

American Diplomacy at Risk: List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Secretary and the State Department should strenuously press the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Congress for resources—positions, people and the funds needed to support them—to restore to American diplomacy the ability to play its critical role in the country’s national security.

Recommendation 2: The president and the Secretary of State should systematically include career diplomats in the most senior of State’s leadership positions because they provide a perspective gained through years of experience in diplomacy, thus assuring them the most experienced available advice and support.

Recommendation 2a: A senior career Foreign Service Officer should occupy at least one of State’s two Deputy Secretary positions, and the Undersecretary for Political Affairs position. This would not preclude other senior principals at the Undersecretary level from also coming from the career ranks.

Recommendation 2b: Consistent with the Act, select for the position of Director General (DG) of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources of the State Department a highly respected senior Foreign Service Officer who has held at least two senior appointments, one as Chief of Mission.

Recommendation 2c: The Director of NFATC (FSI) should always be a senior Foreign Service Officer and the deputy director a senior Civil Service employee.

Recommendation 2d: Implement fully the specifications for nomination of COMs in the Act, noting specifically sections (a) (2) that “positions as chiefs of mission should normally be accorded to career members of the Service” and (a) (3) that “Contributions to political campaigns should not be a factor in the appointment of an individual as a chief of mission.”

Recommendation 2e: The Deputy’s (“D”) Committee should be composed of a majority of active duty or recently retired senior Foreign Service Officers. The “D” Committee should approve also the selection of Deputy Assistant Secretaries.

Recommendation 3: The Department should adhere to the Act, which mandates a “career foreign service characterized by excellence and professionalism” as “essential in the national interest to assist the President and the Secretary of State in conducting the foreign affairs of the United States.”

Recommendation 3a: The number of politically appointed ambassadors normally should not exceed 10 percent of all ambassadorial appointments.

Recommendation 3b: Non-career and political appointments in the front offices of bureau Assistant Secretaries, other than the principal, should not exceed one Schedule B (foreign affairs subject matter expert) and one Schedule C (staff

attached to a political appointee) or other limited appointment authority.

Recommendation 3c: Special Envoys, Representatives, Coordinators, etc. should be appointed only for the highest priority issues and should be integrated into relevant bureaus unless special circumstances dictate otherwise.

Recommendation 4: The Department must define clearly the respective and distinctive roles of the Foreign Service and Civil Service, in compliance with the legislative language of the Act and other sources as appropriate.

Recommendation 5: State should use the language of the Act to describe publicly and internally the roles, missions, and personnel of the Foreign Service. For example, State should cease all efforts to un-name the “Foreign Service” as a professional cadre and to de facto discount and decommission “Foreign Service Officers” by speaking and writing of “generalists.”

Recommendation 5a: Use the slogan “One Mission—One Team” in its appropriate meaning as devotion to the single purpose of supporting US foreign policy interests, not as an excuse for “homogenization.”

Recommendation 6: The Department should suspend conversions above the FS-03 level of Civil Service employees to Foreign Service and of all Foreign Service positions to Civil Service until the Director General completes a thorough review and evaluation.

Recommendation 7: The Director General and AFSA should evaluate the pilot Overseas Development Program (ODP) and, if extended, agree on terms and conditions that preserve opportunities for the Civil Service and do not disadvantage the Foreign Service. The program should include a guarantee that participants must return to State in a Civil Service position where they can apply the knowledge and experience gained in their ODP assignment.

Recommendation 8: As a part of the review and evaluation of position conversion processes, the Department should address the relative allocation of Foreign Service and Civil Service positions in functional bureaus and special offices in light of their respective roles (as identified in response to Section III, Recommendation 4).

Recommendation 9: The Department needs to share proposed conversions of Foreign Service and Civil Service positions with AFSA and the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), the employee exclusive representative units. (See also Section VI, Recommendation 23 regarding availability of data in general.)

Recommendation 10: Realign the Foreign Service with the military and intelligence commissioned officer corps, with which it shares the risks and physical demands of overseas service, and reinstitute, through legislation if necessary, a lower maximum entry age ceiling to permit service of 20 years before mandatory retirement as a logical premise for the needs of a professional career.

Recommendation 10a: Modify the Foreign Service entry examination to better balance knowledge that is fundamental to diplomacy—American political and economic history, culture, politics and international relations—with currently desired skill sets and a commitment to diversity.

Recommendation 10b: Provide greater incentives to acquire language proficiency prior to entry, reflecting the greater level of familiarity with a wider range of foreign languages among applicants to today’s Foreign Service. Institute a monetary language differential determined by testing during orientation that would be sustained over a career by periodic testing and related assignments. This would replace the current language bonus system of added points on the entry register.

Recommendation 10c: In order to achieve a rigorous and realistic tenure process, extend the period for the first review for tenure of ELOs from the current as early as 36 months to a maximum of 54 months. In cases where no language training is required, or if there are multiple Employee Evaluation Reports (EERs) by multiple evaluators covering different functions, candidates could be reviewed at 48 months.

Recommendation 10d: Treat the initial pre-entry “cone” selection as a temporary designation for purposes of recruitment; then, as part of the tenure decision, confirm or change designations based on the informed interest and performance of the employee and the needs of the Service.

Recommendation 11: Include in the tenure process beginning work on a Foreign Service Institute Certificate in Diplomatic Studies and Practice to inculcate the basics of diplomacy as a profession. During the tenure period, ELOs can start earning required credits toward this Certificate at FSI, as part of the study part of the practicum and continue with elective courses online. The Certificate would need to be completed for promotion to FS-01 (see Recommendation 14).

Recommendation 12: Continue to emphasize the responsibilities of supervisors to mentor subordinates professionally and constructively.

Recommendation 12a: Develop a supervisory-mentoring module in both classroom and distance learning format for mid-level management based on the study of effective management and mentoring techniques adapted to the Foreign Service, that covers the responsibilities of supervision, resource management and mentoring of subordinates.

Recommendation 12b: Strengthen the existing mentoring component of the deputy chief of mission/principal officer (DCM/PO) course to reinforce the role and responsibility of DCMs/POs for mentoring ELOs and mid-level officers.

Recommendation 13: Refine and expand the existing Career Development Program (CDP) to improve the preparation of Foreign Service Officers for broad senior supervisory responsibilities.

Recommendation 13a: Within the roadmap in the existing CDP,⁴⁴ the Department

should emphasize a mix of assignments for all mid-level 0-2 and 0-3 officers in both regional and functional specialization related to their primary and/or secondary career tracks. (This Recommendation complements Recommendation 6c in calling for the restoration of Foreign Service positions in functional bureaus.)

Recommendation 13b: Re-establish the multi-functional promotion track to stimulate development of broad, integrated policy formulation and interagency leadership expertise to provide additional incentives and reward to the CDP, which requires multi-functional service in a variety of areas and specializations.

Recommendation 13c: Consistent with the intent of the Career Development Program, require officers seeking promotion into the senior Foreign Service to first complete at least one assignment in either another foreign affairs agency, or in a functional (global policy) bureau or regional affairs office in geographic bureaus as well as program direction at State. (The requirement would take effect in 10 years to allow time to meet it). As resources permit, add assignments to another Foreign Affairs agency. (This Recommendation complements Recommendation 6c calling for the restoration of Foreign Service positions in functional bureaus.)

Recommendation 14: In order to be eligible for promotion to FSO-1, require that an officer must have completed the FSI Certificate in Diplomatic Studies begun in the pre-tenure period (see Recommendation 11 in the preceding Entry-Level section).

Recommendation 15: Centralize management of Senior Executive Service (SES) employees in the Human Resources Bureau (HR) to provide mobility, professional education and training, and career development, rather than following the current practice of leaving those responsibilities to individual bureau

Recommendation 16: Within the Bureau of Human Resources, establish access to an orientation course immediately on entry and provide formal career development counseling for mid- and junior level Civil Service employees, integrated with the annual Civil Service employee evaluation exercise.

Recommendation 17: Establish a new option for Civil Service employees: a Career Policy Program for domestic positions incorporating rank-in-person, mobility, and up-or-out competitive promotions that allows qualified Civil Service employees to bid on up to 10 percent of Foreign Service domestic positions on the current Open Assignments list.

Recommendation 18: The Department should undertake a comprehensive review of the entire system of human resources management, including recruitment, position creation and classification methodology, staffing, assignment and promotion.

Recommendation 18a: The Department should examine all programs that seek to remedy short-term staffing needs, such as the Hard-to-Fill (HTF)⁵² and Limited Career Extension (LCE)⁵³ programs, to determine their utility and effectiveness in identifying and resolving long-term human resource needs.

Recommendation 19: NFATC (FSI) should explore closer relationships with analogous institutions such as military senior service colleges and the intelligence community's National Intelligence University. As a long-term vision, (1) postulate the establishment of the National Diplomatic University at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center and (2) form a closer and more formal relationship among the cluster of national security universities.

Recommendation 20: Each bureau should designate a career Foreign Service Deputy Assistant Secretary to be responsible for staff training and to oversee professional education, with responsibility for liaison with the HR and with the director of the NFATC.

Recommendation 21: HR should exercise ultimate authority for the development and assignment of Foreign Service employees in order to ensure that the long-term needs of the employee and the Service are met, as well as those of the bureaus.

Recommendation 22: Design an online course in US diplomatic history and practice for Foreign Service and Civil Service employees and others in the foreign affairs community throughout the US government. Draw on case studies from American diplomacy, developed by a combination of academic experts, master practitioners of diplomacy and individuals experienced in online learning.

Recommendation 23: In recognition of its obligations to the Civil Service and Foreign Service exclusive employee representatives, State should report annually to them and to the Congress a greater array of personnel data to ensure that actions affecting Civil Service and Foreign Service positions and employees are transparent (see also Recommendation 9.)

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