

Richard T. Arndt's introduction to  
**“The Decade Ahead: The US Role in the World”**

The Second Distinguished Fulbright Lecture on International Relations,  
given by Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering on 18 May 2012.

“Thank you, Professor Whitefield, for the kind words. They help overcome my diffidence at the task you and Professor Hurrell have set me, first as one Yank introducing another to a learned British audience, and then, in Aesopian terms, as a minor alumnus of the US diplomatic corps introducing—like the mouse presenting the lion—a giant of American diplomatic history. I shall try to pay this honor the respect it deserves.

Pro-Vice-chancellor, distinguished scholars of the Oxford community, ladies and gentlemen.

We gather in the aura of a great American, a product of Oxford's Pembroke College, the late Senator J. William Fulbright. This is the final lecture of this first iteration of the tripartite Fulbright Legacy Lectures, including seminars for specialists, capping events at King's College London and the University of Edinburgh. It is appropriate to reflect for a moment on what Oxford meant to Fulbright and what the name Fulbright might mean today for those gathered here.

Gratitude goes to many who have helped—thanks always come first, in this case to a complex mix of contributors. Ex nihilo the Legacy Lectures grew from a steering committee at Pembroke College now chaired by Professor Whitefield but then driven by Professor Sir Adam Roberts and Professor Andrew Hurrell; the spark leapt to the US-UK Fulbright Commission and its incomparable director Penny Egan; her Commission quickly saw that international education was less a string of single grants than a lifelong process by which today's students become tomorrow's statesmen and women, then reach back to those who follow; Ms Egan also convinced the Cultural Office of the US Embassy in London to join; two universities quickly matched Oxford in offering hospitality; Donald Markwell, Warden of Rhodes, saw a common cause; at Pembroke College, Master Giles Henderson gave willing, active sponsorship; in the US, a sister steering committee searched for speakers; the support of the tiny Roth Endowment set an example for other US contributors; and here in Oxford, the dedicated, tenacious, generous and ultimately indispensable Pembroke alumnus Mr Brian Wilson.

Returning to the guiding spirit hovering over this event, it is nearly ninety years since the

young Fulbright arrived here, a green young provincial bearing the attribute then most commonly associated with US Rhodes Fellows: excellence in athletics. In his case he had achieved national prominence at the peculiar corruption of rugby we know as American football; adapting his agility to another North American sport, lacrosse, he competed for his College and earned a knee injury which permanently blighted his golf game.

He brought a few pieces of other useful cultural baggage. As a boy 4,000 miles distant, he experienced the deep and shaping impact of World War I, absorbed the slogan "Never Again!" and breathed Wilsonian internationalism; disillusion followed when Wilson tragically failed to sway a backward-looking Congress.

This native son of a far northwestern corner of the oft-overlooked State of Arkansas bore the courtly manners of the Old South and the modesty of *paideia*, reinforced by the wounds of civil strife still called by diehard southerners the War of Northern Aggression. That national catastrophe, bleeding his grandfather's generation, had trashed the South's economy, cut off communications with northern intellect and education, and humbled its citizens.

In Fayetteville, a city named for the Marquis de la Lafayette, he read voraciously and learned how to learn in one of the thousands of free public libraries bestowed on the English-speaking world by the Laird of Dunfermline, Andrew Carnegie. By example, he saw the far-reaching new American approach to philanthropy which Carnegie pioneered. This provincial lad, pried from his native habitat by Cecil Rhodes' simple idea, spent his 1.4 thousand Oxford days living the process of cultural interchange, with its potential to contribute to a more peaceable world. His businessman father and crusading mother tutored him in the politics of human commerce, self-reliance and democracy, frontier-style.

By luck, Pembroke was ready for him: the young Scottish don Ronald B. McCallum, future Master of Pembroke, was back from two years at Princeton, marked by an Oxford-echoing university remolded a decade earlier by its president Woodrow Wilson. McCallum was at the threshold of a lifelong quest to translate Wilsonian thought into the language of Whigs, foreshadowing what his student later had to do at home in a more hostile political climate. The two were loyal sons of a subject state and wary of central government, both knew how power looked from the underside, both grew up in a proud intellectual context distinctly different from the national norm, and both knew that durable acts of politics are impeded by partisanship and ideology.

They clicked instantly--one iconic photo records their trip north to honor the grave of John Pym, hero of the Long Parliament. Their friendship and their rich still-unpublished correspondence came to an end only with McCallum's death. We can only speculate on the substance and themes of four years of guided interchange. However, neither could have been unaware of the idea buried deep in John Hay's handling of the Boxer Indemnities in 1904: remember that the six-power coalition which crushed the nationalist uprising in China had imposed crippling indemnities on the Chinese government, which Wilson-precursor Hay, US Secretary of State, reluctantly accepted, with stern reservations, then diverted China's US payments into two-way educational exchanges, governed by a bi-national Chinese and American board. After the War, Belgium then Finland set up similar arrangements on their own, but in 1924, a year before Fulbright reached Oxford, the British government followed the US example in China.

In 1928-29, Fulbright returned to Arkansas, was mugged by the Great Depression, and set about managing his family's businesses. But he was a changed man with a mission: he understood and never forgot what he had learned here. Late in his life, a trusted friend found a privileged moment for questions: one concerned his intellectual lineage, another probed what he had intended in the deepest part of his mind when he launched his global program of international exchanges in 1947. His lineage? "Simple. A six-letter name: W-I-L-S-O-N"—McCallum had taught him well. The second answer, a trifle less patient: "Aw hell, I just wanted to educate these goddamn ignorant Americans." Perhaps the most central constant in his life was a perpetual battle against any form of provincialism.

The Depression, as he struggled with the family enterprises, brought another kind of learning experience, along with the joy of finding he was good at it. When the crisis eased, he moved to Washington to spend a few years with the US Department of Justice, doing little in his work but collecting in his spare time two priceless treasures: a law degree from the George Washington University, and a gracious Philadelphian wife from the much-feared North. Back at his home university, he taught in its law school, nurtured his new family, and dabbled in academic politics, supporting law school Dean Julius Waterman for the presidency of the University. Propelled into that role himself as the youngest US university president ever at the time, he turned out to be good at that too—a decade later he was approached but declined to be considered for the presidency of Columbia University.

His election to the US House of Representatives in 1943 was succeeded a short year

later by his move to the Senate. In the spring of 1943, already in mid-campaign, he took the time to accept Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles' invitation to lead a US delegation to the meetings of the Allied Ministers of Education; elected Chair, he probed his colleagues' thoughts about postwar plans and saw the birth of the UNESCO idea. His visit resulted in two far-reaching Senate decisions, both bi-partisan and heavily supported: history knows them as the UN and the UNESCO Resolutions (1944 and 1945).

By the time he left the Senate 32 years later, he had been the longest-serving Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee ever. His defeat in 1975 was unexpected and retains some mystery: perhaps it is no coincidence that he was defeated by an out-of-state political shift that no one foresaw, and this by an even larger margin than the recent tsunami which surprised his Pembroke friend and successor-Chair of SCFR, Richard Lugar of Indiana.

Among the accomplishments he cherished, one overrode all others and drew his unstinting support until the end: his famous program of international exchanges (1947), "a modest program with an immodest goal," as he said. The self-deprecation masked an astonishing bit of legislative creativity, akin in scope to the Land-Grant College Act of 1862 or the founding of the Smithsonian Institution decades earlier, sparked by the bequest of another Pembroke alumnus. With a pen-stroke, he had extended Rhodes' idea—by other means: opening it to all, introducing bi-directionality, adding multilingualism, and globalizing the idea. Today the Program funds two-way flows between the US and virtually every university, in every nation, in every language of the world. At its core is etched the commitment to world peace which we sometimes overlook in Rhodes' rhetoric: in Fulbright's translation, borrowing a phrase from Franklin Roosevelt's first inaugural address, "mutual understanding". Fulbright wrote Rhodes Warden C. K. Allen in December 1944: "I only hope I may be able to make some contribution toward the peace and stability . . . in this world", which Rhodes sought. All this was born at Oxford.

I have spent too much time on the golden frame for this event; it is time to look at the portrait it displays, that of our speaker.

Born in a city named Orange, named for the House of Nassau, he was a star student at one of the fine US undergraduate colleges on the Oxford model which dot the US landscape, Bowdoin College—its name honors Belgium's monarchy and reminds us where US education found its provender in the early years. Graduate study followed at one of the first of no more than a dozen US schools of public and international affairs,

the Fletcher School of Tufts University. In 1956 he moved to the University of Melbourne as a Fulbright Fellow, where he studied with Oxford icon Sir Zelman Cowan. Despite his choice of an English-speaking country—as Australia is still said to be—our speaker is famous in US foreign service history for competence in more languages and dialects than anyone has ever managed to count. In 1956 he also began three years of service in the US Navy, rising to the rank of Lieutenant-Commander and remaining in the Naval Reserve Corps until a businessman Secretary of Defense cut the reserve program and opened the doors to today's exploitation of the National Guard and other military "outsourcing".

In the Foreign Service (1959), he wove a unique career fabric. First, in 40 years of service he held sixteen jobs, averaging 2.5 years per posting. I hasten to note this does not reflect his inability to hold a job but the high demand for his help. Another aspect of his record is equally unusual: thoughtful career design; his service record reflects posts on both sides of a great number of classic divides. One divide was bridged at the outset, the juncture of politics and the military (we call it Pol-Mil) in State's office of arms control, then as political advisor at the Disarmament Conference in Geneva and two years later as Deputy Director of Pol-Mil in Washington. In the field, his first post leapt the North-South divide, when he was Consul General in Zanzibar, followed by Dar es Salaam, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission, and later ambassador to Nigeria. By then State's leadership saw his talent and pulled him out of bilateral diplomacy into policy-formation, first as special assistant to the Secretary of State, just in time to welcome Henry A. Kissinger after his long seven-block trek from Nixon's White House to State, then as executive director of State's nerve-center Secretariat. In 1974 he returned to the field, first to Jordan for two years, then to Lagos, then after crossing the divide between the politics and technical aspects of diplomacy as Assistant Secretary for Oceans, Environment and Science, then to El Salvador, leaping the Atlantic hemispheric divide. A more perilous wall fell when he became ambassador to Tel Aviv in 1985, one of few who led missions on both sides of the River Jordan. He straddled the bilateral-multilateral divide when he was appointed permanent delegate to the UN in New York in 1989; he moved then to India in 1992 to discover South Asia, then north to the Russian Federation in Moscow in 1993, sweeping up the debris of the East-West divide. All this was the perfect prelude to the career pinnacle for a foreign service officer—Undersecretary for Political Affairs in 1997 under Oxonian President Clinton; at the time the Secretary and her Deputy were focused on Russia, with the result that without fanfare he had quietly to manage the rest of the world. The last leap was from government to private sector, first as president of the Eurasia Foundation, then with the Boeing Corporation as Vice President (2000-2005), and with various NGOs. Recently he

joined Ambassador William Luers in forming a group dedicated to restoring public understanding of and faith in diplomacy in an increasingly militarized world.

This then is a small sketch of the man whom ex-colleagues still call *stupor mundi*—to turn the sketch into a portrait would require another Holbein. I hope I have made clear his qualifications as a Fulbright Legacy Lecturer. Perhaps one last, little-known anecdote will hang the portrait in the right place. In May 1943, the Senator-elect from Arkansas met in London with the Allied Ministers of Education. Afterwards, he was invited to chat with Mr Churchill; the meeting was attended by his daughter-in-law Pamela. It was a time, you will recall, when—as American diplomats were told—British diplomatic wisdom held that US foreign policy was far too important to be left to the Americans. US-British relations were, to say the least, testy; certainly the relationship was less than special. As Pamela Churchill Harriman recounted of that meeting in 1943: “It was the first time I had ever seen my father-in-law listen to an American.” Since 1943, British leaders have made a largely healthy habit of listening to Americans, but I like to think that if Mr. Churchill were among us this evening he would not be alone in listening with special acuity to the Honorable Thomas R. Pickering.”

**Richard T. Arndt, 18 May 2012**

*For more information on the Fulbright lecture, please click the image below.*

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DISTINGUISHED LECTURE ON INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS

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THE US ROLE IN THE WORLD**

Ambassador Thomas Pickering

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The Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford, in association with the US-UK Fulbright Commission, the United States Embassy, Pembroke College and the Lois Roth Endowment

