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## The Ambassadors: America's Diplomats on the Front Lines

Edward Salo

Paul Richter

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took to succeed. Stavridis sees the Drake story as a cautionary tale of a swash-buckling pirate who led by bullying and terrifying his men. “Not everyone has the bold personality of Drake but building the habit of courage—no matter the venue—is within everyone’s reach and is part of the voyage of character” (p. 67). Drake’s brand of boldness is necessary for achieving disruptive innovations. Stavridis tells the story of how he himself survived the antibodies of a rigid bureaucracy that wanted to end his career as a one-star admiral for his role in leading the Navy’s successfully disruptive think tank, Deep Blue. To his credit, he also draws lessons from his innovation failures while leading Southern Command.

Fisher, Stavridis’s favorite, was extraordinarily creative. An undiplomatic leader possessing a bitter bark, “Fisher never saw a windmill at which he could resist tilting” (p. 121). He championed gunnery and advanced submarine innovations. As most disrupters do in their professions, Fisher created plenty of enemies in the Royal Navy. “If I could pick only one admiral to spend a long evening with,” Stavridis states, “it would be Jacky Fisher. That combination of relentless perseverance and an unbounded desire to ‘seize the new’ is very, very rare in leaders” (p. 142).

Stavridis then recounts his own attempts to tilt at his share of windmills, including his experiences, both good and bad, in wrestling with the challenges of character. He ends with this question to help us judge our own moral compass: Who are our heroes? Do we admire them because they have a superb list of résumé-virtue accomplishments? Or do we admire them for their eulogy virtues, the character values for which

people are remembered kindly, such as empathy and resilience? If our résumé virtues overshadow our eulogy virtues, we may need to innovate and disrupt, recalibrating our moral compass to avoid the big rocks and shoals toward which we are headed.

TERRY PIERCE



*The Ambassadors: America's Diplomats on the Front Lines*, by Paul Richter. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019. 352 pages. \$28.

Over the past several years, politicians and pundits regularly have attacked members of the American Foreign Service as being part of a “deep state” that has some nefarious agenda against certain elected leaders. Members of the American diplomatic corps are portrayed as either elites or partisan supporters of political rivals and previous administrations. Such would run totally counter to the way the Foreign Service was envisioned when Congress established it in 1924 to be a professional, nonpartisan group in which an individual’s success would be based on ability and merit.

In *The Ambassadors: America's Diplomats on the Front Lines*, Paul Richter, a former journalist who covered the State Department and foreign policy and the Pentagon for the *Los Angeles Times* out of its Washington bureau, surveys the careers of Ryan Crocker, Robert Ford, Anne Patterson, and J. Christopher Stevens. These four members of the Foreign Service held a combined fourteen ambassadorships and deputy chief of mission posts in the greater Middle East, and played critical roles in efforts to stabilize the region. Richter

uses them to tell the story of how the members of the State Department's Foreign Service worked hand in hand with the military in efforts to combat terrorism and build a lasting peace.

While a plethora of books has explored the U.S. military leaders of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, Richter frames the wars through a different prism as he depicts the unflagging efforts of the members of the diplomatic corps to implement American foreign policy in the Middle East and to use that foreign policy to bring peace and stability to the region. Rather than seeing these diplomats as political actors trying to subvert the administration's policy, Richter portrays them as tireless workers who sometimes are given impossible jobs but still execute them, even in the harshest of circumstances.

To tell the story of America's diplomatic efforts in the Middle East as part of the global war on terror, Richter examines the efforts of all members of the Department of State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, whom Richter describes as "proud, loyal to each other, and a bit insular" (p. 9). Richter focuses on Ryan Crocker, the six-time ambassador who represented both the Bush and Obama administrations in the region; Robert Ford, who worked as a one-man government in Iraq, and later as ambassador in lawless Syria; Anne Patterson, ambassador to Pakistan; and J. Christopher Stevens, the ambassador to Libya who dealt with the violence of the land and was later killed in a terrorist attack. While Richter tells the stories of all four, Crocker and Stevens receive more attention for their successes, and for Stevens's courage to conduct his diplomacy person to person, no matter the personal risk (pp. 216–17).

To assist the reader in understanding the complex web of persons and time, the author provides both a cast of characters and a time line of events—very useful to the reader, who otherwise could get lost in the details.

*The Ambassadors* celebrates those in the Foreign Service, who are ignored at the best of times and attacked at the worst of times. While many books, movies, and television shows celebrate the members of the military who have been fighting in the Middle East since September 11, this book offers another view of the conflict, seen here through the eyes of the nonpartisan members of the Foreign Service who also risk their lives to further the nation's policy and bring peace. As Ambassador Ryan Crocker stated to students at Stanford University, "Do you really want to spend your career in Brussels, Paris, or Berlin? Or do you want to be out where the action is?" (p. 285). While these members of the diplomatic corps are not adrenaline junkies looking for the excitement of a post in a war zone, Richter shows us how they want to be where they can make a difference in the safety of the nation—no matter the personal risk. This book should be read by those who feel that we can operate with a weakened State Department and those who work with our diplomats overseas, as well as those who are thinking about a career in diplomacy.

EDWARD SALO



*Special Duty: A History of the Japanese Intelligence Community*, by Richard J. Samuels. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2019. 355 pages. \$32.95.

Former U.S. Director of Central Intelligence Robert Gates once said that