TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
"AMERICA FORWARD: RESTORING DIPLOMACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN A FRACTURING WORLD"
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Imagine how America *could* be in the world. Imagine a corps of official representatives, trained and sworn to advance U.S. interests around the globe, staffing embassies, missions, trade and cultural offices of all kinds, who reflect the world and speak the world's languages fluently. Imagine Africans seeing African-Americans, Asians seeing Asian-Americans, Latin Americans seeing Latinx Americans, just as Europeans have long seen European Americans and Anglo-Saxon countries have seen Anglo-Saxon Americans: as people who look and often sound like themselves but who are unmistakably American.

Can we really doubt that the "special relationship" between the United States and Great Britain is based in part on our close genetic, linguistic, and cultural kinship? Is it an accident that the "Five Eyes," the three countries in addition to Britain that we are most willing to share intelligence with, are Canada, Australia, and New Zealand? All branches from the same mother tree?

The identity of our official representatives abroad is no small thing. It is not a matter of wanting diversity and inclusion because those are good things to have and the *zeitgeist* demands it. The United States could do few things more important for its future security and prosperity (another is to fund universal early education) than ensure that the people who represent America in the world actually look like America. We could have the same kind of special relationship with countries on every continent, not a relationship of harmony, necessarily – the U.S. and Great Britain have often been at

odds. But a relationship in which trust is the baseline and in which disputes, even serious ones, do not dissolve the deeper ties that bind us together.

Genetic, linguistic, and cultural kinship is obviously not all it takes to create enduring bonds between nations. Political systems, geography, natural resources, and national values all play key roles. Moreover, even countries that appear very similar on the surface, such as the U.S. and Canada or Australia, still have plenty of cultural, ethical, and political differences. Still, if U.S. representatives abroad truly reflected the demography of the United States, we would have far greater cultural, linguistic, and historic channels of connection with the peoples of other nations. We would also see ourselves, and other countries would see us, as a nation that reflects and connects the world.

Note that I keep referring to representatives rather than diplomats. I have great respect for diplomats both personally and professionally: their trade is to avert, smooth over, and sometimes even to resolve arguments, to advance difficult negotiations, and to steer without being seen to steer. We need only to look to CIA Director Nominee William Burns to see a master of the trade and to appreciate the value of a diplomatic corps to the country in many situations. Still, diplomatic abilities are only one part of the skillset that the nation needs in our relations with other nations in the decades to come.

A Foreign Service and a Development Department for the 21st Century

The current Foreign Service was created in 1925, through a merger of the Consular Service and the Diplomatic Service, and reformed several times during the 20th century, although its form and the basic assumption that diplomacy is a 30-year career

with a carefully prescribed progression from bottom to top were never changed.[1] The world has moved on, however; young people today typically think about their careers in five to ten year chunks. Moreover, it is possible to have a global career, in the sense of traveling and living abroad, in many different sectors. And the number of Americans who grow up speaking their parents' natal language as well as English has steadily increased over the last century, changing the recruiting pool for Americans who can represent the government abroad.

A Congressionally mandated overhaul of the Foreign Service could create a new Global Service open to anyone interested in serving the country as an official representative abroad who is willing to sign up for a ten year tour at any stage in their career. Early, mid, or even later career individuals could bring a tremendous range of skills to the job, as well as languages, cultural expertise, and contacts that they developed in other jobs. Members of the Global Service could have backgrounds in business, technology, civic organizations, education, science, sports, arts, and religion.[2]

Such a service would be far more likely actually to represent the actual population of the United States than the Foreign Service. It would be possible to recruit people from many different careers at different stages in their careers, without requiring them to make a thirty-year commitment to a life of three-year tours hopscotching between foreign countries and Washington. To take only one example, individuals working in state or municipal governments in large, medium, and even smaller cities could be

[1] For an account of the origins of the current Foreign Service, see "The Rogers Act - Short History - Department History - Office of the Historian," accessed May 12, 2020, https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/rogers.
[2] For a more detailed explication of this proposal, see Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Reinventing the State Department," *Democracy Journal*, https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/reinventing-the-state-department/.

eligible, particularly those who handling trade, climate, security, and other matters that require regional and global contacts.

We would still need rigorous selection criteria, of course, but the Foreign Service examination could certainly be overhauled, as could training for postings abroad. It might well be that the U.S. approach to diplomacy could reduce the endless details of diplomatic protocol over time, but we would likely find other countries quickly following suit. Much of that protocol is better suited to the 18th century than the 21st.

A great advantage of such a Global Service would be the ability to mobilize different kinds of public-private-civic-philanthropic partnerships that are now and will increasingly be necessary to tackle global problems. These partnerships can also advantage the U.S. in great power competition or other foreign policy initiatives. To take only one example, when President Obama announced a "new beginning with the Muslim world" in 2009, he could not offer a governmental Marshall Plan. He could, however, have mobilized tremendous resources with the systematic ability to work across sectors in at home and in every Muslim-majority country.

Alongside a new Global Service, the U.S. government needs a capacity to invest in development abroad in ways that connect to development at home. Most U.S. towns and cities have departments or agencies for economic development; most states have economic development associations. It's time to stop thinking about "development" as money that the United States sends to poor foreign countries to help them develop, and instead to see that even rich countries and cities have deeply poor and underdeveloped parts. Helping other countries develop, in environmentally and socially sound ways, serves U.S. interests and can teach us valuable lessons.

Instead of the U.S. Agency for International Development, established under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and an eternal step-child to the State Department, Congress should create a new cabinet-level Department of Global Development. It should be fully empowered and designed to engage with other sectors of the U.S. economy and society in ways that marshal public, private, civic and philanthropic resources in the service of development in other countries and our own.

The new Department should also be authorized and equipped to build coalitions like the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, created with the assistance of Bloomberg Philanthropies, in which mayors of over seven thousand cities around the world come together to make commitments to reduce carbon emissions and to exchange best practices with one another.[3] Another model is Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, an institutionalized collaboration among national governments, international organizations, the Gates Foundation, pharmaceutical corporations, and non-government organizations, all in the service of immunizing over 600 million children thus far.[4] A fully empowered Department of Global Development would have the full authority of the U.S government to create similar collaborations to respond to a host of global problems within and across countries.

Getting It Done

These are grand schemes, perhaps more appropriate for a university seminar than a Congressional hearing. Yet they are no grander than the reorganization of the U.S. Department of Defense in the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, strengthening

[3] https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/
[4] https://www.gavi.org/.

civilian control over the military and substantially reducing inter-service rivalry. It took a number of years, but it got done.

The playbook for making major change in Washington is well-established: appoint a commission. In 1985 the Reagan Administration appointed a Blue Ribbon Commission led by former Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard to investigate Department of Defense procurement and other managerial practices. Years earlier, however, members of Congress serving on both the House and the Senate Armed Services Committees also sought to investigate a series of botched or mismanaged military operations and responses. Both committees launched multi-year reviews, supported by work that Senator Sam Nunn commissioned from the Center for Strategic and International Studies. These processes ultimately converged in the set of reforms that were passed in the Goldwater-Nichols Act.

Congress could come together now and appoint a Commission to investigate how best to equip the United States for the multi-stakeholder diplomacy and development needs of the 21st century, requiring a report with proposed legislation by the end of 2021. Congress could then act on that report in the first half of 2022.

Why Now?

Congressional action is needed *urgently*. In 2009 the Obama Administration had a chance to work with Congress to overhaul the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to make a host of structural and other changes. Senator Levin's office was ready and willing to work with the executive branch to get it done. Internal frictions and lack of leadership meant that we missed what turned out to be only a two-year window before the midterm

elections of 2010. This Congress and this Administration should not make that mistake again.

The Administration's foreign policy team has a host of immediate and medium-term challenges. Yet the single most important thing the United States can do for decades to come is to ensure that we attract the very best talent from across every part of the American population to represent us in the world, with the skills and connections necessary to engage in new approaches to global problem-solving. As every business knows, in times of continual change, plans and policies are far less important than people. The workforce in every sector must be composed of people who can adapt and respond to new circumstances quickly, effectively, and continually.

The current Foreign Service was created nearly a *century* ago. It is time to take bold action to create a Global Service that will meet U.S. needs for the next century, and to create the capabilities that will truly give us equal strength and depth in diplomacy, defense, and development. The diversity and innovative capacity of the American people, reflecting immigration over centuries from the entire world, is our greatest strength. It is time we applied that strength to managing U.S. relationships with other countries and tackling the problems that endanger us all without regard for borders.

The United States as a Talent Magnet

I have not talked to you of the many problems the United States faces in the world: how to manage relationships with China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, or various other countries; how to shore up relations with U.S. allies; how to create a safe global information environment that reflects the values embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; how to govern that space; how to tackle global crime and corruption;

how to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the development of a new generation of bioweapons; how to develop and implement an effective strategy to reduce and mitigate climate change, and many others.

It is not that I do not think those issues are important. But as I have said, you have a short time to make lasting change. The best way to do that is to focus not on the issues but on the people who will represent us and the structures that empower them to do so.

In this regard, one of the most important foreign policy contributions this Congress could make is to reform U.S. immigration policy on a bipartisan and lasting basis. It is also critical that U.S. colleges and universities be able to welcome students from every country in the world, including countries that we count as our rivals. Even accepting that some number of Chinese students, for instance, might indeed be intelligence risks, those risks are far outweighed by the enormous benefits that U.S. labs and seminar rooms derive from the talent we attract and the relationships we develop. Being an open nation is an enormous advantage in our competition with other great powers.

To be an open nation, however, as the past decade has demonstrated, it is necessary to take care of Americans at home. Only if Americans see a road of opportunity and prosperity ahead will they welcome trade, investment, and immigration channels with other nations. Thus the best foreign policy strategy for now is to expand health care, make high quality education accessible and affordable, build an infrastructure of care for infants through elders, and create a new generation of good jobs. That is a real foreign policy for the middle class.