

THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

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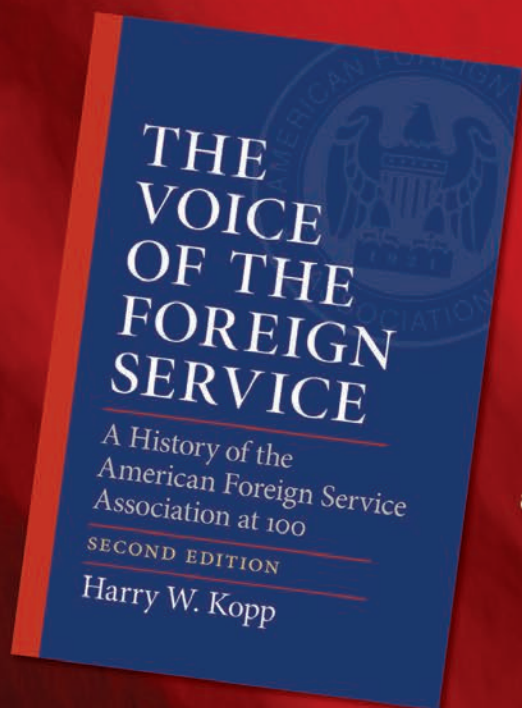


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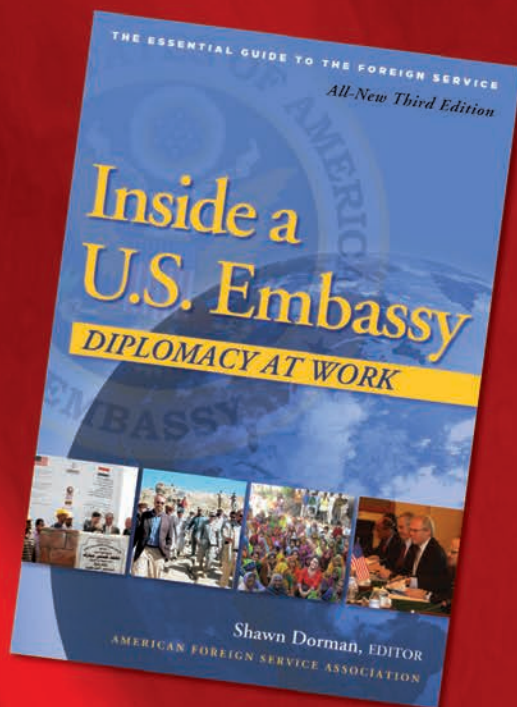
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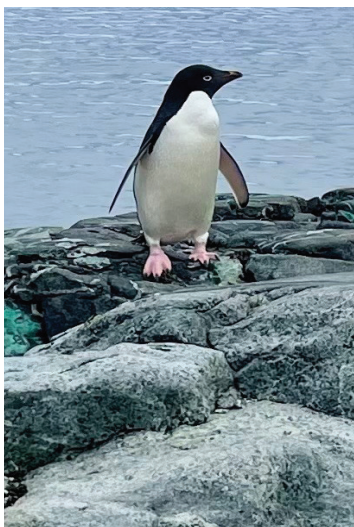
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Cover art—General view of the meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Heads of State and Government—Washington Summit, on July 10, 2024 (photo courtesy of NATO). Inset: NATO, comprising representatives of the 12 Atlantic Pact nations, gathers to plan joint defense in Washington, D.C., in September 1949 (photo by Everett Collection Inc./Alamy Stock Photo).

NATO at 75: It's Personal ...

BY TOM YAZDGERDI

In this edition, which celebrates the enduring nature of NATO, you will hear from U.S. Ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith and three former U.S. ambassadors to NATO: Nick Burns, Sandy Vershbow, and Robert Hunter. Each describes critical moments in the history of the Alliance—including the end of the Cold War and the search for a new relationship with Russia, the response to 9/11, the current war of aggression against Ukraine, and the accession of NATO's newest members, Sweden and Finland. The personal perspectives and efforts of these high-level diplomats throw into stark relief why NATO has been and remains the most successful alliance in the history of the modern world.

Like millions of Americans who have roots in East-Central Europe, I had an abiding desire to see these countries decide their own futures when the Berlin Wall fell. But they would need to be backed up by an ironclad security guarantee that would prevent them from falling victim to aggression from powerful neighbors.

When I was of an age that I could understand these things, I asked my grandfather why he had fled Czechoslovakia in the mid-1930s to come to



America. He said after Hitler came to power, it was only a matter of time before Czechoslovakia would be occupied and

dismantled. As a freethinking journalist in his hometown of Prague, he thought in the aftermath it was likely that he and many others would be rounded up and silenced, or worse.

As a graduate student in international relations, I spent the summer of 1989 as a USG-funded exchange student learning Czech in the Moravian capital of Brno. While there, I had the opportunity to visit my grandmother's first cousin, Jana, at her home in Prague. When Jana wanted to let me know what she really thought, we would take a walk.

As a young woman, Jana had witnessed firsthand the trauma of the German occupation of Prague in March 1939. As an ethnic Czech, she found that the occupation meant that many possible life choices were now closed off to her. And things were clearly much worse for Czech Jews, who faced the prospect of being deported and killed.

Jana told me she greatly admired President Ronald Reagan. When I asked her why, she said that President Reagan, with what she saw as his uncompromising support of freedom against continued Russian occupation, "gave us hope for a better future."

Those words have stayed with me. A few short months after my language study ended, the road to this better future opened with the advent of the Velvet Revolution in November 1989 and elections in June 1990—the first free and fair elections since the imposition of communist rule in 1948.

Fast forward to my fourth Foreign Service assignment, as Czech desk officer in 1997-1999. I had bid this job specifically in the hopes of seeing the Czech Republic, along with Poland and Hungary, become the newest member in the first wave of NATO enlargement. It was not a slam dunk: Some in Congress and in parliaments throughout the NATO alliance had to be convinced that it was in the best interests of the other NATO members to ratify this enlargement.

Working at the NATO 50th anniversary summit in Washington in March 1999, I was never prouder than when these three countries formally joined the Alliance and NATO decided to keep the door open for other nations with these same aspirations. I knew then that Jana, who had the chance to live out her final years in a free and independent country, and her fellow citizens would never again have to stand alone.

As we celebrate and reflect on NATO at 75, let us remember that the United States is stronger as a country when we commit to working together with our NATO allies. While there remain issues of burden-sharing, inadequate defense spending, and capability gaps, as Amb. Smith points out in her article, there is clearly no alternative to NATO that can confront aggression and promote our shared values and commitment to collective action.

Please let me know your thoughts at yazdgerdi@afsa.org or member@afsa.org. ■

Tom Yazdgerdi is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.

Editor in Chief, Director of Publications
Shawn Dorman: dorman@afsa.org

Deputy Editor
Donna Gorman: gorman@afsa.org

Senior Editor
Susan Brady Maitra: maitra@afsa.org

Managing Editor
Kathryn Owens: owens@afsa.org

Associate Editor
Mark Parkhomenko: parkhomenko@afsa.org

Publications Coordinator and Content Strategist
Hannah Harari: harari@afsa.org

Business Development Manager—
Advertising and Circulation
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Fax: (202) 338-8244
Web: www.afsa.org/fsj
Address Changes: member@afsa.org

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2101 E Street NW
Washington DC 20037-2990



CONTACTS



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AFSA Headquarters:
(202) 338-4045; Fax (202) 338-6820
State Department AFSA Office:
(202) 647-8160; Fax (202) 647-0265
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Hope for Our Climate

Thank you to the *FSJ* for September's special section on the climate crisis and article, "How the U.S. Is Leading the Global Response." While it is easy to despair in the face of floods, droughts, and wildfires around the world, the breadth and depth of action highlighted in the five articles and in the *FSJ* digital archive provide a strong basis for hope.

Principal Deputy SPEC Sue Biniarz's piece outlining the role of the U.S. in "conceptualizing and advancing the framework for global action" and building multilateral alliances provides evidence of the essential role of U.S. leadership in climate diplomacy. The articles highlighting the role U.S. technology and private sector engagement play in addressing climate issues demonstrate the benefits of a cross-sectoral, whole-of-government approach.

And FAS Counselor Michael Conlon's piece, "Fertilizer Diplomacy," underscores the importance of addressing oft-neglected agricultural greenhouse gas emissions, as the U.S. is doing through the Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils program.

Of course, we're still in the early stages of a multidecade journey. But *FSJ*'s highlighting what climate diplomacy can do is inspiring—and let's hope it inspires continued U.S. commitment to this vital work.

Ladd Connell

FSO, retired

Environment Director,

*Bank Information Center
Washington, D.C.*

Introducing Tourists to Diplomacy

The 100th anniversary of the Foreign Service is obviously an opportunity to



celebrate our past but also an opportunity to provide for the future —by building on that past. One element of that past is the National Museum of American Diplomacy (NMAD)

that is located on the 21st Street side of main State. NMAD is intended to become a tourist attraction, as the first and only museum in the United States devoted to telling the story of U.S. diplomacy and its diplomats. The museum's location near two popular tourist sites—the Lincoln and Vietnam memorials—bodes well for its eventual success.

The contents of the museum, however, may not show the high drama that the American public has become accustomed to seeing on TV and in movies, so the question becomes one of attracting tourists to the site.

One possibility would be a daily show at the site that would attract the multitude of tourists who make the rounds between the capital's many attractions. For instance, we could unashamedly copy the world-famous daily event at Buckingham Palace in London: changing the guard.

The event could be structured as follows: Every day during the tourist season at a designated time, say 9 a.m., a detachment of U.S. Marines would assemble at the corner of Constitution and 21st Streets. In full dress and led by a color guard and a small military band, the Marines would parade up 21st to the front of the museum. There they would hold a formal flag raising and, perhaps, a small changing of the guard. (Two Marines having been installed in front of the museum doors in advance.) After a short ceremony (10 minutes?),

the Marines would return up 21st Street, with the band playing the Marines' Hymn.

Consideration might be given to expanding the ceremony to conclude with a brief Taps ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and something appropriate at the Lincoln Memorial, thereby tying the State Department to two important tourist attractions in the district.

Such an event could easily become popular with tourists, providing a dramatic beginning to each visitor's day. Tour companies could schedule the event into their programmed tours. It would appeal to all ages and interests, lend glamour to the museum itself, and could easily become a popular film clip.

The event should not be expensive or difficult to organize. The Marine Barracks in southeast Washington, D.C., exists to support ceremonial missions in the nation's capital. The barracks is home to units appropriate to this proposed event, including the Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon, the Marine Drum and Bugle Corps, the Marine Band, and the official Marine Corps Color Guard. The presence of the barracks only 20 or so minutes by car across the Mall makes it logistically easy and not very time-consuming.

The Marine Corps' historic involvement with the State Department and our embassies makes the connection logical and enables the relatively unknown State Department and Foreign Service to benefit from its popularity with the American public. And the proposal may be attractive to the Marine Corps, a government institution known for its skill at public relations.

Edward Marks

Ambassador, retired

Washington, D.C. ■

RESPONSE TO A JULY-AUGUST 2024 FEATURE ARTICLE, “THE IDEAL FOREIGN SERVICE”

The Ideal, *Bilingual* Foreign Service

BY ROGER W. ANDERSON



Inspired to ponder “The Ideal Foreign Service” by Josh Morris—the third-place winner in AFSA’s 2024 Centennial Writing Competition—I would want each U.S. diplomat to be equipped with advanced linguistic proficiencies in one (or more) non-English language, in other words to be “bilingual” ... at least. Moreover, I would prioritize bilingualism among FSO candidates during the selection process.

While English and French are the only two recognized working languages of the United Nations’ Secretariat, to assume either is sufficient for the critical work of international relationship-building would be a gross simplification, not to mention glaringly egotistical.

Currently, the Foreign Service (FS) relegates bilingualism to a subskill within the essential skill (“dimension”) of cultural adaptability. This low prioritization of bilingualism is reflected in the FSO hiring process, which, as of June 2024, comprises five steps: (1) applying for the Foreign Service Officer Test (FSOT); (2) participating and passing the Foreign Service Officer Assessment (FSOA); (3) completing final reviews (e.g., medical, security); (4) being placed on the register, where additional credit is awarded to veterans and to those with proficiencies in certain languages; and, finally, (5) receiving a final offer.

In burying language testing deep within the process, the FS may be inadvertently losing candidates with invaluable language and cultural knowledge. What’s more, the FS has no mechanism to even ascertain a count of such candidates.

Let’s imagine an FSO candidate, a U.S. citizen who speaks, reads, and understands Mandarin Chinese at an ILR (interagency language roundtable) level 3. Level 3 is considered “general professional proficiency” and typically takes a language student at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) two years of study to achieve. Equally impressive is her near-insider cultural knowledge.

She acquired these skills either through her upbringing in a Mandarin-speaking community and years of dual-language study (maintained by committed parents and networks), or as a tenacious non-native speaker aided by study abroad opportunities, including one of the many programs funded by the U.S. government.

Currently, if she does not pass the FSOT or the FSOA, she will not become a U.S. diplomat. When rejecting her candidacy, the examiners were not even aware of the exceptional bilingualism and cultural expertise she would bring to the diplomatic corps. Her candidacy simply did not endure through the stage of language testing.

To put a finer point on it, the current process values a candidate’s bilingualism less than her general knowledge of international affairs (tested by the FSOT) and her ability to produce a memo and work with others (tested by the FSOA), together referred to hereafter as “diplomatic skills.”

This valuation invites the question: Are diplomatic skills in fact more valuable than bilingualism, including advanced proficiency in a Category IV language? Is it more (cost) effective to facilitate the acquisition of a diplomat’s bilingualism and insider-level cultural *savoir faire* than their general knowledge and administrative skills?

Undoubtedly, FSI’s School of Language Studies provides excellent training, yet is the U.S. really positioned to squander linguistic and cultural capital that takes months or even years to cultivate?

Further, the secondary effects of her rejection in round one or two should give the FS pause. What message is conveyed to this candidate’s Mandarin-speaking community about the government’s view of the value of maintained language skills? The disinterest it suggests in the potential contributions of Chinese Americans seems counterproductive to current initiatives to render the FS as diverse as the American people.

Conversely, if the rejected candidate is a non-native Mandarin speaker, what does her rejection indicate about the value of the Fulbright, Boren, Flagship, or Critical Language scholarships in which she participated, which the U.S. taxpayers provided her?



Roger W. Anderson is an independent scholar living in Monterey, California. He earned a PhD in foreign/second language education from Ohio State University as well as master’s degrees in African studies and French from Ohio University and in teaching Arabic as a foreign language from Middlebury College. The content of this essay is the sole responsibility of the author.

In both cases, language learning programs and community-maintained linguistic and cultural identities have no instrumentality vis-à-vis the U.S. government. Only the most committed ethnic communities overcome the U.S. trend of cultural assimilation, including abandonment of bilingualism in favor of English monolingualism. Government-funded education projects become ends unto themselves, which often prove difficult to maintain within government agencies' budgets.

Diplomats' linguistic needs are in part determined by the structure of the Foreign Service itself, its posting and rotation of diplomats, and so on. While it is crucial to build diplomats' portfolio of skills, wouldn't the ideal FSO have advanced proficiencies in a local language? More-

over, the ideal bilingual FS would quickly banish the ancient myth of "clientitis"—or "going native"—that brings into question the patriotism of bilingual U.S. diplomats serving abroad.

Ten years ago, the Peace Corps overhauled its application process, allowing applicants to apply for specific positions within specific countries, rather than demand an applicant's fealty and willingness to accept a worldwide placement. This way, a French major could avoid being sent to Ukraine, and a Russian major to Bolivia. Interagency data sharing could yield insights into how applicants' preparedness, or even the quality of their service, changed because of this reform.

With monumental challenges facing the world, it seems imperative that U.S.

diplomats be able to communicate with precision, fluency, and cultural appropriateness in non-English languages. For this reason, the ideal FS and its hiring process should prioritize strong, extant bilingualism over diplomatic skills. Bilingualism is a critical tool for national defense that the Foreign Service has locked away in a drawer that it has lost the key to.

I encourage the State Department to maintain the momentum of its recent reforms, which included reducing the dimensions from 13 to 11 (2023), increasing accessibility to the FSOA (2024), and making long-overdue changes to language testing (2022).

I encourage it to go even further toward realizing "the ideal, *bilingual* Foreign Service." ■

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Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan Top UNGA Agenda

At the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the war in Ukraine, the Israel-Hamas conflict, the escalating conflict in Lebanon, and the devastating hostilities and humanitarian crisis in Sudan were top concerns.

During a high-level Security Council meeting, Secretary-General António Guterres condemned the “horrific acts of terror” committed by Hamas while also calling for an immediate cease-fire to end Israel’s bombardment of Gaza.

Guterres warned that the escalating violence risks dragging the entire region into further conflict, noting that Israeli strikes recently targeted Hezbollah positions in Beirut.

In the General Assembly, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu defended his country’s military actions against Hamas and Hezbollah, calling it a “battle of good against evil.”

His speech was met with wide protests, however. Scores of diplomats walked out of the hall in protest of the ongoing war in Gaza and recent Israeli attacks on Lebanon.

Netanyahu issued stern warnings to Iran, saying: “There is no place in Iran that the long arm of Israel cannot reach.” Iran has vowed retaliation following Israel’s recent actions, including attacks on its embassy in Damascus and the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky made an impassioned plea to world leaders in New York City, urging them to reject cease-fire proposals that would only bring a temporary “lull” rather than a lasting and just peace.

Zelensky reiterated his peace plan, which calls for the full withdrawal of Rus-

Contemporary Quote

USAID is an incredibly mission-driven agency where people come to work every day to save lives, to improve lives. It’s honestly inspiring to work, including among those people who criticize me, with the incredibly talented people that could be working in the private sector.

Instead, they come to work every day to help people like the people who are suffering in Gaza. More than 40,000 civilians have been killed in Gaza, more than 13,000 children, more than 308 workers. I would honestly be disappointed if my staff were not in churn and pressing for more.

And I just feel lucky that I’m in the government, in the room engaging the Israelis, working with a team that’s pushing for a cease-fire, because fundamentally that’s what’s needed most of all, because, clearly, none of us can be satisfied with where things are now in Gaza.

—USAID Administrator Samantha Power on “PBS NewsHour,” Sept. 25, 2024.

sian forces, accountability for war crimes, and security guarantees. His address came as he visited the U.S. to present his “victory plan” to President Joe Biden and other leaders and seek more military aid.

Zelensky’s visit coincided with a European Parliament resolution urging the lifting of restrictions on Ukraine’s use of Western-supplied weapons on legitimate Russian targets, a move that some European countries, such as Italy, oppose.

UNGA: Global AI Partnership

Also at UNGA, Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced on Sept. 23 a new public-private partnership aimed at expanding access to artificial intelligence (AI) technology in developing countries.

The Partnership for Global Inclusivity on AI will bring together leading tech companies—including Amazon, Anthropic, Google, IBM, Meta, Microsoft, Nvidia, and OpenAI—to address critical disparities in AI access, capacity, and application.

“AI must be inclusive to be effective,” Blinken said. “We’re working to ensure more people, especially in the Global

South, can benefit from AI technology to solve the real-world problems they face, such as climate change, food insecurity, and access to education.”

As part of the initiative, the U.S. government will provide \$33 million in foreign assistance for AI development, with \$10 million specifically allocated to expanding access in developing countries. Additionally, the tech companies involved have committed more than \$100 million in total resources, including infrastructure investments, free access to technology, and training programs.

Key features of the partnership include the expansion of computer resources to low- and middle-income countries, capacity-building efforts to train local AI developers, and the creation of context-specific datasets to preserve cultural and linguistic diversity. Blinken emphasized that these efforts aim to bridge the gap between nations and ensure that AI technology is developed and applied equitably across the globe.

“This is an important moment,” Blinken concluded. “AI has the potential to transform lives, but we must make sure that no one is left behind.”

Industry leaders echoed this sentiment, with representatives from Microsoft, IBM, and Google highlighting the importance of investing in local infrastructure, education, and the development of AI models for diverse languages and communities.



Secretary Blinken meets with Haitian Prime Minister Garry Conille on Sept. 5.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

SecState Visits Haiti

On Sept. 5, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Haiti to reinforce the U.S. commitment to a multinational security mission aimed at combating gang violence and supporting the country's political transition.

In his meeting with Haitian leaders, including Prime Minister Garry Conille and the Transitional Presidential Council, Blinken emphasized the importance of swiftly establishing a Provisional Electoral Council to oversee general elections.

During a press conference that same day, Blinken acknowledged the progress made since the formation of the Transitional Presidential Council and underscored the need for more international support.

He also highlighted U.S. efforts to ensure the mission is sustainable, including consideration of a UN peacekeeping operation.

The UN-backed Multinational Security Support mission, led by more than 380 Kenyan personnel, has intensified

operations with the Haitian National Police in Port-au-Prince, aiming to end gang control. Blinken also announced an additional \$45 million in humanitarian aid, bringing total U.S. support to Haiti this year to more than \$210 million.

International Treaty for Taliban Accountability

Since retaking control of Afghanistan in 2021, the Taliban has systematically stripped women and girls of their rights, from education and employment to basic freedoms of speech and movement.

The regime's latest decree, making it illegal for women's voices to be heard by male strangers in public, has sparked global condemnation but no real consequences. A potential international treaty, however, could provide new leverage.

In October, an UNGA committee met to decide whether to advance a treaty that criminalizes crimes against humanity, including "gender apartheid."

The proposed treaty has gained momentum amid rising global conflicts and growing awareness of the Taliban's repression of Afghan women. If approved, the treaty could bring legal pathways to hold violators accountable for enforcing systemic gender oppression.

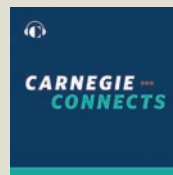
Proponents of the treaty, including Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai, have called on countries to classify gender apartheid as a crime against humanity. International recognition of this crime

Podcast of the Month: *Carnegie Connects*

Hosted by Aaron David Miller, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Carnegie Connects* delivers timely discussions on today's most pressing foreign policy challenges. Drawing on his extensive background in U.S. foreign policy and Middle East diplomacy, Miller engages experts and policymakers to provide thoughtful analysis on critical global issues. Many episodes tackle Middle East concerns, especially the Israel-Hamas war.

In the Sept. 19 episode featuring former acting Assistant Attorney General Mary B. McCord and Southern Poverty Law Center Senior Fellow Eric K. Ward, Miller tackles the rising concern of political violence in the U.S. ahead of the 2024 elections. Together, they explore the drivers of political violence and discuss ways to mitigate the threat.

Another recent episode dives into the escalating tensions in the Middle East following significant strikes by Israel against Hezbollah and Hamas leaders. Miller speaks with Amos Harel, *Haaretz's* military correspondent, to analyze the potential for a major regional war and the prospects for de-escalation through diplomacy.



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

could send a powerful moral message, akin to the global response to South Africa's former racial apartheid system, which ultimately led to its classification as a crime by the International Criminal Court.

For Afghan women, the codification of gender apartheid could offer hope in the face of their worsening plight under Taliban rule.



Author Steve Coll at DACOR–Bacon House on Oct. 1, 2024.

Lessons from a Foreign Policy Journalist

On Oct. 1, as part of its Distinguished Speaker Series, the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST) invited journalist Steve Coll to give a talk, “From *Ghost Wars* to the *Achilles Trap*: Lessons from a Foreign Policy Journalist and Scholar.”

Coll shared his thoughts on what went wrong in the lead-up to the Iraq War, the importance of oral histories, and the problems with relying on SIGINT—signals intelligence—in conducting research. He shared sometimes-amusing anecdotes about what was happening in Saddam Hussein’s inner circle and what the U.S. government got wrong in its analysis at the time.

Heard on the Hill

Preserving Overseas Pay

You said something about the overseas comparability pay authority. ... I completely agree with you. We need to continue this. If we let it lapse, State Department, the Foreign Service officers, are going to face up to a 22 percent cut. That will certainly hinder our ability to recruit and retain these professionals. ... Another thing that presents a challenge for us in Africa is the diplomatic presence there on the continent. There are currently six U.S. missions ... in Africa that do not have a Senate-confirmed ambassador: Eswatini, Lesotho, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania, and Sudan.

—Representative Dina Titus (D-Nev.-1) to Under Secretary for Management John Bass in a Sept. 11 House Committee on Foreign Affairs hearing on *Great Power Competition in Africa*.

Family Sacrifices

And to all our nominees today, I want to thank you for your service to our country, and especially our Foreign Service career professionals, that you sacrifice a lot of time away from your family and friends representing our great nation overseas. And I really appreciate those sacrifices that you and your families make. So, thank you very much for what you do for us.

—Senator Pete Ricketts (R-Neb.) in a Sept. 11 Senate Committee on Foreign Relations nominations hearing.

Global Consequences

You [nominees] have spent your careers serving our country. We have a strange way in America of fetishizing, in a disproportionate manner, wealth and celebrity. But the values that have made this nation as strong as it is are values of service, sacrifice, and humility. The jobs that you all are here before us for, have enormous world-affecting consequences, and on the global scale of importance. I am humbled by the dedication you all have. ... And I would be wrong if I did not point out that you don’t do it alone. You all have in your introduction spoken of the families that support you, and they too are evidencing those great American values of service, and sacrifice, and knowing the countries that you serve.

—Senator Cory Booker (D-N.J.) in a Sept. 11 Senate Committee on Foreign Relations nominations hearing.



JOSH

Coll told the crowd he used ADST’s oral histories to research his most recent book, *The Achilles Trap: Saddam Hussein, the C.I.A., and the Origins of America’s Invasion of Iraq* (also featured in “Of Related Interest,” page 40). Through researching this and other books, Coll became interested in diplomats and the embassies in which they work. “I think [embassies] are a neglected part of the way America lives in the world,” he said. “They

are fascinating places, and the people who work there are bright, and committed, and interesting, and don’t get a lot of ink.”

Coll said he tries “to keep diplomats alive in my stories, if I can find someone who is in an interesting place in an interesting time, but also to convey some understanding and respect about what the profession is—and what it isn’t.”

Watch the full discussion at https://bit.ly/ADST_Steve-Coll.

100 Years Ago

The Career

I hope there will never enter into the mind of the Foreign Service officer a feeling of distaste, of dissatisfaction, a sense of disillusionment because his career is not all that it was felt it might be at the outset. Success in any career is never in anything outside. It is primarily in the satisfaction you get out of work. ...

Certainly, this satisfaction is possible to those who are engaged in this most important work of promoting and defending the interests of our country in connection with foreign affairs. What could be more appealing to any man of patriotic sentiment than to have an opportunity of that sort? What could be more interesting than to be constantly associated in his work with the currents of influence through the world, with the activities which are really determining the future of nations. Not simply the future of our own national life but the future of the whole human family. You should have the greatest possible satisfaction in the sense of the importance of your work.

—Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes in *The American Foreign Service Journal* (precursor to the FSJ), November 1924.



The report downplays former President Donald Trump's role in setting the withdrawal in motion with his 2020 deal with the Taliban, instead highlighting Biden's decision to proceed with the withdrawal despite warnings of a swift Taliban advance. The investigation, which involved key official interviews and 20,000 pages of documents, accuses the National Security Council of sidelining military leaders during key decision-making points.

The Biden administration defended its actions, blaming Trump's withdrawal deal that left it few options. Despite Republican criticism, Biden has maintained that ending the 20-year war was the right decision.

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Antony Blinken faced contempt of Congress charges after a House Foreign Affairs Committee vote, led by Chair McCaul, advanced the resolution.

The charges were a result of Blinken's failure to appear before the committee to testify on the Afghanistan withdrawal, despite his diplomatic commitments at the UN General Assembly.

"As I have made clear, I am willing to testify and have offered several reasonable alternatives to the dates unilaterally demanded by the Committee during which I am carrying out the President's important foreign policy objectives," Blinken wrote.

Critics have noted the political nature of the timing, with Republicans aiming to hold the Biden administration accountable for the chaotic evacuation, while Democrats called it a partisan maneuver designed to sway public opinion ahead of the presidential election. ■

This edition of Talking Points was compiled by Mark Parkhomenko.

Online Passport Renewal

The State Department announced on Sept. 18 that Americans can now renew their adult passports entirely online, marking a shift away from the traditional paper-based process. This new system eliminates the need to print forms or mail checks, offering a more streamlined experience.

"The Department is embracing digital transformation to offer the most efficient and convenient passport renewal experience possible," the State Department noted in its press release. The new online option was tested in a public beta launched in June and is now fully rolled out for U.S. residents.

"Thanks to increased staffing, technological advancements, and a host of other improvements, the average routine passport is being processed today in roughly one-third the time as at the same point last summer, and well under the advertised six to eight weeks pro-

cessing times," the department added. The online renewal system is available only for adult passports that have expired within the last five years and is currently limited to citizens residing in the U.S. or its territories.

Online passport renewal is available at travel.state.gov/renewonline.

House Republicans' Afghanistan Probe

House Republicans released a report on Sept. 9 sharply criticizing the Biden administration's handling of the 2021 Afghanistan withdrawal, accusing it of planning poorly and ignoring the warnings of the U.S. military.

The report, led by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas), claims the administration chose "optics over security" during the chaotic evacuation, which left Americans and Afghan allies stranded as the Taliban took control.

My \$100,000 EER

BY RACHEL SCHNELLER

In May 2019, I was medically evacuated from post and spent a week in a mental hospital in Northern Virginia, diagnosed with retriggered post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and severe depression. I spent another month in outpatient treatment before receiving a medical curtailment. What led to this unfortunate outcome?

I had toughed out the previous two years in a toxic work environment under hostile leadership, trying to manage my worsening PTSD symptoms through frequent trips to my post's health unit for medication and self-care regimens like meditation and yoga—treatments that had helped me recover from my initial bout of PTSD following a tour in Iraq in 2005-2006.

Weeks before the medevac, with no warning or preparation, my supervisor emailed me a career-ending statement for my employee evaluation report (EER) that bore no resemblance to my understanding of my performance and included fabricated material. Bewildered, I reached out to trusted colleagues for advice and tried to negotiate with my supervisor, but to no avail. That individual refused to change a word.

My reviewing officer avoided me

Rachel Schneller is a Foreign Service officer who joined the State Department in 2001. In 2008 she received the William R. Rivkin Award for Constructive Dissent for her efforts to raise awareness of PTSD and improve services for those suffering following service in conflict zones.

In retrospect, there were a number of missed opportunities to correct course and avoid a lawsuit, which would have been to the benefit of all involved, including the American people.

and several days later—again with no discussion or preparation—emailed me an EER review statement that validated my rater's negative assessment of my performance.

This triggered my mental and emotional collapse. The following day, I sought treatment from the regional medical psychiatrist, who authorized an immediate evacuation from post. I flew out that same night.

A few hours before my flight, my reviewing officer called me at home as I lay miserable in bed, my husband and young son attempting to comfort me. Word had finally reached our D.C.-based office director of my plight, and he had apparently intervened. The reviewer apologized to me over the phone and pledged to revise their draft assessment.

The reviewer offered a confusing explanation of how they had handled my EER—something about not knowing how to deal with the professional risk associated with social media—which made no sense to me at the time. I burst into tears. I was so demoralized and traumatized by this point I knew I required medical intervention.

In September 2021, after two agonizing and expensive years of the equal employment opportunity (EEO) process, I reached a legal settlement with the State Department.

My medical evacuation alone cost about \$20,000, and my medical curtailment from post likely incurred another \$20,000 in forfeited school fees when my son suddenly had to depart post in July. I had retained professional legal representation, fronting more than \$40,000 in fees that, ultimately, I recouped.

Then there were the costs not so easily calculated: the number of hours State Department lawyers spent working on my case over the 2019-2021 period.

In addition, my medical curtailment left a yearlong gap at post in a managerial position, undoubtedly taxing those who had to stretch themselves to cover my workload, to the detriment of our foreign policy interests.

Further, I had spent a year in language training in preparation for a three-year position, but the department got only two years' return on its investment.

This estimated \$100,000 price tag—ultimately footed by U.S. taxpayers—would have been even higher if my final settlement had included compensatory



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In the end, I decided there was no amount of money that could compensate me for what I had endured.

damages. In the end, I decided there was no amount of money that could compensate me for what I had endured.

I found my settlement satisfactory—my lawyers even told me they had never seen the department go to such lengths to set things right. I did not ask for any measures to be taken against my former supervisors. I cannot think of a single thing they could do that would make up for the working environment I had endured.



I do not want to relitigate my case—that is over and done with. However, a few instructive points show how my situation degenerated needlessly. In retrospect, there were a number of missed opportunities to correct course and avoid a lawsuit, which would have been to the benefit of all involved, including the American people.

- My supervisors had somehow gained access to a private Facebook group. They read some anonymous posts on this site and assumed I had written about them. *Rather than confront me directly about these posts, they kept their activities secret* for months, creating logs of which posts they believed I had made and why they believed my alleged anonymous postings were unfair. These logs did not come to light until the litigation process was underway.

- My direct supervisor apparently was so upset about the anonymous posts that they met with the post EEO counselor and filed an EEO complaint against me, with the knowledge if not

the encouragement of their supervisors—which also came to light during litigation.

In one exchange, my supervisor relayed to their reviewer that the EEO office had not agreed to act on the complaint against me but had offered to mediate between all parties. *My supervisor turned down the mediation offer.*

- While in outpatient treatment, I met with the Office of the Ombuds, explained the state of affairs, and asked for their help. The ombuds agreed to mediate, providing all parties agreed to participate. *My supervisors refused to participate.*

- My direct supervisor's hostile behavior toward me was no secret. I had alerted my reviewing officer in October 2019 that my supervisor's punitive behavior was retriggering my PTSD symptoms. I reported higher up the chain on three occasions to my reviewer's supervisor that my supervisor was abusive, but that senior officer took no steps to stop the behavior, on one occasion asking, "Can't you just not let yourself be abused?"

When asked if I had reported the abuse, this same Senior FSO responded in a legal affidavit that nothing I had reported "sounded like abuse" and that my complaints were "taxing."

- I met with the post EEO counselor the day before my medevac. This counselor later contested that I had begun the EEO process since I had not filed a formal complaint that day. I later discovered this EEO counselor had also handled my supervisor's EEO complaint

against me and was seeking an onward position in our bureau using my supervisor as a reference. *That person did not divulge the conflict of interest* or recuse themselves from my case.

- I met with AFSA, but there was nothing they could do until I had a completed EER as evidence of “harm.” My supervisors did not sign off on my EER until post management finally pushed it through in December 2019, after I had retained outside lawyers. Meanwhile, the EEO process requires action within 45 days.

- I first attempted to go through the State Department’s alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism rather than file a legal suit. However, in November 2019, the department declined my request, stating: “It is S/OCR’s policy to decline cases involving agency decisions of curtailments and medical clearances being revoked.” My only alternative at that point was to file a formal complaint.

In the summer of 2021, the State Department requested use of the ADR to reach a settlement in my case. Would it have been possible to reach an agreement much earlier (and more cheaply) if we had used ADR in 2019?



The State Department has made progress since my case in many meaningful ways that I hope will prevent further occurrence of cases like mine. I like to think my case helped prompt some of these improvements, but my case alone could not be responsible.

I know others in the department have suffered similarly, because I was not the only State Department employee in inpatient and outpatient treatment. I know because there is a support group for victims of bullying in the State Department with nearly 150 members.

My main recommendation, based

on my experience, concerns accountability. I do not mean accountability to the victim—I have been compensated adequately. I mean accountability to U.S. taxpayers: They are the ones who pay the price for the costs that bullying and mismanagement impose on our ability to further national security interests abroad.

Apart from accountability, the department should explicitly state that all EER statements must be truthful and contain no fabricated information, and that willful misrepresentation in an EER will incur strict penalties.

As it is, department regulations only specify that EERs should be fair and accurate, but do not state that willful fabrications and inaccuracies are not acceptable.

The department should consider incorporating feedback from subordinates into the files of anyone in a managerial position, either through the EER process or some other mechanism.



I share my experience so that other victims know they are not alone and that there is hope. As long as this sort of behavior remains a dirty secret in the State Department, perpetrators will continue to act with impunity. Many of their targets may choose to leave the department altogether, but I hope they remain.

I frequently recall the response I received from a psychiatrist while I was in the hospital, struggling to understand what drove my supervisors to their actions. “Sometimes people choose to do the easy wrong thing instead of the hard right thing.”

I believe that at State the answers lie in making it easier for people to do the right thing and harder to do the wrong thing. ■



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NATO

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Following the July NATO Summit in Washington, D.C., and closing out 75 years of the North Atlantic Alliance, *The Foreign Service Journal* reached out to a number of those who have served as U.S. Ambassador to NATO with these questions: Why does NATO matter, and what value does it bring to the United States?

We are pleased to present here the messages we received from current U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO Julianne Smith and three former ambassadors to the Alliance: Alexander “Sandy” Vershbow, who served as Deputy Secretary General of NATO (2012-2016), the first American to hold that position, and earlier as the 18th U.S. ambassador to NATO; R. Nicholas Burns, the 19th U.S. ambassador to NATO; and Robert E. Hunter, the 17th U.S. ambassador to NATO.

—Shawn Dorman, Editor in Chief



NATO Today

By Julianne Smith

During my Senate confirmation hearing in the fall of 2021 to become the U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO, I outlined three chief priorities: strengthen the Alliance, revitalize America’s relationships with its closest Allies, and address some of NATO’s shortcomings (such as inadequate defense spending, capability gaps, and slow decision-making). What I had no way of knowing at the time was just how transformative the next three years would be for the Alliance. NATO’s response to Russia’s unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine has showcased the Alliance’s value, adaptability, and resilience. NATO is now stronger, bigger, and more united than ever.

A little after 3 a.m. on Feb. 24, 2022, my phone rang. I was told that the war in Ukraine had started and that NATO would meet in an emergency session in just a few short hours. Thanks

to weeks of consultations and detailed contingency planning in January and early February, NATO was ready. Within an hour, the Alliance launched both its Graduated Response Plans and elements of its NATO Response Force. Individual Allies redoubled their efforts—already set in motion weeks prior to the invasion—to reinforce the eastern flank with tens of thousands of troops and additional capabilities.

Allies condemned Russia’s actions, and every member of the Alliance pledged humanitarian, financial, and security assistance for Ukraine. NATO announced a virtual summit with Allied leaders for the next day. This was NATO at its best: Allies coming together to share intelligence both before and at the start of Russia’s war, Allies enhancing deterrence in Eastern Europe, Allies providing urgent assistance to one of their closest partners, and Allies strongly united around a common purpose.

Vladimir Putin no doubt assumed that NATO unity would start to crack, and Allies would eventually lose interest in Ukraine. This was a grave miscalculation. More than two years later, NATO Allies continue to support Ukraine in its efforts to defend its sovereignty. The Alliance has also taken a series of

concrete steps to help Ukraine build a bridge to NATO membership. It lifted the traditional requirement of completing the Membership Action Plan (MAP), created the first NATO-Ukraine Council as well as a new mission for training and security assistance, established a new NATO Representation office in Kyiv, launched initiatives to help Ukraine modernize its forces, and declared that Ukraine is on an “irreversible” path to membership.

Perhaps even more troubling for President Putin, the Alliance added Sweden and Finland as members, significantly increasing Russia’s land border with NATO and proving that despite Russia’s best efforts, NATO’s door remains wide open.

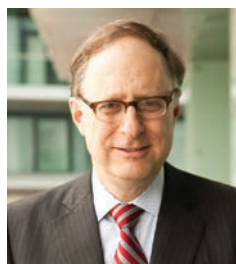
The dramatic changes didn’t stop there. NATO issued a new Strategic Concept in 2022 that mentioned the People’s Republic of China (PRC) for the first time. NATO members significantly increased defense spending, with 23 of the 32 Allies hitting the 2 percent target for the first time in 2024. The Alliance placed four new multinational battalions in Eastern Europe, bringing the total in that region to eight. It rolled out new regional plans that will ensure that the Alliance can protect every inch of NATO territory. NATO deepened its partnership with its four Indo-Pacific partners. And NATO has spent the past three years strengthening its tool kit to take on future challenges such as cybersecurity, emerging and disruptive tech, and space.

In July the Alliance celebrated its 75th anniversary at the Washington Summit. While parts of the summit were designed to look back at all that NATO had achieved over more than seven decades, most of the three days were about NATO’s bright future. This is, after all, an alliance that continues to attract new members. It is an alliance that continues to adapt to new challenges. It continues to get Ukraine what it needs to defend itself. And its strength continues to rest in members’ shared values and commitment to collective action.

Ambassador Julianne Smith is the U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO. Prior to her current position, she served as a senior adviser to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, as acting national security adviser and deputy national security adviser to then-Vice President Joseph R. Biden, and as the principal director for European and NATO policy in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. In addition to her government service, Ambassador Smith has held a variety of positions at research institutions including the Center for New American Security, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the German Marshall Fund, the American Academy in Berlin, and the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik in Berlin.

NATO is now stronger, bigger, and more united than ever.

—Ambassador Julianne Smith



Why Does NATO Matter to the United States?

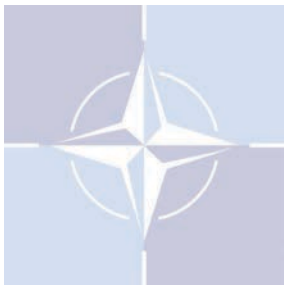
By Alexander Vershbow

NATO matters for U.S. security for the simple reason that peace and security in Europe are vital to our own security and prosperity and to encouraging respect by other nations for the values on which NATO is based: liberty, democracy, and the rule of law. Americans learned after World War I the cost of disengaging from Europe and choosing the path of isolationism. The wise leaders who created NATO 75 years ago were determined not to repeat the same mistake.

NATO was formed by the United States, Canada, and 10 West European nations to provide collective security against the growing threat of a hostile Soviet Union and to alleviate instability in the wake of the devastation of Europe during World War II. NATO’s purpose as set forth in its founding treaty was to secure peace in Europe and the North Atlantic area, promote cooperation among its members, safeguard freedom, and deter external aggression.

Under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, members pledged to treat an attack on another member as an attack on all and to take action—individually or collectively—to assist the victim of aggression to restore peace. While the threats to NATO security have changed over the past 75 years, the purpose, values, and founding principles of the Alliance have not.

I worked on NATO policy for the larger part of my 40-year diplomatic career, including 11 years at NATO headquarters. As an insider who has attended more NATO summits than I care to count, I think NATO’s enduring value lies in its remarkable ability to adapt to changing circumstances and evolving threats to members’ security.



The Alliance did not go out of business after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet empire, as many skeptics recommended at the time. Instead, NATO went “out of area” to end the civil wars and ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, and it joined the global war against terrorism after the United States was attacked on 9/11—the only time Allies invoked Article 5.

Thanks to the vision of American and European leaders, NATO also became a key instrument for overcoming the division of Europe imposed by Stalin at the Yalta Summit in 1945. NATO laid the basis for a “Europe whole and free” after 1989 through partnership and admission of new members from the former Soviet bloc. During all this time, NATO sought a strategic partnership with Russia as part of an integrated European security system.

It will be a long time before Russia can again be considered a partner of the West and NATO. In attempting to change Ukraine’s borders by force and erase it from the map as a sovereign state, Putin’s Russia has dealt a serious blow to the European order that has underpinned peace and security since the end of World War II. Helping Kyiv defeat Russia in Ukraine is essential if the European security order is to recover. Even a partial win for Putin would be dangerous and encourage other despots to attack their neighbors.

Fortunately, our allies have stepped up since Russia’s initial aggression in 2014 and its full-scale invasion in 2022. Twenty-three of today’s 32 Allies now meet or exceed the 2 percent-of-GDP goal for defense spending adopted in 2014. And they have substantially increased the size and readiness of NATO forces on NATO’s eastern flank, pledging to defend “every inch” of Allied territory, including that of new members Finland and Sweden.

Allies have provided military and economic support to Ukraine on a par with the United States, showing the continuing value of having like-minded allies ready to share the burdens of defense and security. At this year’s 75th anniversary summit in Washington, D.C., NATO members took additional measures—both collectively and bilaterally—to expand defense assistance to Ukraine, increase its interoperability with NATO forces, and help it develop a strong industrial base.

These and other summit deliverables will constitute a solid bridge on which to expedite Ukraine’s future membership in NATO. In this regard, Allies understand that long-term peace and stability and security in Europe can be assured only when Ukraine has the capacity to defeat today’s Russian aggression

While the threats to NATO security have changed over the past 75 years, the purpose, values, and founding principles of the Alliance have not.

—Ambassador Alexander Vershbow

and deter Moscow from ever attacking again, underpinned by the protection of NATO’s Article 5 guarantee.

Russia is the most immediate challenge facing NATO, but it’s not the only one. At the recent summit, Allies reaffirmed the need for NATO to multitask and address the multiple threats along its other borders—such as international terrorist groups, instability, failing states, and irregular migration. They understand that NATO must do its part to meet the increasingly global challenge from a rising China that is aligned with other revisionist powers and, like Russia, seeks to overturn the rules-based order.

All these challenges make NATO more important than ever in safeguarding the freedom and prosperity of its 32 members and the dozens of partners from beyond Europe who seek to strengthen their security through cooperation with NATO.

Alexander Vershbow joined the Foreign Service in 1977. He was Deputy Secretary General of NATO from 2012 to 2016, the first American to hold the position. Earlier postings included assistant secretary of Defense for international security affairs (2009-2012); special assistant to the president and senior director for European affairs at the National Security Council (1994-1997); U.S. ambassador to NATO (1997-2001), to Russia (2001-2005), and to the Republic of Korea (2005-2008); and State Department director of the Office of Soviet Union Affairs (1988-1991). He is now an Atlantic Council Distinguished Fellow.

◆

NATO on 9/11

By R. Nicholas Burns



On Sept. 11, 2001, I was participating in the weekly lunch of NATO ambassadors in Brussels, having arrived only 12 days prior to take up my new position as U.S. ambassador to the Alliance. One of our

local Belgian employees came into the meeting through a side door to whisper to me that a plane had hit the World Trade Center in New York.

My immediate thought was whether bad weather was involved. Had a small plane crashed into one of the towers in fog or a storm? When we heard a few minutes later that a second plane had hit the Twin Towers, we all knew it couldn't be weather or an accident but terrorism.

NATO's keystone principle is an attack on one Ally is an attack on all. When founded in 1949, that was the central commitment President Harry S. Truman and his successors gave the European Allies during the five decades of the Cold War—the U.S. would come to Europe's aid just as we had done in the First and Second World Wars if the Soviet Union attacked across the north German plain. That that war mercifully never came was in large part due to NATO's massive deterrent strength.

It is thus a historical irony of 9/11 that when the Allies invoked Article 5 the next day for the first time in NATO's history, it was Europe and Canada that came to America's defense, not the other way around.

It took us about 18 hours to make that decision once we had heard news of the attack. NATO operates by consensus, meaning every Ally must agree with a resolution to make it official policy. It was not unusual for Allies to debate for weeks or even months before all agreed on a consequential decision.

We didn't have the luxury of time on 9/11. If NATO was to act, it had to do so quickly and resolutely. Any hesitation would have sent exactly the wrong signal to al-Qaida as well as to the American people reeling from one of the most shocking attacks on our homeland in history.

That was the key concern as our combined State-Defense Department team huddled in my

office that afternoon watching the Twin Towers fall again and again in CNN's looped, nonstop coverage. We called but couldn't reach the White House, State, and Defense Departments because all had been evacuated.

We worried whether every Ally would agree to, in effect, pledge to go with us to war against the organization most suspected to be behind the attack—Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida.

The 19 ambassadors met late that evening under Secretary General Lord Robertson's chairmanship. He asked me to speak first to report on the carnage in the U.S. I explained the terrible dimensions of the tragedy, lamenting that early estimates of the death toll were so high that Sept. 11, 2001, could turn out to be the bloodiest day in American history since the Civil War Battle of Antietam in September 1862.

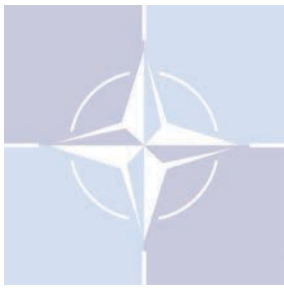
One by one, each of the Allied ambassadors was asked whether they would agree to invoke Article 5. The majority gave an unequivocal yes. Some had still not received instructions from their capitals and did not expect them until the following morning. One—Denmark—had to consult its parliament.

By then, I had reported to Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of Defense Don Rumsfeld as well as National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. We all agreed that a quick NATO decision backing the U.S. would buoy the American public and send a strong signal to terrorist groups and the world of NATO's resolve. We also agreed that failure to act would do perhaps irretrievable damage to NATO's credibility as the world's strongest alliance.

Early on the following morning, Sept. 12, my team and I called each of the Allied missions. They all reported they were with us



Ambassador Nicholas Burns (center) confers with NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson (left) and Supreme Allied Commander General Joe Ralston on the afternoon of Sept. 11, 2001, after the attacks in the U.S.



Americans need not live alone in the world in bitter isolation as we have chosen too often in the past.

—Ambassador R. Nicholas Burns

in invoking Article 5. Elated, I called Condi Rice, who was still at work in a darkened White House at 4 a.m. in Washington, D.C. I told her I needed the president's instruction, given the stakes involved, to vote to invoke Article 5. She said the president was getting some badly needed rest following a terrible day, but that he was all for it, and I should vote accordingly.

I said I would take that as my presidential instruction and rush down to NATO's Conference Room 1 to raise my hand in favor for the U.S. Before I could hang up the phone, Condi said to me, "One more thing. It's good to have friends in the world."

I've never forgotten her words, and I think of them on every anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, including the one just past.

America remains the world's strongest military and economic power. What truly separates us from China, Russia, and other adversaries, however, is that we have friends in the world, democratic allies in the North Atlantic and Indo-Pacific who share our interests and values. They are America's difference makers in the global balance of power.

During the past three years, I've watched from U.S. Embassy Beijing as the Alliance has united again, as we did on 9/11, this time to stand up for an embattled Ukraine against a malevolent foe in Vladimir Putin's Russia.

NATO is the greatest alliance in modern history and is as vital to us now in its 75th year as it was at its creation at the dawn of the Cold War. The lesson we've learned as one of its founders and leaders is that Americans need not live alone in the world in bitter isolation as we have chosen too often in the past.

NATO is essential for our own security and to achieve our supreme national interest in a united, democratic, and peaceful global order in Europe and beyond.

R. Nicholas Burns is the U.S. ambassador to the People's Republic of China. During his 30-year career at the State Department, he has served as under secretary of State for political affairs, ambassador to NATO and to Greece, State Department spokesperson and special assistant to President Clinton, and senior director for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia affairs at the National Security Council.



Fortunately, It Did Not Go Out of Business in 1991...

By Robert E. Hunter

Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer.

—Voltaire

NATO is not as important as God, but it also can't be dispensed with: at least not if its member states are to meet responsibilities for their security and other national interests—political, economic, and social.

For the United States, a stable, secure, prosperous, and democratic Europe, with unimpeded access and engagement across the Atlantic, is a *sine qua non*; it's also necessary for pursuit of U.S. interests in other parts of the world, including Asia. Politically and instrumentally, for the United States nothing can substitute for a strong, robust, and effective NATO, which is the most important linchpin of U.S. foreign policy and enjoys the American people's bipartisan support.

Likewise, for Europe writ large, America's continued engagement in Europe is necessary to underpin cooperation across the continent and is an indispensable safety net. America and NATO are also critical for dealing with the great unknown, Russia's future.

These are the basics.

To understand NATO's continuing importance on both sides of the Atlantic, it's first necessary to reject the once-popular but erroneous notion that the Alliance lost all purpose when the Cold War ended. It did not; but it *did* have to adapt to meet radically changed circumstances.

Its transformation has involved several key elements, most importantly keeping the United States committed as a permanent European power, continuing to exercise leadership. Other elements have included:

1. Preserving the best of the past, especially NATO's unique integrated military command structure and its offshoots (military, civilian, public, and private), plus the invaluable quality of institutional inertia;

2. In agreement with Moscow, “solving” the historic German problem (which began in the 1860s) through unified Germany’s membership in NATO;

3. Removing states in Central Europe (leading causes of two world wars and a cold war) from the geopolitical chessboard (welcoming all in Partnership for Peace and offering full NATO membership for some);

4. Forging a close relationship with what is now the European Union (work still incomplete); and

5. Securing a place for Ukraine in the West (NATO-Ukraine Charter).

The most consequential element for the future of European and trans-Atlantic security was recognition by the United States and some allies that Russia will inevitably again become a great power, whether as help or hindrance. They saw the need to help Russia have a “soft landing” and, if possible, join a “Europe whole and free” (George H.W. Bush, Remarks to the Citizens in Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany, May 1989). The West also sought to avoid what happened with Germany when the 1919 Versailles Treaty imposed the so-called War-Guilt Clause (Article 231), which Adolf Hitler used to stoke German revanchism.

Well before this year, initially hopeful efforts to include Russia in some form of mutually beneficial European security structure (notably the NATO-Russia Founding Act) had failed. Perhaps Vladimir Putin always wanted to reconstitute the Soviet Union; even if so, he was aided by U.S. neocons who, beginning in the late 1990s, wrote off Russia as a potential major power and did what Russia’s leaders had cautioned against: to “surround it”—at least on its European side—with new NATO allies.

Under U.S. pressure, in 2008 NATO declared that “Ukraine and Georgia will become NATO members.” That meant a commitment for them to join, even though Allies thought the invitation would not take effect until much later. Then, in January 2014, senior State Department officials promoted a change of government in Kyiv. These provocative steps clearly crossed a Russian “red line,” just as any comparable declarations by the Kremlin would have been viewed by NATO. Still, neither Western action could justify Russia’s aggression in 2014 and 2022.

From the Western perspective, NATO is objectively not aggressive, while membership is a psychological boon to countries that had so recently been vassals of Soviet power and communism. But viewed from the standpoint of classic strategic analysis, encroachment of many new NATO members near and even on Russia’s frontier would likely be seen by Moscow in terms similar to those that Washington saw in 1960 when the USSR allied with Castro’s Cuba.

As the most serious mechanism for mustering Western military capacities, NATO became the natural coordinator of aid to Ukraine. Also, led by the United States, NATO has become crucial to reestablishing and reinforcing deterrence of any Russian ambitions beyond Ukraine.

Thus, NATO’s increases in military power during the last decade are part of a potentially long-term containment of Russian power, with an added benefit for the Alliance: They are helping to convince the United States (especially Congress) that other Allies are “pulling their weight”—a decades-long U.S. theme.

At the same time, NATO has also provided the United States with major benefits, unquantifiable but nonetheless real, through invaluable influence in Europe for both U.S. public and private sectors. This has been true since the 1948 Marshall Plan, which helped rebuild shattered European nations but also benefited the United States politically and economically. These benefits will continue so long as the United States remains a European power—likely for the indefinite future.

The Alliance would almost surely have played an important role in holding the two sides of the Atlantic together without the current war in Ukraine. NATO has fostered and preserved democratic forms of government west of Russia, though a few Allies are backsliders and are shamed for it; promoted largely cooperative and mutually beneficial trans-Atlantic economic relations; stimulated some allied support for security elsewhere in the world; and helped promote a cast of mind that members of NATO are part of the same civilization.

Other institutions are important, notably the European Union and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), but NATO provides a blanket of confidence, beginning with security, and is a spur toward cooperation over discord.

Finally, even following an end to the Ukraine war, America’s leadership and commitment in dealing with Russia’s future will still be crucial. That will also require a NATO that continues to be strong and effective.

Thus, like *le Dieu*, if NATO did not now exist, *il faudrait l’inventer*. Fortunately, it did not go out of business in 1991. ■

Robert E. Hunter served as U.S. ambassador to NATO from 1993 to 1998. Among many other positions in trans-Atlantic relations, he also served as lead official for West European and then Middle East affairs at the National Security Council (1977-1981) and as foreign policy adviser to Senator Edward Kennedy (1973-1977). Ambassador Hunter is currently a member of the American Academy of Diplomacy’s Executive Committee.

In Their Own **WRITE**



ISTOCK.COM/TETIANA KONMARTSKA

The *Foreign Service Journal* is pleased to present our 23rd annual Foreign Service authors roundup. With “In Their Own Write,” we celebrate the wealth of literary talent within the Foreign Service community and give our readers the opportunity to support their storytelling colleagues.

Many of these titles, in particular the memoirs, are excellent resources for anyone contemplating a career in international affairs. And the list comes to you in time for your holiday shopping.

Each entry contains full publication details along with a brief commentary sent to us by the author. All listed prices are for the paperback edition unless there is only a hardcover edition; and where an e-book is available that is noted.

This year our list of books written, edited, or translated by Foreign Service personnel and their family members stands at 65. The list is not a definitive record of works by FS authors. As always, we rely on the authors themselves to bring their books to our attention. If your recent book is not listed here, please let us know, and we can add it to next year’s collection. We accept submissions for the November *FSJ* all year—for more information, email journal@afsa.org.

Note that we can feature only one book by each author. For inclusion, books must be available for purchase, and we use publisher list prices as of press time in late October. Also note: Inclusion of a book in this collection does not imply endorsement by AFSA or the *FSJ*. AFSA welcomes the opportunity to share the news of books published by members of the FS community but does not vouch for the contents of the books.

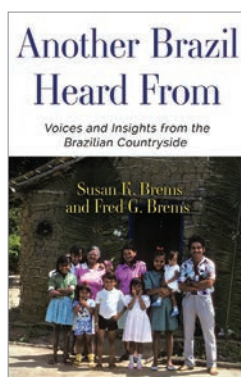
This year, in addition to seven works of history or biography and eight books on policy and issues, we have 12 memoirs, 24 works of fiction (including eight for children and young adults), six guidebooks and self-help, and two volumes of poetry. We also include a “Grab Bag” section of essay collections, academic books, cookbooks, and others that didn’t quite fit any of our standard categories.

As always, we also offer a selection of recent books “of related interest” to diplomats and their families that were not written by FS authors.

It takes a village to put this collection together. This year, it was assembled by Publications Coordinator and Content Strategist Hannah Harari. ITOW blurbs were written by Deputy Editor Donna Gorman and ORI blurbs by former *FSJ* Editor in Chief Steve Honley.

—The *FSJ* Team

MEMOIRS



Another Brazil Heard From: Voices and Insights from the Brazilian Countryside

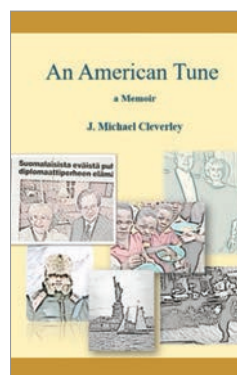
Susan K. Brems and Fred G. Brems, Olympia Publishers, 2024, \$20.99/paperback, e-book available, 292 pages.

Susan and Fred Brems lived in the state of Ceará in northeast Brazil for 17 months, when Susan was posted there as an FSO with USAID from 1989

to 1990. This book is a compilation of letters the couple penned describing their life and work in this little-known enclave, where she was a researcher on fertility and health among rural women and he was a high school teacher.

The letters shine a light on the socioeconomic and political landscape of Brazil in the early 1990s, the everyday lives and struggles of the people who lived and worked there, and the couple’s own experiences as residents of such a community. The stark differences between northeast Brazilian and American cultures are illustrated with deference, humor, and self-reflection.

Susan Brems is a retired USAID Senior Foreign Service officer. During her 25-year career, she served in Lima, La Paz, Managua, Luanda, Lusaka, Manila, and Washington, D.C. Her husband, Fred Brems, is an educator, researcher, and photographer. After retiring in 2017, the couple moved to Durham, North Carolina.



An American Tune: A Memoir

J. Michael Cleverley, independently published, 2024, \$26.99/paperback, print only, 274 pages.

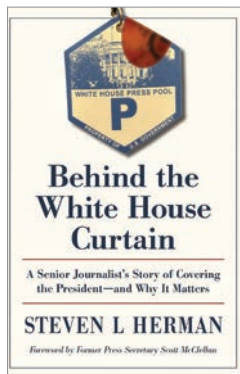
An American Tune tells the story of retired Senior Foreign Service Officer J. Michael Cleverley’s nearly 30 years living and working in Europe and Africa, focusing on his assignments as deputy chief of mission in Helsinki, Athens, and Rome. The memoir offers

an insider’s view of critical conjunctures in the years following World War II. Much has changed since those decades—but perhaps not so much as one would think. Many of the issues the Foreign Service wrestled with then, both internally and diplomatically, remain.

J. Michael Cleverley served in Rome, Athens, Helsinki, Pretoria, London, and Milan. He holds master’s degrees from

the Harvard Kennedy School and Brigham Young University and is a graduate of the National War College.

An earlier book by Cleverley, *Born a Soldier* (2008), was a bestseller in Finland and Sweden, and was runner-up for the Next Generation Indie Book Award in both the history and biography categories.



Behind the White House Curtain: A Senior Journalist's Story of Covering the President—and Why It Matters

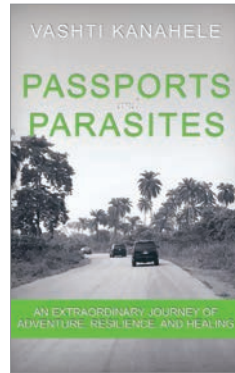
Steven L. Herman, Kent State University Press, 2024, \$29.95/hardcover, e-book available, 248 pages.

Author Steven Herman combines memoir and history to pull back the curtain on the inner workings of the

White House press corps, giving readers a rare glimpse into the historical and current relationship between the president and the press. He reflects on the experience of reporting on a president who once called journalists “enemies of the people”—and indeed, former President Trump singled out Voice of America (VOA), accusing the organization of being not a voice of America but rather a voice supporting Moscow’s and Beijing’s interests.

Under questionable circumstances, top VOA executives lost their security clearances, and a dossier was prepared on Herman in an effort to remove him as White House bureau chief. Herman convincingly argues that public access to accurate, unbiased information is essential to a healthy and peaceful democracy, and that journalists can and *should* play a key role in pressing government officials to be truthful and transparent.

Steven Herman is an active-duty Foreign Service officer with the U.S. Agency for Global Media and is VOA’s chief national correspondent. He also served on the AFSA Governing Board for eight years, stepping down in October 2024. For a more detailed review of his book, see the June 2024 *Foreign Service Journal*.



Passports and Parasites: An Extraordinary Journey of Adventure, Resilience, and Healing

Vashti Kanahale, independently published, 2023, \$16.99/paperback, e-book available, 390 pages.

This memoir from Diplomatic Security spouse Vashti Kanahale is full of adventure, travel, and raw, unfiltered moments from 15 years spent living

overseas. From war-torn Baghdad to the sunny Caribbean and multiple countries in between, Kanahale shares details from an adventurous life she never foresaw herself living. She writes about struggles familiar to FS spouses, like the need to reinvent herself with every move, and more personal struggles with infertility, Lyme disease, and Hashimoto’s disease, sharing how she has been able to live with and overcome complex chronic illnesses while serving overseas.

Vashti Kanahale is the spouse of Kraig Kanahale, who joined Diplomatic Security in 2002, and has been posted to Baghdad; Beirut; Phnom Penh; Dallas, Texas; Lagos; Willemstad; and Washington, D.C. They plan to move to Cairo in July 2025.



Episodes from a Foreign Service Career: Africa, Democracy and Public Diplomacy

Robert LaGamma, Palmetto Publishing, 2024, \$15.99/paperback, print only, 348 pages.

In *Episodes from a Foreign Service Career*, author Robert LaGamma invites readers into his life as a U.S. diplomat. In a career that spanned more than three decades, LaGamma

served in nine African nations and Italy, culminating in his tenure in South Africa during Nelson Mandela’s first year as president of that country. He writes about the intricacies of diplomatic negotiations and the challenges of advocating for democracy in nations grappling with change.

LaGamma also writes about his post-retirement work leading missions for the National Democratic Institute in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Carter Center in Nigeria. He was also director of the Council for the Community of Democracies.

Robert LaGamma is a retired Foreign Service officer who joined the United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1963

and served in Zimbabwe, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Senegal, Nigeria, and South Africa. LaGamma is a past recipient of the prestigious Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Public Diplomacy. He lives in Reston, Virginia.

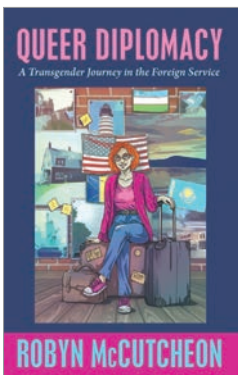


Heshima: Les dix rocs du respect
Laurent Lubulu, L'Harmattan, 2024, \$23.60/paperback, print only, 222 pages.

In this French-language memoir, Foreign Service spouse Laurent Lubulu argues that respect is the cornerstone of all virtues. Through colorful anecdotes from his own life in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, and many other

places, the author shares his understanding of respect—defined here as dignity, tolerance, gratitude, and compassion—which he learned from his mother's culture. In the epilogue, Lubulu calls for women's power as a way to improve the future of humankind.

Laurent Lubulu is currently posted in Abuja with his spouse, Office Management Specialist Tammy Lubulu. They have previously served in Mali, Benin, Djibouti, Bahrain, Eritrea, and Senegal.



Queer Diplomacy: A Transgender Journey in the Foreign Service

Robyn McCutcheon, Westphalia Press, 2024, \$16.25/paperback, e-book available, 338 pages.

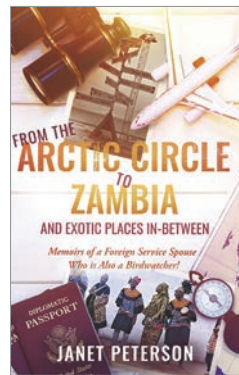
Robyn McCutcheon was the first Foreign Service officer to transition gender while posted overseas, and *Queer Diplomacy* is the only book out there that tells the story of what

it's like to be transgender in the Foreign Service. McCutcheon writes about the experience of being both a diplomat and gender nonconforming.

How does being a diplomat affect the personal life of someone who is gender nonconforming? How does a gender nonconforming person represent the U.S. government in the countries where they are posted? Is a gender nonconforming person able to influence U.S. policy in ways that a cisgender

person cannot? McCutcheon addresses these questions while relating her own experience.

During 15 years in the Foreign Service, Robyn McCutcheon was posted to Moscow, Bucharest, Tashkent, Astana, and Washington, D.C. She retired in 2019.



From the Arctic Circle to Zambia and Exotic Places In-Between: Memoirs of a Foreign Service Spouse Who Is Also a Birdwatcher!

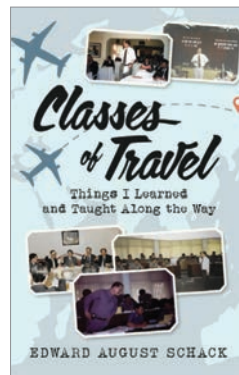
Janet Peterson, BookBaby, 2023, \$19.99/paperback, print only, 400 pages.

This memoir by Janet Peterson chronicles her family's daily life, adventures, and misadventures after her spouse,

Jon Peterson, joined the Foreign Service midcareer as an information management specialist.

While adapting to new living arrangements, Janet observes the local flora and fauna (especially birds—her passion), which leads to a deeper understanding of the cultural differences in each country they are assigned to.

Janet Peterson was posted with her spouse, Jon, who joined the Foreign Service in 2001, to Yaoundé, Bern, San José, Lusaka, and Oslo. Upon his retirement in 2019, they moved to Delaware, where they are in the process of restoring a Victorian house.



Classes of Travel: Things I Learned and Taught Along the Way

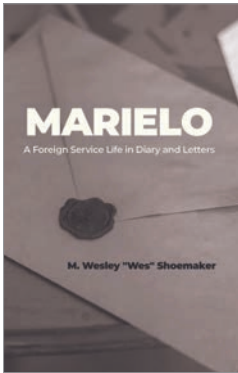
Edward August Schack, BookBaby, 2024, \$28.22/paperback, e-book available, 492 pages.

Edward August Schack has worn many hats overseas. He wrote this memoir about the years he spent working in 36 countries as a Peace Corps volunteer, English teacher, U.S. Customs

inspector, State Department employee, and Foreign Service spouse—specifically the challenges he and his wife, retired FSO Mary Pauline Stickles, faced. They not only juggled dual professional careers but also explored the world as a family, ensuring that their three children received good educations.

Edward August Schack and his spouse were posted in Bangkok, Yerevan, Kabul, Zagreb, and Washington, D.C.

He retired from his job as a management inspector for the Office of the Inspector General in 2017 but continues to work part-time as a receptionist at the State Department. The couple lives in Wheaton, Maryland.



Marielo: A Foreign Service Life in Diary and Letters

M. Wesley “Wes” Shoemaker, Dorrance Publishing Co., 2023, \$62.00/paperback, e-book available, 912 pages.

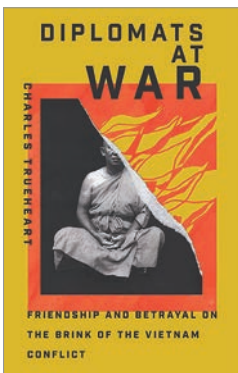
Former Foreign Service Officer Wesley “Wes” Shoemaker was married to fellow FSO Mary Shoemaker for 51 years. After Mary’s death in 2013, Wes began the process of turning her personal

writings into *Marielo: A Foreign Service Life in Diary and Letters*.

Containing a total of 191 letters—116 of which were written to Wes—*Marielo* chronicles Mary’s life as a Foreign Service officer who was forced to resign her position when she married a fellow FSO in 1962 because of a department policy that female FSOs who were married would not be paneled overseas. She rejoined the Service in 1974, when the State Department revised its policy on married women as Foreign Service officers.

Mary and Wes communicated through the slowly dying medium of letter writing, which provided a lifeline that held their marriage together through the months and years when they were separated by their work.

M. Wesley Shoemaker is a former Foreign Service officer. He resigned to enter a doctoral program in Russian history at Syracuse University and went on to teach at Lynchburg College.



Diplomats at War: Friendship and Betrayal on the Brink of the Vietnam Conflict

Charles Trueheart, University of Virginia Press, 2024, \$34.95/hardcover, e-book available, 368 pages.

Journalist Charles Trueheart was born into a Foreign Service family: His dad, William Trueheart, was deputy chief of mission at the U.S. embassy in

Saigon from 1961 to 1963, as the conflict in Vietnam was heating up. A close family friend, the author’s godfather, Frederick “Fritz” Nolting, served as the ambassador then. *Diplomats at*

War is the young Trueheart’s account of how the conflict in Vietnam destroyed the close relationship between his dad and the ambassador, who never spoke again after a fallout over policy turned personal. The book is also fascinating for its portrayal of life as an FS kid in prewar Saigon.

“The author paints a fascinating portrait of the interagency process,” says Ambassador Laura Kennedy in a forthcoming *FSJ* review of the book. “He describes the diplomatic dilemmas that we continue to grapple with today: the diplomatic establishment seeking to assert its authority over an increasingly dominant military, the relationship of State and the CIA, journalists who not only report but shape political and popular attitudes, the embrace of ‘strong men’ whose proclivities can end up undercutting the policies we pursue.”

Charles Trueheart is a former reporter and Paris bureau chief for *The Washington Post*, and he knows how to tell a story. He is also a past director of the American Library in Paris. Trueheart grew up in Paris, Ankara, London, and Saigon.

Diplomats at War is the winner of the American Academy of Diplomacy’s 2024 Dillon Book Award for a Book of Distinction on the Practice of American Diplomacy.



A Jew in Gaza: Humanitarian Heartbreak, Hubris and Horrors

Allan J. “Alonzo” Wind, Enable & Enoble, 2024, \$19.99/paperback, e-book available, 242 pages.

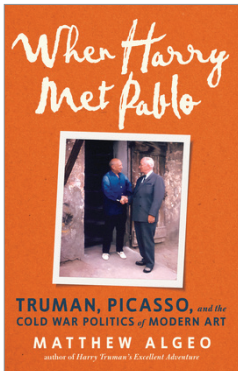
This is the story of how A.J. “Alonzo” Wind, a retired Foreign Service officer and international development executive, became mission director for International Medical Corps in the occupied Palestinian territories and

lived in Gaza and East Jerusalem from 2022 to 2023. It offers a view into Gaza few have had.

As an American Jew, a Baha’i, and a humanitarian, Wind lived through interminable conflicts between Israel and Gaza. He writes of the two years he spent in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories, including and beyond the Oct. 7 attack on Israel and the current war between Israel and Hamas. Wind explains how his organization struggled to provide humanitarian assistance in the face of conflict and danger to innocent civilians.

Alonzo Wind is a retired USAID Senior Foreign Service officer. From 1999 to 2019, he served in Managua, Luanda, Abuja, Baghdad (twice), Kandahar, Pretoria, and Washington, D.C.

HISTORY & BIOGRAPHY



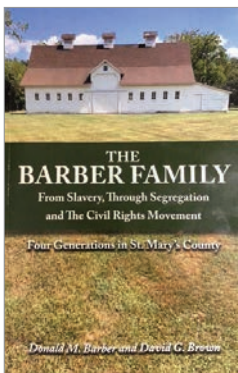
When Harry Met Pablo: Truman, Picasso, and the Cold War Politics of Modern Art

Matthew Algeo, Chicago Review Press, 2023, \$28.99/hardcover, e-book available, 256 pages.

In the summer of 1958, former U.S. President Harry Truman and Pablo Picasso spent a day together sightseeing in the south of France, a meeting arranged by the founding director of

the Museum of Modern Art, Alfred Barr. The politician and the painter were an odd couple: Picasso was a communist, and the only thing Truman hated more than communists was modern art. But they hit it off, striking up an unusual friendship that also served as a rebuke to critics of modern art in the United States. This book will appeal to readers interested in a broad range of subjects from the Cold War, American politics, and McCarthyism to art history and travel writing.

Matthew Algeo is married to FSO Allyson Algeo, who is currently the deputy chief of mission in Gaborone. The couple's previous postings include Bamako, Rome, Ulaanbaatar, Maputo, and Sarajevo.



The Barber Family: From Slavery, Through Segregation and the Civil Rights Movement

Donald M. Barber and David G. Brown, independently published, 2024, \$20.00/paperback, print only, 102 pages.

This book follows four generations of the Black American Barber family, describing challenges they faced living in the rural and racist post-Civil

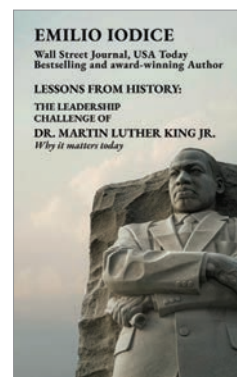
War society of St. Mary's County in Southern Maryland. The book was written by retired FSO David G. Brown and Donald M. Barber, a retired social service worker and one of the book's subjects.

Although emancipated in 1864, the Barbers lived in a segregated society dominated by white men and women who wished to preserve their Southern way of living. Successive generations of the Barber family overcame this as they sought the

education and opportunities that would allow them to build self-reliant, prosperous, and fulfilling lives with dignity.

The book is available for purchase only from Historic Sotterley, Inc., through museumstore@Sotterley.org.

David Brown spent 32 years in the Foreign Service, including assignments in Ho Chi Minh City, Tokyo, Beijing, Taipei, and as deputy consul general in Hong Kong. His last assignment before retiring in 1996 was as director of Korean affairs in Washington, D.C.



Lessons from History: The Leadership Challenge of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: Why It Matters Today

Emilio Iodice, independently published, 2024, \$14.00/paperback, e-book available, 134 pages.

Emilio Iodice has written a new book on leadership, this time exploring how Martin Luther King Jr. led his battle for equality, lifting the burden of segregation

from the shoulders of Black Americans. Iodice calls Dr. King "one of the most extraordinary leaders in American history," whose emotional intelligence and ability to lead with courage, Iodice explains, set the stage for a moral change in the character of Americans.

Emilio Iodice served in Brazil, Mexico, Spain, and Italy before retiring from the Foreign Service in 1998. He subsequently served as vice president of Lucent Technologies and director and professor of leadership of the John Felice Rome Center of Loyola University until 2016. His book *The Extraordinary Leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt: Why It Matters Today* was featured in the November 2023 FSJ.



Our First Glimpse of Japan: Prominent American Visitors to Japan in the 1870s

Samuel Kidder, ed., Piscataqua Press, 2024, \$25.00/paperback, print only, 373 pages.

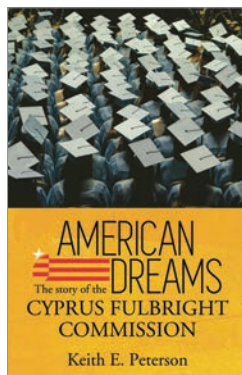
Our First Glimpse of Japan is a collection of contemporary published and personal accounts of travel in Japan during the 1870s by four prominent Americans: William H. Seward

(Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of State), Charles A. Longfellow

(son of poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow), Ulysses S. Grant, and Andrew Carnegie.

Each section is introduced by an established scholarly expert, with editor Samuel Kidder providing an overall introduction, timeline, and footnotes to put these accounts into their diplomatic, cultural, and historical context. The personal observations of these travelers give the reader a glimpse into the formation of American attitudes toward Japanese society and culture.

Samuel Kidder joined the Foreign Commercial Service in 1983 and retired in 2006. His last position was as minister-counselor for commercial affairs in Japan—his third Japan posting. Upon retirement, he became executive director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan, a position he held until 2014. Another retired FSO, Edwina S. Campbell, wrote the introduction to the section of the book on Ulysses S. Grant. Campbell is the author of a book on Grant’s post-presidential travel and diplomatic policy, *Citizen of a Wider Commonwealth*, which was featured in the November 2017 *FSJ*.



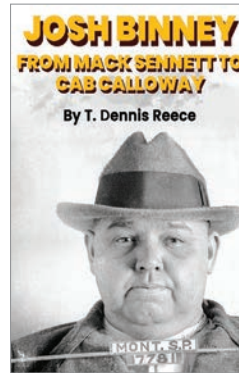
**American Dreams:
The Story of the Cyprus
Fulbright Commission**

Keith E. Peterson, Armida Books, 2024, \$25.00/paperback, print only, 298 pages.

This is the history of the 52-year run of the Cyprus Fulbright Commission, which was for decades the largest commission in the world. The bicomunal commission benefited both Greek and

Turkish Cypriots, who worked on the commission together, even after their 1974 war. The U.S. invested more than \$250 million in the commission, including millions of dollars devoted to conflict resolution work by many important American scholars.

Keith Peterson retired in 2015 after 29 years as a public diplomacy officer with USIA and the State Department. He was posted in Bangladesh, Tunis, Nicosia, Bridgetown, London, Valletta, Stockholm, and Washington, D.C. Peterson was the last chairman of the board of the Cyprus Fulbright Commission and currently splits his time between Illinois and Florida.



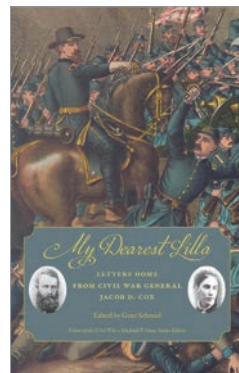
**Josh Binney: From Mack Sennett
to Cab Calloway**

T. Dennis Reece, BearManor Media, 2024, \$28.00/paperback, print only, 198 pages.

This biography explores the film and stage career of actor, director, writer, producer, and promoter Josh Binney, a pioneering artist who was called a “spiritual forefather” of director Spike Lee. The author covers Binney’s direc-

tion of all-Black films in the 1940s as well as his troubles with the law, including time spent in Montana State Prison for investment fraud.

T. Dennis Reece is a retired State Department Foreign Service officer who served in the Soviet Union, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Cabo Verde, and Washington, D.C. A graduate of Valparaiso and Purdue Universities in Indiana, he now lives in Tampa, Florida. He is a volunteer for the Goodwill-Suncoast Bookworks early literacy program and is head of the Clearwater chapter of the Sons of the Desert, a Laurel and Hardy appreciation society.



**My Dearest Lilla:
Letters Home from Civil War
General Jacob D. Cox**

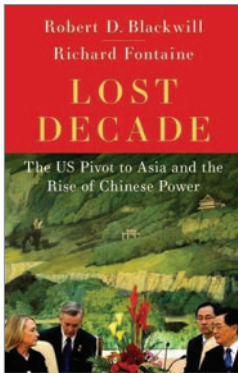
Gene Schmiel, ed., University of Tennessee Press, 2023, \$34.95/paperback, e-book available, 296 pages.

My Dearest Lilla is a collection of letters written from the battlefield by Civil War General Jacob Cox to his wife, Helen. This collection of letters, edited

by retired FSO Gene Schmiel, offer lucid reports and analyses of the war as Cox makes the transition from untested soldier to respected general and statesman. As the letters also show, Cox’s commitment to the Union and the abolition of slavery motivated him to fight, but his love for his wife, and his respect for her as an intellectual equal, shine through.

Gene Schmiel has written 25 books about the Civil War and regularly speaks to Civil War groups across the country. During his Foreign Service career, he served as chargé d’affaires in Reykjavík, Djibouti, and Bissau, and as consul general in Mombasa.

POLICY & ISSUES



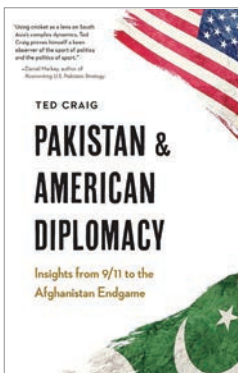
Lost Decade: The US Pivot to Asia and the Rise of Chinese Power

Robert D. Blackwill and Richard Fontaine, Oxford University Press, 2024, \$29.99/hardcover, e-book available, 480 pages.

Two foreign policy experts—one a retired Foreign Service officer—explore whether the U.S. government’s “Pivot to Asia,” begun during the Obama administration in 2011, has been a strategic success. Outlining its aims, achievements, and where it has fallen short, they present the historical context of the pivot and propose a path forward to preserve American security and prosperity.

Robert Blackwill is a retired Senior Foreign Service officer and former ambassador who served as principal deputy assistant secretary for political affairs and European affairs, before being appointed by President Ronald Reagan as chief U.S. negotiator with the Warsaw Pact. He was later appointed by President George H.W. Bush as special assistant to the president for national security affairs and senior director for European and Soviet affairs as well as U.S. ambassador to India from 2001 to 2003. He is currently a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and at Harvard Kennedy School’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

Co-author Richard Fontaine, a veteran foreign policy professional who has specialized in Asian affairs, is executive director of the Trilateral Commission, a member of the Defense Policy Board, and the chief executive officer of the Center for a New American Security.



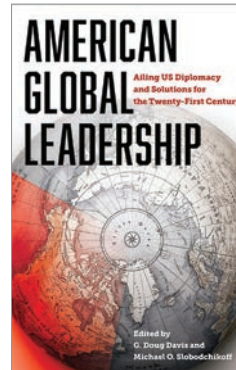
Pakistan and American Diplomacy: Insights from 9/11 to the Afghanistan Endgame

Ted Craig, Potomac Books, 2024, \$34.95/hardcover, e-book available, 296 pages.

As a Foreign Service officer, Ted Craig served in Pakistan twice, including as political counselor from 2018 to 2019. He brings his expertise and insights to *Pakistan and American Diplomacy*

with a fast-moving tour through Pakistan-U.S. relations, from 9/11 to the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. He outlines the history of Pakistan’s diplomacy and its relations with regional neighbors India, Sri Lanka, China, and Afghanistan. Also detailing the policy failures that led to the fall of the Kabul government in 2021, he discusses the difficulties the U.S. government faces in promoting democracy while combating terrorism.

Ted Craig retired from the Foreign Service in 2018, after 29 years and two tours in Islamabad. He also served three tours in Latin America and held policy jobs related to peace and security, environmental diplomacy, and human rights. He is currently a counterterrorism program adviser based in Tashkent.

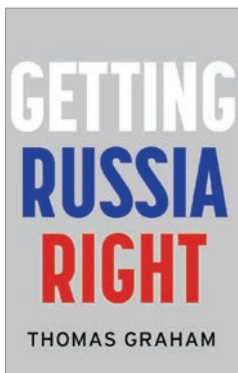


American Global Leadership: Ailing US Diplomacy and Solutions for the Twenty-First Century

G. Doug Davis and Michael O. Slobodchikoff, eds., University of Tennessee Press, 2024, \$34.95/paperback, e-book available, 496 pages.

Dedicated to former Secretary of State George Shultz, and with a foreword written by yet another former Secretary, James Baker, this book comprises 15 essays about American diplomacy and lessons learned by retired diplomats including Ambassadors Tom Pickering, Ron Neumann, Marc Grossman, David Dunford, and Michael McFaul as well as retired General Wesley Clark.

The authors discuss the relevance of diplomacy in resolving global crises, the use of military policy and force as diplomatic tools, skills diplomats should possess, and the obstacles facing current U.S. foreign policy. They also examine both American mistakes and successes of the past 70 years and evaluate how the role of diplomacy has changed over time and how it must continue to evolve into the future. *American Global Leadership* will interest scholars of diplomatic history and political science, current diplomats, and those aspiring to careers in the U.S. Foreign Service.



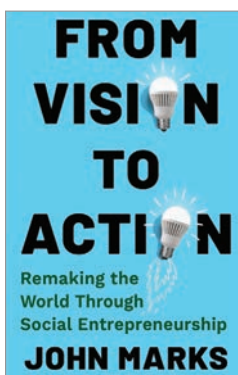
Getting Russia Right

Thomas Graham, Polity Books, 2023, \$29.95/hardcover, e-book available, 272 pages.

Russia expert and former Foreign Service Officer Thomas Graham traces the evolution of U.S.-Russian relations from the beginning of the post-Soviet era until today, closely examining the mistakes made by successive U.S. administrations that led to the current

hostile relationship between the two nations. Graham suggests policy shifts that would bring about improved relations in a post-Putin world, allowing the U.S. to better advance its own interests.

As an FSO from 1984 to 1998, Thomas Graham served two tours in Moscow. Between those postings, he worked on Russian and Soviet affairs on the State Department's policy planning staff (S/P) and in the office of the under secretary of Defense for policy. He was director for Russian affairs for the National Security Council (NSC) from 2002 to 2004 and special assistant to the president and senior director for Russia on the NSC staff from 2004 to 2007. He is currently a distinguished fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and a lecturer on global affairs and political science at Yale University, where he co-founded the Russian Studies Project. He holds a BA in Russian studies from Yale and both an MA in history and a PhD in political science from Harvard.



From Vision to Action: Remaking the World Through Social Entrepreneurship

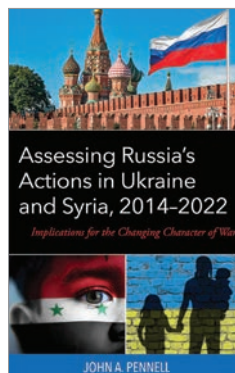
John Marks, Columbia University Press, 2024, \$28.00/paperback, e-book available, 208 pages.

Author John Marks explains how he and his wife, Susan Collin Marks, used the methodology of social entrepreneurship to build the world's largest peacebuilding nongovernmental organization with a staff of 600 and offices in 35 countries.

In describing 11 basic principles of social entrepreneurship, he shows how these principles were employed to prevent violence in the Middle East, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

John Marks joined the Foreign Service in 1966. He served in Vietnam and Washington, D.C., until 1970, when he resigned

in protest over U.S. policy in Southeast Asia. He is the founder of Search for Common Ground, a peacebuilding NGO.



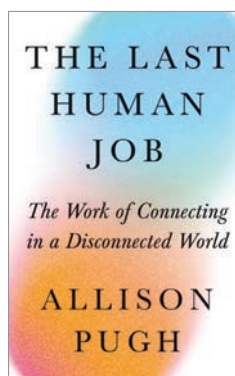
Assessing Russia's Actions in Ukraine and Syria, 2014–2022

John A. Pennell, Rowman & Littlefield, 2024, \$130.00/hardcover, e-book available, 370 pages.

What do Russia's actions in Ukraine and Syria, particularly between 2014 and 2022, tell us about the character of modern conflict? USAID Foreign Service Officer John Pennell posits that Russia's actions in Syria and Ukraine

reveal more continuity than change and more evolution than revolution in warfare. He argues that new-generation warfare, political warfare, or full-spectrum conflict better describe Russia's activities than hybrid warfare.

John Pennell joined USAID in 2001 and is currently the USAID/Caucasus regional mission director in Tbilisi, Georgia. He has also served in Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Tunisia, Afghanistan, El Salvador, Indonesia, and Iraq. He has a PhD in war and defense studies from King's College London.



The Last Human Job: The Work of Connecting in a Disconnected World

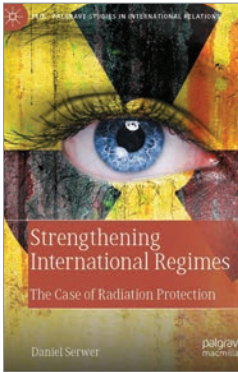
Allison Pugh, Princeton University Press, 2024, \$29.95/hardcover, e-book available, 384 pages.

With the rapid development of artificial intelligence and labor-saving technologies like self-checkouts and automated factories, the future of work has never been more uncertain,

and even jobs requiring high levels of human interaction are no longer safe.

The Last Human Job explores the human connections that underlie our work, arguing that what people do for each other in these settings is valuable and worth preserving. Drawing on in-depth interviews and observations with people in a broad range of professions—from physicians, teachers, and coaches to chaplains, therapists, caregivers, and hairdressers—Allison Pugh develops the concept of “connective labor,” a kind of work that relies on empathy, the spontaneity of human contact, and a mutual recognition of each other's humanity.

Allison Pugh was in the Foreign Service from 1991 to 1994, serving in Honduras and the Operations Center in Washington, D.C.



Strengthening International Regimes: The Case of Radiation Protection

Daniel Serwer, Palgrave MacMillan, 2024, \$119.99/hardcover, e-book available, 431 pages.

In *Strengthening International Regimes*, retired Foreign Service Officer Daniel Serwer traces the history of international radiation protection norms from 1896 to the present. Serwer explains how and why a mechanism with no legal authority has become universal and applies the lessons learned to other pressing issues that require a balance between risks and benefits, such as artificial intelligence, human genome editing, and climate change. This book will interest readers who seek to understand how to set resilient international norms that balance risks and benefits in today's conflict-riddled world.

Daniel Serwer served as a State Department FSO from 1977 to 1998. After retirement, he became a vice president at the United States Institute of Peace. He is currently a professor and senior fellow at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

FICTION



Return of the Silent Sovereign: A Space Fantasy of War, Passion and Second Chances

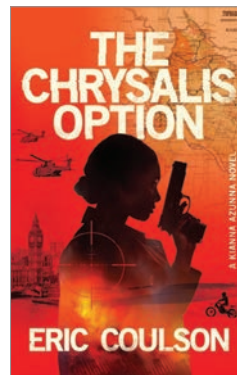
Judith Baroodly, independently published, 2023, \$9.99/paperback, e-book available, 294 pages.

A Star Fleet admiral embarks on a suicide mission to save her crew and enters a space-time warp. She awakens as a baby on her home planet 300 years later with the memory of

her previous life intact. Aware that the thousand-year civil war dividing her planet will lead to the extinction of her civilization, she returns to space to find a solution. Her journey leads her to

vengeful fanatics, ballerinas in desperate straits, and an archenemy who may be the key to saving her world.

As a public diplomacy Foreign Service officer from 1984 to 2017, Judith Baroodly served in Damascus, Tel Aviv, Casablanca, Nicosia, Santiago, Baghdad, and Paris. Baroodly has a PhD in international relations and has taught at both American University and the National War College. She served as chair of the *FSJ* Editorial Board from 2011 to 2013. Baroodly is also the author of *Media Access and the Military* (1998), *Casablanca Blue* (2020), and *Paris Gold* (2022).



The Chrysalis Option: A Kiana Azunna Novel

Eric Coulson, independently published, 2024, \$16.95/paperback, e-book available, 345 pages.

When Kiana Azunna, the first woman Royal Marine commando, leads a mission into Afghanistan as the country is collapsing, the operation goes wrong, and she finds herself recruited by Britain's Secret Intelligence Service on

a voyage of adventure and self-discovery. Kiana travels across Türkiye, Syria, and Ukraine, only to end up in Nigeria confronting a threat to peace and the person who was responsible for her parents' deaths.

Retired FSO and former U.S. Army officer Eric Coulson joined the State Department in 2015 and served in Abuja, Santo Domingo, and London before retiring in 2022.



and far away (Book One of the Man Series)

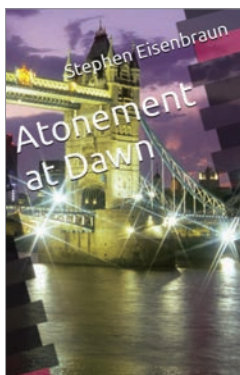
Robert Richard Downes, Longhornbar Book, 2024, \$14.95/paperback, e-book available, 200 pages.

Set in 2004, *and far away* follows a retired—and tired—intelligence officer who just wants to relax at his home in New England with his books and his cats. But his former employer keeps calling him back to undertake special

projects. In this book, the first of a series, he reluctantly agrees to help combat an international crime network.

Robert Richard Downes is a retired Senior Foreign Service officer with 37 years of federal service, the majority with the State Department. He joined the department in 1981 and served in

Australia, Germany, Mexico, Nicaragua, Thailand, and Venezuela. Prior to that, he worked for both an NGO in Guatemala and the U.S. Agency for International Development. He now lives in his native Texas where he kayaks, writes, and volunteers for local charities and international organizations. He is the author of four books including *Hello to a River*, a book on kayaking in Texas, published in February 2024.



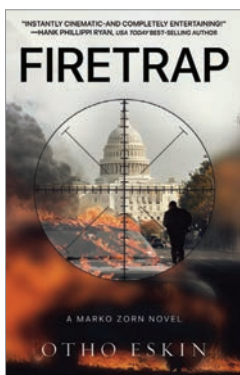
Atonement at Dawn

Stephen Eisenbraun, independently published, 2023, \$12.00/paperback, print only, 102 pages.

Atonement at Dawn is a sequel to Stephen Eisenbraun’s previous novel, *Danger and Romance in Foreign Lands*. It continues the love story of Rakhi, a beautiful Indian banker, and an impetuous American foreign correspondent, Scott, who met in New

Delhi in the late 1970s. Rakhi’s London-based career brings her into contact with a wealthy Chinese business client in Singapore. While Rakhi is frequently abroad on business, Scott becomes entangled in London with Nasreen, a sultry woman who enters the dark world of espionage and sex work.

Stephen Eisenbraun joined the Foreign Service in 1975, serving in Dhaka, Lahore, Freetown, and Mombasa as well as in various D.C. assignments. After retiring in 2002, he spent 20 years editing the department’s Human Rights Reports.



Firetrap: A Marko Zorn Novel

Otho Eskin, Oceanview Publishing, 2024, \$27.95/hardcover, e-book available, 320 pages.

When a narcotic more deadly than fentanyl spreads across Washington, D.C., homicide detective Marko Zorn must investigate the source. In Book 3 of the Marko Zorn series, his search for the criminals behind the drug leads him to a Big Pharma company run by murder-

ous twin brothers. When Marko learns of the company’s plan to release another dangerous prescription medicine, he needs to stop the twin brothers. But can he evade their attempts to kill him?

Author and retired FSO Otho Eskin served in Syria, Yugoslavia, Iceland, and Berlin (then the capital of the German Democratic Republic). He says his career in the Foreign Service unknowingly

prepared him for thriller writing later in life as he witnessed political corruption at every level of society. Eskin has also written plays that have been professionally produced in Washington, D.C., New York, and Europe. He is married to writer Therese Keane and lives in Washington, D.C.



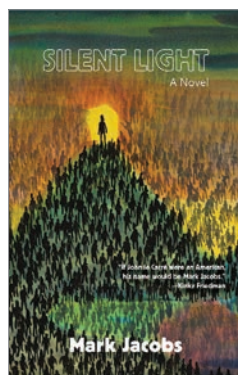
High Value Targets: A Zach Turner Thriller

Michael T. Evanoff, Authors On Mission, 2024, \$14.99/paperback, e-book available, 212 pages.

In the bustling diplomatic enclave of Islamabad, a church bombing shatters more than just lives and limbs—it ignites a relentless pursuit of justice. Diplomatic Security Service Agent Zach Turner’s world crumbles when

his friend Attaf falls victim to the attack. Fueled by grief and an unwavering commitment to duty, Turner extends his tour in Pakistan, determined to unravel the web of extremism behind the bombing. Drawing on his unconventional training and sharp instincts, Turner plunges into a dangerous game of cat and mouse with a shadowy network of terrorists.

Michael Evanoff served as a Diplomatic Security Service special agent for 26 years and as assistant secretary of State for Diplomatic Security from 2017 to 2020. He served in eight embassies, including Islamabad (before, during, and after 9/11). In 2003 he was recognized for his role in capturing 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Now retired from government service, he writes thriller novels that educate readers about the Foreign Service and the role of DSS special agents.



Silent Light: A Novel

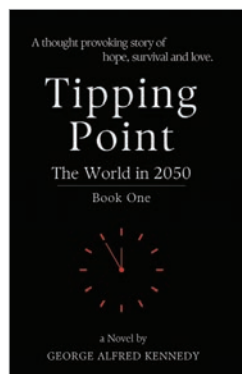
Mark Jacobs, Evergreen Review Books, 2024, \$23.00/paperback, e-book available, 374 pages.

In this new novel by former Foreign Service Officer Mark Jacobs, an American named Smith is working on an oil platform off the west coast of Africa when he unexpectedly wins a stash of diamonds while playing poker. But there’s a catch: He has to find the dia-

monds, which are hidden somewhere in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. After setting off in search of the gems, Smith meets Béatrice, who tells him they are a thousand miles away,

in her small village on the other side of the country, and promises to lead him to the diamonds if he can help her get home.

Mark Jacobs was a Peace Corps volunteer in Paraguay and served in Europe, Türkiye, and Latin America as an FSO. He has published five books and more than 200 stories in magazines including *The Atlantic*, *The Kenyon Review*, and *The Southern Review*. His story “How Birds Communicate” won the Iowa Review Award in fiction. Jacobs lives and writes in Virginia.



Tippling Point:

The World in 2050 – Book One

George Alfred Kennedy, SETAF Press, 2024, \$20.00/paperback, e-book available, 323 pages.

It’s 2050, and climate change on planet Earth threatens the lives of the world’s population. What will world leaders do to preserve life as we know it around the globe? Caught between ideological hawks and their corporate industry

allies and financial donors who question this reality, will they be convinced to rethink the geopolitics of a changing global climate to avoid worldwide famine, drought, mass migration, and shooting wars?

George Kennedy spent 35 years in the State Department, retiring as a Senior Foreign Service officer after assignments in seven countries, including as consul general in Toronto, deputy assistant secretary, and senior adviser to Ronald Brown, the first Black Secretary of Commerce. Kennedy currently lives in Arizona.



The Filigree Master's Apprentice

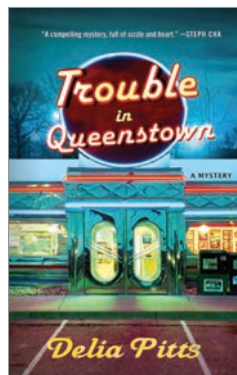
Jeannine Johnson Maia, independently published, 2023, \$12.99/paperback, e-book available, 270 pages.

As Porto prepares to inaugurate Gustave Eiffel’s magnificent iron bridge over the Douro River in 1877, 17-year-old Henrique flees the harsh conditions of life upriver. Behind him is a searing betrayal he wants to

forget. Ahead is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to apprentice in a goldsmith’s shop. Henrique is learning the delicate art of filigree-making when an acquaintance from his past appears, dredging up old accusations of thievery and threatening all he’s built. *The Filigree Master’s Apprentice* is a story of resilience,

friendship, and a young man’s search for the person he wants to become.

Jeannine Johnson Maia worked for more than 13 years as a press specialist in the Public Affairs Office of the U.S. Mission to the European Union in Brussels. Prior to that, she worked as a journalist in Belgium and Washington, D.C., studied international relations in the U.S. and Italy (at the University of Virginia and SAIS Johns Hopkins, respectively), taught English in France, earned a creative writing master’s degree, and lived in Cabo Verde. Her first novel, *Rossio Square N.º59*, was featured in the November 2021 *FSJ*.



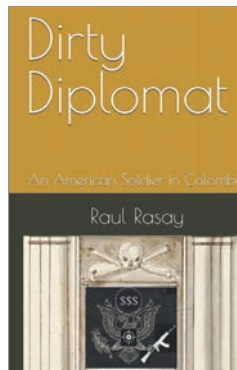
Trouble in Queenstown: A Mystery

Delia Pitts, Minotaur Books, 2024, \$28.00/hardcover, e-book available, 320 pages.

In this fast-paced contemporary mystery, Black private investigator Vandy Myrick returns to her New Jersey hometown after a personal catastrophe. As she establishes her new career, Vandy tackles a racially charged

murder case connected to the family of her small community’s mayor. It seems nearly impossible that she can solve the case, but Vandy won’t back down.

Delia Pitts spent 11 years as a cultural affairs and information officer in the U.S. Information Agency, from 1983 to 1994. She served in Lagos, Nouakchott, Mexico City, and Washington, D.C. Pitts is also the author of *Murder Take Two* (2022) and numerous short stories. She is active in Sisters in Crime, Crime Writers of Color, and Mystery Writers of America.



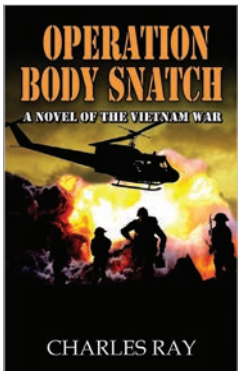
Dirty Diplomat: An American Soldier in Colombia

Raul Rasay, independently published, 2022, \$6.16/paperback, e-book available, 237 pages.

A U.S. Army military intelligence analyst assigned to the U.S. embassy in Bogotá leaks sensitive information to drug cartels in Colombia in exchange for money to care for his ailing child.

Among the results of his illegal disclosures: a federal agent gunned down, failed drug busts, and a contract hit on a drug-sniffing dog. Will this dirty diplomat get caught?

Raul Rasay joined the Foreign Service as a security engineering officer in 2006. He has served in Washington, Mexico City, Bogotá, and Moscow. He is currently posted in Rome.



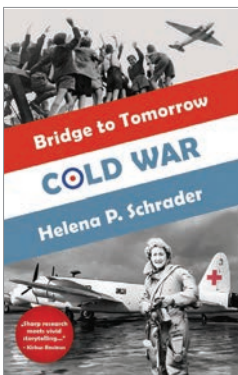
**Operation Body Snatch:
A Novel of the Vietnam War**

Charles Ray, Dusty Saddle Publishing, 2024, \$0.99/e-book, digital only, 98 pages.

Captain Roger Malik and his commando team are sent across the border to find and capture an enemy courier carrying plans for a devastating new operation against friendly forces. They don't know the courier's identity or

schedule and are pressured to complete the mission as quickly as possible. An impossible mission—but Malik and his men thrive on the impossible.

This book is one of several published by Ambassador (ret.) Charles Ray in 2024, including *The Lost Patrol*, *Rendezvous at Phouwong*, and *The Last Election*. He is the author of numerous mysteries and Western series as well as several leadership books. Ray served for 20 years in the U.S. Army and then 30 years in the U.S. Foreign Service, including as U.S. ambassador to Cambodia and Zimbabwe, before retiring in 2012 and beginning a new career as an author.



**Bridge to Tomorrow:
Cold War: A Novel of the
Berlin Airlift, Part Two**

Helena P. Schrader, Cross Seas Press, 2024, \$23.95/paperback, e-book available, 516 pages.

In part two of an intended trilogy based on historical events, Berlin is under siege. More than 2 million civilians must receive food, fuel, and medicine by air—or surrender to the

Soviets. USAF Captain J.B. Baronowsky and RAF Flight Lieutenant Kit Moran once risked their lives to drop high explosives on Berlin; they are about to deliver milk, flour, and children's shoes instead. Meanwhile, two women pilots are flying an air ambulance carrying malnourished and abandoned children to freedom in the West.

Helena Schrader lived in Germany for 26 years, earning a PhD in history from the University of Hamburg before becoming

a Foreign Service officer in 2005. She retired from the Foreign Service in 2018 and now writes full-time from an island in Greece. As an FSO, she spent most of her career in Europe and Africa; her last post was as an economic officer in Addis Ababa. She has previously published 18 historical novels.



Dead Hand

James Stejskal, Double Dagger Books, 2023, \$16.99/paperback, e-book available, 269 pages.

In this second novel by James Stejskal, a Foreign Service family member, Russia has won the war in Ukraine and is eyeing the Baltics next. When a spy deep in the Kremlin contacts his handlers and mentions a code word for a Russian plan to start and win a nuclear

war, it sets off alarm bells in Washington. A legendary CIA officer is sent to meet the Russian spy, and former Special Forces and CIA operator Joshua Devlin is coaxed out of retirement to be his backup, with promises that the job will be little more than babysitting. But things go sideways, initiating a chain of events that throws Devlin back into a deadly world where failure could mean nuclear Armageddon.

James Stejskal has been married to Ambassador (ret.) Wanda Nesbitt since 1997. During Nesbitt's Foreign Service career, the two were assigned to Namibia, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, and Washington, D.C. Stejskal is also the author of *Mission Iran* (2024).



Jackleg Boys

Mark G. Wentling, Pegasus Publishers, 2024, \$19.99/paperback, e-book available, 506 pages.

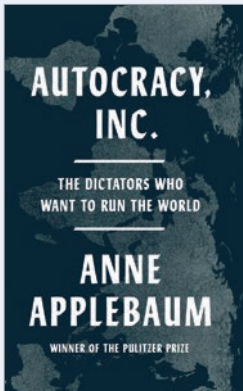
Jackleg Boys is a fictional account that traces the lives of the author's great grandfather and his younger brother, who were teenagers when they fled their fifth-generation plantation home in Virginia during the U.S. Civil War. They made their way to Texas, where

they became cowhands and went on cattle drives to Kansas, going through innumerable trials along the way. With the law on their heels, they escaped to Florida, where the story ends quite differently for each brother.

Mark Wentling is a retired USAID Senior Foreign Service

(Continued on page 45)

OF RELATED INTEREST



Autocracy, Inc.: The Dictators Who Want to Run the World

Anne Applebaum, Doubleday, 2024, \$27.00/hardcover, e-book available, 224 pages.

Anne Applebaum's 2020 bestseller, *The Twilight of Democracy*, analyzed the growing appeal of autocracy to Western intellectuals and politicians. In her new volume, *Autocracy, Inc.*, she trains her lens on the dictator-

ships—Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe, among others—that are working together (and with prominent American billionaires) to enhance their power and undermine the West.

General Mark Milley, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, hails the book as “a wakeup call ... for anyone interested in preserving the democratic values and culture that have been fought for at a high price in blood and treasure for over 200 years.”

After 17 years as a *Washington Post* columnist, Anne Applebaum became a staff writer at *The Atlantic* in 2020. She is the author of five critically acclaimed and award-winning books, including *Gulag: A History*, winner of the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction.



Everyone Who Is Gone Is Here: The United States, Central America, and the Making of a Crisis

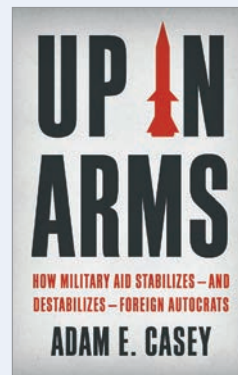
Jonathan Blitzer, Penguin Press, 2024, \$32.00/hardcover, e-book available, 544 pages.

Not surprisingly, the ongoing migrant crisis at America's southern border is one of the major issues in this year's hotly contested presidential election.

As Jonathan Blitzer explains, the scale of the influx has soared in recent years, largely because so many desperate people have been uprooted from their homes in the Northern Triangle countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

Everyone Who Is Gone Is Here documents how decades of misguided U.S. policy and sweeping regional corruption paved the way for the crisis. But Blitzer makes the story personal, telling it both through the eyes of those who have attempted the crossing and those on the other side of the border who have either helped them along the way or tried to prevent them from crossing.

Jonathan Blitzer is a staff writer at *The New Yorker*. He has won a National Award for Education Reporting as well as an Edward R. Murrow Award and was a 2021 Emerson Fellow at New America.



Up in Arms: How Military Assistance Stabilizes—and Destabilizes—Foreign Autocrats

Adam E. Casey, Basic Books, 2024, \$32.00/hardcover, e-book available, 336 pages.

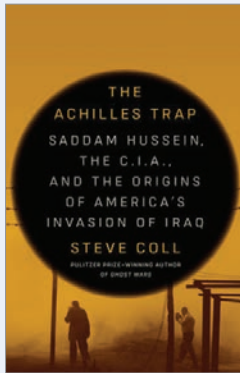
Debates about the utility and morality of security assistance date back to our founding, as Adam E. Casey points out in his introduction to this provocative book. The conventional wisdom is that

military aid props up nondemocratic governments, but is this necessarily true?

Citing case studies ranging from Paraguay and Guatemala to Libya and Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), among others, Casey says it isn't true: “Aid, arms, and advisers do not just bolster dictatorships; they also transform them. And these transformations are not always beneficial for the stability of authoritarian regimes.”

A *Wall Street Journal* review calls *Up in Arms* “a methodical study that largely avoids moral posturing, especially about U.S. policies and decisions. That alone justifies taking it seriously.”

Adam E. Casey is a U.S. government analyst whose writing has appeared in *The Washington Post*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *Foreign Policy*. His research has been cited by *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, and Bloomberg, among others.



The Achilles Trap: Saddam Hussein, the C.I.A., and the Origins of America's Invasion of Iraq

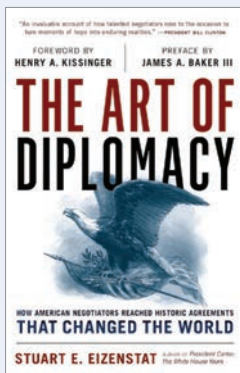
Steve Coll, Penguin Press, 2024, \$35.00/hardcover, e-book available, 576 pages.

Countless books have been published in the two decades since the United States' ill-fated decision to invade Iraq and depose Saddam Hussein.

Most of these blame President George W. Bush and his administration for organizing a campaign to sell the war to the public, even though there was no evidence Hussein possessed any weapons of mass destruction.

Steve Coll's contribution to the literature is to document the considerable role that Bush's three predecessors played in paving the way for his colossal blunder. His title draws on Greek mythology to describe a situation in which the parties to a conflict imagine a "fatal flaw in their opponent that did not actually exist."

Steve Coll is the author of nine books, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Ghost Wars*. He is an editor at *The Economist*, was a staff writer at *The New Yorker* for nearly two decades, and received a Pulitzer Prize for explanatory journalism in 1990 for his work at *The Washington Post*.



The Art of Diplomacy: How American Negotiators Reached Historic Agreements That Changed the World

Stuart E. Eizenstat, Rowman & Littlefield, 2024, \$35.00/hardcover, e-book available, 520 pages.

The title of Stuart Eizenstat's book implies that he is singing to the choir. After all, Foreign Service members presumably need little persuasion that

diplomacy matters. So the question naturally arises: Why should we read *The Art of Diplomacy*?

First, it is gratifying to get the perspective of a political appointee who clearly respects career diplomats and has worked closely with them for decades. Eizenstat also offers helpful examples of the importance of preparation for negotiations.

As a bonus, the foreword by Henry Kissinger and preface by James A. Baker III are both worth reading in their own right.

Stuart E. Eizenstat has been the special adviser for Holocaust issues ever since the position was created in 2013. Prior to that, he served as U.S. ambassador to the European Union and deputy secretary of both State and Treasury. The author of several other books, he is an international lawyer in Washington, D.C.



America's Collection: The Art and Architecture of the Diplomatic Reception Rooms at the U.S. Department of State

Virginia B. Hart, Rizzoli, 2023, \$100.00/hardcover, print only, 352 pages.

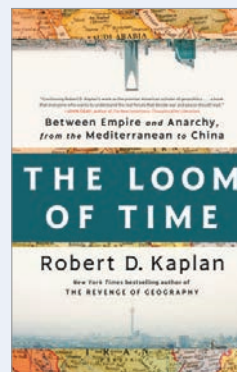
There is no getting around the fact that \$100 is a hefty price tag for a book, even one as handsome as *America's*

Collection: The Art and Architecture of the Diplomatic Reception Rooms at the U.S. Department of State. On the other hand, given ever-tighter security, a coffee-table volume is probably the only way for most Americans to see the treasures housed in the Diplomatic Reception Rooms on the building's seventh and eighth floors.

With a foreword by former Secretary of State John F. Kerry, the book offers essays by noted experts who detail how the collection was formed and how it came to be displayed as it is, before focusing on highlights of the collection.

Reviewing *America's Collection* in the April 2024 *FSJ*, Jane Loeffler writes this "well-illustrated volume would be a welcome addition to any library that features American art."

Virginia B. Hart is the director and curator of the Diplomatic Reception Rooms at the State Department.



The Loom of Time: Between Empire and Anarchy, from the Mediterranean to China

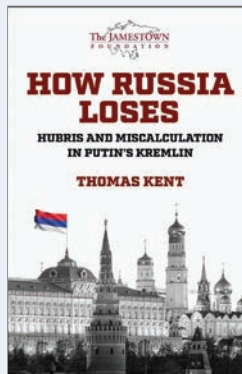
Robert D. Kaplan, Random House, 2023, \$30.00/hardcover, e-book available, 400 pages.

Despite its poetic title, *The Loom of Time* makes the case for realism in foreign policy. Specifically, Robert D. Kaplan casts a skeptical eye on the West's efforts to promote democracy

across the Middle East and to counter China's spreading influence there.

Kaplan reminds readers that “the tragedy of the Greater Middle East ever since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire has as much to do with the West’s dynamic interaction with it as with the region itself.” He views the region as “the puzzle piece that China needs to command ... to link its budding commercial outposts in Europe with those in East Asia.”

Robert D. Kaplan is the bestselling author of 22 books on foreign affairs and travel, which have been translated into numerous languages. He holds the Robert Strausz-Hupé Chair in Geopolitics at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, and *Foreign Policy* has twice named him one of the world’s Top 100 Global Thinkers.



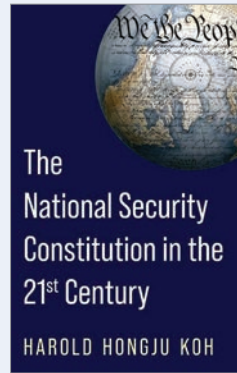
How Russia Loses: Hubris and Miscalculation in Putin’s Kremlin

Thomas Kent, The Jamestown Foundation, 2023, \$38.50/ paperback, e-book available, 379 pages.

As Russian President Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine drags on, already more than halfway through a third year with no end in sight, there is no denying that he has inflicted major damage. But he also has not achieved any of his strategic objectives there—just one of many episodes Thomas Kent cites to support his thesis that, contrary to his fearsome reputation, Putin is far from a master of statecraft.

Reviewing the book for the *Journal of Policy & Security*, Michaela Dodge says: “Kent draws on his decades of experience ... and deep knowledge of Russia. Expert interviews provide additional nuance and depth to a complicated subject. Together, these elements make for a riveting read.”

Thomas Kent, a senior fellow at the Jamestown Foundation, lectures on disinformation and Russian affairs at Columbia University’s Harriman Institute. Previously, he served as Moscow bureau chief, international editor, and ethics editor for the Associated Press.



The National Security Constitution in the 21st Century

Harold Hongju Koh, Yale University Press, 2024, \$40.00/hardcover, e-book available, 496 pages.

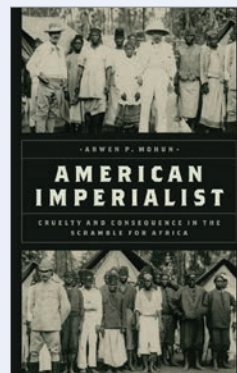
In 1988 the *Yale Law Journal* published Harold Koh’s “Why the President (Almost) Always Wins in Foreign Affairs.” Two years later, Yale University Press published a book-length version of that article, *The National Security*

Constitution: Sharing Power After the Iran-Contra Affair.

So what is the National Security Constitution, and why has Harold Hongju Koh published an updated version of his analysis a third of a century later?

Koh’s concept asserts that “the power to conduct American foreign policy is not exclusively presidential, but is a power shared among the president, the Congress, and the courts.” Unfortunately, he adds, successive presidents “have repeatedly invoked an alternative vision of unchecked executive discretion.” This book examines that situation and recommends ways to restore constitutional balance.

Harold Hongju Koh is the Sterling Professor of International Law and former dean at Yale Law School, and a former State Department legal adviser and assistant secretary of State for democracy, human rights, and labor. He is the author of nine books and numerous articles.



American Imperialist: Cruelty and Consequence in the Scramble for Africa

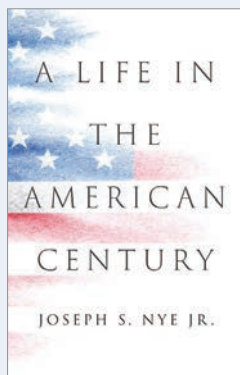
Arwen P. Mohun, University of Chicago Press, 2023, \$30.00/hardcover, e-book available, 328 pages.

Strikingly, the title of this biography does not contain the name of its subject—even though it is the author’s own great-grandfather, Richard Dorsey Mohun. That editorial choice likely reflects the profound ambivalence Arwen Mohun feels about her ancestor.

There is no question that Richard Mohun facilitated the brutal exploitation of countless Africans during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. On the other hand, he does not seem to have carried any particular animus toward them; for him, it was just a job.

The *Times Literary Supplement* calls *American Imperialist* “compelling. ... This page-turner should encourage more public interest in other U.S. imperialists, including Henry Sanford, who was instrumental in founding the [Congo] Free State. One also hopes that it will stimulate more work on the African collective memory of such imperialists, to assess the lasting consequences of their nefarious actions.”

Arwen P. Mohun, a history professor at the University of Delaware, teaches and writes about capitalism, technology, and gender in American history.



A Life in the American Century
Joseph S. Nye Jr., Polity, 2024,
\$29.95/paperback, e-book available,
254 pages.

Long renowned for his expertise on the theory and praxis of statecraft and foreign policy, Joseph Nye has published dozens of well-received books and countless articles over the years. His latest volume, *A Life in the American Century* (employing a

catchphrase associated with Henry Luce, the publisher of *Time* and *Life* magazines), is a memoir tracing his rise to the halls of power and influence.

Reviewing the book in the October 2024 *FSJ*, Joseph Novak lauds Nye’s “ability to deftly interweave the details of his personal journey around brief accounts of the epoch in which he lived.”

Joseph Nye Jr. is University Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus and former dean of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. He also served as assistant secretary of Defense for international security affairs, chair of the National Intelligence Council, and a deputy under secretary of State, and won distinguished service awards from all three agencies.



Military Guide to the U.S. Embassy
Center for Army Lessons Learned,
2023, free PDF, 53 pages.

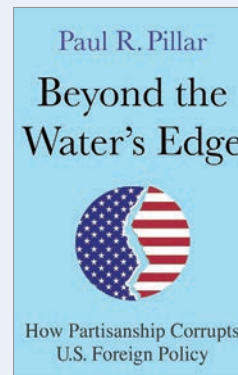
The poet Robert Burns once wrote:
“Oh, would some Power give us to see

ourselves as others see us!” Answering that plea by diplomats, the Center for Army Lessons Learned has issued this *Military Guide to the U.S. Embassy* “to improve Department of Defense interactions with Foreign Service professionals.” Toward that end, it describes the organization, mission, and culture of the

U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development as well as the interagency staff at U.S. embassies.

The book’s five chapters also discuss the agencies’ role in crafting the U.S. National Security Strategy, concluding with a list of ways DoD personnel can successfully integrate into, and communicate with, U.S. embassy country teams.

The Center for Army Lessons Learned leads the U.S. Army’s Lessons Learned Program, delivering timely and relevant information to resolve gaps, enhance readiness, and inform modernization. The guide can be downloaded at <https://bit.ly/Military-Guide-to-Embassies>.



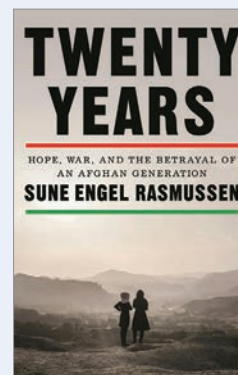
**Beyond the Water’s Edge:
How Partisanship Corrupts
U.S. Foreign Policy**
Paul R. Pillar, Columbia University
Press, 2023, \$35.00/hardcover,
e-book available, 328 pages.

Many *FSJ* readers probably know the 19th-century aphorism that “even our party divisions, acrimonious as they are, cease at the water’s edge.” But as Paul Pillar documents in *Beyond the Water’s*

Edge, it has often been a mere aspiration, if that. And that, Pillar warns, “is a perversion of the constructive role of political parties in articulating competing interests and grand strategies.”

Reviewing the book in the June 2024 *FSJ*, retired FSO Joseph L. Novak commends Pillar for sending up “a flare on the threat posed to U.S. national security by extreme political polarization.”

Paul R. Pillar is a nonresident senior fellow of the Center for Security Studies at Georgetown University and a nonresident fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. He served in several senior positions in the U.S. intelligence community and is a retired officer in the U.S. Army Reserve.



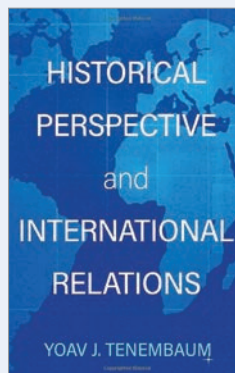
**Twenty Years: Hope, War,
and the Betrayal of an Afghan
Generation**
Sune Engel Rasmussen, Farrar,
Straus & Giroux (FSG), 2024,
\$30.00/hardcover, e-book available,
352 pages.

Pushing back against our collective amnesia about the chaotic 2021 American withdrawal from Afghanistan, journalist Sune Engel Rasmussen’s

new book tells the story of Washington’s two-decade war from the point of view of the Afghans themselves.

Peter Bergen, the author of *The Rise and Fall of Osama bin Laden*, says: “Rasmussen’s coverage of Afghanistan has long been superlative. Now comes his excellent new book, which is deeply reported, well written, and moving, telling the story of America’s abandonment of the Afghan people. It’s a somber story that he tells very well.”

Sune Engel Rasmussen has reported on Afghanistan extensively for *The Guardian* and *The Wall Street Journal*, where he is now a correspondent who covers Afghanistan, Iran, and North European affairs. The author of a 2019 Danish-language book on the country, he now lives in London. His work has also appeared in *Harper’s*, *The Economist*, *National Geographic*, *GQ*, *Newsweek*, and *Time* magazine.



Historical Perspective and International Relations

Yoav J. Tenenbaum, Matador, 2023, \$19.95/paperback, e-book available, 304 pages.

Yoav Tenenbaum says this collection of short essays (most previously published) aspires “to combine the rigor of academic thought with the style of analytic journalism. The book, in a sense, is an intellectual hors d’oeuvre,

a brief journey into the realm of history and international relations.” Some of the essays dwell on more theoretical aspects of international relations and diplomacy, while others examine the intersection of international law and diplomacy.

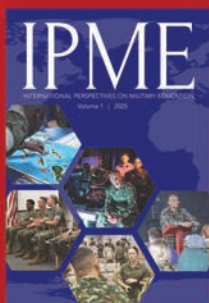
Tenenbaum’s second chapter, “Learning from History in Shaping Foreign Policy—A Theoretical Framework,” may be of particular interest to *FSJ* readers, given its focus on a distinction between “effective and deceptive analogies” when

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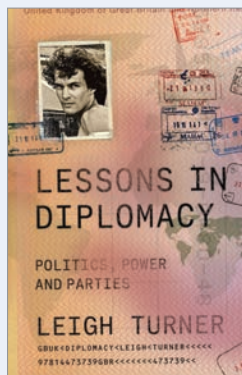
MCUP publishes open access, scholarly books and journals on military history/heritage and national security topics in order to support excellence in Marine Corps University’s professional military education, to inspire debate, and to advance knowledge for a diverse community of scholars, U.S. and allied military leaders, and policy makers. MCUP accepts book and journal submissions throughout the year.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION AND SUBMIT TODAY!

national leaders consider the role of history in the shaping of foreign policy.

Born in Argentina and now a resident of Israel, Yoav J. Tenenbaum is a lecturer in international relations at Tel Aviv University. His publishing credits include a poetry anthology and a children's book, as well as numerous articles in various periodicals.



Lessons in Diplomacy: Politics, Power and Parties

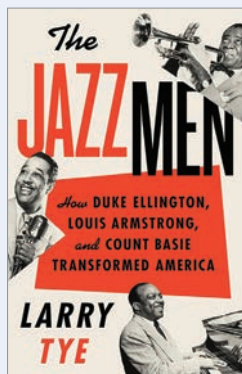
Leigh Turner, Policy Press, 2024, \$29.99/hardcover, e-book available, 256 pages.

Lessons in Diplomacy lives up to the promise of its title by offering 15 chapters, each drawing on Leigh Turner's extensive overseas experience to explain how to do just about everything involved in a diplomatic

career: "survive a crisis," "tackle terrorism," "handle politicians," "learn from diplomatic tradecraft," "drink wine and know things," "know people," "craft a career," and "make diplomacy reflect our changing world," among others.

In his epilogue, "Top Tips for Diplomats and Ambassadors," the author lays out the challenges diplomatic professionals face. He ends on an optimistic note: "The requirement for expertise in distant places, policies and peoples will persist. ... A deep understanding of people and what makes them tick will never go out of fashion."

Leigh Turner is a British writer and former diplomat. His final diplomatic role was as the British ambassador to Austria and U.K. permanent representative to the United Nations in Vienna from 2016 to 2021.



The Jazzmen: How Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Count Basie Transformed America

Larry Tye, HarperCollins, 2024, \$32.50/hardcover, e-book available, 416 pages.

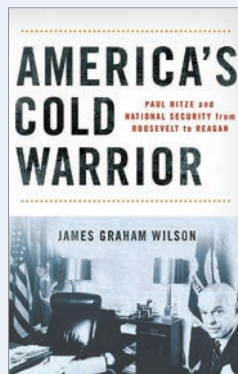
Larry Tye's three-in-one biography of these great American musicians (all born within the same five-year span at the turn of the 20th century)

is full of colorful details about their lives and careers. But it is

chapter 23, "Overseas Ambassadors," that will be of special interest to Foreign Service readers.

Tye notes that "each of the maestros acted as an informal ambassador in mid-century, traveling to dozens of countries from Asia to Latin America and Europe. At first, they sought only the artistic acceptance and lucrative paydays that eluded them in America. Over time, the State Department started picking up the tabs and setting itineraries that served political, as well as musical, objectives." This was particularly true of their trips to Africa; in 1960, for instance, the civil war in the Belgian Congo ceased entirely in honor of Satchmo's 24-hour visit.

Larry Tye is a bestselling author of eight books, including biographies of Joseph McCarthy and Bobby Kennedy.



America's Cold Warrior: Paul Nitze and National Security from Roosevelt to Reagan

James Graham Wilson, Cornell University Press, 2024, \$32.95/hardcover, e-book available, 336 pages.

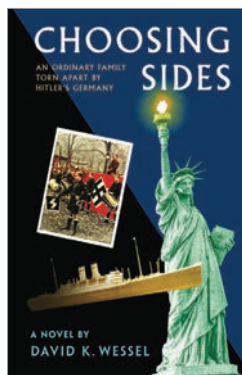
Although he lived almost as long as George Kennan, Paul Nitze never quite achieved the fame of his coeval. But James Graham Wilson makes a compelling case in this biography that Nitze was comparably influential in U.S. diplomacy. Perhaps best known for leading the formulation of National Security Paper 68 ("United States Objectives and Programs for National Security") in 1950, he played a prominent role in negotiating arms control treaties with the Soviet Union some three decades later.

Reviewing *America's Cold Warrior* in *The Wall Street Journal*, Richard Aldous writes: "Mr. Wilson tells Nitze's story with an impressive command of detail and sources, no mean feat given the span of Nitze's career."

James Graham Wilson has been a supervisory historian at the State Department for more than 10 years, leading a team that compiles volumes for the *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) series, the official record of U.S. foreign policy.

(Continued from page 38)

officer. He joined USAID in 1977 and served in Niger, Guinea, Togo, Benin, Somalia, Tanzania, and Washington, D.C., before retiring in 1996. Wentling lives in Lubbock, Texas. He is the author of *Africa Memoir*, a three-volume account of his career in Africa.



Choosing Sides

David K. Wessel, Moonshine Cove Publishing, 2024, \$21.00/paperback, e-book available, 274 pages.

Choosing Sides tells the story of an ordinary family torn apart by Hitler's Germany and the difficult choices each family member must make: to endorse the Party, to stay quiet in the hope that Hitler would soon be gone, to join the resistance (at great personal risk), or

to leave their beloved fatherland and family behind. The story revolves around a young man, Karl-Heinz, a character based on the author's own father. Born in Germany, Karl-Heinz moved to the United States when he was 4 years old and returned seven years later to a changed country.

David Wessel was a Foreign Service officer from 2012 to 2017 and served in Rome and Guatemala. He is currently at work on his second novel. He is also the author of "In Their Own Words: A Conversation with Four Foreign Service Authors," in this *FSJ* edition (see page 51).

FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG ADULTS



What You Never Knew About Olivia Rodrigo

Nafeesah Allen, Capstone Press, 2023, \$8.99/paperback, e-book available, 32 pages.

This book is part of an early reader "Behind the Scenes" series that offers biographies of celebrities admired by teens and tweens. Author Nafeesah Allen tells the story of Olivia Rodrigo

in a way that is accessible to early and struggling readers. Allen has three other books in the series: on Stephen Curry, Zendaya, and Timothée Chalamet.

Author Nafeesah Allen is an active-duty FSO currently serving as the conflict stabilization coordinator in Mozambique. Other titles by Allen are available at <https://www.nafeesahallen.com/author>.



Trailer Park Prince

Andre L. Bradley, Tiny Ghost Press, 2024, \$12.81/paperback, e-book available, 298 pages.

This young adult science fiction novel explores themes of discrimination, identity, and leadership through the lens of alien refugees living on Earth. The story follows Prince Noan Ladoan—a 17-year-old outcast among his own people, the Kaydans—as he

navigates integration with humans, develops superhuman powers, and grapples with his role in his community's future. The novel draws parallels to the American Civil Rights Movement, using the Kaydans' struggles against human prejudice and violence to examine issues of racism, xenophobia, and social justice.

Andre Bradley is an active-duty Foreign Service officer in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service. He joined FAS in 2016 and has served in Mexico City. Bradley is currently posted in Washington, D.C.



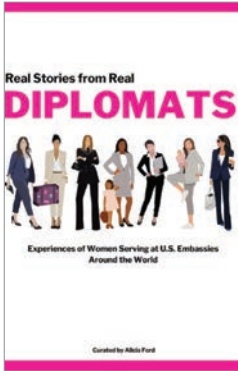
Seeking Neopolis (The Trident's Reckoning)

Elizabeth A. Drysdale, Stag Beetle Books, 2024, \$13.99/paperback, e-book available, 312 pages.

Avi's world turns upside down when a mysterious boy reveals that her memories have been manipulated by her own mother. Already shaken by her mother's disappearance, Avi is plunged into a hidden war between a magical

kingdom and a powerful organization, both accusing her mother of stealing an important artifact known as the Trident. With adversaries closing in, she embarks on a perilous journey to the sunken city of Neopolis. There, Avi uncovers a shocking and sinister truth about her mother's actions.

This is Foreign Service family member Elizabeth Drysdale's fifth novel for young adults. She is the daughter of FSO Clay Allen, who was most recently posted in Haiti. Drysdale lives in northern Utah with her husband and three sons.



Real Stories from Real Diplomats—Experiences of Women Serving at U.S. Embassies Around the World

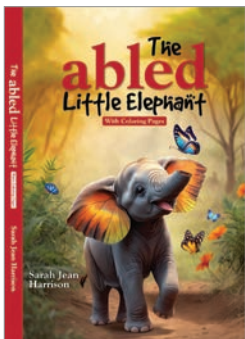
Alicia Ford, independently published, 2023, \$19.99/paperback, e-book available, 139 pages.

This thoughtfully curated debut anthology aimed at young adult readers offers honest, firsthand accounts from female Foreign Service officers

around the world. Those featured are first-generation Americans, ambassadors, dual citizens, public service award winners, naturalized Americans, non-native English speakers, and former military personnel. They discuss topics such as racism, sexism, imposter syndrome, mental health management, LGBTQ+ issues, long-distance relationships, and motherhood.

Read about their experiences with coups, terrorism, interactions with global leaders, living and working in danger posts, helping U.S. citizens overseas, working with refugees, human trafficking, and more. This book also serves as an inspirational career guide and a call to join a public service community. It includes a glossary and tips for how to become a U.S. diplomat.

FSO Alicia Ford is currently the American Citizen Services chief in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.



The Abled Little Elephant

Sarah Jean Harrison, independently published, 2024, \$24.99/hardcover, e-book available, 57 pages.

The Abled Little Elephant tells the story of Esinka, a young elephant who loses his trunk in an accident. Despite feeling different and unsure of himself, Esinka discovers through teamwork, creative problem-solving,

and self-belief that his true strength lies not in his trunk but in his heart and spirit. His story reminds readers that everyone has unique abilities and that challenges can be overcome with dedication and the help of a caring community.

Sarah Jean Harrison joined USAID in 2010 and became a Foreign Service officer in 2013. She has served in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Kenya, Israel, and Washington, D.C. Harrison is currently studying Spanish in preparation for her next assignment in Peru.



Ashley Wants a Pet

Jestina Hodge-Pais, independently published, 2023, \$12.99/paperback, 27 pages.

This heartwarming children’s book explores the essence of pet ownership—how it involves not only the joy of companionship but also

the commitment to love and care for an animal for a lifetime. Author Jestina Hodge-Pais hopes Ashley’s story will inspire Foreign Service family discussions about owning and caring for a pet.

Jestina Hodge-Pais joined the Foreign Service in 2000 as a human resources specialist and has served in Manila, Lagos, Brasília, Beijing, Kabul, Maputo, Kinshasa, and Washington, D.C. She is currently assigned to Islamabad. Hodge-Pais is also the author of *A Chance to Love*.



Christopher & Caroline in India

Joanne Grady Huskey, Xlibris US, 2023, \$14.99/paperback, e-book available, 36 pages.

Joanne Grady Huskey wrote this children’s book about her own children, Foreign Service kids Christopher and Caroline, whom she calls “world citizens who love to learn about new cultures.” The book tells the story of Christopher and Caroline’s early childhood in India—FSO dad James L. Hus-

key was assigned to Chennai from 1993 to 1996. By sharing the magic and richness of the Indian culture and people, the author hopes she can inspire children to learn more about faraway places and cultures different from their own.

Joanne Grady Huskey is an author, crosscultural trainer, and public speaker. She and her family were posted in Beijing, Chennai, Nairobi, and Taipei. Huskey now serves on the board of Championwoman, a program to empower Indian women. Her previous books include *The Unofficial Diplomat: A Memoir*; *Make It in India*; *Growing Up Grady*; and *iCAN: A Young Woman’s Guide to Taking the Lead*. Another children’s book, *Christopher in China*, was published in July 2024.



The Book of Allies

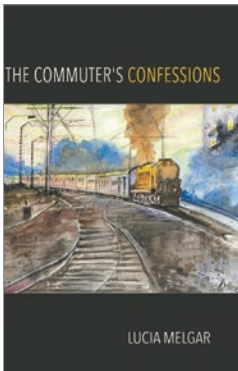
Chigozie Okocha, independently published, 2024, \$13.99/paperback, e-book available, 148 pages.

The Book of Allies is a compilation of 10 short stories, all based on real-world events, to inspire and offer hope to young adult readers ages 11 to 18. The collection of short stories features a variety of characters, from Oom Bey, who fought against apartheid in South

Africa, to an extreme couponer in Woodbridge, Virginia. The author features people who have been motivated to do and be better for their community, encouraging readers to step into positions of leadership.

Chigozie Okocha joined the State Department as a Foreign Service officer in 2015. He has served in Casablanca, Hyderabad, Quito, and Washington, D.C. He recently started his fifth assignment as a policy adviser (POLAD) to AFRICOM.

POETRY



The Commuter's Confessions

Lucia Melgar, Finishing Line Press, 2023, \$17.99/paperback, e-book available, 38 pages.

The Commuter's Confessions is the first book of poetry by Lucia Melgar, who is also new to the Foreign Service. The poems focus on the quiet and heart-pounding thoughts that accompany train commuters in the short span of time before they arrive at their

destination, when, writes the poet, their inner desires, fears, observations, and meditations come to light. We question if we really want to arrive, if we should be headed elsewhere, or even if we should have traveled in the first place.

Lucia Melgar is currently in limited non-career appointment (LNA) training at the Foreign Service Institute before setting out for Panama City in early 2025. Before becoming an LNA, Melgar spent seven years as an internal auditor for Goldman Sachs and Citibank. Her poems have been published previously in *Dovetail*, the art and literary journal of the NYU School of Professional Studies.



Corona/Crown

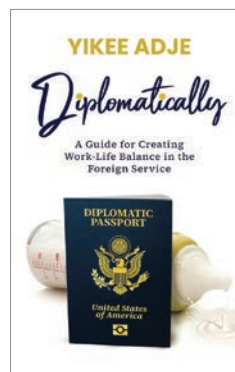
Kim Roberts and Robert Revere, WordTech Editions, 2023, \$21.25/paperback, e-book available, 44 pages.

A collaboration between poet Kim Roberts and fine art photographer Rob Revere, *Corona/Crown* is a personal response to the closing of cultural spaces during the COVID-19 lockdowns. This series of prose poems

and photographs borrows from the formal tradition of heroic crowns of sonnets—*corona* is Italian for “crown”—in which each section is connected to the last by a repeated line or phrase. This slim book references specific cultural experiences while keeping in mind the larger issues of mortality, health, and love.

Photographer Robert Revere is a public diplomacy officer currently posted in Dushanbe. He has also served in Manama, Montreal, Freetown, and Washington, D.C. He studied at the Corcoran School of Art, the Art Institute of Boston, and the Maine Photographic Workshops, and taught at Maryland College of Art and Design. His work has been exhibited in Washington, D.C., New York, and Boston, and he has been an artist in residence at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and Ireland's Burren College of Art.

GUIDEBOOK/SELF-HELP



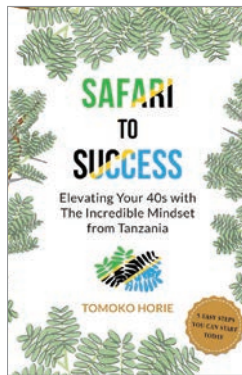
Diplomatically: A Guide for Creating Work-Life Balance in the Foreign Service

Yikee Adje, independently published, 2023, \$15.95/paperback, e-book available, 109 pages.

This book by active-duty USAID FSO Yikee Adje provides a practical road map on how to align your professional aspirations with your personal priorities. It will give you the tools to build

strong relationships, communicate effectively, and approach your work with intention so that you can negotiate for and achieve work-life balance. *Diplomatically* unveils the “3Cs” approach—connection, communication, and courage—that are key to Adje's success as a Foreign Service officer and mother to five children.

Yikee Adje joined USAID in 2012 and is currently the USAID program office director in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She is also a certified executive coach and master facilitator who coaches USAID staff and facilitates retreats globally to help individuals and teams reach higher levels of performance.



Safari to Success: Elevating Your 40s with the Incredible Mindset from Tanzania

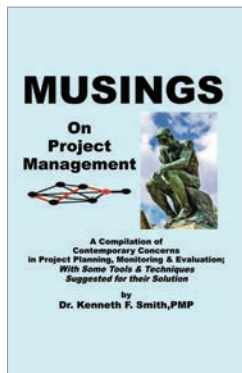
Tomoko Horie, Rosslyn Publishing, 2023, \$5.50/e-book, digital only, 71 pages.

Originally from Japan, Tomoko Horie moved to Washington, D.C., to work as a journalist for Nippon TV. When her spouse joined the Foreign Service in 2022, she was in her 40s, and she quit

her job to move with him and her young children to Tanzania.

In this book, Horie describes how she navigated and overcame the obstacles of middle age while living in Tanzania. The new perspective she gained by moving to Africa helped the author resolve her worries about aging. Reading this book, says the author, offers a unique chance to join her on this journey, experiencing life in Africa and rethinking personal challenges.

Tomoko Horie worked as a journalist for 15 years. Tanzania is the first overseas assignment for her family; their next post will be Hong Kong.



Musings on Project Management

Kenneth F. Smith, Central Books, 2023, \$80.00/paperback, e-book available, 475 pages.

Managers are continually confronted with a variety of issues at various stages of a program’s project life. *Musings on Project Management* highlights some typical problems, offering both tried and true “best practice” approaches as well as some innovative recommended

solutions, complete with techniques, tools, and templates.

Kenneth Smith joined USAID as a civil servant in 1965, converting to the Foreign Service in 1971. He was assigned to Washington, D.C. (with extended temporary duty to Vietnam and other USAID missions), Manila, Seoul, and Jakarta before retiring from USAID in 1983. After retirement he continued working as a freelance project management consultant for

USAID and others. He holds a BA and an MA in government and international relations from the University of Connecticut, an MA from MIT, and a doctorate in public administration from George Mason University.



How to Be a Diplomat

Darren Thies, BookBaby, 2024, \$19.99/paperback, e-book available, 220 pages.

Have you ever wondered what it’s like to be a diplomat? Darren Thies answers this question through stories and firsthand accounts of the work, lifestyle, and adventures of U.S. Foreign Service officers, shedding light on the day-to-day work of diplomats

and outlining the seven qualities needed to excel in this field. Packed with practical rules and personal advice, this book will empower you to navigate any workplace or interpersonal relationship like a seasoned diplomat.

Darren Thies is a public diplomacy officer who joined the State Department in 2010. He has served in Dushanbe, Bucharest, Kabul, Vladivostok, and in the Office of Iranian Affairs in Washington, D.C. He and his spouse are currently posted to Yerevan.



Riding More with Less: A Future for Bike Repair

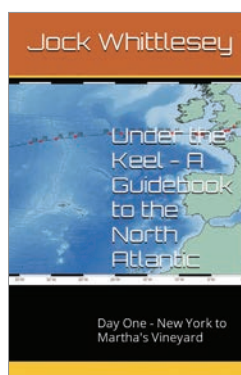
Sam Tracy, PM Press, 2024, \$24.95/paperback, e-book available, 272 pages.

Turning away from the obsolescence and disposability so often implied within consumer economies, *Riding More with Less* surveys experienced community bike shop mechanics worldwide to identify the best and

safest repair solutions when new parts are not an option. For those already familiar with bicycle preservation, the book aligns the most useful technical references within a well-organized compilation of the most effective low-cost and free repair techniques.

And for the uninitiated, the book includes an overview of the community bike shops many readers may find in their own neighborhoods. *Riding More with Less* is the bike repair manual for anyone who rides bikes for fun, exercise, or transportation.

Sam Tracy is a Foreign Service family member who is currently working as a management assistant in Montevideo. His spouse, Kerri Spindler-Ranta, is a public affairs officer. The couple previously served in Riga, Georgetown, Pretoria, and Washington, D.C.



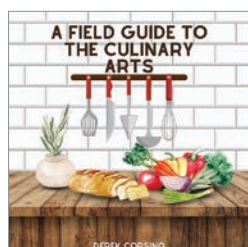
Under the Keel—A Guidebook to the North Atlantic (Day One—New York to Martha’s Vineyard)

Jock Whittlesey, independently published, 2023, \$11.00/paperback, e-book available, 163 pages.

The first book in his nonfiction travel series, *Under the Keel—A Guidebook to the North Atlantic*, author Jock Whittlesey provides overviews of the oceanography, history, charts, geology, shipping, law, currents, weather, fish, animals, and famous events across the North Atlantic by following the path of the ocean liner *Queen Mary 2* as it traveled from New York to Southampton in 2022. The wide-ranging information is aimed at a general-interest reader; it is not a specialized or technical tome.

Jock Whittlesey was a Foreign Service officer from 1992 to 2018, primarily working on environment, science, technology, and health issues. He served in London, Kingston, Amman, Athens, and three tours in China. Now retired, he has worked as an editor on the State Department’s Human Rights Report since 2019. Whittlesey is also the author of *Coast Guard Academy—A User’s Guide* (2021).

GRAB BAG



A Field Guide to the Culinary Arts

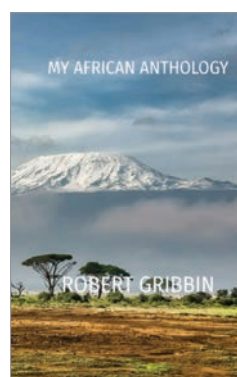
Derek Corsino, independently published, 2024, \$25.00/hardcover, print only, 115 pages.

A Field Guide to the Culinary Arts offers an immersive journey through the heart of the kitchen, crafted for

novice cooks and seasoned chefs alike. With a meticulous blend of tradition and innovation, this comprehensive cookbook serves as your compass in the vast landscape of gastronomy. Have a hankering for s’mores but can’t find marshmallows

at post? Or maybe you need to make brownies but you don’t have access to boxed brownie mix? Derek Corsino has you covered. But he also includes easy explanations for complex recipes, like homemade ravioli.

Derek Corsino is a new FS family member whose spouse joined the Foreign Service earlier this year. The couple plans to depart for their first post, Shanghai, in May 2025. Corsino spent the past 11 years as a culinary and baking and pastry educator, and he is currently transitioning to become a full-time online educator.



My African Anthology

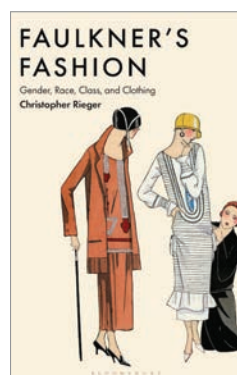
Robert E. Gribbin, independently published, 2024, \$17.00/paperback, e-book available, 351 pages.

In *My African Anthology*, Ambassador Robert Gribbin draws on almost 60 years of work in and with Africa to spin tales and air his opinions. Themes include preventing child trafficking, finding a long-missing treasure, seeking “Gacaca justice,” fleeing from

Ebola, searching for a legendary beast, observing the U.S. military presence in Africa, discovering black magic, and more.

The collection, which comprises fiction and nonfiction, both humorous and serious, paints a realistic portrait of Africa, its peoples, and its issues as seen and experienced by an astute observer. The book provides just the right mix of history and modernity, with deep insights into Africa.

Career FSO Robert Gribbin served as ambassador to the Central African Republic (1992-1995) and Rwanda (1995-1999). He is the author of *In the Aftermath of Genocide: The U.S. Role in Rwanda* and five novels, all set in Africa. His novel *Finding Kony* was featured in the November 2023 *FSJ*.



Faulkner’s Fashion: Gender, Race, Class, and Clothing

Christopher Rieger, Bloomsbury Academic, 2023, \$100.00/hardcover, e-book available, 184 pages.

Faulkner’s Fashion is the first book-length study of author William Faulkner’s use of clothing in his novels and short stories and how that intersects with race, class, and gender.

The book examines clothes as material objects with their own significance outside their symbolic meanings to the wearer and viewer. Faulkner’s own interesting history with fashion and dress is also linked to his world of fiction.

Christopher Rieger joined the Foreign Service as a generalist in 2023 after 15 years as a professor and director of the Center for Faulkner Studies at Southeast Missouri State University. He is a public diplomacy–coned officer currently on his first tour in the consular section in Mexico City.



Blood Sweat Tears

Christine Reed, ed., Rugged Outdoorswoman Publishing, 2024, \$24.99/paperback, e-book available, 294 pages.

Blood Sweat Tears is a collection of short essays about being a woman on a trail. The women writers detail their experiences hiking, backpacking, mountaineering, and trail running as they share the challenges, beauty, and

self-knowledge they find in outdoor adventures.

One story in the collection, “A Period of Transition,” was written by Public Diplomacy Officer Maggie Seymour, who joined the Foreign Service in 2020 and was first posted in Montreal. She is currently serving in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research on the INR Watch in Washington, D.C.



Zest Quest: Adventures with a Fruit Fanatic

Mikkela Thompson, independently published, 2024, \$21.40/paperback, e-book available, 120 pages.

Mikkela Thompson is back, this time with a book on traveling the world in search of exotic fruits to sample. From a fruit haven in Kandy, Sri Lanka, and the night markets of Singapore, to a mountain village in Colombia, and

even in the fruit-only menu on an airplane, *Zest Quest* is all about eating exotic fruit, both good and bad. Throughout the pages, Thompson follows her passion not just for passionfruit but for adventure.

The child of an FSO, Mikkela Thompson joined the Foreign Service as an office management specialist in 2011 and has served in Dhaka, Bogotá, Caracas, Vancouver, Nassau, Port of

Spain, Santo Domingo, Lima, Rome, and Washington, D.C. Before joining the Foreign Service, she worked at AFSA, *The Foreign Service Journal*, and the Family Liaison Office (now GCLO). Thompson is currently assigned to Diplomatic Technology’s office of eDiplomacy, where she helps her colleagues with technology and knowledge management. Her last book, *La Dolce Italia*, was featured in the November 2023 *FSJ*.



Living Abroad With Children

Mary M. Muro, Jill P. Strachan, and John R. Whitman, eds., independently published, 2024, e-book available at no charge, digital only, 209 pages.

Fourteen adults—from France, Japan, Norway, and the United States who grew up as third culture kids (TCKs) and all attended the same elementary school in Cairo—offer memories and ideas aimed to make the most

of a child’s life overseas. The book is available in 51 countries as a free e-book by searching Apple Books for the title “Living Abroad With Children.”

One of the co-editors, John Whitman, grew up overseas as the son of Foreign Service Officer Ross Whitman. The Whitman family lived in Oslo (1951-1953), Tel Aviv (1953-1955), Karachi (1955-1956), Cairo (1957-1961), and Tokyo (1961-1962).

Co-editor Jill Strachan grew up overseas as the daughter of Foreign Service Officer D. Alan Strachan and Evelyn B. Strachan. The Strachans were posted to Athens (1947-1952), Lahore (1959-1962), and Cairo (1962-1965).

Their story also appeared in the October 2023 *FSJ*. ■

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

An Interview with Four Foreign Service Authors



ISTOCK.COM/TETIANA KOMARYTSKA

Foreign Service authors share their struggles and inspirations.

BY DAVID K. WESSEL

As evidenced by the number of entries in *The Foreign Service Journal's* annual "In Their Own Write" compendium, many former and current members of the Foreign Service community have a story to tell. Writing can be a rewarding outlet for the untapped creative talents, mental energy, and free time of Foreign Service employees and their family members while at posts abroad. I asked several authors included in the 2023 "In Their Own Write" to share the story behind their stories and explain how their writing was inspired or hindered by their Foreign Service work and lifestyle.

I spoke with Gregory E. Buford, an FS family member currently living in Turkmenistan and the author of a memoir series, *Kept*, based on his life at different posts; Lydia Kiesling, novelist and daughter of a retired FSO; Sarah Chapman Monahan, a Foreign Service child and current FSO spouse who writes historical young adult fiction; and Mikkela Thompson, a Foreign Service child who is a multigenre writer and a Foreign Service office management specialist.



*David K. Wessel is a retired Foreign Service officer and amateur historian turned novelist. His first book, *Choosing Sides*, was published in March 2024 and is featured in this year's edition of "In Their Own Write." He can be reached at davidkwesselauthor@gmail.com*

or through his website: www.davidkwessel.com.



Write every day, even if it's just for a few minutes.

—Gregory Buford

David K. Wessel: *Have you always wanted to be a writer?*

Gregory E. Buford: Yes, for as long as I can remember.

Lydia Kiesling: I have always written and, I think, did want to be a writer when I was a child. During high school and young adulthood, I wasn't really cognizant that "writer" was a sustainable profession that someone could have. I didn't start writing in earnest until I was around 25.

Sarah Chapman Monahan: As a child, I was forever journaling and writing little stories on folded pieces of paper bound with staples. After graduating from college, I moved to Istanbul, my father's last post before retiring, and began doing some freelance writing and editing—for the consulate newsletter, the Hilton's magazine, little articles commissioned by Redhouse Press—whatever popped up. Just speaking native English was a perk, so some of my work involved editing things that had been written by non-native speakers: a taste of what you could do when living overseas back then.

Mikkela Thompson: Yes, at least as far back as the age of 9, when I think I may have declared it. Recently, I have been digitizing old papers belonging to my mother and my grandparents. It turned out that my mother kept all my writing from the first book I made, with string and glue, back when I was 6 or 7. And I didn't stop there. It seems like I was always writing and publishing books.

Wessel: *What was your first book about? What inspired you to write it?*

Buford: My first book was a novel, *Making Ghosts Dance*, a tale of corruption and greed set within the American diplomatic community in Cambodia. I moved with my wife and three young children to Phnom Penh in 2004. Upon our arrival, I was immediately struck by Cambodia's thriving sex industry, in general, and the prominence of sex tourism, in particular.

Most disturbing of all was the evident trafficking and prostitution of children. As the primary caregiver of three small children—including an adopted child who could pass for Cambodian—and the kind of parent who always checks for the fire

exits, I found the safety of my family was no passing concern. This book, in essence, is a product of my worst nightmare.

Kiesling: My first book, *The Golden State*, is a novel about caregiving, toddlers, rural Northern California, right-wing extremism, and our immigration system. I had recently given birth to my first child and wanted to capture the experience of taking care of a small child in a way that didn't fit my previous short-form freelance writing.

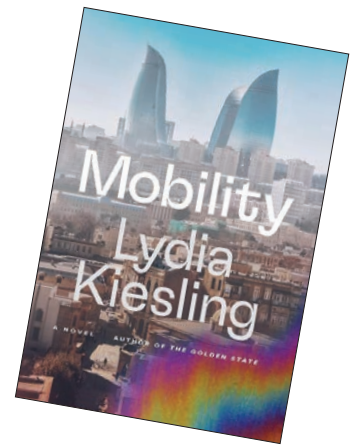
Monahan: I have written only one book—so far. It's a young adult (YA) novel, but it has appeal for adults, too. It's based on experiences I had while living in divided Berlin as a high school student in the late 1970s. A coming-of-age tale, it takes place on both sides of the Berlin Wall and portrays life in the American Sector and the impact the Cold War had on young minds. It's also about the unique challenges of moving—leaving homes behind and creating new ones in new countries. But mostly, it's an exciting adventure that takes place in Berlin's unique historical setting: a walled-off island of freedom surrounded by a totalitarian state.

When I lived in Berlin, I had a diplomatic passport, so I was able to visit the East and make some East German friends who, of course, could never see where I lived. I kept in touch with one friend until, years after the fall of the wall, he came with his wife and two children to visit me in Türkiye, where I was living with my Foreign Service spouse and three children. The myriad questions posed by our curious offspring got us talking about those days, and I was intrigued by how my friend's perspective of that period differed from mine—and how much of that chapter in history had been forgotten. It struck me as grist for a novel, inspiring me to create a story to bring those days back to life.

Thompson: In October 2013, my boss in Dhaka, who was my greatest cheerleader, asked for a book version of my blog. It was an online product, but she wanted a book. I started my blog in October 2011 at my dad's suggestion when I was about to head out to Bangladesh. I had tried to blog in the past, in hopes of making money from it, and had failed, so I couldn't see what I would blog about. But I started blogging, and I have blogged every week, on average, for 12 years.

My upbringing as a Foreign Service brat is fundamental to my experience of the world and my ideas about place and home.

—Lydia Kiesling



Wessel: Tell us about your journey, from idea stage to publication.

Buford: Writing the book was the easy part. Indeed, I *had* to write the book because of what I was seeing in Cambodia. Then I spent years trying to interest literary agents and publishers in my work, to no avail. Finally, I published the book myself through Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing. My only regret is that I waited so long to go that route. All my books have been published this way, and it's paid off.

Kiesling: I started out with little vignettes that didn't go anywhere, and then decided to leave my full-time job for a part-time

job and spend a year completing a draft. I was very lucky that it worked out, and I was able to get an agent at the end of that year.

Monahan: I started writing the story when I joined a creative writing group while living in Rome, never thinking about having it published, just writing chapters to share. It was a make-believe world I dove into for fun and writing practice. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I began to edit the lengthy pages and realized that if I could polish it into a cohesive story, I could try to get it published.

So I rewrote the whole thing, edited it for flow, and began to look for a publisher. Literary agents wanted nothing to do

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For a nonworking spouse, I think the Foreign Service life is ideal for writing.

—Sarah Chapman Monahan

with historical fiction for YA, especially with a first-time, out-of-nowhere, “older” author. That was discouraging. I began to research self-publishing, which seemed more challenging—and much less fun—than writing. And then I focused on small publishing firms. Finally, I began submitting my manuscript to any who were accepting my genre.

Thompson: I would get up early to work on turning my first two years of blogging into a book. I got it done in time for the embassy’s holiday bazaar, and the ambassador kindly did a photo op of him buying a copy—autographed, of course. Now, I write about what I feel like writing, but mainly I recycle material from my blog. Blurb.com was set up for printing blogs, and I still publish my books with them; but I do the e-books through Amazon’s Kindle publishing house because Blurb no longer does e-books. I may switch to something else if I find it easier.

Wessel: *How did being part of the Foreign Service community help during your journey?*

Buford: Many members of the FS community provided me with invaluable background information and moral support throughout my journey.

Kiesling: My upbringing as a Foreign Service brat is fundamental to my experience of the world and my ideas about place and home. It is reflected in my first novel and more explicitly in my second novel, *Mobility*, which follows a Foreign Service brat through her adolescence and adulthood.

Monahan: I can’t say that the FS community helped per se, but the fact that I did not need to work full-time when we were overseas made the long hours spent on this questionable venture—constantly battling that internal voice asking, “Who do you think you are?”—feasible.

Thompson: Being part of the Foreign Service community is what started my book writing success. I had talked for decades about writing, but then when I got that request back in 2013, it unleashed the production process in me.

Wessel: *Did your Foreign Service life hinder your writing journey in any way? If so, how?*

Buford: No.

Kiesling: No, since my Foreign Service life was essentially constrained to my childhood.

Monahan: No, certainly not. I am not sure I’d ever have finished a novel had I been settled in the U.S. somewhere, working full-time. But—who knows? For a nonworking spouse, at least, I think the Foreign Service life is ideal for writing.

Thompson: Writing—no. Publishing—yes. Getting books cleared is difficult for me as a direct-hire active-duty employee. It depends very much on the whim of the public affairs officer at the embassy. So far one out of three has been successfully published when overseas. Most of the time, it is not worth the months spent going around in a bureaucratic fug. I publish on home leave now.

Wessel: *What advice would you offer other aspiring Foreign Service authors?*

Buford: Write every day, even if it’s just for a few minutes.

Kiesling: Starting a writing project feels very daunting, and it can take a long time before you get the confidence and momentum to really devote a lot of time to your writing. Give yourself a chance to express what you want to express, even if it feels miserable in the beginning.

Monahan: When moving to a new place, my modus operandi is to study the local language, find somewhere to volunteer, and check out writing opportunities. All these activities offer avenues to meet people and get to know a new culture.

The downside of writing is that it can come at the expense of immersing yourself in a place and ultimately, ironically, make you feel cut off and lonely. To combat this and promote progress, it’s a good idea to stick to a writing schedule. That way you will be open to other opportunities when they come along without ignoring your writing.

Getting this book written and published felt like giving birth to a manatee, but I am so glad that I persevered. People who live

If this is what you want—to write, to see your name on a book, to tell a story—just do it.

—Mikkela Thompson



our lifestyle acquire unique perspectives and have much to offer others. So, if you have a compelling story idea, a knack for telling a story, and the urge to sit for hours and crank it out, give it a go!

Thompson: Like most things in life, if you really, really, really want it, go for it. Do not let anything stop you. If you don't know what to write about, write about yourself, as that is what you know best. Write every day. Use social media as a way to force yourself to write every day. Join a writer's group. Start with a journal or blog. Try a podcast if you can't write it down. If you can't get published, do it yourself.

Don't let anyone dissuade you, whatever the reason. If this is what you want—to write, to see your name on a book, to tell a story—just do it, even if it's just to write about how you met your partner because you think you have the greatest love story ever. Or if you want to write the sort of children's book you wish you had read when you were a child, then do that. If you can't find the time, then it's not what you really, really, really want. And that's okay, too. ■

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The Marginalization of Career Diplomats

New data on chiefs of mission suggests that the power and influence of career members of the U.S. Foreign Service are on the decline.

BY THOMAS SCHERER AND DAN SPOKOJNY

A new analysis suggests the extent of political-appointee control over U.S. foreign policy—and conversely, the decline of career-diplomat authority—is deeper than previously understood. The ambassadors who lead our embassies overseas play a vital role in shaping and implementing U.S. foreign policy. While it has been common

practice for decades for presidents to fill roughly 30 percent of chief-of-mission positions with political appointees, notably including donors, this ratio obscures a worrying decline of influence for career members of the U.S. Foreign Service.

According to a different measure—namely, the total gross domestic product (GDP) of host nations that have U.S. ambassadors who are members of the Foreign Service—the sway of career diplomats is vastly smaller.

This trend and its implications are important to keep in mind as we transition to a new administration in the coming months.



Thomas Scherer is an academic practitioner working on international crisis and intervention. Now the research director for fp21, he previously applied innovative research technologies to peace and conflict issues as deputy director of the Center for Peace and Security Studies, University of California, San Diego, and also worked at the U.S. Institute of Peace. He holds a PhD in politics from Princeton University.

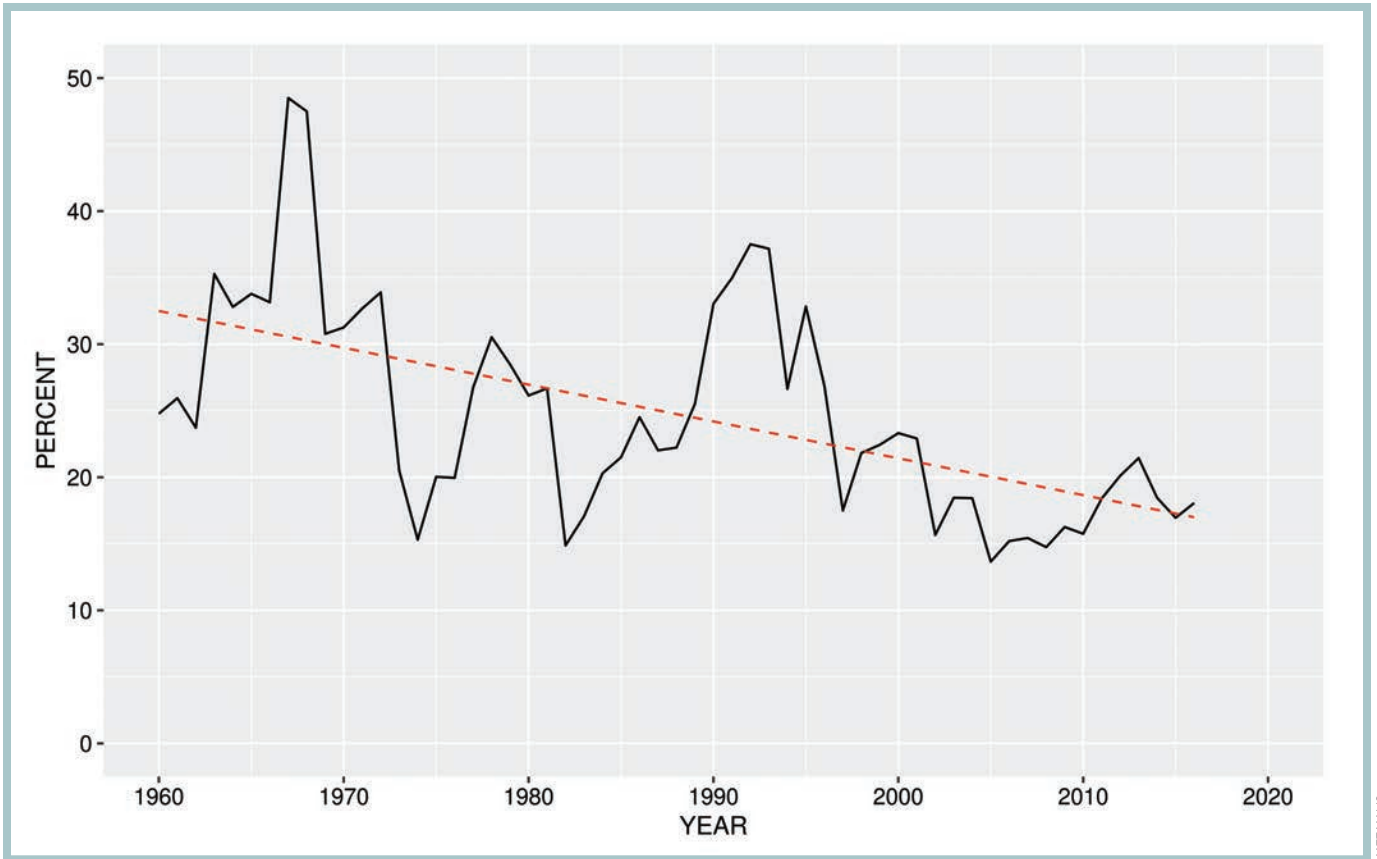


Dan Spokojny is a member of the Editorial Board of The Foreign Service Journal. He is also the founder and CEO of fp21, a think tank dedicated to studying foreign policy reform. He served in government for more than a decade, as a U.S. Foreign Service officer and a legislative staffer in Congress, and on the AFSA Governing Board. He is finishing his PhD in political science with the University of California, Berkeley, focusing on the role of expertise in foreign policy.

A Shrinking Sphere of Influence

A new analysis by fp21 shows that career FSOs have chief-of-mission authority in countries that, combined, are responsible for less than 20 percent of the world's GDP, a portion that has steadily decreased in recent decades. In other words, if you add up the GDP of all nations in which politically appointed ambassadors lead U.S. embassies, it equals more than four-fifths of the world's GDP (excluding the United States). This percentage does not account for influential multilateral ambassadorships also typically filled by political appointees, such as NATO, the United Nations, the European Union, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Data collected by scholar Matt Malis for the period from 1960 to 2015 shows no evidence that the trend of empowering political appointees over career members of the Foreign Service has significantly abated in recent years (see figure on opposite page). If anything, it may be on the rise. Data from the American Foreign



MATT MALIS

Figure 1: Aggregate GDP of Countries with Career FS U.S. Ambassadors.

Service Association suggests the Trump and Biden administrations have had the highest ratios of political appointees since Reagan (see figure on page 58).

Host-country GDP is, of course, an imperfect measure of the influence of career diplomats. The collective influence of ambassadors depends on the complicated interaction between the power of the host government, the flow of current events, the strength of the individual ambassador, and more. Nevertheless, the trend identified here is noteworthy.

Why It Matters

The choice of who leads our embassies has a measurable impact on the quality and capacity of our foreign policy institutions. Research has demonstrated that career officials, according to some metrics, are on average more effective leaders who oversee higher performance compared with their political-appointee counterparts. Career ambassadors, on average, have more of the desired qualifications, as defined by Congress, according to a study published in the *Duke Law Journal* in 2019.

The career diplomatic service was created to ensure presidents had access to nonpartisan experts who were insulated from political pressures so that they could speak truth to power. The State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research, for instance, famously dissented against the incorrect claim that Saddam Hussein’s Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction.

This trend and its implications are important to keep in mind as we transition to a new administration in the coming months.

Some fear that the reliance on political appointees at the helm of U.S. embassies risks returning our country to the pre-Pendleton Act, pre-Rogers Act spoils system. The law governing diplomacy, the Foreign Service Act of 1980, directs that “positions as chief of mission should normally be accorded to career members of the Service, though circumstances will warrant appointments from time to time of qualified individuals who are not career members of the Service.”

Worryingly, many talented young foreign policy aspirants no longer believe that joining the career Foreign Service is the most viable pathway to influence in U.S. foreign policy. The sacrifices of public service loom larger when one’s influence wanes. Morale inside the institution suffers.

What Career Diplomats Can Do

The next president of the United States, whether it be Kamala Harris or Donald Trump, will have experience in the White House.

We also believe that career diplomats deserve some of the blame for their own diminishment.

We hope that experience has taught them that the successful execution of their goals will depend, at least in part, on the career officials who serve at the cutting edge of U.S. foreign policy.

Yet, we also believe that career diplomats deserve some of the blame for their own diminishment (this is said with utmost respect; one of us is a proud former career diplomat). Career diplomats have done an ineffective job proving to presidents that their skills are superior and sufficiently differentiated from political appointees.

The definition of a profession is “a paid occupation, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification.” One must question whether the U.S. Foreign Service rises to this standard. Precious little intellectual capital has been produced from within the institution to advance meaningful professional

standards or doctrine. The Foreign Service’s muted response to the State Department’s new Core Curriculum for diplomacy is a case in point. One might have expected the institution to leap at the opportunity to set a high bar for itself.

The Foreign Service’s ethos of self-assuredness and habit of eschewing rigorous training not only jeopardizes the quality of U.S. foreign policy but is also politically ineffective. The evidence presented here suggests the influence of the Foreign Service has been on a steady decline for decades. We are particularly disappointed when Foreign Service luminaries claim that foreign policy is “an art, not a science.” It is not merely anachronistic; it is an invitation for outsiders to join diplomacy’s ranks with little formal training.

Most observers would agree that there is a role for both political appointees and highly professionalized career officials in leading the State Department. We believe that the next president can identify a more reasonable balance between career and political appointees. Ultimately, what matters is the strength of our national security and the United States’ ability to contribute to a more just and stable world.

The apparent marginalization of career diplomats is good for neither. ■

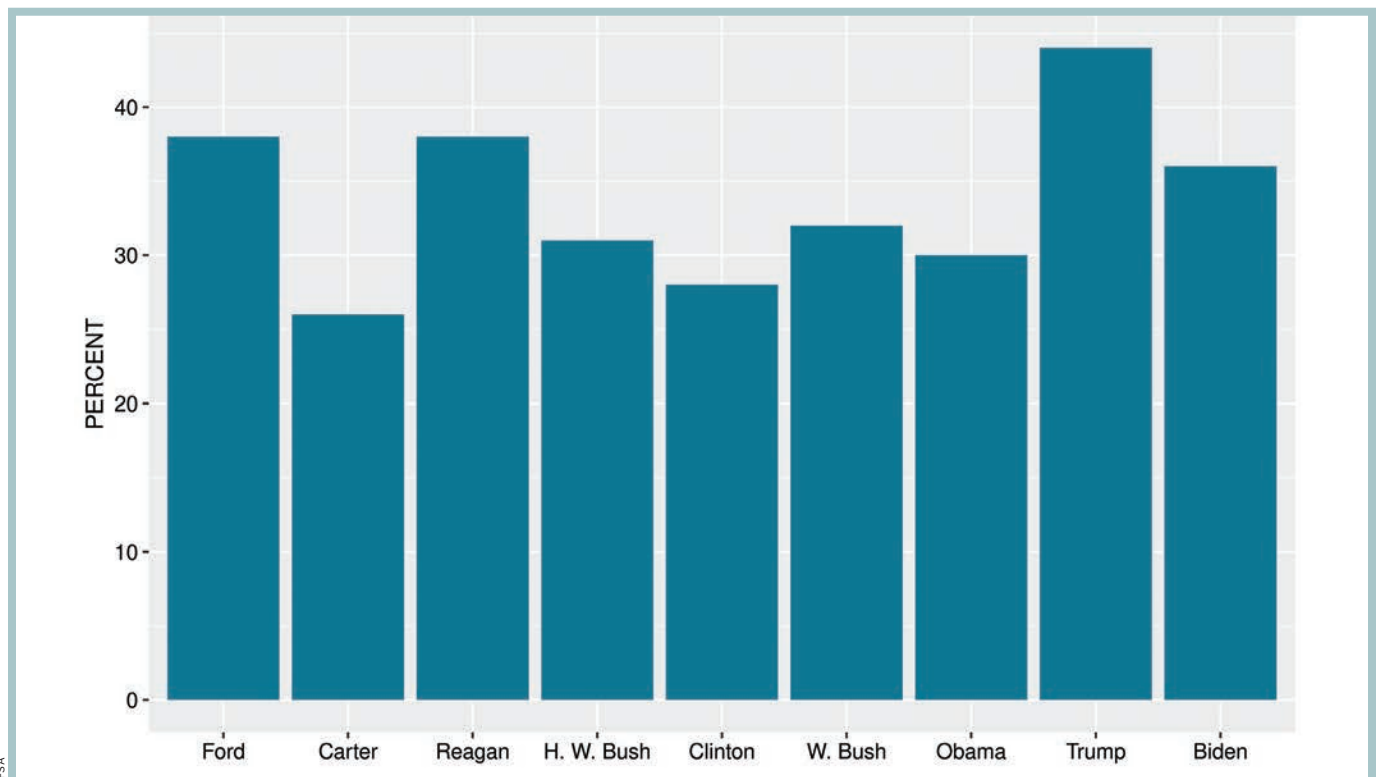


Figure 2: Political-Appointee Ambassadors by Administration.



Controlling Kissinger

A control officer reflects on his experience with the former Secretary of State and their time in Berlin.

BY FLETCHER M. BURTON

To my generation of Foreign Service officers, Henry Kissinger was an intimidating figure, some combination of Metternich, Machiavelli, and Mephistopheles. My chance to take the measure of the man came in the last week of March 2000, when he traveled to Berlin on one of his periodic visits to take the German pulse. Kissinger was then 76. Some 30 years his junior, I was a mid-level diplomat at the U.S. embassy. The plum assignment to serve as his control officer fell my way—a designation grandiose in any

circumstance and especially so with the former Secretary of State. Yet I wondered if the plum was really a sour apple.

Kissinger was intrigued by the shape-shifting city. United but not unified, like the country itself, Berlin had by then reclaimed the seat of the German government. Kissinger knew its past, its complexity, its significance through history. The city was as multifaceted as was Kissinger himself. As a statesman, historian, and native German, he wanted to plumb its many dimensions. He was keen to explore.

For several days I accompanied Kissinger as he made the rounds in Berlin. A control officer does not have the authority of, say, a jockey over a horse; I was more of a stable-hand, helping the real rider into the saddle. There was, however, considerable interest for me in the time in between, especially during long talks in the car or back at his hotel near the Brandenburg Gate. Kissinger spoke openly of his impressions of Berlin as a city, the leadership style of Germans and Americans, his memories of Germany as a boy in Fürth and as an American GI in Hannover, and his own approach to writing history.



Fletcher M. Burton, a retired Foreign Service officer and former ambassador, served several tours in Germany, including in divided and united Berlin, in Bonn when it was the capital, and in Leipzig as consul general. Before joining the Foreign Service, he was a Fulbright scholar at the University of Bonn.



COURTESY OF FLETCHER BURTON

The author at a groundbreaking ceremony for the new U.S. embassy in Berlin in 2004, a few years after the Kissinger visit.

Statesman as Cityman

Berlin fascinated Kissinger. He wanted to know about all its varied aspects: the reconstruction of the kaiser’s palace (now the Humboldt Forum), the remnants of the Berlin Wall, the location of the chancellor’s residence, and the Norman Foster design of the Reichstag dome. When we passed the Holocaust Memorial next to the Brandenburg Gate, he wondered out loud about the political effect in Germany of building “a monument to its shame in the heart of the capital,” as he put it. When we passed a theater, he asked if plays of Bertolt Brecht were still staged with their “mordant view of human nature.”

His inquisitive attitude manifested itself as a series of quizzes: Did I know if Daniel Barenboim was still conducting at one of the opera houses? (He was.) Who was up, who was down, in the German Foreign Office? (I could speculate, for that was my beat.) And could I identify the near-identical churches, known

as the German and the French, on Gendarme Square? (I made a lucky guess.)

We discussed the dramatic changes that had swept across the city. I recalled my summer internship at the U.S. mission in Berlin in 1987, when, as I told him, I had drawn on his memoirs, using some of his same language on Berlin’s special status in my own reports. “Oh really?” he said. “Probably the first time the State Department had read it.”

Leadership Comparisons

He was particularly interested in the varying styles of German leaders. We discussed Churchill’s sardonic put-down of Kaiser Wilhelm, who strutted around desperately hoping to be taken for another Napoleon or Frederick the Great. Churchill got it right, Kissinger said, adding that Kaiser Wilhelm was a miscast figure who marched into a war he did not want.

A control officer does not have the authority of, say, a jockey over a horse; I was more of a stable-hand, helping the real rider into the saddle.

Our talk turned to Chancellor Adenauer, whom Kissinger admired, in part because of the old chancellor's judgment (directed at Franz Josef Strauss, the Bavarian paladin) that "one should never confuse energy with strength."

He told of a memorable episode with Adenauer: The two had once had a conversation in which they concluded that the breach between the Soviet Union and China was widening. When Adenauer later made this same point to President John F. Kennedy, adding that "your own adviser Kissinger agrees with me," JFK expressed his displeasure that his own adviser was not sharing his insights with him. Kissinger told the story without the consternation he must have felt at the time—and with a bit of satisfaction that, after all, the insight had been correct.

He called JFK "charismatic but superficial," adding that "Nixon was better equipped but then obsessed with Kennedy." For Kissinger and me—indeed, for all Americans then in Berlin—Kennedy remained a presence, almost spiritual, because of his passionate expression of solidarity with the city.

Recalling my earlier days as a student at Bonn University, I mentioned a remark by Adenauer that I remembered every time I glanced at the Rhine. The difference between European and American civilization, Adenauer once said, can be traced back to their river systems: The rivers of Europe flow south to north, bringing civilized habits with them; in contrast, the rivers in the U.S. flow north to south, without the same nourishing effect. Kissinger was intrigued by the geographical principle but did not accept its universal validity. Instead, we agreed, Adenauer's remark said more about him—as a Catholic soul with a Rhenish heart who served as mayor of Cologne and chancellor in Bonn—than about cultural determinants.

As for current German leaders, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, the Social Democrat, and the up-and-coming Angela Merkel, the Christian Democrat who had just become her party's head, Kissinger asked the same questions: What was their understanding of history? Their seminal experience? Their generational imprint? What did they know of the U.S.? Did they feel an emotional bond with Americans? Answers to such questions, he believed, offered a window on their psychology,

a foundation stone of their politics. In neither case was he sure of the answers. He had come to Berlin for a closer look.

A Generational Divide

Kissinger's writings make clear that he viewed the return of Germany after World War II to the community of nations as one of the greatest successes of American diplomacy. Now he was troubled, however. A new generation was rising in German politics. Their historical knowledge seemed limited, their political orientation uncertain.

The generational prism was a main lens for Kissinger. Judging by his April 6, 2000, thank you letter to Ambassador John Kornblum, Kissinger was most taken by a small luncheon: "The opportunity for candid discussion with such a group of young leaders was extremely helpful to my understanding of some of the issues and trends that will be dealt with in the coming years. I greatly appreciated the time with them."

There was always the old guard. At the Adlon Hotel, Kissinger rendezvoused with former Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Kissinger was also eager to see his old friend, Gräfin von Dönhoff, a wonderfully cultivated German from an earlier cultural epoch, a woman who was, as I knew from her memoir and mentioned to her in the Adlon lobby, only two degrees of separation (or, as the Germans say, two handshakes) from Wolfgang von Goethe.

Kissinger and I reminisced about his hometown of Fürth, which I had once visited by bicycle, riding around looking for Kissinger's boyhood home. He recalled his return to his native Germany during World War II, this time wearing the uniform of the U.S. Army. He related one of his assignments, sitting outside an office and trying to detect former Gestapo types solely by their appearance, commenting that it was a bit preposterous.

Kant and Spengler

At one street corner, he spotted a poster announcing the Ninth Congress on the German philosopher of the Enlightenment Immanuel Kant, a conclave that overlapped with his own visit in Berlin. That brought a gleam to his eye. "Kant!" he said,

Kissinger's writings make clear that he viewed the return of Germany after World War II to the community of nations as one of the greatest successes of American diplomacy. Now he was troubled, however.

"I once did a paper on him ..." trailing off to allow for, even invite, a follow-up question. That was his senior thesis at college. Kissinger told me Kant took his symbolic logic too far, but he clearly felt an intellectual sympathy with Kant, and there was palpable pride in his long-ago thesis.

In fact, I had heard of his senior thesis while I was in college, not because of its treatment of Kant but of Spengler, who was the subject of my own paper. Kissinger was surprised that I knew of the unpublished manuscript. I said that Spengler's *Decline of the West* had riveted me, both its method of universal cultural comparisons and its doomsday prophetic tone. Spengler, Kissinger said, offered a new way of thinking about cultures that he had never encountered before. And in Spengler's lesser-known work, *Prussianism and Socialism*, Kissinger contended, he was right in predicting what actually happened in the 1930s in Germany.

Reasons of State

I brought up Kissinger's recent work, *Diplomacy*. When it first came out, in 1994, I was working in the State Department and, at the morning meeting of office directors in the European bureau, read out the book's dedication: "To the men and women of the Foreign Service of the United States of America, whose professionalism and dedication sustain American diplomacy." Kissinger was pleased with the book's reception as well as with the German translation of its title, *Staatsvernunft*. "That's a good title in German," he said, one that suggested *raison d'état* above and beyond diplomacy.

I asked when he found time to write. "Mostly on weekends," he said, in longhand on a yellow legal pad. "I'm obsessive about it." And did he feel, when he finished a book, that sense of relief but also emptiness, the melancholy that comes with saying farewell to a long-term companion that Edward Gibbon noted after completion of his volumes on the Roman Empire? "There is a void," he said.

Kissinger had brought along copies of his latest book, the third volume of his memoirs, *Years of Renewal*, as gifts for his German hosts. I asked about the last section, "A Personal Note," in which he wrote about his grandfather's words of wisdom,

conveyed in German: "*Der Mensch muss seine Schuldigkeit tun* [A human being must always fulfill his moral obligation]." I said, "*Schuldigkeit* is an old-fashioned term, not heard often anymore; it's really a form of virtue." Kissinger agreed, "It's all about virtue." I wondered if the principle had also guided his *Staatsvernunft*.

One of the last events of his visit was a television interview. His hotel suite was transformed into a studio with lights and cameras. Kissinger pushed to find out what questions might arise, though he was not worried about one particular area. "It's fine if they ask about Vietnam. I can handle myself on Vietnam," he said, like a hardened litigator.

Baby Chickens and Crayfish

On the evening of March 30, the American Academy in Berlin, of which Kissinger was a founder, hosted a dinner in his honor. The back of its menu (*entrée*: crepinet of baby chickens and crayfish with Swiss chard and saffron noodles) served as my notetaking paper for his speech at the event. I recorded themes clustering around statesmanship: the importance of a "sense of direction and national interest" derived from a study of history; examples of both great leadership (President Harry S Truman after WWII) and inept (Kaiser Wilhelm before WWI); and the need for gradualism rather than absolutism in diplomacy. He concluded his remarks on a clarion note, a reference to his revered Kant and the philosopher's prophecy that "eternal peace" would come from either catastrophe or insight.

As he finished his extensive program in Berlin, Kissinger was keen to return to New York, judging by an overheard phone call to his wife and their discussion of what she would serve him upon his return (scrambled eggs). For me, the assignment had not been a rotten plum after all. The sour apple was handed to his shotgun-riding security aide, a young man on his first overseas outing with a very demanding boss. Kissinger taunted him and, behind his back, ridiculed him. It left me shaking my head. It was the Kissinger sometimes spoken of in State Department corridors, brusque with subordinates, less than generous in spirit. Insistent. Controlling. He was uncannily like the layered, prodigious metropolis he had just explored. ■

Overseas Comparability Pay Update

A potential, severe pay cut for Foreign Service members overseas has been averted as overseas comparability pay (OCP) continues. Introduced in 2009, OCP helps address a significant pay gap between Foreign Service employees serving abroad and their counterparts stationed in Washington, D.C.

This salary adjustment, which averages 22 percent, ensures more equitable compensation for entry- and mid-level Foreign Service members posted overseas.

The pay gap stems from the Federal Pay Comparability Act of 1990, which excluded federal employees outside the continental U.S. from receiving locality pay adjustments, leaving Foreign Service personnel—who spend

about 60 percent of their careers abroad—at a financial disadvantage compared to their domestic colleagues.

OCP currently provides two-thirds of the locality pay that Washington-based colleagues receive.

In late September, as the fiscal year drew to a close without an authorization bill to fund the government, Congress faced a critical deadline to pass a continuing resolution (CR) to avoid a government shutdown.

OCP authorization was set to expire at the end of the fiscal year, which would have resulted in a significant financial loss for Foreign Service members overseas.

On Sept. 18, the House failed to pass a six-month CR, which also did not include the

OCP authority extension. This setback prompted further bipartisan negotiations; after several days of discussions, Congress passed a CR containing the OCP authorization extension on Sept. 27.

This legislation extends OCP authority through Dec. 20, 2024, preventing both a government shutdown and a potential lapse in OCP. While this extension brings immediate relief, it is clear that the fight for a long-term solution is not over.

AFSA's advocacy efforts during this critical period were extensive. We worked diligently behind the scenes to build support in Congress, collaborating with key members to generate bipartisan momentum for OCP.

Continued on page 67

CALENDAR

Please check afsa.org/events for the most up-to-date information.

November 11
Veterans Day
AFSA Offices Closed

November 14
11 a.m.-1 p.m.
Centennial Book Market
and Publishing Panel

November 20
12-1:30 p.m.
AFSA Governing
Board Meeting

November 28-29
Thanksgiving
AFSA Offices Closed

December 11
12-1:30 p.m.
AFSA Governing
Board Meeting

December 11
Member Happy Hour

AFSA Happy Hour

On Sept. 12, AFSA hosted a happy hour at its headquarters, drawing more than 100 members for a celebratory way to mark the end of summer.

The event brought together new hires, retirees, friends, and colleagues, all eager to connect, share stories, and enjoy the evening.

AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi welcomed attendees as guests mingled while enjoying snacks and a selection of special beverages. He noted that this happy hour was extra special because it celebrated the 100th anni-

versary of both the Foreign Service and AFSA.

Yazdgerdi also acknowledged that the issue of overseas comparability pay (OCP) was weighing on the minds of many—and assured those present that it was AFSA's top priority to get extension of this mission-critical pay included in the continuing resolution before Congress.

The event was sponsored by the American Foreign Service Protective Association (AFSPA), whose representatives were on hand to assist members with any questions. ■



Attendees mingle and enjoy light hors d'oeuvres at AFSA HQ.



State's Talent Retention Objectives

Many of our members tuned in to Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Director General Marcia Bernicat's Talent Retention Townhall on Sept. 4, when they unveiled the department's first Talent Retention Plan.

The plan, a 41-page report available on the State Department intranet, documents findings from a three-year investigation into retention and employee experience challenges at the State Department.

According to the preamble, "the Plan [is] an important step in re-establishing the department's reputation as an employer-of-choice for a talented and diverse workforce." Let's take a closer look.

This Talent Retention Plan is changing the conversation about how our institution understands the employee experience in the department.

Its authors acknowledge that economic officers, Pickering and Rangel Fellowship alumni, women, and Black Americans (especially women), as well as women across all Foreign Service specialist tracks, have been experiencing higher levels of regrettable attrition (the loss of talented employees due to job dissatisfaction) than average rates when compared to other employee categories.

The plan recommends the prioritization of improvements in professional growth and development, more

equitable and transparent talent management systems, stronger management and leadership training at mid- and senior-levels, family support for FS employees, advancement of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) principles, and support of workplace and career flexibilities.

Unfortunately, many of these recommendations are conceptual rather than actionable, and do not include any office/bureau commitments, budgetary allocations, or specific objectives.

AFSA sees the need for the department to communicate these specific details to the entire workforce, including and especially in the appendix, called "the Talent Retention Action Plan," which has not been made available to AFSA or employees.

I have urged State Department leaders to share that specific action plan this fall. AFSA is excited about partnering with the department to advocate for the resources to build out an ambitious Talent Retention Plan, and it is vital that our union is part of this journey every step of the way.

I understand our members remain frustrated about vital programs that have been held back from the workforce, such as emergency backup care or the ongoing concerns about slow promotion rates for our FS-3s and FS-2s across generalist cones and mid-rank specialists.

Many of the bureaucratic processes inside our institution make it seem like our talent retention objectives perpetuate redundancy and internal hurdles rather than building collaborative systems.

Our common sense of mission must combine with tangible career growth and attainable career paths for our dedicated and talented workforce.

Too often we hear from employee organizations and individual members that the department does not get that recipe right.

Many of the bureaucratic processes inside our institution make it seem like our talent retention objectives perpetuate redundancy and internal hurdles rather than building collaborative systems and providing workforce opportunities that pave the way to a truly modern and nimble Foreign Service.

I do want to credit the plan's acknowledgment of the need to seek more representation across our department to reflect the diversity of the United States, particularly striving to meet U.S. workforce demographic benchmarks.

I also strongly endorse recommendations to strengthen recruitment and training of our workforce in

critical skills areas aligned with the Secretary's Modernization Agenda.

However, many other areas outlined in the plan, such as "workforce management" and "succession planning," appear to fall short in addressing real resource constraints and existing bureaucratic hurdles.

When our workforce is busy dealing with one global crisis after another, while they are trying to navigate unnecessary hurdles such as pet importation restrictions or payroll issues outside their control, there is no space to decompress, engage peers at the working level, or study lessons learned.

The bottom line: we need peer learning platforms to learn from both our policy successes and failures, and we need to build a culture that values and fully realizes employee talents. Employees want to see more than just the Talent Retention Plan, and we have a lot more to get done together. ■



Thank You, Sue

We meet new people throughout our careers, adding friends and professional contacts before moving on to the next assignment, the next group of friends, the next set of contacts, and the next set of farewells.

An important farewell is coming my way this fall, when my friend, colleague, coach, and mentor Sue Bremner departs AFSA to begin her well-deserved retirement.

Sue joined AFSA as USAID Labor Management adviser in 2019 after more than 30 years in the Foreign Service.

While at the State Department, she rose through the ranks to the Senior Foreign Service, served as chief of mission at two embassies, and worked in Asia, Europe, Africa, and here at home.

Throughout her career, Sue has supported colleagues who have felt themselves to be victims of institutional inflexibility or bias, helping them identify formal and informal remedies. She has been a proud member of AFSA since her first days as an FSO.

Like many of you, I met Sue in less-than-ideal circumstances. It was during the COVID-19 pandemic, and for the first time since joining USAID and AFSA, I needed support. In a fevered pitch of anger, angst, and frustration, I sent a long

rambling email with attachments to Sue and USAID VP Jason Singer. A few hours later, Sue replied with an invitation to call later that night.

She listened to me sound off on how the agency was letting me down and my desire to fight for what I thought I was due. Once I was done, she said: "Well, I hear and understand your frustration. Unfortunately, what USAID is doing is their right." It's not what I had hoped to hear, but it is what I needed to hear.

She calmly laid out the policy and identified ways I could push back and ask for some relief. I would not get what I thought I was due, but I did get solid direction and solutions to ensure I was protected and recognized.

Her advice worked. A week later, we talked again by phone. Not only was there a resolution, but my situation was much improved.

Three years later, as the new AFSA USAID vice president, I met Sue in person for the first time. I don't know if she remembered our earlier discussion or not, but her approach hadn't changed. She was still listening, still providing that reality check, and still offering solutions.

When I started in this new position, I had ideas and expectations. Sue helped channel my energy, set an approach for work-

ing with agency leaders to advance AFSA interests, and grounded it all within the history of the association, current policy, and the successes and failures of previous VPs.

Without her coaching and mentoring, the past year would have been different.

Mind you, all of that was just her side gig. Her main job supporting 1,600-plus USAID AFSA members kept her busy day and night, on weekends, holidays, and during vacation. Sue never hesitated to take a call or respond to an email, logging contact with some 60-100 members per month.

Some member issues were resolved with a single email; others took more work. Regardless, everyone received her respect, compassion, time, and the best professional advice. Whether shaking loose a

stalled reimbursement, defending an allegation of misconduct, or supporting the filing of a grievance, Sue made you feel like you were her only client and that it was personal to her, too.

I am not sure how relaxing Sue's retirement will be—between translating Chinese poetry into English, serving on various arts boards, editing manuscripts, and traveling with her partner, it sounds as though she'll be busy. But it's a busy centered on fulfillment and enrichment.

On behalf of USAID Foreign Service and Foreign Service Limited officers, I want to thank you, Sue, for all your hard work and unwavering support for USAID FSOs and AFSA.

You will be missed. Take care and enjoy your retirement. Farewell, Sue. ■

AFSA BOOK MARKET!

Join us on **November 14** at **AFSA Headquarters** for a special **Centennial Book Market and Publishing Panel**.

Don't miss this chance to explore new titles and learn more about the art and business of getting published from industry professionals.





Honoring Fallen Colleagues

During my 14 years on the AFSA Governing Board, I have worked with other AFSA officers and staff to maintain and expand the AFSA Memorial Plaques that grace the walls and columns of the State Department's diplomatic entrance.

The 12 plaques currently honor 321 colleagues who died in circumstances distinctive to overseas service since the founding of the republic.

In 2001, when I was AFSA president, the Governing Board restored—after a half-century in abeyance—the original plaque criteria honoring colleagues who died in the line of duty such as in vehicular crashes during official travel.

That resulted in the inscription of 29 names of State Department or USAID colleagues who died between 1959 and 2000.

In 2021, as AFSA retiree vice president, I coordinated adding the names of 67 consuls and diplomats dating back to 1794 whose deaths in circumstances qualifying for inscription were recently discovered by researchers mining online databases.

That same year, to preserve the remaining plaque space to honor future deaths, I led the creation of the Virtual AFSA Memorial Plaque to commemorate any additional fallen colleagues from past decades and centuries whose names

are belatedly discovered. As of today, five have been so honored.

While I felt great pride in helping to get those 101 colleagues properly honored, I never looked forward to the occasional difficult conversations with friends and family members of colleagues who died in circumstances that did not qualify for inscription.

To be sure, all deaths are tragic—especially those of colleagues serving our country far from home. But there are practical, philosophical, and legal reasons why not all overseas deaths can be commemorated on AFSA's polished stone plaques.

The practical reason is that there is insufficient space in the C Street lobby to display the names of the more than 1,000 early consuls and diplomats and post-1923 Foreign Service members who died overseas.

The philosophical reason is the desire to focus visitors to the plaques on the distinctive dangers of life and work in the Foreign Service such as terrorism. To do so requires excluding deaths due to natural causes and in other circumstances not directly attributable to carrying out official duties in the location of assignment.

The legal reason is that the 1933 Joint Resolution of Congress authorizing the placement of the AFSA plaque on government

The 12 plaques currently honor 321 colleagues who died in circumstances distinctive to overseas service since the founding of the republic.

property made it clear that the people whose names were inscribed were to have died in circumstances distinctive to overseas service. Thus, were AFSA to begin inscribing all deaths, it could prompt a challenge to AFSA's authority to continue updating the plaques.

I have often explained this to people inquiring about plaque criteria, because AFSA presidents in the last six years have forwarded inquiries to me for initial review based on my institutional knowledge of plaque history and criteria. Previously, that role was filled by longtime members of AFSA's Awards and Plaques Committee.

For many decades, this committee comprised mostly active-duty and retired AFSA members, many with years of experience adjudicating plaque nominations.

For example, in 2016 the committee had two Governing Board members and seven regular AFSA members. But in 2017, AFSA replaced all the previous committee members with five Governing Board members.

Since then, with some exceptions including myself, most committee members have served only during their single two-year Governing Board term.

They inevitably arrive with no knowledge of the plaque criteria or the case histories of how the criteria have been applied over the past 91 years. This loss of institutional knowledge was compounded earlier this year by the departure of the AFSA staff member who had advised the committee for five years.

With my eight years' service as retiree VP ending next summer, my departing advice to the new board taking office in July 2025 will be to resume appointing at least some regular AFSA members to the Awards and Plaques Committee—seeking volunteers who anticipate being able to serve for six or more years.

Rebuilding institutional knowledge on this committee would safeguard AFSA's ability to correctly and consistently apply plaque criteria to properly honor our colleagues dying in circumstances distinctive to overseas service. ■

AFSA Welcomes New Executive Assistant

We are delighted to welcome Jahari Fraser to the AFSA team as the new executive assistant to the president.

Born outside the Bay Area, with family roots in Jamaica and Guyana, Jahari was raised in Atlanta. He attended Bard College in upstate New York, where he earned a degree in global and international studies, concentrating in global economics, Latin American and Iberian studies, and Spanish literature.

As a leadership fellow for the Inspire Brands Foundation, he played a key role in leading a high school internship program, managing in-restaurant fundraising efforts, and overseeing employee-giving initiatives.

What excites Jahari most about joining AFSA is the opportunity to witness the full cycle of a Foreign Service career and to contribute to the team's success in championing its members. His passion for community

engagement and operational efficiency will be invaluable to AFSA as we continue advocating for our members.

Outside of work, Jahari enjoys creating ceramics, attending music festivals and concerts, traveling, and spending time with friends and family.

We welcome Jahari to our team and wish him all the best in his new role. You can contact Jahari at fraser@afsa.org. ■



Jahari Fraser

Overseas Comparability Pay Update Continued from page 63

Three congressional letters, spearheaded by key advocates, were instrumental in making the case. The first letter was led by Rep. Dina Titus (D-Nev.) and was signed by members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) and Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska), co-chairs of the Senate Foreign Service Caucus, led a second letter addressed to Senate leadership.

Finally, Rep. Gerry Conolly (D-Va.) rallied members from the D.C., Maryland, and Virginia delegations to send a third letter to House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.). These efforts helped ensure that OCP was included in the final CR and demonstrated broad, bipartisan support for the issue.

Beyond building congressional support, AFSA undertook targeted outreach to House and Senate leaders, focusing on the committees with oversight of foreign affairs and personnel policies.

Additionally, AFSA gathered anonymized member testimonials that highlighted the personal impact of OCP and shared these broadly, including across our social media platforms and with congressional partners.

In parallel, we mobilized grassroots efforts by equipping our members with the tools to contact their representatives directly. Many of you reached out to your elected officials, and we are grateful for your engagement.

AFSA also partnered with organizations such as the American Academy of Diplomacy and the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition.

Our communications strategy played a central role in raising awareness about OCP. We conducted media interviews, submitted op-eds to Hill publications, and launched a social media campaign that spanned Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.

It's important to note that throughout our advocacy, we did not encounter any opposition to including the OCP extension in the CR.

Looking ahead, AFSA is focused on securing a long-term solution. While the CR extends OCP through Dec. 20, 2024, we are hoping that the FY25 State Department Authorization Act, which extends OCP through FY26, will be attached to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

The NDAA has traditionally passed every year, and we are optimistic that it will pass this year with this key OCP

provision. However, should the NDAA not provide this extension, we are confident Congress will address the issue through another legislative vehicle, such as a follow-on CR or an appropriations legislation.

Our ultimate goal remains a permanent authorization for OCP. We will also continue to fight for full Washington, D.C., locality pay for all overseas Foreign Service members, rather than the current two-thirds.

While achieving permanent authorization and full funding may take time—especially with a divided Congress—we are encouraged by the bipartisan support we have received thus far.

This support provides us with new momentum to press for a long-term fix, and we remain committed to prioritizing OCP as part of our broader advocacy strategy. ■

Governing Board Welcomes Heather Pishko

AFSA welcomes our newest State representative, Heather Pishko, to the Governing Board.

Heather joined the Foreign Service as an office management specialist (OMS) in 2006. Her diplomatic journey has taken her to five international posts, including Helsinki, Lima, Frankfurt, Belgrade, and Astana. Domestically, Heather has served in various roles in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in FSI's political training division, at the Florida Regional Center, and, most recently, in the front office of the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau.

Before joining the State Department, Heather worked as a patent secretary at several intellectual property law firms in Chicago.

She holds a BA in Russian and international studies from Macalester College and a JD from DePaul University College of Law.

Heather's dedication to fostering inclusion was highlighted during her tenure as chair of the Disability Action Group from 2020 to 2022.

In addition to her professional achievements, Heather enjoys traveling, reading, and coloring. She is also a dedicated NASCAR fan, sharing a passion for the sport with her

sister. Together, they've visited six different tracks over the past 20 years—they even got to meet their favorite driver, Ward Burton.

Beyond her career and racing fandom, Heather is an avid collector of ostrich figurines, boasting an eclectic collection that includes items made from various materials—even bottle caps.

During the pandemic, when a colleague mentioned that he found Shakespeare boring, Heather—a trained Shakespearean actress—took up the challenge. Her performance of the witches' song from *Macbeth* won over her colleague and sparked



Heather Pishko

a monthly dramatic reading tradition at the end of staff meetings, bringing a touch of theatrical joy to two years of teleworking. ■

A Clean AFSA Audit

The American Foreign Service Association is proud to let its members know that for the 15th straight year, the association has received the highest possible commendation in its annual audit: a clean, unmodified opinion.

While AFSA is not required by any internal or external regulations to undergo an annual audit, we believe doing so is important to ensure adherence to the strictest financial controls.

The accounting firm, Gross Mendelsohn, found no deficiencies in AFSA's 2023 financial reporting and financial operations. The AFSA Governing Board received the official report at its August board meeting.

AFSA Executive Director Ásgeir Sigfússon said, "I should no longer be surprised after 15 years of good news on the audit front, but it's nonetheless very gratifying to be able to point to this record of success. It's something we are very proud of, as it assures our members that we take our role as a steward of their resources seriously."

The relevant documents will be posted publicly on the AFSA website in December. ■



AFSA Governing Board Meeting, August 21, 2024

At their Aug. 21 meeting, the board appointed AFSA State representative Greg Floyd to serve on the Legal Defense Fund Committee.

The board accepted the resignation of AFSA State Representative Kimberly Harrington, effective Aug. 22, 2024. The board appointed Heather Pishko to replace Harrington.

AFSA's auditing partner, Gross Mendelsohn, presented the board with a preliminary audit briefing.

The board agreed to move its October AFSA Governing Board meeting to Oct. 15 to accommodate a recruitment luncheon the following day. ■

Emergency Travel Policy Update

AFSA extends its congratulations to Americans by Choice (ABC) for initiating the advocacy that led to AFSA's and ABC's partnership to secure an important update to the State Department's Emergency Visitation Travel (EVT) policy. The revised policy now allows all State Department Foreign Service employees eligible for EVT to book authorized travel regardless of whether the destination is domestic or overseas.

Over the past year, AFSA and ABC collaborated with the State Department to successfully remove the cost-construct requirement for EVT to locations

outside the United States. This policy change means employees no longer need to cost-construct travel costs to their service separation residence address when the emergency destination is outside the U.S. Covered expenses include flight costs, airport taxes, connecting transportation, and checked luggage.

AFSA encourages active-duty State members to review 24 State 89126 to ensure they understand the updated procedures before booking after-hours emergency tickets. We continue to advocate that this policy be extended to all six foreign affairs agencies. ■


Foreign Service Grievance Board Appointments

Congratulations to the retired Foreign Service members appointed by Secretary of State Antony Blinken to the Foreign Service Grievance Board for two-year terms starting Oct. 1, 2024.

As required by the Foreign Service Act of 1980, the candidates were jointly nominated by AFSA and the five agencies utilizing the Foreign Service personnel system.

New member Sylvia Johnson (State) replaces Ambassador Donald Yamamoto (State), whom AFSA thanks for his service. Reappointed members are Kristen Bauer (State), Ambassador Greg Delawie (State), and Stuart Hatcher (State). Reappointed as FSGB chair is legal professional Charles Carron. ■


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David L. Mortimer, CPA, has over 25 years of experience in tax planning and research, including developing tax minimization strategies, planning business/real estate transactions and audit representation.

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- Financial planning
- Practiced before the IRS



David L. Mortimer, CPA
120 S Royal Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: (703) 869-0272 • Fax: (202) 204-5199
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AFSA's Good Works

Public Outreach and Education

AFSA has long conducted public outreach and education to increase understanding among the American people about the role of the Foreign Service.

Engaging with students, academics, think tanks, the media, congressional audiences, and the general public, AFSA tells the story of America's diplomats and development professionals to ensure that others understand the importance of properly resourced diplomacy.

In 1954, AFSA launched one of its earliest public outreach initiatives, a contest offering cash prizes to students and other members of the public for essays on how to improve the organization and administration of the U.S. Foreign Service.

To fund those prizes, AFSA created what is now called the Fund for American Diplomacy (FAD). Over the past 70 years, that 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity evolved from a narrow focus on the essay contest to a broader portfolio encompassing all AFSA's outreach work.

Funding for the FAD comes from outside donors and AFSA member contributions. Check your email in late November for a message from AFSA asking for "Giving Tuesday" donations. It is also registered in the Combined Federal Campaign as "Diplomacy Matters-AFSA" at CFC number #10646.

Today, the FAD supports a variety of public education programs including the AFSA National High School Essay Contest, which has garnered thousands of entries over the past quarter century; publication of the book *Inside a U.S. Embassy*, which in three unique editions has sold more than 200,000 copies; a robust speakers bureau that sends Foreign Service speakers around the country to address university and community groups; and the Road Scholar Program, a five-day academic program for senior citizens wanting to further understand U.S. diplomacy.

Additionally, AFSA runs an awards program that highlights the achievements and sacrifices of those in the Foreign Service community. And, for more than 90 years, the AFSA Memorial Plaques have offered visitors to the State Department an inspiring reminder of Foreign Service sacrifice.

In recent years, AFSA has expanded its public outreach into webinars and social media content creation to keep fol-

AFSA's Good Works

Each edition during our centennial year, The Foreign Service Journal is profiling an AFSA program that advances the collective or individual interests of its members. This issue features public outreach and education.

lowers up to date on issues of interest to the Foreign Service community.

AFSA is online on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and X (formerly known as Twitter). A recent initiative recruited family members to help gather and create engaging "behind-the-scenes" social media content to shed light on the work and life of members of the Foreign Service.

During the soon-to-conclude Foreign Service centennial year, AFSA has conducted a variety of public outreach efforts, including exhibits at three U.S. presidential libraries and the production of a video highlighting 100 years of the Foreign Service, which premiered at AFSA's centennial gala held at the State Department last spring.

Finally, AFSA has long worked with both major and minor media outlets to tell the Foreign Service story. Sometimes AFSA's perspective appears as quotes from the AFSA president. Other times, AFSA suggests the topic to the reporter and provides background information cited in the article.

Each May, to coincide with Foreign Service Day, AFSA recruits retired members from around the country to submit op-eds to their local newspaper highlighting the service and sacrifice of career diplomats.

All these efforts align with AFSA's broader mission: to serve as the voice of the Foreign Service. AFSA's goal is that Americans beyond the Beltway not only understand the work of our diplomats but also recognize how essential it is to American prosperity.

This past summer, 2024 High School Essay Contest winner Ian Rosenzweig shared how the contest opened his eyes to the importance of the Foreign Service and said: "Other high schoolers should know how important the Foreign Service is to America's place on the global stage and the entire global network of work that's being done in diplomacy and international relations and how directly that impacts our everyday lives."

Through this vital public outreach, AFSA builds support for the Foreign Service and helps lay the groundwork for a robust diplomatic corps in the future. ■

—John K. Naland

■ **Queenie Sorrel Goldstein Andrus**, 81, the spouse of retired FSO Donald Bruce Andrus, passed away on Aug. 9, 2024, in Montreal, Canada, from myeloid dysplasia syndrome and the complications of an E. coli infection.

Ms. Andrus was born on Oct. 31, 1942, in Montreal to Tena Sydney Levitt Goldstein and Bernard Harry Goldstein. She graduated from the School of Nursing of the Jewish General Hospital in Montreal and worked at the Jewish General Hospital; Verdun Hospital; Maimonides in Montreal, where she worked with famed psychiatrists Dr. Vivian Rakoff and Dr. Heinz Lehmann; Massachusetts General Hospital, specifically in the Bulfinch metabolic research unit; Boston State Hospital; and hospitals in Caldwell and Moscow, Idaho, and in Columbia, South Carolina. She was a compassionate and dedicated nurse throughout her life.

Ms. Andrus married Bruce Andrus in 1970 in Montreal. In 1977, she joined her husband in a career in the U.S. Foreign Service and was also a nurse in Hong Kong and at embassies in Rabat, Islamabad, New Delhi, and Antananarivo, and at the State Department in Washington, D.C.

Ms. Andrus valued her medical colleagues and learned from them, and, in turn, they learned from her, and together provided medical care of the highest quality, family members recall. She was active in the diplomatic settings of embassies and consulates, often looking after the welfare of all employees and their families before the community liaison officer program was created.

In Kolkata, she had the opportunity to volunteer with Mother Teresa, and in Islamabad, she made frequent visits as a volunteer nurse to Afghan refugee camps from 1991 to 1994.

Participating in bioweapon and mass casualty exercises, she accompanied

many embassy employees and family members on medevacs, including one on an old airplane in Pakistan where the door came off its hinges.

As her colleague Beverly Greenfield put it, they were engaged in “stamping out disease and saving lives.” In the Foreign Service, this included dealing with many tropical diseases.

After retirement in 2001, Ms. Andrus joined her husband on short tours of duty in Tel Aviv, Kathmandu, Dushanbe, and Casablanca. Ms. Andrus enjoyed playing bridge during Foreign Service life and in retirement.

She is survived by her husband, retired FSO Donald Bruce Andrus; her children, Eric Bernard Andrus (and spouse Irina Daniela Burcescu) and Michelle Lisa Andrus; and her grandchildren, Alin Everest Burcescu Andrus and Roman Orion Burcescu Andrus. She is also survived by her sister, Sheila (and spouse Howard) Cohen, of Calgary, Canada; her brother, Jay (and spouse Janet) Goldstein, of Grand Blanc, Mich.; and her cousins, nephews, and nieces.

Contributions may be made to the Canadian Cancer Society or to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society to further research into myelodysplastic syndromes.

■ **William Andreas Brown**, 93, retired FSO and former U.S. ambassador to Israel and Thailand, died peacefully of natural causes on July 19, 2024, at his home in Arlington, Va.

Mr. Brown was born on Sept. 7, 1930. He graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Harvard in 1952, earning his MA in 1955 and his PhD in 1963. He served as a U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) artillery officer in the Korean War, then as a captain in the USMC Reserve.

He joined the Foreign Service in 1956, serving in Hong Kong; Taiwan (twice);

Singapore; Malaysia; USSR (twice—first as a Sino-Soviet expert, later as political counselor); India; Thailand (as ambassador from 1985 to 1988); and Israel (three times), including as deputy chief of mission from 1979 to 1982 during the 1982 Lebanon War, and twice as ambassador from 1988 to 1992 and 1993 to 1994.

Among the highlights of his diplomatic career, Amb. Brown opened the first U.S. consulate in Borneo, a symbol of U.S. support for the fledgling Federation of Malaysia in the face of armed intervention by Indonesia’s independence leader and first president, Sukarno.

He escorted House Majority Leader Hale Boggs and Minority Leader Gerald Ford to the People’s Republic of China in 1972 (the first such delegation from the House of Representatives).

He administered the U.S.-Soviet Environmental Agreement from 1974 to 1976. As the last chargé d’affaires in Taiwan, he closed the U.S. embassy after the U.S. broke diplomatic relations in 1978.

He then opened its “non-official” replacement, the American Institute in Taiwan, and later became its acting director. From 1983 to 1985, he was principal deputy assistant secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific affairs.

After serving as ambassador to Israel during the Persian Gulf War, the first Intifada, and the peace process, which led to the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, he retired in 1992.

Amb. Brown was called out of retirement in 1993 to head the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv. As part of the events connected with the Oslo Accords, he attended the September 1993 White House meeting of President Clinton, Prime Minister Rabin, and Yasser Arafat, then returned to retirement in 1994.

In retirement, he served briefly as special envoy on Burma (1996) and led

a team that visited the People's Republic of China to assess U.S. funding for the United Nations Population Fund program (2002).

As pro bono chair of the board of directors of the American Institute of Taiwan, he continued to meet and escort leaders visiting or transiting the United States.

He continued for many years as pro bono chairman (later honorary chairman) of the board of trustees of the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Amb. Brown's publications include *Wen T'ian-hsiang: A Biographical Study of a Sung Patriot* and an annotated translation of *The History of the Mongolian People's Republic*.

He sailed extensively, returning annually to Thailand to sail until the pandemic. He swam daily until the age of 92.

Amb. Brown is survived by three daughters, one son, five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Helen Brown, his beloved wife for 72 years, died in 2022. He will be interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

■ **Roger "Monty" Freeman**, 71, a retired State Department Foreign Service officer, died on Aug. 17, 2024, in Eugene, Ore. The cause of death was acute myeloid leukemia.

Born in Olympia, Wash., to Roger Adolf Freeman, who was at the time working for the governor of the state of Washington, and Emily Harpster, an English language teacher, Mr. Freeman accompanied his parents on their job-related moves to Bolivia, Washington, D.C., Virginia, and California.

During his junior year at Beloit College, he studied geography at Sheffield University in the U.K. There he met Kay Jackson, a British fellow student, and the couple married a year later.

Mr. Freeman's interest in the Foreign Service was sparked by Beloit College's diplomat in residence, who had endless fascinating stories about serving in Chad.

After obtaining an MBA from the University of Southern California, Mr. Freeman took the Foreign Service examination, becoming a Foreign Service officer in 1978.

Throughout Mr. Freeman's 20-year career with the State Department, he focused on assisting developing countries to build trade capacity.

His first assignment (1979-1981) was as an economic and commercial officer in Côte d'Ivoire. Subsequent overseas State Department assignments included Bamako, Rabat, Colombo, and Cairo.

In Bamako, Mr. Freeman worked with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank on Mali's first economic reform and structural adjustment program and coordinated the sale of Air Mali's last remaining Boeing airplane to FedEx.

While Mr. Freeman worked at the embassy, his wife, Kay, began her USAID career. As an early joint State-USAID tandem couple, they dealt with many logistical challenges, including spending significant time in domestic assignments.

The highlight of their time in Mali was the birth of their first daughter, Laura Antonia Freeman.

In Rabat (1988-1990), he worked initially as a general services officer (GSO). He was then assigned as an economic/commercial officer (1990-1992).

In 1991, his family, now including their second child, Heather, was evacuated ahead of the first Gulf War, but Mr. Freeman remained in Rabat because his experience as a GSO had given him useful knowledge about the embassy building.

After transferring to Colombo in 1992, he organized the country's first American Trade Fair in 1993, featuring the film pre-

miere of "Jurassic Park," attended by Sir Arthur C. Clarke.

Back in Washington, D.C., he served as energy policy officer involved in multilateral negotiations of the law of the sea and the Antarctic Mineral Regime, was part of the State Department delegation responsible for China-World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations, and worked on development of the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

In 1999, Mr. Freeman was assigned to Cairo, where he focused on building Egyptian trade capacity in textiles, infrastructure, and professional services.

Upon return to Washington, D.C., in 2000, he became director of developing country issues in the office of the U.S. Trade Representative, coordinating analysis for WTO trade policy reviews for 22 countries.

In 2003, as a result of a pre-retirement medical exam, Mr. Freeman was diagnosed with mantle cell lymphoma, a non-Hodgkins lymphoma with an extremely high mortality rate. This was successfully treated at Johns Hopkins Medical Center in Baltimore, where he received a stem cell transplant.

When well enough to work again, he spent three months in Mongolia on contract as a USAID international trade specialist. He then served as USAID's senior trade economist in Indonesia from 2005 to 2007. The highlight of his time in Indonesia was successfully developing a master's degree program in international trade policy at the University of Indonesia.

He then transferred to the USAID trade program in Cairo, where he continued to work on trade policy issues.

Back in Washington, D.C., he served for almost 10 years as an anti-corruption adviser for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. As his final contribution, he provided support

to atrocity prevention programs around the world.

Mr. Freeman retired for a second time in 2018 to Eugene, Ore., where he enrolled in university classes and earned his fifth and final college degree, a BA in psychology.

In 2023 he was diagnosed with blood cancer, myelodysplastic syndrome. This cancer often results from stem cell transplants and eventually developed into acute myeloid leukemia that was ultimately untreatable.

Mr. Freeman is survived by his daughter Laura Freeman, of Eugene, Ore.; his daughter Heather Freeman (and spouse Ethan Amarant), of Bellingham, Wash.; his sister, Chrissy Freeman, of Grass Valley, Calif.; and his former wife, Kay Freeman, of Eugene, Ore.

Donations can be made in Mr. Freeman's memory to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society at <https://www.lls.org>.

■ **Michael Malinowski**, 75, retired FSO and former U.S. ambassador to Nepal, died in Washington, D.C., on Aug. 22, 2024.

Born in Chicago on Nov. 14, 1948, to Edward and Helen Malinowski, Mr. Malinowski graduated from St. Rita High School and then Loyola University, where he received a bachelor's degree in political science in 1970.

After a few years as a social worker in Chicago, he found his true calling and was accepted into the U.S. Foreign Service in 1976.

From his first assignment processing visas at the U.S. embassy in Mexico City to his last, State Department chair at the National Defense Intelligence College, Amb. Malinowski left his mark.

He specialized in the nations and cultures of Asia, especially Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Nepal, where he spent much of his career.



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He worked at U.S. Embassy Kabul during the Soviet occupation when the ambassador at the time, Spike Dubs, was brutally murdered.

He spent two years at the U.S. consulate in Peshawar on the troubled border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, where he met many of the combatants. In Peshawar, as a colleague recalled, “Mike rode herd on a bunch of characters, inside and outside the consulate, that rivaled the bar scene in ‘Star Wars,’ to which it was often compared.”

Later as an Afghanistan policymaker in Washington, D.C., he would get phone calls directly from Taliban leaders who wanted their message heard in Washington.

As he advanced in his career, he was assigned as the deputy chief of mission in the Philippines. Because of the unwillingness of the Senate to confirm an ambassador, he ran that huge mission as the *chargé d'affaires* for almost two years.

In 2001 he was nominated by President George W. Bush to be ambassador to Nepal, a country where he had served before.

It was a time of domestic terrorism and civil war, with Maoist insurgents attempting to seize power from a constitutional monarchy. Amb. Malinowski strove to work with both sides toward a resolution to the war.

He retired in 2009 and, in 2014, suffered a debilitating stroke that left him in a wheelchair. His gregarious nature continued to make him a magnet for friends, old and new alike.

Family members recall that he sought to be involved on the front lines in the making of U.S. foreign policy and succeeded in that goal.

He took into his home the family of his former employee at the embassy in

Kathmandu, and they helped him medically and personally in his last years.

His wife, Karen Gerlach, predeceased him in 2011.

Amb. Malinowski is survived by his sister, Melanie Olszewski; her husband, John; and their two children, of Ruidoso, N.M.; and many devoted friends.

■ **Terryl “Terry” A. Purvis-Smith**, 80, a former Foreign Service officer, died on May 4, 2024, at Colorado’s Anschutz Medical Campus, of acute myeloid leukemia.

Mr. Purvis-Smith was born on Aug. 10, 1943, in Pasadena, Calif.

After careening down his first zipline in his 60s, he used it as a metaphor. He reflected that graduating from Covina High School in 1961 was like standing on a zipline tower, scared to take the plunge.

But plunge he did, reaching the first secure tower in the person of a local pastor. Their conversations led him to Whitworth University, where he graduated in 1966 and met his wife. He and Virginia “Ginny” Purvis married in 1965.

Other secure towers included theological and graduate studies, with a focus on ethics. He earned his MDiv from Andover Newton Theological School in 1969, followed by a PhD from Hartford Seminary Foundation in 1972.

His professional focus was pediatric chaplaincy, first at Children’s Hospital of Michigan and later at the University of North Carolina.

He reflected that the leap from each tower replicated life’s progression in that one feels simultaneously safe and frightened, change is rapid, and sometimes one is out of control and challenged by ethical dilemmas and questions that don’t have answers.

The place he felt welcomed and encouraged to explore those challenges was the church. He was ordained in 1971



If you would like us to include an obituary in *In Memory*, please send text to 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.

and never retired, responding to the call to assist Presbyterian churches in transition around the country as an interim pastor until leukemia robbed him of strength.

In 1999 he joined the Foreign Service, which took him and his wife to Senegal, Washington, D.C., and the Bahamas.

In all these professional contexts, a guiding value was to express himself with integrity but not to personally demean those with whom he disagreed.

As family members recall, his competitive spirit and sense of humor were constants, whether in family games of charades, cards, and chess, or playing baseball and running in the Memorial Day Bolder/Boulder 10K.

His sister Patricia and her late husband, Frank, invited Mr. Purvis-Smith and his wife to hike the Camino de Santiago in northern Spain several years ago, and that experience added life-as-pilgrimage to his life-as-zipline metaphor.

The couple walked 100 miles of the demanding 500-mile walk, and Mr. Purvis-Smith started using walking as meditation.

Family, friends, and colleagues are grateful for his kindness and the clarity of his commitments.

Mr. Purvis-Smith is survived by his spouse, Ginny; daughter Julie Fouque, son-in-law Guillaume, and their children, André and Mélanie; son Steven Adams-Smith, daughter-in-law Kelly, and their children, Sophie and Ben; a brother, Steven Smith, and sister-in-law Marcia, and their two children and two grandchildren; and a sister, Patricia Eichenlaub, and her two children and five grandchildren. ■

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The Elephants Make a Comeback

BY SETH LUXENBERG

It's a pleasant evening on Jan. 24, 2024, in Bouake, Côte d'Ivoire's second-largest city. Here for an investment forum, I'm enjoying being out at night and experiencing the country far from the embassy in Abidjan, where I work in the economic section. As the spouse of a first-tour officer with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, I am one of several family members advancing U.S. policy priorities in Côte d'Ivoire.

Sitting in a plastic chair in the sand, I'm watching Morocco play Zambia at a *maquis*, one of the informal restaurants that are everywhere in Côte d'Ivoire. Many have TV screens to watch the games. They serve simple meals.

You pick which protein you want—chicken or fish—and then the nice lady behind the grill prepares it especially for you. On the side she usually adds *allico*, plantains dripping in oil, delicious in their own right, with a dipping sauce made from fresh chilies. Add in a cold, watery beer (or three) and an outdoor screen, and there is no better way to watch soccer.

The sport was invented, or at least formalized, in England in the 1800s. One could say, however, that watching the game was perfected in Côte d'Ivoire in the 21st century. Plenty of people are out, many only half watching the game, the



Seth Luxenberg is an economic associate in the Expanded Professional Associates Program (EPAP) at U.S. Embassy Abidjan.

He was a Peace Corps volunteer in Mauritania and Morocco from 2008 to 2011.



In January 2024, during the AFCON 2023 tournament, embassy employees in Elephant colors gather in the U.S. Embassy Abidjan atrium to celebrate Côte d'Ivoire's soccer team.

last one of pool play for the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) soccer tournament, which Côte d'Ivoire is hosting for the second time.

If Morocco wins, then Côte d'Ivoire's national soccer team, nicknamed the Elephants, will advance to the round of 16. If it's a tie or Zambia wins, then Côte d'Ivoire will be eliminated. Worse than eliminated, disgraced. Their 0-4 defeat to Equatorial Guinea would be a humiliating way to end the tournament.

Morocco scores against Zambia just before halftime. It slowly starts dawning on more people in the crowd that if Morocco wins, Côte d'Ivoire will advance. As the second half progresses, the number of viewers increases. By the last few minutes, most at my *maquis* and the half-dozen other *maquis* on the street start focusing intensely.

This night Morocco has more fans in Bouake than in Casablanca. Finally, the whistle blows, and the city erupts in celebration. Strangers high-five, motorcycles honk their horns—everyone is celebrating the win by their neighbor Morocco that keeps the Elephants in the AFCON.



To understand the importance of this win, one must know the devastation felt by Ivoirians across the country and globe after that earlier loss to Equatorial Guinea. U.S. Secretary Antony Blinken attended that game as part of his visit in January 2024. Before introducing the Secretary the day after that defeat, Ambassador Davis Ba addressed the elephant in the room: "The U.S. is Côte d'Ivoire's partner on the good days and

also on the tough days. Today is one of those tough days.” Secretary Blinken told the media, “Someone once said, soccer is life, with ups and downs.”

All seemed lost. Fans destroyed buses outside the stadium in Abidjan. The coach, a Frenchman, even resigned in embarrassment. At independence in 1960, Côte d’Ivoire had a bright future, with a French-trained administration and close ties to France.

While neither Côte d’Ivoire’s political class nor its population has rejected France in the way that some of its neighbors have, it’s clear that Ivoirians no longer want to be a dumping ground for a mediocre French coach. Instead of bringing in another one, the football federation decided to promote deputy coach Emerse Faé. As a former Ivoirian national team player, he is the right man for the job.



AFCON involves competition at many levels. Also visiting Côte d’Ivoire this past January was Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. In the strategic competition between the U.S. and the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the U.S. has lots of advantages—including democratic governance, technology, and cultural power. But so does China: notably, its willingness to build infrastructure, like soccer stadiums.

If geopolitical competition is a popularity contest, then building a soccer stadium for a country hosting a major soccer tournament is about as strong a move as a country can make. We countered, however, with a stronger move and clear message that as a result of U.S. investments, especially in public health, tens of thousands of fans are alive and healthy to fill the AFCON stadiums.

More than all the investments in stadiums, hotels, and roads, and more

than the opportunity to host players and fans from across Africa in the “AFCON of Hospitality,” hosting the tournament showed the continent and the world that Côte d’Ivoire is back.

The first two decades of independence were successful (as the world’s leading producer of the main ingredient in chocolate, Côte d’Ivoire had become known as the “Saudi Arabia of cacao”). But the good times couldn’t last forever. Commodity prices dropped in the 1980s, and in 1993 Father Time eventually caught up to founding president, Félix Houphoët-Boigny.

The 1990s and 2000s found Côte d’Ivoire in crisis, consumed in a series of succession battles. Rebel leaders occupied swathes of the country in the early 2000s, and for a few strange, dangerous months in 2011, the country had two presidents at the same time.



In the round of 16, the Elephants face Senegal, the AFCON defending champs and one of the favorites to win the tournament. Senegal scores the first goal just four minutes into the game. Then, something unexpected happens. For the first time in the tournament, Côte d’Ivoire plays with heart and conviction. The Elephants give it all they have and end up winning on penalty kicks.

Up next, the Elephants face Mali in the quarterfinals ... and more geopolitics.

Although Mali and Côte d’Ivoire share a border, and millions of Malians live in Côte d’Ivoire, the countries aren’t exactly best friends—at least right now. Mali’s current leader came to power in a coup in 2021 and formed the Alliance of Sahel States along with military regimes in Burkina Faso and Niger.

Côte d’Ivoire, conversely, is a leader in the Economic Community of West

African States (ECOWAS), urging its neighbors to return to democracy. Yet, on Jan. 28, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, also members of ECOWAS, all publicly announced their withdrawal from that multilateral organization, less than a week before the Côte d’Ivoire–Mali face-off.

An Ivoirian defender draws a red card in the first half, forcing Côte d’Ivoire to lose a player on the field. Down a man, and then down a goal, all seems lost again. Somehow, the Elephants power through, tying the game in the final minute of regulation, then scoring the winning goal against Mali in the final minute of extra time.



The final match is against Nigeria. Nobody can talk about anything else. An entire country is wearing orange (the Elephants’ color). I head out to watch the game with a group of colleagues, hundreds of new friends in orange jerseys, and several buckets of Budweiser.

Walking to the fan zone in my orange jersey, I get lots of high fives. I no longer feel isolated in my embassy bubble but rather like one fan among millions supporting a team once down and now moving up.

Nigeria scores first. In the 62nd minute, Côte d’Ivoire gets the equalizer. The audience is tense. Both teams are giving it all they have. In the 81st minute, the “Coup de Marteau”—the title of a ubiquitous song by 25-year-old Ivorian Tam Sir that translates to the “Hammer Blow”—is delivered. Sebastian Haller, only two years out from a testicular cancer diagnosis, finds the back of the net.

The Elephants, and this country, have made an improbable comeback. ■

LOCAL LENS



This photo captures a moment with an Adélie penguin on Horseshoe Island in Antarctica during a January 2024 visit. The Adélie is one of only four penguin species to nest on the Antarctic continent and the littlest. Though just around 28 inches tall and 8 to 18 pounds, they are bold and boisterous and will readily challenge other animals, including predators larger than them such as leopard seals and orcas. ■

Justin Franklin is a Diplomatic Security Service special agent at U.S. Embassy London. He joined the Foreign Service in 2008 and has served in numerous domestic and overseas locations, most recently in Islamabad. With their trip to Antarctica, Justin and his spouse, Maria, have visited all seven continents. The photo was taken with an iPhone 12 Pro.

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