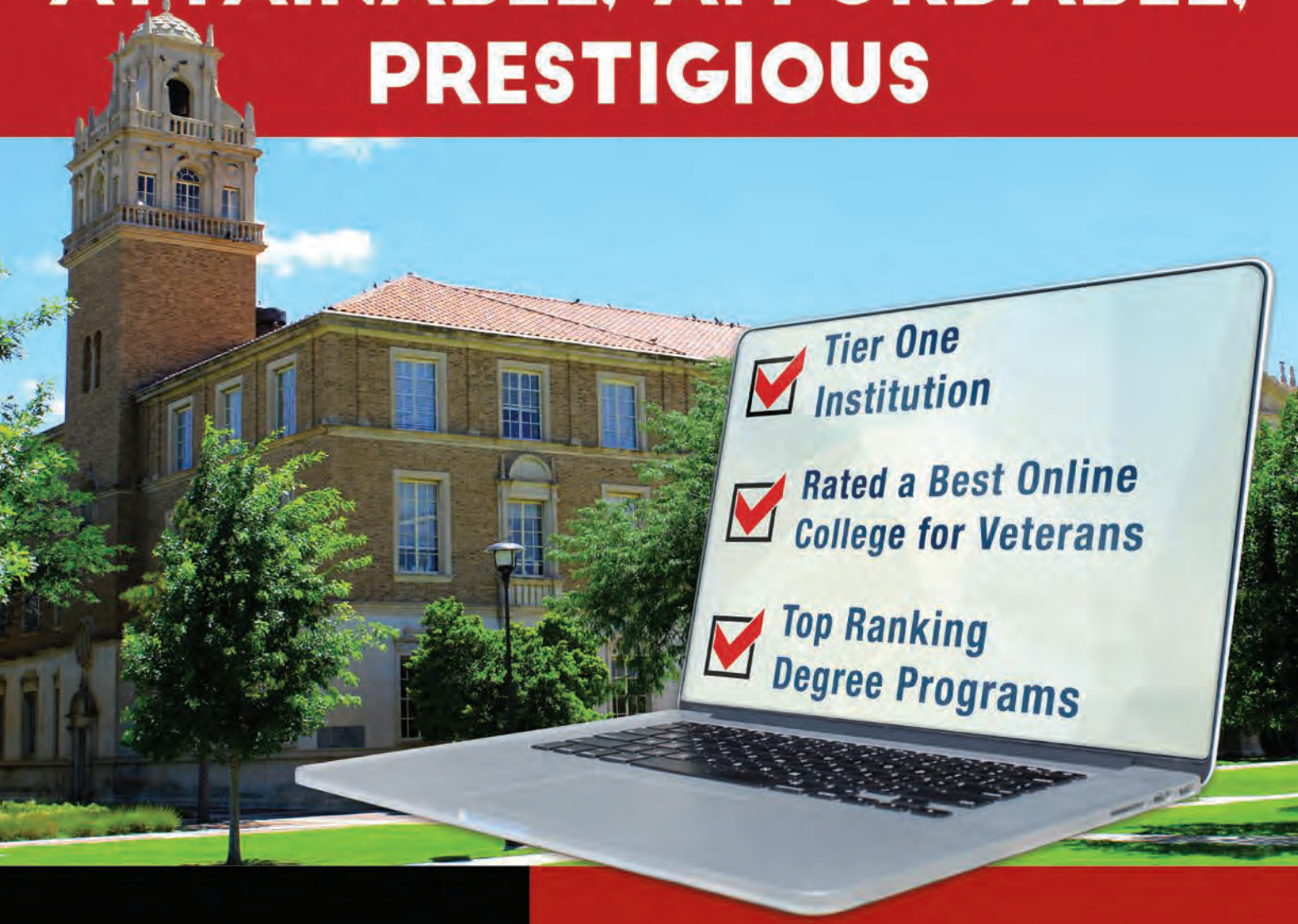

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mined American foreign policy in the mid-20th century.

The unprecedented expansion of America's global presence, and its underlying internationalist goals (including democratization and free trade), required a more skilled, highly organized, professionalized diplomatic corps. Professionalization occurred across all areas of society during the 20th century (medicine, law, education, etc.), but it was especially pronounced in the field of diplomacy. The technically trained and carefully vetted representative of the state supplanted the aristocrat-turned-diplomat of old. Governments, including the United States, built large bureaucracies to train and organize the work of men (and eventually women) hired full-time to manage different elements of each nation's foreign activities in trade, travel, military affairs, education and other matters. The new professional Foreign Service officers were selected on merit (usually through competitive examinations); they were highly trained (often with advanced degrees); and they were specialized (by field or region).

The professionalized diplomacy of the 20th century dominated the Cold War, and it continues to shape the post-Cold War world, although the traditional power of the Department of State has been diminished as the military has taken up more and more space in the foreign policy arena. American diplomats (George Kennan, Averell Harriman, Dean Acheson, Henry Kissinger, and many others) were at the center of U.S. policymaking, as were their Western European, Soviet, Chinese, Japanese and postcolonial counterparts. Since at least 1945, every major country has strived to hire, train and employ the most skilled professional diplomats for a variety of tasks, including: economic cooperation, counterterrorism, cultural exchange and conflict management.

Vive la Difference

One of the most striking things about the results of our survey of diplomatic services in eight key countries is how different

Fostering Strategic Thinking in the French Foreign Ministry

The French see themselves as missionaries for their revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity.

French diplomats believe that they invented the modern art of diplomacy in the 16th century. They seek not only to secure the interests of the French state, but also to promote these ideals through public diplomacy and other forms of "soft power." They do so in a relationship between posts and capital that seems to be unique: French diplomats are empowered to take stances that are consistent with the government policy without having to return to base at every juncture.

This flexibility has allowed diplomats to command conversations rather than react to the positions of others. Thus, France has gained success in the international community by consistently leading conversations and directing dialogue.

Max12Max (own work) [CC BY-SA 4.0], via Wikimedia Commons

The official entrance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, France.

—From "Developing Diplomats: Comparing Form and Culture Across Diplomatic Services," Country Report: France, pp. 59-77.

Max12Max (own work) [CC BY-SA 4.0], via Wikimedia Commons

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Beijing.

Recruitment and Training in the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Immediately after selection, new hires complete a six-month training course designed to familiarize them with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chinese diplomatic system. They then normally spend their first three-year assignment at MFA headquarters in Beijing and are not considered full diplomats until their first international posting.

As they progress through their careers, junior officers participate in a number of training courses—ranging from a few days or weeks to as long as two years—to be eligible for promotion. A unique feature of their professional development is that approximately 140 officers are sent to major national and international universities annually to complete a full year of graduate-level academic study.

Selection for this additional academic training is a strong indicator for future promotion to leadership ranks. Advancement to key leadership positions can occur at a relatively young age, and many ascend to ambassadorial posts by age 40.

—From "Developing Diplomats: Comparing Form and Culture Across Diplomatic Services," Country Report: China, pp. 40-58.

their histories and cultures are, despite the many structural and procedural similarities among them. From these diverse examples, is it possible to identify the ideal diplomat? Surely not: skilled diplomats come in various shapes and sizes. Some are master strategists, others are gifted linguists with deep regional expertise, and still others are experienced administrators and leaders. Diplomatic services need officers with these varied talents: the attributes one seeks for the head of the planning staff are not the same as those sought for the director of a regional bureau or a United Nations ambassador. *Vive la difference!*

There are, nonetheless, certain practices these services share that ensure they will nurture and develop skilled and effective professional diplomats. All of them recruit highly qualified officers, many drawn from elite institutions like the École Nationale d'Administration (ENA) in France and the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) in Russia, which are specifically geared for the preparation of public servants. And all provide entry-level training designed to familiarize officers with the ministry as well as to acquire diplomatic skills.

The Brazilian, German and Indian services have the most extensive initial training of the eight countries studied, ranging from three semesters in Brazil to as long as three years in Germany. France, Russia and the United Kingdom do not provide the same level of initial training, relying instead on their rigorous selection process from elite institutions and the professional education entering officers received there before joining the service.

Several services offer focused training courses at various points throughout a career. Brazil and China link mandatory mid-career training courses to eligibility for promotion, while France requires mid-career management training after 15 years of service. The German and French services seem to be the most advanced in promoting a "work-life balance" through generous family leave policies, flextime work arrangements and job placement help for partners.

To regularize promotion procedures and make them more transparent, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office has established Assessment and Development Centers, which administer a mix of written and interactive exercises focused mainly on management and leadership. Similarly, Turkey requires meritocratic examinations between the sixth and ninth years of service.

In all eight countries ambassadorial posts are almost entirely reserved for career diplomats. Most ambassadors to key posts have prior experience as ambassadors, speak the local language fluently and have served in senior levels in their home ministries. The contrast between the professional standards of these countries and the U.S. practice of assigning political appointees to key posts is conspicuous.

Laurie Jones aka ljonesimages on Flickr [CC BY-SA 2.0], via Wikimedia Commons

The North Block of the Indian Secretariat Building, which houses the Ministry of External Affairs.

Lessons for the United States?

We did not include the U.S. Foreign Service in our multicountry survey deliberately, fearing that doing so might lead us to judge everything against the U.S. experience. We also hesitated to draw sweeping conclusions about which practices are most relevant or most deserving of emulation by the United States. A "best practice" in one country is not necessarily best for another.

There are many areas in which the U.S. Foreign Service excels. It recruits a highly talented group of entering officers, whose composition is more diverse than that of other services we studied. These rising diplomats acquire strong regional and language skills along the way, and they typically have a mix of postings that help them acquire a global perspective. Another strength of the U.S. system, often mentioned by foreign diplomats with admiration and envy, is the presence at the senior working level of many "irregulars" who come in from academia, think-tanks or law firms to take up staff positions at National Security Council, National Economic Council, policy planning staff and elsewhere. (Of course, this practice has the disadvantage of displacing FSOs who might have aspired to those same positions.)

Yet, compared to many of the services we studied, America's diplomatic corps is disadvantaged at the entry level and again at the senior level. At entry level, officers are given a mere five weeks of orientation in the A-100 course, involving no serious substantive training. Then it may take several years before they

Entry-Level Training in the Indian Foreign Service

India's practice is unique among those diplomatic services we studied. New Indian diplomats are drawn from the highly selective Indian Civil Service examination process. Indian Foreign Service candidates are recruited alongside domestic counterparts such as the Indian Administrative Service, and their training begins with civil servants from across ministries and levels of government.

IFS officers subsequently undertake almost two additional years of training on top of the instruction they received as civil service recruits, including extensive rotations throughout the central government's ministries, as well as military attachments.

Their training also includes innovative features meant to ensure that Indian diplomats are well-connected to their country at the grass roots level: for example, a 10-day trek in the Himalayas followed by a 12-day visit to a remote village and the *Bharat Darshan* (view of India), a tour of major cultural, commercial and historical sites. Brazil has an analogous but less extensive practice whereby officers spend time in various states to experience something of the diversity of their country.

—From "Developing Diplomats: Comparing Form and Culture Across Diplomatic Services," Country Report: India, 97-116.

have a chance to work in their career track, as all officers must do at least one year of consular work, and often more than that. As a result, many junior officers begin to lose some of the enthusiasm they had when they entered, especially since these early postings are followed by what can be a painfully slow rise through the ranks.

As U.S. diplomats progress through their careers, they often find that the Foreign Service does not offer sufficient time off to pursue advanced academic training or gain experience in another professional setting. Contrast this with their military counterparts, who routinely receive yearlong training at least twice in a career. The very few FSOs who are afforded mid-career academic opportunities most often receive their strategic training at the National War College, with the result that diplomats learn strategy from the military rather than the other way around.

The United States is an extreme outlier among foreign services in the number of political appointees who serve as ambassadors and senior leaders in the State Department. No other country permits this level of amateurism, and the United States pays a heavy price for being so disadvantaged at the top level of critical missions abroad and within the department itself.

None of this is to denigrate the U.S. Foreign Service, whose officers are often among the most skilled and dedicated of any diplomatic service. Rather, it is to suggest that there are lessons to be learned from other services that could better empower the U.S. Foreign Service to field the strongest officers at entry level, prepare them to be both experts and strategic thinkers, and ensure that only the most qualified individuals represent the United States at the highest levels.

These are the lessons that our nation's leaders, in Congress and in the White House, must appreciate. And the American public must understand these insights, too. We need to nurture new Benjamin Franklins who will represent our country as skilled diplomats, and educate citizens about the importance of their work.