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Charting the "hows" of Foreign Policy



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## America's Diplomacy, Foreign Affairs Reporting, and Diplomatic Capital Remarks at the 21st Annual Weintal Prize Ceremony April 25, 1995

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Charlie Bartlett has asked me to reflect upon my quarter century of life in this town as Dean of the EDMUND A. WALSH SCHOOL OF FOREIGN SERVICE — the country's first school of international affairs. I am obliged to confess that I have always been awed by the nation's capital and have felt it a privilege to live and work in the extended shadows of the great monuments of this world capital. I have enjoyed this privilege from a privileged position. Others in this city are in its fray: legislators, policymakers, lobbyists, doers of all sorts, and, of course, journalists. I have been a spectator observing the fray, and the participants in it, from the safety and relative tranquility of a decanal office.

Here, I have lived in the world of opinion, not the world of decision. It is an important distinction and one for which I have enormous respect. It is a luxury to live in the world of opinion. I defer to those who must act. I salute them and, over the years, have provided some of them a respite on the faculty of this school. It is a role this school can play, a contribution it can make.

Paul Nitze, Henry Kissinger, Pete Vaky, David Newsom, Donald McHenry, William Hyland, Chester Crocker, and Marvin Kalb come prominently to mind. Their association with the School of Foreign Service has helped to establish and disseminate its fame.

I have now been Dean of the Walsh School for twenty-five years and was a founding trustee of the Weintal Prize twenty-one years ago. Over that span of more than a score of years, two interrelated phenomena intimately connected to the focus of this prize ceremony — namely, the reporting of foreign affairs — have impressed, or, rather, depressed me. These phenomena are opposite sides of the same coin or of the same street. On one side, our public capacity to conduct foreign affairs has been reduced. On the other side, so too has our private capacity to report on foreign affairs. These reductions have caught our foreign affairs in a pincer movement that threatens their quality and effect.

With respect to this country's public capacity to conduct its foreign policy, shocking statistics rise to the surface as

*Founded in 1978 as part of the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy (ISD) sponsors discussions, research, and publications focusing on the implementation of foreign policy — seeking to answer the question "how" announced policy objectives can best be pursued. It does so by drawing on the concrete experiences of practitioners and the conceptual, comparative, and historical work of academics. In so doing, the Institute fills a special niche within the academic and practitioner communities.*



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*No amount of technology can substitute for the educated, experienced eyes and ears of observers, interpreters, and advisors on the ground, in the field, and overseas.*

the latest feeding frenzy on the federal budget unfolds. In the last ten years there has been close to a 50 percent decrease in this country's international affairs budget. Over the same decade there has been a combined 72 percent reduction in the defense and international affairs budgets, with international affairs taking a 10 percent bigger hit than the defense budget. We are not turning swords into plowshares.

Additional evidence of a dramatic reduction in our investment in the world resides in the foreign assistance budget. When I arrived here as Dean, the United States contributed 3 percent of its GNP (gross national product) to foreign aid. Today, that figure stands at half, or .15 percent. These reductions translate directly into the closing of posts and the elimination of personnel. Since the start of the Clinton Administration, seventeen posts abroad have been closed (with an additional fifteen slated for closure), accompanied by a reduction in force in the Department of State of 1,100 people.

At the same time, the capacity of this country's media to really know what is going on in the world has been placed in jeopardy. Over the past twenty-five years the number of foreign bureaus and foreign correspondents has declined. Deeply informed individual insight from the field is fast disappearing. News and media services compound the problem by making news more homogenous. The media increasingly are reduced to establishing a fleeting physical presence only after CNN announces that there is a crisis abroad worthy of our attention. Yet, CNN itself is, by its very nature, flawed. It provides unevaluated and sometimes exaggerated reports of developments abroad that drive a domestic rush to judgment and a correlated reaction.

So, in the paired domains of the official conduct of foreign affairs and the private reporting of them, this country's capital stock is depreciating. This is occurring precisely at a time when capacities to observe, interpret,

and influence foreign affairs are in greater demand and of greater importance than ever before. They are in greater demand because the world that we can and must know is a bigger, more palpably complex place than it was in the simpler days of the Cold War. Vast and complex expanses of the globe — previously sealed off behind various walls and curtains, but historically and strategically significant — are now open to our ideas, investments, and presence. Twenty-five new countries have appeared or reappeared since the collapse of the Berlin Wall. They summon our attention. If they do not get it, we will not get them, and our foreign policy, right.

Paying attention to a bigger, more insistently pluralistic world is more important than in the past because the price of neglect and ignorance can be so much higher. The ready availability of weapons of mass destruction and the reality of nuclear proliferation (or its poor man's equivalent) raise substantially, and potentially catastrophically, the price of avoidable conflicts. As the world gets bigger, the foreign policy agenda simultaneously grows longer. Replacing the set agenda of the Cold War is a veritable avalanche of pressing international issues: nuclear proliferation; terrorism and international law enforcement; ethnic and religious conflicts; immigration and refugee migration; democracy and free market economies; human rights; and environmental concerns encompassing population growth, disease, and pollution. These issues are not simply more numerous; they are more technical and complex than those forced on us by the Cold War. Our diplomats and our journalists need to engage these issues wherever they reside in a far-flung world.

In an age of real-time, multimedia, interactive communication, there is a tendency to declare obsolete (or at least dispensable) the diplomat and the foreign correspondent in the field. We will do so at our peril. The myriad forms of instantaneous interactive communica-

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tion threaten to substitute immediacy for insight, hyperbole for reality, and deniability for integrity. No amount of technology can substitute for the educated, experienced eyes and ears of observers, interpreters, and advisors on the ground, in the field, and overseas.

Some years ago Ted Turner stood on this stage to receive a Weintal Prize for wiring the world. He richly deserved the award. But in his acceptance remarks he proceeded to say a wrong (and gratuitous) thing. He said that we should not call this school the School of Foreign Service because there wasn't anything that was foreign anymore. Well, Mr. Turner was wrong and that wrongness is at the root of the problems I have just assayed. There is plenty that is foreign in the world, and we had better start deploying our resources — both public and private — at a level and in a way that enables us to be directly in touch through our diplomats and journalists with that vast, external, and yes, foreign realm to which our national destiny is increasingly tied. Only in that way will that world become less foreign.

For its part, the School of Foreign Service is both widening and deepening its attention to the world. In the 75th anniversary year we have just concluded, we established new endowed chairs in Chinese, Korean, Southeast Asian, and Turkish studies. We have extended the school's mandate to embrace both Russian Studies and Latin American Studies at the graduate level. More of our faculty and students are drawn from abroad, and more each year study abroad. The internationalization of this school — which is the country's principal provisioner of those whose careers lie abroad — proceeds apace. We do not wish this country's diplomats and journalists to fall behind us. Instead, we wish to join forces with them in advocacy of this country's immersion in the world, with real people, on the ground in real places, letting our government and our public know what is really going on.

### *About the Author...*

**PETER F. KROGH is the Dean of the EDMUND A. WALSH SCHOOL OF FOREIGN SERVICE at GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY. After twenty-five years of distinguished service to the SCHOOL OF FOREIGN SERVICE, Dean Krogh will retire on July 1. During his tenure, Dean Krogh presided over a successful school that has risen to pre-eminence in the Washington, national, and international communities. He will return to Georgetown next year as Dean Emeritus and Distinguished Professor of International Affairs at the SCHOOL OF FOREIGN SERVICE.**

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*The Edward Weintal Prize is an annual award presented to one or more journalists for distinguished reporting on foreign policy and diplomacy. The Prize is made possible through the will of Edward Weintal, which created an endowment at Georgetown University. Prize recipients are selected by a committee whose original membership was stipulated by the Weintal will. Committee members are Charles Bartlett, chair, Marvin Kalb, David D. Newsom, Hugh Sidey, and Casimir A. Yost. Competition is open to journalists in both print and broadcast media. Submissions authored during the previous calendar year are considered for the Prize.*



# Weintal Awardees

Edward Weintal (1901-1973) had a long, distinguished career as a diplomatic correspondent after coming to Washington as a Polish diplomat in 1933. He was born in Warsaw and graduated from Oxford. His diplomatic career was ended by the German conquest of Poland, and he began, in 1939, to edit a diplomatic newsletter. He was hired by NEWSWEEK in 1944 and served for twenty-three years as the magazine's diplomatic correspondent. From 1969 until his death he was special consultant to the Director of the United States Information Agency.

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