



SENIOR LEADERSHIP SHORTAGES AT AMERICA'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS AGENCIES ENDANGER U.S. GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

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Given the growing challenges the United States is facing around the world – from an increasingly competitive China; the largest humanitarian crisis in our hemisphere; and the Syrian refugee crisis – it is imperative that America's foreign affairs agencies have qualified personnel in place, ready to advance America's security and economic interests.

Alongside a number of bipartisan Congressional statements over the past year weighing in on the personnel challenge, President Trump's National Security Strategy recognized that "diplomacy is indispensable" and a "forward-deployed" diplomatic and development presence are critical to keep pace with growing global threats and compete against rising powers, like China and Russia. Unfortunately, the absence of personnel in key positions and embassies – due to both slow nomination and confirmation processes – directly undermines American leadership around the world.

CONTINUED SENIOR VACANCIES FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AGENCIES

While there has been progress, close to 80 senior leadership posts remain vacant at the State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. embassies, and other U.S. foreign affairs agencies.

- More than 40 nominees are currently awaiting Senate confirmation, while at least another 35 critical leadership positions await a nominee from the White House.
- As of March 19th, only two of the six Under Secretaries of State and 14 of 22 Assistant Secretaries of State have been confirmed.
- Around the world, more than 40 Ambassador posts have not been confirmed or named, leaving critical gaps in advancing our interests in places like Turkey, Jordan, and Egypt.
- 13 percent of overseas Foreign Service positions at more than 270 embassies and consulates worldwide remain vacant, elevating security risks and hampering America's ability to advance foreign policy interests (according to a recent GAO report).

LACK OF PERSONNEL HAS CRITICAL REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Secretary Pompeo has committed to fully staffing the State Department, saying, "the United States diplomatic corps needs to be in every corner, every stretch of the world, executing missions on behalf of this country." Yet, the slow process to nominate and confirm the most senior positions at America's foreign affairs agencies is jeopardizing U.S. security and economic interests in every corner of the world from Asia to Africa.

- **Indo-Pacific.** Three of the most senior posts at State Department and USAID – the Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, the Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs, and Assistant Administrator for Asia – who are responsible for implementing America's Indo-Pacific Strategy, remain vacant as China is expected to spend over \$1 trillion on its "Belt and Road" initiative and expand its economic and political influence in the region. The United States also lacks Ambassadors to critical allies in the region, including Pakistan, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, and ASEAN.

- **Latin America.** Even as the Western Hemisphere’s worst humanitarian crisis is escalating, the Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration and more than a dozen U.S. Ambassador posts in the region including Chile and Brazil – two countries that are bearing the brunt of the Venezuelan refugee crisis – remain vacant. While USAID has been a critical partner, helping Latin American countries – particularly El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico – address the root causes of migration and become self-reliant, the agency still lacks an Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean and U.S. Ambassadors in those three capitals.
- **The Middle East.** Despite the Pentagon’s warning that ISIS could return within 6 to 12 months if the U.S. does not stay engaged, the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs has been vacant for more than two years and the U.S. lacks Ambassadors in some of the most strategically important regions – including Turkey, Jordan, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Qatar. Furthermore, the Assistant Administrator for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance post remains vacant as 71 million people, including 35 million children, in the Middle East are in need of humanitarian assistance.
- **Africa.** The United States lacks Ambassadors to nine African countries, including Egypt, as well as the Assistant Administrator for Africa at USAID, impeding America’s ability to effectively counter Russia’s and China’s aggressive economic and military expansion throughout the continent in a new era of great power competition. In fact, China has not only surpassed the U.S. as Africa’s largest trading partner but established its first overseas military base in Djibouti, while Russia is actively engaged in conversations to establish military bases in Sudan and Eritrea.

REACTION FROM CAPITOL HILL

- “While it is tempting to retreat to the comfort and security of our own shores, there is still a great deal of work to be done, and we know that left untended, these conflicts will reverberate right here in our own cities. We are not the world’s policemen, but we are the leader of the free world, and it is incumbent upon the United States to lead.”
– **Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY)**, January 2019
- “We all know that in order to manage an agency like that you’ve got to have really solid people around you to be able to make the bureaucracy work... We do need the Ambassadorships filled, and the top positions in the Department filled.”
– **Senator James Risch (R-ID)**, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, April 2018
- “If we do not have voices present to speak, no nation can listen to us ... We cannot continue to allow the pulpits where we preach American values to remain vacant.”
– **Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ)**, March 2018
- “There are many lessons learned from past organizational reform efforts, including that the 1990s cuts and hiring freezes may have saved money in the short term, but led to increased personnel costs down the line ... As important as it is to retain those with deep experience at Foggy Bottom, ensuring a steady inflow of entry-level diplomats and aid workers is also important.”
– **Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC)**, March 2018
- “This is no time to be dismantling the structure and the personnel and the programs and the budget of the Department of State or USAID or our embassies and our missions overseas. Both Sec. Mattis and Sec. Pompeo said we should be doing what we can to bolster them.”
– **Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT)**, June 2018
- “The personnel of the State Department and USAID are on the front lines, every day, all around the world protecting our interests, promoting our values, and keeping us safe.”
– **Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD)**, December 2017