

*Deficient, Enfeebled, and Ineffective: The  
Consequences of the Biden Administration's Far-Left Priorities on U.S. Foreign Policy*

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The Foreign Affairs Committee  
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**Introduction**

In the past few years, the federal government has followed academia into advocating race-based and sex-based preferences instead of encouraging diversity through equal opportunity and merit-based selection. Not only has the State Department embraced critical theory in its own internal management, it has also pushed the same divisive ideology in diplomatic programs abroad.

My testimony cannot catalogue every instance of how this over-arching ideology has pervaded the Department; I attempt here only to offer an explanation of the philosophy behind it and some examples of the results.

**I. Criticism of the State Department: Myth and Reality**

**Myth One: The State Department Lacks and Resists Race Diversity**

In the past five years, reports from the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)<sup>i</sup> and the Belfer Center at Harvard<sup>ii</sup> concluded that the State Department's perceived lack of diversity must be remedied urgently. To accomplish this goal, the authors seem willing to discard neutral criteria in hiring, promotion, and job assignments.

Yet, based on data from 2023, the State Department's overall staff is largely reflective of American demographics and labor market realities.<sup>iii</sup> Those who criticize the lack of diversity within the Foreign Service do not attempt to prove bad faith on the part of the State Department or individual employees, nor do they cite any discernible (and thus remediable) opposition to diversity among current staff.

Instead, they simply posit the existence of “systemic racism,” “structural bias,” or other invisible process working to minimize employment of certain (but not all) minorities.

### **Myth Two: “Structural Barriers” Prevent Minorities from Entering the Foreign Service**

To test the theory that structural barriers are impeding the hiring of officers who belong to certain identity groups, one would have to know the breakdown by race of those who take the Foreign Service Officer Test (FSOT) and oral exam, any difference in the pass/fail percentage by race, and whether those disparate results can be explained by factors other than bias. The State Department at present either does not publish research and analysis on racial disparities in test taking and performance.

### **Myth Three: Promotions Are Biased Against Minorities and Women**

In the Foreign Service, there is no discernible disadvantage in promotions for non-white officers.<sup>iv</sup> Furthermore, the 2023 promotion data showed higher rates of promotion for women than for men.<sup>v</sup> Cumulative promotion results from fiscal years 2020,<sup>vi</sup> 2021,<sup>vii</sup> and 2022<sup>viii</sup> also showed that women were generally promoted at a higher rate than men. This promotion advantage in favor of women exists in all five Foreign Service career tracks. It is possible, though extremely unlikely, that women on average are simply better at their jobs, in every career track, over many years. A more plausible explanation is that the officers grading them have been trained and incentivized to focus on historical bias and advance “equity.”

### **Myth Four: The State Department Has a “Hostile Climate” for Minorities**

A CNN journalist claimed in 2021 that “microaggressions, quiet bigotries and structural hurdles” are “systemic” impediments to success for ethnic minorities at State.<sup>ix</sup> However, staff surveys did not support this claim.<sup>x</sup> The State Department’s Office of Civil Rights reported that in 2022 there were 169 discrimination complaints among approximately 25,000 U.S. staff.<sup>xi</sup> Of the 169 complaints, there were only two findings of actual discrimination, roughly one per 12,500 employees.

### **Myth Five: Minorities Leave Because of a Hostile Climate**

A Government Accountability Office report from 2020 shows little difference in the rates at which white vs. non-white employees “left for reasons other than retirement or death.”<sup>xii</sup> One obvious reason for attrition is that State is competing with the private sector for talented college graduates, and the private sector pays better.<sup>xiii</sup> In 2021, companies in the Standard and Poor’s top 100 hired more than 300,000 people, and, according to Bloomberg, 94 percent were “people of color.”<sup>xiv</sup>

## **II. How DEI Replaced Equal Opportunity with “Equity”**

A philosophy has taken hold in American institutions that rejects meritocracy and advocates preferential treatment based on race, sex, and even “gender identity.” Under the traditional American value of equal opportunity, everyone gets a fair chance to compete, and the most qualified candidate wins. The goal of “equity,” in contrast, is a guaranteed equal outcome. Until recently, “equity” was synonymous with “fairness.”<sup>xv</sup> However, proponents of “equity” as defined by race essentialists like Ibram X. Kendi and Robin DiAngelo believe that “disparity in condition can only be the result of systemic discrimination”—and nothing else.<sup>xvi</sup> Accordingly, they call for government and the private sector to treat Americans unequally. As Kendi writes in his book *How to Be an Antiracist*, “[t]he only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination.”<sup>xvii</sup> Or, as Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancik put it in their book *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, “only aggressive, color-conscious efforts to change the way things are will do much to ameliorate misery.”<sup>xviii</sup>

That human beings differ in intelligence, talent, and industry is not only obvious common knowledge, but well documented.<sup>xix</sup> However, if one is committed to an ideology that dictates that there can be no differences among groups of people for any reason other than discrimination, then the aim of “equity” is to correct “structural” bias and ensure desired outcomes. This was the cornerstone of the Biden Administration’s philosophy.<sup>xx</sup>

Most State Department white-collar employees and almost all Foreign Service Officers have at least one college degree.<sup>xxi</sup> As such, they are the products of mostly left-wing institutions. Critical race theory (CRT), the ideology which underlies the implementation of DEI in academia, asserts that certain groups are oppressors and others are oppressed or “marginalized,” and that the latter must be given preferential treatment to create “equity.”<sup>xxii</sup> CRT is infused into American education at all levels<sup>xxiii</sup> and hence into the government workforce.<sup>xxiv</sup>

### **DEI Mandates Under President Biden**

Soon after taking office, Secretary of State Antony Blinken established the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, which then devised an “Equity Action Plan” for the department.<sup>xxv</sup> This DEI bureaucracy entrenched an unwritten canon of acceptable views on human rights, sex and gender, immigration, climate change, and other issues that it is not “career-enhancing” to challenge.

To achieve a diverse workforce, the Biden Administration made objective criteria subservient to DEI considerations. In addition to DEI being a factor in hiring, adherence to DEI is now a requirement for promotion. In 2022, the Department added to the promotion precepts for Foreign Service Officers a section that requires officers to demonstrate their achievements of DEI goals,<sup>xxvi</sup> thereby holding managers responsible for variables over which they have no control. (At the time of writing, the State Department is working to change this). Under Biden the Administration, the State Department implemented mandatory DEI career training, engaged in race-based preferences in hiring, and actively encouraged employees to form “affinity groups,”<sup>xxvii</sup> which are informal staff clubs mostly based on religion or ethnicity.<sup>xxviii</sup>

### **DEI in The Foreign Service Entrance Exam**

Under the “equity” dogma, if tests produce disparate results among racial groups, the tests must be ignored or eliminated, even if there is no evidence that the tests themselves are biased. The Department of State followed the path of college admissions boards by applying a “comprehensive” or “holistic” hiring model to the Foreign Service.<sup>xxix</sup> This unproven approach may violate the federal government’s merit system principles for hiring as defined in U.S. law.<sup>xxx</sup>

The written FSOT is an online multiple-choice test given three times a year. Until the Biden Administration, passing the FSOT was a mandatory entrance requirement for most generalist officers. In April 2022, to make the process more “equitable,” “a candidate’s...score [was] combined with a preliminary Qualifications Evaluation Panel (QEP) score to determine who moves forward in the process.”<sup>xxxi</sup> Instead of advancing only those candidates who passed the FSOT to the oral exam, State’s Board of Examiners can pick candidates who scored below the passing level, to bring “intersectional” factors into play and ensure their desired distribution of race and sex.

There is a clear correlation between scores on standardized tests such as the SAT,<sup>xxxii</sup> MCAT<sup>xxxiii</sup> and LSAT<sup>xxxiv</sup> and future accomplishment. It stands to reason that accepting applicants with lower FSOT scores will lead to lower performance as those officers move through their careers.

### **“Equity” via the Qualifications Evaluation Panels (QEPs)**

The Foreign Service oral exam process is a day-long series of live exercises for those who pass the written FSOT. The QEPs are a selection filter between the written and oral exams. Much like the holistic selection model used by universities, the QEPs look at the “total candidate” in ranking them.<sup>xxxv</sup> Via the QEPs, it is thus possible for candidates to fail the written exam and still be moved forward to the oral exam, or to pass the written test and yet be blocked from proceeding to the oral exam. Before the QEP, the oral exam had a pass rate of between 6 percent and 10 percent. Examiners did not have any background information on candidates to consider for “equity.” In recent years, the pass rate on the oral exam has risen to 50 percent.<sup>xxxvi</sup> This means that instead of the real selection being made on objective criteria during the written exam, the QEPs decide based on subjective criteria like the Personal Narrative that can highlight group identity traits for which the department wishes to select. The essay in the FSOT could also be used to screen out applicants with unwanted opinions.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

### **DEI Bias in the Promotion Process**

Bias creeps in through several ways. The first is that Foreign Service job assignments are compromised by “DEIA” bias [the “A” was added for “accessibility.”]<sup>xxxviii</sup> The second vulnerability is the individual score on the new DEIA precept. How this is graded by panels and how average scores compare across race and sex categories are not publicly available information.

The third way in which bias could influence promotion panels is through inferences about a person’s race and sex. Consider the names below, taken from articles found in the national media over the past few years:

- Dezarrious, Zontayveon, Dartavius, Jarquavivus, Tarquavion
- Martha, Susan, Kayla, Barbara
- Sanjay, Jesus, Shaomin, Mohammed
- Sherlonda, Zo’nique, La’Shaunae, Lashawndra
- Braydon, Tucker, Cooper, Tanner

“Unconscious bias” training notwithstanding, panelists could make assumptions about the race or sex of candidates, and bias in favor of preferred groups could affect how they score them.

### **Foreign Service Recruitment Pipeline Reflects Realities in American Education**

There is a fundamental tension between meritocracy and diversity due to a persistent “skills gap” in the hiring pipeline. American public education is increasingly failing. According to data from the National Association of Education Progress (NAEP), in 2024, only 30 percent of eighth-grade students performed “at or above NAEP Proficient” on the reading assessment.<sup>xxxix</sup> Future representatives of the United States also need a strong knowledge of their country’s past, and yet in 2022 only 13 percent of eighth-graders were “Proficient” in U.S. history.<sup>xl</sup>

The percentage of Americans with higher education also varies considerably by group. For adults ages 25 and above, the percentage of Asians with a bachelor’s degree or above is 61 percent, while for non-Hispanic whites it is 41.9 percent and for blacks it is 28.1 percent.<sup>xli</sup>

The State Department makes a significant effort to attract diverse applicants, with 16 senior diplomats in residence around the country. In 1992, Congress established the Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship,<sup>xlii</sup> followed in 2002 by the Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Fellowship.<sup>xliii</sup> Both programs focus primarily on ethnic minorities. They also bypass the written FSOT, and once in

the program, fellows have several tries to pass the oral exam.<sup>xliv</sup> In fiscal year 2022, State hired 327 Foreign Service Officers, of whom 90 (almost a third) were Pickering and Rangel fellows.<sup>xlv</sup>

### **DEI in State Department Schools**

The State Department's Office of Overseas Schools (OOS) supports 193 international schools which serve the children of U.S. embassy staffers.<sup>xlvi</sup> Though located abroad, these American-supported schools are often staffed with American teachers, who bring with them the culture of teaching colleges and universities, including DEI. The Trump Administration, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, have made it clear that discriminatory programs under the DEI rubric are unacceptable. Still, some schools are attempting to dodge criticism and potential de-funding by using euphemisms and re-branding while leaving the ideology and indoctrination in place.<sup>xlvii</sup>

### **DEI in Foreign Policy and Aid**

According to a Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) with USAID, the State Department "protects and advances the interests of American citizens."<sup>xlviii</sup> Rather than concentrating on the "values at the heart of the American way of life," as the JSP instructs, the State Department has allowed itself to be captured by a leftist agenda tangential to America's core values at best and inimical to them at worst.

The State Department under the Biden Administration adopted an Equity Action Plan (EAP) that opened thusly: "Addressing systemic racism...is a core tenet of President Biden's foreign policy."<sup>xlix</sup> Clearly showing its roots in the academic world of critical theory, the EAP contains the word "intersectionality" 11 times, "underserved communities" 47 times, and "equity" 113 times. The word "equality," meanwhile, can be found only seven times. The EAP does not identify a clear set of problems, and it does not prescribe specific, measurable solutions.

Under Blinken, the department promoted a radical gender ideology that is not accepted by most Americans, let alone foreign publics.<sup>l</sup> A Biden executive order in 2021<sup>li</sup> effectively "displace[d] biological sex with gender identity in domestic and international affairs."<sup>lii</sup> More insidiously, it conflated the contentious term of "gender identity or expression" with sex and sexual orientation. American diplomats were ordered to advocate acceptance of synthetic sex identities<sup>liii</sup> which go against the beliefs and beyond the tolerance of the population in many of the countries with which the U.S. has other important interests to promote.

An *Interagency Report* on implementing the Biden agenda<sup>liv</sup> revealed how U.S. embassies hosted special events for the month-long "Pride" festivities, flew "Progress Pride" flags,<sup>lv</sup> and how the department "celebrated Coming Out Day, Spirit Day, International Pronouns Day, Intersex Awareness Day, Intersex Day of Solidarity, and Ace week (celebrating those with asexual-spectrum identities), with many of these commemorative days highlighted for the first time in the department's history."<sup>lvi</sup> Leaving aside whether all these concepts merit their own respective days of commemoration, how are they relevant to American foreign policy or national security?

Biden's State Department offered grants to promote transgenderism in India,<sup>lvii</sup> drag performances in Ecuador,<sup>lviii</sup> LGBTQIA+ awareness in Botswana,<sup>lix</sup> a "gender and sexuality library" in Lebanon,<sup>lx</sup> and DEI training for police forces in Latin America.<sup>lxi</sup> At the United Nations, the Biden Administration succeeded in inserting the term "sexual orientation and gender identity" into U.N. documents as well as employing the phrase "women, in all their diversity," which is code for including biological males who "identify" as women. A Biden executive order<sup>lxii</sup> conflated "conversion therapy" with any efforts to counsel gender dysphoric youth into accepting biological reality.<sup>lxiii</sup> The Biden Administration

promoted “gender-affirming” medical care in the U.S.<sup>lxiv</sup> at a time when other developed countries are banning it for minors based on growing evidence that it is harmful and ineffective.<sup>lxv</sup>

### **III. Conclusion**

Woke ideology and DEI are too firmly entrenched in American institutions and staff to go gently. Some career civil servants and their agencies will retrench, resist, or rebrand.<sup>lxvi</sup> Still, under Secretary Rubio, the State Department is making progress to eliminate its wasteful, redundant, and discriminatory DEI bureaucracy; refocus existing resources on core values and priority goals; and depoliticize the personnel process to return to merit-based principles.

There is much more to be done, but the path is clear. DEI—or DEIA—divides. Merit and equal opportunity are open to all. In personnel matters, State’s guiding principles must return to equal opportunity, fair treatment, high expectations, and accountability. In foreign policy, the focus must be on enduring rather than ephemeral American values and interests.

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