

Beat: Local

RECEPTION ON - AMERICAN DIPLOMACY - PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGES OF TOMORROW

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USPA NEWS - Antony J. Blinken, Deputy Secretary of State, in Washington, DC on February 2, 2016, gave an official speech during a Reception on 'American Diplomacy: Preparing for the Challenges of Tomorrow'.

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It is a pleasure to welcome you all to the Ben Franklin Room at the State Department—named, of course, for our nation’s first, and perhaps most eccentric, diplomat. Ben Franklin charted the Gulf Stream, pioneered the study of electricity, authored America’s first diplomatic treaty, and helped forge a new ethos of self-government—almost none of which he did sober.

In other words, he was an innovator—one of our nation’s greatest. He looked at challenges in new ways—not as difficulties over which to despair, but as problems to solve. He understood that diplomacy’s abiding strength was not its isolation but rather its immersion in the great currents of global change. Through the centuries, our diplomats have served as essential navigators in these tides—sensing and seizing opportunities across the globe to shape a world that is a little bit wealthier, a little bit healthier, a little bit wiser.

So when others argue that America is on the retreat—that we have abdicated our responsibility to lead—I couldn’t disagree more. Exactly the opposite is true. Thanks to the more than 73,000 men and women of the State Department, the United States has never been more engaged in more places than at this moment in time, and our leadership is producing real powerful and positive results.

In the last two years ago alone, American global leadership has mobilized countries to confront ISIL, violent extremism and Ebola.

We have revitalized NATO’s committed to the defense of its own members, rallied European allies to support Ukraine, and penalized Russia for its actions in Ukraine.

We’ve deepened our engagement with the Asia Pacific—securing a landmark trade partnership with a region that is increasingly embracing the nexus of good governance and sustainable growth.

Last month, I visited China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea for the third time in a year—and even in that short time we have seen stronger relations grow between two of the United States’ most important allies and a deepening of our relationship with China, complicated as it is.

We have carried our relationship with India to new heights, and helped competing Afghan blocs achieve their first-ever peaceful democratic transition in that country’s history.

We hosted the first-ever U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit to build new relationships among our governments and with the private sector.

We reestablished diplomatic relations with Cuba, negotiated an agreement to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and bring unjustly imprisoned Americans home. We’ve enlisted 195 countries in a historic climate agreement.

In each of these cases, I like to do a little thought experiment, and it's based on the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*. We all know what happened to Bedford Falls when George Bailey was out of the picture. And I think it's self-evident where the world would be without American leadership on these challenges.

For me, the question is not and indeed it's never been whether America is leading; the question is how we're leading—by what means, and to what ends. That is the proper subject for debate and discussion. And I would suggest there are a few basic principles on which we've tried to ground our leadership.

First, we must lead with purpose to ensure the security of our country, its citizens, our allies and partners; to promote a strong U.S. economy and to advance our values; and to shape an international order that bolsters peace, security, and prosperity.

Second, we must lead from a position of strength, with unrivaled military might, a dynamic economy, and the unmatched strength of our human resources.

Third, we should be leading by the power of our example as well as the example of our power—lifting our citizens, growing our economy, and living our values here at home.

Fourth, we should lead with capable partners, because we can best advance our interests in an interconnected world when others are working with us, while recognizing that the United States and our leadership is often necessary to mobilize collective action.

Fifth, we must lead with all the instruments of American power—with determined diplomacy, an ever-ready military, our economic might, and also the powerful attraction of American innovation, science, education, and culture.

A few days ago, I was in Silicon Valley, where I joined roughly 150 innovators, humanitarians, coders, designers in a full-day workshop to help close the education gap for Syrian refugee children.

Every day, our team here at State works towards big goals like this that benefit from the leadership and creativity of the innovation community.

And every day, our team tackles issues at the intersection of technology and foreign policy—from modernizing arms control agreements to negotiating norms of behavior in cyberspace or outer space.

Despite this focus, we need to create more bridges that allow our diplomats to tap into the energy and ingenuity of American education, innovation, and entrepreneurship—and enable our foreign policy priorities to spark or accelerate new ideas.

Developed under Deputy Secretary Burns' leadership, the Foreign Service Institute's Center for the Study of the Conduct of Diplomacy is one such bridge—ensuring that we apply the lessons of the past to our conduct and actions in the future.

We are also developing a new core curriculum at FSI, to ensure that everyone starts their careers with foundational knowledge and skills relevant to this century. Through new and experiential training, we will prepare our officers to better understand unstated assumptions that shape conflict and collaboration, apply future forecasting to the geopolitical world of tomorrow, and tap into unconscious drivers of behavior that will help us effectively conduct and advance our foreign policy.

To help build another of these bridges, Secretary Kerry recently established the Innovation Forum in order to enable our foreign policy leaders to be able to see around the innovation corner—to ask important questions like: 'What does the revolution in robotics mean for warfighting? What do advances in artificial intelligence mean for our labor markets? What does the advent of digital currency mean for the dollar?'

The Foreign Service Institute is essential to this mission. Today's class of new officers, specialists, and fellows draws on a greater diversity of professional and technical skills—more so than ever before.

One of the things that struck me, going around the world and getting a chance to visit our embassies and talk to our first and second tour officers, is how much the Department has changed over the last decades. It used to be that most of the officers starting at the Department were coming out of college or graduate school. When you talk to our officers today, they are coming from full careers doing something else—as lawyers, soldiers, from NGOs, doctors.

Nothing has more enriched the Department than this greater diversity and experience that our new officers are bringing to the building. It gives me great confidence going forward about the strength of the Department and the relevance to the problems we have to tackle.

We have an obligation as leaders, as public servants, to find ways of unleashing that potential as fully as possible, just as Ben Franklin taught us so many years ago.

We have a rich and ambitious agenda for the years ahead that requires the tools and talents not only of our whole government but of our whole community. So, on behalf of Secretary Kerry, the Foreign Service Institute and all my colleagues at the Department, we hope to deepen our engagement with all of you.

We look forward to your ideas and your partnership, as we continue to bring luster and strength to a word that defines our common calling: diplomacy.

Thank you very much.

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