

**The American Diplomacy Project: A Foreign Service for the 21st Century**

The U.S. Foreign Service is facing one of the most profound crises in its long history. As the crucial instrument for protecting American power and interests around the world, the Service is losing its capacity to serve the American people effectively. At a time of pandemic and recession, Americans inside and outside of government in both parties should support the revival and rebuilding of one of our country's most important institutions. We must honor and support the men and women of the Foreign Service who serve in often difficult and dangerous positions around the world. They deserve no less.

Under the auspices of the non-partisan American Diplomacy Project at Harvard University, we have met with and listened to several hundred currently serving and former State Department officials, former senior leaders of the uniformed military and intelligence services, business leaders, and concerned citizens.

This list of draft recommendations represents our thinking to date. We welcome and would greatly value your input and ideas as we aim to complete and release our full and final report after the Presidential election in November.

The four of us are retired members of the Foreign Service who served at every rank from Junior Officer to Ambassador in our careers. We hope this nonpartisan report will contribute to a national debate to support an irreplaceable instrument of American power and effectiveness around the world.

Draft Recommendations to Strengthen the Foreign Service of the United States

First, both parties in Congress and the Administration should undertake urgently a comprehensive re-examination of the Foreign Service. Our career diplomats need a new mandate and mission to succeed for the American people in the decade ahead. Just as the U.S. launched major efforts in the past to reform and modernize the U.S. military and intelligence services, it should do so now for the Foreign Service.

Second, Presidents of both parties should re-establish the State Department and Foreign Service's role as the lead U.S. government agency on the development of U.S. foreign policy and its execution. To reach this goal, we believe a new Foreign Service Act is required to support this renewed role of our career diplomats and to make clear in legislation its role and responsibility in U.S. foreign policy. There have been only three such foreign service acts during the last century – in 1924 after the First World War, in 1946 after the Second World War, and in 1980 at the height of the Cold War. At this time of transformational change in the global power balance, in our economy and in digital age technologies, the time has come after four decades to re-authorize the mission of the Foreign Service.

Third, Congress and the White House should ensure that the great majority of American Ambassadors serving overseas—at least 90 percent—be career members of the Foreign Service. In addition, all leadership positions in the State Department in Washington below the level of Under Secretary of State should be filled by career officers. At least two of the five Under Secretaries should also be career officers.



Fourth, the Foreign Service Personnel System should be modernized and streamlined for the 21st Century, for example:

- The personnel system at the State Department needs to be reinvented. The men and women of the Foreign Service, Civil Service, and Locally Engaged Staff are the Department's most valuable assets. There should be a new commitment to professional development that is enabled by legislation mandating a 15 percent training float. Recruitment, training, retention, and morale need to be re-imagined and strengthened at every level.
- A commitment to much greater racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion is a major strategic imperative. The Foreign Service has failed to build a workforce that looks like the American people and to recruit and retain the best young people in our country. This urgent challenge should occupy every leader at every level.
- The culture of the Foreign Service itself requires deep reflection and a commitment to transformation that emphasizes leadership at all levels, accountability, smart risk-taking and lessons from other branches of government and the private sector. The goal should be to encourage the highest standards of professionalism, expertise, and integrity.
- The Foreign Service should establish a Diplomatic Reserve Corps of citizens willing and able to return to service in the event of national emergency and international crisis.

Fifth, the Foreign Service needs a new name – “The United States Diplomatic Service” – to signify America’s commitment to a new future for this vital institution that promotes American values and interests around the world.