US Foreign Service Women in the Middle East and Islamic North Africa, 1945–2001

ANTHONY J. BARKER

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Preface

At a conference on oral history several years ago, I listened to arguments between archivists advocating unprompted reminiscence and historians seeking answers to questions. Later, I met historians sceptical of the value of oral history to the point of denying its legitimacy. Close to 200 interviews for seven books on aspects of Australian political, social and sporting history show where I stand on both issues. Involvement in those projects has enabled me to assess the methodology of interviews conducted by many different individuals available online in 'Frontline Diplomacy: The Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training' [ADST].

I used some interviews from that Collection in two previous books: *A Little America in Western Australia: The US Communication Station at North West Cape and the Founding of Exmouth* (2015) and especially *US Diplomats and their Spouses during the Cold War: Americans Looking Down On Australia and New Zealand* (2019). While applauding the systematic approach of Charles Stuart Kennedy, the principal interviewer and director of 'Frontline Diplomacy', I expressed regret that his hostile attitudes to Australia in the second of those two books were from his observation of the country's troops in Vietnam while he was consul general in 1969–1970.

In 2016 Kennedy received a 'Lifetime Award for his Contributions to American Diplomacy'. Following his death on January 2, 2022, he was

applauded as ‘a pillar of ADST’s excellence’. In again using ‘Frontline Diplomacy’, I begin by assessing his apparently dominant control of interviews of female Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) and spouses in the Islamic Middle East and North Africa.

Crawley, WA Anthony J. Barker

Acknowledgements

As always, I thank my wife Rosie for her support for my persistence with this project and insistence it won't be the last. Daughters Nikki and Sarah—along with husbands Joe and Francis—have readily responded to varied requests for assistance, even though our eight Perth-based grandchildren are understandably their priorities. In distant Victoria, daughter Ali has found time to read drafts of early chapters while raising our other two grandchildren and working at RMIT University. I'm no less grateful to Carolyn Holbrook for similar support during an impressive career at Deakin University.

Although it is a pleasure to acknowledge the enthusiasm and professionalism of editor Emily Russell, I would have struggled to complete this book without the diligence of Craig Muller—enabled by his experience as a PhD in United States History—to offer a critical reading of every draft and completed chapter. I hope to be able to match his contribution with comparable support for a forthcoming book reflecting his working experience in Australian Indigenous culture.

Contents

Introduction

It is important to stress that the process of looking back to the 1940s and forward to the early 2000s demands caution about interviews delayed by years, even decades, after assignment. Adding to uncertain memory is potential for individuals to use knowledge acquired long after particular events under scrutiny. Another reason for caution is the issue mentioned in the Preface, the apparent control of interviews by the Program's acclaimed Director, Charles Stuart Kennedy. Interviewing him a decade apart, Jewell Fenzi and Ambassador Brandon Grove Jr. make clear he was far from hostile to women. Collectively, these interviews reveal that Kennedy's priority was to use retirement to establish his oral history programme.

In November 1986, Fenzi extracted favourable insights into Kennedy's personal life. While he told others he was married to a teacher, Fenzi alone reported her name was Ellen, was seven years younger and had not graduated from college when they married. Attending an unnamed university, she raised all three children while Kennedy was in Vietnam.

Following four years in the Air Force during the Korean War, Kennedy used the GI Bill to earn a Master's degree at Boston University, claiming rejection by Harvard saved him from taking eight years to complete a PhD. He had always liked history and felt that Joseph Grew's *Turbulent Era* was a major reason he sat the Foreign Service exam. Entry in 1955

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preceded work as a Consular officer in the Refugee Relief Program in Germany until 1960. His ensuing career took him to Saudi Arabia and Yugoslavia as a Consular Officer, then Consul General in Saigon, Athens, Seoul and Naples. Interspersed among those assignments were periods in Washington in INR (State Department Intelligence Bureau); Serbo-Croatian language training in the 1960s; attendance at State's Senior Seminar from 1974 to 1975; and membership of its Board of Examiners (1975–1976). Immediately before retirement as a diplomat, he was liaison officer in INS (Immigration and Naturalisation Service), 1982–1984.

Brandon Grove Jr.'s interview on September 4, 1996, confirmed Kennedy's commitment to his marriage. Unwilling to live overseas again, Ellen was pursuing a Master's degree in linguistics to teach English as a foreign language. Sympathetic to her priorities, Kennedy was seeking support for a potentially major project, 'a history of the United States consular service', in which he had uniquely spent his entire career. In the six months before he retired from the Foreign Service in February 1985, Kennedy and Victor Wolf Jr. were partners searching for a location for an oral history programme.

Despite very different personalities, they cooperated in sending explanatory drafts to the Senate Historian's Office, the American History Association and the National Archives. Expressions of interest produced no commitment, while diplomatic historians at the National Archives embarrassed Kennedy by attacking his assumption that 'tapes cost only about $1.50 each'. His 'idea has merit, but nobody is going to sit and listen to tapes. … You've got to get them transcribed. That means money.'

In December 1985, Victor Wolf, trying to cross a busy street, was killed instantly by a truck. Kennedy's immediate reaction was that their project had also died because Wolf was more interested in 'the administrative-financial side'. But he persisted with an arrangement already made with George Washington University. For three years before and after Wolf's death, he received no salary but was assigned $10,000 for expenses. The $300 paid for each interview did not cover often greater costs of transcription. Kennedy's positive attitudes to Foreign Service women were revealed to interviewer Grove in 1996. Without emphasising that all fifteen of Fenzi's interviews were with spouses, he suggested, 'Jewell's major motivation was to complete what became "a very good book called 'Married to the Foreign Service'"'. She and several other spouses had started 'the Foreign Service Wives' before, Kennedy believed, 'it became the Spouse

Program, and we shared ideas about how to interview'. Although that programme had 'sort of fallen off', they were interviewing 'a good number of women' and 'transcribing … going out raising money, and doing quite well, thank you'.

Kennedy admitted the Spouse Program's focus was one he 'never got overly engaged with, but this is probably me'. If a male officer mentioned his wife, Kennedy seldom asked how they met and how she adjusted to the Foreign Service. He was more likely to discuss US policy to a country than ask, 'What the hell did your wife think about going to Ouagadougou?' As a guy, 'I just don't talk normally about the family. But women officers seem to wear two hats rather comfortably, the family and the profession.'

Starting at George Washington University before Wolf's death, Kennedy had assumed that if they were part of a university team, 'even unpaid', it would send them to people and institutions 'delighted to give us a lot of money'. The University's response was, 'you go out and find the money, and whatever you get we'll take fifteen per cent'.

While acknowledging that his Foreign Service pension saved him from penury, Kennedy was ready to abandon the project as the costs of transcribing and printing meant his $10,000 was running out. Meanwhile, over innumerable lunches at the university cafeteria, he asked former Foreign Service personnel if they were interested in helping. 'I wasn't asking for money, I was asking them for the time to do some interviewing. "I'll get back to you"', was the response before very little happened, so he did the bulk of interviews himself. In the early quest for a base he had enjoyed a friendly, albeit non-committal, reception from David Newsom, head of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. Encouraged by a mutual friend to return there, he was offered a small room in Georgetown's Lauinger Library. It was there the interviews were conducted from June 1988. The Library was 'pretty relaxed' about the arranged interview program ensuring 'anything produced would go into their special collections', as well as to the 'Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training' (ADST) that had agreed to host his Program. Although the university did not pay for long-distance telephone calls, it charged half the student rate for the major expense of duplication and xeroxing.

* * *

As argued in *US Diplomats and their Spouses During the Cold War*, the influence of such 'founding mothers' of feminism as Betty Friedan and

Gloria Steinem was less important than stifled ambition among US government personnel. In 1968 Alison Palmer sued the State Department over alleged discrimination in assigning women to Foreign Service positions. If her activism encouraged some to join her in the Women's Action Organisation (WAO), her eventual abandonment of litigation makes it necessary to see the origins of that crucial organisation in a range of issues broader than one individual's grievance about career frustration.

In 1970, an all-male committee issued a State Department report for the coming decade that ignored the role of women in US diplomacy. A group of female recruits and veterans responded by turning the WAO into an Ad Hoc Committee demanding equal status and opportunities for women in government employment at home or overseas. Also influential but less confronting was the American Association for Foreign Service Women (AAFSW) established in 1960, which represented spouses and employees such as secretaries not usually regarded as diplomats.

It is less important to attempt to rank the influence of those two organisations than to emphasise the significance of the State Department's belated response to women's demands in its 'Directive of 1972'. Married women were no longer barred from applying for Foreign Service employment. Serving female FSOs could marry without being forced to resign. A wife's contribution was removed from the assessment of a male FSO's performance, freeing her—subject to approval from her chief of mission—to take paid or voluntary employment outside an embassy. The new rules also opened opportunities for 'tandem careers' for husband and wife FSOs.

The term 'Foreign Service' also needs definition. Although it strictly applies to State Department employees, both the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United States Information Agency (USIA) had their own overseas presence as USIS and AID. Yet, while ultimately responsible to US ambassadors in any location, AID personnel in some had the advantage of large financial resources to promote major projects, taking them closer than embassy staff to general populations, sometimes through more extensive employment of 'Foreign Service Nationals' (FSNs), as local employees are known. The USIA was absorbed into the State Department in 1999, a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union made redundant its function of diplomacy through propaganda.

Since its inception by President Kennedy in 1961, the Peace Corps also sent volunteers to serve in Third-World countries, often interacting with

Foreign Service personnel. Fluctuating overall numbers of its volunteers reached a peak of over 15,000 in 1966.

* * *

No matter how crude popular Western prejudices might be, American FSOs were trained to understand, or quickly learned from experience, that the Islamic world was far from united. The most obvious clashes dated from the seventh century between the majority Sunni and minority Shi'a over descent from Prophet Mohammed. Moreover, in separate chapters, an analysis of the Middle East and the North African Maghreb and Sahel reveals political issues in a world that was the United States' greatest challenge outside Cold War hostility. Feminist Foreign Service spouse Marguerite Cooper argued that it was 'inherently difficult' in a legal action to show what she regarded as 'terribly important—discrimination in assignment by function and by geographic region'.

> You were discouraged [from] going to Latin America because men only respect nuns and their sisters, anybody else would be fair game for sexual harassment. You didn't go to Africa because it was too dangerous. You didn't go to the Middle East because women were looked down upon. [Marguerite Cooper, interviewed by Jewell Fenzi, September 11, 1989, p. 6]

A broadly defined Middle East provides the context for the United States' lengthy conflict with Islam most closely associated with the terrorism of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. By 1958, the State Department saw its original term 'Near East' as interchangeable with the later 'Middle East' in defining the region as Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar. A factor affecting them all at varying times was the presence of the major American strategic regional priority, Israel. Eventually, the definition of Middle East was expanded to include North African countries, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, 'closely connected in sentiment and foreign policy with the Arab states' (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/place/Near-East). That definition is the closest to the one adopted for this book's analysis. Upheavals in the twenty-first century revealed a significant Moslem presence in Turkey long after Kemal Ataturk's creation of a secular state in 1923. Iran belongs in the Middle East as a powerful and regionally influential Shi'a state, in contrast to Sunni Muslim Saudi Arabia, the

other major player in the international politics of oil production and distribution. Contentious relations across a porous border with Saudi Arabia demand Yemen's inclusion in the Middle East. Although Sudan lies in the Sahel belt of Africa, its geography and colonial history are entangled with Egypt. Libya is added to the North African list, especially because of the ascendancy of Muammar Qadhafi from 1969 until his death in 2011.[1]

Despite varied versions of his name, he appears most frequently as Qadhafi in both the interview transcripts of 'Frontline Diplomacy' and the United States' diplomatic correspondence and hence throughout this book.

Finally, a criterion that focuses only on countries with a Moslem majority excludes Nigeria with almost equal Moslem and Christian regions.

Moslem autocrats in Africa had international aspirations dating from colonial regimes that in some cases had drawn their political boundaries on distant European desks. Major focus on a redefined Middle East and North Africa rules out detailed discussion of the most populous Islamic countries, all in Asia. They are not ignored entirely because, as well as having links with countries in the Middle East and North Africa, they provided many American FSOs and spouses with comparative contexts of experience in the field.

It took four years from 1945 before international agreement about the future of all of the Dutch East Indies. The Western half had neither racial nor religious links to Java or Sumatra, nor to tensions in hundreds of islands scattered between Indian and Pacific Oceans. But those contested inclusions do nothing to dilute Indonesia's ranking as the world's most populous Islamic country. Before long, US diplomacy had to cope with the hostility of the Sukarno regime, culminating in genocidal massacres in 1965–1966 and eventually the airborne Islamic terrorist attacks on New York City and on the Pentagon just outside Washington, DC, on September 11, 2001.

British withdrawal in 1947 made Pakistan the world's second most populous Islamic country. The millions of Moslems who resisted the temptation to move to a new country ensured that India remained the third largest, even though it had 80 per cent Hindus during the subsequent half century and beyond. From 1961, India was a leading member

[1] In Libya in 2011.

of the Non-Aligned Movement, distancing itself from the global US/Soviet Cold War. The Chinese military incursion into northeastern India in 1962 briefly raised fears of full-scale invasion with imponderable global implications until it became clear it was a Himalayan border dispute and probably a response to Indian support of the Dalai Lama and others fleeing Chinese control of Tibet.

Immediately after Independence in 1947, war between Pakistan and India failed to resolve the conflict over Kashmir, a former princely Hindu state with a predominantly Muslim population. Political negotiations in 1947 had created an Islamic country in two regions separated by a thousand miles of Indian territory. Disdain in West Pakistan for allegedly inferior Bengali Islam reinforced East Pakistan's resentment at its distance from the centre of government. A brief but bloody war in 1971 involved hostilities between West Pakistan and India, the latter supporting East Pakistan's emergence as Bangladesh. More troubling to international observers in the early twenty-first century was that both India and Pakistan had nuclear weapons while their periodically violent clashes over Kashmir remained unresolved. On the other hand, in both countries women achieved national leadership before paying the price in death from assassins' bullets.

No women were recruited specifically for US Foreign Service careers in Islamic countries. Assignments in more than one such country were common, many before or after service in regions just as dangerous in Latin America and South-East Asia. At first sight, the 'Country Readers' assembled in 'Frontline Diplomacy' are useful in grouping together interview transcripts relevant to particular countries. But in every location they fail to include spouses, other than the wives of a few especially famous ambassadors. A search of the general alphabetical career lists in 'Frontline Diplomacy' has enabled inclusion in this study of significantly more spousal than female FSO interviews and across many varied locations. While interview transcripts are a major source, declassified diplomatic cables, available only in the 1970s, are used to confirm, clarify, modify or challenge the experiences and attitudes of female FSOs and spouses. The official records in the edited electronic series *Foreign Relations of the United States* provide valuable contexts for important issues: this book's Bibliography lists separately diplomatic cables and documents all accessed through FRUS. Throughout the following thirteen chapters,

commissioned articles, created and updated by academic specialists, make the *Encyclopedia Britannica* an occasional source for brief introductory or background commentaries.

* * *

Long ago, this writer's *The African Link: British Attitudes to the Negro in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* [London, Frank Cass, 1978] acknowledged fundamental regional differences in Africa. More recently, Howard W. French made a scathing attack on claims of African uniformity displayed in 'A Bend in the River', 'one of the crowning achievements in the career of V.S. Naipaul, awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001 [Naipaul's Unreal Africa', *The New York Review of Books*, December 22, 2022].

A relatively recent secondary source of varying relevance to this book is Lawrence Freedman's *Command: The Politics of Military Operations from Korea to Ukraine*. [Allen Lane, Penguin Random House, 2022]. Its insights into real and potential interactions between politicians, military leaders and senior diplomats in sensitive locations include well-known tensions in the early 1950s between President Harry Truman and the ambitious and popular General Douglas MacArthur. Similarly, Freedman tackles much discussed conflicts within John F. Kennedy's administration and between it and Moscow during the 'brinkmanship' of the Cuban Missile crisis in October 1962.

Less familiar is Freedman's emphasis on the manoeuvres of Ariel Sharon—the 'Very Model of Insubordination'—while the eye-patched Moshe Dayan had emerged as a popular hero, commanding the Jerusalem front in the 1948 Arab–Israeli War and then Chief of Staff of the Israel Defence Forces during the 1956 Suez War. Freedman's 'Dictator as Supreme Commander: Saddam Hussein' provides details of that tyrant's background and insights into his support base largely overlooked in the interviews with US Foreign Service personnel in 'Frontline Diplomacy'.

Long-standing commentaries retain their relevance as contrasting introductions to the Foreign Service. J. Robert Moskin provides an overview of its history since the Republic's earliest days [*American Statecraft: The Story of the U.S. Foreign Service*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2013]. Harry W. Kopp's *Career Diplomacy* (revised third edition with John K. Naland, Georgetown University Press, 2017) examines eleven

years of innovation during his rise in 1967 to deputy assistant secretary of state for international trade. Benefitting from the introduction of 'Cones' for specialisation within the Foreign Service, he also covered an era when bidding for assignments was possible following its absence during earlier careers.

The second chapter deals with the recorded memories of women FSOs and spouses in Israel, the key to US regional policy. Thereafter, experiences and attitudes in different Islamic countries are grouped largely chronologically, each with a brief introduction. After the focus on Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and ten North African countries, two final chapters deal with terrorism before and immediately after September 11, 2001.

Israel: The Crucial American Commitment in the Middle East

Emerging from chaotic British maladministration of Palestine Israel challenged the skills of American diplomats in a country that was in endless conflict with Muslims in surrounding regions and within its own controversially expanding borders. While acknowledging impressive Jewish recovery from the Nazi Holocaust in World War II, many American female FSOs and spouses joined their male colleagues in disapproval of the treatment of Palestinians expelled from, or remaining inside, Israel. With impressive scientific and engineering expertise, Israel had the resources to use generous American funding without needing American assistance to tackle environmental and social challenges. That capacity made the country more than a US client state.

* * *

Austrian Theodor Herzl turned Zionism—a long-standing aspiration for a Jewish homeland in Palestine—into a political movement by publishing a pamphlet, *The Jewish State*, in 1897; organising the first Zionist Congress

Throughout this book's fourteen chapters, Endnote References to Interview Transcripts are rendered as First Name, Second Name, page number.

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in Basel, Switzerland, the following year; and then becoming the first president of the World Zionist Organisation. In 1917, Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour's letter to the prominent Anglo-Jewish Lord Rothschild implied British support for the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people. In 1920, the victorious Great War Allies agreed that the Mandate for Palestine be assigned to Britain, a decision endorsed by the League of Nations two years later.

Anti-Jewish riots in 1920 and 1921 prompted the formation of the Hagenah, which would remain a secretive Jewish self-defence organisation through to the 1940s. More riots in 1924 followed clashes between Hagenah and Arab mobs. In the next few years, immigration doubled the Jewish population in Palestine to about 150,000, numbers more than compensating for the Hebron massacre in 1929 that killed some sixty-seven Jews and wounded a similar number.[1] At that point the British had done little to protect Jews. In the mid-1930s they did no better in response to the formation of the Arab High Command, led by Haj Amin al-Husseini and combining workers' strikes with boycotts of Jewish products.[2]

When industrial activism led to Arab terrorism Britain responded in July 1937 with the Peel Royal Commission's recommended partition of Palestine.[3] Soon offsetting that radical decision was the increasing concern with the threat of war with Germany. Britain's need for Middle Eastern oil in Islamic countries outweighed its commitment to a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Although Jews had every reason to support British opposition to anti-Semitic Nazi Germany, a Palestinian revolt reshaped the political agenda. In November a new royal commission reversed the July recommendation as impractical. Britain responded to the revolt with new punitive measures including deportation of Palestinian Arab leaders. In their absence, the Palestinian cause thereafter would involve neighbouring Arab states, including those with oil reserves of as much interest to the United States as to Britain.

At the end of World War II, the vagueness of the Balfour Declaration about how much of Palestine was to be Jewish raised suspicions in the wider Arab world in an era of international sympathy for Jewish victims

[1] "Hagenah". Ibid., 18 Jul. 2016; British Palestine Mandate: History & Overview, *Jewish Virtual Library*.

[2] "Amin al-Husseini". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 30 Jun. 2022,

[3] "Peel Commission", Ibid., 3 Sep. 2010, https://www.britannica.com/event/Peel-Commission.

and survivors of Nazi extermination policies.[4] When the United Nations resolved in November 1947 to replace the British mandate with separate Jewish and Arab states, violence quickly ensued with atrocities by both Arabs and Jews. In May 1948 an announced withdrawal of British forces brought a declaration of independence by Israel. Arab forces from Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon occupied areas of southern and eastern Palestine not assigned to the Jewish state: they also occupied East Jerusalem, including a small Jewish area. In 1949 a series of armistices established a temporary frontier between Israel and the Arab states. Israel occupied all the Negev desert to the frontier with Egypt, except for the Gaza Strip on the Mediterranean shore.

In 1953, Margaret Plunkett, the US labour attaché to a Technical Aid Mission in Israel, remarked that the British in 1931 had excluded Arabs from a labour force survey that included only the Jewish population. Pleased that Arabs were to be included in a new survey, she was annoyed the Israeli authorities had no plan to print in Arabic the schedule that was to be taken to Arab villages. Her suggestion that Arabs should be hired to do the interviewing seemed to astonish 'the Israeli Government and even our own Mission. There was no connection between the Mission and the Arab population. It never spoke with the Arabs.' She believed that the survey, properly run, would give 'a sense of belonging' to 'the many, many thousands [of] people who hadn't run away during the 1948 war'. After some effort she received a positive response from the Israeli government, and the schedules were finally printed in Arabic.[5]

Plunkett also took a stand against the State Department for abolishing extra pay for Embassy staff working in a dangerous place. She agreed with complainants that the situation had not changed. On one occasion, driving back from Jericho she encountered a group of Arabs armed with rifles, walking behind big rocks towards Jerusalem and towards an outlying kibbutz. That went on all the time. Various kibbutzim were being attacked by the Arabs, so it was still a dangerous situation.

More irritating than dangerous was that 'the staff, including the Embassy staff, couldn't go into Jerusalem without getting a permit from the trans-Jordanian Government stating they were admissible'.[6]

[4] "United Nations Resolution 181". Ibid., 2 Nov. 2014, https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-Nations-Resolution-181.

[5] Margaret Plunkett, 8–9.

[6] Ibid., 11.

For six months in 1953 and 1954, Margaret Taylor spent her first overseas assignment in the Tel Aviv Embassy immediately after her USIS agency was separated from the State Department. Her inexperience at first threatened to consign her to secretarial duties. But encouraged by 'a wonderful CAO, Tom McGrail', she was able to associate with Israeli groups sharing her cultural interests. It was a period when Israelis wanted to meet as many foreigners as they could and give them a good impression of the country. They invited her and McGrail into their homes, 'so we had that kind of natural entree into the country through the people. It was a most interesting and pleasant way of establishing contact.'[7]

Without her noting it, however, it was also a period of renewed existential threat to Israel. In 1952, an officers' coup had overthrown the monarchy in Egypt. Two years later, Gamal Abdel Nasser, who had overruled execution of King Farouk, emerged as the group's leader, deposing the puppet head of state, General Muhammad Naguib. Nasser's charismatic leadership, discussed in the chapter entitled "Reactions to Nasser's Egypt and the Suez War of 1956", threatened to turn the whole Arab Middle East into practical as well as symbolic hostility towards Israel.

Israel's emergence as a significant military power during the Suez crisis of 1956 is noted mainly in Egyptian-based interviews. A rare Israel-focused interview is of Bilha Bryant, born in 1934 to Sephardic Jewish parents in Bulgaria. An immigrant in 1948 living in an Israeli kibbutz, she became, in turn, a cultural attaché in the Israeli Foreign Service, an American Foreign Service spouse and eventually an American FSO herself. With the outbreak of war in 1956, as thousands of Israelis were mobilised, she was assigned to the Public Affairs Office of the Israeli Army to escort foreign journalists. In the process she met and worked briefly for the Israeli Northern Commander, General Moshe Dayan:

> He was dangerously flirtatious, but delightful. He came often to our office on the shores of Lake Tiberias and would always bring a flower and compliment me, and then concentrate on the "business" part of his visit. I was really smitten by him: he was good looking, charming and extremely intelligent. He just filled up the room when he walked in, he really did.[8]

* * *

[7] Margaret V. Taylor, 5.
[8] Bilha Bryant, 14.

At the time that Bilha was meeting Ted Bryant in Holland and marrying him in 1963, a young American was completing a painful transition to impassioned advocacy of the Palestinian cause in Israel. Born in 1939, Andrea Morel grew up in a Jewish family in an ethnically mixed area of Brooklyn. Her paternal grandparents, immigrants from Poland, died before she could know them. Her mother's parents from Russia insisted on speaking English, so Yiddish was never spoken in the family. She was closer to her father, who ran a garment business but had time to take her to 'many, many games' of the Brooklyn Dodgers at Ebbets Field. Her mother's involvement from 1947 with Hadassah (Women's Zionist Organisation of America) introduced a more religious element into the family. The young Andrea attended Jewish Sunday schools and, for eight years, a summer camp. She enjoyed singing Israeli Hebrew songs but never 'got into the history' and knew little about the issues: 'It was all sort of in the air but not something that I really grabbed on to. I didn't consider Zionism really seriously.'[9]

After Jewish elementary and high school—'hated all the way' from 1956 to 1960—she rejected Smith College because of its emphasis on mathematics and she was among just 10 per cent of Jewish students at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts. Before she found it 'amusing that the person I married is a mathematician', she had annoyed her parents by dating 'Spanish, South Americans, and a Chinese guy, and at one point an Indian'. 'Absolutely out of their minds at this behaviour', her parents soon faced an even greater challenge. In her final year Andrea became president of Holyoke's International Relations Club and began dating her University of Massachusetts counterpart, a Palestinian Arab who had just completed a Master's degree in Mathematics.[10]

Briefly visiting his apartment on their first date, Andrea asked why 'Israel' was scratched out in a map of the Middle East. It was the first time she heard about Jewish/Palestinian issues and the first occasion Yusif Rasakh realised she was Jewish; he told her he had often dated Jewish girls.

After dating for a whole year—and before Yusif went to teach mathematics at the American University of Beirut (AUB)—they decided to marry. He attended her graduation at Mount Holyoke without her parents knowing he was there. When they discovered her intentions, they 'used to scream at me over the phone … and we had horrible fights'. An

[9] Andrea Morel Farsakh, 7–9, 12–14.
[10] Ibid., 17.

uncle was enlisted to take her to dinner and convince her to break the relationship: 'Here you are in the United States where you have all your rights and you are going to go to the Middle Ages [sic] where women are treated like dirt'. It was an onslaught that literally made her 'sick—it was so unpleasant'. But the campaign failed and her parents had to accept that Yusif would 'carry me off to the Middle East'.[11]

The rabbi approached by Andrea's mother to conduct the marriage ceremony ruled himself out by saying, 'you can always tell when an Arab is coming down the street because you can smell him a block away!' Already 'fairly well turned off religion' during her college career, 'that incident really did it for me once and for all'. Even so, she won something of a victory:

> Rabbi Elmer Berger was the most famous—or infamous—anti-Zionist in the entire United States. He spoke beautifully at our wedding and I was so grateful and touched, but my mother was ashamed by the fact that this guy was the one who married us. I of course, so very much appreciated him because I was already more than beginning to move away from anything to do with Zionism.[12]

That was a decision which influenced her to enrol in a PhD programme in the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University in Washington, DC. Thanks to 'a really excellent Arabic teacher', she was awarded a National Defence Scholarship in Arabic, a full grant to cover study for a second year at SAIS. But by then she and Yusif had decided to marry. In August 1961, her parents 'sort of swallowed their anger' and gave them a beautiful wedding at a hotel on Park Avenue before they sailed for Beirut.[13] The AUB was unwilling to give her any credits earned at SAIS, but it allowed her to finish her course work in a year when it ordinarily took two years.

Very different from the anger in New York was Andrea's reception in the fall of 1961 by Yusif's parents at their home on the West Bank. By then she was pregnant, and Yusif's parents 'didn't seem to care' she was Jewish and welcomed her with open arms.[14]

[11] Ibid., 19.
[12] Ibid., 18.
[13] Ibid., 19.
[14] Ibid., 22.

They lived in Bir Zeit, 'a pretty progressive kind of town' near Ramallah with a university and a population evenly divided between Muslims and Christians of several denominations. Like most West Bank towns, Bir Zeit had a nearby refugee camp. In keeping with local residents' sympathies, Yusif's parents had a refugee family living in their basement for several months. Under hostile Jordanian rule, Palestinians were 'still kind of in shock in 1961–62', said Farsakh, but 'of course the '67 War changed everything'. Long before Israel replaced Jordan on the West Bank, she had clarified her views about the plight of Palestinians. Even more than her time with Yusif's family, research for the final paper in a course on the modern Middle East at AUB was the 'watershed' in her thinking.[15]

Although when interviewed in June 2008 she could not remember what books she read for the longest paper she wrote at AUB in 1962, Andrea had vivid recollections of her husband typing the sixty pages with one finger in their air-conditioned apartment in 'disgusting hot, humid, Beirut', while she worked on one of six term papers. From Israeli books read previously, she 'had imbibed the myths that the Palestinians left voluntarily, that the Israelis had a right to the land of Palestine'. Her husband had made no attempt, despite her Brooklyn family's prediction, to brainwash her. The many Palestinians she met in Beirut talked little about the past, so researching the paper 'was what really turned me. It wasn't anybody telling me something; it was actually seeing in black and white, reading British sources, reading Arab sources, reading Israeli sources' that opened her eyes to 'the brutal and unjust way that the British had treated the Palestinians'.[16]

In 1968, she and Yusif crossed the Allenby Bridge from Jordan to the West Bank: 'the Israelis were nothing but lousy, and they got worse as the years went'. While Palestinians were forced to wait hours in the sun, foreigners were placed in a shady area and 'wafted through quickly, put on buses and sent on their way'.[17]

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[15] Ibid., 23.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

At the outset of her first overseas posting in Tel Aviv from 1967 to 1969, Teresita Schaffer was in the most junior position as a rotation officer. After an exclusive education at Bryn Mawr—interrupted by a year of private education in France—she passed the Foreign Service entry exam despite a 'catastrophic' performance in American history.[18] Needing a 'rudimentary introduction to the Arab/Israeli issues', all she knew was that the two antagonists were at odds and that the State of Israel had never been recognised by its neighbours. She had no thought of imminent war, but neither did anyone else to whom she spoke. The first sign of events leading to the 1967 war was an aerial dogfight between Syrian and Israeli planes in early April. The shooting down of a number of Syrian MiGs was a serious incident, in part because it was such a departure from the normal pattern of infrequent border skirmishes. Schaffer visited Israeli friends to help them put masking tape on their windows to prevent them from shattering in case of air raids.[19]

Among a number of further incidents, Schaffer remembered a couple of fiery speeches by President Nasser calling on UN observers to stop monitoring the Israel-Egypt borders. He was closing the Straits of Tiran, the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba and therefore the Israeli Port of Eilat. Because the Israelis had for many years stated that the closing of the Strait would be a 'casus belli', many analysts concluded that war was very likely. When Moshe Dayan, now opposition leader, joined the government it was clear war was possible, if not imminent.

Absent from contemporary Israeli commentary was the emphasis that historian Lawrence Freedman has placed on the country's serious regional vulnerability and the decisive emphasis of Major General Ariel Sharon on pre-emptive attack rather than defence.[20] Determined to 'prevent Israeli shipping passing through the Straits of Tiran blocking oil from Iran and exports to Africa and Southeast Asia', Nasser was 'soon speaking of confrontation' and 'a general war to destroy Israel'. The major powers were urging 'restraint on all sides, but could not agree on any action to prevent Israeli shipping being blockaded'. Although Israel was urged not to act unilaterally, it was 'unclear what diplomacy could achieve'. Meeting on May 28, the cabinet was 'split on whether to act now or give diplomacy

[18] Teresita Schaffer, 6.

[19] Ibid., 17.

[20] Lawrence Freedman, *Command: The Politics of Military Operations from Korea to Ukraine*. Allen Lane, Penguin Random House, UK, 2022, pp. 110–15.

more time'. An afternoon message from President Lyndon Johnson warned of possible intervention on Egypt's behalf if Israel initiated 'hostilities', making it 'impossible for the friends of Israel to stand by your side'. Remarkable in the light of imminent Israeli consternation is Freedland's suggestion that, prior to receiving Johnson's warning, 'Prime Minister Levi Eshkol was inclined to side with the hawks'.[21]

In a national television address 'Eshkol appeared hesitant and unsure, stumbling over a script that had been altered in ways he could not follow'. His 'image as a weak leader, when strength was demanded', persists in Freedland's account of intensifying conflict between Eshkol—whose 'direct military experience was brief service with the British' in World War I—and generals 'with reputations forged in the 1947–48 fight for independence then the 1956 War with Egypt'. It is in the account of the conflict between politicians and generals that Ariel Sharon emerges as Freedland's 'Very Model of Insubordination'. Among many fierce responses by generals to Eshkol's request for patience, the most forceful statement came from Sharon. 'Today we have removed with our own hand our most powerful weapon—the enemy's fear of us. … At stake was the existence of the people of Israel. … We present ourselves as a helpless nation. We have never degraded ourselves that much before.'[22]

Although on the eve of the war Sharon had been told to hold a defensive position, on the first day he was sent on the offensive 'to capture a vital road junction seen as the "Gateway to Sinai"'. A nocturnal plan using helicopters that he had discussed with Dayan was seen as too intricate by other generals and not celebrated by Freedland as a great victory vindicating Sharon's ambition. The loss of 2000 Egyptian men and 60 tanks compared with 40 Israelis killed in action and 19 lost tanks, 'owed a great deal to Egyptian mistakes including unexpected attack from the north'.[23]

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Far from the battlefield action but in a senior role in the State Department's Intelligence Bureau (INR) focusing on Soviet activities, Martha Mautner believed the speed of Israeli victory in 1967—the Six-Day War—offered the chance 'to make a gesture to the Arabs and begin setting the switches

[21] Ibid., p. 111.
[22] Ibid., p. 113.
[23] Ibid.

slightly differently'.[24] In July 1970 the Israelis shot down two Soviet MiGs rising to repel one of their air strikes penetrating further and further into Egypt. Mautner wrote a paper, 'arguing that the Soviets would now begin to scale back their commitment to Egyptian defence after that moment of truth'. Although 'they would not let an ally go down the drain easily … they weren't prepared to fight the United States'. For Israel, the 1973 (Yom Kippur) War was 'an eye-opener'. There had been nothing quite as arrogant as some of the Israeli military and intelligence officers after the 1967 war. 'You couldn't tell them anything after that victory.' So, in 1973 the Israelis were 'caught flatfooted'.[25]

Without addressing Mautner's arguments, Teresita Schaffer's recollections of the 1973 war were about public anxiety rather than arrogant military self-confidence. In the streets of Tel Aviv there were no young men, only children and older people. There was virtually no traffic because cars had been requisitioned. When a few reappeared they were caked with mud from being camouflaged in the desert. Her Israeli friends were 'very anxious and bitter about the Arabs, who they thought didn't care how many people they would kill—the sense of being beleaguered was the most memorable one'.[26]

Schaffer enthused about Israeli victory. During incredible euphoria at the end of the war, people drove through the streets 'with tops down, honking, waving, singing, shouting'. Included in Tel Aviv's annual Festival of Song was the specially composed 'Jerusalem the Golden'. Performed by Shuli Nathan, a singer with 'a gorgeous voice', it failed to win the competition but was a close second and was the song that everyone remembered from the festival. After the Israelis had taken the old city of Jerusalem, said Schaffer, the song writer wrote an additional stanza celebrating its return. It became even more popular. Young men being discharged from the army 'were singing it—actually shouting it'. The opportunity to return freely to the old city with all of its holy places 'resonated deeply; it was a huge emotional experience.'[27]

In Tel Aviv for a relatively short time and making friends exclusively with Israelis, Schaffer failed to consider that resident Palestinians might be deeply disturbed about Jerusalem's new status. The week after hostilities

[24] Martha C. Mautner, 40.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Teresita Schaffer, 19.
[27] Ibid.

ended she was sent there to assist in the Consulate General, enabling regular staff to pursue relatives' inquiries about the well-being of Americans residing in the country. While she found the beginning of Israel's occupation of Jerusalem 'an exciting time', she discovered that

> our Consulate people knew a lot of Arabs who had lived in old Jerusalem; they were seriously distressed by the new turn of events. They had watched a major exodus of Arabs from old Jerusalem as the Israelis moved in; most of them moved to the east bank of the Jordan River.[28]

Eleanore Raven-Hamilton's closest friend at AUB was a Palestinian from Jerusalem who had fled with her family when the Israeli forces were on the move in 1948. They fared well enough in a refugee camp for the children to get university degrees. From that friend, Raven-Hamilton learned that Jerusalem had been divided by a wall; family members could climb to look over it and see Israelis who had moved into their house picking fruit from trees they had planted. She learned about Palestinian families with the keys to their lost houses passed down from generation to generation. They continued with their lives to a certain point, but feared that if they went too far away they would never get back to their houses.[29]

Like many other Americans, expecting to move several times in their lives, Raven-Hamilton had 'no special attachment to a piece of land or a house'. But she came to realise it was 'a thorny issue' for Palestinians owning a plot of land as well as a house with citrus trees and—added interviewer Edward Dillery—'olive trees … they are so old too'. Raven-Hamilton agreed: 'some are very old. That is why it has been so awful when the Israelis have brought bulldozers in to dig up the olive trees. It is such a catastrophe for them.'[30]

Schaffer did eventually modify her views. She felt that after publicity in the early 1960s exposed harsh treatment of refugees on the West Bank of the Jordan River controlled by Jordan, 'the Palestinians really began to be noticed; they were a factor in the Middle East unlikely to disappear.' But Israeli defeat of Jordan in the 1967 war led to a crackdown in 1970 that reduced Palestinian power and influence, 'particularly since the activist leadership was pressured to leave Jordan for other countries'.[31]

[28] Ibid.
[29] Eleanore Raven-Hamilton, 28.
[30] Ibid., 29.
[31] Teresita Schaffer, 27.

Schaffer's incremental insights accumulated in intelligence work for INR did not come close to fulfilling Raven-Hamilton's fervent hope that the Palestine situation 'will be resolved before too much longer, and peace will be restored to the region'. Patricia Veliotes had been promised by husband Nicholas that his assignment as DCM in Tel Aviv would be their 'golden years'. But they never shared planned visits to archaeological sites and other wonderful places. They arrived in August 1973. In October, the Yom Kippur War and its aftermath meant she scarcely saw him over the following two years. Instead, she clung to hopes of an unlikely Middle East Utopia.[32]

After an earlier 'wonderful' experience in Jordan, Patricia felt that because half of the 'marvellous' Jordanians were Palestinians and 'such clever, intelligent, and cultured people … so much like the Israelis—if the two groups could ever get together it would be an unbeatable combination'. It amazed her that 'the Jordanians or the Palestinians understood the Israelis more than the Israelis understood them; Israelis were so intelligent and perceptive, in the lead in scientific research in so many countries that they've gone to and come from'. With a career, unusual at the time, outside the embassy as a Suzuki piano teacher, she found an explanation not through study of thirty years of regional history or political analysis by embassy staff. Her husband had polyps removed from his nose by a Palestinian surgeon at the King Hussein Medical Centre in Jordan. Israeli friends were incredulous that there 'were doctors of this calibre or people of this calibre' in the Arab world. While acknowledging that 'maybe not every Israeli felt like that', she felt interaction between the two peoples was so hostile that cooperation was very unlikely.[33]

There was, however, no shortage of criticism of Israel by American women already present in the country. Margaret Barnhart, consular officer 1968–1970, had entered the Foreign Service in 1967. After being a State Department intern and working for UNESCO in the 1950s, she was an FSO in assignments at home and abroad relating to Japan in the early 1960s. A large group of Orthodox Jews lived right outside her office. Regularly, some would come in for visas to go to the United States for the High Holy Days. She had thought all Jews came to Jerusalem for such days, but learned that, for many, their head rabbi was in the US. Initially, they were difficult to deal with because 'they'd never look at you'. If asked

[32] Patricia Veliotes, 9.
[33] Ibid., 10.