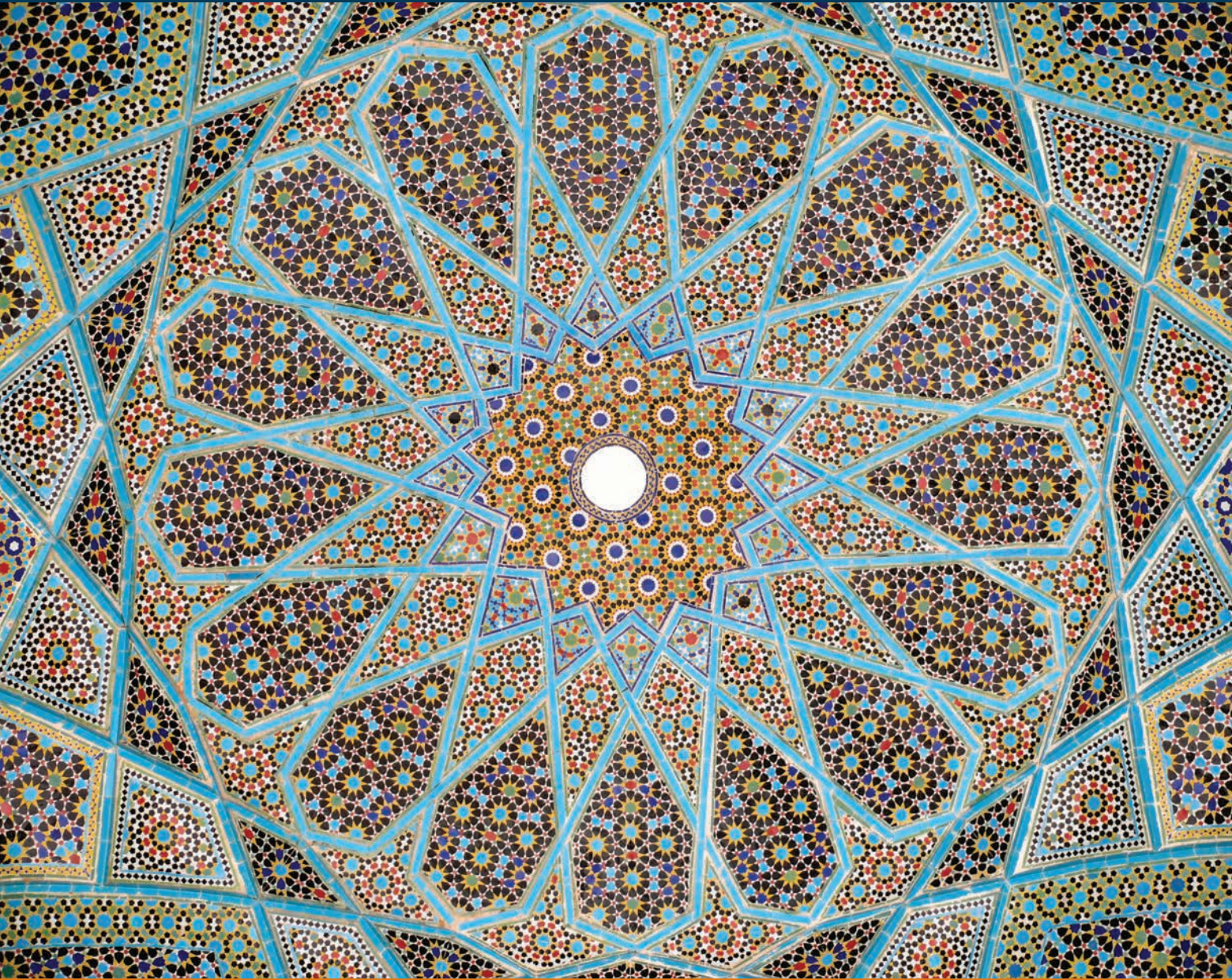


# THE **FOREIGN SERVICE** JOURNAL

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

OCTOBER 2017



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**On the Cover:** A mosaic of ceramic tiles on the domed ceiling of the pavilion erected over the tomb of Hafez (1315-1390), the beloved Persian poet, in Shiraz, Iran. Photo: DYNAMOSQUITO [CC BY-SA 2.0]/FLICKR. Below, British paratroopers in Hamminkeln, Germany, on March 25, 1945, during Operation Varsity. Credit: IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUMS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM/EN.WIKIPEDIA.

# Stewards of a Vital Institution

BY BARBARA STEPHENSON

I acknowledged in a recent message to you that the Foreign Service has hit a rough patch. I find that when I am faced with a rough patch, one of the best ways to get my compass set on true north again so I can navigate through it is to review any foundational documents that might give me guidance on first principles.

So it is that, not for the first time, I use this column to remind you of who we are—by quoting Section 101 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, our foundational legislation.

“The Congress finds that—(1) a career Foreign Service, characterized by excellence and professionalism, is essential in the national interest to assist the President and the Secretary of State in conducting the Foreign Affairs of the United States; ...

“The objective of this Act is to strengthen and improve the Foreign Service of the United States by— ...

“(4) establishing a statutory basis for participation by the members of the Foreign Service, through their elected representative [AFSA], in the formulation of personnel policies and procedures; ...

“(7) establishing a Senior Foreign Service which is characterized by strong policy formulation capabilities, outstanding

executive leadership qualities and highly developed functional, foreign language and area expertise.”

The Act reminds me that the role of

## We are stakeholders, not mere employees. We are the stewards of this great institution.

the Foreign Service is to help *formulate* foreign policy, not merely implement it. It reminds me that we are stakeholders, not mere employees. We are the stewards of this great institution.

As a mentor of FSI leadership classes during the last administration, I heard well-founded concerns about the proliferation of political appointees and the explosion in the size of the National Security Council. I responded every time by urging members to own their portfolios, lean in, and contribute their best effort and deep expertise to developing policy proposals.

My consistent advice: Don't just wait to receive a tasking; pull your interagency colleagues together to develop policy proposals that reinforce America's global leadership role and make us more secure and prosperous at home.

I repeat that advice now. With both the size of the NSC and the number of political appointees now dramatically smaller, space and time have opened back up for the career Foreign Service to play the leadership role in policy formulation intended by Congress. I ask you to double down on efforts to do that in your own portfolio.

For the many of you who supervise others, I have a second request. I ask that you honor your role as stewards of this great institution by instilling in those whose professional development you are

entrusted with an understanding of who we are. Mentor them to master the art of providing leadership in policy formulation so that the core capability of our institution is passed on to the next generation.

Former Senior FSO Julie Nutter, now director of professional policy issues at AFSA, dedicates her first column to “The Foreign Service Act—Our Constitution.” I encourage each of you to read the column and to read at least the first section of the Act itself as a refresher about the fundamentals of our Service and Congress' intent in creating a “career Foreign Service, characterized by excellence and professionalism.”

I have always found strength and courage in former Secretary Colin Powell's admonition (quoting the late Rear Admiral Grace Hopper), that “It is better to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission.”

I take this opportunity to point out that you *do* have permission. Secretary Tillerson, upon arrival at the State Department Feb. 2, referring to a motto of the serial Super Bowl champion New England Patriots, said: “Do your job!”

We owe the American people our best effort to make America safe, secure and prosperous. I don't need to be a football player to see that the Foreign Service has what it takes to deliver one diplomatic win after another—even when we find ourselves in a rough patch. ■



Ambassador Barbara Stephenson is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.

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*The Foreign Service Journal* (ISSN 0146-3543), 2101 E Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20037-2990 is published monthly, with combined January-February and July-August issues, by the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA), a private, nonprofit organization. Material appearing herein represents the opinions of the writers and does not necessarily represent the views of the *Journal*, the Editorial Board or AFSA. Writer queries and submissions are invited, preferably by email. The *Journal* is not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, photos or illustrations. Advertising inquiries are invited. All advertising is subject to the publisher's approval. AFSA reserves the right to reject advertising that is not in keeping with its standards and objectives. The appearance of advertisements herein does not imply endorsement of goods or services offered. Opinions expressed in advertisements are the views of the advertisers and do not necessarily represent AFSA views or policy. *Journal* subscription: AFSA member—\$20, included in annual dues; student—\$30; institution—\$40; others—\$50; Single issue—\$4.50. For foreign surface mail, add \$18 per year; foreign airmail, \$36 per year. Periodical postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. Indexed by the Public Affairs Information Services (PAIS).

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# The Iran Policy Puzzle

BY SHAWN DORMAN

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, known also as the Iran nuclear deal, reaches the two-year mark this month. The JCPOA came into effect on Oct. 18, 2015—Adoption Day, 90 days after the agreement was signed. Then, in January 2016, the International Atomic Energy Agency verified that Iran had implemented its commitments related to dismantling parts of its nuclear program, and the United States, United Nations and European Union began lifting oil and financial sanctions.

An illustration of effective diplomacy, the Iran deal may be an exemplary case study in why it's important to talk to adversaries as well as friends. While the deal is not popular with the Trump administration (President Trump has called it the “worst deal ever”), the president has twice certified that Iran was meeting its part of the bargain. The next certification date is Oct. 15.

This month the *Journal* puts some pieces of the Iran policy puzzle together, not aiming to be comprehensive but rather to offer various views from experts who have been deeply involved in dealing with Iran. Gary Sick, a former National Security Council official under Presidents Ford, Carter and Reagan and now a Middle East scholar at Columbia

University, offers context and perspective in “Iran Inside and Out.”

Amb. (ret.) Dennis Jett, who just finished

a book on the Iran nuclear deal, shares his views on what the deal can teach us about particular challenges in making foreign policy today. Amb. (ret.) Kenneth Quinn takes us on a “soft power” journey to Iran—where international appreciation for Norman Borlaug, Iowa farm boy turned biotech hero, leads to common ground.

FSO Dave Schroeder offers an optimist’s view, suggesting that the JCPOA could lead the way to an Iran that can serve as a stabilizing force in the region as part of the international community.

Then we look back in time for lessons. In a piece from the *FSJ* Archives (April 1980), the late Roy Melbourne, a retired FSO and former head of the political section in Tehran, shows how much influence oil politics and European colonialism have had on U.S. relations with Iran. And Amb. (ret.) John Limbert presents the strange and cautionary tale of the murder of Alexander Griboyedov, Russian diplomat and emissary to Persia in the 1820s.

Elsewhere in this issue, Amb. (ret.) Charlie Ray offers advice on handling ethical dilemmas during times of uncertainty, and a Foreign Service daughter shares her father John Kormann’s story of mercy and gratitude. In her President’s Views column, Ambassador Barbara Stephenson reminds members of the Foreign Service to embrace their role as stewards of the institution.

In November, look for the popular annual roundup of new books by Foreign Service authors, along with some how-to advice for aspiring writers. ■



Shawn Dorman is the editor of *The Foreign Service Journal*.

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## Senate and House Committees Walk Back State Budget Cuts

On Sept. 7 the Senate Appropriations committee reported out a 2018 appropriations bill that included \$51.4 billion for State, foreign operations and related programs—nearly \$14 billion more than the Trump administration requested.

The administration’s request for a near 30 percent cut in the State and USAID budgets was rejected across the board. The bill, which also included several amendments aimed at reigning in the administration’s effort to “redesign” the State Department, was sent to the Senate floor unanimously.

“Now is not the time for retreat; now is the time to double down on diplomacy and development,” Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), chair of the appropriations subcommittee on State and foreign aid said, reflecting the bipartisan sentiment of his subcommittee.

The House Appropriations committee sent its own State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs funding bill to the House floor on July 19, and it was approved by the full House on Sept. 14. At \$47.4 billion, the House budget for diplomacy and development represents a 17 percent cut from Fiscal Year 2017 levels, according to *Politico*.

Once both houses pass spending bills, they will go to conference for reconcili-

ation. The final legislation must then be passed by each house before it is presented to the president.

## Atlantic Council Presents Roadmap for State Department Reform

On Sept. 6 the Atlantic Council’s Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security released its report on reform of the State Department.

Requested by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-Calif.), the report makes a number of recommendations to ensure that the State Department can more efficiently and effectively meet today’s foreign

*From the Sept. 6 congressional hearing on the 2018 State & Foreign Ops Appropriations Bill held by the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs.*

America must remain the preeminent power in the world. Today, we face complex challenges from North Korea, Russia, China and ISIL and other extremists. Now is not the time for retreat; now is the time to double down on diplomacy and development. The bill provides vital security, economic, development, health and humanitarian assistance that makes all Americans safer at home. ... Through the bill and report, the subcommittee has articulated its vision of an active American role in the world today. ‘Soft power,’ as it’s commonly called, is an essential ingredient to national security. This bill recognizes and builds upon the significance of ‘soft power.’

—Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), chairman of the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee

## Heard on the Hill



The president sent us a budget that was irresponsible and indefensible. We were provided no credible justification for the cuts that were proposed, which would have severely eroded U.S. global leadership. This bill repudiates the president’s reckless budget request, and I commend Chairman Graham for reaffirming the primacy of the Congress in appropriating funds.

Chairman Graham and I have been outspoken in our criticism of sequestration, as have many others. He and I both know this bill does not do enough to protect our national security interests. Underfunding many critical programs—from U.N. peacekeeping to climate change to humanitarian relief for victims of war and natural disasters—is unacceptable for the world’s wealthiest, most powerful nation. Ultimately, the solution lies in a new, bipartisan budget agreement that enables the United States to meet its international obligations and be the leader we and the world need.

—Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), ranking member of the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee

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## Contemporary Quote

“The lessons-learned since September 11, 2001, include the reality that defense alone does not provide for American strength and resolve abroad. Battlefield technology and firepower cannot replace diplomacy and development. The administration’s apparent doctrine of retreat, which also includes distancing the United States from collective and multilateral dispute resolution frameworks, serves only to weaken America’s standing in the world.”

—From the Introduction to the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriation Bill, 2018, submitted by the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Subcommittee. On Sept. 7 the Senate Appropriations Committee unanimously approved this and other parts of the 2018 appropriations bill by a 31 to 0 (bipartisan) roll call vote, sending the measure to the floor of the Senate.

policy challenges and opportunities.

In his keynote to the Atlantic Council event, Rep. Royce welcomed the Council’s professional guidance and made an impassioned pitch for a strong Foreign Service and State Department.

“America needs an effective Department of State, we need an effective USAID to confront the national security threats and to promote our U.S. interests. We clearly need a strong military; but diplomacy matters, too,” Rep. Royce stated.

“It helps keep America strong,” he added. “It helps keep our troops out of combat. Simply put, defeating ISIS and other threats require a strong State Department and Foreign Service. That is what the generals say.”

The report was prepared by a core group of 10 retired professional diplomats with many years of experience working for the State Department, led by Ambassadors Chester A. Crocker, David C. Miller and Thomas Pickering.

Setting the stage for a detailed discussion of the report, Amb. Miller explained the origins of the Council’s effort to evaluate and reform the civilian side of foreign and security policy management.

Amb. Crocker reminded the audience of the State Department’s pivotal, leading

role in the development and execution of U.S. foreign policy. “We cannot afford a weakened State Department. We cannot afford an underfunded, poorly-led, inadequately trained and bureaucratically muscle-bound State Department. We need to strengthen it, restore it and empower it to do better,” Crocker concluded.

Focused in five areas—structure and process, personnel, budget, congressional relations and USAID—the recommendations are intended to serve as “a road map for recognizing and implementing reforms,” the report’s preface states.

The main recommendations are to reduce the number of bureaus and offices reporting to the Secretary by consolidating and eliminating functions; reduce the number of layers of clearance, review and approval to three and push decision-making downward to assure timely delivery of essential documents to key players; and carry out a “top-to-bottom” redesign of the intake, assignment and promotion processes.

Also recommended is implementation of mandatory mid- and senior-level training; restoration of the budget as a management tool and consideration of a cross-agency “National Security Budget”; rebuilding relations with Congress;

and maintaining USAID as a standalone agency, reporting to the Secretary of State, with greater control over all U.S. foreign assistance efforts.

This report is the second from the Scowcroft Center on this subject. The first, “A Foundational Proposal for Reforming the National Security Council,” published in June 2016, argued for a return of the NSC to its original mission and smaller size.

To view the entire discussion, go to [bit.ly/StateReformLaunch](http://bit.ly/StateReformLaunch).

## FS Applications Drop in June

June 2017 saw the lowest number of applicants taking the Foreign Service exam in nearly a decade, a drop of 26 percent from the same month a year ago, according to data obtained by *Politico*.

This has triggered concern among some former officials about the long-term risks to U.S. diplomatic power.

“The Foreign Service is like the military—if you don’t bring in lieutenants now, you don’t have the majors you need in 10 years and don’t have the colonels you need in 20,” said Ambassador (ret.) Ronald Neumann, president of the American Academy of Diplomacy.

Devika Ranjan, president of the student Academic Council of the Georgetown School of Foreign Service this past year, says many recent graduates who had been considering careers at the Department of State were choosing to focus their attention instead on think tanks, nonprofits or further education.

Ranjan cited the proposed cutbacks at the State Department and a perception that the new president is less interested in diplomacy as the reason.

The suspension of several fellowship programs has added to the uncertainty

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felt by many students considering a career with the Foreign Service.

Still, the Foreign Service Officer Test remains intensely competitive (only 1.8 percent of applicants are hired).

And there is “continued strong interest in serving in the Foreign Service,” said State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert. “The department is not surprised or concerned about a reduction in FSOT applications,” she added.

## DS Establishes New Cybersecurity Office

Following news that the Office of the Coordinator for Cyber Issues would be shuttered, Federal News Radio reported in late August that the State Department had established a new office, called the Cyber and Technology Security directorate, within the Bureau of Diplomatic Security on May 28.

The new office will “provide advanced cyber threat analysis, incident detection and response, cyber investigative support, and emerging technology,” according to a State Department official, who spoke to *The Hill*.

The directorate, which is currently headed by an interim director, represents a single point of contact for diplomatic interests to stay abreast of vulnerabilities and attacks, Federal News Radio cited a government official as saying.

Coordinator for Cyber Issues Christopher Painter departed suddenly in July amid rumors that the office would be closed and its functions moved to the Bureau of Economics and Business Affairs.

News of the establishment of the new directorate in DS has been welcomed widely. Because DS already conducts some cybersecurity operations, this would simply consolidate the department’s cyber efforts under a single office.

## “Acoustic Attack” on U.S. Diplomats in Cuba

Since late last year, and following the re-establishment of U.S.-Cuba relations two years ago, a possible “acoustic attack” has left at least 16 Americans at U.S. Embassy Havana and one Canadian diplomat with nausea, hearing loss, headaches and balance problems.

Some have been diagnosed with “mild traumatic brain injury” and “likely damage to the central nervous system,” according to a report from CBS News.

Ten affected FSOs met with AFSA representatives in the last week of August to report on the symptoms they have experienced. Some victims have been relocated to the United States while an

American doctor was flown to Havana to treat others.

The Cuban government has been known to harass U.S. government employees in Havana, but instances of physical harm were rare.

High-frequency devices that could have been hidden near the residences are believed to be responsible, but as of this writing investigators have yet to find any evidence. Believed to be related to these incidents, in May, the State Department expelled two Cuban embassy officials which CBS subsequently identified as intelligence officials.

Officials say the Cuban government is cooperating with the investigation. Havana has taken the unusual step of

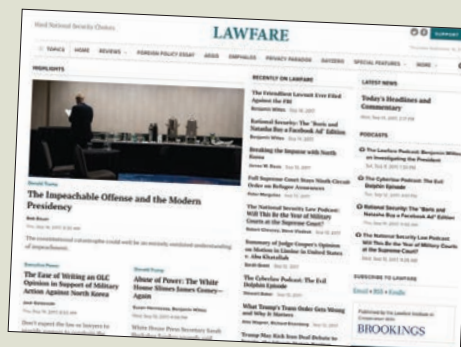
**SITE OF THE MONTH:** [www.lawfareblog.com](http://www.lawfareblog.com)

Lawfare is a blog dedicated to national security issues, published by the Lawfare Institute in cooperation with the Brookings Institution.

The term “lawfare” refers to the use of law as a weapon of conflict and also to the idea that America remains at war with itself over the law governing its warfare with others.

Initiated by Benjamin Wittes (Senior Fellow in Governance Studies for the Brookings Institution), Harvard Law School professor Jack Goldsmith and University of Texas at Austin law professor Robert Chesney in September 2010, contributors include practicing lawyers and law students, members of the military and former officials in the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations.

According to Mr. Wittes, the bipartisan blog is devoted to the nebulous



zone in which actions taken or contemplated to protect the nation interact with the nation’s laws and legal institutions.

Recent topics have included the civil-military divide, nuclear proliferation and U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. The blog also covers civil liberties, cybersecurity and counterterrorism issues.

A weekly podcast features interviews with policymakers, scholars and journalists.



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## Quo Vadimus? [Where Are We Going?]

A final imaginary Foreign Service ill is its illusion of utter political impotence. It is true that the Foreign Service is a small group, about half of whom are out of the country at any given time. The Foreign Service does not control large numbers of jobs, or large amounts of money. ...The Foreign Service way of life tends to make its members a slightly peculiar breed. Their regional accents are blurred. Their interests are influenced by their special lives. They may even take on some of the superficial characteristics of their foreign environment, and they have an atypical sympathy with foreign viewpoints which follows from closer contact and better understanding. Moreover the trauma of the McCarthy era is still regarded by the Service as fearful evidence of what it can expect, and the scars of that period still linger under the surface.



But in actuality the Foreign Service is unique in the level of its domestic governmental contacts. ...It is unique, also, in its area of competence, the gravity of its responsibility and its political strengths, as well as its weaknesses; and if it showed more self-assurance in its dealings with Congress, it would not have so much to worry about. In fact, the record proves that the Foreign Service is not really the underdog which it thinks itself; if it is a convenient public whipping-boy, this is irritating but not by any means determining. The three requisites of power proposed by Tennyson apply also to the Foreign Service: self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control. ...

There must be changes in Foreign Service attitudes and behavior patterns, to cope with the new challenge of a larger organization and more complex tasks. Much has been done in the past few years to promote inquiry and find solutions. The trouble is that the Foreign Service, as such, has not been sufficiently brought into the process. Hence the inquiries and their results are suspect. Moreover, there has appeared to be a degree of cut-and-try, almost of playing with new schemes, even when the basic institutions of the Service are involved. The result has been to engender more anxiety than improvement. ...

On the other hand, non-FSOs in senior departmental positions should recognize and accept that there is much of the Foreign Service style that is necessary and valuable. For instance, they should give due weight to the formal organization pattern of their offices, and take some initiative in seeing that the grease does not go only to the squeaking wheel in a group conditioned not to squeak. They should recognize that dedication and reflection often do serve a useful purpose, as well as brilliance, and often last longer.

—FSO Donald S. MacDonald, excerpted from his article by the same title in the October 1967 Foreign Service Journal.

allowing FBI agents and members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to travel to Cuba to investigate, and Cuban authorities have strengthened security around diplomatic residences.

“Cuba has never allowed, nor will it allow the Cuban territory to be used for any action against accredited diplomatic officials or their families, without exception,” the Cuban Foreign Ministry has stated.

“We’ve not been able to determine who’s to blame,” Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said on Aug. 8, adding that Washington holds the Cuban authorities responsible for finding out who is carrying out the attacks.

## Secretary of State Slashes Special Envoy Positions

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has identified at least 30 special envoy positions to eliminate. He outlined the changes in a letter to Senator Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, made public on Aug. 28.

In the letter, the Secretary notes that many of the special envoy or similar political positions have outlived their purpose—for example the Special Envoy for the Six-Party Talks, which ended in 2008.

He also argues that in some cases, the duties of the special envoy would be more efficiently handled by an existing State Department bureau.

For example, the duties and responsibilities of the U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change will be “folded back” into the Bureau of Oceans and International and Scientific Affairs; and those of the Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan will return to the Bureau of African Affairs.

One surprise is the decision not to

eliminate the position of Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTI Persons, currently held by career FSO Randy Berry, who also holds the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

Secretary Tillerson's effort to reduce the number of special envoys has broad support within the State Department. Many feel that these political positions have proliferated to the point where they are undermining existing State Department regional bureaus and other divisions that do similar work.

The American Academy of Diplomacy, for instance, describes special envoys as "often gumming up the works" and taking much-needed staff away from critical positions within bureaus.

At the same time, many of the positions are supported by advocacy and interest groups who fear that the elimination of a special envoy position will rob them of an important voice in the political arena.

Sen. Corker has said that he looks forward to reviewing the proposals in detail. In July, the SFRC passed bipartisan legislation that requires the State Department to tell Congress which special envoys it wants to keep.

The legislation also requires that all special envoy nominees going forward obtain Senate confirmation.

## Diplomatic Security Special Agent Honored

On July 31, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center named Diplomatic Security Special Agent Jeremy Miles FLETC 2016 Honor Graduate of the Year.

The award is presented annually to the FLETC basic training honor graduate with the highest academic average. FLETC graduated more than 70,000 law enforcement officers and agents in 2016.



(From left) U.S. Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security Deputy Assistant Secretary Scott Moretti, DSS Special Agent Jeremy Miles and FLETC Acting Director William Fallon.

Special Agent Miles received the certificate from FLETC Acting Director William Fallon and Deputy Assistant Secretary and Assistant Director of Training for Diplomatic Security Scott Moretti at a ceremony on the FLETC main campus in Glynco, Georgia.

"Your excellent academic and physical achievements have put you in a special league," said DAS Moretti in his keynote. "I'm proud we get to call you one of our own." Special Agent Miles was also recognized by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson at a press conference on Aug. 1.

Special Agent Miles is currently serving at the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Washington, D.C., field office. In addition to investigative work, he also has supported several protective details for visiting foreign dignitaries. He graduated from Duke University in 2012 with a B.A. in public policy studies. ■

*This edition of Talking Points was prepared by Gemma Dvorak, Susan Maitra and Shawn Dorman.*



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# Decision-Making in Times of Uncertainty

BY CHARLES RAY

*These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country. But he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.*

—Thomas Paine, *The Crisis*, Dec. 23, 1776

**T**hough written 240 years ago, Thomas Paine's words of resolve to American patriots attempting to throw off the yoke of English colonialism apply equally in our current uncertain times. With the State Department budget under threat, and the continued independence of the U.S. Agency for International Development under a cloud, those who are engaged in diplomacy and development have to be wondering what the future holds for their profession.

More importantly, in my opinion, they must be approaching their day-to-day jobs with a sense of trepidation; wondering how even the most routine action or decision will be interpreted by those who seem to view the profession with disdain, if not outright hostility, and who hold the fate of those professionals in their hands.

In the face of this, I'm moved to

consider an issue that has so far not been a topic of public discussion: How are diplomatic professionals to conduct themselves as we inch slowly forward?

There is, of course, always the option of resignation. David Rank, chargé d'affaires at our embassy in Beijing, resigned in response to the president's decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement, stating that "as a parent, a patriot and a Christian" he could not in good conscience deliver a demarche to the Chinese government announcing our withdrawal from the agreement.

The problem with this approach—and I am not criticizing Mr. Rank for his action—is that it's a road down which, once you travel, there is no turning back. You are no longer in a position to affect the actions and decisions of the organization from which you're resigning. If the action you're protesting so violates

your personal moral code, it is, perhaps, the only choice; but most professional diplomats rarely come up against that line in the sand.

## Grappling with Ethical Dilemmas

What, then, to do when the actions of a boss, the organization or even the head of state, impinge on personal ethical and moral beliefs?

I often wrestled with this issue during my time in active service, and since retiring in 2012, I have devoted many hours to researching it. Not often as stark as the Rank incident, these situations are ethical dilemmas. I first encountered that term when I was providing pre-deployment training to army units about to be stationed overseas in situations where they would have to coordinate with civilian agencies and American diplomatic establishments.

Included in the soldiers' field exercise was a scenario called "the ethical dilemma," in which they were presented with a situation that was not combat-related and asked to assess it and decide on the appropriate response. Such ethical decision-making is also a key com-



*Ambassador (ret.) Charles Ray retired from the Foreign Service after a 30-year career, and before that, served for 20 years in the U.S. Army, retiring with the rank of major. In the Foreign Service, he was posted to China, Thailand, Sierra Leone, Vietnam, Cambodia and Zimbabwe. He was the first U.S. consul general in Ho Chi Minh City, and served as ambassador to Cambodia and Zimbabwe.*

*From 2006 to 2009 he served as deputy assistant secretary of defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs and director of the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office. Since retirement from public service in 2012, he has been a full-time freelance writer, lecturer and consultant, and has done research on leadership and ethics. He is the author of more than 60 books of fiction and nonfiction. His most recent work, *Ethical Dilemmas and the Practice of Diplomacy* (Uhuru Press, 2017), addresses the gray area of conflicting values in the diplomatic service. Each summer he conducts a workshop on professional writing for Rangel Scholars at Howard University. He is a member of AFSA, a member of the board of directors of the American Academy of Diplomacy and director of communications for the Association of Black American Ambassadors.*



ponent in the training of young Marine lieutenants.

While ethics is a part of our training at the Foreign Service Institute, my survey of the courses being offered indicates that FSI emphasizes *compliance*-based ethics. Such courses do not address the issue of “value conflict”—those situations when it’s not a matter of legal versus illegal, or even right versus wrong, but when two or more courses of action are legal, but contain value conflicts.

For example, what does an FSO decide when asked to do something that is legal, and in a certain context, right, but would forestall another action that is also legal and right? An example from my own experience illustrates the point.

When I served as ambassador to Zimbabwe, an American citizen was arrested in one of the provinces on trumped-up charges by an over-zealous provincial police chief. While the embassy, myself included, worked quietly behind the scenes with senior government officials, the governor of the same province made an inflammatory public statement about the operation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in his province; his announcement was out of line with Zimbabwe’s national policy and exacerbated a situation that NGOs were facing in other countries.

At the time, our policy was to take a firm line on such actions, which would, ordinarily, have called for a strong public statement at the least. But I faced a dilemma: If I made a public statement against the governor, it would probably have torpedoed our efforts to secure the American’s release from prison.

On the other hand, failing to respond could lead to problems with NGO operations countrywide; and, at the time, the majority of our programs were run through NGOs. I had two “right” courses

of action. What was I to do?

I decided that the most immediate and identifiable harm would be caused if we did anything to jeopardize the American citizen’s situation. Because the other nine provincial governors had publicly expressed disagreement with their colleague’s position, and I had received assurances from senior national officials that the national policy would continue to be applied, I decided that any immediate harm to NGOs would be minimal, and we would have time to work it out after the American had crossed Zimbabwe’s border as a free man.

Events vindicated my decision. The American was freed with an apology from the police, and the NGO announcement turned out to be all smoke and no fire. The governor had been trying to burnish his credentials as a hard-liner, and had overreached. His announcement was quietly ignored and the NGOs continued to operate under the existing rules. Later, the NGOs thanked me for not muddying the waters of their closed-door negotiations with the governor with a provocative public statement.

I’d like to be able to say that my FSI training or my time in uniform prepared me to assess such situations, but sadly, that’s not the case. I had to rely on my own instincts and experience, trusting that they were right.

## Transforming Training

If we are to prepare Foreign Service personnel of all ranks to operate effectively in these troubled times, this has to change. While compliance ethics must remain a part of our training, it is not sufficient. We need to prepare our people to operate effectively in the gray areas—the situations when the line between right and wrong is blurred. They have to be able to assess situations when they face



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## I'd like to be able to say that my FSI training or my time in uniform prepared me to assess such situations, but sadly, that's not the case.

a clash of values and have the tools to make informed decisions.

The place to start this transformation is in our training. A method currently being used in some Marine Corps classes offers one possibility. Known as decision-forcing cases (DFC), this type of training puts the student in a situation, real or hypothetical, and then requires

him or her to go through the decision-making process and come to a conclusion.

In the real cases, students have actual events against which to judge their decisions. Even in hypothetical cases, they tend to retain the lessons learned longer than they would from lectures alone.

The Foreign Service Institute uses a

similar method in its consular training.

The Basic Consular Course, known as Congen Rosslyn, puts FSOs about to go out on consular tours in hypothetical consular situations, in the hypothetical Republic of Z. In simulation exercises, they face challenges such as problematic visa interviews, which require them to apply the regulations and their own knowledge to come up with solutions. I retained more from the consular training course than almost any of the other courses I took at FSI during my career, with the exception of media training, which also put students in real-life situations.

Introducing the case method, or a version of DFC, to all FSI training (with the possible exception of language and

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area studies) would ensure retention of the information, and make it easier for an FSO facing a situation in the field to find a resolution.

This won't be easy to implement. Change is unsettling, and this would require significant changes to the way courses are taught at FSI. It would also require more buy-in from bureaus, offices and posts, requiring them to release people for training even if it means suffering gaps in staffing for short periods of time.

I'm convinced, though, that the pay-off would be worth it. Having a well-qualified individual arrive late for a position is more beneficial to the organization in the long run than having a position filled by someone who is ill-equipped to handle the demands that will inevitably arise.

I would also recommend that FSI consider introducing a course on ethical decision-making, focusing on assessing the ethics of the decisions we make across the board. As a start, such a course could be online, and it could be made a requirement for promotion to FS-1, or even lower. Eventually, though, a resident course should also be established, because more benefit is gained when face-to-face interaction is enabled.

We live in interesting, and uncertain, times. Effective diplomacy is needed now as much as, if not more, than ever before. We might not be able to forestall significant reductions in our capability in terms of numbers of people or programs, but we can ensure that those we do retain operate at optimum capacity. The ability to make good decisions in an environment of uncertainty should not be overlooked as an essential skill for every member of the U.S. Foreign Service. ■

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# IRAN INSIDE AND OUT

This in-depth look at Iran provides context and perspective for understanding the controversial nuclear deal.

BY GARY SICK

**I**ran surprises. You can't get your arms around it, and it refuses to be categorized. This is irritating; it is baffling; it is also intriguing, and keeps you coming back for more.

It is easier to define Iran as a Middle Eastern country by stating what it is *not*. It is not Arab, though it borrowed that alphabet. Iranians don't speak Arabic, except for tribal clusters on the corners of the modern state. Though comprised of a multitude of tribes and peoples, the culture is Persian to the core and glues the various parts together more firmly than its enemies imagine.

Yes, it is Muslim, but just to flout its uniqueness, it is over-

whelmingly Shia—the branch of the religion that so annoys the Sunni grandees in Riyadh and elsewhere. At the same time, Iranians persist in celebrating ancient Zoroastrian holidays, to the official disapproval of their ruling clerics.

Iran has its own unique cuisine, music and, above all, poetry. Who could have imagined that Rumi, a 13th-century Persian writer, would be one of the best-selling poets in the United States of the 21st century? Most Iranians can quote him for hours.

The country also has oil, but it is not a rentier state like so many of its wealthy neighbors. It has a well-developed industrial sector and produces most of its own weapons, from artillery and aircraft to mini-submarines, though it relies primarily



*Gary Sick served on the National Security Council under Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, and was the principal White House aide for Iran during the Iranian Revolution and the Embassy Tehran hostage crisis (1979-1981). He is currently adjunct professor of international affairs and adjunct senior research scholar at the Middle East Institute at Columbia University's School of International & Public Affairs and executive director of its Gulf/2000 project. He is a member (emeritus) of the board of Human Rights Watch in New York City and chair of its advisory committee on the Middle East.*

*Mr. Sick is the author of two books on U.S.-Iran relations (All Fall Down: America's Tragic Encounter with Iran, Random House, 1985; and October Surprise: America's Hostages in Iran and the Election of Ronald Reagan, Random House, 1991). He has edited several other books and published numerous articles on U.S. Middle East policy.*



ALEMAN (FLICKR) [CC BY 2.0] / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

In Tehran, women protest gender discrimination in 2006.

on outsiders for high-end items. Its manufacturers also produce and export excellent drones, some of which are reverse-engineered from captured American models.

Although Iran is a mid-level power, with a gross domestic product somewhat larger than Norway's

and slightly smaller than Austria's, it has a 2,500-year imperial history and perceives itself as a world power. Its self-importance may be exaggerated, but its geostrategic weight in the Persian Gulf area is not. Its population of 82 million is double that of the six Gulf Cooperation Council states combined, even including their expatriate workers. In the most recent election, the number of Iranians who voted for President Hassan Rouhani was greater than the entire citizen population of the GCC.

Iran also occupies a vital piece of real estate that is one of the anchors of the new Chinese "Belt and Road Initiative," a re-creation of the ancient Silk Road. Specifically, it dominates the northern littoral of the Persian Gulf and the strategic Strait of Hormuz. It has a well-organized and experienced military that has limited capacity to project power outside its borders, but would be a formidable opponent for any would-be invader.

**Five revolts in a century,  
all aspiring to greater civil  
liberty and democratic reform—  
though largely thwarted in  
each case—give Iran a remarkable  
record of political activism.**

### **A History of Political Upheaval**

One characteristic of Iran that often goes unnoticed is its rebellious citizenry. Iran has experienced at least five major political upheavals in just 100 years. In the early 20th century, the Constitutional Revolution imposed a written constitution on its

monarch. In 1925, Reza Shah seized the throne, ousted the corrupt Qajar dynasty and instituted a series of fundamental reforms that attempted to emulate those of Kemal Ataturk in neighboring Turkey. And in the early 1950s, Prime Minister Mohammed Mosadegh led a popular movement to nationalize the oil industry, a move that unnerved Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the ruling son of Reza Shah, who fled the country temporarily.

Although the shah was restored to the throne in 1953 with the assistance of the CIA and Britain's MI-6, nationalization of the oil industry was sustained, and he was forced to introduce major reforms in the form of his own White Revolution. In 1979, he was again overthrown by a mass popular uprising—a true revolution—and replaced by a unique combination of theocratic rule and the trappings of a representative democracy. That system was challenged by a massive outpouring of popular anger at what was perceived to be a fraudulent election in 2009 (a century after the

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Constitutional Revolution), which shook the regime to the core but was subdued by outright force, intimidation and mass incarcerations.

Five revolts in a century, all aspiring to greater civil liberty and democratic reform—though largely thwarted in each case—give Iran a remarkable record of political activism. That same rebellious instinct has been present in virtually every election that has been conducted under the Islamic Republic, at least since the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989. Presidential, parliamentary and municipal races are held every two years or less, on average. All Iranian citizens are free to vote, and they can cast their vote in any polling station in the country.

### The 2017 Election

To see how the political system works, let's look at the presidential election earlier this year. In Iran, anyone can register to be a presidential candidate; and for this past May's election, 1,636 citizens, including 137 women, did. Instead of holding primaries to cull the field, the Guardian Council, an appointed and constitutionally mandated 12-member body, sorts the candidates. In a lightning-fast period of five days, it reduced the presidential slate to six men: the incumbent president himself and one of his close associates, two conservatives (the head of a major religious foundation who was said to be the favorite of the Supreme Leader, and the mayor of Tehran), plus two nonentities. A former president and many other candidates with apparently sterling qualifications were rejected, without explanation or appeal. This part of the process is opaque, blatantly political in nature and utterly undemocratic by any possible measure. No one who is perceived to be an opponent or critic of the Islamic revolutionary system is permitted to run for president, and no woman has ever been approved as a candidate for that office.

The decision by President Rouhani and one of his close associates to run against each other is an interesting feature of recent Iranian elections. Under Iranian law, the winning presidential candidate must have a clear majority, or else the election goes to a runoff. It was understood by everyone that Rouhani's associate was there to take a hard line in the debates; to say the sorts of things that might have been difficult for the president himself to say; to promote Rouhani on the stump in the very brief campaign period of only one month; and then to withdraw his candidacy in favor of

**On foreign policy, Iranians are realist to the core and driven almost entirely by their perception of the long-term interests of the nation.**



The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs occupies the former headquarters of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Co.

the president. That had been a winning tactic previously for the reformist candidates, and it was repeated this time.

In the past, the conservatives had competed against each other and divided the vote, to their chagrin. In this

election, they played the reformist game. Ibrahim Raisi, who many regarded as the preferred candidate of the Supreme Leader, and even as a possible future candidate for supreme leader himself, was a poor campaigner with almost no political experience. Mohammad Qalibaf, the mayor of Tehran, was an experienced politician with an impressive résumé who had twice before run for the presidency. To the surprise of many, he withdrew from the election at the last minute, throwing his support to Raisi, thereby making it effectively a two-man race.

Iran has no political parties. However, major candidates endorse lists of candidates who tend to agree with them. These lists can overlap, and for purposes of expediency may include candidates whose support is marginal at best. So it is extremely



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A crowd watches one of the three live, televised debates held during the 2017 presidential election.

difficult to determine who “wins” in a legislative or municipal election. But these lists are the closest one can come to an ideological definition of the political structure in Iran.

In the 2017 election, 73 percent of the 56 million eligible voters cast a ballot, and 57 percent of the voters (23 million people) voted for the incumbent president, Hassan Rouhani. His victory continued several Iranian traditions—first, granting the incumbent a second term. Every president elected since the constitution was changed to a presidential system in 1989 has also been re-elected. It also renewed another tradition, which usually goes unnoticed: Given a very limited choice of candidates, the Iranian body politic consistently votes for the man they believe is most committed to reform of the existing system. President Rouhani is a veteran of the Islamic Republic, and has been an insider from the beginning. But he has also become much more reform-minded as he has campaigned and ruled.

### A Leader Who Is Not So Supreme

A third tradition, which seems to be repeating itself in the present cycle, is the propensity of the Supreme Leader to begin undercutting the authority of the elected president almost as soon as he begins his second term. This tendency is not hard to explain. Ever since the election of President Mohammad Khatami in 1997, presidents, who must actually appeal to the electorate directly and who are held accountable for policies that affect people in their daily lives, tend to become increasingly reformist during their campaigns and in their first term. They come into their second term with an agenda and a mandate, and

that is perceived as threatening by the Supreme Leader, who is, in fact, less “supreme” than his title would suggest.

The occupant of this unique political position is chosen, essentially for life, by a group of hand-picked senior officials. As the heir of Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, the Supreme Leader is responsible for preserving the revolutionary elements of the Iranian system. Moreover, although he is *primus inter pares* within the leadership, he is in fact mainly an arbiter among the various institutions competing for power: the president, the legislature, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and the very conservative judiciary and intelligence ministries.

Typically, the Supreme Leader wants a heavy voting turnout and even a second term for the president, since that is evidence of popular support for a stable Islamic Republic. But *too* much popular support for a reformist president is a threat to the Supreme Leader and his institutional imperative. The military, conservative judiciary and intelligence agencies, on whom the Leader depends for his personal and institutional security, are also suspicious of too much power gravitating to the presidency and its supporters. To them, reform means an evolution away from the revolutionary Islamic nature of the system. They often wait impatiently for the election to play itself out and then reassert their own authority, as if to remind everyone that they have not gone away.

The tension between these two camps defines the structure of what some regard as a contradiction in terms: a revolutionary Islamic republic. (The origins, strategies and deficiencies of the Iranian reform movement are brilliantly portrayed in Laura Secor’s book, *Children of Paradise*.)



## Playing the Long Game

Iran's foreign policy is less contentious than its domestic policy. This is a nation that survived an eight-year war (1980-1988) instigated by Saddam Hussein's Iraq; opprobrium and crippling sanctions imposed by the West; and near-perpetual conflict with the United States, the unquestioned international superpower and military hegemon of the Persian Gulf. Although the country suffered as a result of these conflicts, it has emerged with its revolution and independence intact. Iranians often grumble about the price of supporting Hezbollah in Lebanon, or subventions to the Assad government in Syria, or even the gratuitously obnoxious rhetoric against Israel; but for the most part, the Iranian citizenry (not unlike its counterpart in Israel) is willing to leave foreign policy in the hands of the Supreme National Security Council and the permanent structure that has grown up around the Supreme Leader's office.

On foreign policy, Iranians are realist to the core and driven almost entirely by their perception of the long-term interests of the nation. Tehran's relationship with Damascus, for instance, was forged during the war with Iraq, when Syria was the only Arab state that sided with Tehran, and it has continued to this day as a critical link both to Hezbollah and governments around the Mediterranean. This bond, which Tehran regards as strategic, helps explain why Iran was willing to pour significant financial and military resources into the effort to prevent a radical Salafist takeover of Damascus. Hezbollah itself gives Iran crucial strategic depth and serves as a deterrent against Israel's military threats. It is very likely that the shah would have pursued similar policies under similar circumstances, though no doubt with a different rhetorical façade.

In terms of strategy, Iran is opportunistic and tends to play a long game. When the George W. Bush administration invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, Iran openly assisted in the first conflict but not in the second. However, it was quick to appreciate America's "gift" of eliminating its two most serious rivals, leaving it immensely more influential in the region. Iran had virtually no contact with the Houthis in Yemen and played no role in their revolt, but when Saudi Arabia invaded the country in 2015 and claimed that it was opposing encirclement by Tehran, the Iranians gradually began to lend enough support to take some credit for themselves and ensure that the Saudis and their allies would remain bogged down in the Yemeni quagmire. And when the Saudis and Emiratis broke the Gulf Cooperation Council in two

**In terms of strategy,  
Iran is opportunistic and  
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by boycotting Qatar earlier this year, Iran was quick to offer the besieged country use of its airspace and ports to help ensure that the split among the rival Sunni monarchies would not end quickly or amicably.

When the United States and Israel joined forces in 2009 to sabotage Iran's centrifuge chains by inserting a digital worm (Stuxnet) that cleverly caused the centrifuges to explode for no apparent reason, Iran responded in two ways. First, it redoubled its production of centrifuges and low-enriched uranium, thereby pushing toward a potential nuclear breakout much faster than anticipated, which eventually added to the pressure for negotiations. Second, Iran launched a massive cyberattack against U.S. financial institutions and the oil operations of U.S. allies in the Persian Gulf. Just to make the point clear, the attack on Aramco computers in Saudi Arabia

utilized a piece of the code originally devised for the Stuxnet virus. In true spy-vs.-spy fashion, responsibility for the attacks was never publicly acknowledged by either side.

The most serious assault on Iran's nuclear program was the assassinations of scientists. Over a three-year period at the height of the international pressure against Iran, a series of killings targeted Iranian scientists who had varying degrees of involvement in the state's nuclear program. According to some U.S. intelligence officials, these highly professional operations were carried out by Israeli intelligence, working with the Mojahedin-e Khalq, an Iranian opposition movement headquartered in Paris. (The details are described by Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council in Washington, in his recent book, *Losing an Enemy*. See the review on p. 61.)

The United States strongly disassociated itself from these actions, but Iran refused to believe that Israel would act without U.S. approval and reacted by launching a string of clumsy, failed attacks against Israeli officials, culminating in the bombing of a busload of Israeli tourists in Bulgaria. The extremely amateurish and botched plot by an Iranian-American to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to Washington may have been part of this campaign, as well. The Iranian intent was clear; the sloppy execution was harder to understand.

## A Fraught Relationship

The fraught American relationship with Iran is the product of an extraordinary series of historical events, policy misbehavior, virulent misunderstandings, malign neglect and external pressures. It has now been nearly 40 years since the Islamic Revolution began,



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Supporters of presidential candidates running in Iran's 12th presidential election took to the streets of the capital to campaign.

leading to the overthrow of the shah, the Iranian identification of the United States as the Great Satan and, above all, the Iranian attack on the U.S. embassy in Tehran and the holding of its personnel for 444 days (1979-1981).

All of this played out as the first major U.S. foreign policy crisis to be fully televised and piped into the living rooms of every American. Over dinner, the U.S. public was treated to nightly appearances of fanatical, bearded young men in Tehran shouting “Death to America!” It was a very bad time to be an Iranian in the United States, as well. One Iranian friend of mine complained that his neighborhood mechanic would not repair his car out of anger about what was happening in Iran, so my friend began to tell people he was from Brazil. That negative view has endured, with polls today reflecting 70 percent disapproval of Iran on the part of the American public.

This was also the first direct contact between the United States and political Islam, and it was not pretty. It was an inauspicious starting point for any relationship, setting the tone for the next three decades. Tehran’s approach was largely based on revolutionary zeal, disregard for the most basic international conventions and a confidence that God’s favor rested entirely on one side. On this side of the Atlantic, most Americans remain unaware of the string of broken U.S. promises, misunderstandings and betrayals that had helped shape Iranian hostility since the 1950s. (These are catalogued in Barbara Slavin’s masterful work, *Bitter Friends, Bosom Enemies: Iran, the U.S. and the Twisted Path to Confrontation.*)

Despite this history, Barack Obama arrived in the White House in 2009 with a proclaimed interest in engaging with Iran as part

of a restructuring of U.S. foreign policy to reduce the American footprint in the Middle East. He made no headway on this during his first term, but his second term coincided with the election of Hassan Rouhani, who had led a failed effort to engage the United States in the early 2000s. Rouhani and his foreign minister, Javad Zarif, knew the landscape intimately, and President Obama was willing to give them the one thing that they absolutely needed to proceed with negotiations: acknowledgement that after years of global sanctions, Iran would be permitted to pursue its own peaceful nuclear program, enriching uranium on its own soil.

Negotiations began in earnest in 2013, with the United States taking the lead in partnership with a remarkable coalition, known as the P5+1: all five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (China, France, Russia, Britain and the United States) plus Germany and the European Union, which served as the host and facilitator. The talks were extremely intense and complex. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman, who led the U.S. team for much of the process, compared it to a Rubik’s Cube, where all the pieces had to fit together into one interlocking whole. Secretary of State John Kerry participated actively in the negotiations, particularly in the final stages.

An agreement was reached on July 14, 2015, and implementation began on Jan. 16, 2016. The huge American team finished the marathon discussions in a state of exhaustion, but with a new set of Iranian contacts and some admiration for a mid-level state that could successfully carry out a complex, two-year negotiation while facing all the major powers of the world on the opposite side of the table.

## The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as the Iran nuclear deal is known, represents a true milestone in nonproliferation. It effectively removes Iran's capability to create a nuclear weapon, and puts Tehran under a kind of nuclear house arrest for a decade, after which the extraordinary restrictions are to revert to the more normal limits of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency protocols. Critics generally focus on the JCPOA's sunset provisions, ignoring or disregarding the fact that Iran has formally accepted—in *perpetuity*—the Additional Protocols of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the most rigorous levels of inspection applied to nuclear-capable nations.

In addition, Iran itself wrote into the preamble of the agreement that “under no circumstances will Iran ever seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapons.” This unprecedented commitment was repeated in the United Nations Security Council document that was signed by all permanent members of the Security Council, giving force of international law to the agreement.

The agreement was vociferously opposed by Israel, its powerful friends in the United States, and Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Gulf states who feared a budding relationship between the United States and Iran. The United States had accepted the role as the Persian Gulf enforcer of Iranian containment during the Bill Clinton presidency, and regional states were alarmed to see the Obama administration backing away from that commitment. Presented to Congress as an executive agreement rather than a formal treaty, the accord barely survived a Republican effort to reject it, and presidential candidate Donald Trump denounced it as the “worst deal ever negotiated.”

Yet even though he promised to tear up the agreement on his first day in office, President Trump has twice now certified (as the president is obliged to do every 90 days) that Tehran is keeping its end of the bargain. At the same time, the president and several prominent members of his administration regularly complain that Iran is not living up to the spirit of the agreement.

Republican and Democratic members of Congress have written new bills imposing additional sanctions on Iran, which the president has signed, leading Iran to charge that the United States is not in compliance with the letter of the JCPOA. Prospects for the agreement's survival are still in doubt, but the longer it continues to operate, the more likely it is to be sustained.

What has been lost for now, however, is the possibility of building on the positive momentum of the negotiating process. In the course of the prolonged, intensive negotiations, a

significant group of American diplomats and officials became acquainted with their counterparts in Iran. This was a huge departure from the past, when officials of both countries were forbidden even to exchange pleasantries at official functions.

The JCPOA was never intended to solve all the problems between Iran and the United States, but it was no secret that the leaders of both countries quietly hoped that the experience of direct contact would expand the range of discussion to include other issues, such as Syria, Yemen, Iraq or Afghanistan, where Tehran and Washington have overlapping interests. The 2016 election in the United States put an end to those hopes, at least for the time being.

## Some Modest Observations

The United States and Iran have a complicated and, since the Islamic Revolution, mostly hostile history. Both countries, however, are key players in the Persian Gulf and the wider Middle East. Every U.S. president since Jimmy Carter has found a reason to try to work with Iran in some fashion, usually with only limited or very temporary success. We are in a new era, and anyone who wishes to venture firm predictions about where the bilateral relationship goes from here is far bolder than I. But after a career of dealing with U.S.-Iran relations, there are a few modest observations that I might offer:

- Iran is a major power in the Persian Gulf region, and any U.S. strategy must deal with it. As a general rule, lack of contact makes our policy more difficult and prone to error.
- Our national interests will converge with Iran on some issues, and cooperation on those issues is not only feasible, but desirable.
- On those issues where we will never agree, we should consider carefully the nature and level of resources that we wish to devote to their pursuit. War is expensive and unpredictable.
- Opponents of the Islamic Republic have confidently been predicting its demise literally from the first weeks of its existence. Greet such arguments with skepticism.
- When Iran's system does change, it will do so at the hands of its own people. When we try to speed or manipulate that process, the effect is often to smother or thwart it.
- Our allies in the region have their own interests in relation to Iran. Their interests are not always the same as ours, and we should know the difference.
- If the JCPOA is preserved and implemented fairly, Iran will not get a nuclear weapon. Withdrawal by the United States would remove the nuclear constraints and put us at odds with our closest allies. Consider the consequences. ■

What the  
**IRAN**  
Nuclear  
Deal Says  
About



# MAKING FOREIGN POLICY **TODAY**

**Doing foreign policy has rarely been easy, but several new realities contribute to making it especially difficult today.**

BY DENNIS JETT

**I**n July 2015, the United States and five other countries concluded an agreement with Iran concerning that country's nuclear program. The negotiations stretched over 20 months and the resulting accord ran to more than 30,000 words, but it was based on a simple tradeoff: Iran would get relief from economic sanctions and in return would dismantle parts of its nuclear infrastructure and place limitations on the rest. The goal was to assure the world that the program would not be used to develop nuclear weapons.

While some hailed the successful conclusion of the talks as



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one of the greatest achievements of the Obama administration, others could not condemn the result strongly enough. It became one of the most contentious foreign policy debates in years, and Congress came very close to overturning what the diplomats had accomplished.

The debate over the agreement revealed not just a sharp difference of opinion, but also how difficult making foreign policy is today. That is because the process is affected by five factors: **globalization, partisan politics, money, technology and truth.** None of them is new, but all have more impact than in the past.

## Globalization

Simply put, globalization is people, things and ideas crossing national boundaries with greater speed, frequency, impact and reach. Anything constrained by those boundaries, like national governments, becomes weaker, while anything that can ignore them grows stronger. Globalization means that even the world's only superpower is not all-powerful. And globalization is the reason the United States cannot confront Iran alone unless it wants to wage another war in the Middle East—this time without any significant allies.

Some have suggested that harsher sanctions will bring Tehran to its knees

and cause the Iranians to give up their entire nuclear program. But in the absence of Iran testing a nuclear weapon or committing some other undeniable violation of the agreement, harsher sanctions are not going to happen. The proof would have to be crystal clear, but would come from an intelligence community that President Donald J. Trump has repeatedly denigrated. Given the growing distrust abroad of the American government and its intentions, an assertion by Washington of a violation based on an intelligence assessment would convince no one other than Iran's Sunni enemies.

Acting unilaterally to impose harsher sanctions will not work either; unless broadly adopted by other nations, sanctions would have little impact and would hurt the American economy more than Iran's. Our negotiating partners are not going to tear up the existing agreement simply because a new president thinks it is a bad deal; and they have no desire to return to the negotiating table to seek a better one. To the contrary, our partners recognize Iran must receive some benefit from the agreement for it to succeed, and they are moving ahead with

expanded commercial ties. Airbus and the French oil company Total have signed multibillion-dollar deals with Iran, and our other partners are doing business with Tehran, as well. Washington's options are limited by the increasing international trade that is part of globalization.

## Partisan Politics

Globalization isn't the only thing constraining the formulation of foreign policy. Toxic partisan politics has become as much a part of the Washington environment as heat and humidity in August. Not a single Republican in Congress supported the agreement, and the contenders for the party's presidential nomination acted as if they were in a contest to claim who would tear it up fastest upon taking office.

John Isaacs, a senior fellow at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, pointed out in an article in *The Hill* that the opposition did not stem from careful consideration: "Most GOP members did not even wait for the ink to dry on the agree-

ment to vigorously oppose the deal presented to Congress on Sept. 14. They did not bother to read the 120-page document, study the details, wait for hearings or consult with experts."

The opposition went so far that 47 of the 54

Republican Senators wrote an "open letter" to "the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran," pointing out that the next American president could reverse any agreement with the stroke of a pen. It was drafted by Tom Cotton (R-Ark.), who at that point had been in the Senate for all of 10 weeks. He admitted in a speech at the right-wing Heritage Foundation that "the end of these negotiations isn't an unintended consequence of congressional action, it is very much an intended consequence."

## Money

Senator Cotton's attempts to put partisan politics ahead of national security in his effort to derail the Iran nuclear deal can be linked to another factor affecting foreign policy: the corrupting influence of money on politics. His election campaign received millions of dollars from fervently pro-Israel billionaires and groups. The Emergency Committee for Israel spent \$960,000 to support Sen. Cotton. Paul Singer and Seth Klarman, both billionaire hedge fund managers, gave \$250,000 and \$100,000, respectively. The political action committee run by John Bolton,

Globalization comes into play because it demonstrates that even the world's only superpower is not all-powerful.

George W. Bush's recess-appointee ambassador to the United Nations whom a Republican-majority Senate refused to confirm, chipped in at least \$825,000.

Thanks to *Citizens United* and other decisions by the conservative majority on the Supreme Court, the floodgates have been opened wider than ever before, and there is no longer any real limit on what the wealthy can spend on elections in the hope of influencing policy. As Trevor Potter, a former chairman of the Federal Election Commission, described it in a *New Yorker* article: "A single billionaire can write an eight-figure check and put not just their thumb but their whole hand on the scale—and we often have no idea who they are. Suddenly, a random billionaire can change politics and public policy—to sweep everything else off the table—even if they don't speak publicly, and even if there's almost no public awareness of his or her views."

One such billionaire, who makes no secret of his policy preferences, is casino owner Sheldon Adelson. He once suggested detonating a nuclear weapon in the desert in Iran, just to show them America means business. He is a major funder of a number of groups like United Against Nuclear Iran, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and the Foundation for Defense of Democracies that dedicated themselves to defeating the Iran deal. AIPAC spent between \$20 million and \$40 million in the effort, and a good bit of that was Adelson's money.

Whether driven by ideology, money or both, the debate over the Iran nuclear issue marked a new low in relations between the Republican majorities in Congress and the Obama administration. It also prompted a remarkable, perhaps unprecedented, level of involvement by groups outside of government. Think-tanks, political advocacy organizations, pro-Israel and religious groups, nonprofit associations, veterans' groups, media outlets, arms control organizations and others weighed in on both sides of the debate. It was a foreign affairs food fight, with positions both for and against the agreement argued with great passion and intensity.

In an open letter to Congress in April 2015, more than 70 national organizations implored representatives and senators to support the Iran nuclear deal. Three months later, just after the deal was signed, a large rally was held by dozens of other

organizations in New York City, to argue the opposite. Estimated at between 10,000 and 15,000, the crowd urged Congress to vote the deal down. The turnout at the rally was large because the organizers used social media and other means to support the effort. In addition to the rally and the open letter, tens of thousands of people contacted their members of Congress and hundreds of thousands signed petitions to express their support or opposition to the agreement.

### Technology and Truth

The involvement of so many organizations and individuals demonstrates that foreign policy is not limited to diplomats holding quiet discussions behind closed doors. Apparently the Founding Fathers did not anticipate the creation of the internet and the spread of social media. They didn't plan for the tens of thousands of lobbyists engaged in that multibillion-dollar industry and the thousands of nongovernmental, nonprofit and religious organizations, think-tanks

and business associations that have also set up shop in Washington to have an impact on government policy.

When a policy attains a high profile, it attracts the attention of a broad range of actors, assuring the debate about what direction to take will be vigorous. These kinds of debates are usually orchestrated by the Washington establishment—those who live in and around the nation's capital and who are in government or the business of influencing it. But occasionally, as the general public becomes aware of and concerned about a particular foreign policy, any number of individuals can join in. That is easier to do today, with email, the internet, social media and other technologies enabling those who want to broaden participation in the debate to do so. Thanks to technology, connecting with like-minded people takes just a few keystrokes. And all those means of connecting came into play in the making of the Iran nuclear agreement, as those who favored it and those who opposed it attempted to influence the outcome.

The range of information sources made possible by technology also means that, in effect, everyone can have his or her own version of the truth. Whatever one wants to believe, a justification for it can be found online. Back when people got their television news from NBC, CBS and ABC, there was not much

**As the general public becomes aware of and concerned about a particular foreign policy, any number of individuals can join in.**

difference in the world that was presented to them, all from a limited number of media outlets. Now liberals watch MSNBC, conservatives tune in to Fox and independents can catch CNN. But beyond that there are unlimited sources, many of them possibilities for news, much of it unreliable and even untrue.

Because of these divergent realities that Americans live in, there is often no agreement on even the most basic facts. That makes it difficult if not impossible to have a serious discussion of the national interest, what threats there are to those interests or how to deal with them. People can believe Iran will never hold up its end of the bargain, or they can think that diplomacy is the only way to avoid another war. And both camps can buttress their arguments with “proof” found online.

### Looking Ahead

The successful conclusion of the Iran nuclear agreement and its first two years in existence did not end the debate. Congress required the president to certify every 90 days that Iran

is abiding by the agreement, thus ensuring the debate will be renewed every three months. And since the agreement did not solve all of America’s problems with Iran, there is always the opportunity to argue against extending it because Iran is not living up to its “spirit,” even if it continues to comply with the limits placed on the nuclear program.

Secretary of State George Shultz once said, “Nothing ever gets settled in this town. It’s a seething debating society in which the debate never stops, in which people never give up.” Shultz made those remarks in 1986, as he tried to explain to the House Foreign Affairs Committee why he was so ignorant about the Iran-Contra scandal, which included selling Iran 1,500 anti-tank missiles and spare parts for anti-aircraft missiles. But he could have been talking about Iran policy today.

Opponents of the Iran nuclear agreement have not given up. And with an unpredictable president, the eventual outcome is impossible to foresee. The one certainty is that the Iran issue will not go away. ■



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# Norman Borlaug and Biotechnology



## Lead a U.S. Ambassador to **IRAN**

**In this unusual example of the value of soft power, the often-divisive issue of biotechnology enabled the United States and Iran to find common ground.**

BY KENNETH QUINN

It was truly a magical moment to speak to an overflow audience in the heart of our democracy as we installed Dr. Borlaug's statue in the pantheon of great Americans in history. That this ceremony took place on



In March 25, 2014, long after I retired from the Foreign Service, I had the opportunity to address the joint leadership of the Congress as part of a ceremony in Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol. As chairman of the Dr. Norman E. Borlaug Statue

Committee, I was there to unveil the magnificent bronze likeness of Borlaug, an Iowa farm boy whose miracle wheat saved hundreds of millions from famine, starvation and likely death in India, Pakistan and the Middle East during the 1960s.



*During his 32-year career in the Foreign Service, Kenneth Quinn served as a rural development officer in Vietnam, on the National Security Council staff at the White House, as refugee and narcotics counselor at the U.S. Mission to the International Organizations in Vienna and as ambassador to Cambodia. Since 2000, he has been president of The World Food Prize in Des Moines, Iowa. Amb. Quinn is the only civilian ever to receive the Army Air Medal, and the only three-time recipient of an AFSA award for constructive dissent. He has also received the Secretary of State's Award for Heroism.*

the 100th anniversary of his birth added to the sense of grandeur that surrounds his extraordinary legacy.

Little did I know that within just months, at a time when U.S.-Iranian relations were full of tension over Tehran's nuclear program and behind-the-scenes negotiations on the matter had yet to reach fruition, I would have the opportunity to take the extraordinary Borlaug legacy to Iran. It was an unusual diplomatic experience, one of the most memorable in my post-Foreign Service career.

### Who Was Norman Borlaug?

Dubbed the "Father of the Green Revolution," Borlaug received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970, and subsequently was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal, our country's highest civilian honor—making him one of only three Americans to receive all three of those honors. (The other two were Martin Luther King Jr. and Elie Wiesel.)





COURTESY OF KENNETH QUINN

Kenneth Quinn addresses the symposium commemorating Norman Borlaug at the Agricultural Biotechnology Research Institute of Iran on Aug. 26, 2014 (inset). Held at the Institute’s campus in Karaj, the symposium drew more than 400 Iranian scientists and students and 10 international guests. Among the senior government officials in attendance were Hujjat al-Islam Mr. Hossein Saeidian, the official representative of the Grand Ayatollah (front row, left), and Mahmoud Hojjati, Iran’s agriculture minister (fourth from left).

It had been my incomparable privilege to work closely with Dr. Borlaug for more than a decade as president of The World Food Prize, which he founded, and which is headquartered in my home state of Iowa. I spent those years endeavoring to fulfill his dream that this \$250,000 prize would come to be seen as the “Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture.”

That Borlaug is a legend in so many countries around the globe was reflected in the multiple events that celebrated his centennial in 2014. In Obregón, Mexico, a ceremony was held around a statue of Borlaug that was erected by the farmers with whom he worked there. A similar event took place on the campus of the Indian Institute of Agricultural Research in New Delhi, where yet another statue of Borlaug was installed. In Uganda, the theme of the National Agricultural Fair was taken from Borlaug’s last words, “Take it to the farmer.”

Closer to home, the University of Minnesota, where Borlaug earned his undergraduate and Ph.D. degrees, announced that it would purchase a replica of our Iowa statue in the U.S. Capitol from the artist who created it, Benjamin Victor. In Des Moines, Iowa, a celebration took place at The World Food Prize Norman Borlaug Hall of Laureates.

It therefore didn’t surprise me when Benjamin Victor contacted me a few months after the ceremony at the capitol to tell me that

he had received an inquiry about another possible purchase of a seven-foot Borlaug statue. What did stun me was the source of that inquiry: Iran.

### An Unusual Invitation

The Agricultural Biotechnology Research Institute of Iran was planning a half-day symposium on Aug. 26, 2014, to commemorate the centennial. They told Victor that they hoped to erect Borlaug’s statue on their campus as part of that celebration.

My amazement at this news was compounded a few days later, when I received an email inviting me to be the keynote speaker at the event. I learned that Borlaug was considered a hero in Iran, both for the impact his “miracle wheat” had had in the 1960s and for his advocacy of biotechnology. In fact, Iran had presented Borlaug a gold medal in 2000 to reflect his status as one of the leading agricultural scientists in the world.

Although it would not be possible for Victor to create another statue in time for the event in Iran, I considered the merits of accepting the invitation to speak. Several things crossed my mind. First, I found it extraordinary that the science of biotechnology—the genetic modification of crops, which is such a divisive subject between the United States and European allies or even among Americans—might provide a topic on which Iranians and Ameri-



In Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol on March 25, 2014, Ambassador (ret.) Kenneth Quinn unveiled a bronze statue of Dr. Norman Borlaug on the hundredth anniversary of his birth. Seated from left to right, House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio).

cans could find common ground. I could also see that this invitation seemed to fit with Iowa's historical agricultural legacy and Borlaug's own life experiences in building understanding through agricultural exchanges and confronting hunger.

But even if my participation in the event in Iran were deemed appropriate—when asked, then-Deputy Secretary of State William Burns posed no objection—it was highly improbable that security elements at the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs would ever approve issuing a visa to a former U.S. ambassador and State Department official. Finally, even if I received a visa, could I possibly get there on time? My daughter was getting married in England on Aug. 24, just two days before the symposium was scheduled to take place in Iran. Following the wedding, my wife and I planned to take a honeymoon in Greece that we had delayed for 40 years.

Yet I was sure that Norm would have wanted me to go, so I filled out visa forms for my wife and myself and sent them in, along with my acceptance of the invitation. As expected, more than a month went by with no word on the visa. I was certain it would never come, and so did not even prepare a presentation.

But on Aug. 19, just as we were leaving our house for the flight

**I learned that Borlaug was considered a hero in Iran, both for the impact his “miracle wheat” had had in the 1960s and for his advocacy of biotechnology.**

to England, my cell phone rang with a call from Tehran—the visas had been approved. In between pre-wedding festivities in London, I worked furiously on my remarks and PowerPoint slides with my staff in Des Moines while trying to buy airline tickets to Tehran using an Iowa-based credit card—itsself an interesting experience.

We found a flight that landed in Iran at 2 a.m. on Aug. 26, the day I was scheduled to speak. After a very short night, we were driven to the Agricultural Biotechnology Research Institute of Iran campus in Karaj, where I was introduced to Minister of Agriculture Mahmoud Hujjati and Hujjat al-Islam Mr. Hossein Saeidian, the official representative of the

Grand Ayatollah, the Supreme Leader of the country, to agricultural organizations. They had a lot of questions about my background and didn't smile much.

### **The Borlaug Legacy**

So it was with considerable trepidation that I entered the auditorium, wondering whether I had made a mistake in coming here. I was taken aback by the size of the crowd. Every one of the 400 seats was filled with Iranian scientists, with students standing in the back and along the sides of the room. A small contingent of

about 10 international guests sat in the center section behind the minister and other senior government officials.

The ceremony began with significant religious overtones, with prayers, poems and invocations. After the director general of ABRRI opened the program, the minister of agriculture delivered the first address, receiving polite applause for his remarks.

Then it was my turn. I was introduced as president of The World Food Prize, without any reference to my State Department diplomatic service. My title of ambassador was never used. As I took the stage, I was struck by what an unusual environment I was in. I had no idea how my presentation would be received. Would there be a hostile, or even volatile, reaction?

I began by describing Norman Borlaug as part of Iowa's rich agricultural legacy, which included a number of historic endeavors to build relationships with former adversaries. I cited several examples: Herbert Hoover taking food to feed the children of the Soviet Union at the end of World War I; the Yamanashi Hog Lift, which took Iowa animals to Japan following a devastating typhoon not long after World War II; and George Washington Carver's advice to Mahatma Gandhi during India's struggle to throw off colonial rule.

I then came to the critical part of my presentation. With a slide showing a painting of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's visit to an Iowa farm at the height of the Cold War, in 1959, I described the visit as taking place during "the most dangerous moment in all human history." American and Soviet nuclear weapons were poised to be launched at each other. The painting showed Khrushchev and farm owner Roswell Garst at the corn crib, with the Soviet leader lamenting the fact that Russian farmers could not produce similarly robust crops.

I explained that this visit led to several decades of bilateral exchanges on agriculture, none of which had anything to do with nuclear weapons, but everything to do with creating the sense on both sides that some degree of mutual understanding and cooperation might be possible. These exchanges on agriculture eased tensions and eventually provided an atmosphere in which negotiations on reducing the nuclear threat was possible. Without stating it directly, I felt the audience clearly understood the analogy to the current U.S.-Iranian nuclear tension.

Next, I recalled being with Dr. Borlaug at the 100th anniversary of the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo in 2001, listening as 1986 Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel told the audience that he had come to believe that "people who can stand together to sing or cheer or applaud together for the same achievement, can live in peace together."

I stressed that this philosophy underscored Borlaug's life and the efforts of The World Food Prize, adding that "confronting hunger and alleviating human suffering can bring people together

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Iran's Minister of Agriculture Mahmoud Hojjati presented a smaller version of the institute's wall hanging commemorating Dr. Borlaug's centennial to Ambassador Quinn. Shown here, from left, are Amb. Quinn; Agriculture Minister Hojjati; Dr. Isa Kalantari, the former minister of agriculture of Iran, who invited Dr. Borlaug to Iran in 2000 to receive a gold medal; Dr. Bahman Yazdi-Samadi, professor of genetics and plant breeding at the University of Tehran; and Dr. Eskandar Zand, deputy minister of agriculture of Iran and head of Iran's Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization.

across even the widest political, religious, ethnic or diplomatic differences." While making this point, I showed a slide of Dr. Daniel Hillel, the Israeli irrigation pioneer, receiving the World Food Prize in 2012 in Des Moines, Iowa, with U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon at his side. Later, I explained to an Iranian TV reporter on camera that Hillel had been nominated by people from three Muslim countries, and that a Muslim princess, an Arab sheikh and an Israeli diplomat were present when he was honored.

### People Standing Together

Continuing my remarks, I noted that we were here in Karaj standing together and cheering together for Dr. Borlaug. What we needed to do, I said, was to find further ways to work together so we would have more reasons to stand together and celebrate joint breakthrough achievements. This was particularly important, I stressed, since we now face the challenge of feeding more than nine billion people worldwide.

I suggested that one area for possible Iranian-American cooperation was in dealing with the scourge of rust disease, which Borlaug had battled during the course of his life, but which was now reappearing around the globe, including in Iran. Looking straight at the minister and the director general of ABRRI, I said I was sure that Dr. Borlaug would be very pleased with Iran's recent positive

**Dr. Borlaug is part of Iowa's rich agricultural legacy, which included a number of historic endeavors to build relationships with former adversaries.**

cooperation with and participation in the Borlaug Global Rust Initiative. Led by an American scientist from Cornell University who was once Borlaug's student, the Rust Initiative is waging the battle to contain Ug99, a virulent new strain of wheat rust disease that threatens global wheat production.

In the same vein, I shared one of Dr. Borlaug's most heartfelt wishes, one with special relevance for ABRRI. Before he died, I related, he had told me of his dream that one day scientists would discover which gene in the rice seed keeps that plant from developing rust disease. Using biotechnology, they would insert that gene into wheat, thus forever eradicating the scourge against which he had battled for his entire life.

As a country that grows both rice and wheat, I said, Iran is poised to play a significant role in making Norman Borlaug's dream come true. I urged the Ministry of Agriculture and the Biotechnology

Research Institute to commit themselves to this goal, and to work with American scientists to achieve it. On the spot, I invited the Iranian minister to select his top scientist working on Ug99 and send that person to Des Moines to take part in a special panel on wheat rust at our World Food Prize symposium later that year.

I concluded by saying that there could be no greater tribute to

Dr. Borlaug than if Iranians and Americans worked together to eliminate rust disease from the face of the earth. I painted a verbal picture of two scientists—one from Iran and one from the United States—walking in together to receive The

World Food Prize. We could then, as Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel said in 2001: "stand together and cheer together for this great common achievement," I stated, leaving unstated but clearly understood: "and live in peace together."

I stepped back from the podium, uncertain of and unprepared for the reaction that followed. Led by Agriculture Minister Mahmoud Hojjati, the audience spontaneously sprang to their feet in unison and gave me a prolonged standing ovation. Many in the audience surged forward to congratulate me on my remarks. The cleric representing the Supreme Leader almost ran to congratulate me, effusively pumping my hand while praising my statement.

At the closing ceremony, I was on stage as the minister unveiled a large woven likeness of Dr. Borlaug, with a quote by him in both Farsi and English. While they were ultimately unable to place a statue on the ABRRII campus, this artwork would be prominently displayed there, reminding all Iranians of Norman Borlaug's legacy and of the power of agricultural exchanges to bring people together.

### Epilogue

Two months later, in October 2014, the director general of the Iran Seed Improvement Center arrived in Iowa to take part in our Borlaug Dialogue symposium, where he was able to interact with more than 1,400 participants. The theme for our conference was "The Single Greatest Challenge in Human History: Can We Sustainably Feed the Nine Billion People Who Will be on Our Planet by 2050?" The presence of an Iranian participant at our event just may have been one of the most significant developments of the entire yearlong Borlaug Centennial.

To continue this initiative, in each of the two following years,

I designated a World Food Prize laureate to speak at a major agricultural congress in Iran. I also had the opportunity to revisit our Iranian connection at a U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization-sponsored conference at Expo Milano in 2015, where I met with Agriculture Minister Hojjati and his team.

As someone who dealt with a range of terrorist incidents in the Middle East during my diplomatic career, I have no illusions about those elements of the Iranian power structure that have supported a range of threatening organizations and sought to attain nuclear weapons. But having seen the U.S. relationship evolve so dramatically with the former Soviet Union and with China, with agriculture playing a leading role, I cannot help but think that building a connection to Iran around Norman Borlaug's legacy would be a highly useful asset.

My wife Le Son and I are thinking about writing a memoir, *Honeymoon in Iran*. And I dream that Norman Borlaug's statue will one day stand on the Agricultural Biotechnology Research Institute of Iran campus in Karaj, just as it does in Mexico, India and Washington, D.C. ■

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## IRAN in 2025:

# An Optimist's View

**Iran offers a potential path to progress in dealing with the volatile Middle East and the threats emanating from there.**

BY DAVE SCHROEDER

**T**he writer L.P. Hartley once observed: “The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.” The same can be said of the future. For instance, even the most rosy-eyed U.S. policymakers in 1983 would not have suspected that the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc would peacefully expire within a decade.

Still, the practice of foreign policy compels practitioners toward realism bordering on pessimism. As a result, acute failures in policy planning have occurred in the wake of success. Even the most cynical policymakers should plan for a range of outcomes, including success, no matter how improbable they may seem. With that in mind, the strategy outlined below for dealing with Tehran between now and 2025 is premised on one potential path

of progress—perhaps not the most likely path, but one Washington should be prepared to pursue to maximize the outcome.

Why 2025? That is the year in which key provisions of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action—the agreement President Barack Obama worked out to slow Tehran’s progress toward becoming a nuclear power—expire, giving Iran more leeway to restart that program. Obviously, a nuclear-armed Iran poses a direct threat to the United States and its allies, and would upset the balance of power in the region, almost certainly touching off a regional nuclear arms race.

Meanwhile, our efforts to address instability throughout the Middle East are draining our military capacity, leaving us vulnerable to threats from adversaries. Our economic prosperity, and that of our allies, would suffer should the supply of Middle East oil be interrupted. Within these threats, however, an opportunity exists: Iran desires security through regional hegemony.



*Dave Schroeder is a 2017 Distinguished Graduate of the National War College and recipient of a master’s degree in national strategic studies, as well as the George F. Kennan Strategic Writing Award. A Foreign Service officer since 2000, he previously served as the deputy director in the economic policy office for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. He served overseas in Guangzhou, Tirana, Mexico City and Kyiv, and in Washington as the Serbia desk officer. He currently serves in the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs as a coordinator for air quality and hazardous chemical programs. Prior to joining the State Department, Mr. Schroeder practiced law as a trial attorney for 11 years in Alexandria, Virginia. He is married to a fellow career diplomat, Roxanne Cabral, and the couple has three sons. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and not necessarily those of the U.S. government.*

## Let's Make a Deal

Offered the right incentives, Iran could play a significant role as a co-guarantor of regional security without resorting to nuclear weapons. To make that outcome more likely, we should deploy a robust array of diplomatic and economic tools in the service of two objectives: reducing the likelihood of Iran “going nuclear” after 2025, while simultaneously encouraging Iran to more responsibly assist in promoting regional stability for at least a five-year period.

This approach to statecraft hinges on four assumptions: Iran will continue to consistently adhere to JCPOA; Tehran’s economic linkages with the world will continue to grow stronger; Iran’s desire for a regional security role more commensurate with its historical influence is what underlies its quest for nuclear weapons and its support for Hezbollah; and Iran’s governance systems will either remain static or, although this is less likely, trend toward incorporating more democratic characteristics.

Admittedly, hard-liners in Iran’s governing institutions, including the Guardian Council, will likely maintain their grip on power. But the domestic pressures of an aging, wealthier and more economically diverse society could eventually drive the Iranian leadership to include more moderate voices. Iran’s demographics may also serve as a forward indicator for more inclusive governance; the country is rapidly aging, with a median age of 20.8 in 2000 that rose to 27.1 in 2010 and is projected to be 35.5 by 2025, according to a 2013 United Nations report. In any case, with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei reportedly in poor health, the potential exists for a change in direction.

The overall strategic concept is to create the space and conditions for Iran to join the pantheon of global leadership, becoming a positive force for regional balance. Broad and sustained diplomacy, underpinned by economic incentives, will have primacy in this effort.

Specifically, a coherent diplomatic approach among the P5+1 (shorthand for the United Nations Security Council’s five permanent members—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States—plus Germany) will maintain JCPOA-like continuity efforts on the nonproliferation front. At the same time, a much steeper challenge must also be contemplated: namely, laying the groundwork for persuading key regional actors of the

merits of an approach that recognizes the inevitability of Iran’s relative economic and conventional force superiority. Although this will be anathema to some allies, the alternatives—continuation of current patterns of instability and proxy wars, a more isolated and unpredictable, nuclear-armed Iran—are not compelling options in the long run.

With Iran directly, the diplomatic effort must center on persuading Tehran that it will gain more security and regional clout through economic strength and international legitimacy than by acting as a rogue, isolated, nuclear power.

## Playing to Tehran’s Own Strengths

The advantage of this approach is that it plays into Iran’s own motivations and inherent strengths. Iran’s historical, economic and demographic characteristics position it to be a global and regional leader. All that stands between it and attaining that position is its recent history of supporting terrorism and nuclear weapons development.

There is reason to believe that Tehran can be convinced that the conditions which motivated its unfortunate policies have largely vanished, and that better approaches exist to promote both external and internal security. The P5+1 can provide resources and tools to

help accelerate its shift to a better, alternate approach to security once the diplomatic conditions are set. A combination of direct, sequential, multilateral, overt and covert approaches—all within a framework of shaping, accommodating, persuading and inducing Iran and other relevant actors—will guide the selection and use of each instrument of power in this effort. The centerpiece of the diplomatic effort would be the restoration of full diplomatic relations between the United States and Iran, at our initiative and prior to 2025.

A JCPOA-compliant Iran merits this direct approach, and re-establishing a diplomatic presence in Tehran would greatly facilitate progress on nonproliferation and regional security issues. As with the Obama administration’s overtures to Havana in 2014, this effort will require a series of covert negotiations with Iran, perhaps conducted via an intermediary like Germany, prior to any public announcement.

At the moment, U.S. domestic support for such a move certainly does not exist. Similarly, it may be presumptuous to

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expect Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to welcome a rapprochement with Washington. But the resumption of Sino-American relations in 1972 shows that such breakthroughs are possible if carefully prepared.

### Soothing Iran's Neighbors

Any reassessment of U.S. interests in the region should also recognize that U.S. partners like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have had a hand—directly and indirectly—in supporting adversaries over the last two decades who kill U.S. soldiers and murder U.S. citizens. Covert discussions with Saudi Arabia, Israel and Turkey (Iran's chief regional rivals) will be necessary to induce their governments to accommodate a stronger security role for Iran in the region. As part of those talks, it may be possible to reach tacit understandings concerning subregional spheres of influence (e.g., Yemen within Saudi Arabia's; southern Lebanon within Israel's; Iraq within Iran's; and Syria within Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey's).

Just as Tehran can be persuaded that it does not need nuclear weapons to be secure, these regional actors could be convinced that the economic and demographic forces within Iran make its growing influence inevitable; and that, therefore, the most prudent course of action is one in which Iran is encouraged to dovetail its policies more closely with the world's. However much we and our allies may desire an isolated, non-nuclear and weak Iran, a JCPOA-compliant Iran will still be nuclear-capable and will also have a stronger, more diverse and resilient economy. The question will be whether Iran's neighbors want such a state to be nuclear-armed, as well. In that sense, a stronger but cooperative Iran poses less of a security threat to them than the current rogue state.

It will be essential to ensure P5+1 unity and resolve prior to embarking on this course of action. Policymakers should also bear in mind that Iranian economic ties to the rest of the world will continue to grow over the duration of the JCPOA. Should Tehran leave the agreement, it would sacrifice much-needed economic growth—and its attendant, domestically stabilizing influence. (This incentive, it should be noted, will still be powerful even after the “snapback” deadline for reimposing international sanctions expires.)

### The JCPOA Follow-on Agreement

The goal for the P5+1 should be the pursuit of a 10-year, follow-on “JCPOA-lite.” Lasting until 2035, this successor agreement would combine ongoing, long-term international monitoring and restraints on weaponization with a phase-out of research and centrifuge restrictions. Much of this approach is already consistent with Iran's commitments under the International Atomic Energy Agency's Additional Protocol. Thus, it should not draw additional fire from hard-liners in Iran while maintaining, if not enhancing, a reasonable level of nonproliferation protections. By 2035, Tehran

should be economically and conventionally strong enough to assure its own security without a nuclear arsenal.

Increasing Iran's economic linkages and interdependency with the world could hasten its pace toward more responsible policies. Toward that end,

**Covert discussions with Saudi Arabia, Israel and Turkey (Iran's chief regional rivals) will be necessary to induce their governments to accommodate a stronger security role for Iran in the region.**

the United States and the rest of the P5+1 should consider offering low-cost (to us) but highly valuable (to Iran) technical assistance on alternative energy development, financial market governance and development, and small business assistance programs. Such programs would further diversify and strengthen Iran's economy, and empower its citizenry.

To achieve success, sequencing will be critical. First, we must ensure P5+1 unity in the approach. This will facilitate current JCPOA enforcement and set the stage for a follow-on agreement. Second, covert outreach to Iran on recognition and an enhanced regional role will provide them with direction and, at the same time, allow us to approach our regional allies with more assurances. Third, with recognition established, we can continue to incentivize Iran's move toward economic growth and legitimate regional influence by providing economic programming assistance, preferably in tandem with our P5+1 partners.

Will this be a daunting diplomatic challenge? Absolutely. But we have surmounted higher diplomatic obstacles in the past. Should we plan for only the most pessimistic range of scenarios? Absolutely not. The sudden, and largely unexpected, fall of the Soviet Union left U.S. policymakers struggling to cobble together a Russia strategy on the fly. Had such an optimistic scenario been planned for, the long-term results could have been much better. With Iran in 2025, we should be prepared for the best, the worst, and everything in between. ■



From the *FSJ* Archives: April 1980

## The World of 1953 and Iran

BY ROY M. MELBOURNE

**The United States is a relative latecomer to the politics of the Middle East, much of which derives from European colonialism, as this retrospective on Iran from 1980—already more than three decades past—shows.**

**T**he movement of great forces, while given definition by the vertebrae of power politics, has, since World War II, transformed the earth in a fashion that old historical maps could never convey. The world of 1953, already distant from today, was part of that great change.

Globally the Cold War raged, raised to an all-out struggle by Korea, still without an armistice. A malignant senator had convinced his public that China was lost because key public servants were communist dupes, if not crypto communists. Despite war losses, communist states were thought making a good recovery, helped by indigenous resources and a crucial, short-run advantage of centralized priorities direction. Strategically centered, revolutionary communism was regarded as monolithic and as pressing against its worldwide frontiers. A strong America was the keystone of the free world (there was no credible Third World); it was a partner in a threatened NATO alliance not yet four years firm, while Western Europe and Japan were just finding their feet.

In the Mideast there were two coherent, sizable states: the tough kernel of republican Turkey, being buttressed by America against Soviet demands, and the new revolutionary military

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*Roy M. Melbourne, a retired FSO at the time he wrote this article, was head of the political section in Tehran during and following the Mosadeq regime, and followed Iranian developments thereafter. These are excerpts from his "America and Iran in Perspective: 1953 and 1980," published in the April 1980 Foreign Service Journal.*

government of Egypt. Dynamic Israel was a newcomer, while the others were either colonially plotted land tracts designated as countries or old feudal societies. Iran was a mutant.

A geographic plateau, a long distant culture, Shia Islam, and the shah as a focal symbol, served to give an identity to Iran's core, half the population. The rest included disparate elements sharing some of these features, but stretching, among others, from the Kurds of the northwest and the Qashqais of the south, to the Baluchis of the southeast. Iran, long buffeted by the Anglo-Russian rivalry, had lost significant territories to Russia and in the south, Khuzistan, had seen the British run the great oil fields and refinery essentially for their own benefit.

The country had once been divided (1907) into spheres of influence between Russia and Great Britain and militarily between them during the urgencies of World War II. Thereafter British troops left, but it took great American pressure at the United Nations and some Iranian guile to impel the Russians to desert their puppet Azerbaijan regime and evacuate the country in 1946. A 1921 treaty, however, could give them a handle to return if this looked promising. Then, too, a secret clause of the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact revealed ultimate Soviet aims by giving that country a free hand south in the direction of the Persian Gulf. This artery was seen by the West as the oil jugular of the free world and of nascent NATO.

Nevertheless, accumulated popular resentments toward foreign domination erupted over the issue of Iran's oil. The highly visible British controlled the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, divided



During World War II British troops attacked the island of Aradian on the River Shatt-el-Arab, at the head of the Persian Gulf, to gain control of a large oil refinery belonging to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Indian troops were landed from assault ships from the quayside, and they attacked the Iranian strong points in the refinery. Here, Indian riflemen stand guard at the refinery.

between British government and private ownership, and refused to increase Iran's oil royalties at a time when the country was the world's largest oil exporter. Turbulence took over, and, when the smoke cleared, emotional nationalism was embodied in the 1951 coalition government and unilateral uncompensated oil nationalization was its result. The Iranian-British standoff featured a boycott of Iranian oil and deepening financial depression for Iran. To international concern that the deteriorating situation gave fertile scope for communist subversion, Iran's eccentric elderly prime minister [Mohammad Mosadeq] merely replied, "Too bad for you." Time magazine thus started 1952 by naming him its man of the year. The caption: "He oiled the wheels of chaos." The old man was delighted.

Iranian politics by 1953 continued to revolve around the twin pillars of nationalism and monarchy. The shah had not disowned the emotional xenophobia arising from the oil crisis. Prime Minister Mosadeq, controlling the Majlis, or parliament, had taken care to govern in the name of the shah and not to challenge openly his popular position as a traditional symbol of stability and, despite his youth, as a father figure. ...

## Oil Politics

When Iranian oil nationalization came, the AIOC believed that it had an effective weapon in an oil boycott, supplemented by foreign court challenges if any distributor dared run the gauntlet. This proved true. Meanwhile, other gulf states were raising production and servicing Iran's old markets. The desired implication in those halcyon oil surplus days was that the new National Iranian Oil Company might have no place to go. For the Americans, however, the oil impasse, embodying Iranian nationalist frustrations and Britain's desperate need for foreign exchange, was too important an economic, no, strategic, question to fester untended.

Before the issue exploded, the United States had confined itself to fruitlessly urging the British to be more forthcoming on royalties and other disputed matters, warning of the heavy consequences. To starve out the Iranian government and economy was similarly discouraged. When these courses jelled as policies, however, the economists, Americans included, made solemn periodic assessments on when Iran would have to capitulate. Successive crucial dates passed and the National Front, although frayed, was still there. The give in Iran's underdeveloped economy was consistently underrated. There was not much distance to fall.

After the death of Foreign Secretary [Ernest] Bevin, the Attlee Labor government was on unsure ground with his successor, the mediocre Herbert Morrison. Whitehall belatedly recognized that the problem was too serious to be left to the chairman of the AIOC. British embassy personnel also were gradually changed. However, it was not really until the return of the power of [Winston] Churchill and [Anthony] Eden that Iran was moved to the political front burner.

Along with their economic strategy, the British had to recognize the concerns of their ally and, in hopeful or pessimistic expectations, approve American endeavors as middleman to find a compromise. Washington initially was reluctant to consider the oil issue as anything but an economic problem and resisted the indicators that it was basically a political question. The United States, at any rate, had the confidence of the Iranians, and thus embarked in 1951 on a persistent refuse-to-be-discouraged line, searching for a magic formula. This was punctuated by diverse visitors to Tehran for discussions with Mosadeq and his principal advisers. American senior statesmen, leading financial experts, oil company presidents, politicians, and a variety of scavenging personalities marked the procession. There was, of course, a large Tehran foreign press colony.

Shrewd Iranian politician that he was, Mosadeq talked from the intransigently proclaimed oil policies that gave his political base. In short retrospect, it was clear that he wanted to use foreign

talks to help gain what today might be deemed as not unusual. This included international acceptance of the oil takeover without significant compensation, and freedom of oil production and distribution, perhaps with other oil companies. Proposals were bruited, there were exchanges between Tehran, London, and Washington, but the gap remained. Mosadeq had even gone to Washington and to the United Nations in New York to press his case, and his colorful presence provided reams of press copy.

If it could mean a settlement that would get the oil flowing, the United States decided it would be willing, both for its Cold War concerns and for non-disruption of the gulf oil industry and states, to exempt American companies in the national interest from antitrust laws so they might participate with others in the Iranian oil industry. The new Republican administration of 1953 followed the same course. There was still no solution.

Despite his theatrics that the West would be to blame and suffer if Iran's disorganization proved a communist field day, Mosadeq had the ego and hubris to believe that he could control the two parts of his situation—the oil issue and domestic politics. He seemed to think that, over time, American intercession with the economically troubled British would become pressure the British could not resist, thereby bringing success without appreciable concessions to the British. Domestically he felt no worrisome challenge from the shah. The congeries represented by the National Front he expected to manipulate.

Pushing a good thing too far or losing proportion are not unknown in Iran, as elsewhere. With his power, Mosadeq had sycophants and politically motivated groups, such as the foreign minister and Tudeh sympathizers, who encouraged him to press. Of the two parts of his situation, America was not on Mosadeq's wavelength.

## The United States and the Iranian Problem

The United States, sympathetic to its ally's financial problems and aware of the effects upon other oil operations in the Persian Gulf area, was not going to push for a debilitating, no-accommodation deal. It wanted a compromise. In regarding the Iranian flux it could see signs of strain in the National Front and restiveness among the shah and non-Front elements.

The United States was well informed. It had more than the Tehran embassy components and the three consulates at Isfahan, Meshed and Tabriz. There were two other large operations scattered in the country responsible to the ambassador: the Military Mission and the Point Four Technical Assistance Mission. The former worked, of course, with the military and was most careful to keep that work purely professional, while the latter was the biggest



President Harry S. Truman and Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq of Iran during the latter's visit to Washington, D.C., in October 1951.

U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION/ABBIE FOWE

such program in the world, again very prudent in confining itself to agricultural, health, education and like technical help activities, with coordinating suboffices in major areas of the country. The leadership of both missions was excellent.

The shifting situation and operations generated regular requested and voluntary factual and analytical reports to Washington on varied subjects. And in Tehran close liaison among the American elements included joint conferences and evaluations, each element from its respective sphere. With a new team handling affairs in London and the British embassy, eventually by 1952 the American and British governments were getting joint assessments from their Tehran embassies. However, prolongation of the oil crisis finally provoked Mosadeq into breaking relations with Great Britain, and one late autumn dawn its diplomats left by car convoy bound for Baghdad.

As the crisis deepened from 1952 and into 1953, Iranian antipathies and suspicions were fanned against Americans. At the least it was not discouraged by the leadership, by some encouraged, and the Tudeh party (progressively active) and the large Soviet embassy aided its rise. The United States was literally the man in the middle. Since the Iranians were not realizing their oil hopes through America, since it was Britain's NATO ally, and since domestic tensions were growing, the visible Americans became the target. It varied in parts of the country, but there were hostile incidents and demonstrations with something of a synthetic, organized character about them. Americans became cautious going about in public, while shouts, graffiti and doorway stickers had the same message, "Yankee, go home." ■

# Love in Tiflis, Death in Tehran: The Tragedy of Alexander Sergeyevich Griboyedov

**This story of power politics, warfare and diplomacy in 19th-century Iran and the Caucasus is a rich slice of history. It is also a cautionary tale that transcends its time and place.**

BY JOHN LIMBERT

**O**n June 11, 1829, the young Russian poet Alexander Pushkin was traveling through the Caucasus Mountains to meet his brother, who was serving on the Turkish front. At Besobdal, on the Armenian-Georgian border, he describes the following scene:

*...Having rested a few minutes, I set out again and saw opposite me on the high bank of the river the fortress of Gergery. Three streams plunged down the high bank, plunging noisily. I crossed the river. Two oxen harnessed to a cart were descending the steep road. Some Georgians were accompanying the cart.*

*“Where do you come from?” I asked them.*

*“From Teheran.”*

*“What do you have on your cart?”*

*“Girboyed.”*

*This was the body of the slain Griboyedov, which they were taking to Tiflis.*

This grim encounter in the mountains of northern Armenia (recorded in Pushkin’s *A Journey* and quoted in Laurence Kelly’s *Diplomacy and Murder in Tehran*) took place six months after the murder of the young Russian emissary to Persia, Alexander Sergeyevich Griboyedov. The diplomat had been in Tehran only a month in 1828 when a mob stormed the Russian mission, murdering all of the Russians there except the first secretary, Ivan Mal’tzov, who managed to escape. The tragedy put an end to the remarkable career of a Russian intellectual, diplomat, poet and playwright. It is also a rich source of lessons and insights for contemporary diplomats and students of international affairs.

Griboyedov had been closely involved with the power politics, warfare and diplomacy that accompanied the Czarist Empire’s expansion into the southern Caucasus and its humiliation of the feeble Qajar dynasty of Persia. He was one of the negotiators who concluded the famous 1828 Treaty of Turkmanchai between Russia



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and Persia, a one-sided agreement that Iranians have long viewed as the symbol of their victimization and exploitation by foreigners.

The young diplomat's fate can be traced to short-sighted Russian nationalism that insisted on imposing the harshest and most humiliating conditions on the Qajar rulers; simmering Iranian resentments that took only a small spark to become murderous mob violence; personal grudges by individuals who found a chance to insult religious feelings and the honor of high-ranking Iranians; as well as his own obliviousness to the explosive situation in Tehran, the provocative actions of his underlings, the power of insults to Persian honor and the extent to which the people of Tehran sought to avenge their country's debasement.

Further, Griboyedov's blind obedience to his instructions to enforce every provision of Turkmanchai led him to reject all last-minute offers of compromise, which would very likely have saved him and his mission members.

### First Assignment to Persia

Born in 1795 into a family of minor Russian nobility, Griboyedov joined the Russian diplomatic service in 1817 after four years of military service. His early service in St. Petersburg seemed to include mostly parties, gambling, flirtations and debts. Involvement in a duel between colleagues led to his semi-exile to Persia in 1818 as deputy to S.N. Mazarovich, emissary to the court of Fath-Ali Shah Qajar (1797-1834).

It had been five years since the Treaty of Gulistan ended the first Russo-Persian war. The two unequal empires came into direct conflict early in the nineteenth century, following Russia's annexation of the ancient Orthodox Christian kingdom of Georgia in 1801. Along with the Ottoman Empire, Russia and Persia vied for influence over the semi-independent khanates of the southern Caucasus in the regions of Karabakh, Nakhchivan, Derbent (Darband),



GALEK.ANDROVA/CC BY SA 4.0/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS. INSET: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

A monument to Alexander Sergeevich Griboyedov in St. Petersburg. Inset: A sketch of the diplomat and writer from the 1820s.



Talesh and Shirvan. The war that broke out between Russians and Persians in 1804 ended with military disaster in 1813. Under the Treaty of Gulistan, Persia recognized Russian control of most of today's Georgia and the Republic of Azerbaijan. North of the Aras (Araxes) River, the Persians retained only the regions of Yerevan (in modern Armenia) and Nakhchivan (today an Azeri enclave inside Armenian territory).

Mazarovich's mission was to deal with the aftermath of Gulistan, including the return of Russian deserters, unresolved border issues and Russian commercial activities in Persia. When the mission reached Tiflis (today's Tbilisi) in October 1818, Griboyedov met the aggressive Russian viceroy and military commander of the Caucasus, Alexis Petrovich Yermolov, who was to be his protector and patron until the former's dismissal in 1827. Yermolov was known for his brutality against the Muslim population of the Caucasus and for his provocations against the Persians in the disputed border areas—incidents that would goad the Qajar rulers into unwisely renewing war against the Russians in 1825.

Still a headstrong young man, Griboyedov fought a duel while in Tiflis. The incident was smoothed over thanks to the indulgence of both Yermolov and Griboyedov's civilian boss, Mazarovich, and the mission travelled on to Tabriz in early 1819. Ruling there as governor was the 26-year-old Qajar Crown Prince Abbas Mirza, who received the Russian mission with respect. Mazarovich observed reciprocal diplomatic courtesies toward his hosts in an effort to undo the damage done by the tactless Yermolov.

Griboyedov's first sojourn in Persia (1819-1821) was less than a personal or diplomatic triumph. Always the Russian nationalist, he resented serving under the Catholic and non-Russian Mazarovich. While Mazarovich mostly remained at the shah's court in Tehran and on the cooler plains of Soltaniyeh, Griboyedov remained



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This miniature portrait of Fath-Ali Shah Qajar (1772-1834), the second Qajar king of Persia, was painted by Ahmad in 1811. It is part of the David Collection in Copenhagen.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/HTTP://REPOSITORY.LIBRARY.BROWN.EDU

This drawing by Hippolyte Bellangé depicts Crown Prince Abbas Mirza (1789-1833), the son of Fath-Ali Shah, reviewing his infantry. Intelligent and possessed of some literary taste, he was an early modernizer of Persia's armed forces and institutions. Yet with Abbas Mirza as the military commander of the Persian forces, Iran lost all of its territories in the Caucasus to Russia in conformity with the 1813 Treaty of Gulistan and the 1828 Treaty of Turkmanchai, following the outcomes of the 1804–1813 and 1826–1828 wars.

mostly in Tabriz, where a monastic lifestyle did not suit the young bachelor. His main accomplishment was to escort a group of several hundred Russian deserters from Tabriz to Tiflis, where, despite reassurances, they received a less than friendly welcome. While in Tabriz he occupied himself with studying Persian, attempts at commercial ventures and work on his most famous composition, the verse comedy "Woe from Wit."

In 1821 he succeeded in getting himself attached to Yermolov's staff in Tiflis, and was able to leave Tabriz. The years 1823 to 1825 found him on extended leave in St. Petersburg enjoying the capital's literary circles and completing his play. In late 1825 he returned to Tiflis and Yermolov's staff, but the failed "Decembrist" revolt of that year led to his arrest and forced return to St. Petersburg. By June 1826 an investigation had cleared him of complicity in the uprising. Despite the fact that a new war had broken out between Russia and Persia, he made a leisurely return to his post on Yermolov's staff in Tiflis, arriving there late in the year.

His fortunes improved when the new czar, Nicholas I, replaced Yermolov with his deputy, Ivan Paskievich, in March 1827. Paskievich was related to Griboyedov by marriage and made the young official his close adviser on matters related to the Persians and the peoples of the Caucasus. Paskievich combined military victories against Abbas Mirza and the weak Qajar armies with diplomatic success, thanks to strategic alliances with the autonomous Muslim rulers of the Caucasus.

## Negotiating Turkmanchai

Following a string of Persian defeats, Abbas Mirza approached Paskievich in the summer of 1827 seeking an armistice. The latter

sent Griboyedov to lead the Russian negotiating team at Tabriz, although what happened there was less a negotiation than a series of ultimatums from the victorious Russians to the defeated Persians. Russia demanded the cession of Yerevan and Nakhchevan provinces to Russia and reimbursement for the full cost of the war plus a substantial indemnity. The meetings ended inconclusively, and Griboyedov predicted that the Persians would accept the Russian terms only after the fall of Yerevan. By October 1827, the Russian armies had not only captured Yerevan, but had occupied Tabriz and Ardabil as Persian resistance collapsed.

In February 1828 Persian and Russian envoys, including Griboyedov, concluded what became famous as the Treaty of Turkmanchai. Its provisions were:

- Cession to Russia of territory north of the Aras River, including Yerevan and Nakhchevan. Establishment of the Talesh frontier (near Astara on the Caspian).
- Payment of 20 million silver rubles to Russia in reparations. Russian troops would gradually withdraw from Iranian Azerbaijan as installments were paid.
- Russia to have exclusive right of trade and navigation (including maintaining a navy) on the Caspian Sea.
- Persia to remain neutral in case of war between Russia and Turkey.
- Free emigration of Persian citizens, Armenians in particular, who wished to settle in new Russian territory.
- Russia to recognize Abbas Mirza as heir to the Qajar throne.
- Russia to open consulates to protect her merchants in Persia, who were subject only to Russian law.

This one-sided treaty was a humiliation that in the Iranian

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political vocabulary became the Iranian Munich, synonymous with appeasement and surrender. The indemnity bankrupted an already depleted Qajar treasury; the loss of wealthy provinces in the southern Caucasus brought foreign forces to the border of Azerbaijan, Iran's richest and most strategic region. In the longer term, the treaty gave Russia a voice in Persia's royal succession and gave foreign private citizens, through the hated "capitulations," immunity from local law. In the short term, the provisions for repatriating Armenians were to prove deadly for Griboyedov and his colleagues.

If Griboyedov understood the implications of this treaty, there is no sign that he cared. He received a hero's welcome when he delivered it to St. Petersburg in March 1828. Czar Nicholas I gave him a decoration and a cash reward and appointed him resident minister plenipotentiary—one step below ambassador—to the Persian court.

### Last Mission to Tehran

By July 1828 Griboyedov was back in Tiflis. A month later he married the 16-year-old Georgian princess, Nina Chavchavadze, and in the autumn the envoy's entourage, with the pregnant Nina,

made the difficult trip to Tabriz. There he had the unpleasant task of extracting installments of the indemnity from Abbas Mirza, whose father, the shah, refused to help. Finally, leaving Nina in the care of the English consul and his wife, Griboyedov traveled in hard winter weather to Tehran, arriving on Dec. 30.

He quickly completed his two missions. He presented his credentials to Fath-Ali Shah and, at a second meeting with the shah, presented a ratified copy of the Treaty of Turkmanchai. Although both sides kept up diplomatic appearances, the mood in Tehran was ugly, as people digested the extent of the mortification inflicted on Persia. Griboyedov, apparently unaware of the simmering resentment, played the role of conquerors' envoy and thought only of leaving Tehran as soon as possible to rejoin his wife at a country house near Tiflis. He planned to depart on Jan. 31, 1829.

In late January a distracted Griboyedov was caught by surprise when a seemingly trivial incident involving Armenians became a firestorm. One of the shah's eunuchs, an Armenian convert to Islam named Mirza Yakub, sought asylum at the Russian mission. The desertion of such an important person, with access to intimate matters at the shah's court, was a major embarrassment

to the Persians. Griboyedov could not ignore his role as protector of Iranian-Armenians, but he failed to recognize the sensitivities in a case involving both the fugitive's religious conversion and his access to private matters of the Qajar court.



Princess Nina Chavchavadze



Alexis Petrovich Yermolov, by E.A. Dimitriev Mamonov



Ivan Paskievich

Things took a turn for the worse when Mirza Yakub, abetted by Griboyedov's Georgian quartermaster, Rustem-Bek, sought other Armenian converts for Russian protection. Both men's motive seems to have been a desire to continue humiliating the Persians and rubbing their faces in the recent defeat. The pair found two female candidates for protection in the harem of Allahyar Khan, a Persian nobleman who had encouraged the original (and disastrous) attacks on Russia and who bore personal grudges against both Griboyedov and Rustem-Bek. After some hesitation, the two women took asylum in the Russian embassy. Despite attempts by both Russians and Persians to find a solution, Mirza Yakub refused to back down and the seemingly oblivious Griboyedov, although angry at Rustem-Bek's troublemaking, insisted on his right to carry out the letter of the peace treaty, including keeping Allahyar Khan's women at the embassy.

On Jan. 29, 1829, Rustem-Bek lit the last fire when he ordered the two women taken to a bathhouse near the embassy. The message was: they are being prepared for marriage, yet another insult to the honor of their Iranian Muslim husband, Allahyar Khan. Throughout the day reports spread in the city that Mirza Yakub had betrayed Islam, and that the Russians were not only holding two Muslim women taken from their husband but were making them convert to Christianity. The next morning a crowd gathered at the city's main mosque, where preachers ordered the people to seize Mirza Yakub and rescue the two women. In the ensuing clash at the embassy—the Persian guards had disappeared—Mirza Yakub, a Cossack guard, several servants and several attackers were killed. Allahyar Khan's men seized the two women.

Angered by the deaths of their compatriots, the mob reappeared later in the day. When a Cossack guard disobeyed Griboyedov's orders and killed an attacker, the mob stormed the building and murdered every Russian they found there—including Griboyedov. Persian authorities were helpless against the mob; when the governor of Tehran attempted to disperse them, they told him: "Go pander your wives to the Russians." For four days, the

shah and his court remained locked in their palaces. Order was finally restored when the insurrection ran out of steam.

## The Aftermath

The Russians' reaction to the murders was restrained. In hindsight, it is clear they had little desire to jeopardize the advantageous terms of Turk-

manchai or to prolong their military occupation of Persian territory while they were engaged in a war with the Ottomans in both Europe and Asia. Viceroy Paskievich and Foreign Minister Karl Vasilyevich Nesselrode found it convenient to accept the abject apologies of the shah and crown prince and their explanations that they had nothing to do with the outburst of the Tehran mob.

The Qajars—who seemed unable either to conduct a war or control their own population—sent Prince Khosrow Mirza, the son of Crown Prince Abbas Mirza, on a mission to St. Petersburg with a letter of apology from Fath-Ali Shah. Perhaps more effective in placating the czar were gifts from the shah—essentially Griboyedov's blood money—including an enormous diamond looted from Delhi a century earlier. For his part, Czar Nicholas announced he was ready to forget the matter and even forgave the last installment of war indemnity, for the sake of which Griboyedov had alienated so many of his Persian hosts.

Griboyedov's widow, Nina, remained at Tabriz where no one would tell her of her husband's fate. In her last trimester of pregnancy, she returned to Tiflis and there heard the tragic news. Overwhelmed by grief, she lost her child. She never remarried and died of cholera in 1857. She was buried beside her husband at the Monastery of St. David near Tiflis. She had had the following words engraved on his monument: "Your spirit and your works remain eternally in the memory of Russians: Why did my love for thee outlive thee?"

The final tragic irony of Griboyedov's diplomatic career is that in May 1828, when he presented his foreign ministry bosses in St. Petersburg recommendations for future Russian policy toward Persia, he had proposed a course of mildness and leniency and of flexibility in the matter of the indemnity. When his superiors rejected his proposals, Griboyedov did not follow his own advice and best instincts. Instead, as a Russian nationalist and obedient civil servant, he had no hesitation in carrying out the harsher policy his superiors ordered—a policy they softened only after he and his colleagues were murdered. ■



## AFSA Hosts “Redesign” Event



AFSA President Ambassador Barbara Stephenson speaks to a capacity crowd at the AFSA headquarters building, where more than 100 members gathered to discuss the proposed redesign of the Department of State and USAID.

On Aug. 23 AFSA hosted a discussion about the proposed redesign of the Department of State and USAID.

The event was an opportunity for all AFSA members to contribute ideas and recommendations on the five workstreams of the redesign: Foreign Assistance Programs, Overseas Alignment & Approach, Human Capital Planning, Management Support and IT Platform Planning.

A workstation was also available for members to discuss the impact of the ongoing hiring freeze at the department.

AFSA President Ambassador Barbara Stephenson kicked off the event, and more than 100 attendees contributed their thoughts and recommendations on the redesign effort.

Member feedback from

the event has been incorporated into AFSA's own recommendations to the Redesign Team, which also drew on feedback gathered through AFSA's ongoing “Structured Conversations” with mem-

bers. We know members love their jobs—and want to see cumbersome, time-consuming bureaucratic processes streamlined so they can focus on the work they love. ■



State Rep Martin McDowell reviews recommendations at the “Management Support” station.

## CALENDAR

October 1-6  
AFSA Road Scholar Program  
Chautauqua, N.Y.

October 2  
12-1 p.m.  
AFSA/Public  
Diplomacy Council:  
“How Finland Is Using  
Public Diplomacy to  
Celebrate Its Centennial”

October 5  
Luncheon:  
146th Specialist Class

October 9  
Columbus Day:  
AFSA Offices Closed

October 11  
12-1:30 p.m.  
AFSA Book Notes:  
Global Adventures on  
Well-Traveled Roads –  
A Foreign Service Memoir  
by Ambassador James  
Bullington

October 15-19  
AFSA Road Scholar Program  
Washington, D.C.

October 18  
12-1:30 p.m.  
AFSA Governing  
Board Meeting

October 25  
Luncheon:  
192nd A-100 Class

October 27  
12-1 p.m.  
FSI Job Search Program  
Graduation Reception

November 10  
Veterans Day:  
AFSA Offices Closed

November 15  
12-1:30 p.m.  
AFSA Governing  
Board Meeting



## Getting the Job Done (During Chaotic Times)

There's no doubt that these are difficult times at State. We've heard that we are "not a highly disciplined organization," and that the State Department "was broken" when the current administration took office. The "Listening Report" by Insigniam stated that the "system... treats people as tools, not human beings."

Concurrently, the department froze hiring for most positions in the Foreign and Civil Services, suspended several fellowship programs, slashed our promotion rates to historic lows and halted filling positions traditionally held by eligible family members (EFMs).

Our daily work has become more difficult as a result of these actions. Yet, we are being told that somehow we are the problem. Now, we all know that the State Department can improve, and would warmly welcome efforts to enhance efficiencies and streamline operations. But we are not the problem.

Indeed, despite the swirl of these unprecedented challenges, the work of State continues. We hear from our members that you all continue to do your jobs, do them well, and have adapted to the administration's new policies, where they've been enunciated.

We rightly take great pride as we head home each day. And deep down, we

### **Our work remains as important to the U.S. national interest and the American people as ever. After all, there is no B Team.**

know that our work remains as important to the U.S. national interest and the American people as ever. After all, there is no B Team.

Here at AFSA, as both your association and your union, we are continuously promoting the Foreign Service as the preeminent force that can most effectively advance diplomacy in the current complex global environment that we face today. For those of you who haven't, please read the Foreign Service Act of 1980, or (if you don't have time) Julie Nutter's column reviewing the Act, on page 52.

The FSA provides a statutory basis for the Foreign Service to participate—through AFSA—in the formulation of personnel policies and procedures affecting conditions of employment, as well as the grievance system to ensure due process for our members. Congress recognized the importance of AFSA, your union, as the entity which guards the Foreign Service—and you—in ways big and small.

For instance, in response to the decision to suspend EFM hiring, we pushed long, loud and hard against that decision. As of this writing, the Secretary has autho-

rized more than 800 positions worldwide—still too few, but a vast improvement.

In addition, we've been working to understand the impacts of new Fair Share requirements on tandem couples, those with medical issues or whose family members cannot receive privileges and immunities. We're also working with the employee group Balancing Act to convince the department to pay for non-concurrent travel for the children of expecting mothers—which saves money and is less disruptive to families. And we're pushing the Bureau of Medical Services to find creative ways to get Foreign Service employees to post while ensuring individual health, education and well-being concerns are appropriately considered. While there are limits on what we can do, like you, we all work creatively to get the job done, even in the most chaotic of times.

AFSA is also working on some of the bread-and-butter issues for our membership. AFSA's labor management team receives about 75 requests for assistance weekly, ranging from routine inquiries to more serious matters. Some requests can

be resolved through a few emails or phone exchanges, while others become longer-term cases involving a great deal of legal and technical skill to resolve.

The cases run the gamut, but recent additions to the LM workload focus on employee evaluation reports and work place conflict, as well as tenure, assignment, financial debt, medical and security clearance issues.

It's a lot, but the great thing is that the AFSA staff and I really love trying to find solutions that can help our members. We know that at any point in our careers, things can go awry. Problems arise. Mistakes are made. Bureaucracies falter. When that happens, whenever possible, we're here for you. And we've got the knowledge, experience and the law to back us up.

So keep doing your work. Keep doing your best. Know that we've got your back. The American people continue to support us and the world still needs us. Be proud, and watch out for one another. Because it's who we are, and it's what makes us great. ■



Views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the AFSA USAID VP. Contact: aposner@usaid.gov | (202) 712-1631

## USAID's AFSA Standing Committee

At a tumultuous time for USAID, with possible budget cuts, reorganizations large or small and major changes on the near horizon for both USAID's Foreign Service performance management structure and its FS assignment processes, the constituency Standing Committee continues to be very important. It delivers sound advice to the AFSA USAID Vice President and behind-the-scenes service to members of the Foreign Service at USAID.

### What the Committee Does for You

Since former USAID Vice President Sharon Wayne convened the Standing Committee two years ago, committee members have reviewed

and improved several USAID Automated Directive System proposals under revision.

They have also scrutinized planned procedures, forms and other documents comprising the new USAID Foreign Service performance management system now being designed. They spotted glitches and asked critical and very perceptive questions of the team at the Human Capital and Talent Management Center for Performance Excellence.

Informed by their wealth of supervisory and management experience and their knowledge of operations at overseas missions and in Washington, D.C., committee members have been particularly helpful in reviewing the strengths of the new

system, pointing out possible problems and focusing on the impact of the planned changes on overseas missions and on USAID FSOs stationed overseas.

Thanks to newly appointed USAID Representative Madeline Williams, Jaidev Singh, Christian Hougren, Eleanor TanPiengco and Haven Cruz-Hubbard; they have been and continue to be very helpful members of our Standing Committee.

### Get Involved

I am now looking for additional AFSA members to serve on this useful committee. Are you interested? Let me know via email: aposner@usaid.gov.

My hope is to recruit FSOs with diverse experience, skills

and family situations. Are you single, a tandem, a same-sex couple? Does your family have children with special educational needs? Have you weathered scary evacuations, or served at Critical Priority Posts?

Service on a Standing Committee does not need to take much of your time. We would like to have monthly meetings and maybe a few ad hoc meetings if particular exigencies suddenly arise.

Participants can call in to meetings. We are interested in hearing from members, particularly those posted overseas, about issues that may be region-specific or best practices used by your post that could be of use elsewhere. Bring your observations. We'll discuss, and we'll act. ■

### NEWS BRIEF

#### SHORT-TERM TELEWORK ON MEDEVAC

In June, AFSA welcomed changes to the Foreign Affairs Manual covering short-term telework arrangements for employees on medevac status (including obstetric-medevac).

Allowing medevaced employees to telework in appropriate circumstances is an efficient use of human resources, minimizes the impact of the employees' absence from post and facilitates continuity of operations.

AFSA worked closely with the State Department's Human Resources Bureau and the employee organization Balancing Act in updating this policy. Read the updated FAM guidance at <https://fam.state.gov/fam/03fam/03fam2360.html> (and specifically 3 FAM 2362.5 for the policy on short-term telework during medevacs). ■

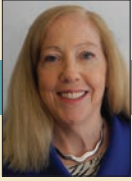
### NEWS BRIEF

#### HARASSMENT IN CUBA

AFSA has heard from many of its members regarding the reports of U.S. diplomatic personnel in Cuba being subjected to "sonic harassment", resulting in hearing loss, severe headaches and cognitive disruption. In late August, AFSA representatives met and spoke with 10 members of the Foreign Service who experienced damage to their health following these attacks.

On Aug. 14, in response to the initial reports of "sonic attacks" in Cuba, AFSA sent a letter to the State Department management asking for additional information on the issue and how the department has responded to it. We will report back to our membership when we receive any further information. ■

—Ken Kero-Mentz, State Vice President



## The Foreign Service Act—Our “Constitution”

*AFSA is the principal advocate for the long-term institutional well-being of the U.S. Foreign Service. In that role, AFSA solicits feedback from you, the membership, on Foreign Service workforce issues such as hiring, retention, professional development and promotions and brings our members' concerns to management. With this new series of columns, we will share with you how AFSA is approaching your concerns. My inaugural column presents the Foreign Service Act and explains the ways it frames for us the Foreign Service workforce today. We welcome your feedback. Please write to [nutter@afsa.org](mailto:nutter@afsa.org).*

The first few pages of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 contain beautiful, almost poetic language describing what the Foreign Service should be and how crucial it is to the conduct of effective diplomacy. Originally passed to modernize the Foreign Service, and building on earlier legislation from 1924 and 1946, this piece of legislation is the foundational document spelling out the role and structure of the Foreign Service.

Section 101 describes Congress' view of the Foreign Service:

*The Congress finds that—a career Foreign Service, characterized by excellence and professionalism,*

*is essential in the national interest to assist the President and the Secretary of State in conducting the foreign affairs of the United States ... The objective of this Act is to strengthen and improve the Foreign Service of the United States by assuring, in accordance with merit principles, admission through impartial and rigorous examination, acquisition of career status only by those who have demonstrated their fitness through successful completion of probationary assignments, effective career development, advancement and retention of the ablest, and separation of those who do not meet the requisite standards of performance. ...*

These words contain the seeds of the up-or-out system, entrance via examination, the tenure system, worldwide availability, professional development, the separation of those who do not advance to the next level and the role of Foreign Service members in formulating and implementing the foreign policy of the United States.

These aspects of the Foreign Service are further articulated—often in quite prescriptive terms—in later parts of the Act, along with language calling for the Foreign Service to be “representative” of the United States as a whole. The Act also provides the statutory

basis for the existence of AFSA as the sole representative of the Foreign Service.

The Foreign Service Act is not just a guide to the functioning and structure of the institution, however. The fact that the Foreign Service has a foundational document gives us direction and a clear role as stakeholders, as stewards responsible for maintaining the health and vigor of our institution.

The language of the Act highlights the need for a professional Foreign Service and makes it clear that the Congress of the United States considers a Foreign Service “characterized by excellence” to be in the national interest.

AFSA's mission is to promote policies and practices that strengthen the Service and to further the interests and well-being of our members. A strong Foreign Service is one that has the resources, the leadership and the motivation to live up to the promise of the Act.

For that reason, AFSA's work often focuses on policy measures and other actions that invigorate professionalism, such as protecting the integrity of the promotion process and improving the experience of entry-level officers so probationary assignments provide a meaningful basis for judging whether career status should be granted.

Much like the U.S. Consti-

tution, the Foreign Service Act can serve to protect the institution, to set a standard, to lay down our rules and to be an inspiration. We have used it again and again to preserve the Foreign Service as a professional body that produces high-performing members, responsive to the foreign policy needs of the United States. It is a reassuring presence.

So take a look at the Act. Prepare to be surprised at how specific some of the language is—Congress really paid (and still pays) a lot of attention to what we do and how we do it—and note how inspirational it is in other places.

The Act gives the Foreign Service standards to live up to and a primary place in “the conduct of the foreign affairs of the United States.” AFSA is committed to helping all members live up to the promise of the Foreign Service Act and, as always, we thank you for your service. ■

Stay tuned for an invitation to a discussion focused on the Foreign Service Act, to take place at AFSA Headquarters in October.

## Book Notes

A Tense and Thrilling Read: *Enemy of the Good*

On July 13, AFSA's Book Notes series continued with Foreign Service Officer Matthew Palmer speaking about his new thriller, *Enemy of the Good* (G.P. Putnam' Sons, 2017).

AFSA President Ambassador Barbara Stephenson introduced Mr. Palmer and praised his books for making the Foreign Service more accessible for those who do not understand its role.

"No one does a better job making real what the Foreign Service does," Amb. Stephenson said. She read a brief passage from the book, in which Palmer describes the process of traveling to a new posting.

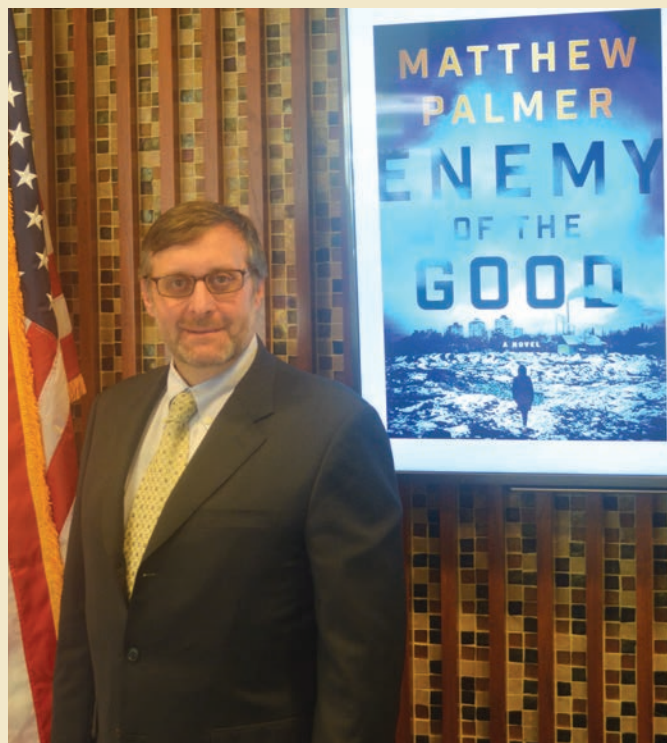
*Enemy of the Good* is Mr. Palmer's fourth novel and the first to feature a female protagonist, Kate Hollister,

a second-generation FSO stationed in Kyrgyzstan.

Discussing the novel, Mr. Palmer stated that it was a challenge to write a female character, but that he did not want to define the character by her gender. He also spoke about the complexity of setting the action in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan and the balance between realism and fiction in the book.

Following the presentation, Mr. Palmer participated in a Q&A session. He responded to audience questions about his writing process, the importance of character development and scene setting for a non-Foreign Service audience, and the influence of his family on his writing career.

Visit [www.afsa.org/video](http://www.afsa.org/video) for a recording of the event. ■



FSO and bestselling author Matthew Palmer at AFSA headquarters, where he spoke about his latest novel.

AFSA/ALAN SAUNDERS

## AFSA Welcomes New Foreign Service Officers



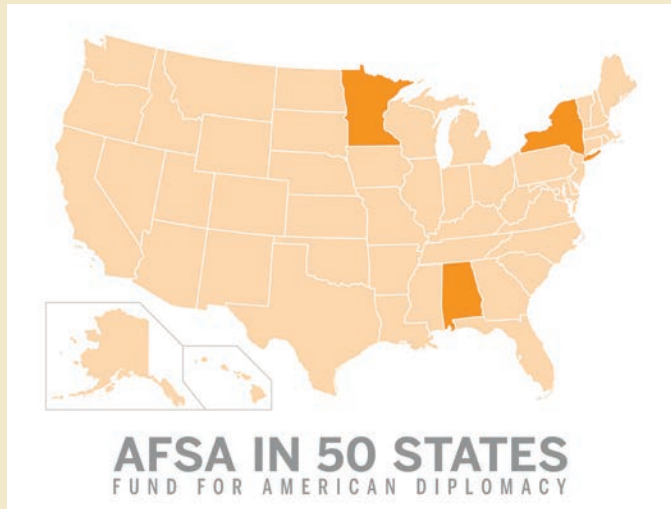
AFSA President Ambassador Barbara Stephenson (fourth from left) and incoming AFSA FCS Vice President Daniel Crocker (sixth from left) were very pleased to welcome 11 members of the newest Foreign Commercial Service class of Foreign Service officers to a luncheon at AFSA headquarters on July 12.



On Aug. 11, six members of the newest U.S. Agency for International Development class attended a luncheon with newly elected USAID Vice President Ann Posner (center). The group discussed the realities of life in the Foreign Service and the benefits of joining AFSA.

AFSA/HEMMA DVORAK

## Reaching Out Across the United States



### AFSA at FarmFest in Minnesota

In early August, AFSA President Ambassador Barbara Stephenson accepted the invitation of U.S. Representative Tim Walz (D-Minn.) to travel to Minnesota to attend FarmFest.

Rep. Walz, a member of the House Agriculture Committee, is a strong advocate for the Foreign Service's work opening up markets around the world for American farmers, ranchers and producers of farm equipment and biotechnology.

FarmFest is the second-largest agricultural event in the country, showcasing products and services related to the Minnesota farm and ranch sectors. As a state, Minnesota ranks fifth in the nation for total agricultural production and fourth for agricultural exports. It is no wonder, then, that members

of the House Agriculture Committee made the trek to FarmFest to be able to hear first-hand from a wide range of stakeholders hoping to shape the next farm bill.

Guided by Matthew Wohlman, deputy commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Amb. Stephenson spoke with leaders in the Minnesota soy and corn sectors, gave remarks at the event's main venue and was interviewed twice on the radio about the value of diplomacy and development to Minnesota agriculture.

A consistent theme that emerged from dozens of spokespersons for the industry was the importance of trade and the need to continue expanding market access for agricultural products.

For AFSA, it was a perfect opportunity to "connect the dots" for individuals in



Ambassador Stephenson (center) with Retiree Representative Phil Shull (right) and Matthew Wohlman, deputy commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, reviewing the impact of Minnesota farmers worldwide.

the agricultural community, discussing how American diplomats and development professionals work for them, facilitating market access for their exports overseas. The huge round of applause for Governing Board member Phil Shull, former agricultural attaché in Beijing, demonstrated that the corn and soy producers present under-

stand the vital importance of FAS' work in keeping prices up for agricultural exports.

This visit also follows up on a "white paper" by Mr. Shull and former AFSA FAS Vice President Mark Petry arguing that agricultural audiences are a natural outreach target for AFSA and the Foreign Service, given their understanding of the impor-



AFSA President Ambassador Barbara Stephenson (center) speaks to Linder Farm Network broadcaster Lynn Ketelsen (right) at the 2017 FarmFest in Minnesota.

tance of expanding markets and promoting America's unrivaled agricultural products around the globe.

### Chautauqua Collaboration Continues

For the 33rd time since the inaugural program in 1996, AFSA arranged for six diplomats to travel to the Chautauqua Institution in western New York state in early June to spend a week lecturing on the Foreign Service and its importance to foreign policy and national security.

The six speakers were AFSA President Ambassador Barbara Stephenson, Ambassador (ret.) E. Michael Southwick, Ambassador (ret.) Jerry Lanier, Ambassador (ret.) Lino Gutierrez, Ambassador (ret.) John Dinger and Ambassador (ret.) Marc Wall.

Among them, they covered such topics as human rights, foreign policy strategy, the trans-Atlantic relationship, doing diplomacy on a shoestring budget and East Asia policy.

The program continues to be a fantastic outreach opportunity for AFSA and the Foreign Service. This summer, close to 150 participants came from all over the United States—and some from Canada—to learn about U.S. diplomacy and the individuals who carry it out abroad.

Since this collaboration began, more than 4,000 individuals have participated in the program, each one bringing their positive experience back to their home



From left, Ambassadors Southwick, Lanier, Wall and Dinger, at the Chautauqua Institution, where they spoke with more than 150 participants in the Road Scholar program about diplomacy, human rights and foreign policy strategy.

community and telling friends and family about the Foreign Service.

AFSA's fall program at Chautauqua takes place Oct. 1-6 and features another six speakers: Ambassadors (ret.) John Maisto and Lange Schermerhorn, and retired FSOs Molly Williamson, Richard McKee, Doug Spelman and Dr. Elizabeth Shelton. We thank them all for agreeing to carry out this important outreach, helping AFSA tell the story of the Foreign Service to our fellow citizens.

### Re-Connecting with Your Home State

In mid-August, new AFSA Governing Board member Martin McDowell traveled to his home state of Alabama to lead outreach efforts to local audiences.

Alabama has few Foreign Service retirees and is traditionally underserved when it comes to Foreign Service outreach. AFSA therefore welcomed the opportunity to facilitate a visit by a serving FSO.

During his visit, Mr. McDowell spoke with his hometown newspaper, *The Cullman Times*. Cullman is a city of fewer than 16,000 people. Mr. McDowell described his path to the Foreign Service, his career and the importance and contributions of diplomats and development professionals to Americans in every state.

Later in the week, he met with students at the University of Alabama in Mobile, where he spoke about the Foreign Service.

Such hometown visits are excellent opportunities to engage

in outreach. AFSA welcomes the opportunity to set up events for any members of the Foreign Service who are heading home for a few days. Contact our outreach team ([www.afsa.org/outreach](http://www.afsa.org/outreach)) for information and assistance.

Don't forget to check out our progress toward fulfilling our 50-state strategy, offering outreach programs in each state in 2017. Visit [www.afsa.org/50states](http://www.afsa.org/50states) to see how we are doing. ■

AFSA/CATHERINE KANNENBERG

## AFSA Governing Board Sets Its Agenda

On Aug. 14 many of the new AFSA Governing Board members attended a retreat at AFSA's headquarters. Noting that AFSA's members voted overwhelmingly for a continuity slate, AFSA President Ambassador Barbara Stephenson shared her thoughts for turning that mandate from voters into an action plan.

Retired FSO and former Governing Board member Dean Haas facilitated the event, which involved a series of discussions and focus groups that were tasked with laying out and refining the strategic priorities for the 2017-2019 board.

Attendants produced a resolution setting out the proposed priorities that was presented to the full Governing Board for ratification at their monthly meeting on Aug. 16. The full text of the resolution is below:



Session leader Dean Haas, a retired Foreign Service officer, leads a discussion at the AFSA Governing Board retreat on Aug. 14.

### Summarizing Strategic Priorities of the 2017-2019 AFSA Governing Board

Whereas AFSA exists to support the United States Foreign Service, which deploys worldwide to protect and serve America's people, interests and values;

Whereas AFSA is the principal advocate for the long-term institutional well-being of the professional career Foreign Service and responsible, as well, for safeguarding the interests of Foreign Service members;

Whereas members, from whom the Governing Board's authority flows, voted overwhelmingly for a continuity slate which ran on making the Foreign Service stronger in fact and in reputation;

Be it resolved that the Governing Board adopts the following priorities:

Continue work begun by the previous board in the areas of: outreach to tell the story of the Foreign Service to the American people to build support across the country and in Congress; inreach to gain a nuanced understanding of the aspirations and concerns of members; and positioning AFSA as a thought leader in workforce planning in support of a strong, efficient and effective Foreign Service;

Reaffirm our commitment to a Foreign Service that sustains the uniquely high standards of performance and accountability established in the Foreign Service Act and to defending the Act and its principles by all appropriate means, including the capabilities granted to AFSA by the Act;

Seize every opportunity presented by the transition and redesign to make the Foreign Service stronger, including by streamlining bureaucratic processes and focusing on core diplomatic priorities, while opposing by the most effective means possible harmful measures that weaken the Foreign Service;

Consolidate bipartisan congressional support for a strong, professional career Foreign Service that operates above the partisan fray and always in the national interest. ■





## AFSA Governing Board Meeting, August 16, 2017

**Engaging a search firm:** Due to the upcoming departure of the executive director, State Vice President Ken Kero-Mentz moved that the Management Committee be tasked with initiating the search for a suitable replacement. The motion was approved.

**Strategic Priorities:** State VP Ken Kero-Mentz moved that the Governing Board adopt a resolution summarizing the 2017-2019 Governing Board strategic priorities, which were determined at a Board retreat on Aug. 14. The motion was approved. See opposite page for the full text of the resolution.

**Awards Committee:** AFSA Secretary Ambassador (ret.) Tom Boyatt moved to appoint State Representative Josh Glazeroff as the chair of the Awards and Plaques Standing Committee. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Glazeroff moved to appoint State Representatives

Anne Coleman-Honn and Tricia Wingerter, FCS Alternate Representative Matthew Hilgendorf and USAID Representative Madeline Williams to the committee. The motion was approved.

**Management Committee:** State VP Ken Kero-Mentz moved that the Governing Board appoint the constituency vice presidents to be members of the Management Committee. The motion was approved.

**Constituency Standing Committees:** USAID Vice President Ann Posner moved that the elected agency vice president should serve as the chair of the constituency standing committee. The motion was approved.

State VP Ken Kero-Mentz moved that the elected and appointed constituency representatives serve as permanent members of their respective committees. The motion was approved. ■

## AFSA Welcomes Pickering and Rangel Fellows

On June 6, a reception for the 2017 Thomas R. Pickering Graduate and Undergraduate Fellows and Charles B. Rangel Fellows was held at AFSA's head-

quarters. Hosted by the Thursday Luncheon Group and the Association of Black American Ambassadors, the reception featured remarks by Ambassador

(ret.) Thomas R. Pickering and Congressman Gregory Meeks (D-N.Y.). Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon and AFSA's 2016 Lifetime

Contributions to Diplomacy Award recipient, Ambassador (ret.) Ruth A. Davis, were also present to welcome the fellows. ■



Guests at the Pickering and Rangel Fellows' reception listen to remarks by Ambassador (ret.) Edward Perkins, president of the Association of Black American Ambassadors.



Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon (second from left), with Thursday Luncheon Group President Stacey Williams (second from right) and three Pickering and Rangel fellows at the reception on June 6.

## AFSA Visits Retirees in the Midwest

As part of AFSA's visit to Minnesota's FarmFest in August (see page 54), retired Foreign Service Officer Bill Davnie arranged for a group of 15 foreign affairs retirees from the Upper Midwest Chapter to meet with AFSA President Ambassador Barbara Stephenson, Governing Board Retiree Representative Phil Shull and AFSA Outreach Coordinator Catherine Kannenberg in Minneapolis.

Amb. Stephenson briefed the group on changes in Washington, D.C., and reminded them that there is now strong bipartisan support on Capitol Hill for maintaining an effective and well-resourced Foreign Service.

The group included numerous members who are active speakers with programs or organizations such as Great Decisions, The Humphrey School, Rotary Clubs and high schools. Several support AFSA's strategic partner, the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition by serving on USGLC's state advisory board for Minnesota.

Minnesota is one of the top five states to receive foreign visitors. Foreign Service retirees also support Global Ties, another of AFSA's strategic partners. The state's World

Affairs Council/Global Ties affiliate runs the Great Decisions series, hosting individual programs in various venues around the Twin Cities area—almost half of which feature retired FSOs as speakers.

—Catherine Kannenberg,  
Outreach Coordinator

## Take Charge of Your Retirement Benefits

During my service as director of the State Department's Office of Retirement, I spent a lot of time helping employees and retirees get out of holes they had dug for themselves due to insufficient knowledge of laws and regulations governing retirement benefits.

death. Delays in reporting changes will delay—and may permanently prevent—adjustments in benefits such as the survivor annuity and FEHB health insurance coverage.

Ensure that your next-of-kin knows how to promptly report your death so that survivor's benefits may be paid. Official instructions are found in the Office of Retirement's Foreign Service Annual Annuitant Newsletter at <https://RNet.state.gov> under the "What's New?" tab.

I suggest downloading those instructions and placing them alongside your will. The AFSA Retiree Directory has a resources section to help

you and your loved ones navigate survivor and other retirement issues.

Second, keep your Foreign Service retirement account up-to-date by using the Annuitant Express website. There you can update your mailing address, direct deposit account and tax withholdings. You can also view your annuity statements and 1099-R.

Instructions for accessing Annuitant Express are found in the annuitant newsletter.

Third, if you need to file a Foreign Service Pension System Annuity Supplement earnings report or are considering changing your health insurance provider during the late-year open season, the

deadlines and forms will be in the 2018 Annuitant Newsletter, which should be posted online in mid-November.

Finally, check out AFSA's retiree page: [www.afsa.org/members/retireeservices](http://www.afsa.org/members/retireeservices). We try to help you make smart retirement decisions that save you money in the long run.

If you do encounter problems with your federal retirement benefits or have related questions, AFSA's Retiree Counselor Todd Thurwachter can be reached at [thurwachter@afsa.org](mailto:thurwachter@afsa.org) and (202) 944-5509. I can be reached at [naland@afsa.org](mailto:naland@afsa.org).

—John K. Naland, AFSA  
Retiree Vice President

## AFSA Welcomes Retiree Outreach Coordinator

As a part of AFSA's ongoing effort to increase outreach and help our retiree members get more involved, AFSA is pleased to welcome Christine Miele to the team.

As the new retiree outreach coordinator, Christine has reached out to existing Foreign Service retiree associations, with the objective of supporting retirees' participation in local outreach and advocacy efforts. You can find a full listing of these groups at [www.afsa.org/retiree-associations](http://www.afsa.org/retiree-associations).

If you would like to tell AFSA about the great work of your association, get more involved in local outreach and advocacy efforts, or even start a new group in your area, please contact Christine at [miele@afsa.org](mailto:miele@afsa.org). ■



AFSA President Ambassador Barbara Stephenson speaks to retirees in Minneapolis, Minnesota, briefing them on changes in Washington, D.C., and listening to their comments and suggestions.

I know that you have better things to do in retirement than study the Foreign Service Act, but you owe it to yourself and your family to do due diligence in key areas.

First, promptly report to the State Department any change in your marital status due to marriage, divorce or

AFSA/CATHERINE KANNENBERG

## AFSA Hails New Staff



### Christine Miele

We are excited to welcome Christine Miele to AFSA as the Retiree Outreach Coordinator. Hailing from Pasadena, California, Ms. Miele has more than 20 years of experience in program development and management across nonprofit, business and

government sectors. Her interest in international development and working for social justice inspired her to join the Peace Corps where she served for two years in rural Zambia.

In Mozambique in 2010 Ms. Miele co-founded an organization focused on improving literacy and (alongside the Peace Corps and USAID) worked to establish 50 community libraries in rural communities throughout the country.

Most recently Ms. Miele lived in Costa Rica working as an independent consultant for nonprofit organizations. She is married to Diplomatic Security Special Agent Kala Bokelman and has two young children.



### Mary Daly

Mary Daly joins us as Director of Advocacy and Speechwriting. She served in the Foreign Service for 23 years and has extensive experience in policymaking, legislative affairs and speechwriting. Assignments included working on the Secretary of State's

policy planning staff; roles in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor and the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs; and overseas assignments at several posts in Europe.

Since retiring she has worked in EUR, DRL, the Office of the Inspector General, the Bureau of Human Resources and at the Foreign Service Institute. Ms. Daly joined AFSA to help build bipartisan support for the Foreign Service. She is an alumna of the University of Virginia and did graduate work at Yale in theology. She has one daughter.



### Christine (Christy) Rose

Before joining AFSA as the Special Assistant to the USAID Vice President, Christy Rose was an educator for 11 years, teaching in many different settings, from pre-school to college.

Ms. Rose started her teaching career in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1997, before taking an opportunity to teach elementary school children in Togo. In 2009 she moved to El Salvador with her family and taught elementary school students there before taking a position training teachers at Escuela Americana.

In 2011 Ms. Rose transitioned to working as the Community Liaison Office coordinator. She returned to Washington, D.C., after serving as a consular assistant in Hanoi from 2015 to 2017. ■



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## AFSA NEWS

### FSJ Wins Two Silvers at AMP



Editor-in-Chief Shawn Dorman (far left) with FSJ creative and editorial team members (left to right), Jay Mason, Caryn Smith, Dmitry Filipoff and Susan Maitra at the Association Media & Publishing EXCEL Awards Gala, with two silver awards won by the *Foreign Service Journal*.

The *Foreign Service Journal* won two awards in this year's Association Media & Publishing EXCEL Awards competition.

The awards, which recognize excellence and leadership in nonprofit association media, publishing, marketing and communications, are conferred each year during the AMP annual meeting.

At a gala event on June 26, FSJ Editor-in-Chief Shawn Dorman, Art Director Caryn Suko Smith and Publications Manager Jennifer (Jay) Mason accepted the silver award in the "Magazines: Single Topic Issue" category for the December 2016 edition of *The Journal*, "The New Russia at 25."

*The Journal* also received a silver award in the "Journals: General Excellence" category. ■

### Dog Days and Cat's Cradles

Traveling around the world with a pet can be an exhausting, but ultimately rewarding experience. We know that our members love the dogs, cats and even more unusual pets they take with them to every clime and place, and we invite readers to submit photos of their animals at post.

When submitting your high-resolution images, please include your name, the name of your animal, where the photo was taken and the origin of your pet (we know there are a lot of rescue animals out



there!). Send your images to [journal@afsa.org](mailto:journal@afsa.org), subject line: Pets.

The best photos will be published in a future issue of the *Journal*. ■

## Against All Odds

### **Losing an Enemy: Obama, Iran and the Triumph of Diplomacy**

*Trita Parsi, Yale University Press, 2017, \$32.50/hardcover, \$16.99/Kindle, 472 pages.*

REVIEWED BY STEVEN ALAN HONLEY

It takes real chutzpah to write about a historic agreement, particularly one as complex and polarizing as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action—the deceptively bland official name of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal—just two years after its signing. This is even truer when one’s subject is the product of six years of intricate negotiations and maneuvering on an array of political chessboards, and remains so controversial that its durability is in serious doubt.

Fortunately, Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian-American Council, possesses in spades the two skill sets required to meet the challenge of tracing that history and explaining the significance of the agreement to a general audience: substantive expertise and insider knowledge.

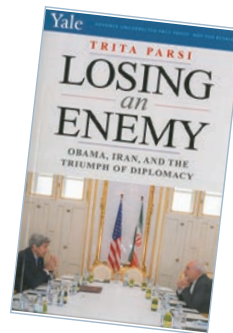
Parsi teaches at Johns Hopkins University and at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, and was the 2010 winner of the Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order.

He is also the author of *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran and the United States*, the silver medal winner of the 2008 Arthur Ross Book Award from the Council on Foreign Relations, and *A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama’s Diplomacy with Iran*, which was named Best Book on the Middle East in 2012 by *Foreign Affairs*. (As he notes in his preface, he draws heavily on both volumes, particularly in

the first half of this new book.)

Although he did not have a formal role, Parsi advised the Obama White House throughout the talks with Iran, and interviewed more than 75 of the key actors and decision-makers he met and worked with for this book. Virtually all the quotes are on the record, and many come from prominent foreign officials, such as Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif.

Parsi takes a chronological approach to his subject, which works well despite some backtracking and repetition along



what surprised at how unsupportive of the negotiations Parsi says Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was—an attitude he ascribes to her presidential ambitions.

President Donald Trump has thus far disregarded his campaign rhetoric and grudgingly certified Tehran’s compliance with the JCPOA at each mandatory 90-day mark.

As the next deadline for certification approaches in October, shortly before this review appears, let us hope that he continues to follow that practice.

I say that not just because I strongly

**Even though we know from the start that the parties eventually reach an agreement, the story is so gripping that it has a real “Perils of Pauline” feel.**

the way. As a bonus, even though we know from the start that the parties do eventually come to an accord, the delayed gratification confers a real “Perils of Pauline” feel that intensifies the closer we get to the denouement. (By the way, skip the “Conclusions” chapter, which is nothing more than an executive summary of the book.)

As his title, *Losing an Enemy: Obama, Iran and the Triumph of Diplomacy*, makes clear, Parsi is an ardent cheerleader—both for the agreement and for President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry’s roles in pulling it off. (Sadly, that fact alone will probably deter many readers from giving the book a chance.)

He also does not hesitate to call out opponents of the deal by name, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the top of the list. I was some-

believe the agreement is in our national interest, or even because its survival will confirm the wisdom of Pres. Obama’s strategy of making our Middle Eastern diplomacy less beholden to Tel Aviv and Riyadh.

The very existence of the JCPOA shows us that, as Parsi asserts, even the most contentious international conflict can be resolved peacefully if all sides negotiate in earnest, accept painful concessions and muster the political will to defend their peaceful path against domestic critics.

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*Steven Alan Honley, a State Department Foreign Service officer from 1985 to 1997 and editor-in-chief of The Foreign Service Journal from 2001 to 2014, is a regular contributor to the Journal.*

## Mirror, Mirror, On The Wall...

### **The Mirror Test: America at War in Iraq and Afghanistan**

*J. Kael Weston, Knopf, 2016,*

*\$28.95/hardcover,*

*\$17/paperback, 608 pages.*

REVIEWED BY GORDON BROWN

Kael Weston's short, eventful, inspiring—and yet ultimately discouraging—Foreign Service career was unlike any other. After a tour with the U.S. Mission to the United Nations during the run-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and in spite of his opposition to the war, he volunteered to go to Baghdad. Right away, he was thrown into street-level diplomacy, helping to mediate a labor dispute between the authorities and the Iraqi truckers who ran the vital supply lines that supported the local economy.

The experience provided a lesson that shaped the rest of his seven years on the front lines of our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan: that the success of our interventions would depend, in the long run, on first understanding the expectations of the local population, then acting in ways that would win their trust. By that measure, he suggests, we are not doing well.

Disdainful of the isolation of the Green Zone and even of the staffers in Forward Operating Bases (derided as “Fobbits”), he soon volunteered to serve as political adviser to the Marine command in insurgent Anbar province, where he was tasked with coordinating political guidance to the commanding general.

As coalition forces first fought to regain control of Fallujah, and then attempted to restore basic security and civic services, he plunged in, getting rid of his security detail and immersing himself in the community—work-

ing with his interpreters, Marine civil affairs officers and those few Iraqis willing to risk collaboration with the occupiers.

In his three years in Fallujah, he developed strong bonds with the young Marines in the force, as well as with the Iraqi collaborators whom he helped to recruit and support—and who often paid for their service by being assassinated by the insurgents. Living in the city center and providing a direct channel to the military command, Weston apparently was the go-to guy for negotiating numerous difficult civil affairs crises.

There is no chest-thumping in his account, however, concerning his occasional successes. Rather, there is resignation over the intractabilities of what he calls the “wrong war,” combined with

**Weston's experiences were life-changing, and not surprisingly he had no desire to return to a life of traditional diplomacy after them.**

grief over the all-too-frequent deaths of both his unit's soldiers and his Iraqi collaborators—in particular, when their deaths came from trying to carry out policies that he himself had supported.

Nonetheless, Weston volunteered to serve in a similar capacity once again when requested to do so by a general with whom he had served in Fallujah. He transferred to Afghanistan, where he served for the next three years: first in Khost on a Provincial Reconstruction Team, and then as political adviser to the Marines as they fought to push back the Taliban in Helmand province.

In advising both the embassy and his military hosts on local political senti-



ments, opportunities and dangers, his eye was always on his goal of developing the kind of long-term trust that he still thinks is possible in Afghanistan—what he calls the “good war.” Weston shows pride in some of the community-building projects of his PRT in Khost province, as well as in the fruitful yet often tragic cooperation he obtained from brave Iraqis in Fallujah.

But the strongest flavor of his account comes from his matter-of-fact recitation of our mistakes—from the false claims of weapons of mass destruction, through the arrogance of the occupation, the profligate expenditure of money and attendant corruption, the injustices of Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib and the perceived cluelessness of Washington, to the often thoughtless indifference to local sensitivities.

Weighed against those issues, his

grief at the death of so many acquaintances accounts for the sorrowful rather than polemical tone of his reporting. Only in the last section, recounting his postwar travels and reflections in America, does his account take on a more outspoken, anti-war tone.

Weston's experiences were life-changing, and not surprisingly he had no desire to return to a life of traditional diplomacy after them. He left the Foreign Service, and has spent the intervening years seeking to put meaning to his experiences and his sorrow. He has traveled our country with the aim of memorializing his dead colleagues and helping war-damaged veterans.

His book, then, can be seen as part of this process. It is retrospective—a granular yet gripping ground-level account of the political and human costs of war: its small successes, as well as its tragedies, absurdities and ironies.

While Weston's style is more descriptive than prescriptive, his tone is both angry and sorrowful, and the effect is a cry from the heart about the costs of war. This brings up the book's title. The mirror test, he explains, is a challenge given to a seriously wounded and disfigured soldier: When he sees himself in a mirror, can he foresee a life of pride and honor?

As the cover illustration of two American flags—one immaculate and one tattered—indicates, Weston is concerned about the deterioration of America's image caused by the wars, both our self-image and our image in the eyes of the world. This very readable book can help us understand better the human and political costs of the last 15 years.

---

*Gordon Brown served in the U.S. Army before joining the Foreign Service. His 30-plus-year diplomatic career was centered in the Middle East and North Africa. He was the political adviser to the U.S. Central Command during the first Gulf War and retired as an ambassador. Amb. (ret.) Brown served on the FSJ Editorial Board from 2011 to 2017.*

## French Lessons

### **A History of the Iraq Crisis: France, the U.S., and Iraq (1991-2003)**

*Frédéric Bozo, Columbia University Press, 2016, \$34.82/hardcover, \$44.32/Kindle, 408 pages.*

REVIEWED BY DIANA CLARK GILL

When is a book about deciding whether to go to war in Iraq *not* a book about

deciding whether to go to war in Iraq?

Answer: when it is a cautionary tale, using the 2003

American war against Iraq as an example of the difficulties of maintaining a diplomatic relationship with a country that is bigger than yours, with more political clout, and yet one that is intent on making a bad global situation even worse. In other words, when it is the story of how France negotiated its antiwar position with the hawkish United States after 9/11.

Frédéric Bozo, a professor at the Sorbonne in Paris with specialties in history and international relations, takes us behind the political curtain of the build-up to the U.S.-Iraq War of 2003. Powerfully, he shows how events between 9/11 and the beginning of the Iraq War were perhaps more than anything a crisis between an aggressive United States that wanted to act independently without constraints in punishing a recalcitrant Saddam Hussein over obstruction of United Nations weapons inspectors and major European powers, who were insisting on the communal rule of international law as dictated by the United Nations.

During the lead-up to war, French President Jacques Chirac communicated to President George W. Bush that he thought Washington was not only about to intervene in an area of the world of which it had little cultural understanding, but by doing so, would undermine the U.N. by flagrantly acting without the sanction of the Security Council.



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**Today, Paris and Washington have reconciled, working together to fight the rise of terrorism, much of it prompted by the very war that divided them 14 years ago.**

Neither objection seemed to influence the Bush administration, not when they were combating an “axis of evil” by attacking Saddam’s imagined weapons of mass destruction. Pres. Bush even made a point of ominously ridiculing the French president’s stance on the matter: “Chirac has pushed it to the point where there’s a huge anti-French backlash in America,” Bush told Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern on March 13, 2003. “He’s taken it too far.”

Unfortunately, history would favor France’s anti-war position over that of the United States. And what the Bush administration got for its miscalculation was eight years of war, 4,424 dead Americans and 31,952 wounded.

What the “liberated” Iraqis got was 134,000 killed, with another 400,000 deaths to which the war contributed. Financially, the war cost the United States “\$1.7 trillion with an additional \$490 billion in benefits owed to war veterans, expenses that could grow to more than \$6 trillion over the next four decades counting interest,” Reuters World News reported on March 14, 2013.

Noted economists and politicians even blamed the war for contributing to the global Great Recession of 2008-2009. Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize-winning economist, testified before the U.S. Senate’s Joint Economic Committee in 2008 that the war had “weaken[ed] the American economy.”

What it did, though, to Iraq’s econ-

omy was to wreak absolute havoc that, in turn, destabilized an already fragile society, fueling the violence that would culminate in the creation and proliferation of the terrorist group known as the Islamic State.

Today, Paris and Washington have reconciled, working together to fight the rise of terrorism, much of it prompted by the very war that divided them 14 years ago.

Country-specific squabbles aside, *A History of the Iraq Crisis* reminds us of two things. First is the danger of unilateralism in military ventures. Allies should be considered equal partners in world affairs. Disagreements should not undermine bilateral relations, but friendship and solidarity call for frankness.

Second, our country needs to invest in maintaining a cadre of exceptional statesmen and diplomats. In 2002 and 2003 it was France that tried to put the brakes on a deteriorating situation. But someday, with the rise of superpowers in Asia, it may well be the United States in the diplomatic hot seat, sounding the voice of reason in talks with some much larger, newly-crowned hyperpower intent on flexing its own military might. ■

---

*Diana Clark Gill is the author of How We Are Changed by War: A Study of Letters and Diaries from Colonial Conflicts to Operation Iraqi Freedom (Routledge, 2010).*



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# Mercy Is Its Own Reward

BY ANDREA KORMANN LOWE

**W**hat item do you choose to save when you're an 11-year-old Foreign Service child being evacuated from a maelstrom? What do you think when you don't even know if your family or father will survive?

When the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War broke out in 1967, a hostile mob attacked the U.S. embassy in Benghazi, Libya. My father, John Kormann, barricaded himself with his staff of nine, retreating to the inner security vault of what had previously been a bank building.

He was briefly able to contact my mother to ask her to warn U.S. families and prepare to evacuate. He and his team inside the embassy then alternated between fighting off intruders as best they could and destroying confidential documents.

The frustrated mob turned its fury on the nearby consul's residence (our home, and the site for receptions and other official events). Luckily our family had moved to the suburbs days before.

Against the backdrop of my mother phoning warnings—"The war has broken out. Please keep your children and pets inside and await further instructions . . ."—I chose a family necklace, while my

---

*Andrea Kormann Lowe has been honing her diplomatic skills as the founder and, for 10 years, CEO of LPEQ Limited, an international financial trade association. She is a board director for two private equity funds. The daughter of the late FSO John Kormann, she is based in London and has two grown daughters.*

brothers chose comic books and a favorite toy.

## Embassy Evacuation

The British 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards made numerous attempts before finally rescuing the trapped Americans from the embassy 10 hours later. They also formed an escort to get all the American and British families out of their homes and to D'Aosta Barracks prior to evacuation three days later.

During the embassy siege, and at the Benghazi airfield, my father's military experience was invaluable. While the U.S. Air Force planes from the Tennessee National Guard were en route, more than 1,000 Algerian and Egyptian paratroopers had landed in MiG fighters and troop carriers at the airfield.

My father had to make the call whether to continue the evacuation attempt, which could risk loss of life and an international incident.

As I strapped myself into a paratrooper bucket seat on the military plane, the tension and distress of the departure was matched by the surreal realization that I was reliving my father's World War II life.

In the end, everyone at the embassy made it out safely. My father was given the State Department Award for Heroism for "calm and effective leadership as the officer-in-charge of the embassy in Benghazi."

But the action for which I am most proud of him, and the tribute for which he will be best remembered, was a similarly tough decision in 1945, when he was a 20-year-old paratrooper with the 17th Airborne Division in Germany.

## Operation Varsity

Dad was part of Operation Varsity—the single biggest one-day airborne



COURTESY OF ANDREA KORMANN LOWE

The Kormann family on home leave in Florida with John's mother in 1966. Back row, from left: John Kormann; his mother, Elsie Behr Kormann; and his wife, Elsa Wells Kormann. Front row, from left: Andrea, Matthew and Wells Bradford (Brad) Kormann.



Andrea Kormann Lowe at the commemorative plaque dedication in Hamminkeln, Germany, on March 24, 2017.

operation of World War II. The night before he saw action, he received a letter from my grandmother, who had emigrated from Germany in 1905.

“Son,” she wrote, “I know you are going into battle soon. Please remember that the young man you are fighting has a mother who loves and prays for him as I love and pray for you, and be merciful.”

Dad tossed the letter aside, angry at what she’d written. He knew hesitation could cost his life and those of his fellow soldiers. The operation involved towing gliders with men and jeeps from France to Germany in a bumpy flight.

On landing, Dad was briefly knocked unconscious when bounced out of the glider under fire. When he recovered and regrouped with his fellow soldiers, their urgent mission was to find the German snipers hiding in nearby farmhouses.

Bringing up the rear as they passed a farmhouse, my father heard noises coming from a potato cellar. Convinced that German soldiers were hiding there, he lifted the wooden cellar door cautiously and was about to throw in a grenade when he remembered his mother’s plea: “Be merciful!”

So instead he shouted down in German for the soldiers to surrender. Silence. His second shout brought out an elderly grandmother, and eventually 14 people—nine women and five children—stood before him. He said later, “I shudder at the thought of what I might have done, and the burden it would have placed on my life, had I not received my blessed mother’s letter.”

## A Dying Wish

Years later, as Dad was dying, we talked about things he wished he had done during his lifetime. He wanted me to find the soldiers from the 5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards who had

COURTESY OF ANDREA KORMANN LOWE



helped get us out in Benghazi—particularly one soldier who had been badly burnt when the mob threw a petrol bomb into their armoured vehicle. His other regret was not finding out what happened to the children his act in Germany had saved.

The badly injured British soldier was relatively easy to find, and I was able to speak with him by phone just before the 50th anniversary of the Six-Day War. Although I know thanks were extended by the U.S. Secretary of State for British help, he told me that I was the first person to personally thank him in 50 years, saying “it’s not the British way.”

But trying to find survivors who remembered a wartime incident more than 70 years earlier required all the skills my father and the Foreign Service taught me: empathy, determination, and an understanding of how to use help and contacts.

With the aid of a Dutch military tour guide and the local newspaper, I found the farm. The potato cellar had been unique in that part of Germany, and all the children played in it. Although the farmhouse no longer exists, the farmer’s son kindly found an old photograph which I was able to show my father the night before he died.

Amazingly, I found an 80-year-old man who had been an 8-year-old boy in the “Be Merciful” cellar. He told me he was too young then to know how close to death he had been.

## “Be Merciful” Is Memorialized

On March 24, 2017, the 72nd anniversary of Operation Varsity, on a wind-swept field in Hamminkeln, Germany, a bilingual commemorative plaque was dedicated to John Kormann and the “Be Merciful” incident.

Eighty people attended, including Germans and Americans of the Scions of

## The tension and distress of the departure was matched by the surreal realization that I was reliving my father’s World War II life.

the 17th Airborne Division (children of servicemen, like me), and the Dutch Mar-graten Memorial Group that has adopted the graves of fallen U.S. soldiers.

Local German schoolchildren researched their area’s role in World War II, welcomed by the school as a way to discuss the difficult subject of Germany’s wartime actions. Some of them spoke at the dedication ceremony, saying: “It was very dangerous and courageous what your father did. But he did it nonetheless.”

“There are still so many wars going on in this world. That’s why it’s so important to commemorate acts of humanity like this of Mr. Kormann. It shows us what unifies all people on earth despite their different cultures, nationalities and religions.”

When I met the elderly cellar survivors, I was struck by their vivid childhood memories of colored parachutes, the GIs who were farm boys helping to milk cows, and how the GIs then gave them chocolate, which they shaved into warm milk and instant coffee (and still love drinking).

I arranged a lunch to follow the dedication, where each elderly German getting up encouraged the others to speak in front of an international audience and, crucially, the young people of the town. That turned out to be the first time most of them had ever told their stories in public.

## Experiencing and Shaping History

Dutch TV picked up the “Be Merciful” story and filmed a documentary, “Closer to Freedom,” which is now being used in schools. The National Liberation Museum

in Groesbeek, Netherlands, is suggesting that the European Union-funded Liberation Route Europe add Hamminkeln to its locations. To my knowledge, this is the only commemorative plaque concerning an act of valor by an American in North Rhine Westphalia, which was part of the British Occupied Zone following World War II. The German owners of the “Be Merciful” farm have submitted a proposal to create an Operation Varsity museum.

After the war, my father joined the Foreign Service and served overseas in Bavaria, Manila, Benghazi and Cairo—accompanied by my mother, my two brothers and me. His focus was political-military affairs, and he participated during a crucial period—implementing the Marshall Plan, witnessing Marcos’ accession amid the strains of the Vietnam War, experiencing Libya’s turmoil and, in Cairo, facilitating Henry Kissinger’s shuttle diplomacy and the largest Defense Department and USAID programs at that time.

We are blessed in the Foreign Service with extraordinary lives observing and forming history. Let us capture them for posterity. Whether through video, or writing an autobiography as my father did, record your experiences for your descendants. Do it while you are young enough to get feedback in your lifetime: your memories will trigger others, to the great joy of all.

My father’s deathbed request seemed an overwhelming burden at first, but it turned out to be his greatest gift to me. ■



Please submit your favorite, recent photograph to be considered for Local Lens. Images must be high resolution (at least 300 dpi at 8" x 10", or 1 MB or larger) and must not be in print elsewhere. Please include a short description of the scene/event, as well as your name, brief biodata and the type of camera used, to [locallens@afsa.org](mailto:locallens@afsa.org).

A spring vacation to Antalya, Turkey, in April 2017 and many visits to the various ruins have inspired a budding photographer. Nicholas Dinoia, age 9, took over the family camera and is captured shooting the columned street that runs east to west in the ancient city of Perga. Perga is perhaps one of the most impressive sites in the area because it is in excellent condition. Among other things, the city includes a nymphaeum, baths, necropolis, stadium and theater. While some parts of the complex are still under excavation or renovation, the areas available to be viewed should not be missed when visiting this region. ■

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*Jen Dinoia is the spouse of the senior regional security officer to Mission Turkey, Peter Dinoia. She took this photo with an iPhone 5, as her Canon was already in use.*

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