Tracing the US diplomatic team’s shift from East Coast old boys to a diverse, highly specialized unit of area experts, and the impact on US-Middle East relations.

This book examines the careers of 53 area experts in the US State Department’s Middle East bureau during the Cold War. Known as Arabists or Middle East hands, they were very different in background, education, and policy outlook from their predecessors, the Orientalists. A highly competitive selection process and rigorous training shaped them into a small corps of diplomatic professionals with top-notch linguistic and political reporting skills. Case studies shed light on Washington’s perceptions of Israel and the Arab world, as well as how American leaders came to regard (and often disregard) the advice of their own expert advisors. This study focuses on their transformative role in Middle East diplomacy from the Eisenhower through the Ford administrations.

Readership

This book will be of interest to historians, area studies scholars, and students at the undergraduate and graduate levels interested in Middle East studies and US foreign relations.

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Introduction: America’s Middle East Area Experts; 1. The Orientalists Fade Away; 2. The Middle East Hands Emerge, or, Don’t Worry Mother, Your Son Is in the ASTP; 3. Landfall: Language Training at Beirut, 1946; 4. Filling the Cold War Linguist Gap: The Middle East Area Program in Beirut; 5. “The Departure of Kings, Old Men, and Christians”: The Eisenhower Years; 6. Quiet Diplomacy In Action: The Kennedy and Johnson Years; 7. Kissinger’s Arabesque: The Nixon And Ford Years; Epilogue: Beirut Axioms: Lessons Learned by the Middle East Hands; Appendix: Brief Biographies; Bibliography; Index

About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

Teresa Fava Thomas is a professor of history at Fitchburg State University in Massachusetts.