

# THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

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# Welcome, Director General Bernicat! AFSA Stands Ready to Work with You

BY ERIC RUBIN

**W**e here at AFSA are happy to welcome the new Director General of the Foreign Service, Ambassador Marcia Bernicat. We know her well from her previous outstanding work, and we look forward to working with her and her team to improve the Foreign Service. We're here to help make the Service stronger, more attractive to applicants and more supportive and caring to active-duty and retired members.

What will strengthen the Foreign Service? First and foremost, we need to focus on making a commitment to public service appealing and feasible for FS members. We want to join the DG in the following pursuits:

**1. Making a Foreign Service career work for employees in 2022.** This includes addressing the needs of two-career couples, single FS members and families with children. It means supporting employees who face constant challenges and frustrations, whether traveling with pets or keeping families together or getting help with moves as a single. It also includes ensuring that

members of the Foreign Service with disabilities are able to pursue their careers with support and reasonable accommodation.



*Ambassador Eric Rubin is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.*

**2. Prioritizing support for employees.** This comes up in situations where employees must make difficult and long journeys to and from post, even though the U.S. government travel regulations provide for exceptions to the Fly America Act and city-pair fares. For example, forcing employees to take two or three flights when one direct flight is available and allowable is a morale killer. This kind of bureaucratic frustration, and others like it, drives attrition.

**3. Fixing what is broken.** AFSA has made progress working with all six foreign affairs agencies to fix what is not working for our members. From intake to assignments, evaluations to promotions, our system continues to be based on the Foreign Service Act of 1980, a law that needs updating and modernizing. The act was adopted only a few years after the end of policies that forced women to resign when they married, and required wives—not spouses, but wives—to be evaluated on their husbands' annual efficiency reports. There is a lot in the Foreign Service Act that should be preserved, but much also needs updating.

**4. Increasing transparency.** AFSA has welcomed innovations that have led to the advertising of vacancies for deputy assistant secretary positions as well as other senior State Department positions. This is a best practice that all foreign affairs agencies should follow. It

is not just about transparency, but also about ensuring that the best candidates have a real chance of rising to senior positions.

**5. Taking care of our people.** The Biden administration has done much to support employees who have been affected by Anomalous Health Incidents (Havana syndrome), but recent developments appear to point to an effort to limit relief and exclude many employees who have truly suffered injury in service to their country. We need to see an effort that helps every injured employee, rather than attempts to limit eligibility for support and compensation.

**6. Growing the Foreign Service.** Today, there are not enough FS members serving overseas. The Biden administration has taken small steps to remedy this situation, but we still have too many overseas posts that are desperately understaffed. We are spending less in real dollar terms on diplomacy and foreign assistance than we did 30 years ago at the end of the Cold War. This severely limits our ability to compete in a new world in which we have to earn and demonstrate our leadership.

We wish Director General Bernicat well as she takes on this challenging new position. AFSA is committed to working constructively with her and her team to help make the Foreign Service a more attractive career better equipped to meet our country's challenges. ■

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# Africa at the Center

BY SHAWN DORMAN

As we were about to go to press with this special edition on U.S. engagement with Africa, Secretary of State Antony Blinken headed out on an Africa tour. During his stop in Pretoria, he gave a major speech launching what is being billed as a new U.S. policy toward sub-Saharan Africa. Tied to that, the White House released a new “U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa.” Read more in the next *FSJ*.

And so this is a great time to hear from some of the best diplomat experts on Africa.

Mark Wentling, a retired USAID Senior Foreign Service officer who served in six African countries, offers his sobering perspective on Africa today in “Much Cause for Worry: A Clear-Eyed Look at Africa.”

Ambassador (ret.) Tibor Nagy, who served in Africa for 22 years at eight posts and as assistant secretary of State for Africa from 2018 to 2021, takes a more optimistic, though still realistic, view in “A Brighter Future for Africa?”

Vice President for the U.S.-Africa Business Center at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Kendra Gaither, a former FSO, looks to the future and makes the case for the U.S. to engage with Africa as a strategic and economic priority.



U.S. Navy Commander Jonathan Ahlstrom, writing from the USS *Columbus* nuclear submarine, argues in “Higher Education and

the New Scramble for Africa” that the U.S. should invest in education for Africans as a vital component of our engagement.

In a fascinating look back, FSO (ret.) Gregory Garland recounts how two American politicians were first to prioritize relations with Africa in “Kennedy, Nixon and the Competition for Mr. Africa, 1952-1960.”

In the Feature, “Helping Refugees in Poland,” FS family member Lilia Lally describes her experience helping Ukrainians forced to flee home. And in FS Heritage, FSO (ret.) Luciano Mangiafico tells the curious story of “The Short Diplomatic Career of Mordecai Manuel Noah.”

In “Retirement Planning: A Mid-Career Checklist,” AFSA Retiree Vice President John Naland, a former director of State’s Retirement Office, offers great advice on how to ensure a comfortable life after the Foreign Service.

The Local Lens is a glimpse of busy times in North Sulawesi from Embassy Jakarta’s senior commercial officer, Paul Taylor. If you’d like to see a favorite recent photo of yours travel the world on the *Journal’s* pages, please submit it to [locallens@afsa.org](mailto:locallens@afsa.org).

In the Speaking Out, USAID FSO (ret.) José Garzón looks back at his long career of democracy promotion and asks some tough questions in “Democracy as a Vocation.” And grown-up Foreign Service kid Louisa Rogers offers a relatable Reflection on “The Lure of the ‘Painful Childhood.’”

In his President’s Views column, Ambassador Eric Rubin welcomes Director General Marcia Bernicat and presents

a list of priorities AFSA hopes to engage with her team on to strengthen the Foreign Service.

AFSA News this month is jam-packed with association happenings, including the 2022 merit scholarship award winners, a Diplomats at Work event with a Foreign Commercial Service officer, a screening of “The Lavender Scare,” the chiefs-of-mission breakfast, an event honoring Archer Blood (and dissent), State VP Tom Yazdgerdi on family member employment, plus columns from AFSA’s USAID and FAS vice presidents, along with welcomes for new Governing Board and Editorial Board members, plus two new staff members.

The October edition will include perspectives on Ukraine from Ambassadors (ret.) Bill Taylor and Rose Gottemoeller, and others, as well as a requested article from the Board of Examiners (BEX) to explain the changes to the Foreign Service exam and assessment process. We look forward to shining light on what’s felt like a mysterious process to many, including AFSA.

In closing, I offer news from the grammar front. After much debate during recent *FSJ* style guide updating, we decided to adopt the serial, or “Oxford,” comma, starting with the October edition. For those who don’t care, just know that this is a highly emotional topic for those who do.

Please be in touch with responses to articles and other submissions (Local Lens, Off-Road with the Foreign Service, Speaking Out, Feature, FS Know-How, Reflections). Write to us at [journal@afsa.org](mailto:journal@afsa.org). ■

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

## Thanks for the Focus on DEIA

I am a member of the Mission Japan DEIA Council, serving on its communications subcommittee. Thank you for the wonderful June 2022 edition of the *FSJ* with its many articles and resources on promoting diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA).

Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley recently visited Japan and, in several of her meetings, mentioned *The Foreign Service Journal*.

We plan to feature DEIA-related content from the *Journal* in our Mission Japan DEIA Council newsletter.

*Beau Miller*

*FSO*

*U.S. Consulate General Sapporo*

## FSOT and the Ideological Muddle

Although the June 2022 *Foreign Service Journal* (Focus: A Progress Report on Diversity) tried to present a fair and honest picture of the State Department's newly announced diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) policies, the policy prescriptions themselves are so nonsensical and contrary to thoughtful discussion that we learned nothing beyond the ideological twaddle DEIA directors regularly mouth.

A key element of this ideological muddle is the effort to justify the decision to reduce the central role of the Foreign Service Officer Test (FSOT) for selection of new FSOs, as described in the lengthy interview AFSA President Ambassador Eric Rubin conducted with State's Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley.

Contrary to the assertions made in

that interview, the FSOT by its very objective nature opens the Foreign Service to talented candidates from a great diversity of political opinions, socioeconomic backgrounds and cultural heritages.

Its objective standards do not discriminate by sex, race, creed, color or national origins. The entire point of having all applicants pass an objective test for career consideration is to afford equal opportunity to all applicants.

Sadly, however, "equality of opportunity" no longer appears to be the objective of State Department leadership, which is trying to substitute the new and invidious concept of "equity."

This, in fact, is an effort to move away from open opportunity toward specific racial, gender and, perhaps, ideological and political goals inappropriate to and destructive of an ethos of public service representing our extraordinarily diverse society.

*Ed Stafford*

*FSO, retired*

*Philadelphia*

## FSOT and the "Good Diplomat"

AFSA President Eric Rubin's interview with Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley in the June 2022 *FSJ* ("The Office of Diversity and Inclusion Turns One") demonstrated Ambassador Abercrombie-Winstanley's enthusiasm and dedication in pursuit of her mandate.

In making her case, however, regarding the Foreign Service Officer Test (FSOT), she stated: "The reality is that the written test has zero correlation to being a successful diplomat. Zero. Passing doesn't prove that you're going to be

a good diplomat; it doesn't prove that you're going to be a terrible diplomat. It tests a certain body of knowledge at that time."

Disregarding the fact that no one has ever claimed that the FSOT "proves" whether one would be a good diplomat, Amb. Abercrombie-Winstanley offers no evidence to substantiate her categorical statement of "zero" correlation between the test and success as a Foreign Service officer.

I would suggest that over the nearly 100 years that passing the test has been required for further consideration as an FSO, by and large it has been a good indicator of likely success.

The General Knowledge ("Job Knowledge") section of the FSOT covers a wide range of topics that demonstrate an applicant is conversant with national and international events, history, politics, math, etc. Doing well on this

section indicates an applicant has had the interest and inquisitiveness to pursue the topics under consideration. This, it seems to me, is one of the attributes of a successful FSO—an inquisitive mind.

The English Expression and Usage section demonstrates whether an applicant possesses one of the

crucial elements required of a successful diplomat, i.e., the ability to express oneself coherently and succinctly. The ability to write well has always been one of the critical elements required of an FSO.

One can analyze information and data, reach conclusions and recommend courses of action, but if one cannot write clearly and persuasively



to convey the findings and recommendations to decision-makers, it is all for naught.

Finally, Amb. Abercrombie-Winstanley states: “Anything that we need, it can be taught” at the Foreign Service Institute. In this, as well, she misses the mark. English-language skills, composition and reading comprehension cannot be “taught” in a two-week course at FSI. Neither can the body of knowledge a successful applicant who passes the FSOT brings to the Foreign Service.

Amb. Abercrombie-Winstanley dismissively suggests the FSOT “tests a certain body of knowledge at that time.” But the “body of knowledge,” including English-language ability, demonstrated by successful applicants who pass the FSOT, has historically been one of the key indicators of a successful career as a Foreign Service officer.

*William H. Barkell*  
*FSO, retired*  
*Arlington, Virginia*

## Consuls Bearing Arms

The May 2022 *FSJ* included a fascinating article about Robert W. Imbrie (“A Lethal Encounter in Tehran, 1924,” by Michael Zirinsky), providing lots of information about an incident in Foreign Service history known to many of us, but only dimly. Thanks for printing it.

However, it raises some questions. Were sidearms standard equipment for American consular officers in the 1920s? If so, were they issued or purchased privately by officers? Was there pertinent guidance about their use in the Foreign Service regulations?

Imbrie’s revolver is so prominently



displayed in the photos that I wonder about these questions. Professor Zirinsky’s otherwise excellent study is silent on this issue. He does comment, however, that Imbrie “was no diplomat” but rather an “adventurer-spy.” Lots to ponder here.

And, by the way, the *FSJ* is increasingly rich, I find. And in difficult times.

*Edward Marks*  
*Ambassador, retired*  
*Washington, D.C.*



## Consuls Bearing Arms— The Author Responds

To the best of my knowledge, it was not usual for consuls to pack heat. Indeed, in the material I reviewed about the incident in the National Archives in 1981, the only weapon mentioned was Imbrie’s “shillelagh,” which was wielded by his prisoner who identified it as a “blackjack.”

The pictures of Imbrie armed with a pistol, which I had never before seen (the *FSJ* editorial staff found and chose them), rather make my point that he

was more adventurer-spy than “diplomat.”

In looking at the Library of Congress site where the photo was found, there is no indication of when and where it was taken, other than the 1924 caption created by the media. My recollection from my research is that the LOC received the photo after Imbrie’s death.

Since I am aware of no American “staff member” at the Tehran consulate, my (tentative) conclusion is that the photo was actually taken in Anatolia, when Imbrie was seconded to Ankara to negotiate with Mustafa Kemal amid the struggle to establish the Kemalist regime and to reject the Treaty of Sevres.

The headgear in the photo is telling.

It seems likely that he had clothed himself in Turkish military gear for his “roughing it” adventure in Ankara and beyond.

My recollection of Imbrie’s personnel file and other State Department records is that he did not make “inspection tours” in Iran. The only journey I can surmise is his travel to Tehran, which would likely have taken two months from Washington. The routing

would have been something like DC–NYC–London–Paris–Marseille–Bombay–Basra–Baghdad–Khanaqin–Kermanshah–Hamadan–Qazvin–Tehran, which was the route taken by Minister Joseph Kornfeld two years earlier.

Iran then had no railways and few car roads, most intercity transport being made by horse, donkey or camel, so it is possible that the photo was taken on the overland journey to Tehran from the railhead at Khanaqin.

Going armed on this trip would have been reasonable, since highwaymen

had a habit of stopping travelers and relieving them of all possessions except their underwear, at least as I recall reading the diplomatic and missionary records.

Hope this helps.

*Michael Zirinsky*

*Professor, Boise State University  
Boise, Idaho*

## New England Retirees: An Update

In response to John Naland's piece ("An Insider's Guide to the Re-Employed Annuitant Program") in the May 2022 *FSJ* on the restarting of retiree association activities, I am pleased to report that the Foreign Affairs Retirees of New England (FARNE) is up and running.

We've held two luncheon events since the pandemic started easing. Thanks to Maine volunteer Judith Fergin, in October we met at the Brunswick Hotel in Brunswick, Maine, to hear from retired Senior FSO Susan Thornton about U.S.-China relations.

And in late April, we were in Salem, Massachusetts, at the historic Hawthorne Hotel for an address by retired Senior FSO John Dickson about his new book, *History Shock: When History Collides with Foreign Relations* (University Press of Kansas, 2021).

Both events were very well attended, and we have since welcomed several new members who were at these luncheons. (Because of a rise in COVID-19 cases, the April meeting was postponed from January, and as a precaution we asked that all attendees at both meetings confirm their full vaccination status, which made most feel comfortable enough to engage without masks.)

Our New Hampshire volunteer, Tom Hull, is now working on the next gather-

ing, planned for his state in the fall.

Since its founding in 1983, FARNE members have enjoyed the special collegial atmosphere and the well-informed discussions that take place at our luncheons. As John Naland noted, the regional retiree associations help us keep in touch with others of similar professional experience, as well as with our profession.

AFSA was a major help in getting FARNE off the ground, and continues to provide assistance in getting the news of our events out to prospective members.

*Liz Barnett*

*FSO, retired*

*President, Foreign Affairs Retirees of  
New England  
Boston, Massachusetts*

## Remembering Colin Powell

I read Stacy Williams' Letters-Plus in the April 2022 *Foreign Service Journal* ("My Role Model, Guiding Light and North Star for 30 Years") with considerable emotion because the late Colin Powell was also my hero.

When my late husband, Larry Foley, was murdered in Jordan in 2002, the then Secretary of State was one of the pillars of support who truly enabled me to keep my head above water.

His was one of the many initial formal letters of condolence sent to our family, and he followed up with a personal phone call. I was bolstered by recognition of the contributions Larry made through his efforts in the Peace Corps and as executive officer with USAID. It was Colin Powell's representative who met the plane when I

returned with Larry's body for autopsy and cremation. The fact that the U.S. Secretary of State not only cared what had happened to us but was also somewhere in the background offering support was a comfort to me.

When Secretary Powell began his speech honoring Larry at the following Foreign Service Day, his first few words were so powerful that no one in our family heard the words that followed. We had to ask for a copy of the speech later.

Colin Powell was not only a "model of a Servant-Leader" to his people, as America's top diplomat he was also a warm and caring human being. While I was struggling with shock and grief after my husband's murder, I felt the weight of the worldwide press focus and the potential political ramifications for

Jordan whose geography, people and leaders we had learned to love. I tried to tread softly.

It was the brief sentence Secretary Powell wrote on a photo of us together, taken on that Foreign Service Day—"Proud of you."—that gave me hope and courage, knowing that I met his approval.

Secretary Powell has been a hero to many people. I am one of them.

*Virginia Foley*

*FS family member*

*Guerneville, California*

## "No One Was Listening" Author Responds

When I agreed to have my letter published as the April 2022 Speaking Out column ("No One Was Listening: Russia, 1992"), I expected some rebuttal



and possibly negative backlash. So I read and reread each section to be sure everything included was exactly as I remembered it and removed anything I judged to be even a little questionable.

Since I anticipated negative feedback, it came as a surprise to receive instead several (18+) emails and phone calls from FSOs thanking me for writing the article, for “saying what needed to be said.” In fact, the responses from Mr. Myers (“No One Was Listening...?!” in June 2022) and Mr. Norris (“Unavoidable Chaos, No ‘Shock Therapy’” in July-August 2022) are the first rebuttals I’ve seen.

I do dispute some of their statements. For example, if there is any doubt about shock therapy, all one needs to do is an online search for “shock therapy, Russia, 1992.” Not only do these articles establish shock therapy as a real thing, every article supports my thesis.

Mr. Norris says that developing cooperatives is very difficult, more difficult than establishing a private sector. What was attempted in Russia was not just establishing cooperatives or a private sector, it was moving a huge economy from communism to capitalism. What could possibly be more complicated and difficult? But shock therapy was in line with Russia policy guidance. Cooperatives were not.

I don’t want to discuss point by point these responses. I know from working with USAID that our team in Moscow was very dedicated to doing the best they could within the confines of State Department policy guidance, as is always the case.

I don’t doubt they believe what they are saying and are somewhat insulted that I would present an alternative narrative, especially now when we have

the war in Ukraine. For my part, I think it’s vital to hear from those who dissent from the established narrative, perhaps more important now than ever. I stand behind everything I wrote in the article.

I guess the best we can do is just agree to disagree. I do appreciate the *FSJ* giving my thoughts a broader audience. It really seems to have hit many in a very positive way, if not Mr. Myers and Mr. Norris.

*Kristin Loken*

*USAID FSO, retired*

*Falling Waters, West Virginia* ■

#### **CORRECTIONS**

In the July-August 2022 Reflection, “Pearl Buck’s Rehabilitation in China,” Ms. Buck’s parents’ names should be Caroline and Absalom Sydenstricker.

In the July-August 2022 book review, the correct year for the Tet Offensive is 1968, not 1967.

We regret the errors.



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## Opportunity in South Asia

BY CHRIS HIPPNER

Robert Wang’s assessment of U.S.-China relations and recommendation to adopt stronger measures that counter China’s trade practices, as laid out in his July-August article, have merit. His “lessons of history” suggest China will continue to be a challenging competitor, and an occasional partner, for the foreseeable future.

In applying more direct measures, I would point to South Asia as a prime region for advancing his approach.

With Afghanistan no longer the central driver behind policy in the region, the U.S. should develop a South Asia strategy that advances the region’s economic and political integration into the greater liberal world order and provides an alternative to the Chinese Communist Party’s power-politics framework.

Such an approach would build on work done by previous administrations and ultimately shape the regional environment to the benefit of our long-term interests, as well as imposing on Beijing the kind of change-inducing costs Dr. Wang describes.

The cornerstone of such a strategy would be an increase in diplomatic, economic and military ties with *both* Pakistan and India.

Prior to 2001, U.S. policy in South Asia

focused on the integration of a democratically and economically viable Indian partner into the liberal world order, on one hand, and the prevention of terrorist attacks and nuclear proliferation by Pakistan on the other. The end of the Cold War allowed the U.S. more flexibility in pursuing greater economic integration in South Asia, particularly with India.

With a global rebalancing of priorities following the 2017 National Security Strategy, which continues under the current interim NSS, actions designed to bolster the rules-based order in regions like South Asia are now at the forefront of U.S. policy. However, China’s own regional strategy threatens to reverse decades-long progress and stymie future gains.

### China’s Strategy

China is currently Pakistan’s primary supplier of military arms, and its infrastructure investments into Pakistan are expected to exceed \$60 billion under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor umbrella. While CPEC creates a significant debt burden for Islamabad, the country lacks any true alternative for financing infrastructure development.

China’s investments in Pakistan counter decades-long efforts by the United States to improve Pakistani governance and manage the India-Pakistan rivalry.



China’s relations with Pakistan center on a shared suspicion of India, a common desire for economic development and obsession with combating “extremist” groups.

Further, China’s predatory economic programs in Pakistan and heavy-handed “Wolf Warrior” diplomacy with India will potentially constrain U.S. diplomacy during any future India-Pakistan crisis. Historically, China avoided making any firm commitments to Pakistan. During the 1971 Pakistan-India War, China publicly supported Pakistan, but privately told U.S. interlocutors: “You have strength to persuade India. You can speak to both sides.”

But since 1971, the level of China’s investment in South Asia under the One-Belt, One-Road Initiative has soared, and the region has become key to the country’s continued economic prosperity. China’s economic interests in the region alone suggest it may play a more active role during a future crisis.

In the event of another India-Pakistan crisis, how would the U.S. facilitate de-escalation, as it has done historically, if Pakistan now has another major global power to leverage for support and compel India to de-escalate? And, assuming China chooses to intercede on Pakistan’s behalf, would India look solely to the U.S. for support?

This scenario quickly starts to look like a patron state-client state standoff between two competing global systems. On one side, the U.S. representing a world



*Chris Hippner is currently a student at the U.S. Naval War College. He is a member of the U.S. intelligence community who specializes in East and South Asia. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. government.*

## Greater economic and political integration of South Asia into the liberal world order helps shape the strategic environment in which China operates.

based on rules, established institutions and interests aligned with India; on the other, the CCP, with its revisionist interpretation of global history since the end of the colonial era, supporting Pakistan.

### Expand U.S. Engagement

Dr. Wang is correct: Future U.S. policy should communicate that China's continued prosperity must occur within the existing rules of the world order. Greater economic and political integration of

South Asia, as a whole, into the liberal world order helps shape the strategic environment in which China operates.

Greater multilateral trade between the two South Asian countries and the U.S. and its allies creates additional diplomatic triangulation options for crisis management, as well as providing an alternative to China's predatory economic programs.

Further, closer military relations with both Pakistan and India, but especially

Pakistan, would provide another pillar for regional stability, even if it simply comes through more traditional forms of security cooperation, the expansion of existing professional military education opportunities, or increased intelligence sharing in areas of mutual interest.

When approaching South Asia, one can view it as a hotbed for radicalism that is continually dragged down by historical grievances, or a region of opportunity, ripe for expanded U.S. engagement. China certainly values the region for its own economic growth.

The U.S. should engage with both Pakistan and India to bolster their economic and political integration into the rules-based order, and thus shape one region in which China operates. ■



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## The American Public Likes Diplomats

A study published this year by the RAND Corporation evaluating the public view of U.S. diplomats and diplomacy found generally favorable attitudes toward diplomats but limited understanding of what they do, how they are selected and the role of diplomacy in America’s national security establishment.

To conduct the study, in 2020 and 2021 RAND posed a series of questions to a nationally representative, probability-based sample of more than 2,000 Americans ages 24 and older.

Survey respondents and focus group participants considered support for American citizens abroad to be a core and highly valued function for diplomats. They were less aware that diplomats also promote U.S. exports and support businesses.

Those surveyed identified understanding of global affairs and negotiating prowess as the most important skills for diplomats. More than half had no opinion on whether they considered U.S. diplomats to be representative of American society.

The authors of the study also found what they characterized as “worrisome levels of opinion that American diplomats, while trustworthy, were politically biased.” Nevertheless, the public expressed greater confidence in career ambassadors than political appointees, implying that reduced politicization of State Department positions would be broadly supported by Americans.

Despite the fact that more than 65 percent of respondents said they thought diplomacy contributes to national security, when asked whether spending on foreign affairs should be more, less or about the same, respondents favored keeping spending about the same.

Finally, the group expressed a clear

preference for diplomats to lead foreign policy efforts rather than military leaders.

## Sustained Support for Ukraine

On July 27, the day before Ukrainian Statehood Day, USAID announced its plan to send an additional \$75 million in humanitarian aid for those affected by Russian President Vladimir Putin’s war against Ukraine. This brings the total USAID humanitarian contribution to more than \$1 billion, and the total contributed by the U.S. government to more than \$1.5 billion.

Days earlier, a senior U.S. congressional delegation led by Congressman Adam Smith (D-Wash.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, traveled to Kyiv to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on July 23.

In a joint press release, the delegation pledged to “continue to seek ways to support President Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people as effectively as possible as they continue their brave stand.”

Meanwhile, the Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR), a breakaway Russia-backed group not recognized by the U.S. government, claimed credit in June for the capture of U.S. military veterans Alexander Druke and Andy Tai Ngoc Huynh.

Against warnings that American fighters will be treated as mercenaries

if captured by Russian soldiers—and therefore not protected by international rules for prisoners of war—the two traveled overseas as volunteers to help train troops in Ukraine. The State Department said it is in contact with Ukrainian and Russian authorities concerning the captured Americans.

A third U.S. citizen, Grady Kurpasi, is missing in Ukraine and at least two Americans are believed to have died in the fighting, *The Washington Post* reported in July.

The capture of the ex-military personnel is a sensitive dilemma, as the Kremlin may use it as evidence that the U.S. has become directly involved in the ongoing conflict.

## S Talks Equity at State

Addressing a global audience from the Dean Acheson Auditorium, Secretary of State Antony Blinken (S) hosted a town hall on May 31 to discuss how the State Department is embedding equity in its foreign affairs work and institutional culture. He was joined by Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources Brian McKeon and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley.

Secretary Blinken explained that the State Department’s equity action plan, approved by the White House in April and part of his modernization agenda,

contains specific actions, metrics and accountability measures to integrate equity into five priority areas: (1) foreign policy development and implementation, (2) foreign assistance, (3) public diplomacy, (4) consular services and (5) procurement, contracts and grants.



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, U.S. Ambassador Bridget Brink and Representative Adam Smith (D-Wash.) meet in Kyiv on July 23.



“We’re operating in an incredibly diverse world,” he said. “The idea that we wouldn’t take the fact that we are one of the most diverse countries in the world and use that in our work shortchanges us.”

The Secretary reminded the audience that starting in the next rating cycle, which begins in April 2023, advancing diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) will be part of the promotion criteria for State personnel.

Secretary Blinken described the department’s efforts to integrate equity as “more like turning an aircraft carrier than flipping a switch; it takes sustained effort. There must be a cultural shift.”

Deputy Secretary McKeon added that he would also like to see the department moving beyond performative actions to concrete plans. “We need to be thoughtful and innovative in how we put this into practice” here in Washington, D.C., as well as overseas, he said. “Which communities are not usually engaged by our missions and consulates? Are we only talking to elite communities abroad? How can we leverage our diplomatic engagements to ensure they are representative of all segments of society?”

Ambassador Abercrombie-Winstanley said her office recently launched its first DEIA climate survey, which garnered the participation of a third of the department’s workforce. The findings will provide her team with the disaggregated data and insights required to inform their work.

She also noted that, when reviewing the State Department’s action plan, the Office of Personnel Management said it was significantly more robust than plans submitted by other agencies. “They were impressed with the over 30 department offices and bureaus who contributed,” she said. “Now on to the next phase: implementation.”

## Contemporary Quote

“Diplomacy is a process, not an event. It’s the non-quantifiable art of building relationships for issues you do not yet know you’re going to have and being able to have conversations in ways people will understand.”

—Ambassador (ret.) Barbara Bodine, director of Georgetown University’s Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, speaking as part of an online panel discussion during the launch of the federally mandated State Department Learning Agenda on June 30.

## Au Revoir, Professional French Diplomacy?

On June 2, French diplomats went on strike for the first time in nearly 20 years to protest budget cuts and reforms proposed by President Emmanuel Macron that will transform the structure of diplomatic careers when they go into effect in 2023.

In what some are calling the end of France’s professional diplomacy, the measures would create a new body of state administrators in which senior civil servants will no longer be linked to a specific administration, *France24* reported in June. Instead, diplomats will be placed in a large pool from all branches of public service, encouraged to switch to other ministries and forced to compete with outsiders for diplomatic posts.

The reforms would also merge and gradually phase out the two historic bodies of French diplomacy: ambassadors and foreign affairs advisers. One of the presumed goals of the change is to modernize and diversify the country’s diplomatic corps, created in the 16th century and seen by some in the government as an elitist institution.

France currently has the world’s third-largest diplomatic corps behind the U.S. and China, with about 1,800 diplomats among a total of about 13,500 officials working at the foreign ministry. The

proposed plan is said to affect about 800 diplomats.

At overseas posts around the world, including Washington, D.C., numerous diplomats and some ambassadors participated in the daylong strike, according to the Associated Press.

In a commentary published in *Le Monde* in early June, a group of 500 French diplomats wrote: “We risk the disappearance of our professional diplomacy. Today, [diplomatic] agents ... are convinced it is the very existence of the ministry that is now being put into question.”

They also warned of “the risks of such a decision, which will allow appointments of convenience to the detriment of competence and will result in a loss of expertise and a vocational crisis.”

On July 19, French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Catherine Colonna—herself a career diplomat—announced to the Senate that the planned reforms will not be suspended in response to the backlash. She suggested that unspecified “guarantees” would be obtained to reassure concerned diplomats, French news outlet *Marianne* reported in July.

## Afghanistan Now

Just weeks before the one-year anniversary of the United States’ withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan

## 25 Years Ago

### The Cornerstone of the Foreign Service: Its Professionals' Language Skills

The Foreign Service's competitive advantage is its knowledge of foreign countries and peoples, a knowledge gained from living abroad and communicating in foreign languages. Ours is a unique and vital contribution to America's foreign policy. Experts with substantive knowledge are needed to help clarify U.S. foreign policy goals, but FSOs are needed to carry out those plans.

... FSOs are responsible for reporting on developments overseas, but a Foreign Service corps that is poorly trained to use the local language can keep busy doing bureaucratic tasks and never effectively report on social, political or business activities.

—Foreign Service Officer Robert Griffiths in a *Speaking Out* article titled "Preserve Language Pay Incentives" in the September 1997 FSJ.



Reconstruction (SIGAR) released its 12th Lessons Learned report.

Titled "Police in Conflict: Lessons from U.S. and International Police Assistance Efforts in Afghanistan," the June 1 report explores the reasons behind the U.S. inability to create an effective police force in Afghanistan, with crucial insights for future efforts elsewhere.

The findings "highlight the difficulty of fighting a heavily armed insurgency while trying to develop indigenous law enforcement and civilian policing capabilities," the report says. As the Taliban-led insurgency gained inroads in 2004 and violence escalated, the U.S. and the international community decided to transition from a civilian-led to a military-led police assistance mission.

As a result, the Afghan police force's focus became fighting insurgents rather than stopping criminals and gangsters—many of whom were members of or affiliated with the Afghan government. This shift empowered warlords-turned-police chiefs who, despite being tactically proficient in fighting, were also

human rights abusers and criminals.

Police advisers often faced a moral dilemma: whether to partner with corrupt and abusive yet militarily effective police officials who had the support of the local population, or to refuse and risk rising instability, the loss of support for the U.S. intervention and the reduction of its ability to disrupt terrorist cells.

Today, earthquakes, flash flooding, ongoing economic instability and rising malnutrition have all led to a humanitarian crisis.

Additionally, the latest report on Afghanistan from the United Nations Security Council contains alarming details on the activities of terrorist groups now enjoying the Taliban's protection. "Afghanistan has reverted to the state it was in before Sept. 11, 2001, when it hosted Osama bin Laden," *Foreign Policy* wrote on July 27.

Since the Taliban takeover last year, there have been repeated reports of al-Qaida fighters crossing the Pakistan border into Afghanistan, the BBC said,

including some at the top of the U.S.' most wanted list.

On the morning of July 31, a U.S. drone strike killed al-Qaida leader and key 9/11 plotter Ayman al-Zawahri in the heart of Kabul, where he was staying in a safe house believed to belong to the acting Taliban interior minister. No other deaths were reported in the attack.

Zawahri, who assumed al-Qaida leadership after the death of bin Laden in 2011, was also suspected of playing a role in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya.

Back in Washington, the U.S. government's review of Afghanistan is not without conflict. In a June 22 letter to Congress, the Secretary of State and the USAID Administrator, SIGAR Director John Sopko reported that the agencies' officials were not cooperating with his office's probe.

"Historically, State and USAID officials have honored my office's requests," the letter says. "Inexplicably, this long track record of cooperation seems to have abruptly ended. Agency officials now appear to have adopted a premeditated position of obstruction."

State Department spokesperson Ned Price responded that SIGAR "did not request input from the State Department" when drafting a May report on the military's collapse, "nor did they afford us an opportunity to review the draft before it was finalized." However, a series of emails between the department and Sopko's team, released by SIGAR, do not support these claims.

In response to a direct request from SIGAR on Nov. 29, 2021, for AFSA's assistance in reaching Foreign Service officers for the purpose of voluntary interviews, AFSA emailed members on Jan. 13 informing them of the request and including the appropriate SIGAR contact information.

## New Faces in New Places

On June 3, career Senior Foreign Service Officer Ambassador Joan Polaschik was sworn in as the 22nd director of the Foreign Service Institute. She previously served as dean of the School of Professional and Area Studies and as the institute's deputy director.

In remarks at the swearing-in ceremony, Amb. Polaschik named as one of her key priorities the establishment of a training float.

Notable recent State Department appointments include former Virginia first lady Dorothy McAuliffe, who will serve as the new special representative for global partnerships, and Desirée Cormier Smith, who was appointed in June to the newly created position of special representative for racial equity and justice.

Since our last update in the July-August issue, the Senate has confirmed 23 individuals for ambassadorships and other senior positions. Those are: career Foreign Service officers for 12 ambassadorships (Sudan, South Sudan, the Slovak Republic, North Macedonia, Uzbekistan, Thai-

land, Fiji/Kiribati/Nauru/Tonga/Tuvalu, Mongolia, Nepal, Qatar, Zambia and Chad); one member of the civil service (Kazakhstan); seven political ambassadors (Denmark, Hungary, South Africa, ASEAN, Malta, Iceland and Kenya); and two political appointees to be assistant secretary of State for legislative affairs and USAID assistant administrator for Africa.

As in the last update, four senior positions at the Department of State have nominees who have yet to be confirmed. In addition, the same two positions do not yet have a nominee: inspector general and under secretary of State for public affairs and public diplomacy.

At USAID, three nominees remain unconfirmed, and one position lacks a nominee. The CEO of the U.S. Agency for Global Media has yet to be confirmed.

AUSAID is currently tracking 44 ambassador vacancies across the globe, 24 of which have a nominee. Nominations that have been announced since our last update include 18 career Foreign Service members (Mauritius/Seychelles, Papua New Guinea/Vanuatu/Solomons,

Armenia, Tajikistan, DR Congo, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Niger, Cambodia, Cyprus, African Union, Latvia, Romania, Côte d'Ivoire, Bulgaria, Rwanda, Turkmenistan and Suriname) and one political appointee (Czech Republic).

In addition, nominees for USAID assistant administrator for Asia and ambassador at large for cyberspace and digital policy were announced—both political appointees.

The nomination of Elizabeth Frawley Bagley as political appointee ambassador to Brazil stalled in May when *The Washington Free Beacon* surfaced remarks she made in a 1998 oral history interview with the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training about the influence of the “Jewish lobby” and finances. As a result, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee blocked moving her nomination on to the full Senate.

In July, Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger, made famous after successfully landing US Airways Flight 1549 on the Hudson River in 2009, resigned his position as ambassador to the International Civil Aviation Organization (the United Nations air safety agency) in Montreal for unspecified reasons. He had served in the role for just six months.

On July 28, the Nicaraguan government announced it had withdrawn its approval of the nominee for U.S. ambassador to the country, Foreign Service Officer Hugo Rodriguez, Reuters reported. The rejection comes as a response to comments Rodriguez made during his Senate confirmation hearing, which included supporting a “change in direction in Nicaragua” and considering the removal of the country from the Central America–Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement.

Follow AUSAID's ambassador tracker for real-time updates at [afsa.org/ambassadorlist](https://afsa.org/ambassadorlist).

### HEARD ON THE HILL



### Understaffed Embassies in Africa

The persistent and acute understaffing of career Foreign Service positions at U.S. missions in Africa is a significant concern. While the global need and demands on the department are immense, the dire staffing and human resource situation reflects Africa as an afterthought rather than a priority of global significance.

—Senator Jim Risch (R-Idaho) in a July 22 interview with Foreign Policy.

### Bolstering Diplomacy with Africa

The United States government has invested billions in the security sector in countries in Africa over the years, but we are falling short with regards to addressing the lack of resources and diplomatic presence. This hampers our ability to balance security programs with those aimed at tackling the root causes of extremism and overall insecurity.

—Senator Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in remarks to Foreign Policy on July 22.

Site of the Month: <https://InkstickMedia.com>

**N**amed after military slang for the simple black pen, Inkstick is a media outlet that aims for a pared down, jargon-free approach to foreign policy and national security coverage targeting a young and diverse audience.

The website includes reporting, commentary and essays on topics such as rebuilding U.S. credibility in the Middle East, NATO's posture toward the Kurds, the roots of Sri Lanka's current crisis and the growing need for international space law.

Though Inkstick maintains a staff of columnists and editors, many articles are submitted

by international studies professors and fellows at foreign affairs or national security think tanks.

The outlet also hosts the podcast "Things That Go Boom," which was featured as podcast of the month in the November 2020 *FSJ*.



During the conversation, Amb. Bodine cautioned against overfocusing on data, which could lead diplomats to run short-term interventions rather than build long-term engagement. "Let's not default to quantified metrics that distort results and make us less intuitive, less relational, less wise going forward," she added.

Connolly raised the importance of creating a system to manage and share knowledge for the purpose of collective learning. "Organizations can't learn; it's people who learn," he said. He believes bureaucracies need to share failure stories internally to close the gap between evidence-learning and decision-making.

## TSP Info Gone MIA

**A**fter fielding complaints from a growing number of constituents, two members of Congress—Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.) and Abigail Spanberger (D-Va.)—sent a letter on July 25 to the Government Accountability Office requesting a comprehensive examination of the new Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) online system.

On June 1, the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board launched a new system with the goal of modernizing TSP's recordkeeping, improving customer service and bolstering cybersecurity.

In a debacle giving many FS members payroll déjà vu, users have since reported problems ranging from inability to access their TSP accounts, incorrect account balances, missing or incomplete information in their accounts and hours-long wait times to reach customer service.

As of December 2021, TSP had approximately 6.5 million participants and more than \$838 billion in assets, making it the world's largest defined contribution plan.

*This edition of Talking Points was compiled by Julia Wohlers. ■*

*The appearance of a particular site or podcast is for information only and does not constitute an endorsement.*

## Learning Agenda Launches

**I**n an effort to institutionalize "evidence-based learning" in diplomacy, the State Department launched its Learning Agenda on June 30. The virtual launch event was hosted by the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, and featured a keynote address from Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland (ambassador, ret.).

Although developing the agenda was mandatory—the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 requires all federal agencies to develop a plan to gather evidence in support of policy—Director of the Office of Foreign Assistance Dafna Rand said in opening remarks at the event that "State has risen to the occasion."

Over the past two years, she said, more than 100 employees across almost every bureau met in groups to examine the department's core objectives. The result, laid out in 40 pages, is a methodi-

cal approach to answering eight ambitious questions over the next four years about how to increase the impact of U.S. foreign policy.

U/S Nuland asked the audience, "How do you measure whether you've made a difference in diplomacy? Can we put more rigor into how we evaluate what we've done in the past so we can apply those lessons to the future? It's key that we're sure the investments we're making in terms of people, time and money lead to better security outcomes for the American people."

A panel discussion followed, with the participation of Ambassador (ret.) Barbara Bodine, director and distinguished professor in the practice of diplomacy of the Georgetown University's Institute for the Study of Diplomacy; Dr. David Connolly, director of learning, evaluation and research at the U.S. Institute of Peace; and Eric Rosenbach, co-director of the Belfer Center and head of the Defending Digital Democracy projects at the Harvard Kennedy School.

# Democracy as a Vocation

BY JOSÉ M. GARZÓN

Politics is a strong and slow boring of hard boards. It takes both passion and perspective. Certainly, all historical experience confirms the truth that man would not have attained the possible unless time and again he had reached out for the impossible. But to do that a person must be a leader, and not only a leader but a hero as well, in a very sober sense of the word. And even those who are neither leaders nor heroes must arm themselves with that steadfastness of heart which can brave even the crumbling of all hopes. This is necessary right now, or else we will not be able to attain even that which is possible today.

—Max Weber, *“Politics as a Vocation,”* 1919

This is a love letter to junior FSOs everywhere, but especially those in democracy and governance (USAID) or political (State) career tracks.

In 1994, a few years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, USAID created the Center for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, and a few years later created a specialty cone (“backstop” in USAID-speak) dedicated to the subject (BS 76). When the new bureau’s assistant administrator came to my post, I marched into his office, slapped down my CV, which screamed “political scientist” on the top, and said: “I want to be one, too.”

And so I became a democracy and governance (DG) officer. I ran programs

in Bolivia, Guatemala, Afghanistan, Kosovo and Washington, D.C. And did I have fun. With my colleagues I helped build municipal associations, introduced a new and effective approach to dealing with youth gangs, brought community radio to the farthest reaches of Afghanistan and broke through barriers between ethnic groups in Kosovo.

But now, as I reflect on my career and more recent work in Central America as a contracted adviser, I wonder ... what difference did any of it make?



A hostile government kicked USAID out of Bolivia (beginning with its democracy office) in 2013; Guatemala and

Kosovo seem stuck in time; and Afghanistan’s government crumbled last year with all of our hopes. Elsewhere dictatorship or populist authoritarianism is on the rise, from Nicaragua to Hungary, while several other governments abuse their citizens with impunity.

Democratic reform in Russia is a distant memory, as are the hopes of a more democratic China that greater and freer trade would bring.

The “democratic recession” is well documented in the indices and academic research. For example, the 2021 Freedom in the World report from Freedom House documents a steady decline in freedom in each of the past 15 years, with the greatest “democracy gap” in 2020.

Oh, and on the Mother Ship, the world’s last and best hope, things are not looking so good either. A year ago, the United States narrowly avoided a populist coup. Journalists, school board members and judges have been threatened and even attacked outright. School libraries are removing books from their shelves. The U.S. is starting to have the look of a fragile state.

Democracy is in retreat, and authoritarianism in fashion. Unlike the authoritarianism of the past, which was often the extension of influence of the superpowers, this authoritarianism often, though not always, grows from below: from popular frustrations or anxieties of every sort. It is rooted more in fear and grievance than in ideology. It doesn’t even have an ideology—it defies categorization, yet it is everywhere.

A statement that has haunted me for years, from one of my favorite pieces of



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*Followers” (The Foreign Service Journal, March 2014 and January-February 2017, respectively) and “Democracy and Development Reconsidered” (USAID Frontiers in Development, 2012). He currently serves as a mentor to junior officers through the Payne Fellows Program and USAID Alumni Association.*

## The struggle to advance democracy, whether here or abroad, must never cease.

political theory, Max Weber's "Politics as a Vocation," comes to mind: "And even those who are neither leaders nor heroes must arm themselves with that steadfastness of heart which can brave even the crumbling of all hopes."

I now realize that Weber was talking to me. In fact, he was speaking to anyone who has tried to make a difference in the world. I think most of us in the Foreign Service, myself included, choose every day to arm ourselves with a steadfastness of heart. In the spirit of Martin Luther, we cannot do otherwise.

I don't know what the future holds for democracy, whether in the United States or anywhere else. What I can say is that the struggle to advance democracy, whether here or abroad, must never cease. The pain and frustrations are worth it. I did not fail, nor will anyone else engaged in this cause. We have cultivated a tree that others planted. Some of the branches may have been cut; but the roots still thrive, and they will not die.

The desire for some form of democracy—as defined by rights, dignity, freedom and some measure of participation in decisions that affect us—is human and universal. The institutional structures, the cultures, the specific values and the ranking of other priorities (such as nationalism or economic interests) vary enormously, but the democratic spirit cannot be forever suppressed.

The struggle continues. But how we conduct ourselves must take a new perspective, far from those heady days in the early 1990s when we all thought the

world had changed for better and forever. To withstand the crumbling of hopes, we must first affirm those hopes and what we believe. Only then do we have a calling to achieve what is possible.

In "Politics as a Vocation," Weber notes that the modern politician requires three contradictory qualities within the same soul: passion, a sense of responsibility and clarity of vision. Those who support democracy abroad require the same virtues, and perhaps a few more.

Clarity, certainly. Not only do we need to know the "best practices" and research, but as politicians—and we are politicians—we need to think politically. I would add a few more qualities for the aspiring democracy and governance or political officer.



First, and most important of all, is **humility**. Too often, our attempts at assisting democracies abroad have suffered from national hubris. Nowhere was that more evident than in Afghanistan, where the U.S. government poured in millions of dollars and spoke bravely of "game changers," not realizing that pouring excessive amounts of money into a poor country often undermines democracy itself.

This thinking is still prevalent whenever someone asks, "What are *we* doing about it?"—as if we can determine another nation's future. As individuals, we sometimes let our egos get in the way: *I have to be seen making it happen* so I can get some measure of credit. After

all, if I didn't make it happen, what am I doing there? Good question.

But it's not about you; and really, it's not about the United States, although you will never convince policymakers otherwise. Democracy is a decision that people must make for themselves, and they will usually make it affirmatively if allowed. Get your ego out of the way and play a supporting role, but play it well.

And to the public at large and the policymakers, I am probably wasting my pixels writing this, but stop thinking you can solve every problem with enough money or putting the right people in place. The corollary of this I direct to the world at large (again probably wasting pixels): stop laying every problem at the feet of the United States, or Washington will think it can solve the problem, and it won't. Or at least you won't like the solutions.

The second virtue is **persistence**, which is really sustained passion. When I speak with students contemplating careers in development, I ask, "How many of you run marathons or long distances?" I get a few hands. "You are well suited to my line of work."

Development work, especially in the field of democracy, is Weber's slow boring of hard boards. It is not for those seeking instant gratification. Victories can come unexpectedly, but so do setbacks, sometimes the result of the host government, sometimes the result of our own government. You change approaches and try again. But you do not give up.

Third is **creativity**. Especially in what are euphemistically called "closing spaces," you look for opportunities wherever you can find them. You may find them in unusual places, like education programs, communities or with religious groups. Seek out opportunities to collabo-

## How things end depends on our host country. How they begin depends on us.

rate with artists and storytellers—they can spark the imagination of the people you want to reach, certainly better than PowerPoint can.

Or look for unusual times to meet with unusual people, like conversations over beer with your adversaries, or tea with the town merchants. You never know where things can lead. Do not be afraid to try something that sounds a bit odd, like a reality TV show, or a rock concert, a telenovela, or sports. Yep, I've tried them all.

Next, this work requires **courage**.

Sometimes that can mean physical courage, like visiting a dangerous place. But more frequently it requires speaking truth to power, or truth to your skeptical colleagues. Go ahead, speak your mind. Mobilize your evidence and arguments, but take a stand.

And, as for Weber's politician, democracy work requires **perspective**. I said earlier that it is not about you. I take that back. It is about you and about the United States. It's just not in the way we are accustomed to thinking. How things end depends on our host country. How they

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begin depends on us. What you are doing reflects who we are.

The United States supports democracy because if it did not, it would not be the United States. If, God forbid, we lose our democracy, we cease to be the United States. What you are doing is inherently right, no matter the result. Your work matters. You matter. ■



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# MUCH CAUSE FOR WORRY

## A CLEAR-EYED LOOK AT AFRICA

**It is time to put sentiment aside and look clearly at Africa through an objective lens, this Senior Foreign Service officer asserts.**

BY MARK G. WENTLING



fter working and living in every corner of the continent and visiting its 54 countries over the last 50 years, I cannot help but worry about Africa's future, and I want to spell out why.

I apologize in advance to all my African friends. Though this article may come across as being too negative, I believe we need a dose of realism. It is time to put sentiments aside and look clearly at Africa through an objective lens, without exaggerating its future promise.

There is no question that peace, stability and good leadership are essential to the advancement of any country. Today the opposite exists in most African countries, limiting the continent's future role in the world. Few have graduated from the lowest ranks of the poorest countries. All but three of the 31 countries



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listed in the lowest human development category of the United Nations Development Programme's 2021 Human Development Index are in Africa. Despite many development efforts over the years, this has been the case since the annual HDI reports were initiated in 1990.

This is not to say that some progress has not been made. For example, the average adult literacy rate in Africa has increased from 49 percent to 66 percent from 1985 to 2019. And the infant mortality rate improved from 139 to 44 per 1,000 births in the 1970-2020 period. Importantly, during the past 50 years the status of women has also been elevated, in spite of Africa's age-old patriarchal traditions. Indeed, women represent Africa's greatest untapped resource. But while there has been progress in Africa, it has been much too slow.



I arrived in Africa for the first time in 1970, in Togo, a small West African coastal country that was known at the time as "the Switzerland of Africa." There was a euphoric mood among the people. They believed that after 10 years of independence, real development was within grasp, and soon there would not be any need for external assistance.

Those were hopeful days in West Africa, where most coun-





tries gained independence around 1960. Little did the Togolese suspect then that the military coup perpetrated in 1963 would be the first of many in Africa, that they would have the same president for 38 years, and that upon his death in 2005, he would be replaced by his son, who still rules. My Togo experience has taught me many lessons about how difficult it is to achieve progress in an unpredictable Africa.

Yet Togo is a mild case of the kind of anti-development malaise that permeates most of the continent. Conditions are far worse in many other countries in Africa, which seem hell-bent on reversing the progress achieved over the last half-century. It is difficult to find an African country where competent and honest governance prevails and where justice is rendered to the people. Violent conflict exists in 20 African countries, and potential

upsets in others cannot be ruled out. The violent activities of extremist groups are spreading. Living in Africa today obliges one to take many security measures.

**Population Numbers.** All African countries are coping with the tsunami of a fast-growing population. The youthful structure of that population (the average age in Africa is 19.7 years, compared to 38.5 years in the U.S.) presents formidable challenges. Rapid population growth is outstripping development gains. In 2050 Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, will have as many people as the United States in a land area that is one-eleventh the size of the U.S.

There are almost four times the number of people in Africa today than when I first arrived on the continent in 1970. Projections indicate that its total population will continue to

## The fact that most of the world's future workforce will be in Africa merits greater attention.

expand, going from about 1.4 billion today to possibly more than 4 billion in 2100. I am at a loss to see how Africa can cope with this number of people.

The phenomenal growth of Africa's population underscores the fact that it is the only region in the world which has not achieved a demographic transition—i.e., its birth rates remain high. Further, this growth in population is spawning rapid urbanization, which often translates into the growth of large informal settlements. The dire consequences of such unprecedented population growth, coupled with a massive rural exodus, on Africa's development prospects are without historical parallel.

**A Constrained Workforce.** The fact that most of the world's future workforce will be in Africa merits greater attention. While the working population in high-income countries is dwindling, the overall working population in Africa is increasing. Yet most adults in Africa remain jobless. If the litmus test of development is job creation, Africa can be judged a failure. A central question for wealthier countries with vacant jobs is how to engage Africans to fill these jobs.

A huge constraint on the use of the available labor force in Africa is the low educational and health status of the people. In most countries on the continent, a substantial percentage of the population is illiterate. And the prevalence of tropical illnesses such as malaria limits the contributions of its labor force.

Low scores in the education and health sectors are key determinants keeping most African countries mired in the bottom ranks of the HDI. Host governments and donors need to accept that these countries will always be in the lowest HDI ranks as long as these two key indicators—education and health—remain low. If the objective is to reduce poverty, improvements in these indicators are essential.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added to Africa's burdens. On average, less than 10 percent of Africans are fully vaccinated, and there is a fear of new virus variants originating in Africa. The low percentage of Africans vaccinated represents a health threat to the entire world.

**An Agricultural Paradox.** Africa is also the only region in the world that has not had an agricultural productivity transition. Crop yields remain a fraction of what they are in other regions,

and average farm size is small compared to other regions. The average age of the African farmer is increasing as young people abandon rural life for the towns and cities.

The absolute number of hungry Africans (in the millions) is rising. Food import costs for African countries are also rising. Yet Africa has the potential to not only feed itself but the rest of the world. In this regard, it represents something of a paradox. Currently, the shortage of food in Africa is being made worse by Russia's war in Ukraine.

Higher population densities oblige farmers to cultivate smaller acreage and marginal land. Part of the problem is a lack of access to the improved inputs needed to cultivate intensively. Farmers' encroachment onto marginal lands has also added to large-scale deforestation and land degradation. Further, rampant illegal logging has resulted in the disappearance of millions of acres of Africa's forests.

The lack of secure rights to land impedes any progress in dealing with Africa's agricultural productivity failure. Only an estimated 10 percent of African farmers have legal title to their land. Africa remains the only region in the world where land ownership has not become fundamental to successful farming.

Coupled with this challenging agricultural production picture are negative nutritional factors, and these, too, hold Africa back. In many African countries, malnutrition among children is of crisis proportions. If good nutrition is the foundation of life, Africa has no solid foundation.

**Challenges to Democracy.** Further complicating the picture, ongoing civil conflicts have resulted in more than 20 million people fleeing their homes, either to become internally displaced or refugees in neighboring countries. With the rise in violent conflicts and unfavorable changes in the climate, this number is expected to grow. Added to this number are thousands of desperate migrants who try to escape poverty by making the perilous trek north to Europe.

There is much handwringing over the backsliding of democracy in Africa. Do not get me wrong. I am not for military coups that result in uncertainty or constitutional coups that maintain in power the same corrupt leaders, but I want what is best for the African people, particularly for future generations. Democracy works best in a low-income country when it is effective at reducing poverty.

I do not believe "good governance" requires the establishment of a widespread participatory democracy process modeled on wealthier countries. I also question whether a function-

ing democracy is possible in any low-income agrarian country with a high level of illiteracy.

Holding democratic elections is expensive, and the term “democracy” does not exist in most local African languages—but the word

“justice” does. Most so-called Western-style democracies in Africa are a sham. Perhaps indigenous forms of participatory governance would be more appropriate.

Any decision on the form of governance to be adopted will need to consider a country’s multi-ethnic makeup and the colonial borders it inherited. National borders in Africa are those set by colonial powers in their scramble for Africa following the Berlin Conference in 1884-1885. When the African Union was founded in 1963, it accepted these borders.

Africans want justice. This could mean better schools, health clinics and water supplies. These services can be provided by a strong, benevolent leader who puts the best interests of the people and country first. My favorite kind of African leaders have no blood on their hands or large sums of money stashed away in foreign banks. Where in Africa do such national leaders exist?

**PRC Involvement and the Debt Trap.** Over the past 20 years, the People’s Republic of China has made inroads in Africa. China has tackled Africa’s large infrastructure deficit, providing expertise, funds and workers to construct ports, roads, railroads, dams and sports stadiums. The number of Chinese living and working in Africa has grown exponentially. Their willingness to live poor and work hard is unsurpassed.

Western countries have found they cannot compete with the Chinese. The Chinese do not express concerns over the environment, democracy or human rights as Western nations often do. The high amount of China’s loans to African countries has raised fears that it is causing a debt trap for Africa.

The national debt levels of a number of African countries are, indeed, rising, and it is expected they will be obliged to default on their debts. Economic dependence on the export of one or two commodities is not a solution to Africa’s financial problems.

More money leaves Africa illicitly than goes into it through legitimate channels. Until this kind of corrupt financial hemorrhaging is cured, can there be any hope for a better future for Africa?

**Money and Minerals.** The continent has natural resources the world needs. It is regrettable that a number of African

he term “democracy” does not exist in most local African languages—but the word “justice” does.

countries are exploiting a wealth of natural resources, but their people remain poor. There are too many countries in Africa where the country is rich and people are poor. This is a contradiction that only Africans can resolve.

One example of this contradiction is the strife-ridden Democratic Republic of the Congo. This country is larger than Western Europe. The DRC is gorged with natural resources. Yet its people are among the poorest in the world, while its deeply corrupted elites are fabulously rich. It also has a dense forest cover that plays a critical role (after the Amazon Basin) in absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

No doubt the DRC possesses resources the world needs, but if the international community does not act, these resources will be squandered. These resources include rare minerals like cobalt and coltan, necessary for the manufacture of electric cars and mobile phones. These minerals are largely mined in a chaotic fashion by criminal gangs.

Since the survival of the planet may be at stake, it is past time for the international community to take seriously what is happening in the DRC. Firm arrangements for efficiently and honestly managing the mining of these minerals and the DRC’s tropical forest must be concluded between the DRC and the international community.

Increasingly, illegal activities that did not exist before are now major preoccupations. The trafficking of humans, arms, drugs, gold, diamonds, animals, timber, money laundering and counterfeit medicines is now commonplace. International organized crime is well implanted in Africa, and criminal cartels control lucrative businesses.

The world is changing quickly. Africa must run fast to stay in the same place. Climate change makes it even more difficult to advance. Where does the hope for the future of Africa lie?



It seems few Americans care about Africa. I care, but I am helpless to change the course of history. I can see that if the negative trends of this large and diverse continent of more than 2,000 ethnic groups are not reversed, there is much cause for worry. ■

# A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR AFRICA?

**U.S. policy needs to recognize the continent's tremendous riches in resources and human capacity and help develop their potential to ensure a promising future, this Africa hand explains.**

BY TIBOR NAGY

In the summer of 2016, then-Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Linda Thomas-Greenfield's office called me to ask if I would accept a short stint as chargé d'affaires in Abuja, Nigeria, because the post was between ambassadors and needed help preparing for a Secretary of State visit. Even though I had retired in 2003 after a lengthy career in Africa and was then happily ensconced as vice provost at Texas Tech University, one could not say no to LTG.

Little did I realize that those few weeks would lead to my own return to the State Department—this time as assistant secretary—for my second African “adventure.” In Nigeria, I was struck again by the incredibly stark choices facing Africa: either a dystopian disaster of misery, instability, growing extremism, more conflicts and huge migrations; or an invigorated continent bursting with youthful energy, economic promise and greatly improved societies.



*Tibor Nagy retired from the U.S. Foreign Service in 2003 after a long career, which included 22 years in Africa at eight postings, with two ambassadorships and three stints as deputy chief of mission. He returned to the State Department as assistant secretary of State for Africa in 2018 and re-retired in 2021. In between, he served as vice provost for international affairs at Texas Tech University. He continues to teach at Texas Tech, write regular op-ed pieces and lecture on foreign policy. His book (co-authored with Ambassador Greg Engle), *Managing International Operations: Kiss Your Latte Goodbye* (Vargas, 2012), won the 2014 Paris Book Festival award for nonfiction.*



U.S. EMBASSY BANGUI

**During a visit to the Central African Republic in 2019, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Tibor Nagy met with U.S. embassy leadership and alumni of U.S. exchange programs. From left: Deputy Chief of Mission Pamela Hack; Pascale Gabriella Serra, a Mandela Washington Fellow in the Young African Leaders Initiative; Brice Ekomo, a participant in the International Visitor Leadership Program; Euphrem Moussa, Kessy Ekomo-Soignet and Riva Felix, all Mandela Washington Fellows in the Young African Leaders Initiative; Tibor Nagy; U.S. Ambassador to the Central African Republic Lucy Tamlyn; and Kinanata Sali, with the Regional Leadership Center of the Young African Leaders Initiative.**

## The Reality

In the 60-some years since Africa’s decolonization, the continent has always been Washington’s lowest geopolitical priority. In explaining this to my African friends, I use the example of a pick-up basketball game among Olympic athletes—even though they are all Olympians, someone must get picked last. This is reality. Anyone who disagrees needs simply to compare how State resources the Bureau of African Affairs and our embassies in Africa compared to other regions; resources, not statements, reflect priorities. For example, where else would a country of more than 100 million people (Ethiopia) merit only one diplomatic post?

A few other truisms regarding America’s engagement with Africa are:

- Africa has always been seen as a “problem” to be solved, rather than an opportunity to be appreciated; Africa is considered the continent of perpetual bad news.
- In our African policy implementation, there has always been a tension between achieving long-range goals and responding to immediate crises; the reality is that the crises have always sucked the oxygen out of the room.
- While each administration has showcased, often to great fanfare, a “new” Africa policy, they have fundamentally all been the same: to promote a stable, peaceful Africa with improved

political, economic and social opportunities for its people. None have succeeded.

- Africa’s colonial masters designed Africa to fail by encumbering it with national borders that made no sense historically, ethnically, commercially or politically—they only met the colonials’ interests. In addition, African states gained independence at a most awkward historical moment—during the Cold War, when they had no choice but to pick a side between the West and the Soviet Empire.

- In the decolonization struggles, the United States invariably supported the losing side—namely, the colonial powers and South Africa’s apartheid regime (until Congress ended “constructive engagement”). This left a bitter taste with the winners that remains even today. Compounding the problem, in the immediate postcolonial period Washington relied on the advice from former colonial powers on how to handle the newly independent states. The colonial powers, of course, were looking after their own interests, and their actions were imbued with racism and paternalism.

- Finally, along with providing generous humanitarian and development assistance, the U.S. has often conducted our engagement with Africa through a megaphone—lecturing, hectoring, advising, but rarely listening.

**F**or decades, the U.S. was Africa's largest trading partner, but this ended in 2009 when China surpassed us with about \$200 billion in annual trade.

### Contrasting Futures

In Nigeria in 2016, I had an opportunity to experience two diametrically opposing glimpses of Africa's future.

One day I had a long discussion with the then governor of Borno State, ground zero for the depredations of Boko Haram, the extremist group that has so terrorized Nigeria's Northeast. Beyond the immediate problems, Governor Ali Modu Sheriff explained that while it is common knowledge that Africa's population will double between now and 2050 (to 2.5 billion), few realize that much of that growth will take place in the vast Sahel—the harsh zone between fertile plains and the Sahara Desert, stretching from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, an area that includes Borno. The region, which is enflamed by extremist violence, also contains some of Africa's weakest states, least-educated populations, the greatest poverty with limited economic opportunities and the fewest rights for women. With such characteristics, I could envision an even grimmer future of greater instability, violence and mass migrations.

However, the next day, I had an opportunity to meet with Nigeria's returning Mandela Fellows, a program under President Barack Obama's "Young African Leaders Initiative," which brings some of Africa's brightest young people to U.S. universities for summer programs. During our discussions, I had an epiphany: Never in my life had I encountered a sharper, more visionary group of young people—these were future leaders sharing similar life goals and dreams as my Texas Tech University honors students, and they were eager to help their countries achieve a much brighter future.

In my view, the determining factor between the contrasting futures offered by the governor of Borno and the Nigerian Mandela Fellows comes down to Africa's youth. Will these millions and millions of young people, in countries with low median ages, be a force for instability or dynamic growth? And the answer comes down to this: Will they have economic opportunities (good jobs) and decent governments, or will they be frustrated by the lack of those essentials? Will they be the world's new consumers or disruptors?

There is no reason Africa's emerging youth "tsunami" should

not have access to great jobs, because Africa's potential is enormous. Others have recognized this, even if U.S. institutions, including most of our businesses, have continued to focus on Africa's problems. Already, in the decade before COVID-19, seven of the world's 20 fastest-growing economies were

African; and by 2050 one out of every four workers in the world will be African. But beyond Africa's population explosion, its major significance to the 21st century will be its prominence in the globe's transformation to a "green economy."

### Tapping Africa's Potential

The continent contains some of the world's largest reserves of rare-earth elements and minerals like copper and bauxite, key components in emergent green tech. For example, while a gasoline-powered car contains about 50 pounds of copper, a fully electric vehicle has 175 pounds, and a wind turbine 4.7 tons. Just one African country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, contains more than half of the world's reserves of cobalt, an essential component in batteries and other renewables. Because of its overall mineral wealth, the DRC is referred to as the "Saudi Arabia of the 21st century," and that's not an exaggeration. Shortly after coming to power in 2018, DRC President Félix Tshisekedi made it clear that his first preference would be to partner with U.S. companies in developing these resources.

Unless the United States grasps such opportunities quickly, they will pass; others have recognized Africa's value and are using it to advance their own global aims. For decades, the U.S. was Africa's largest trading partner, but this ended in 2009 when China surpassed us with about \$200 billion in annual trade. Since then China has continued to increase its African engagement economically, culturally and diplomatically, and has included 39 of Africa's 54 countries in its more-than-trillion-dollar global "Belt and Road Initiative."

Beyond massive infrastructure and mining deals all over the continent, China excels at something the U.S. does poorly: engaging with African leaders at the highest level. Africans notice that Europeans get calls from the U.S. president or Secretary of State, while their leaders—except in rare circumstances—deal with the assistant secretary or under secretary. U.S. presidential, vice presidential and even Secretary of State visits to the continent are rare, while the highest-level PRC officials visit regularly and often.

When I came back to State and started visiting Africa, I saw



**In Bangui in 2019, Assistant Secretary Tibor Nagy and Ambassador Lucy Tamlyn met with students at the Presidency. At center, from left: Central African Republic Minister of Higher Education Jean-Laurent Syssa Magalé (at the time rector of the University of Bangui), Tibor Nagy, Lucy Tamlyn, and University of Bangui Secretary General Dr. Jean Kokoide.**

in every country how extensive their Chinese connections had become. I quickly conducted a survey with our embassies there to find out how many people we had promoting trade and investment compared to the PRC embassy, and the results were depressing. On average, China's advantage was 3 to 1 in staffing—and in some missions we had only a part-time diplomat dedicated to trade, who might also have to do visas when the consular officer was unavailable. But at the same time, African leaders were telling me how eager they were for U.S. trade and investment, because they realized that American companies created the types of jobs their countries needed (and this included the autocrats, because they could also see the rising anger in their young people from lack of opportunities).

I stated in many speeches that I couldn't blame Africans for their deals with the PRC: For years, when they needed help with a project, the only one knocking on the door was Beijing. But, in general, Chinese projects don't transfer technology, don't provide local employment (beyond those turning a shovel) and don't always respect the environment. Often they even bring in vendors from the PRC who replace local small businesses. In addition, given their opacity, deals with Beijing often leave a country with massive debt.

### Preliminary Initiatives

We acted as quickly as possible, introducing the concept of embassy "deal teams," enlisting every American at every African embassy to support two-way trade and investment initiatives that came their way. First introduced at Embassy Nairobi by then-Ambassador Bob Godec, the concept was then extended continentwide. On the U.S. side, the administration implemented two initiatives. One, Prosper Africa, involved taking a "whole of government" approach to supporting U.S. trade and investment. For decades, while U.S. embassies advised their host countries to set up a "one-stop shop" to promote trade and investment, the U.S. itself never did that.

Prosper Africa did not create a new bureaucracy; instead, it

linked together offices in 17 U.S. government agencies that dealt with supporting U.S.-Africa trade and investment in a one-stop-shop digital initiative to promote and support economic engagement in Africa at [www.ProsperAfrica.gov](http://www.ProsperAfrica.gov). Wisely, the Biden administration has continued this effort and will hopefully expand it.

But the initiative is still in its initial implementation phase, and Congress is considering "Prosper Africa" legislation to give it a firm legal foundation. Three U.S. government agencies—State, Commerce and USAID—were key to Prosper Africa's conception, and there was considerable discussion as to where the organization should reside. For now, the secretariat is located in USAID, but it needs an independent home to become truly effective.

Second, we needed a way to provide flexible financing for U.S. companies willing to undertake projects in Africa if they were to be able to compete with PRC (and other) proposals. The administration was able to transform the Overseas Private Investment Corporation into the International Development Finance Corporation, double its capitalization to \$60 billion and give it greater flexibility.

But these initiatives are just a start, and China is not the only country seeking to expand its influence in Africa. In recent years Russia has been working hard to regain the influence it had during Soviet days. But without the Soviet Union's heft and resources, Russia is limited to being opportunistic; it is focused on poking the U.S. and our Western allies in the eye where it can. Russia even fields mercenaries with close ties to Putin. One such, the Wagner Group, has been active in a number of African nations that suffer from instability; but instead of helping, they compound human rights violations and steal mineral riches. Beyond China and Russia, other major players—notably Turkey, the Gulf Arab states, Israel, India, the U.K. and the European Union—have all recognized Africa's importance and are actively pursuing their own commercial, diplomatic and strategic interests.

Despite our benign neglect and historical missteps, Africans are eager to make us their preferred partner because we remain best positioned to help Africa achieve a promising future. We possess many attributes that appeal to Africans, especially the youth.

American entrepreneurship, technology, culture and, most especially, values are all highly esteemed. And Africans greatly appreciate two monumental U.S. presidential initiatives: Bill Clinton's African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), allowing for the duty-free entry of African goods; and George W. Bush's President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), dramatically increasing the number of Africans being treated for HIV/AIDS. President Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) has also made a major positive impact. Beyond bringing Mandela Fellows to the United States, the YALI network—an online community of young Africans communicating with and supporting each other—is now at 700,000 members and growing.

But Africa needs jobs now. An indication of the continent's overall fragility is the metastasizing of extremist violence, which is expanding its scope from long-troubled areas to affect every region of Africa. And while international coalitions are actively confronting the extremists, they cannot be defeated by military means alone. Eliminating one group, without filling the vacuum with government services and economic opportunities, simply results in the emergence of a new group, more extreme and violent than the previous.

### At the Crossroads

This is why Africa's leaders desperately seek the types of investments the U.S. (and other Western companies) can bring. However, since U.S. presidents, unlike China's, cannot order American companies to invest in this or that country, African nations that seriously want to attract U.S. investment have to do their part. This means implementing major and difficult changes: addressing corruption, establishing a "level playing field," improving the judicial system, improving governance, improving commercial factors (e.g., fair taxes, employment rules, property laws), improving human rights, and so on.

This is how the United States can help Africa achieve the more promising future. On the U.S. side, build on Prosper Africa to implement a truly whole-of-government mechanism to effectively support U.S. companies wanting to trade or invest in Africa. This would be especially useful to small and medium-sized U.S. companies that may be eager to invest but need hand-holding. On the African side, engage seriously with African governments that genuinely want to improve their local environments to attract investors who create jobs. In each case, this

 There is no reason Africa's emerging youth "tsunami" should not have access to great jobs, because Africa's potential is enormous.

would require serious public-private partnerships and working with like-minded international donors, but it is very doable.

And most importantly, we need to do much more with Africa's youth, since in the end they are the solution. This means going beyond YALI to much more ambitious programs.

For example, during my time at State, we tried to create a U.S.-Africa University Partnership Initiative to establish long-term, comprehensive partnerships between U.S. and African institutions to benefit both sides. The "big idea" was to help Africa establish the types of universities that could become instruments of national development, as ours have, and produce graduates their economies need. The plan was for student, faculty and research exchanges; dual degree programs; training on how to partner with the private sector; and effective university administration. Our experimental model was highly successful: with \$3 million we funded 10 projects in seven countries involving 75 universities (11 U.S. and 64 African). The U.S. university community was highly enthusiastic, but our proposal went nowhere.

In February 2020, we organized a widely attended conference at the State Department with representation from numerous U.S. and African institutions. Unfortunately, dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic became an all-consuming priority within weeks after the conference, and our initiative did not expand further. This would seem like an obvious program for the Biden administration to expand, especially given the increasing competition with China over which country's global vision Africa's youth will favor.

Regarding Africa, we truly are at the crossroads. Doing what we have always done will leave Africa vulnerable to the dystopian future portrayed by the governor of Borno. On the other hand, recognizing Africa's tremendous riches in resources and human capacity and helping develop their potential can lead to the dynamic future exemplified by the Mandela Fellows.

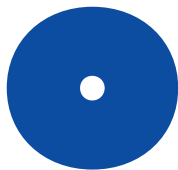
One of the first things I did when coming back to State was to articulate a new slogan for the Bureau of African Affairs: "Look at Africa through the windshield, not the rearview mirror!" And that is exactly where U.S. policy needs to be. ■



# GREAT EXPECTATIONS

**The administration's vow to host the second U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit this year has sparked hope that Washington will treat Africa as a strategic priority. Here's what's at stake.**

BY KENDRA L. GAITHER



In Feb. 5, 2021, a mere two weeks after taking office, President Joseph R. Biden delivered a video message to the African Union Summit, a convening of heads of state from the 55 member countries held virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. President Biden said his administration would work to improve the relationship with the African continent based on mutual respect and solidarity “to advance our shared vision of a better future.” And the message was well received by African governments and institutions. In November, during his first trip to Africa as Secretary of State, Antony Blinken announced that President Biden would host the second U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit to deepen cooperation.

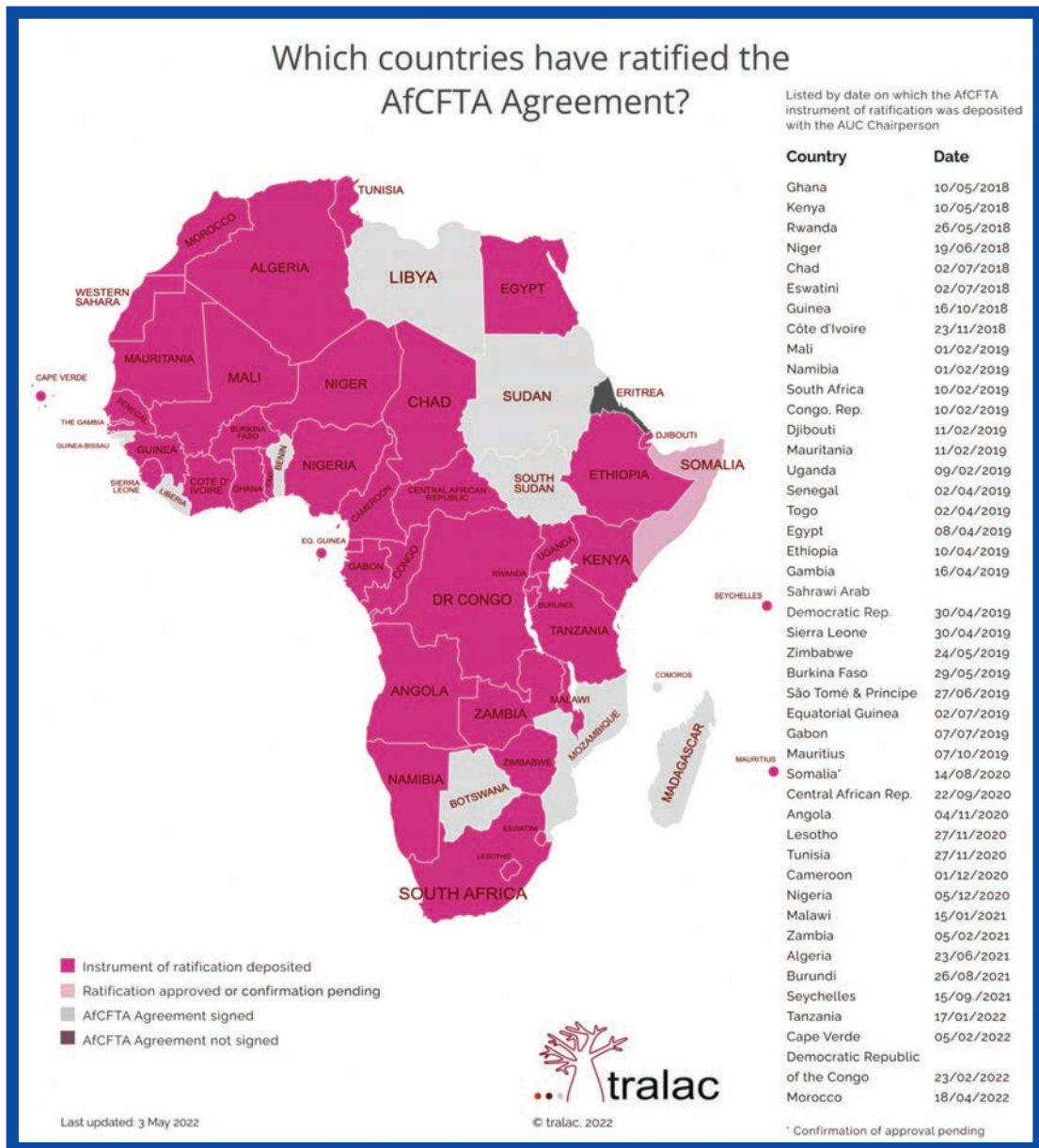


*Kendra L. Gaither is vice president for the U.S.-Africa Business Center and executive director for the Coalition for the Rule of Law in Global Markets at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which she joined in 2015 as senior director for policy in the Americas. An alumna of the Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship, Ms. Gaither spent three years as a civil servant and seven years as a Foreign Service officer specialized in international economic and trade issues in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa.*

We at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's U.S.-Africa Business Center, the member companies we represent, and our network of affiliated American Chambers of Commerce across Africa enthusiastically welcomed Biden's early signal and the Blinken announcement. The U.S. private sector, like others, had taken stock of U.S. foreign policy engagement with Africa and compiled a series of recommendations on engaging the African continent as a U.S. foreign policy priority. Topping that list was a call to reinstitute the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit and its accompanying business forum, and to demonstrate commitment to mutually beneficial trade and investment as part of an ongoing strategic partnership with the African continent.

The promised U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, scheduled for Dec. 13-15 this year, will be the first head of state gathering of African leaders and a U.S. president since 2014, and marks only the second time Washington has accorded this level of attention to a partnership dialogue with the region. Though the United States has an annual trade forum through the African Growth and Opportunity Act, convening trade ministers and a number of bilateral strategic dialogues with key country partners at the foreign minister level, these gatherings don't confer presidential-level priority.

The hope now is that the summit will usher in more consis-



tent head-of-state engagement, treat Africa as a strategic priority for the United States and give a dynamic boost to mutually beneficial U.S. engagement on the continent.

### What's At Stake

One need only look at the contemporary global issues that have dominated 2022 to understand the critical role the African continent plays today and how it will shape the future. South African scientists' extensive and sophisticated genomic surveillance system was the first to identify and detect the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in a critical effort in the global fight to stop the spread of the virus. Africa represents 28 percent of the United Nations membership and has a significant voice in geo-

politics. This was on display as only half of Africa's 54 member states voted to rebuke Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and most of the remaining countries abstained.

As the world assesses its progress and makes new commitments in advance of the 27th Conference of Parties to the U.N. Climate Change Conference (COP 27) to be hosted by Egypt on behalf of the African continent in November 2022, Africa is classified by the United Nations Environmental Program as the most vulnerable region in the world to the effects of climate change, and it is also home to mineral resources like lithium, cobalt, palladium and others that are powering the green revolution and electric vehicles in the race for sustainability solutions.


The staggering demographic boom transforming Africa's

and the world's future has been well covered, but it bears repeating when considering the opportunities and imperatives that other countries are reviewing and responding to with a clear vision. The African continent is home to approximately

1.3 billion people, with an estimated population growth rate of 2.7 percent—more than double that of South Asia (1.2 percent) and triple that of Latin America (0.9 percent). The United Nations projects that by 2050, Africa's population will nearly double to 2.5 billion people, and by 2100 triple to 3.8 billion. These numbers are even more significant in light of the 2020 *Lancet* study that predicts every other region could see its population decline during this same period.

In other words, by the end of this century, one-third of the people on the planet will be African and largely concentrated in cities, with 65 percent of the top 20 urban areas projected to be on the continent. Nigeria, already the most populous African country, is expected to nearly double in population to 400 million by 2050, overtaking the United States as the third-most populous nation in the world, with Lagos poised to become the world's largest city. The Brookings Institution also projects that by 2050, Africa's combined business and consumer spending will exceed \$16 trillion, making the continent an attractive market for African producers and global exporters alike. This means that a continent with the youngest population in the world will set trends in trade, technology, climate sustainability and urban development that will dictate the future of the planet. If demographics are destiny, then Africa is poised to be the center of global affairs within a generation.

Prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, Africa was home to six of the 10 fastest-growing economies in the world. The United States has a growing two-way trade relationship with the continent that exceeded \$64 billion in 2021, but this only represents 1 percent of U.S. trade, and there is plenty of room to grow America's economic partnership with Africa as the continent continues to grow and attract global trade and investment. The continent that gave rise to mobile money and digital payments set record highs in 2021 for venture capital (VC) investments in its fintech sector, according to Partech's 2021 Africa Tech Venture Capital Report. That report showed that African VC investments tripled from the prior year, grew faster than any other region and are growing three times faster than global VC investment. Africa also has an exciting new trade bloc, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), that unites the

 Africa also has an exciting new trade bloc, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), that unites the continent into a single giant market.

continent into a single giant market and promises to reduce red tape, harmonize the regulatory burden, and significantly diminish tariffs and customs procedures.

This ambitious project, which entered into force in May 2019, is in its first phase of implementation, with negotiations underway to set the terms for trade in goods and services, and second-phase talks also in progress to address investment, intellectual property rights and competition policy, among other things. The third phase will include the digital economy and a special protocol on women and youth. As of the Tralac Law Centre's May 2022 status update, no trade had yet taken place under the AfCFTA regime, but there is significant interest in supporting its successful implementation. [See page 34 for a map and list of African countries that have ratified the AfCFTA agreement.]

While the goal of AfCFTA is to spur intra-African trade, it also sets the framework for foreign investors with the promise of a single trading bloc that is twice the size and population of the European Union. Today, as the continent sets the standards for its trade relations, it is working with China through a recently signed cooperation agreement to share experiences on intellectual property, digital trade, competition policy and customs procedures. Significantly, as the continent ascends to become the most dominant region on the globe, China is the country positioned to influence the policies Africa develops in the critical sectors for today and tomorrow.

### **If We're Not Present, We're Not Partners**

Africa policy in the U.S. government and adjacent policy community has been for the most part an area of bipartisan collaboration, but the continent has not been seen as a strategic priority for Washington. This is markedly different from how allies and adversaries have viewed Africa. Countries as diverse as Turkey, Japan, Russia, South Korea, India and the United Kingdom have regular, ongoing summit-level talks with the African continent as a whole. Through the African Union, the continent has articulated a plan to achieve "the Africa we want"—the A.U.'s Agenda 2063 for sustainable development

and inclusive growth—and African leaders are engaging with counterparts who are responding to the continent’s vision for the future.

Significant attention is given to China’s relationship with Africa, and this well-documented relationship has played a role in fueling China’s economic growth. Since 2000, China has held a triennial meeting with African counterparts—the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation—and has made no secret of its interest to create a closer connection with the continent. It’s little wonder that in 2009, China became the continent’s top trading partner and that in 2013 it surpassed the United States as the largest investor in Africa. During the 2021 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, Beijing signed a memorandum of understanding to provide technical assistance and support for implementation of the AfCFTA agreement, further extending its reach through standards setting in the chief vehicle that will dictate trade terms.

Similarly, in February 2022, Brussels hosted the sixth European Union–African Union Summit, in which the partners

announced a new action plan through 2030 as part of their joint vision for renewed partnership. Using mutual interest as a guide and focusing on a joint program of shared priorities, the summit convened the 27 E.U. and 55 A.U. member states and signed onto a commitment to support projects in sectors ranging from health and energy to digital and infrastructure with €150 billion in investment. “As Africa sets sail on the future, the European Union wants to be Africa’s partner of choice,” European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stated Feb. 18.

The absence of high-level U.S. strategic engagement with the continent is striking. Our partnerships are on display nearly everywhere else in the world. In June, the United States hosted the ninth Summit of the Americas (SOTA), where the U.S. president has gathered with regional counterparts in the Western Hemisphere every three years since the U.S. convened the first summit in 1994 (and since 2012, this has included an accompanying CEO summit). The U.S. head of state meets peers annually in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum founded in

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1989 that aligns the 21 countries of the Asia-Pacific with a goal of creating a more prosperous relationship through regional integration. (APEC's Business Advisory Council, ABAC, is the model for SOTA's CEO summit configuration.)

Under the Transatlantic Declaration forged in 1990, the U.S. and the European Community have held regular dialogues and summits, and there is regularized coordination with Europe through the G7, OECD, NATO and various other multilateral fora that set the tone for the nations' collaboration with the world.

The Biden administration appears to grasp that the United States would be wise not to miss a strategic opportunity that allies and adversaries alike have assessed and seized. In short, if we're not present, we are not partners. As Secretary of State Antony Blinken explained in a May 19 interview with Stephen Colbert: "What we know is this: If the United States is not engaged, if we are not trying to lead ... either someone else is—and that might not go forward in a way that reflects our interests and our values—or no one is, and that usually leaves a vacuum."

## Back to the Future

The Biden administration's foreign policy focus on Africa has personal meaning for me as a former economic officer in the U.S. Foreign Service. Two tours in the Bureau of African Affairs launched a careerlong focus on Africa that I have carried beyond my tenure at State to my work at Carnegie Mellon University and now at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Though the Africa reset is certainly most welcome, for me, the calls for a more strategic policy focus on Africa engagement have felt a bit like Groundhog Day.

In 2005 I had the privilege of working on the annual African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum dedicated to promoting trade and investment in Africa. Then 5 years old, AGOA was hailed as a success, with U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman touting an increase in U.S. imports from sub-Saharan Africa of more than 50 percent and an increase in U.S. exports of 44 percent. The atmosphere was filled with optimism: The forum featured a special screening of the film "Africa: Open for Business" featuring success stories that showcased a vision of a modern continent filled with entrepreneurial drive, untapped opportunity and business success.

The ministerial-level event gathered officials, executives

ignificant attention is given to China's relationship with Africa, and this well-documented relationship has played a role in fueling China's economic growth.

and civil society leaders under the theme of "Expanding and Diversifying Trade to Promote Growth and Competitiveness" one year after President George W. Bush had signed an extension of AGOA that included trade capacity provisions to support market utilization of tariff-free access to the United States.

AGOA has been described as the centerpiece of U.S. economic and commercial policy with Africa, and for two decades the forum has been the signature gathering between the U.S. and Africa. In recent years, the U.S.-African Union High-Level Dialogue, which extends beyond economic partnership to include other areas of cooperation, was added. While laudable and important, these gatherings are held at the ministerial level. But AGOA legislation was specifically designed to create an annual head-of-state engagement; the law requires the U.S. president to convene a forum annually on trade and investment relations and AGOA implementation between the United States and its African partners.

Which brings us back to the second U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, expected to take place in late 2022. The reality is that the United States has not accorded the continent the kind of sustained and ongoing high-level partnership dialogue and attention that it grants to other regions, even with legislative efforts designed to boost the same. But as the saying goes, the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago, and the second-best time is now.

This year, the United States can demonstrate a commitment to meaningful partnership with the nations of Africa through a summit that sets the tone and cadence for regular heads-of-state dialogue with our African partners on our shared priorities and opportunities. The president can make good on the commitment to reset relations and build back better by engaging the business community to play a significant role as part of a more holistic engagement of the continent, akin to other global summit dialogues.

Doing so can ensure that the United States is a partner today in the continent's structural transformation under the A.U.'s Agenda 2063, and is positioned to be a partner in Africa's emergence tomorrow. ■

# HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE NEW SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA

**Investment in higher education is a vital component of effective and constructive U.S. engagement in a dynamic Africa.**

BY JONATHAN V. AHLSTROM

**A**s the Welsh American explorer Henry Morton Stanley opened the mysteries of central Africa to the world in the late 19th century, European monarchs regarded his trek with interest. As an employed agent of King Leopold II, Stanley was integral in the Belgian monarch's eventual claim to the Congo Basin, the horrific chronicles of the Congo Free State and the subsequent boom in the East Africa slave trade. Among the most notorious, the Congo takeover marks just one of the many depredations by a European power during the scramble for African territory that began in the 1880s. The wounds of that period of colonial conquest and failed postcolonial rule remain fresh for many African states, even as a new scramble for Africa is occurring in the context of strategic competition.

Today, it is time for the United States to set an example to the world on collaborating constructively with African states in their individual journeys as they navigate the complex geopolitical landscape of the 21st century. The Biden administra-

tion's March 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance acknowledges as much: "[The United States is committed to helping] African nations combat the threats posed by climate change and violent extremism and support their economic and political independence in the face of undue foreign influence."

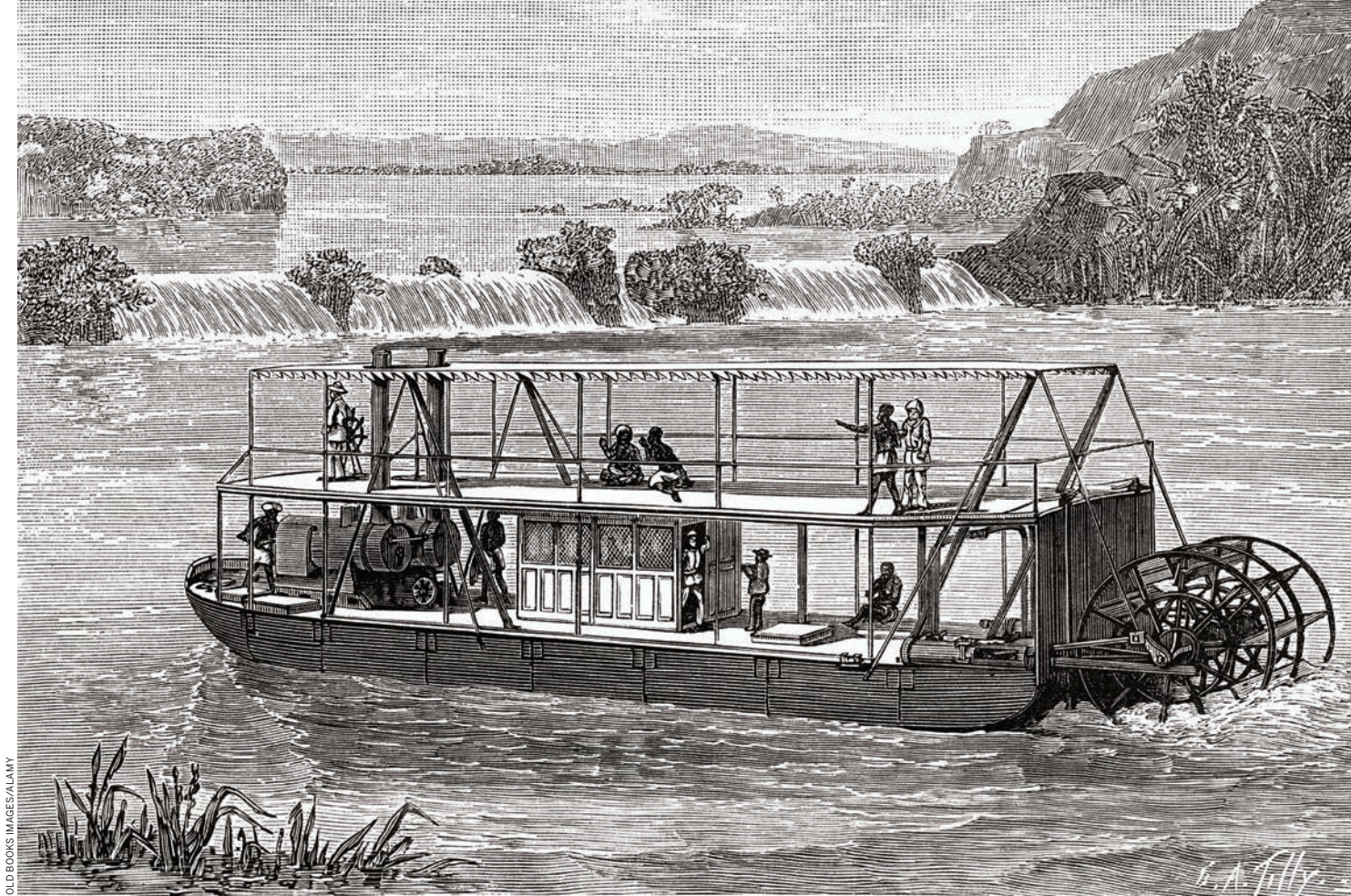
To achieve these ends, American diplomatic and development leaders should construct an Africa strategy that bridges a single administration's partisan divides and cultivates the growth of long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with African partners. One pillar of this approach should be to employ one of the most potent and effective, but underutilized strategic instruments: investments in higher education.

## **A Record of Success and Promise**

In 2015, Tambwe Safalani, the daughter of Congolese parents with a large, close-knit family, set out for the United States to start her pedagogic journey at Georgia State University. Her parents imbued her with the importance of acquiring a strong education as the foundation for all future work. Having recently completed her master's degree in economics, she will soon enter a Ph.D. program during which she will concentrate on public policy. To contribute to the socioeconomic and political advancement of the African continent, Ms. Safalani founded Children Assistance First, a nongovernmental organization dedicated to improving the education, nourishment, protection and development of African children. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and Africa at



*Jonathan Ahlstrom, a U.S. Navy commander, is currently commanding officer of the USS Columbus (SSN 762), a nuclear attack submarine based at Newport News, Virginia. He was previously a White House Fellow assigned to the U.S. Agency for International Development. He lives in Yorktown, Virginia.*



OLD BOOKS IMAGES/ALAMY

**An artistic depiction of Henry Morton Stanley's detachable steamship on the Congo River in the late 1870s.**

large will benefit from Ms. Safalani's talent, passion and energy. As a future leader, she has the advantage of a top-tier education founded on strong democratic principles and a network of committed American friends and partners.

Such stories of promise and success from U.S. exchange programs have been repeated time and again throughout American history. Since the end of World War II, the U.S. Department of State, Department of Defense and Agency for International Development have employed a collection of education exchange platforms. Run through the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Fulbright Scholar Program now boasts a network of more than 400,000 foreign alumni since its inception in 1946. This flagship program continues to bring 4,000 international students to study in the United States annually. The Fulbright program's impact in Africa is substantial. For example, in Ghana, Fulbright alumni account for former presidents, prime ministers, academics and other prominent citizens.

The State Department's efforts in shorter education exchanges include such programs as the Young African Leaders Initiative. A highly successful effort started under the Obama administration, the program features the Mandela Washington Fellowship, a six-week course of study in the United States for aspiring African youth. Today, the program claims more than 700 alumni and a network of members connected to regional centers in Ghana, Kenya, Senegal and South Africa. State Depart-

ment programs foster people-to-people connections that create networks among current and future global leaders, who above all else understand democratic values and society. In other instances, the State Department works in close concert with the Department of Defense in Africa. Funded through State's peacekeeping operations account, the Africa Military Education program works to professionalize African military forces through faculty and curriculum development at various African military education institutions.

The U.S. Department of Defense is a unique partner in the area of higher education. Defense education strategy is developed through the Defense Language and National Security Education Office, which also oversees various related initiatives for U.S. and foreign military members. Foremost of these is DOD's International Military Education and Training program.

Since its establishment in 1976, IMET has funded members of foreign-allied and friendly militaries pursuing courses of study in the United States. The program plays a vital role in forming the connective tissue between American military forces and foreign military powers. However, some of the great potential of IMET is diminished because of a lack of post-education engagement and networking on the part of the United States government. Foreign military exchange students receive minimal contact following their studies, and this leads to missed opportunities for this network to further American democratic values, such as a civilian-run military.

In aggregate, across all functional and regional bureaus, USAID supports more than 12,000 learners annually with scholarships to study in the United States or their native country. The agency sees higher education investments as an integral part of a developing country's journey to self-reliance. It draws direct links between higher education investments (often referred to as a nation's intellectual capital) and reductions in poverty, economic advances and overall sustainable development. USAID provides institutional capacity building through mechanisms such as the Higher Education Solutions Network, which supports partnerships between the United States and host countries to innovate and develop solutions for local development challenges. However, like IMET, the Higher Education Solutions Network needs improvements in internal data collection and clear higher education engagement objectives to be fully effective.

### Why It Matters

Exchanges in higher education don't just involve earning a degree. The experience is as much about cultural exchange as it is about the course of study. Students in an exchange program are often taught in a manner different than that found in their native country; they acquire transversal skills not normally found in traditional education programs, and they learn firsthand the traditions unique to the host culture. Exchange students often form lasting bonds with their classmates and develop diverse networks of colleagues and friends. These relationships form a sort of connective tissue between the exchange countries and serve as a basis for future collaboration and mutual understanding.

The steadily growing utilization of online learning offers new challenges—but also new opportunities—for American institutions. From the standpoint of exchanges, the most significant immediate problem with online education is loss of the immersive, in-person experience that is the heart and soul of these programs, as was proven with the sudden cessation of in-person

Over the past decade, China has established 60 Confucius Institutes at universities in 38 African countries.

exchanges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, as the State Department has shown over the past two years (see “In-Person Exchanges, Interrupted” by Deena Mansour, April 2021 *FSJ*), a carefully developed program of personal exchanges can still achieve the desired connection and network so valued from the traditional exchange. The U.S. is well positioned to benefit from new developments in online education and its potential application in strategically engaging Africa.



COURTESY OF TAMBWE SAFALANI

**Ms. Tambwe Safalani received the prestigious Royal Flame Award of Leadership in April 2020 for her commitment to the Georgia State University community and in recognition of her future leadership potential.**

The importance of higher education investments is not missed in the burgeoning Sino-African relationship. In 2003, fewer than 1,300 African students were enrolled in Chinese universities. Fifteen years later, in 2018, the number of African students in China exceeded 80,000, according to data published by the PRC Ministry of Education. In context, this makes China the second-most popular destination for African students studying abroad, behind France. In opening remarks at the 2018 Forum of China-Africa Cooperation, Martin Mpana, Cameroon's ambassador to China, revealed his hopes that African youth take advantage of study-abroad

opportunities in China to “learn more about China and from the policies and development experience of the Communist Party of China.”

The PRC's outreach is made through Confucius Institutes, the country's most potent mechanism for recruitment and influence at foreign universities. With a stated mission to share Chinese culture and language with the world, these institutes serve as a launch point for arranging people-to-people exchanges and influencing local perceptions of China and teachings related to issues deemed controversial. Over the past decade, China has established 60 Confucius Institutes at universities in 38 African countries.



# The U.S. is well positioned to benefit from new developments in online education and its potential application in strategically engaging Africa.

## Challenges to Education Initiatives

The United States has a proud history of higher education development projects. The modest investments made in higher education with African partners over the years have contributed to real changes in those countries. Despite this, however, higher education exchange initiatives fail to capture stronger support from the U.S. government and lawmakers. While some growth has occurred in the educational and cultural exchanges budget over the past decade, financial increases are geared toward newer embedded objectives, such as the campaign to combat disinformation; though an important initiative, it nonetheless draws from needed increases in the critical people-to-people program budgets.

Compounding this, there has been a steady decline of international student enrollments in the United States—even before COVID-19 paralyzed world travel. A survey commissioned by the U.S. Department of State determined that the four years preceding the start of the pandemic saw steadily falling international student enrollments.

The challenges advancing higher education initiatives at scale are attributed to the following factors:

- *The gains from international students studying in the United States are not realized immediately.* Often, students study abroad earlier in their life before achieving positions of prominence in their respective fields. This makes the idea of committing funds to something that will not show near-term returns less desirable.

- *The positive effects of education exchanges are undercut by the lack of data collection and network engagement.* Across all public and private exchanges, there is a need to collect evidence concerning the outcomes of various scholarship and capacity-building programs. Presenting coherent and convincing arguments for increased funding for higher education exchanges is

not possible without systematic evidence demonstrating the long-term return on investment. The ability to collect data of this nature requires improved tracking and engagement of alumni.

- *America's position as the preeminent destination for international students to study is directly*

*challenged by expanded opportunities to study in other countries.* The economic rise of China and Beijing's outreach through the Belt and Road Initiative is the prime example. Apart from the PRC's aggressive efforts to recruit them, young people are consciously choosing to study in China as a reflection of where they see their greatest future opportunities.

- *Visa restrictions to enter the United States act as a deterrent to facilitating higher education exchanges.* Systemic delays in student visa processing and visa denials create insurmountable barriers for some students aiming to study in the United States. The combination of an archaic and tangled bureaucratic process with the negative American messaging toward immigrant visas directly contributes to the growing problem.



**U.S. Army Major Ben Showman discusses the process of establishing physical performance goals based on tactical training needs with Nigerian Army Captain Issoufou Abdoulaye Souley at the Nigerien Armed Forces Training School in Niger, November 2017.**

## What Can Be Done

It is urgent to put more effort into higher education engagements with African partners now, because the increase in human capital from the academic investment in Africa's youth

will directly support the growth and development of partner countries, and forge stronger mutually beneficial relationships with the United States. To achieve these aims, the United States should embed higher education mechanisms and exchanges into existing and new frameworks. Capitalizing on existing structures allows for faster implementation and reduced startup costs. For example, connecting education opportunities with the partnership-building pillar of USAID's trade and economic investment strategy Prosper Africa would allow for comparatively easy capacity growth.

The shape of these programs can vary in structure and cost; however, at a minimum, the following efforts should be undertaken.

**T**he United States should embed higher education mechanisms and exchanges into existing and new frameworks.



USAID

**Work is ongoing on the Solar-Plus-Storage power project in Malawi. The 20-megawatt project is the first of its scale there to employ a large-scale battery storage system that allows the plant to provide reliable, renewable energy to the national power grid.**

First, the United States should aggressively expand support to African institutions employing U.S. models of higher education. Higher education institutions that use U.S. models provide a liberal education that is more prone to promoting critical thinking skills and freedom of thought while also focusing on individual career development. At a strategic level, these institutions espouse the values of democracy and transparency—values that the future generation of African leaders will benefit from embracing.

Second, the United States should embed American-based degree study programs into all aspects of foreign support projects. This would necessitate apportioning a percentage of overseas development investment toward education. For example, USAID's flagship initiative Power Africa brings together technical experts with private entities and governments from around the world to address the severe lack of access to electricity in many regions of Africa (see "Energy Diplomacy Works" by Andrew Herscovitz, March 2020 *FSJ*). Power Africa's record of success continues, as

seen in the recent production of clean solar energy in Malawi or the first utility-scale wind farm to add renewable electricity to Senegal's power grid. The integration of higher education requires setting aside funding within each project to invest in human capital development. For example, the planned 343-kilometer transmission line in Angola, which is projected to integrate regional grids into a national grid, would also send Angolan operators to the United States for electrical engineering degrees.

Finally, the United States should embrace a program for new and previously existing partnerships between American community colleges and African vocational schools. This is a vital step in laying a strong foundation for future American-African relations. The African youth who participate in study abroad programs at U.S. community and technical colleges represent future leaders back home. Benefits from these programs are numerous and include improved

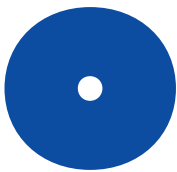
employment rates and acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. At the strategic level, this will assist in spreading the liberal American model of schools.

It is time to make higher education a core tenet of any approach to partnering with African countries. At a fundamental level, these exchanges engender trust between the United States and the recipient country. Trust is a critical commodity and one that the United States struggles to find with many African countries. Much like European powers, the United States has a legitimacy problem that stems from being a Western power associated with a history of colonialism and slave trade. This dynamic helps tilt the scales favorably toward America's rivals in strategic competition. Higher education opportunities facilitate building a foundation of trust, mutual understanding and shared values. The United States must commit to expanding its investment in human capital and embrace the new scramble for Africa. ■

# KENNEDY, NIXON AND THE COMPETITION FOR MR. AFRICA, 1952-1960

**John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon were the first American politicians of national rank to prioritize Africa—more than half a century ago.**

BY GREGORY L. GARLAND



One of the more curious episodes in the history of American foreign relations was the competition for the unofficial title of Mr. Africa between two future presidents: Senator John F. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Vice President Richard M. Nixon.

These two ambitious men jumped at opportunities to associate themselves with the continent at a time when it attracted little interest from the Cold War-focused foreign affairs establishment.

Though their concerns were domestic, Kennedy and Nixon were the first American politicians of national rank to prioritize Africa. They drew widespread attention to Africa with compelling visions of positive engagement based on national interest.



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*Bamako and Praia. Other postings included Dakar/Bissau, Herat, Maputo, Conakry, Luanda, Mexico City, Tijuana and Warsaw. Washington assignments included the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Political Affairs, research fellow at the National Defense Intelligence College, and media and outreach coordinator in the State Department Bureau of African Affairs.*

In hindsight, these two young men and future presidents were modern-day policy pathfinders, pioneering the long, often convoluted, and still unfinished process of bringing the continent into the mainstream of American foreign policy and political debate.

## Domestic Calculations

Domestically, the two men competed for Black support. Republican Nixon especially needed those votes in industrial states that had trended Democratic. He had the political winds to his back. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision, led by Nixon's fellow California Republican Chief Justice Earl Warren, invigorated a pro-civil rights image for the GOP, reinforced by President Dwight Eisenhower's forceful response to the Little Rock integration crisis in 1957. Nixon successfully cultivated support from Black celebrities, notably baseball's Jackie Robinson, another Californian.

Indeed, Nixon could take justifiable pride in his civil rights record. Honorary member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for his service in Congress, he was the first prominent member of the Eisenhower administration to endorse publicly the *Brown* decision. He also backed the Civil Rights Act of 1957. In 1960, he worked with New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller to include a strong civil rights plank



**Vice President Richard Nixon and Second Lady Patricia Nixon unexpectedly meet Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and his wife, Coretta Scott King, for the first time during Independence ceremonies in Accra, Ghana, on March 7, 1957. Griffith “Griff” Davis, a pioneer photojournalist and African American Foreign Service officer with USAID from 1952 to 1985, took this famous shot.**

An Atlanta boyhood friend of Martin Luther King Jr., Davis had been assigned by U.S. Information Service (USIS) in Washington, D.C., as the official photographer to cover Nixon’s inaugural visit to Africa, which was also King’s first visit, only months after the end of the Montgomery (Ala.) Bus Boycott and the launch of the civil rights movement in the U.S. The Kings had been invited by Ghana’s Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah. The resulting photograph was not officially published in the U.S. at that time.

At the time of this assignment, Davis was finishing his first tour of duty as the first audiovisual adviser at U.S. Embassy Monrovia, the first U.S. embassy in a noncolonized African country. Davis’ daughter, Dorothy, president of Griffith J. Davis Photographs and Archives, recounts her father saying, “It was ironic to me that Montgomery, Alabama, and Washington, D.C., had to meet at Accra, outside the United States. However, it was only a short time later that M.L. and his nonviolent movement entered upon the national scene in America.” (This photo and story about Griffith Davis appeared in the opinion section and on the front page of the *Tampa Bay Times*, January 17 and 20, 2020, respectively.)

in the Republican platform. Accordingly, he shared the liberal racial views of many of his party’s stalwarts, including recent nominees Thomas Dewey and Wendell Willkie.

Still, Nixon needed to bolster his foreign policy bona fides, as well as win Black support. Seeing Africa as the answer to both, he became the GOP’s go-to Africanist, representing the United States at the widely publicized independence ceremonies of Ghana in 1957. There, Nixon unexpectedly met the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., fresh off his leadership of the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott. The photograph of their encounter appeared in Black media throughout the U.S., sending the message that Nixon had his ear to the rising civil rights movement as well as to Africa.

Meanwhile, Kennedy calculated similarly. The precarious New Deal coalition of pro-civil rights Northerners and a segregationist Southern base suggested a formula that might achieve just enough to win: avoid civil rights and talk about Africa. The balancing act was realpolitik for Democrats. In 1952, despite Adlai Stevenson’s winning 79 percent of Black votes nationally, Eisenhower swept the North and carried several Southern states. Stevenson’s numbers fell to 61 percent in 1956, and Rev.

King and Rep. Adam Clayton Powell (D-N.Y.) announced their votes for Eisenhower. Democrats thus could no longer take either Black Northerners or white Southerners for granted, yet still needed both to win.

Kennedy would spell out his approach to Africa on July 2, 1957, in his first major foreign policy address, later known as the Algeria speech. “The most powerful single force in the world today is ... man’s eternal desire to be free and independent,” he said. “The great enemy of that tremendous force of freedom is called, for want of a more precise term, imperialism.” In recognizing that the imminent process of decolonization would profoundly alter the geopolitical landscape, he distinguished himself from the older generation of politicians and their Eurocentric bipartisan foreign policy consensus.

Though both Nixon and Kennedy asserted that the Cold War would be fought and won in the so-called Third World, Kennedy defined winning differently. He asserted that nationalism was more strategically important than communism and insisted that America back the nationalists, even against Washington’s European allies. African independence leaders such as Sékou Touré, Tom Mboya and Kwame Nkrumah saw him as

a unique U.S. politician who grasped their interests and voiced them in a way that Americans could understand.

Ordinary Americans were also starting to notice the continent. A 1950 remake of King Solomon's Mines struck gold at the box office. John Ford's "Mogambo" (1953) with Clark Gable, Ava Gardner and Grace Kelly, and John Huston's "The African Queen" (1951) with Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn, were magnificently filmed on location. If such icons as Gable and Bogart could reinvent themselves in the heart of Africa, maybe the Dark Continent beheld a new frontier after all. In 1955, John Gunther's thousand-page *Inside Africa* was a bestseller.

### **Guinea: Ground Zero of Africa Policy**

Richard Nixon's Africanist bona fides rested primarily on his March 1957 trip to Accra as Washington's representative at Ghana's independence celebrations. His widely publicized trip report recommended that a new Bureau of African Affairs be established at State, embassies be set up in every country and substantial economic development assistance extended. Regardless, Nixon eyed Kennedy warily. As the latter hammered the vice president's failure in his report to mention Algeria, he provoked doubts about Nixon's judgment and ability to overcome Cold War-driven policy deference to France. Believing Kennedy was wrong on Algeria and simply trying to upstage his own ownership of the Africa issue, Nixon drove the Eisenhower administration's damage control in the speech's aftermath.

Attention soon shifted to another rebellious French colony. In September 1958, Guinea rejected French President Charles de Gaulle's plan to grant its African colonies independence but remain tied to France economically. Furious, de Gaulle directed departing French officials to leave nothing of value behind, a punitive action that poisoned the Franco-Guinean relationship for decades to come. Sékou Touré thus took over a country economically shattered by de Gaulle's wrath. While the Soviet Union jumped at the opportunity to befriend Guinea, Washington waffled, struggling to balance support for African independence with its alliance with France. No embassy opened for another eight months, and plans for an aid package stalled.

Touré begged Eisenhower for more, insisting that neutrality was his objective. As evidence of his sincerity, he offered to visit the United States, which Washington accepted. The state visit, which occurred from Oct. 25 through Nov. 9, 1959, was the baptismal program of the new Bureau of African Affairs, which, with Nixon pushing hard, had opened its doors on Sept. 8. It also marked Touré's first official travel beyond Africa as head of state;

thus, its success meant as much to the new bureau as to the leader of the new country. Moreover, it elevated Nixon's policy leadership.

Ambassador to Guinea John Morrow recommended extended orientation travel around the United States. Touré himself wanted to see the South. Atlanta, Touré's preferred choice, was dropped because of fear of a racially motivated slight by the governor of Georgia. Consequently, Governor Luther Hodges of North Carolina, Morrow's home state, came to the rescue. Touré received an honorary degree from Morrow's recent employer, North Carolina College, then lunched with the president of crosstown (and segregated) Duke University. He stayed the night in the venerable Carolina Inn in Chapel Hill as its first Black guest.

After a stop in Chicago, Touré flew to Nixon's Southern California, but curiously without Nixon. Instead, Kennedy seized the moment to helicopter dramatically into Disneyland to meet the Guinean. The visit climaxed in New York City with a tickertape parade and an exhibition of Guinean works at the New York Museum of Primitive Art, hosted by French-speaking Governor Nelson Rockefeller.

### **Advantage Kennedy**

For the Guineans, Kennedy's performance was the high point; Touré would follow the presidential campaigns of the next two years closely. In stark contrast to Kennedy, Eisenhower's perceived ambivalence and sluggishness left the Africans cold. The nonverbal message communicated to Africans at the presidential level was that Africa still did not much matter. Moreover, the Republican who most impressed the Guineans was neither Eisenhower nor Nixon, but Rockefeller, considered the vice president's main rival for the nomination.

A sluggish image afflicted the final two years of the Eisenhower administration. The president himself suffered two heart attacks that sapped his energy and contributed to the image of an out-of-touch old man. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' fatal illness during the second term deprived foreign policy of its prime advocate. Nowhere was this truer than in its approaches to Africa. Slow to respond and unable to anticipate the consequences of decolonization, the U.S. deferred to the Europeans. Nixon's African efforts thus hit a wall, leaving the field open to Kennedy.

Although Kennedy took over the new subcommittee on Africa in 1959, he ended up chairing only one session as he focused on his presidential campaign. Nixon's repeated criticism that Kennedy was an absentee chair was on point,

## **K**ennedy staffed the Africa Bureau early on with strong, politically attuned leadership [and] chose highly visible ambassadors to Africa.

although the implication that the senator postured on Africa for only political purposes missed the mark. Regardless, Africans heard little of the criticism. On the contrary, in August 1960, the news that Africa Subcommittee Chairman Kennedy was sending former New York Governor and Ambassador to the Soviet Union Averell Harriman on a fact-finding trip to Guinea and several other African countries only stoked their enthusiasm for the senator.

Africa continued to make headlines. Under pressure from the United Nations, the Belgians fast-forwarded Congolese independence to July 1960. Things went wrong from the beginning, however, and the pall of the Congo hung over the presidential campaign. Kennedy constantly invoked Africa on the hustings, delivering 13 formal speeches on the topic and referring to it 479 times. Kennedy's choice of Harris Wofford as speechwriter confirmed the close link on his own staff between domestic civil rights and Africa. Wofford had served as an attorney for the U.S. Civil Rights Commission and in 1959 edited its first report to Congress. His selection made plain that the intended audience was Black Americans.

### **The Mboya Initiative**

Not long before their respective nominations in the summer of 1960, Nixon and Kennedy confronted each other again over Africa. Kenyan trade union leader Tom Mboya approached a small group of private Americans about organizing a program for several hundred compatriots to study in American universities to prepare a cadre of qualified personnel to lead their country into independence. Celebrities Jackie Robinson, Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier donated their time and names to the project. The missing piece was transportation to the U.S.

Robinson lobbied Nixon personally, and Nixon, in turn, pressed State to produce assistance. Rather than go through Nixon, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Joseph Charles Satterthwaite wrote Robinson directly on July 11 to reject a State role, claiming that he had heard nothing from the Department of Defense to follow up on Nixon's ideas. More-

over, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs objected to funding Mboya in any form; it wanted State to work with one of its officially designated organizations for student programs, the Institute for International Education or the Africa-America Institute (which operated at a much

higher overhead and longer planning timelines and could not have approached anywhere near the 800 students Mboya finally sent to America).

Frustrated with Nixon, several influential activists approached Wofford, Kennedy presidential campaign press spokesman Pierre Salinger and Kennedy brother-in-law Sargent Shriver (who ran the family's Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation). Succeeding in getting an invitation to meet the candidate, on July 26, 1960, Mboya flew to the Kennedy family compound at Hyannis Port, Massachusetts. Wofford later wrote: "Seeing the easy rapport of these two young men, each heading for the top leadership of his nation, I had a sense that day of the far-reaching changes to come in the relationship between America and Africa."

Subsequently, Shriver told the Mboya supporters that the foundation would contribute \$100,000 to the airlift and an additional \$100,000 to defray expenses of the students in the U.S. There was just one condition: no publicity, although word of his family's role finally surfaced shortly.

### **The Debates**

There is no better measure of the weight of Africa on the 1960 campaign than the televised debates. Kennedy opened with the Africa card, putting Nixon on the defensive in the foreign policy arena in which he was most comfortable, in the process turning to a GOP icon, Abraham Lincoln.

"In the election of 1860, Abraham Lincoln said the question was whether this nation could exist half-slave or half-free," Kennedy intoned. "In the election of 1960, and with the world around us, the question is whether the world will exist half-slave or half-free, whether it will move in the direction of freedom, in the direction of the road that we are taking, or whether it will move in the direction of slavery. I want people in Latin America and Africa and Asia to start to look at America; to see how we're doing things; to wonder what the president of the United States is doing; and not to look at Khrushchev or look at the Chinese Communists."

Kennedy did not return to Africa until the fourth and final

debate, when he echoed the language of his Algeria speech: “Africa is now the emerging area of the world. It contains 25 percent of all the members of the [United Nations] General Assembly. We didn’t even have a Bureau of African Affairs until 1957 [*sic*, 1958]. In the Africa south of the Sahara, which is the major new section, we have less students from all of Africa in that area studying under government auspices today than from the country of Thailand. If there’s one thing Africa needs, it’s technical assistance.”

Yet in 1959, Kennedy went on to note, less than 5 percent of all U.S. technical assistance went to Africa. Six African countries are members of the United Nations, he said, but there wasn’t a single American diplomatic representative in any of them. And when Guinea became independent, he added, the Soviet ambassador showed up that same day, but it took nearly eight months for the U.S. ambassador to appear.

Such was the impact of Kennedy’s words that three days later, Assistant Secretary Satterthwaite convoked a lengthy briefing to defend the administration’s Africa policy.

### Mr. Africa: A Mixed Record

Kennedy won the unofficial title of Mr. Africa, which helped to fuel his narrow electoral victory. Africa thus served successfully as an indirect and noncontroversial means to reach Black voters while skirting the explosive language of civil rights. It was just enough to win key industrial states without losing the Deep South, a masterful political juggling act. Nixon read the election returns, too, and would later switch gears to implement a Southern Strategy that would capture the White House in 1968.

Kennedy’s victory raised hopes for a new day in U.S.-African relations. He staffed the Africa Bureau early on with strong, politically attuned leadership, starting with Michigan Governor G. Mennen Williams as assistant secretary. He chose highly visible ambassadors to Africa, including his prep school classmate, magazine editor and fluent French speaker William Attwood to Guinea. He launched the Peace Corps and put brother-in-law Shriver in charge. He reached out to independence movements, notably Mozambique’s Eduardo Mondlane, a product of American education who was married to an American and who had a base of support in the liberal churches and foundations.

Yet Kennedy’s presidential record in Africa would prove mixed, at best. Days after his inauguration, he faced a crisis in the former Belgian Congo and charges of CIA involvement in the assassination of the country’s first prime minister, Patrice Lumumba. His support for Mondlane prompted threats by Portuguese dictator and NATO ally Antonio Salazar to termi-



On Oct. 10, 1962, President John F. Kennedy received President of Guinea Ahmed Sékou Touré at Washington National Airport for a state visit. African independence leaders saw Kennedy as a unique U.S. politician who grasped their interests. From left: Naval Aide to President Kennedy, Captain Tazewell T. Shepard Jr.; President Touré; U.S. Assistant Chief of Protocol for Visits and Public Events Samuel L. King (in back); President Kennedy; and U.S. State Department interpreter José de Seabra.

nate the Azores base agreement. Kennedy then backed off from Mondlane, a message that pushed Africans to look elsewhere for support. Finally, Kennedy’s assassination in 1963 abruptly ended what remained of his Africa outreach. Successor Lyndon B. Johnson practiced a hands-off approach in Africa whose primary criteria for U.S. support was opposition to communist influence, a hardline attitude that isolated Guinea’s Sékou Touré and contributed to his increasingly harsh rule.

To be sure, Kennedy’s vision resonated among those Americans most interested in the continent of Africa, but it would take another generation to build sufficient grassroots political force to influence policy. The anti-apartheid movement eventually enjoyed success in pressuring Congress and a reluctant Ronald Reagan White House to impose sanctions in 1985 on white-ruled South Africa and support negotiations to bring independence to Namibia and end civil wars in Mozambique and Angola. ■

# Helping Refugees in **POLAND**

**One FS family member shares her “all-consuming” experience on temporary duty in Warsaw during the war in Ukraine.**

BY LILIA LALLY



Located at the Przemysl train station, the World Central Kitchen has been serving meals every day since the war in Ukraine began.

Poland was receiving thousands of refugees fleeing Ukraine, and the U.S. Embassy Warsaw requested volunteers to assist with demand. On Monday, March 14, I received confirmation from the Bureau of Consular Affairs that my nomination as a volunteer to assist U.S. Embassy Warsaw with Mission Poland had been approved. Because I was born in Ukraine, participating in this temporary duty (TDY) assignment was my dream from the moment the war began on Feb. 24, 2022. I arrived in Warsaw on Wednesday, March 16, and immediately started interpreting from Russian and Ukrainian into English for consular officers and locally employed staff on the visa line.

There, I met a dedicated consular team whose members had come to serve on TDY assignment from around the world: England, South Africa, Taiwan and South Korea, among other places. I was also glad to reconnect with colleagues from



*Lilia Lally is a proud Foreign Service family member with international experience working in the United States government. She has moved 11 times and has worked in six embassies. She is married to Foreign Commercial Service Officer Michael Lally, and the couple has one daughter. The views expressed in this article are the author's own and are not necessarily those of the U.S. government.*





The Registration Center in Przemysl, Poland.



**Because I was born in Ukraine, participating in this temporary duty (TDY) assignment was my dream from the moment the war began on Feb. 24, 2022.**

Embassy Kyiv’s consular section, where I had worked from 2018 to 2019. They contributed their unique knowledge of Ukrainian naming conventions and other invaluable local knowledge that helped inform visa decisions. I was so grateful for my Polish consular colleagues, as well, who welcomed us and whose graciousness provided us the comfort needed to do this difficult work. Our team of approximately 60 people all worked together to support this effort.

On the visa line, the team adjudicated hundreds of cases each day. This was not easy. Consular work relies on a strong knowledge of U.S. immigration law, but adjudications also draw heavily on local cultural knowledge and experience. Not only was our group of TDYers new to this applicant pool, but the Ukrainian applicant pool had been fundamentally changed by the war, as well. Most of them had never applied for tourist visas before, and all of them had just left a life that had been completely upended. The primary applicants were mothers with small children accompanied by grandparents or relatives.

Most of their stories were the same. They were traveling to visit a cousin or other relative and planning to return to Ukraine as soon as the war is over. They were planning to stay only for a few months since their husbands, sons, brothers and fathers were left behind. One young boy was so excited to receive a visa that he started crying when told it was approved. His mother explained that he had just spent days in a bomb

shelter. A family of five had to stay in a school’s gym while waiting for the interview. They were so delighted to continue their journey after their visas were approved.

It was not only Ukrainians who were applying for visas; Russians were, too. The officer’s job is to assess each application individually, taking into consideration all the factors unique to each applicant. With U.S. Embassy Moscow’s staffing severely decreased due to Russian government strictures, Russians have been applying for visas across the world. Many of the Russian applicants we saw in Poland had traveled to the United States previously and were simply looking to do the things people, regular people, do. They were visiting friends and family. They have children in American universities. We provided the same service to them as to Ukrainian applicants and the same careful consideration of each specific case as we do for people everywhere.



COURTESY OF LILIA LALLY

**Lilia Lally (right) volunteering at the World Central Kitchen in Przemysl, Poland, with Holly Connor (left), a volunteer from EngenderHealth, an NGO in Washington, D.C.**

But this was just one facet of a huge, all-of-government international response. For example, the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service office in Warsaw had begun assisting Ukrainian refugees almost immediately after the invasion started. They received large volumes of inquiries from U.S. companies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) looking to provide support, and they got to work connecting donors with needy recipients.

Because of their unique relationship with the private sector, FCS could easily route offers of assistance, help donors navigate Polish customs clearance, identify freight forwarders that could manage cross-border shipments, and work with the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to help ease bureaucratic bottlenecks. FCS started tracking acts



COURTESY OF LILIA LALLY

**The author in front of U.S. Embassy Warsaw in March.**

of corporate social responsibility and worked closely with the embassy's public affairs section to amplify the support U.S. companies provided to Ukraine relief efforts through the embassy's social media channels.

Shortly after arriving, I joined my colleagues at Mission Poland's American Citizens Welcome Center in the southeastern border town of Przemysl. The center was open 24/7 for more than six weeks, and more than 1,900 Americans received assistance from consular staff by phone or face-to-face. Working side by side with the Warsaw and Krakow American Citizens Services teams, we were able to assist families with emergency passports, transportation and lodging, and general information.

**It was not only Ukrainians who were applying for visas; Russians were, too. The officer's job is to assess each application individually, taking into consideration all the factors unique to each applicant.**

I remember one instance meeting a mother and children who, after just crossing the Ukrainian-Polish border on foot, carrying a saxophone, guitar and ice skates, were finally able to find some rest in a local hotel, thanks to U.S. government support, while we helped prepare and provide them with new U.S. passports and loan applications. Thanks to our support, the family was able to fly to the United States where these small children could find at least some sense of stability, continuing their education in a U.S. school.

In another instance, this one rather surreal, the center facilitated bringing infants born to Ukrainian surrogate mothers across the Polish border into the waiting arms of their new American families. With the help of the Regional Security Office, these newborn children were carried first by Ukrainian ambulances and then Polish fire trucks. None of this could have happened without the support of Polish authorities and many volunteers.

Between shifts, I was able to volunteer at the World Central Kitchen in Przemysl. Since the beginning of the war, World Central Kitchen founder José Andrés and WCK's volunteers had been serving meals every day around the clock—more than 300,000 by the time I arrived. Many Ukrainians were able to receive hot meals with sandwiches at the train station in Przemysl. The food was delicious, nutritious and novel. Many Ukrainians probably tasted a chicken sandwich and Austrian apple strudel for the first time in their lives. I was impressed how well the facility was set up: volunteers from the United States, Spain, Switzerland, Poland and elsewhere kept the place spotless and up to the highest hygiene standards.

My experience was all-consuming. My whole world for this period was the war, the crisis and the people directly affected by it. On returning home to Brussels, I joined my family in welcoming four Ukrainian refugees there. ■

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Shawn Dorman, EDITOR  
AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

# The Short Diplomatic Career of Mordecai Manuel Noah

**In the 19th century, this ambitious American lived several lifetimes, including as a peddler, politician, publisher and even, albeit briefly, a U.S. diplomat.**

BY LUCIANO MANGIAFICO

**I**n August 1810, a 25-year-old American Jew named Mordecai Manuel Noah, then traveling about as a peddler in upstate New York, wrote to U.S. Secretary of State Robert Smith seeking an appointment. He was interested in being a consular agent in Lower Canada to protect the interests of U.S. citizens trading in the area. The letter was accompanied by a petition in favor of the appointment addressed to President James Madison and signed by 27 U.S. citizens. Secretary Smith turned Noah down, but advised him to seek a consular post in Europe.

On April 2, 1811, Smith was replaced by James Monroe, and Noah returned to the charge, writing to Secretary of State Monroe that his appointment to a post would “prove to foreign powers that our government is not regulated in the appointment of their officers by religious distinction,” thus stressing his religious identity for advantage. His quest was successful, and on June 4, 1811, he was offered the new post of consul to Riga (Latvia), then part of the Russian Empire.

Noah accepted the post and was confirmed, but he delayed departure until, with the start of the War of 1812, he was unable to travel to Riga. By then he had moved to Charleston and become involved in politics. During the 1812 presidential campaign, he strongly supported in newspaper articles the re-election of James Madison and the War of 1812 against the United Kingdom.

Noah then traveled to Washington to lobby President Madison directly, and in March 1813, he was appointed consul to Tunis; but before going to his post, Noah was entrusted with a sensitive secret mission, outlined in the instructions Secretary Monroe gave him on April 13. He was to attempt ransoming 11 American captives enslaved by the ruler of Algiers for a maximum price of \$3,000 per person. Monroe’s papers in the Library of Congress document that Monroe had instructed Noah to “for obvious reasons, not let [the attempt] be understood as proceeding from [the U.S.] government, but rather from the friends of the parties themselves.”

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*Luciano Mangiafico, an FSO from 1970 to 1991, is the author of two books, Contemporary American Immigrants (Praeger, 1988) and Italy’s Most Wanted (Potomac Books, 2007). He has also contributed articles to The Foreign Service Journal and the literary journal Open Letters Monthly, among other periodicals.*



Paying ransom to free U.S. prisoners from the Barbary States was not new for the United States. George Washington, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson had ransomed captives, made treaties with the Barbary States and paid yearly tributes. Like European states involved in seaborne commerce in the Mediterranean, they felt that paying for the treaties and other costs was still cheaper than building warships, running a naval establishment and paying increased insurance charges on cargo. The issue, however, had continued to fester, and during President Jefferson's tenure had led to the First Barbary War (1801-1805), principally against Tripoli, which the United States Navy won.

In July 1812, after the war against Great Britain and Spain had begun, the United States was still paying a yearly tribute to the Dey of Algiers, who complained that the United States still owed him \$27,000, and threatened that unless paid he would enslave all Americans in the country. U.S. Consul General Tobias Lear (1762-1816) borrowed the money and paid the dey, but was still expelled, with all Americans, from the country.

Then, on Aug. 25, the Algerians seized the U.S. merchant brig *Edwin* on the high seas, took the cargo and enslaved the crew of 11, soon joined by another American, taken from a Spanish ship.



Meanwhile, in May 1813, Noah embarked for the Mediterranean, but his ship was intercepted by the British Royal Navy, and he ended up in England for nine weeks. He then left for Cadiz, Spain, where he began to work on his secret mission.

There, he was not very circumspect. He revealed his purpose to U.S. Consul Richard S. Hackley (1770-1829), a businessman with intimate ties to the Spanish government nobility, and sought Hackley's advice on whom to recruit to negotiate with the Algerian ruler. Hackley recommended a man of dubious integrity, as

perhaps Hackley, himself, was. (In fact, as it turned out, Hackley later obtained title to most of the Florida peninsula, then a Spanish possession, from the Duke of Alagón, an adviser to the king of Spain. After the U.S. had purchased Florida from Spain, Hackley and his heirs spent years in court trying unsuccessfully to enforce their claim.)



**A portrait of Mordecai Manuel Noah.**

CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL (NEW YORK)

The person Hackley recommended to Noah was Richard Raynal Keene (1779-1839), a lawyer who had been employed in the office of Maryland's attorney general and former delegate to the U.S. Constitutional Convention Luther Martin (1748-1826). Keene had eloped with his employer's 15-year-old daughter, Eleonora Martin (1786-1807), and subsequently moved to New Orleans. In New Orleans, he was involved in the Aaron Burr conspiracy, and was accused of trying to acquire land grants in Spanish Florida and of fomenting hostilities between Spain and the United States.

Keene, who was clearly a self-aggrandizing, untrustworthy schemer, had later moved to Spain and become a Spanish subject. Noah, unwisely, struck a deal with Keene, making him his front man:

Keene would get paid \$1,000 for his work, regardless of success, and \$3,000 if he succeeded in freeing the prisoners.



Keene arrived in Algiers in February 1814, met with the dey and disclosed that he was acting on behalf of the U.S. government. The dey was totally unresponsive and declined to negotiate at any price. Then Keene turned to the British consul (Britain was then at war with the United States), who ransomed two American sailors, claiming that they were British, and four other seamen who claimed to be from Louisiana. Keene paid the British consul \$10,000 and in May 1814, unable to secure the release of the other 10 sailors, returned to Spain to report to Noah. Keene gave Noah a bill for \$15,852, claiming he had paid \$12,000 to the British, plus his expenses of \$3,852. Noah paid him and billed the State Department \$25,910, which included passage back home for the freed

## Paying ransom to free U.S. prisoners from the Barbary States was not new for the United States.

sailors and interest paid on the funds he had borrowed to pay expenses. The State Department rejected the claim.

Noah then left Cadiz for Paris; he did not arrive in Tunis to take up his post until December 1814. He did not do too well. In the few short months he was there, he got involved in several disputes with the authorities, engaged in private business activities and expended official funds to lead a life of luxury, residing, as he admitted, in “one of the best and largest [houses] in Tunis.”

Secretary Monroe and President Madison learned of how Noah had apparently botched the special mission, contravened his instructions and expended funds for sailors who may not have been Americans, from former Consul General Tobias Lear. Lear had received a letter to that effect from the Swedish consul in Tunis. Another letter sent to the State Department by the captain of the *Edwin*, still in captivity in Algiers, corroborated Lear’s report. The president and Secretary were incensed and decided that Noah ought to be relieved of his post.



In early 1815, the War of 1812 ended with the Treaty of Ghent, and on March 2, 1815, the U.S. declared war on Algiers. Two warship squadrons were readied to sail to the Mediterranean, and one of these, under the command of Captain Stephen Decatur, left New York on May 20. Decatur was successful in his mission. He sailed into Algiers’ harbor, obtained the release of all Americans without ransom and negotiated a favorable peace treaty.

Decatur had also carried a letter from Secretary Monroe, which he delivered to Noah. Since the copy in the State Department archives has disappeared, we have to rely on Noah’s transcription and publication in his book *Travels in England, France, Spain, and the Barbary States* for its contents: “At the time of your appointment, as Consul at Tunis, it was not known that the Religion which you profess would form any obstacle to the exercise of your Consular functions. Recent information, however, on which entire reliance may be placed, proves that

it would produce a very unfavourable effect. In consequence of which, the President has deemed it expedient to revoke your commission.”

Thus, ostensibly, Noah had been given the post in the first place in part for being a Jew and was now being fired for being a Jew. This did not make sense, and Secretary Monroe disclosed the real reasons to Noah in Washington in early 1816.

According to Noah, he was told that he had been relieved, among other reasons, for “going beyond orders, employing a most obnoxious character [Keene], expending the public money unnecessarily.” What was left unsaid at the interview was the fact that both Madison and Monroe had been upset that Noah had disclosed the involvement of the government in the ransom efforts, engaged in private business and was suspected of collaborating with Keene in his efforts to obtain land grants in Florida.



Noah did not take his firing kindly. He wrote a 128-page pamphlet, *Correspondence and Documents Relative to the Attempt to Negotiate for the Release of the American Captives at Algiers; Including Remarks on Our Relations with That Regency*, which he sent Monroe, telling him he intended to give it to Congress. Monroe was not concerned, but Noah’s friends dissuaded him from publishing the document because it could harm U.S. foreign relations and could also be taken as a personal attack on Monroe, then running for president.

Noah, however, pursued a claim for his salary, and eventually he was paid. He continued to clamor for a retraction of the charge that he had been fired because of his religious beliefs. In May 1818, he wrote to Madison: “I could wish, not only for the Sake of my Coreligionaires, but for that of your administration, that if my letter of recall, cannot be erased from the Books of the Department of State, that Such explanations may be Subjoined, as may prevent any evils arising from the precedent.” On May 18, 1818, Madison replied in a very carefully worded letter: “It is certain that your religious profession was well known at the time you recd. your Commission; and that in itself it could not be a motive for your recall.”

Although his short diplomatic career had been unsuccessful, Noah continued to be a wheeler-dealer and a man of some importance. He moved to New York, founded and edited a number of publications and wrote plays. He attempted in 1825 to found a Jewish “refuge” on Grand Island in the Niagara River, was sheriff of New York, and led New York City’s Tammany Hall political machine for several years. He died in New York in 1851 at the age of 65. ■

## Honoring Archer Blood: Free Speech and the Right to Dissent

On June 29, Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu hosted a ceremony at the National Museum of American Diplomacy to honor the legacy of the late Foreign Service Officer and former Consul General to Dhaka Archer K. Blood. AFSA was pleased to sponsor the reception that followed.

At the event, guests heard from State Department Director General Marcia Bernicat; AFSA State Vice President Tom Yazdgerdi; Peter Blood, the son of the event's honoree; retired Foreign Service Officer Scott Butcher, who served in Dhaka with Archer Blood and drafted the cable that came to bear his name; and Ambassador (ret.) Teresita Schaffer, wife of the late Ambassador Howard Schaffer.



From left: Peter Blood, retired FSO Scott Butcher, Amb. (ret.) Teresita Schaffer, State Department Counselor Derek Chollet and Assistant Secretary Donald Lu at the June 29 ceremony honoring Archer K. Blood.

In April 1971, Consul General Blood and 20 members of his staff sent one of the department's first-ever dissent cables, known as the Blood Telegram, to then-Secretary of State William P. Rogers. Their reporting brought to light violence and

mass atrocities committed against Bengalis, who were fighting for their independence in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

The Blood Telegram protested U.S. policy toward East Pakistan and urged

*Continued on page 64*

## CALENDAR

Please check [www.afsa.org](http://www.afsa.org) for the most up-to-date information.

September 5  
**Labor Day:**  
AFSA offices closed

September 11-15  
AFSA Road Scholar Program  
Washington, D.C.

September 21  
12-2 p.m.  
AFSA Governing  
Board Meeting

September 22  
Diplomats at Work:  
Commemorating the  
Afghanistan Evacuation

September 25-30  
AFSA Road Scholar Program  
Chautauqua, N.Y.

October 10  
Columbus Day/Indigenous  
Peoples Day:  
AFSA offices closed

October 19  
12-2 p.m.  
AFSA Governing  
Board Meeting

## AFSA Holds Worldwide Virtual Town Halls

AFSA President Eric Rubin and constituent agency vice presidents met with AFSA members around the world in a series of four regional virtual town halls in June.

In the sessions, Ambassador Rubin told attendees that the association is proud to have the largest percentage membership of any federal professional union, approaching 85 percent of

active-duty employees, and continues to seek ideas and input from its members regarding areas for improvement, support and advocacy.

One of AFSA's main goals, he said, is to push for modernization in the Foreign Service, which operates on the basis of the personnel legislation laid out in the Foreign Service Act of 1980.

"It was passed 42 years ago and negotiated in the 1970s—a very different time in our country's history," Rubin said. "We need more resources and more people so the Foreign Service can meet the needs and challenges our country is facing today."

Even as AFSA focuses on big-picture issues, Rubin emphasized, it's also con-

centrating on the "nuts and bolts" of life in the Foreign Service to retain employees and address difficulties they face in their careers.

Successes in this area include achieving parity with the military on in-state college tuition for FS members and dependents, and the Foreign Service Families Act, which allows members to

*Continued on page 64*



## Family Member Employment: An AFSA Priority

Way back in 1992, during my first tour in Panama City, I remember hearing from our DCM during one of his weekly meetings with junior officers, as we were then called, about the significance of family member employment.

"If your wife or husband is not happy, you won't be happy or productive. And meaningful work makes people happy," he said. His words have stuck with me.

Fast forward to the present. The department has gotten better at helping find jobs in our missions overseas for eligible family members (EFMs), and technology has also played an increasingly critical and helpful role.

But there are still things that can be done to improve employment prospects for family members and to build on what already exists.

**Security Clearance Processing.** It takes too long to get the initial security clearance for EFMs. While there have been undeniable improvements in recent years, including the use of bots to reduce wait times for security clearance conversion and reciprocity with other agencies to one day and four days, respectively (see 22 STATE 7276), AFSA is still hearing about problems from our members.

The department recently told AFSA that one way to expedite the process is to have EFMs join the Foreign Service Family Reserve Corps

(FSFRC), where the quick provision of a "public trust" clearance can potentially speed things up for higher-level Top Secret and Secret clearances. (See <https://bit.ly/FSFRC-GCLO>.)

**Support for DETOs.** AFSA strongly backs the Domestic Employee Teleworking Overseas (DETO) program, which allows domestic direct-hire employees accompanying their Foreign Service or Civil Service spouse on an overseas assignment to telework from post. AFSA is glad to see that this program has grown over the years. We welcome the flexibility that the department has demonstrated, such as a recent interim agreement between State and the Department of Defense, now in the final stages, that will allow DETOs married to military spouses to work from military housing overseas.

But, in general, the application process can take an inordinate amount of time. And AFSA does not understand why Civil Service DETOs, many of whom are married to FS members, do not receive at least some portion of locality pay, i.e., what the FS gets with overseas comparability pay, and differential payments at their posts, which their FS DETO counterparts receive.

In the near future, AFSA plans to join with AFGE, the Civil Service union at State, to urge that this situation be rectified.

**The department has gotten better at helping EFMs find jobs in our missions overseas, but there are still things that can be done to improve employment prospects.**

**A Viable Anti-Nepotism Process.** On the margins of the annual chiefs of mission (COM) conference, AFSA hosted a June 22 breakfast for career COMs, chargés and principal officers. One issue brought to light was that anti-nepotism rules and regulations, which affect both EFM and DETO employment, take far too long to implement at post and have expanded beyond what is reasonable.

One COM noted that the rules are needlessly complex and intrusive and can interfere with overseas operations. Another, who recently worked on these issues within the Bureau of Global Talent Management, said that the office can turn around a decision in two weeks, but that the average timeline is now far longer, with some decisions taking more than six months.

To help cut down on the decision time, the department should send one complete set of standardized anti-nepotism review questions, instead of stretching out the process by asking additional questions in an ad hoc manner.

**Working Outside the Mission.** Many family members already have careers and skills that are readily portable to the host country. The

department has more than 150 bilateral work agreements and de facto work arrangements allowing family members to work outside the mission without losing certain privileges and immunities.

The Global Community Liaison Office also manages a Global Employment Initiative with global employment advisers that covers more than 200 posts. (See <https://bit.ly/FamilyMemberEmployment>.)

Robust department support for family members who work on the local economy is vital, and AFSA encourages our members to explore this option where they can.

We have raised and will continue to raise family member employment issues with Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources Brian McKeon and Director General Marcia Bernicat, and believe we have a productive ongoing dialogue.

For AFSA to be as successful in our advocacy as possible, we need to hear from you. Do you believe you are receiving the support you need? Is the department walking the walk when it says that spousal employment is a priority? Please let us know at [member@afsa.org](mailto:member@afsa.org). ■





# Collaboration Through Co-Creation: Putting Policy into Practice

USAID and other development stakeholders have long touted the value of “co-creation,” particularly as the agency advances its efforts to work more closely with local partners.

According to USAID, “Co-creation brings people together to collectively design solutions to specific development challenges. Partners, potential implementers, and end-users define a problem collaboratively, identify solutions, build consensus around action, and refine plans to move forward with programs and projects.” This statement got me thinking.

What if the agency applied the co-creation approach internally, treating AFSA and other federal unions as local partners with whom to co-create solutions?

This shouldn’t be a radical idea—sound bases are already in place to build this approach on, not least the president’s executive order, “Protecting the Federal Workforce” (E.O. 14003). So, where to begin?

Fortunately, USAID has issued a helpful “Co-creation Interactive Guide” (viewable at <https://bit.ly/USAIDCoCreation>) that includes definitions, clarifications, characteristics and how-tos related to the co-creation process. It’s a great resource—so great that I am sharing the USAID schematic here:

“Co-creation is an inten-



USAID'S CO-CREATION INTERACTIVE GUIDE

tional, collaborative design approach that brings people together to collectively produce a mutually valued outcome, using a participatory process that assumes some degree of shared power and decision-making.”

I found this distinction and progression well considered but a bit depressing: AFSA-USAID relations are predominantly stuck at the consultation stage (if they are even on the chart); AFSA too often learns of concerns to the Foreign Service only after the fact.

For example, if you’re like me, you were excited to read in the Administrator’s testimony on the Fiscal Year 2023 budget request her mention of increasing the size and agility of the career workforce, and “the launch of the Global Development Partnership initiative, a workforce expansion program, that will focus on democracy and anti-corruption, global health security, national security, climate change, operational management, and a more permanent

humanitarian assistance workforce.”

As positive as her plan sounds, this was the first AFSA had heard of “the Global Development Partnership Initiative.” As bureaucrats, we know that when initiatives get capitalized, they’re real!

Strategically ambiguous words such as “more permanent humanitarian assistance workforce” raised my eyebrows, and rightly so: ASFA has since learned of the agency’s planned conversion of personal service contractors and institutional support contractors to Foreign Service Limited appointees.

By contrast, the co-creation column of the schematic shared on this page contains phrases such as “shared power,” “mutually beneficial” and “a clearly defined, shared outcome.”

These words remind me of the Biden-Harris administration’s own body of support for employees and their unions, including the February 2022 White House Task Force on Worker Organizing

and Empowerment, which declares: “When federal employees organize a union, they should have an effective voice in workplace issues through their union, and federal management should work closely with these unions to solve workplace issues.”

Of course there will not always be agreement, but surely collaborating on a common challenge is not asking too much. Still, I am hopeful.

AFSA and USAID are exploring the revival of the Labor Management Forum, a structure that met with some success during the Obama-Biden administration. Such a forum could prove to be a positive platform for AFSA-agency engagement and co-creation.

In the meantime, I remain committed to engaging agency colleagues at all levels to advance mutually beneficial solutions to the glaring strategic workforce challenges facing USAID; whether we call it “co-creation” or some other name, hopefully we agree that it is a “shared outcome.” ■



## The True Cost of FAS' Administrative Burden

In AFSA's recent morale and retention survey, one respondent noted: "If we (the Foreign Agricultural Service) are a Foreign Service agency, we need to act like one."

This sentiment was echoed in other responses, in particular in an oft-cited concern that time spent on administrative tasks is a major distraction from servicing our stakeholders and devoting full attention to our mission.

In 2021 the U.S. agricultural industry posted its highest annual export levels ever recorded, totaling \$177 billion. These industry successes are achieved in partnership with FAS FSOs, who play critical roles in facilitating trade.

We persuade host governments to grant market access for U.S. commodities and to legalize the cultivation and importation of genetically engineered products.

We provide critical market intelligence on agricultural production, supply and distribution in overseas markets. The importance of this has been emphasized as Russia's war of choice in Ukraine exacerbates food security concerns in many countries.

In addition, we develop creative marketing initiatives to introduce foreign consumers to U.S. food and beverages, from partnerships with MasterChef to campaigns that demonstrate the sustainability of U.S.

production practices. And in less developed markets, we run economic development programming, from providing food assistance in schools to increasing the competitiveness of local commodities (e.g., cacao).

As anyone whose work has touched agricultural trade will tell you, agriculture is highly technical and politically sensitive: The agriculture chapter is often one of the last to be closed in trade negotiations, and market access requests can take decades of persistent strategic prodding.

Success in these areas is challenging and requires the development of effective relationships with local partners. And this can only truly happen in person, which is why we are overseas. As we continue to face the impacts of war, climate change and other crises affecting global food security, this work is increasingly critical.

Ultimately, we need more FSOs and overseas positions; but first we need to relieve the administrative burden from our 146 FSOs so they can fully focus on the core FAS mission.

While FSOs in other agencies spend some time on administrative tasks, FAS began to shift away from using international cooperative administrative support services (ICASS) many years ago, arguing that doing so would cost the agency less.

Concurrently, headquarters continued to push new administrative requirements on overseas offices. FAS management did not appear to consider the high price of having FSOs overseas or that administrative work could be done more cost-effectively by others.

The cost of a mid-level Foreign Service officer serving overseas—once salary and benefits are incorporated—can be \$150 per hour. In return, our work on the FAS mission and on behalf of U.S. farmers and ranchers adds exceptional value to the U.S. economy: agricultural exports support more than 1.3 million U.S. jobs on the farm and in related industries, such as food processing and transportation.

However, this hourly rate is high for managing simple administrative tasks, such as the multistep approval process to purchase office supplies on an FAS-issued credit card or to manage the office vehicle. If buying a \$10 stapler takes 30 minutes of an FSO's time based on the series of required approvals in various systems, it now costs \$85. And that is 30 minutes they are not working on a market access request for the U.S. pork industry, which could generate \$20 million in U.S. exports annually.

Such activities could be more cost-effectively accomplished through ICASS. While

this system also factors in the costs—salary and benefits—of the individuals providing the service, local staff support, economies of scale and related expertise substantially reduce costs.

Other aspects of the administrative burden, such as supporting permanent changes of station, multistep training requests, and cumbersome budget management could also be relieved by our colleagues in FAS Washington at a much lower cost to U.S. taxpayers.

FSOs remain highly committed to the FAS mission and are therefore working evenings and weekends (without additional compensation) to keep up with these requirements while also meeting our stakeholders' expectations. But FAS' history of pushing administrative tasks to FSOs is one of the key issues chipping away at our morale and retention.

As Benjamin Franklin admonished: "Remember that time is money." By shifting administrative tasks over to those who can accomplish them more cost-effectively, from Washington or by shared admin programs such as ICASS, we allow our small cohort of FSOs to be even mightier as we work to link U.S. agriculture to the world. ■



## State-Level Advocacy: Emerging Issues and Progress

While I usually focus my columns on Congress and our federal advocacy, here I will highlight AFSA's state-level efforts.

With the hiring of a policy analyst, Sean O'Gorman, this past year, AFSA is better positioned than ever to engage more state and even local legislatures on its priorities. We have primarily focused on states where we hear and know most active-duty and retired members of the Foreign Service reside but seek to expand our advocacy work to more states.

You may remember AFSA's advocacy related to in-state tuition eligibility for Foreign Service members and their dependents in Virginia. In 2019, a bill was signed into law to lower the FS residency requirement to 90 days for in-state tuition rate eligibility in that state. We are grateful to Virginia Delegate Paul Krizek (and his staff) for championing the issue and sponsoring the bill.

AFSA's efforts on this issue culminated in passage of the Foreign Service Families Act at the federal level, which allows members of the Foreign Service, including their spouses and dependents, to be eligible for in-state tuition rates in their state of domicile.

As we've tracked state legislation and its implications for Foreign Service members over the past few years, issues ranging from

the taxability of public service pensions to enrollment eligibility at certain public schools have emerged as potential areas of focus for AFSA's advocacy. Members are especially interested in addressing state-level inequities between the Foreign Service and the military.

For example, AFSA supported a Wisconsin bill exempting Foreign Service pension payments from taxation that was designed to entice more retirees to the state. We wrote a letter of support and worked with the sponsor to find a path forward in the state legislature. Unfortunately, it did not become law this year, but AFSA continues to advocate for passage of this bill and similar ones.

The pandemic exacerbated some inequities and brought about further complications for those in the Foreign Service. For example, with pandemic restrictions in place, many members could not complete normal home leave tasks, such as renewing a driver's license. Recently, both Virginia and Maryland—states with substantial Foreign Service populations—provided extensions for federal employees who were unable to renew their licenses.

As of July 1, 2022, Virginia driver's license validity was extended from three to six years beyond the expiration date for U.S. government

personnel serving overseas, including members of the Foreign Service, their spouses and dependents.

Likewise, as of Oct. 1, Maryland will offer temporary renewals (up to two years) for driver's licenses or identification cards for members of the Foreign Service, whether serving overseas or domestically, and their families. AFSA's advocacy team is actively pursuing a similar license renewal extension policy in the District of Columbia.

Similar bills have surfaced in other state legislatures across the country. We have seen bills focused on overseas driver's license renewals in New Hampshire and Nebraska, as well as the introduction of a residence homestead tax exemption for Foreign Service retirees living in Texas.

Even though these bills have not yet become law, their existence is proof that these issues are sparking conversations in different states because they are important to members of the Foreign Service.

At the local level, AFSA hears from members about the lack of access to educational institutions—such as Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Fairfax County—for Foreign Service dependents because of their parents' or guardians' overseas service.

We are working with the



AFSA Policy Analyst Sean O'Gorman can be reached at [ogorman@afsa.org](mailto:ogorman@afsa.org).

Virginia state legislature to open access for Foreign Service dependents to this magnet school and other Governor's Schools across the state, which are already accessible to dependents of active-duty members of the military.

Further, we hope to add greater detail to state-by-state policies in AFSA's annual tax guide and advocate for change in states where unfavorable policies remain in place.

We continue to encourage members to reach out to AFSA with state and local policy concerns, as members are often the first to alert us of issues. ■

## Diplomats at Work Event

# Strengthening the U.S. Economy Through the Foreign Commercial Service

Foreign Commercial Service Officer Yamilee Bastien was AFSA's guest at a virtual Diplomats at Work event on June 16. She discussed the vital role commercial officers play in strengthening the U.S. economy—namely, through creating American jobs and ensuring U.S. industry remains competitive in the global market.

The FCS, Bastien explained, is primarily tasked with promoting the export of American products and services abroad and attracting inbound investments to the United States.

"We help about 30,000 U.S. companies per year," said Bastien. "Many are small and medium companies, and it really is rewarding to see them expand into foreign markets, sometimes for the first time."

The FCS wields its approximately 225 commercial officers—who spend the majority of their careers overseas—to manage a presence at U.S. embassies and consulates in trade hubs located in more than 80 countries.

When a U.S. field office refers a company to an overseas FCS office, Bastien explained, FCS officers and locally engaged staff at that post assess whether the company's product or service holds potential in the local market. If it does, the



Bastien (left) embarks on the Embassy on the Road program to conduct outreach with the business community in Córdoba, Argentina, in 2017 with Chargé d'Affaires Thomas Cooney (right) and Political Officer Robert Alter.

COURTESY OF YAMILEE BASTIEN

office works to match the company with local buyers, distributors or representatives, depending on the desired client profile.

Bastien noted that an FCS officer's portfolio is distinct from but complementary to the work of economic officers. "The [embassy's] economic section tends to focus on macro-level trends and policy-level implications of those trends," she said. "With Commerce, we're looking more at the impact on individual businesses and helping specific companies succeed in that market."

Nevertheless, she said, both types of officers regularly coordinate with others engaged in commercial,

economic and trade issues, including with officers from the Foreign Agricultural Service, Customs and Border Protection, and USAID.

Among the projects she has most enjoyed during her career, Bastien mentioned the Science Without Borders education program in Brazil. In 2012 her team brought a large delegation of 65 U.S. colleges and universities to Brasilia to participate in an education fair, led by the under secretary for international trade and showcasing the benefits of U.S. education and cultural exchanges.

Previously, Bastien said, many promising Brazilian students could not pursue educational opportunities

because of limited personal finances, but the Brazilian government, along with the private sector and international partners, expanded educational opportunities for 100,000 students. The trade mission pledged to boost the number of Brazilians studying in the U.S., whose tuition costs would be covered by the Science Without Borders program.

"You might not necessarily see [change] from today to tomorrow, but in the long term, that has a very positive impact," Bastien said. "An [educational] experience can open your eyes to what's possible and inspire a whole generation to aim big. That made this a meaningful project for me."

Yamilee Bastien currently works as a commercial officer at FCS' export assistance center in Miami. She joined the Foreign Service more than 15 years ago and has served in Colombia, Argentina and Brazil. She is the first FCS officer to be featured in this speaker series.

Diplomats at Work tells the stories of the Foreign Service, introducing the important and varied work of diplomats to new audiences as part of AFSA's outreach efforts.

A recording of this event is available at [youtube.com/AFSAtube](https://youtube.com/AFSAtube). ■

## “The Lavender Scare” Film Screening

In honor of Pride Month, the Secretary’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion (S/ODI) hosted a June 29 screening of the film, “The Lavender Scare,” the first documentary to tell the story of a decades-long discriminatory campaign by the federal government that ultimately ignited the gay rights movement.

The event began with a reception in the Delegates Lounge co-hosted by S/ODI, AFSA and glifaa, the organization that represents the LGBTQ+ community in the foreign affairs agencies. Attendees then moved to the Dean Acheson Auditorium to view the 75-minute film.

Released in 2017 by Full Exposure Films, “The Lavender Scare” begins during the height of the Cold War. President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Senator Joseph McCarthy deemed homosexuals to be national security risks, triggering a witch hunt that lasted four decades. Thousands of government employ-

ees suspected of being homosexual were systematically fired and denied due process, with State Department employees at particular risk.

It was not until one man, Frank Kameny, fought his dismissal and brought a civil rights claim before a U.S. court that the government’s discriminatory actions gained wider publicity and set in motion a civil rights movement. Despite this progress, vestiges of the anti-gay policy remained in force until President Bill Clinton ended them in 1995.

The screening was followed by a panel discussion featuring AFSA State Vice President Tom Yazdgerdi, Foreign Service Officer Virgil Carstens and historian David Johnson, who is interviewed extensively in the documentary and authored the book, *The Lavender Scare* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), which served as the scholarly framework for the film.

Johnson characterized the

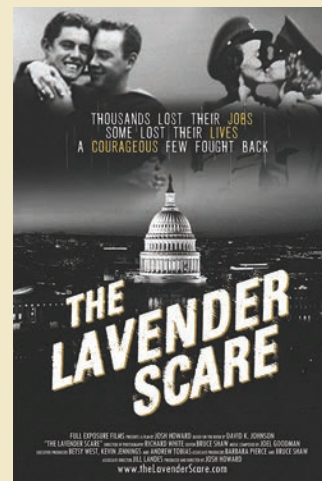
film and the events it examines as “the story of paranoia that led to ruined careers as well as damaged and ended lives,” despite the fact that there was no evidence a gay man or lesbian had ever submitted to blackmail by a foreign agent.

An important lesson that he draws from this painful period in history, he said, is that “activism matters, and ultimately it was activism that ended the Lavender Scare.”

Reflecting on his personal experience as a transgender man in the Foreign Service, Carstens pointed out the importance of fostering inclusive work environments in offices across the State Department to ensure all employees feel safe and valued.

Yazdgerdi added that AFSA strongly supports measures to ensure that there is no discrimination against employees in any of the foreign affairs agencies.

“AFSA did not always hold



FULL EXPOSURE FILMS

the position it holds now,” he said. “But today we are proud to be a partner with glifaa in that effort.”

Also on June 29, S/ODI hosted a virtual panel discussion “Advancing Equity for LGBTQ+ Persons at Home and Abroad,” featuring Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, U.S. Special Envoy to Advance Human Rights of LGBTQ+ Persons Jessica Stern, Professor David Johnson, Consul General Elizabeth K. Lee (from Consulate Thessaloniki) and S/ODI Senior Adviser Thomas Coleman.

View the discussion at <https://interactive.state.gov/DEIA-advancing-equity>. ■

## AFSA Hosts Chiefs of Mission

On June 22, AFSA hosted a breakfast for U.S. chiefs of mission who were in Washington, D.C., for the State Department’s annual chiefs of mission conference. Some 25 ambassadors and *chargés* attended and contributed to a candid conversation about the most pressing challenges

facing career ambassadors at posts around the world.

AFSA President Eric Rubin welcomed attendees and reminded them that the association is here to help by advocating for the needs of Foreign Service members.

The chiefs of mission expressed a range of con-

cerns, including risk avoidance policies that hamper their team’s ability to engage bilaterally and conduct fieldwork; the overtasking of small posts that, in some regions, are often understaffed; and questions about changes to the Foreign Service Officer Test.

They also pointed to ongoing issues that deplete morale at post, such as payroll problems and the CDC dog import ban that complicates travel for pet owners.

AFSA will continue to monitor and seek to alleviate these and other issues affecting the Foreign Service. ■

## AFSA Welcomes New Governing Board Members

With the departure of Foreign Commercial Service Vice President Jay Carreiro for an overseas assignment and Secretary Daniel Crocker for a position at Davidson College as director of the Dean Rusk International Studies Program, and with a vacancy for the position of USAID representative since the departure of Jolisa Brooks in March, AFSA recently welcomed three new Governing Board members for the remainder of the 2021-2023 term.

The board would like to extend its sincere gratitude to Jay Carreiro, who has served as a vice president for almost three years, and Daniel Crocker, who has served as secretary for the past year and previously served for two years as AFSA's FCS VP. AFSA thanks them for their thoughtful contributions and dedicated service to members.



### Sharon Carter

Lending her support to the board as a USAID representative, Carter is a Senior Foreign Service officer currently serving in Washington, D.C., as the interagency coordinator for the Global Fragility Act Plan for Coastal West Africa.

She joined the Foreign Service in 1995 after 15 years as a justice and anti-corruption specialist. She has served as deputy mission director in Senegal, Nicaragua, the Sahel and in USAID's civilian-military coordination office.

Carter attended Michigan State University, the University of Maryland and the National War College. For her various USAID assignments, she has learned French, Spanish and Portuguese.

Now living in the beautiful Shenandoah Valley, she loves to go hiking as often as possible. She has three daughters and two grandchildren who are often found puttering around in her backyard.



### Charlie Ranado

Joining the board as FCS vice president, Ranado is a senior commercial officer who has been with the Department of Commerce for more than 25 years. Most recently, he served as a senior adviser to the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service and as

Global Markets' deputy assistant secretary for Global Markets Asia, where a majority of his efforts were focused on promoting the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity.

He has served tours as a senior commercial officer in

Vietnam, Poland (also overseeing commercial operations in Lithuania) and Guatemala. Ranado has also served as principal commercial officer in Saudi Arabia, and commercial officer in Argentina (also overseeing commercial operations in Uruguay) and Russia.

During a one-year assignment with FedEx in Memphis, Tenn., he collaborated on programs to promote greater export opportunities for small and medium-sized firms.

Ranado began working for the Department of Commerce in 1996. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, he was director of the Department of Commerce's Rochester, N.Y., Export Assistance Center.

Throughout his career, he has received numerous awards, notably the Commerce Department's silver medal in October 2019 for his work on advancing U.S.-Poland bilateral energy issues.

A graduate of the State University of New York at Brockport, where he earned a B.S. in political science, Ranado is currently pursuing a master's degree in climate change and development at the University of London.

He is married with two daughters.



### Sue Saarnio

Joining the board as secretary, Saarnio is a retired Foreign Service officer who served most recently as consul general in Tijuana from 2018 to 2021. A career economic officer, she worked at U.S. embassies in Mexico City, Panama and Ottawa, and at

U.S. Consulate Jerusalem.

In Washington, she served as principal deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Energy Resources and deputy assistant secretary for Mexico, Canada and regional economic policy in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. In the Economic Bureau she served as deputy special representative for commercial and business affairs and special adviser for conflict diamonds.

Saarnio has served twice before as a State representative on the AFSA Governing Board.

Prior to government service, she worked as a journalist in Montana and Minnesota. She holds a bachelor's degree in history from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minn., and she also spent a year at the American University in Cairo, Egypt, through a study abroad program.

She has two grown children and lives in Falls Church, Va., with her Mexican dog, Daisy. ■

## FSJ Editorial Board Welcomes New Members

*The Foreign Service Journal* is pleased to welcome three new members to its editorial board: State FSOs Gaïna Dávila and Maryum Saifee and FCS Officer Aileen Nandi.

Gaïna Dávila joined the Foreign Service in 2014 and has since served in Washington, D.C., Bangladesh and the Eastern Caribbean. Most recently, she worked as the public affairs officer at Embassy Conakry and now serves as the regional policy adviser for Africa in the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs.

Prior to joining the State Department, she served as communications director for Haiti in Transition (H.i.T), a nonprofit organization that aimed to empower Haiti's youth and future leaders.

Dávila is also the co-founder of a specialty coffee company.

She holds a bachelor's degree in foreign policy and a master's degree in international communications from American University. Dávila speaks French, Haitian-Creole and Spanish, and is currently based in Washington, D.C., with her husband and son.

Maryum Saifee is a Foreign Service officer currently serving as a senior adviser in the Secretary of State's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. She began her Foreign Service career in Cairo at the start of the Arab uprisings in 2011. She later served in Baghdad during the U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq and was spokesperson for U.S. Consulate Lahore.

In Washington, Saifee



Gaïna Dávila



Maryum Saifee



Aileen Nandi

has served in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues, and the Secretary's Office of Religion and Global Affairs.

Prior to joining the State Department, she was a Peace Corps volunteer in Jordan and an AmeriCorps volunteer in Seattle. In 2018 Saifee took a sabbatical from the State Department to pursue an international affairs fellowship with the Council on Foreign Relations where she worked with the Human Rights Foundation.

In a personal capacity, she also led a task force on State Department reform as a senior visiting fellow at the Truman Center for National Policy. Saifee is a graduate of Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and a life member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Aileen Crowe Nandi currently serves as executive director for Asia at the Department of Commerce. She spent a total of ten years at three posts in India, most recently as minister counselor for commercial affairs in New Delhi. She

also enjoyed her tours in El Salvador, Silicon Valley and Mexico City.

Born with a severe hearing impairment, Nandi began her education at the age of 18 months at the Central Institute for the Deaf in St. Louis, Mo., and was part of a pioneering program that taught deaf infants how to speak and lip read. Mainstreamed a few years later, she now speaks German, Spanish and a smattering of other languages.

Nandi holds a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Richmond and a master's degree from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service.

An avid reader and writer, she has led or joined book clubs in each place she's lived and is currently seeking a new book club as she gets settled in Washington, D.C.

Editorial board members Joel Ehrendreich, Jessica McTigue and Daniel Crocker are moving on after serving three years each on the board. We thank them for their consistently thoughtful guidance and contributions to the editorial direction of the *Journal*. ■



### AFSA Governing Board Meeting, June 15, 2022

The board met in person at AFSA headquarters.

**Editorial Board:** The Governing Board approved the appointment of three new interim members to the FSJ Editorial Board to fill impending vacancies: State Department FSOs Gaïna Dávila and Maryum Saifee, and FCS Officer Aileen Nandi. The new members will serve for the remainder of the current term, ending in 2023.

**Awards:** The board adopted the Awards and Plaques Committee's recommendations for six recipients of AFSA's annual dissent and performance awards. The full list of award recipients will be announced in the October issue of the *FSJ*.

Archer Blood  
Continued from page 55

department leadership to take stronger action. However, it was not well received in Washington: President Richard Nixon ordered Blood's transfer, and he left Dhaka in June 1971. While Blood was honored by his peers with AFSA's 1971 Christian A. Herter Award for constructive dissent, he was not given an overseas posting until after President Nixon had left office.

Director General Bernicat offered keynote remarks to recognize Blood's courageous leadership and use of the

department's Dissent Channel. Instituted just months before the Blood Telegram was dispatched, the channel still provides a crucial medium for employees to offer dissenting views on foreign policy issues to department leadership. Bernicat pointed out that the channel is rooted in the fundamental right of free speech and the idea that leaders have the responsibility to disagree with official policy when they believe it is wrong.

By sending their dissent cable, Bernicat said, Blood and his staff exemplified the values that the State Depart-

ment still aspires to foster in its future leaders: moral courage, honesty, integrity and the willingness to speak truth to power.

AFSA State VP Tom Yazdgerdi also offered remarks at the ceremony, noting the department's five decade-long legacy of welcoming dissenting policy views and Blood's role in shaping it. He noted that AFSA has a commitment to "celebrate and promote the idea of dissent in the United States Foreign Service."

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Assistant Secretary Lu announced the State

the Fiscal Year 2023 foreign affairs budget to fund the additional personnel.

AFSA is also urging the department to expand orientation training to 12 weeks, in order to better prepare new members across the foreign affairs agencies for the work ahead.

Rubin also addressed the issue of political appointee ambassadors, which, as of early August, account for 47 percent of the Biden administration's appointments, while 53 percent are career Foreign Service officers (the overall percentage of career ambassadors is higher, as the administration kept nearly all career ambassadors appointed by the previous administration).

"The system has long included political appointees to senior positions, and that will continue to happen,"

Town Halls  
Continued from page 55

cancel contracts and leases without penalty when on official orders.

Rubin went on to lay out a list of reform priorities that AFSA is pursuing through collaboration with allies on Capitol Hill. A top priority is to gain more people and more positions for the Foreign Service, particularly overseas.

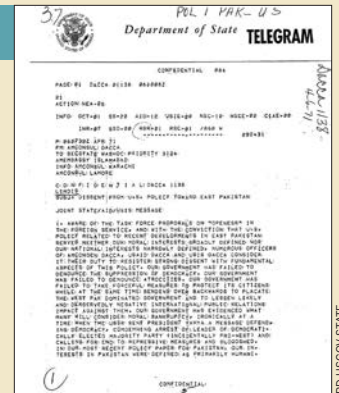
"Our overseas footprint is way too small," he said. Some posts lack adequate personnel, while at others, much of the country team is made up of first- or second-tour FSOs or FS specialists with little experience.

To address this staffing gap, AFSA has called for 1,000 new Foreign Service positions at the State Department and 650 at USAID, and is pushing for an increase to

he said. "But we feel very strongly that it should be limited, and we need figures closer to the historical average of about 70 percent of our ambassadorships and at least half of our senior Washington positions occupied by career members of the Foreign Service."

In its effort to modernize employee assessments and promotion precepts, AFSA has supported new core precepts focused on diversity as well as on workplace culture. Ruben said the association would like to move toward a 360-degree evaluation process to integrate feedback from subordinates and colleagues.

Rubin also reiterated AFSA's support for the dozens of FS members who signed a letter to the State Department's Bureau of Medical Services demanding



"The Blood Telegram," one of the State Department's first-ever dissent cables, was sent by Consul General Blood and members of his staff on April 6, 1971.

Department's plans to name an SCA conference room after Archer Blood. He presented Blood's son Peter with a copy of the plaque that will hang outside the room to honor his legacy and memorialize the values that are central to the Foreign Service. ■

access to women's reproductive health care.

"We're taking a strong position that reproductive health is health," Rubin said. "More than 200 members from both USAID and State raised their concerns and never received even a courtesy reply until one of the signers wrote an op-ed for *The Foreign Service Journal* [in May] and we sent it to MED."

AFSA, he said, is pushing for commitments from the bureau to improve women's access to health care when at post overseas.

Rubin reminded the audience that AFSA has a team of lawyers and legal counselors ready to advise and support members in their life and career in the Foreign Service.

AFSA welcomes your input on issues of concern at member@afsa.org. ■



## 2022 AFSA Strategic Writing Award Winner: Kevin Murakami

Kevin Murakami, an economics-coned Foreign Service officer, is this year's winner of AFSA's Strategic Writing Award (formerly known as the George Kennan Writing Award). AFSA presented the award at a June 3 ceremony at the National War College in Washington, D.C.

AFSA offers the award each year to Foreign Service graduates of the National War College whose research projects and writing have demonstrated excellence throughout the year.

Murakami said he was honored to receive the award. "I always admired George Kennan for his intellect, prescience and candor," he said. "Prior to joining the Foreign Service, I worked in Russia during the initial decade after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. At the time, I always paid close attention to Kennan's insights into Moscow's strategic thinking as the U.S. and Russia tried to work out a post-Cold War relationship."

Assigned to the National War College for the past year, Murakami elected to pursue an independent research project in addition to the strategic research paper every student must write.

His award-winning independent project paper is titled "Back to Basics: Renegotiating and Implementing Economic Assistance of the

Compacts for Free Association."

Murakami told the *FSJ* that he chose the topic "because I have long viewed the South Pacific as flying under the radar a bit in terms of its strategic importance to the United States. Given that the U.S. is currently undertaking renegotiations with the Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Palau on the economic terms of the compacts, which soon expire, the outcome of these negotiations has taken on more importance than ever before."

Murakami's paper takes into account the Chinese government's increasing assertiveness in the South Pacific, the existential threat of climate change to the region, the growing impact of migration from these countries on the United States, and the expansion of U.S. space operations there.

When researching the paper, he interviewed those involved with the original compact negotiations in the 1980s, economists focused on the region and former Government Accountability Office officials who conducted audits into U.S. economic assistance over the compacts' 35-year span.

"I also researched executive orders and Department of State documents related to the original compacts, which helped form some of



2022 AFSA Strategic Writing Award winner Kevin Murakami (center) poses with AFSA State Vice President Tom Yazdgerdi (left) and Commandant of the War College Air Force Brigadier General Jeffrey Hurlbert at the National War College's award ceremony in Washington, D.C., on June 3.

the recommendations for the paper," he said. "I admit it was a rather heavy lift, as I undertook this project concurrently with my practicum and strategy research paper focused on another region. But developing this paper was one of the highlights of my academic experience at the War College."

Murakami joined the State Department in 2004. He is currently deputy director of the international narcotics and law enforcement section at Embassy Bogotá. He previously served as economic counselor at Embassy Mexico City and as the State Department's acting deputy coordinator for Cuban affairs.

Overseas, Murakami has served as the political-economic section chief at U.S. Consulate General Rio de Janeiro and as the public affairs section chief in Karachi. Other tours include Bogotá and

Baghdad. In Washington, D.C., he served as special assistant in the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs and as a desk officer in the Bureau of Near East Affairs.

Before joining the Foreign Service, he worked in Japan as a vocational college instructor and as a congressional and public liaison for Embassy Moscow. In addition to his recent master's degree in national security strategy from the National War College, he also earned a master's degree from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and a bachelor's degree in international relations from the University of California, Davis.

His foreign languages include Spanish, Portuguese, Russian and Japanese. Murakami has an 8-year-old son and is a certified whitewater kayak instructor. ■

## AFSA SCHOLARSHIPS

## Meet the 2022 AFSA Merit Award Winners

Founded in 1926, the AFSA Scholarship Program awarded \$399,500 this year. In need-based Financial Aid Scholarships, \$256,000 was divided among 73 students. In Merit Awards, 38 awards totaled \$143,500.

AFSA is proud to present the 2022 AFSA Merit Award winners, listed here alphabetically by last name. Winners received \$3,500 each; Honorable Mentions received \$2,000; the Best Essay \$2,000; Second-Place Essay \$1,500; and Third-Place Essay \$1,000. AFSA thanks all judges and donors who made this year's Merit Awards possible.

## Academic Merit Scholarship Winners

**William Wonoo Bae** – son of Eugene (State) and Min-Jeong Bae, graduated from the American Embassy School, New Delhi, India. Plans to attend Virginia Tech to study computer science.

**Veronica Bate-Poxon** – daughter of Todd (State) and Julia Bate-Poxon, graduated from the Carlucci American International School of Lisbon, Linho, Portugal. Plans to attend the College of William and Mary to study physics.

**Samuel Bills** – son of Thomas (State) and Rebecca Bills, graduated from Timpview High School, Provo, Utah. Plans to attend Brigham Young University to study science.

**Titus Sterling Brock** – son of David (State) and Charlotte Brock, graduated from the International School of Beijing, Beijing, China. Plans to attend Carnegie Mellon University to study physics.

**Adrienne Burns** – daughter of Jillian (State) and David Burns, graduated from James M. Bennett High School, Salisbury, Maryland. Plans to attend the University of Maryland, College Park, to study psychology.

**Ann Harriet Carew** – daughter of Jeremiah (USAID) and Flor de Maria Carew, graduated from Academia Cotopaxi, Quito, Ecuador. Plans to attend Harvard University to study government.

**Elizabeth Carleton** – daughter of John Carleton (State) and Jennifer Bachus (State), graduated from the International School of Prague, Prague, Czech Republic. Plans to attend the University of Rochester to study molecular genetics.

**Ruby Chadwick** – daughter of Matthew (State) and Stephanie Chadwick, graduated from the American Embassy School, New Delhi, India. Plans to attend Stanford University to study biology.

**Audrey Y. Chang** – daughter of Min Chang (State) and June Kim, graduated from the American School of Paris, St. Cloud, France. Plans to attend the University of Southern California to study computational neuroscience.

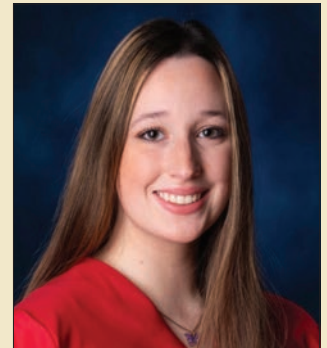
**Cole Basas Crosby** – son of Colin (State) and Vivian Crosby, graduated from the Hong Kong International School, Hong Kong, China. Plans to attend Princeton University to study public policy.

**Sophia Eisele** – daughter of Erik (State) and Jennifer Eisele, graduated from the German International School Washington D.C., Potomac, Maryland. Plans to attend college in Germany to study medicine.

**Otis Jesse Fischer** – son of Otis Fischer (State), graduated from the American Embassy School, New Delhi, India. Plans to attend Claremont McKenna College to study economics and engineering.



William Wonoo Bae



Adrienne Burns



Veronica Bate-Poxon



Ann Harriet Carew



Samuel Bills



Elizabeth Carleton



Titus Sterling Brock



Ruby Chadwick



Audrey Y. Chang



Fiona Foley



Cole Basas Crosby



Colin Laith Heffern



Sophia Eisele



Rylee Marjorie Horne



Otis Jesse Fischer



Annika Houge

**Fiona Foley** – daughter of Christopher (USAID) and Nicole Foley, graduated from Skaneateles High School, Skaneateles, New York. Plans to attend SUNY Geneseo to study sociomedical sciences.

**Colin Laith Heffern** – son of Keith (State) and Carrie Heffern, graduated from the American School of Paris, St. Cloud, France. Plans to attend the University of Virginia to study aerospace engineering.

**Rylee Marjorie Horne** – daughter of Patrick (State) and Cynthia Horne, graduated from Naples Middle High School, Naples, Italy. Plans to attend Brigham Young University to study animation and psychology. Rylee is also the winner of an Art Merit Honorable Mention Scholarship and Second-Place Essay Award.

**Annika Houge** – daughter of Paul (State) and Roksana (State) Houge, graduated from School Without Walls High School, Washington, D.C. Plans to attend Smith College to study neuroscience.

**William David Laitinen** – son of William (State) and Valeria Laitinen, graduated from the American Community Schools of Athens, Athens, Greece. Plans to attend Northwestern University to study global health studies.

**Anders Luffman** – son of Aaron (State) and Robyn (State) Luffman, graduated from the International School of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya. Plans to attend Stanford University to study civil and environmental engineering. Anders is also the winner of a Community Service Honorable Mention Scholarship and Third-Place Essay Award.

**Alexander Neisuler** – son of Peter (State) and Mariana (State) Neisuler, graduated from the Walworth-Barbour American International School, Even Yehuda, Israel. Plans to attend Boston University to study political science.

**Jacob Henry Newman** – son of Ruth (State) and Robert Newman, graduated from the American Overseas School of Rome, Rome, Italy. Plans to attend Brigham Young University to study fine arts. Jacob is also the winner of an Art Merit Honorable Mention Scholarship.

**Karina Solveig Noll** – daughter of George Noll (State) and Kim Marie Knudsen-Noll, graduated from the Anglican International School Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel. Plans to attend St. Olaf College to study nursing.

**William Wallace-Gomez Orr** – son of William (State) and Selma Orr, graduated from Langley High School, McLean, Virginia. Plans to attend Yale University to study English.

**Dimitrios Arthur Romilos Owen** – son of Evan (State) and Joanna Athanasopoulos Owen, graduated from Thomas Alva Edison High School, Alexandria, Virginia. Plans to attend Duke University to study biomedical engineering.

**Zoe Palmer** – daughter of Matthew (State) and Danica Palmer, graduated from Washington-Liberty High School, Arlington, Virginia. Plans to attend the University of Virginia to study neuroscience/pre-med.

**Mia Sampson** – daughter of Aaron Sampson (State) and Natasha de Marcken (USAID), graduated from the Washington International School, Washington, D.C. Plans to attend Princeton University to study public and international affairs.

**Emmanuelle Anna Sim** – daughter of Hyun Bo (State) and Anne Sim, graduated from Manhasset High School, Manhasset, New York. Plans to attend the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, to study human development and family studies. Emmanuelle is also the winner of the Community Service Scholarship.

**Amanda Eryn Southfield** – daughter of Amanda (USAID) and Frank Southfield, graduated from Bishop O’Connell High School, Arlington, Virginia. Plans to attend the University of Virginia to study history.

**John Thomas Speaks IV** – son of John Speaks (State) and Susan Shirley, graduated from the American Embassy School, New Delhi, India. Plans to attend the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, to study computer science and linguistics. John is also the winner of a Community Service Honorable Mention Scholarship.

**Veronica Ann Takats** – daughter of Sarah (State) and Sean Takats, graduated from the International School of Brussels, Brussels, Belgium. Plans to attend the College of William and Mary to study neuroscience. Veronica is also the winner of a Community Service Honorable Mention Scholarship and the Best Essay Award.

**Madeline Grace Wall** – daughter of Matthew (State) and Christy Wall, graduated from Woodgrove High School, Purcellville, Virginia. Plans to attend Samford University to study biochemistry.

**Abigail Rose Whiting** – daughter of David (State) and Andrea (State) Whiting, graduated from Washington-Liberty High School, Arlington, Virginia. Plans to attend Mount Holyoke College to study biology.

**Lilla Woodward** – daughter of Scott (State) and Erika Woodward, graduated from Washington-Liberty High School, Arlington, Virginia. Plans to attend the University of Virginia to study applied politics.

**Art Merit Scholarship Winner**

**Nicholas Hall** – son of Morgan Hall (State) and Lisa Wilkinson (State), graduated from St. George’s British International School, Rome, Italy. Plans to attend Harvard College to study applied math and economics.

**Art Merit Scholarship Honorable Mentions**

**Isabel Catherine Cassilly** – daughter of Michael (State) and Traci (State) Cassilly, graduated from Meridian High School, Falls Church, Virginia. Plans to attend Alfred University to study fine arts.

**Penelope Duran** – daughter of Tod Duran (State) and Linh Trang Huynh, graduated from Carl-Schurz-Schule, Frankfurt, Germany. Plans to attend the University of Arizona, Tucson, to study physics.

**Rylee Marjorie Horne** – see biography under academic merit.

**Jacob Henry Newman** – see biography under academic merit.

**Isabella Schaan** – daughter of Chris (USAID) and Michelle (USAID) Schaan, graduated from the Lincoln Community School, Accra, Ghana. Plans to attend ArtFX School of Digital Arts, Lille, to study 3D animation.

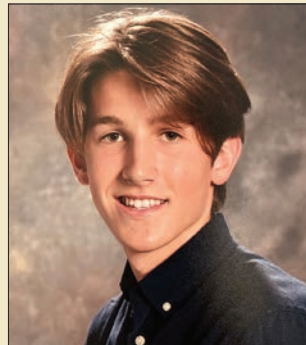
**Community Service Scholarship Winner**

**Emmanuelle Anna Sim** – see biography under academic merit.

**Community Service Scholarship Honorable Mentions**

**Ana Paula Kendrick** – daughter of Mark (State) and Betty Kendrick, graduated from the Riviera Preparatory School, Miami, Florida. Plans to attend New York University to study exploratory studies.

**Anders Luffman** – see biography under academic merit.



William David Laitinen



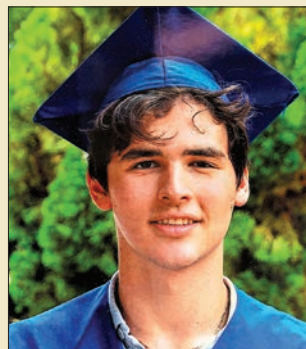
Karina Solveig Noll



Anders Luffman



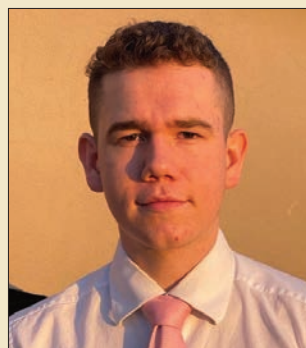
William Wallace-Gomez Orr



Alexander Neisuler



Dimitrios Arthur Romilos Owen



Jacob Henry Newman



Zoe Palmer



Mia Sampson



Veronica Ann Takats



Nicholas Hall



Ana Paula Kendrick



Emmanuelle Anna Sim



Madeline Grace Wall



Isabel Catherine Cassilly



Sophia Armeen Nawaz



Amanda Eryn Southfield



Abigail Rose Whiting



Penelope Duran

**Sophia Armeen Nawaz** – daughter of Brenda Wells (State) and Mohammad Nawaz, graduated from the International School of Azerbaijan, Baku, Azerbaijan. Plans to attend the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, to study biological sciences.

**John Thomas Speaks IV** – see biography under academic merit.

**Veronica Ann Takats** – see biography under academic merit.



John Thomas Speaks IV



Lilla Woodward



Isabella Schaan

**Best Essay Scholarship**

**Rylee Marjorie Horne** – see biography under academic merit.

**Anders Luffman** – see biography under academic merit.

**Veronica Ann Takats** – see biography under academic merit.

## AFSA Selects High School Essay Contest Winner

Katherine Lam, a freshman from University High School in Tucson, Arizona, is the winner of this year's AFSA national high school essay contest.

Lam won with her essay, "Competition and Coaction in Ethiopia: U.S. and Chinese Partnerships for International Stabilization," in which she focuses on how the Foreign Service has partnered with other U.S. government agencies, nongovernmental organizations and, most notably, China to promote peace and development in Ethiopia.

As the winner of AFSA's essay contest, Lam will be awarded \$2,500. She will receive a full-tuition scholarship for an educational voyage with Semester at Sea during college and also traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with Secretary of State Antony Blinken on July 20.

She was accompanied by Mariam Parry and Jonas Lorincz, the 2021 and 2020 AFSA essay contest winners, respectively, who had been unable to visit the State Department during the pandemic. Joining the award recipients were AFSA State Vice President Tom Yazdgerdi, AFSA's Awards and Scholarships Manager Theo Horn and President of Semester at Sea Scott Marshall.

This year's runner-up is Olivia Paulsen, a home-schooled junior in Concord, Massachusetts. She wrote an essay titled "Democracy at a



AFSA national high school essay contest winner Katherine Lam.

COURTESY OF KATHERINE LAM



AFSA national high school essay contest runner-up Olivia Paulsen.

COURTESY OF OLIVIA PAULSEN

Crossroads: Peacebuilding and Collaboration in Burma."

As the runner-up, Paulsen was awarded \$1,250 and a full-tuition scholarship to attend the International Diplomacy program of the National Student Leadership Conference this summer.

Every year, AFSA welcomes essay submissions from students in grades nine through 12 that address diplomacy, peacebuilding and the U.S. Foreign Service.

This was the contest's 24th year. Students were prompted to identify and write about a situation in which American diplomats and peacebuilders are working with other world powers, as well as local and/or regional actors, in a conflict-affected coun-

try to champion democracy, promote human rights and resolve violent conflict.

This year, AFSA received 300 essay submissions from 40 states and numerous locations abroad. The winners were selected in three randomized and blinded rounds of judging.

In addition to the two winners, our judges named eight honorable mentions:

Josh Diaz of Little Rock, Arkansas; Grace Hartman of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; Elena Higuchi of Irvine, California; Ovea Kaushik of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Evan Lindemann of Palm Desert, California; Percival Liu of Tokyo, Japan; Alexander Richter of San Jose, California; and Gavin Sun of Woodbury, Minnesota.

AFSA is thrilled to have received so many essay submissions this year and appreciates the continued support of our valued educational partners: the United States Institute of Peace, the National Student Leadership Conference and Semester at Sea.

To learn more about AFSA's essay contest and other educational outreach initiatives, visit [afsa.org/students](https://afsa.org/students). ■



Secretary of State Antony Blinken congratulates AFSA's high school essay contest winners Katherine Lam (left, 2022), Jonas Lorincz (2020) and Mariam Parry (2021) at the State Department on July 20.

RONNY PRZYSUCHA

## AFSA Outreach: A Jam-Packed Summer

The summer season has brought a full slate of events to AFSA's calendar of events that introduce new audiences to the work of the Foreign Service.

On May 22-25, AFSA President Eric Rubin traveled to Chicago at the invitation of Ambassador (ret.) Ian Kelly, a professor and ambassador in residence at Northwestern University.

Ambassador Rubin delivered a lecture titled

"The View from Washington: Foreign Aid and the Foreign Policy Making Process" to Amb. Kelly's foreign policy class and met separately with interested students at the university's career advancement center to discuss working in the Foreign Service.

AFSA's two virtual speaker series—Diplomats at Work and Inside Diplomacy—continue to feature absorbing

conversations that reach thousands of viewers. The June 16 installment of Diplomats at Work (covered in detail on page 60 of this issue) introduced audiences to the work of the Foreign Commercial Service with active-duty FCS Officer Yamilee Bastien.

The most recent Inside Diplomacy event, an interview on July 14 with Senior Bureau Official and Principal

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Jennifer Bachus, highlights the work of the State Department's new Cyberspace and Digital Policy Bureau and will serve as the cover story for the October issue of the *FSJ*. Stay tuned!

If you have questions about AFSA's outreach programs, please contact Nadja Ruzica at [ruzica@afsa.org](mailto:ruzica@afsa.org). For those interested in joining the outreach speaker roster, please fill out the form at <https://afsa.org/speakers-bureau>. ■

## AFSA Hosts New Recruits, Engages with Members

AFSA continues to develop and sponsor programming for the Foreign Service community by reaching out to new recruits and deepening engagement with those already serving.

On June 15, AFSA hosted a lunch at its headquarters for the State Department's new class of consular fellows who will soon be posted abroad to support the work of the Foreign Service.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Rubin explained AFSA's role as a nonpartisan professional association and union serving Foreign Service employees. He was joined by AFSA State Vice President Tom Yazdgerdi, who discussed the types of issues that AFSA works on to support its members individually and as a collective bargaining unit.

On July 11, AFSA sponsored a lunch at the Foreign



JULIA WOHLERS

AFSA President Eric Rubin speaks to the newest class of consular fellows on June 15.



HANNAH CHAPMAN

AFSA President Eric Rubin addresses Foreign Agricultural Service officers at the annual global attaché conference on July 11.

Agricultural Service's annual global attaché conference, held at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. AFSA's FAS Vice President Lisa Ahramjian introduced Amb. Rubin, who touched on the association's reform priorities and highlighted AFSA engagement on FAS' ongoing payroll and human resources issues.

Ahramjian provided an update on renegotiation of the FAS–AFSA collective bargaining agreement and also presented the results of the FAS morale and retention survey conducted by AFSA that closed in June.

Survey feedback mirrored many of the reforms requested by members in other Foreign Service agencies, such as leadership accountability, as well as FAS-specific actions that could help the agency better serve its stakeholders and meet its mission. ■

## AFSA Welcomes New Staff Members

AFSA is pleased to welcome two new staff members: Hannah Chapman, our new membership coordinator, and Lola Michel-Infante, who previously worked as an intern for AFSA and now joins the team full-time as communications and educational outreach coordinator.

A Northern Virginia native, Hannah graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Va., in 2019 with a bachelor of arts degree in English and a bachelor of science degree in health science. During her time there, she worked on extracurricular projects in event management, content creation and social media management.

In 2017 she spent a semester abroad at Griffith University in Gold Coast, Australia, which sparked her interest in foreign affairs and life abroad.

After graduation, Hannah taught English at an elementary school in Busan, South Korea, for two and a half years amid the coronavirus pandemic. She honed her abilities in leading Zoom classes and structuring lessons for third through fifth graders, as well as debate and speaking programs for middle and high schoolers. The experience taught her a lot, including the Korean language and cuisine, which she loves.

Having returned from Korea in March, Hannah is excited to serve AFSA's almost 17,000 members around the world and



Membership Coordinator  
Hannah Chapman.



Communications  
and Educational  
Outreach Coordinator  
Lola Michel-Infante.

get to know D.C. better. She enjoys crafting handmade ceramics, seeing music performed live, reading and perfecting her banana bread recipe.

Hannah can be reached at [chapman@afsa.org](mailto:chapman@afsa.org).

Lola, who originally hails from Washington, D.C., received her bachelor's degree in Spanish and global liberal studies with a concentration in politics, rights and development from New York University. She then completed a master's degree in international relations from NYU.

During this time, she explored many facets of international law and diplomacy and received the Outstanding M.A. Thesis Award for her work on the role of local grievances and global political opportunity structures in the evolution of violent separatist organizations in Spain.

Lola began her professional work with AFSA as an intern and later as a part-time communications assistant. She has supported the team across research, drafting and outreach projects related to communications and AFSA's scholarships and awards program.

She is excited to return to her D.C. roots and continue exploring and creating new memories in the city.

Lola can be reached at [michel@afsa.org](mailto:michel@afsa.org). ■

### Webinar

## Financial Planning for the Foreign Affairs Community

On June 29, in its fourth webinar of the year on retirement preparation, AFSA hosted financial planner and retirement management counselor William Carrington of Carrington Financial Planning, LLC, to present "Pathways to Financial Independence: Financial Planning for the Foreign Affairs Community."

The Foreign Service pension system, Carrington

explained, is extremely well designed and provides an unusual level of financial security.

"The typical financial rules of thumb do not apply to Foreign Service employees," he said. For example, retirement can begin sooner than in other professions, and many FS members buy real estate that they manage from overseas.

Despite the challenges of uneven cash flows or the unpredictability of family member employment, those who actively maintain a financial plan throughout their relocations will find themselves well positioned when they return to the U.S.

Tailored to active-duty personnel looking ahead to retirement, Carrington's guidance touched on the

most common problem areas for Foreign Service employees, how to leverage technology to enhance advanced planning, pension comparisons (less than 20 years compared to 20 years or more) and home ownership.

Members can view the video recording at [afsa.org/videos](https://afsa.org/videos). ■



## A Conversation with Pearson Fellows

On June 17, AFSA hosted a virtual panel of current Pearson Fellows for a conversation about the importance of these yearlong fellowships on Capitol Hill.

Panelists shared with an audience of more than 70 AFSA members how the program affords diplomats a better understanding of what happens on the Hill and, in turn, helps lawmakers integrate the perspective of foreign policy practitioners into legisla-

tion. These interactions can improve communication and mutual understanding between the Foreign Service and Congress.

One panelist expressed pride in having been able to translate substantive policy issues into bills, while another described her fellowship as “one of the most fantastic tours I’ve had in the Foreign Service.”

AFSA members can view the full discussion at [afsa.org/videos](https://afsa.org/videos). ■

## Update on Payroll Issues

AFSA was pleased to see Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s statement in April promising that the State Department’s Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services (CGFS) would pay interest on all back pay, starting in June.

Most, if not all, who were due payments will have received them by now. While most payments were small, a significant number of affected employees received more than \$100.

Members remain frustrated with the Pay Portal. CGFS says it has added a substantial number of new staff members, which AFSA hopes will lead to shorter response times as the year progresses.


Nevertheless, we ask members to let us know if

they encounter problems (with starting or stopping post differential, for instance) after arriving at post or returning to the U.S. during the summer transfer season.

While we had hoped to find a means for interest to be paid on the many long-delayed lump-sums for leave for retirees, our extensive research shows that there is no legal mechanism that could make that happen.

Finally, AFSA has stressed throughout the last year that we expect a clear explanation of how and why this disaster happened, so that our members never again have to contend with confusion and uncertainty on this scale. A basic duty of any employer is to pay employees on time and correctly. ■


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# Retirement Planning

## A Mid-Career Checklist

Long before your retirement date there are steps to take to ensure a comfortable life after the Foreign Service. Here are the most important ones.

BY JOHN K. NALAND

**L**ong before your retirement date approaches, there are steps you should take to position yourself financially for a comfortable and satisfying life after the Foreign Service. Below are a dozen of the most important ones. More information on these and related topics is available in the Retirement Services section of the AFSA website at [www.afsa.org/retirement](http://www.afsa.org/retirement).

### Become Knowledgeable.

If you have never taken any of the Foreign Service Institute's excellent retirement planning seminars, you owe it to yourself to do so. Even if you took one several years ago, you might want to retake it since the dense information is difficult to fully digest in one sitting. Also, rules and procedures can change over time. Watch-

ing in-depth presentations by subject matter experts may help you avoid major oversights in your retirement planning. The seminars are the two-day RV105-Early/Mid-Career Retirement Planning and the four-day RV101-Retirement Planning Seminar for employees retiring within the next 10 years. The courses are open to all Foreign Service agencies and are currently being presented virtually. *For more information, see <https://www.state.gov/career-transition-center-ctc/>.*

### Weigh Your Options.

The FSI retirement planning seminars will explain the many options you face that will affect your retirement finances. You may want to make some of those decisions years before retiring, including whether to plan on retiring as soon as you are eligible, whether to take out long-term care insurance, and whether to have a living trust drawn up. Other decisions will come at or soon after retirement: how much life insurance to take into retirement, whether to elect a survivor benefit if you have a spouse, whether to pay for Medicare B coverage at age 65, and when and how to make Thrift Savings Plan withdrawals after retirement.

### Consider "What If" Scenarios.

In our up-or-out personnel system, retirement might come sooner than we would like. Or family or other personal reasons might lead us to retire earlier or keep working longer than we currently anticipate. So, as a thought exercise, consider a range of potential retirement dates spread over several years starting with your date of first eligibility, and estimate your retirement benefits on those dates. You can find your Social Security benefits on the Social Security website. State Department employees can use the Employee Retirement Portal on OpenNet to estimate their pension as of different retirement dates.

Armed with those estimates, consider whether your pension, Social Security and TSP will be large enough for you to stop working, or if you may need to seek post-retirement employment. Consider whether you will still have large financial obligations such as a mortgage or kid's college expenses on any of those potential retirement dates. To increase your financial cushion to protect against a possible early end to your career, you might act now to con-



*John K. Naland is the AFSA retiree vice president. He is a former director of the Office of Retirement at the Department of State.*

tribute more to TSP, open an Individual Retirement Account and/or buy rental property.

### Focus on Your TSP.

Since your Foreign Service pension plus Social Security benefits will not come close to replacing your salary, a significant portion of your retirement income will need to come from your TSP account. Thus, you should contribute as much of your salary as early in your career as you can (including making “catch up” contributions starting the year you turn age 50) since the government matches some of your contributions and all the money compounds over time.

Just as importantly, if you or your survivor anticipate drawing on your TSP account 20 or more years from now, most experts advise investing in funds with



relatively high average rates of return (the C, S, I and/or long-range L funds) to increase the chances that your investments will generate gains in the coming decades that outpace inflation. The same consideration applies if you own an IRA or other financial investments.

### Learn about Social Security.

One of your most important decisions will be when to start taking Social Security benefits. You can do so anytime between age 62 and 70. For every month that you wait after your 62nd birthday, your monthly payment rises but you permanently forgo the skipped payments. So, what is the best age to start Social

Security? The answer depends on such things as whether you are still employed, whether you have a spouse, what your life expectancy is, and whether you need those payments early in retirement to help cover living expenses including long, active trips while you are still physically able. As you approach age 62, learn more about Social Security so you can make an informed choice.

### Periodically Reassess Your Health Insurance.

Every November, the Office of Personnel Management holds an Open Season for Federal Employees Health Benefits during which you can change your plan election. There are more than 200 plans to choose from, with varying features and costs. As health care needs change over the years, it is wise to periodically reassess

how your health plan is meeting your and your family’s needs. Also consider optional dental and vision coverage. AFSA offers its members a resource to assist in this process—access to the Consumers’ Checkbook Guide to Health Plans for Federal Employees. The checkbook boils down and interprets a massive amount of data to help you make an informed decision. Look for an email from AFSA each November with instructions on how to access the online guide.

### Resolve Prior Service Issues.

If you worked elsewhere in the federal government prior to joining the Foreign Service, you must proactively take steps to

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obtain retirement credit for that service if you want to increase your Foreign Service pension and advance your retirement eligibility date. To get credit for military or Peace Corps service, you must make a deposit into the Foreign Service pension fund to cover the employee retirement contributions (plus interest) that were not made originally. To get credit for Civil Service time, you must initiate the process to transfer to the Foreign Service pension fund the Civil Service pension fund contributions that you made during that earlier job. To start any of these processes, State Department employees should contact [HRSC@state.gov](mailto:HRSC@state.gov), while employees at other Foreign Service agencies should contact their agency’s human resources office.

### If You Divorce.

The Foreign Service Act of 1980 has unique provisions regarding the impact of divorce on retirement benefits. A State Department summary of the rules is contained in a May 2019 cable posted in the Retirement Services section of the AFSA website under “Getting Ready for Retirement.” For example, Foreign Service spouses enjoy a default statutory entitlement to benefits if they meet certain requirements. The default entitlements can be altered through a court order or spousal agreement. To be valid, however, the order or agreement must specifically refer to Foreign Service benefits. Prior to retirement, divorced Foreign Service employees from all agencies must submit relevant divorce documentation to the State Department for review. For mailing instructions, email [HRSC@state.gov](mailto:HRSC@state.gov).

### Consider Buying Real Estate.

If you anticipate serving additional overseas assignments and do not own a house or apartment, you should



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You should contribute as much of your salary as early in your career as you can [to your TSP account].

consider buying. Living overseas in government-provided housing while a renter covers the monthly mortgage on a property back in the U.S. is a great way to become an owner. Then, at retirement, you can either move into that property, sell it to buy property elsewhere, or continue to rent it out to generate income. While overseas, you will probably want to hire a property manager to vet potential tenants and deal with urgent maintenance requests.


### Do Your Due Diligence.

There are numerous financial issues to keep up with as you move through your career. For example, update your beneficiary designations after a relationship change. Obtain and keep updated estate planning documents such as a will, power of attorney and medical directive. Review your FEHB plan each year during open season to check for better plans. Set up online access to Employee Express, your TSP account

and your My Social Security account to monitor them and make online transactions. Maintain your Federal Employee's Group Life Insurance coverage during the last five years before retirement if you want to continue that coverage in retirement. For a checklist of financially savvy moves to make just before retirement, see "Retirement Planning: One Year Out" in the Retirement Services section of the AFSA website under "Getting Ready for Retirement."

### Consider Post-Retirement Employment Options.

As your retirement date approaches, educate yourself about options for continuing to work. Many Foreign Service retirees work part-time as a



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Re-Employed Annuitant (REA, formerly known as WAE). For details, see my “Insider’s Guide to the Re-Employed Annuitant Program” in the May 2022 *Foreign Service Journal*, which is linked to AFSA’s Retirement Services web page under “Re-Employed Annuitant Program.” Beyond the REA program, AFSA’s Next Stage series features videos of your peers discussing how they successfully transitioned from the Foreign Service to careers in teaching, security and writing. Look under “Next Stage: What’s Next for You Post-Foreign Service?” in the Retirement Services section of the AFSA website. In addition, LinkedIn and Facebook have information specific to the Foreign Service, including employment leads.

## Maintain Your AFSA Membership.

AFSA membership does not automatically continue after retirement. Dues deductions from your salary stop when your salary stops. To continue your membership, you must sign up for deductions from your pension or start making annual dues payments by check or credit card. If you do not see the dues deduction form when you complete your retirement paperwork, just email [member@afsa.org](mailto:member@afsa.org) to obtain a copy. Maintaining your membership will keep you informed about retirement issues, give you access to AFSA staff support should you encounter problems after retirement with the State Department’s finance office, and support AFSA’s legislative advocacy to defend your earned retirement benefits. ■

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■ **Henry Clay Black II**, 89, a retired Foreign Service officer, passed away on May 22, 2022, from complications of Parkinson's disease.

Mr. Black was born on July 29, 1932. At the age of 6, wanting to help his mother during the Great Depression, he became the youngest paperboy ever in his native Des Plaines, Ill. This resourceful can-do spirit stayed with him all his life.

He graduated from Maine Township High School in Des Plaines in 1950. He then received his bachelor's degree from Columbia University in 1954 and his master's degree in English from Harvard University in 1957. He also completed an "all but dissertation" doctorate in American studies at the University of Minnesota.

A great believer in service to country, Mr. Black was a Korean War veteran, a naval officer (NROTC Columbia) and a reservist, retiring at the rank of lieutenant commander. He especially loved his time serving in Japan from 1954 to 1956, where he was profoundly inspired by the culture and aesthetic tradition.

In 1965 Mr. Black left academia for the Foreign Service, working in the consular sections in St. John's, Newfoundland; Rio de Janeiro; and São Paulo. Moving into the economics and trade section, he subsequently served in Nassau, Bahamas; London; Paris; and Dakar. He finished his career as the economics counselor in Athens.

Upon retiring, Mr. Black joined the State Department's declassification unit, charged with releasing classified information to the public, where he worked until 2018. In his role as a declassifier, he proved tireless in helping writers, journalists and historians uncover difficult-to-find information.

This work earned him the gratitude of many, including author and journalist

Yaroslav Trofimov as he was researching his book, *The Siege of Mecca: The Forgotten Uprising in Islam's Holiest Shrine and the Birth of Al Qaeda* (Doubleday, 2007).

Among Mr. Black's proudest moments as an FSO was his work drafting the Law of the Sea Treaty of 1982 under Ambassador Elliot Richardson. This treaty laid out a comprehensive international system for responsibly managing the resources of the sea for the collective good of all peoples. Though it was never ratified in the U.S., it remained for Mr. Black an example of what good diplomacy could potentially accomplish.

Family members and friends remember Mr. Black for his astonishing energy; his willingness to always go the extra mile for a friend; his boundless love for his wife and three daughters; and his infectious enthusiasm for cooking and social gatherings. All his life, Mr. Black remained in thrall to the joys of travel and to meeting new people along the way.

Clay, as he was known to family and friends, was an adventurous traveler, an endlessly curious reader, a champion pancake-maker, and a very loving husband, father and grandfather.

He is survived by his beloved wife, Moira; three daughters, Sheila, Samantha and Sarah Black; eight grandchildren, Annabelle, Walker and Eliza Hayse, Ruslan Black, and Clara, James, Brendan and Cate Doyle; and great-granddaughter Mabel Wolfe.

Memorial contributions may be sent to Cecily's Fund (<https://cecilyfund.org/>), which provides education for orphans in Zambia.

■ **Edward Allan Gallagher**, 68, a retired Foreign Service officer, died surrounded by his beloved family on May 13, 2022, in Arlington, Va., after a battle with cancer.

Mr. Gallagher was born on March 29, 1954, in San Antonio, Texas. After attending Central Catholic High School there, he graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1976 with a major in Russian studies, and earned his master's degree in international studies from Georgetown University.

In 1984, while serving in East Germany as a member of the U.S. Military Liaison Mission, Mr. Gallagher met his wife, Julie Ruffing, who was then working in West Berlin as an English-as-a-second-language specialist with Department of Defense Dependents Schools.

During his military career, he attained command pilot status with more than 4,500 hours in a C-130 transport and a KC-135 air refueling aircraft. He commanded several combat flying units, conducting numerous worldwide operations, and was a senior planner and mission commander in Somalia (1992-1993) and Haiti (1994).

In his additional role as an international political-military officer, he was a military liaison to Soviet forces in East Germany during the height of the Cold War (1983-1985), senior European Command officer for NATO enlargement at the beginning of its expansion eastward (1996-1998), and Czech and Slovak country director at the Office of the Secretary of Defense in 2001 (he was there during the terrorist attack on September 11).

Mr. Gallagher concluded his military career in 2006, as defense and air attaché to the Czech Republic, retiring at the rank of colonel after 30 years of service. He was awarded the Defense Superior Service Medal and the Legion of Merit.

Given the chance to subsequently work in a lucrative position in the private sector, he chose instead to continue to serve his country as a Foreign Service



officer at the State Department in 2007, serving honorably for nearly 12 years.

Most recently, he was director of the embassy branch office in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and most proud of his contributions to that country remaining at peace.

Prior to that, he was director of the embassy branch office in Douala, Cameroon, working closely with democratic forces and holding shipping agent responsibilities for four regional embassies.

At his posting in Paris as a consular officer, Mr. Gallagher directed the special American citizen services unit, always focused on quickly solving unusual issues and problems faced by American tourists, businesspeople and the large expatriate community there.

He gladly volunteered to serve in the political-military section at Embassy Baghdad during combat “surge” operations from 2007 to 2008, taking advantage of his extensive military experience.

He retired from the Foreign Service in 2018.

In final thoughts Mr. Gallagher shared with his family, he considered himself to be an extremely lucky man, having fulfilled the dreams of two or three lifetimes: a wonderful and loving family, successful children in their own careers, military service as an Air Force pilot and a distinguished career as a diplomat, albeit cut short by his cruel disease.

Mr. Gallagher is survived by his beloved wife of 35 years, Julie (Ruffing) Gallagher; his children, Matthew and Caitlin “Katie” Gallagher; and his sisters, Jeannine Ross (and husband, Gene) and Shirley Kelly Mart (and husband, Wally).

■ **Warren Gray**, 67, a retired Foreign Service officer, passed away on Feb. 7, 2022, in Marco Island, Fla., after a battle with leukemia.

He was born in 1954 in Washington, D.C., and was a loyal fan of the Senators baseball team and then the Nationals despite living all over the world. His years of service in the U.S. Army gave him a lifelong love of languages and breaking codes—and also permanently robbed him of the ability to sleep in.

Mr. Gray went on to attend law school at the University of Maryland, where he met and married his wife, Aisling. After graduating in 1990, he practiced law for several years at the Department of Energy, first as an attorney and then as an administrative judge.

In 2004 Mr. Gray joined the U.S. Foreign Service. Uniquely gifted at learning foreign languages, he had previously obtained the highest-ever score on the Department of Defense language aptitude test. It came as no surprise when he was assigned to a brand-new language offering and placed in a class of one at the Foreign Service Institute to study Malayalam.

After tours in India, Poland, Azerbaijan, Washington, D.C. (including an assignment to the National Targeting Center to fight terrorism), Mexico and a temporary duty assignment in Moldova, Mr. Gray retired in 2019. He received the Secretary’s Career Achievement Award for his 32 years of U.S. government service.

Although Mr. Gray already spoke Polish, Russian, Malayalam, German and Spanish, in retirement he continued to study languages, solve puzzles and serve his country with the National Language Service Corps.

He is survived by his wife of 32 years, Aisling; son Aidan Gray of Cambridge, England; daughter Zoe Gray of Marco Island; and aunt Janice and uncle Tom Roddenbery of Lawrenceville, N.J.

Mr. Gray will be laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery.

■ **Ann Delavan Harrop**, 94, wife of retired Foreign Service officer and former Ambassador William C. Harrop, passed away on June 23, 2022, from metastatic pancreatic cancer.

Ann Delavan was born April 21, 1928, in Seneca Falls, N.Y., and grew up in Des Moines, Iowa, graduating from Vassar College in 1950. In 1953 she married William Caldwell Harrop, who became a career FSO, eventually serving as ambassador to Guinea, Kenya, Seychelles, Zaire and Israel.

As his partner overseas, she raised four sons in difficult, sometimes dangerous environments, while moving between the U.S. and Europe, Africa, Australia and the Middle East.

Although somewhat shy, Ms. Harrop is remembered by friends and family members as a kind and welcoming hostess, a Foreign Service professional who confronted the changes and setbacks in her life with equanimity, persistence and humility, and with a mind of her own. Her sons and their wives and her six grandchildren grew up appreciating her love and unwavering support.

Through the Nelson B. Delavan Foundation, a small nonprofit trust founded by her mother in 1984 in honor of her late father, Ann and Bill Harrop began actively supporting institutions they believed in, particularly in diplomacy and foreign policy. Recipients of the foundation’s donations include the American Foreign Service Association, DACOR, the National Museum of American Diplomacy, the Senior Living Foundation, the American Academy of Diplomacy, the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and American Diplomacy Publishers.

Ms. Harrop was devoted to dogs. Throughout her life, no matter where

she lived, she always had one or two dogs in her loving care.

In the second half of her life, Ms. Harrop handled a particularly insidious form of hereditary glaucoma with remarkable grace. She became unable to drive in the early 1990s, and though almost completely blind by the end of her life, she continued to enjoy poetry, word play, music and games. She never complained about her blindness, and hid it so artfully that most people were unaware that she could not see.

She used an oversize monitor for the blind to do crossword puzzles in ink, to read her beloved Emily Dickinson and, in her last six years, to write many poems of her own, some of which she published. She also took piano lessons for years, but blindness made learning new pieces a challenge. She memorized a considerable repertoire from Bach and Beethoven to Satie, Mozart and Schumann, and would rehearse the whole list from time to time to keep the music in her head. She was an inspiration to all who knew her.

Ann and Bill Harrop moved to the Fox Hill retirement community in early 2009, where they lived at the time of her death. She faced her disease with her characteristic acceptance, never complaining, although distressed by the indignities of her deterioration. To the end, she was angry that the law prevented her from being granted the same peaceful death that veterinarians had given many of her dogs.

Ann Harrop will be greatly missed. She is survived by her husband, Bill, and her sons and their wives: Mark Delavan Harrop and Lucy Mayer Harrop, Caldwell Harrop and Susan Elizabeth Spock, Scott Nelson Harrop, and George Hamilton Harrop and Lori Pope Harrop; and six grandchildren, Jessica,

Emily (and her husband, Jack Moxon), Will, Meg, and Max and Dan (and their mother, Erica Hiller Harrop).

Donations in lieu of flowers can be made to the Humane Rescue Alliance ([www.humanerescuealliance.org](http://www.humanerescuealliance.org)), the successor organization to the Washington Humane Society, where Ann Harrop served on the board.

■ **Dwight Holmes**, 60, a former Foreign Service specialist, died peacefully on May 3, 2022, at his home on Nantucket Island, Mass., after a long battle with cancer. His wife and children were by his side.

Mr. Holmes graduated from Nantucket High School in 1980 and joined the Marine Corps that fall. After serving as an aviation clerk at several air bases in the South, he was nominated to attend Marine Security Guard School in Quantico, Va. His first assignment was in Geneva, where he and his fellow Marines were blessed with the care, friendship and fine cooking of longtime Marine House chef Carlos Cascallar, who remained a close friend throughout Mr. Holmes' life.

He was next assigned to Abidjan. His final MSG assignment was to N'Djamena. After six years with the Marine Corps, he returned to Geneva as a private bodyguard to a foreign diplomat.

The following year Mr. Holmes returned to the United States and attended college while working full-time and with aid from the GI Bill. His goal was to be hired by the State Department and continue serving at U.S. missions abroad.

In 1989 he was accepted into the Foreign Service as a communications officer. His first assignment was U.S. Embassy Tokyo (1989-1991), where he and his wife, Nancy, moved after getting married on Nantucket. The family, including son Gerard, were then

assigned to U.S. Embassy Copenhagen (1991-1992).

While in Copenhagen, Mr. Holmes responded to the call for positions to help open new embassies in the former Soviet republics and was assigned to Baku (1992-1993). After that tour, Mr. Holmes was reunited with his family and then assigned to Brussels (1993-1996). There, he was able to finish his bachelor's degree at night, and he and Nancy also welcomed daughter Erin-Marie. After Brussels, the family returned to Nantucket.

There, Mr. Holmes opened a popular takeout restaurant called Cook's Café, which is still open today under new owners. He simultaneously opened and operated a successful pool maintenance business. He and Nancy also welcomed their third child, daughter Jade.

Mr. Holmes maintained and valued friendships with his customers and employees alike, staffing the restaurant with workers from the Dominican Republic, Lithuania, Russia, the United Kingdom and other countries. He particularly enjoyed visiting his many employees from the Dominican Republic and seeing the homes they built with their earnings.

After more than 20 years of running both businesses, Mr. Holmes reluctantly retired as his illness progressed. Nevertheless, for several years he still managed to keep busy with landscaping and carpentry projects, pursuing his love of world travel and ethnic cuisine, and spending time with friends, family and his beloved dogs.

He also enjoyed spending time at his cabin in the mountains of Maine, determined to teach all his children to ski and to enjoy the great outdoors. He kept in touch and enjoyed visits with many friends from his time serving abroad in the Marines and the Foreign Service.

Mr. Holmes was very dedicated to his family and immensely proud of his three young adult children. He is survived by Nancy, his wife of 32 years, of Nantucket; son Gerard and wife Laura of Nantucket; daughter Erin-Marie and husband Troy Huyser (a Diplomatic Security Service security technical specialist), currently serving at U.S. Embassy Jakarta; and daughter Jade, a student at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo.

■ **George Jenkins**, 75, a retired Foreign Service officer with USAID, passed away at home in Round Rock, Texas, on Feb. 24, 2022, after a prolonged battle with multiple myeloma.

Mr. Jenkins was born in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 17, 1946. He attended Bishop O'Connell High School in Arlington, Va., and graduated from Villanova University in Pennsylvania with a bachelor's degree in accounting in 1968.

Mr. Jenkins began his career with USAID in 1971 in the controller's office in Washington, D.C. Almost six years later, he married his wife, Susan, in McLean, Va. From the beginning, he knew he wanted a life that would expose him and his family to the cultures of the world while giving him the opportunity to improve lives.

His first overseas assignment was Yemen, in 1977. Subsequent tours included Mali, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Russia, Haiti, Peru, El Salvador, Nicaragua and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

He didn't choose the most desired overseas posts, but instead opted for those where he knew he could make a difference within the local community and create a network of friends that he would continue to carry with him throughout his travels.

Mr. Jenkins retired in 2000 after 29 years as a Foreign Service officer and continued to work with the agency for another 14 years as a personal services contractor controller.

Over the course of his career, hard work and dedication remained his core values.

Mr. Jenkins was known in the workplace for his compassion for colleagues and for being one of the best mentors. He was humble and laid-back, and preferred a baseball hat and a good conversation over a cold beer to a formal suit-and-tie affair.

His athletic pursuits included playing on the Bamako softball team that traveled throughout West Africa. Everyone was happy when "Big George" stepped to the plate, as they knew a home run was not out of the question.

Later, while in Bangladesh, his interest shifted to tennis, and he developed a reputation for a killer serve and speed on the court (opponents quickly learned not to let his size fool them!).

No one was surprised when Mr. Jenkins found his next athletic challenge in the dojo of Bangladesh's Black Belt Academy, where he developed an impressive roundhouse kick. His retirement years led to a new competitive drive on the golf course with his wife.

Mr. Jenkins is remembered as a calm, loving and patient father and husband who encouraged his children to believe in themselves. He modeled wisdom, rational thinking and mutual respect.

He is survived by his wife, Susan, and five children: Hope, Russ, Denise, Shawn and Jason, as well as his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

■ **Andrew J. "AJ" Kopiak Jr.**, 73, a retired Foreign Service specialist, passed away peacefully on March 30, 2022, sur-

rounded by his family at INOVA Hospital in Fairfax, Va.

After serving in the U.S. Navy for 20 years, Mr. Kopiak joined the State Department in the late 1980s as a messaging communications officer in the Bureau of Information Resource Management. His overseas assignments included Lisbon, London, Sarajevo, Dublin and Tel Aviv.

Over the course of his career, Mr. Kopiak was responsible for control and coordination of telecommunications, information technology and telegraphic programs in IRM's messaging center at the State Department.

He also served as a liaison messaging communications officer supporting the Executive Secretariat's Operations Center on matters concerning State telecommunications operations with other government agencies and Foreign Service posts.

Mr. Kopiak retired from the U.S. Foreign Service in 2013 and immediately returned as a retired annuitant in IRM, retiring for the second time in 2020.

He is remembered as a great friend who captivated audiences with his fascinating stories. Described by his colleagues as a loyal co-worker and mentor, he was affectionately known as "our AJ."

Mr. Kopiak is survived by his wife, Marie; sons Andrew and Seon; grandchildren Aedan, Aaron, Bella, Casey and Robyn; and extended family members. His son Andrew currently serves at the U.S. Consulate General in Edinburgh.

■ **Edward M. Rowell**, 90, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer and ambassador, died on April 14, 2022, at his home in Bethesda, Md.

Mr. Rowell was born in Oakland, Calif., in 1931 and followed the calling of his missionary family to join the Foreign

Service. He spent part of his childhood in Rio de Janeiro where his father was labor attaché at what was then the U.S. embassy (and is now a consulate).

Mr. Rowell went on to graduate from Yale University with a degree in international relations, served two years in the U.S. Army and later studied as a Sloan Fellow at Stanford University.

After entering the U.S. Foreign Service in 1956, he served two consular tours in Brazil before returning to the State Department. He then served as a political officer in Argentina and Honduras.

His next assignments included the State Department's Office of the Inspector General and the European Bureau's Iberian Affairs Office. He served as deputy chief of mission in Portugal, spent two years as deputy assistant secretary of State for consular affairs in Washington, D.C., and then began his ambassadorships to Bolivia, Portugal and Luxembourg.

Honors include the Presidential Merit Award and two Superior Honor Awards. He also received awards from both Bolivia and Luxembourg.

Retiring in 1994 after 38 years in the Foreign Service, Ambassador Rowell served as president at DACOR, an organization of foreign affairs professionals, after having also served as vice president, treasurer, board member and committee volunteer.

His service also included: president of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training; vice president for retirees at the American Foreign Service Association; member of the Douglas Dillon Book Award Committee at the American Academy of Diplomacy; and senior reviewer at the Office of Freedom of Information and Declassification at the Department of State.

In retirement, Ambassador Rowell was also a frequent lecturer on foreign affairs at U.S. universities, a business consultant and a corporate director.

Ambassador Rowell is remembered as a calm, gentle soul who personified dignity, thoughtfulness and wisdom. He is also remembered as a man who set the gold standard as an American diplomat.

He would be the first to acknowledge that his Foreign Service career began and ended in partnership with his wife, Le, whose initiative and relationship-building among the diplomatic, business and cultural communities inspired and aided his personal and professional acumen.

Ambassador Rowell's legacy of service to family and country was a boundless mission to make the world a better place where people can live and work in peace. He understood this is not an individual pursuit, but a team effort for the greater good. His legacy is shared and will endure through those who knew him, all those whose lives he touched and those who will follow a similar path.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Lenora Wood Rowell; his three children, Ted, Karen and Chris; grandchildren Daniel, Andrew, Christopher and Jack; great-grandchildren Harvey, Cece and Lydia; and brother Rick.

■ **Pamela Fay Scott**, 71, wife of retired USAID Senior Foreign Service Officer Rick Scott, died from a heart attack on March 29, 2022.

Ms. Scott was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1950. The first in her family to attend university, she received a CQSW (a master's degree in social work) from the University of Edinburgh.

After practicing social work in the area, she was invited to visit a friend in

India. She traveled there in 1975 and worked for Oxfam UK in the eastern state of Odisha (formerly Orissa) on a "food for work" project.

During her visit, she observed something that stayed with her for the rest of her life: a very thin man bent over to pick up a single grain of rice that had fallen from an open rice bag and ate it. His palpable desperation made a lasting impression, and Ms. Scott remained committed throughout her life to helping ease the path for those less fortunate.

After India, Ms. Scott traveled to Bangladesh. She made her way overland to Dhaka on rickshaws, buses, trains and a rowboat, and often laughed about being one of the few—if not the only—Western women to travel overland to Bangladesh at that time.

On arrival, she heard about a "crazy American" who worked for the international aid organization CARE on the island of Bhola in the Bay of Bengal. Once again, off she went. She met the aid worker and then proceeded overland to Nepal.

Five years later, after working with U.K. social services in Oxford, England, she and the crazy American were married in Wausau, Wis.

Ms. Scott, husband Rick and their two children lived and worked around the globe and experienced many cultures, all of which she loved dearly. Her travels took her to Haiti, India, Morocco, Russia, Israel, Ethiopia, Liberia and Timor-Leste. During this time, Ms. Scott appreciated periodic visits home to her beloved Scotland.

While she valued her chosen profession of social work, she showed an uncanny ability to reinvent herself each time she moved. Her work included serving as the head of the English-language hotline in Moscow to help English

speakers with mental health concerns, as a project manager for the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in Ethiopia, and as a U.S. embassy's community liaison officer in Liberia and Timor-Leste.

Ms. Scott also studied the Indian classical dance, Kathak, in Lucknow with one of India's leading practitioners, and graduated at the top of her ulpan class in Israel, learning to speak and write Hebrew.

After moving to Washington, D.C., in 2011, she worked at the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs in the office that repatriated missing U.S. children under the Hague Abduction Convention.

Her final position, which began in 2014 and ended with retirement in 2021, was as a writer and editor in the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon.

As friends and family members recall, Ms. Scott marveled at the ways in which humans make sense of and build cultures around local conditions and realities. She appreciated humanity in all its shades, colors and belief systems, and this stunningly beautiful Earth, which she strove to protect.

She was an avid recycler and composter (she had a compost bin at every house she lived in around the world). Gardening was an integral part of her life, and people from all over the world still appreciate the flowers and plants that she passed on as she left for the next post. She became a vegetarian in 1977, believing that better health and better care for our planet could be advanced by that lifestyle choice.

She often reflected on her love for Russian art and culture, and was utterly devastated by the recent invasion of Ukraine.

Pamela Scott is survived by her husband, Rick, of Madison, Wis.; her son, Ian, of Cincinnati, Ohio; her daughter, Fiona, of Le Center, Minn.; and five grandchildren.

■ **Nimalka "Nimi" Wijesooriya**, 71, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer with USAID, passed away on May 18, 2022, in Santa Fe, N.M.

Born and raised in Sri Lanka, Mr. Wijesooriya attended St. Thomas' Preparatory School in Colombo, where he was known for his skill on the cricket pitch.

He immigrated to the United States in 1969 and went on to obtain a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Minnesota, Duluth. He graduated in 1976 and joined USAID in 1980.

Mr. Wijesooriya's overseas assignments included the Philippines, Jordan, Egypt, the West Bank and Gaza, and Kenya. He worked diligently throughout his 20-year career with USAID to support transformational change within the agency as a leader in information technology, financial reporting and accounting reforms within the controller backstop.

Colleagues say he served as a mentor and went beyond the confines of his position to improve the broader working environment, program effectiveness and development impact at each mission where he served.

In the later stages of his career, he was often sought out to provide hands-on support to USAID missions to help improve overall effectiveness and institutional capacity through mission management assessments.

Mr. Wijesooriya was also a beloved and important part of the community at each post where he and his wife, Suchinta, served. Through community theater and tennis, or in pursuit of their

diverse interests at post, the couple created a network of friends that Mr. Wijesooriya maintained throughout his life.

In retirement, Mr. Wijesooriya became an avid golfer, playing daily at his nearby course in Santa Fe and befriending fellow players and management alike. During an outing just a month before his death, the course refused to allow him to pay for the round, saying, "Nimi is a local legend. He does not have to pay to play here ever."

Mr. Wijesooriya's colleagues remember him as humble, intrepid, good-humored and dedicated to the core values of USAID. Known for his signature ponytail and eclectic sense of style, he enhanced the lives of everyone he met, everywhere he went.

One co-worker described him as "the finest colleague and friend I ever had in my 40-plus years of working in the Foreign Service." Another recalled: "Nimi respected all cultures and all peoples. In every issue that came up, Nimi's special focus was on the diverse local employees at the mission, showing care and kindness. I will never forget him."

Mr. Wijesooriya leaves behind a legacy of excellence in his work and many devoted friends and associates who remember him as "the kindest person we ever met."

He is survived by his wife, Suchinta; his daughter, Saman; his son, Ruwan; and his grandchild, Roshi. ■



If you would like us to include an obituary in *In Memory*, please send text to [journal@afsa.org](mailto:journal@afsa.org).

Be sure to include the date, place and cause of death, as well as details of the individual's Foreign Service career. Please place the name of the AFSA member to be memorialized in the subject line of your email.

## Broadcasting Behind the Iron Curtain

### Cold War Radio: The Russian Broadcasts of the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Mark G. Pomar, *Potomac Books*, 2022, \$34.95/hardcover, e-book available, 344 pages.

REVIEWED BY ERIC RUBIN

The history of U.S. radio broadcasting to the former Soviet Union and the former Soviet bloc is a barometer of the history of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War.

The work of the Voice of America, Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe tracks closely the history of U.S. foreign policy toward the Soviet Union, from the U.S.-Soviet alliance during World War II through the most fraught periods of the Cold War.

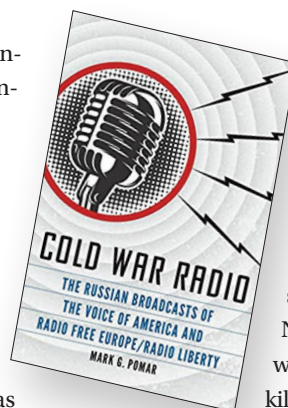
Author Mark Pomar—an expert on Soviet and Russian affairs and former assistant director of the Russian Service at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty—lays out the early days of the radio services, during the years of the anti-German alliance that saw the U.S. praise and welcome the shared effort to defeat Hitler’s Germany, an effort that was reflected in Hollywood films, mass-market paperbacks and popular culture.

Pomar then traces the decline of the U.S.-Soviet relationship into the darkest days of the Cold War, when “Godless Communism” was depicted as the greatest threat to our civilization and the radios reflected that perspective in their programming.

Pomar’s analysis is most compelling in dissecting the conflicts between American foreign policy (which often sought to find accommodation with the Soviet Union and accepted its existence as a given) and

hard-core Russian nationalist ideology (which considered the Soviet state an outrage that could only be destroyed and overcome).

The strain between Jewish dissidents and traditional Russian nationalists runs through this narrative as a constant source of conflict. Nostalgia for the former czarist system motivated many of those who devoted their careers to the radio services, but was not welcomed by the contemporary Soviet émigrés who saw the problem as lack of democracy rather than abandonment of traditional values.



was controversial, as were the radio services’ responses to the assassination of Ukrainian, Russian and East European dissidents in Western capitals.

The case of militant Ukrainian nationalist leader (a divisive figure, seen as a freedom fighter and/or Nazi collaborator, depending on whom you ask) Stepan Bandera, killed in Munich in 1959 by the KGB not far from the radios’ then-headquarters, was only the most famous of a series of Soviet assassinations abroad.

It is hard to conjure up the centrality of shortwave radio in the days before the internet, although some of us are old enough to remember the excitement of tuning into Radio Beijing, Kol Israel and

### Pomar’s analysis is most compelling in dissecting the conflicts between American foreign policy and hard-core Russian nationalist ideology.

The radios were often viewed by Washington policymakers as a source of irritation and distraction. Pomar goes into great detail on the tension-filled months that led up to the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, and the unproven allegations that the U.S.-funded radio services encouraged the Hungarians to rise up against their Soviet overlords.

There was constant division between those who sought the “rollback” of communism and those who sought to push the Soviet system to change in ways that advanced U.S. interests.

Radio Liberty’s role in encouraging the long-running efforts at promoting insurgency in Soviet-ruled Western Ukraine throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s

Radio Moscow as kids. We and our NATO allies spent billions to construct a network of relay stations and transmitters across the globe, to ensure maximum penetration of the Soviet bloc’s airways.

Communist jamming was only sporadically successful, and it cost the Soviet bloc governments a fortune. Many central figures in the struggle against communist tyranny spoke and wrote admiringly of the crucial role U.S. international broadcasting played in keeping them informed of what was happening in their own countries, among them Lech Walesa, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Vaclav Havel.

The U.S. stationed technicians across the globe in places as diverse as Monrovia, Liberia, and Udon Thani, Thailand,

and here at home in Bethany, Ohio, and Greenville, North Carolina (the latter station is still operating to this day).

More recently, there have been successful efforts to restart radio broadcasting to parts of the former Soviet Union, both via shortwave and medium-wave transmission, as well as free rebroadcasting on commercial stations.

Pomar assesses the role of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty as CIA projects aimed at weakening popular support for communist rule among the subject peoples of the Soviet empire.

He dissects the demographic and cultural aspects of the radio services' staff, discussing the role of the heavily White Russian makeup of the employees

in influencing their attitudes toward the contemporary Soviet Union, collaboration with Nazi Germany and anti-Semitism.

Pomar does a superb job of tracking the tension between efforts to promote Western values of human rights and democracy in the Soviet space with hard-core adherence to traditional Russian values of autocracy, monarchy and orthodoxy among some of the staff.

Mark Pomar's stellar career in the Soviet and post-Soviet world makes him an ideal teller of this compelling story. From 1982 to 1993, he worked as assistant director of the Russian Service at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (Munich), as director of the USSR Division at the Voice

of America and as executive director of the Board for International Broadcasting.

From 1993 to 2008, Pomar was a senior executive at IREX, a large U.S. international organization operating in 33 countries that administers programs in education, public policy and media.

And from 2008 to 2017, he was the founding CEO and president of the U.S.-Russia Foundation (USRF), a private U.S. foundation based in Moscow that ran programs in entrepreneurship and the rule of law. The USRF has sadly been forced to stop operations inside Russia as a result of the growing repression under Vladimir Putin's dictatorial regime. ■

*Eric Rubin is the president of AFSA.*

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# The Lure of the “Painful Childhood”

BY LOUISA ROGERS

I’m 8 years old, trying to focus on what my tall, lanky fourth grade geography teacher, Mr. Brow, is saying. Suddenly, apropos of nothing, I erupt into noisy sobs. This marks my first day in a new school (the bilingual *Colegio Americano*) and a new location (Quito, Ecuador).

All the kids stare at me. Mr. Brow frowns, obviously concerned. I can’t explain it myself, though this is hardly the first time I’ve started sobbing for no reason in class. I’ve been breaking down during the first week in a new school ever since kindergarten. And by age 8, my young self has had plenty of opportunities, because I’ve already attended schools in Budapest, Buenos Aires, and now Quito—all postings where my diplomat father was assigned.

Every year, I dreaded the first week of school, hoping desperately I wouldn’t embarrass myself with another meltdown. The pattern seemed inevitable, something outside my control. But I finally outgrew it before my father’s next posting to Washington, which was fortunate, because moving from funky Quito to suburban D.C. was hard enough—even without breakdowns.

Attending sixth grade at Radnor Elementary in Bethesda was my first school experience on U.S. soil, and it was

the biggest cultural change in my life. My clothes were wrong, my hair was wrong, I was wrong. Being a year younger than my peers—a side effect of leaping from country to country with incompatible school calendars—didn’t help.

I’ll never forget my first day there. During recess, my classmates played a game called Greek Dodge. I didn’t have a clue what the game was about, but I gathered the goal had something to do with sticking close to your team and running around in a shapeless mass. I was trying to merge with the other kids, unseen, when a ball came out of nowhere and hit me so hard, my eyes teared up. Later I learned it was a skinny punk named Danny who had walloped me.

Bad start to a hard year. Sixty years later, I still consider Bethesda my hardest “posting.”

And that wasn’t the half of it. By the time I graduated from high school, I had gone to four more schools. Clearly, my family’s itinerant lifestyle wasn’t easy for me.

Not surprisingly, as a young adult I felt my childhood was wounded; but that was in the ’70s, when no one I knew thought



The author, age 11, poses for the camera in Bethesda, Maryland.

they’d been happy in their youth. Instead of playing soccer or going to bars after work, my peers and I spent our free time in encounter groups and gestalt therapy,

merrily blaming our parents for what we considered our “traumatic” childhoods.

It took decades, but gradually my perspective on my childhood changed. I began to see that the challenges I’d faced growing up had helped me become resilient.

A few years ago, in London, while browsing the memoir section in Waterstones, the British equivalent of Barnes and Noble, I noticed an entire shelf labeled: Painful Childhoods. Staring at the label, I burst out laughing—it captured the age perfectly. In our modern culture, the lure of the painful childhood is powerful. I should know, having spent 20 years there.

As the years passed, my lens kept changing. How I view my childhood at 70 is different than at 40, which in turn was different than at 20. Today I look back on myself as a reasonably happy, carefree girl. I’m even in close touch with a few Radnor students (not Danny, though!).

But who knows? When I’m 80, I may feel differently. My father, exactly 30 years older than me, turned 101 last month. If I live anywhere near as long as he has, I’ll have plenty of time to change my mind again—and given my history, I probably will. ■



*Louisa Rogers is a writer and leadership coach who divides her life between Eureka, California, and Guanajuato, Mexico. The daughter of Jordan Thomas Rogers, who served as a Foreign Service officer between 1947 and 1975, she was born in a Chevy sedan outside what was then National Airport (now Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport). She grew up in Hungary; Argentina; Ecuador; Bethesda, Maryland; and Pakistan. An expanded version of this piece appeared on the Unity Magazine website.*



Every year at the start of the Islamic festival of *Hari Raya* (Idul Fitri), tens of millions of Indonesians return to their home villages in a migration known in the Javanese language as *mudik*. This involves an unbelievably huge mass movement of people, similar to China's Spring Festival (or Lunar New Year) celebrations. Even in predominantly Christian parts of the religiously diverse Indonesian archipelago, it is easy to feel the buzz of *mudik*. The buses, trains and planes used by migrants on the more populous island of Java are replaced by hundreds of water taxis serving the island communities of North Sulawesi, like those shown here. ■

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*Paul Taylor is the senior commercial officer at U.S. Embassy Jakarta. He has previously served in West Africa and China and spent many years designing market entry strategies for U.S. companies seeking opportunities in the PRC marketplace. He took this photo with his OnePlus 7 Pro.*

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