



SALZBURG
GLOBAL
SEMINAR

SESSION REPORT

SSASA
XIII

The Search for a New Global Balance: America's Changing Role in the World



SALZBURG SEMINAR AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Deep thanks is owed to the many individual and institutional supporters of the **Salzburg Seminar American Studies Association (SSASA)**.

For the 2015 program, we want to give special thanks to our partner, the **Roosevelt Study Center** (www.roosevelt.nl), and to the **11 United States Embassies** that helped provide scholarships and travel funding for participants and speakers.

In addition, we want to acknowledge the contribution of time and thought leadership provided by the program **Co-Chairs and speakers** and the active participation of all of the **Fellows**.

SSASA 13

September 24 to 29, 2015
Salzburg, Austria

The Search for a New Global Balance: America's Changing Role in the World

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Introduction and Overview

For better or worse, love it or hate it, the United States of America (henceforth also referred to at times as just “America” or “US”) has arguably played the most important role in shaping our current international systems, structures, and geo-political culture. And it will continue to play a leading role in shaping the world for the coming generations. It is also indisputable that America’s role is changing. Other actors, including various States, citizen movements, and terrorist organizations, challenge its predominance and seek to re-shape power in the global arena. Other factors as well are distinctly changing how the world operates and affect what role any single State can play. These include the continued rapid pace of globalization and the increasing influence of multinational corporations, transnational threats like climate change, technological innovation that may be altering social and economic fundamentals, and social media which is shifting our understanding of “people power.”

From 24 to 29 September, approximately 60 academics, journalists, political analysts and advisors gathered in Salzburg, Austria for the 13th Salzburg Seminar American Studies Association (SSASA) program *The Search for a New Global Balance: America’s Changing Role in the World* to reflect on and debate where America is headed, where they, representing 27 diverse countries from five continents, think it should go, whether it should lead or follow, and what impact these decisions have on the rest of the world. The focus is an incredibly important topic for the American Studies field to grapple with as the real-world implications of these questions will have both immediate and long-lasting effects. This is particularly true as the United States nears another presidential election that will see a new leader in the White House in January 2017.

The program unfolded over a five-day period with considerable debate and discussion. This report does not purport to reflect the scope or complexity of the program; rather, it seeks to capture the broad themes and key messages that arose during the program. It reflects an amalgamation of the diverse opinions of individuals who were present (emphasis on opinions). It does not purport to reflect views or positions of specific governments or organizations, including Salzburg Global Seminar, nor the author. For additional information, including interviews with select participants, refer to the SSASA program page:

SalzburgGlobal.org/go/ssasa13

Salzburg Global Vice President Clare Shine (center) introduces US Ambassador to Austria, Alexa Wesner, at a “fireside chat” in the Great Hall of Schloss Leopoldskron



Two recent texts provided a starting point for the discussions in Salzburg: Ian Bremmer's *Superpower: Three Choices for America's Role in the World* (2015) and Joseph S. Nye Jr.'s *Is the American Century Over?* (2015). The participants were asked to read sections of the texts in advance of the program to provide context for the discussions. Nye's book contends that America will remain the pre-eminent global power for the foreseeable future (meaning decades, at a minimum) and is careful to frame US power as "the American Century," beginning with its primacy on the global stage from 1941 onwards, as distinct from a "hegemony." He also tracks periods of increased and decreased engagement in the international arena and characterizes concerns about US withdrawal not as "isolationism," which is practically an impossibility for many reasons, but borrows Stephen Sestanovich's term "retrenchment"¹ instead. In Nye's words, "Retrenchment is not isolationism, but an adjustment of strategic goals and means."² While Nye acknowledges changing power dynamics, he assures us that "we have not entered a post-American world."³

Bremmer's book takes a somewhat different angle on similar issues, starting with the given that America will remain a superpower for the foreseeable

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- 1 Stephen Sestanovich is the George F. Kennan Senior Fellow for Russian and European Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. The reference is from his book *Maximalist: America in the World from Truman to Obama* (New York: Knopf, 2014)
 - 2 Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Is the American Century Over?*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015) p.118.
 - 3 Ibid. p. 125.



Faculty of the 2015 SSASA program.
Left to right: Thomas Bender,
Irakli Alasania, Ron Clifton,
Ted Widmer, Cornelis (Kees) van
Minnen, Edith Chapin, Alex Seago,
James D. Boys

future; the real question is: “What sort of superpower should it be?”⁴ He suggests three broad choices, characterized as “Independent America,” in which the US focuses on domestic matters, largely to the exclusion of international concerns; “Moneyball America,” in which the country engages only around limited strategic concerns; and “Indispensable America,” in which the US embraces its role as a “great nation” and puts great store in solving international challenges with a view to shared interests.⁵ Bremmer also contends that what is most important is that choices be made and intentional decisions follow from those choices.

The readings, and Bremmer’s question, provided a framework for the discussions in Salzburg. But the participants, themselves experts in various fields with considerable experience to draw from, moved beyond simple characterizations and debated the benefits and risks of American policies and actions in and for their countries. Different nations have had very different experiences with the US’ use of power which clearly inform judgments on the role of the US going forward, as well as the need for a new global balance – with “balance” being the operative term. Participants also considered a raft of truly international challenges that require action by the so-called global community, with the US a key member of that community. In addition, tools and technologies that offer opportunities for change, or which are already changing international balances of power and responsibility, were also factored into the discussions. The reality is that there are multiple balances, not a single static set of relationships or established hierarchy. No country is in a position to achieve all of its goals by virtue of its own will or exercise of power, whether soft or hard.

Over the course of the five-day program there was considerable debate, and the opinions and priorities of the participants were as diverse as their individual experiences. Participants looked at both historical and current context, looked across the global arena examining questions from different geo-political loci, and looked ahead, expressing their own hopes for what America’s role will be.

While there were varying degrees of optimism and pessimism, there was general consensus that the US has a critical leadership role to continue to play in this century. There is no question that there are many American foreign policy decisions that a majority of people disagree with, but they still generally felt that the world is safer and functions better with an active and engaged America, rather than one that turns away or rejects any sense of

4 Ian Bremmer, *Superpower: Three Choices for America’s Role in the World*, (New York: Portfolio, 2015) p. 1.

5 Ibid. p.6.



international obligation. Participants agreed that America's relative power and attendant role has declined in an increasingly multipolar world. America must grapple – domestically and globally – with how to conduct itself in these changed and changing circumstances, but there was agreement that withdrawal was in no one's interest.

There was little support for “overly interventionist” actions of the US, generally in terms of war and aggression, but defined differently by each participant. They were also concerned by the apparently increasing domestic focus when it seemed to signal a withdrawal from the global arena. More so, the increasing political polarization inside the US was seen to have negative ramifications for how the US engages with the rest of the world. A somewhat trite, though apt comparison might be the US as a difficult neighbor, too loud, too nosy, too large, too bossy, simply too much, much of the time. However, everyone agreed that it is still the most important presence in the neighborhood and the one that you want to have “on your side.”

With the 2016 US Presidential election campaigns in full swing at the time of the program, probably the most important consensus message was a request that no matter who ends up in the White House, that she/he consider carefully America's continued role in the world and work to be a “good neighbor,” taking a strong leadership role, but working collaboratively and recognizing both in rhetoric and action that all of our destinies are inextricably intertwined and that we need a US that is willing to work in concert with other powers and not neglect the powerless. The hope is that the US can craft a foreign policy that protects national interests, which will always be the priority for any State, while also acknowledging, even promoting, a new balance among powers that also prioritizes peace.

Looking Back

American Exceptionalism?

While it is easy to get caught up in semantics, **Thomas Bender**, Professor of Humanities and History at New York University, eloquently made the case that American insistence on identifying itself as “exceptional” has implications for how it operates in the international system. In his view, exceptionalism is negative in its meaning and in its application; it is used to justify ignoring the rules. By claiming, in effect, that the US is beyond the rules, it sees itself as separate from the rest of the world. This has direct implications for policy making and decision making as well, with the US taking almost a point of pride in continuing policies that are anathema to much of the rest of the global community.

While the roots of “exceptionalism” are clearly evident in US history with “manifest destiny” and the Monroe Doctrine as early examples, it was only more recently, in the 1940s, that the term came into use and the concept was solidified. Bender debated some of the justifications and imagery that has been used, often to great effect, in building this particularly American narrative. Perhaps most memorable has been the reference to America as the “shining city on the hill.” Bender’s own analysis is that the reference, made by an early Puritan preacher John Winthrop upon arriving in the American colonies in 1630 and popularized by Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, was in fact not a bid for exceptionalism or isolation. Rather, it was call to be the best nation possible, acting in love and humility, as America was to be judged by God as well as its peers.



Session Chair, Ron Clifton (right) and faculty member Edith Chapin

Bender pointed out that the US seeks to present its history without global context, and this reinforces a sense of exceptionalism. He refuted much of the thinking that has fed this particular attitude, demonstrating with event after event in US history how deeply and directly tied they are to a broader international context. In his opinion, it would be more accurate, and would better serve America's interests, to understand America's history and role as "distinctively local, and global at the same time."

Understanding National Interests

Moving quickly forward to the recent record, the participants considered what has defined US national interests and foreign policy decisions from the presidency of Bill Clinton to the present. When President Clinton took office, it was the early days of what some would call an American hegemony. The US was in a position to decide how it wanted to be "in" the world and what kind of leadership, as the undisputed global superpower, it would provide. **James D. Boys**, author of *Clinton's Grand Strategy: US Foreign Policy in a Post-Cold War World*, clarified that "the national interest" of any country is basically the same and unchanging at its core: it is about survival. What does change are priorities, and a sense of what is needed to survive and then to grow and thrive. As **Ted Widmer**, former foreign policy speech writer and special assistant to President Bill Clinton, pointed out, although Clinton is retrospectively seen as having had a largely successful foreign policy (with a few glaring tragedies), initially that was not the case. Clinton had to run against George H.W. Bush who had a very successful, and active, foreign policy record. In fact, Clinton succeeded by suggesting that Bush was too active overseas and had ignored domestic problems. In addition,

1. Marty Gecek, Symposium Director and Chair – Salzburg Seminar American Studies Association (SSASA)

2. Alex Seago, Session Co-Chair

3. Irakli Alasania, faculty member





Session Co-Chair Kees van Minnen (left) and faculty member James D. Boys, author of *Clinton's Grand Strategy: US Foreign Policy in a Post-Cold War World*

the Democrats were still struggling to develop a foreign policy platform. While retreating in memory, the Vietnam War still presented a deep conundrum for the party since the war was largely executed by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson (both of the Democratic party) but also rallied “the left” in anti-war protests as the war dragged on. President Carter, whose own legacy is continuing to be revised, was seen as incredibly weak on the international front, his success in brokering the Egyptian-Israeli peace accord notwithstanding. That played directly into the hands of Reagan, delivering the White House to the Republicans for the next 12 years.

When Clinton succeeded in 1992, he necessarily had to emphasize domestic priorities. He also wanted to redefine Democrats’ foreign policy priorities. He chose to emphasize “national security, democracy and prosperity” throughout the course of his presidency, deftly mixing both “soft” and “hard” power, with a clear emphasis on soft power. Security, although at some level a given, was important for Clinton since the Democrats had been branded as too pacifist. Prosperity was particularly timely, Boys noted, because Clinton was “the first globalization president” and was benefiting from the rapid growth and the advent of the internet and trade liberalization. Democracy was the third natural priority given the continued accelerated changes following the collapse of the USSR and the “fall of the wall.” The opening of the economies of central and Eastern Europe and former Soviet states was the perfect opportunity to extend US influence through business investment. Democracy and prosperity were seen as intertwined, and success overseas had a direct positive impact on the economy at home.

While there may be some “nostalgic glow” now for that time period, it also highlighted the deep tensions that persist between core national interests and humanitarian and other priorities. The disaster in Rwanda and the failure of a US response, as well as the delayed and problematic interventions in Bosnia, are just two examples of where the fissures were most clearly visible. Widmer

also pointed out that during the Clinton era we started to see the chafing of the constraints placed on US actions by the international system. The irony, of course, is that the US was being constrained by systems and procedures it helped to design and for which it advocated. But there was a growing sense, which has continued to strengthen in the intervening years, that the US should not be held to the same set of rules as other States and should be free to act in its own best interests without regard for others.

As the Vietnam War defined foreign policy decisions for the decades that followed it, US foreign policy is now also largely defined through a particular lens, that of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Whatever foreign policy might have been pursued by George W. Bush, who took power in January 2001, it was all moot, as 9/11 became the defining point of his presidency and continues to directly affect the policies, both foreign and domestic, of the subsequent presidency of Barack Obama. No one doubts that it will continue to be one of the key defining factors for the next president as well. It led to two wars being waged by the US simultaneously, and at great cost. While neither is still called a war today, the US has not been able to extract itself from either Afghanistan or Iraq, and people's disillusionment with those wars has had a direct impact on the willingness of the current administration to intervene in other situations in the region. There is also deep debate over whether the interventions have ultimately helped or hurt the US and whether they dampened or exacerbated international terrorism. Within the US, public and political factions have raised deep questions about the role Americans feel the US should, or even can, play in the global arena. Agreement is not at hand. While many felt that 9/11 was the point at which the US seemed most likely to become more isolationist, it may well be the continued challenge of terrorism and the rise of the so-called Islamic State that brings that question and that choice into sharpest relief.

1. Thomas Bender, faculty member

2. Ted Widmer, faculty member





Probably the second most important event that has shaped recent foreign policy, again intertwined with domestic policy, is the financial crisis which erupted toward the end of the George W. Bush presidency. This crisis demonstrated just how impossible it is for the US to extricate itself from the rest of the world. The ramifications of potential fiscal collapse were so stark and frightening that it required a rapid and definitive response from the US government. While most of the actions taken were focused at home, they were necessarily taken in an international context and with careful consideration of the ripples caused by each action given the nature of what has undeniably become a global economy.

There is a long list of both challenges and opportunities with which the US government has had to grapple. There is a chorus of voices at home with conflicting demands, and a chorus of voices abroad that also have conflicting requests and expectations. Domestically, the population is changing rather rapidly, and the rising leaders have different attitudes to the global arena, informed by different experiences and completely new levels of connectivity. Demographically, the US is also changing dramatically. By 2050, for example, Caucasians will no longer be the majority, a phenomenon some current leaders often fail to recognize. Former minority groups, and people with recent immigrant backgrounds, as well as those who have traditionally lacked power, will make up the majority. How this will affect foreign policy is yet to be seen, but there is little question that priorities and sympathies will be affected. Even if not fully agreed upon, global challenges like climate change cannot be ignored. Other global challenges are still emerging and less well understood, but of no less a concern, such as cyber-security. Some represent traditional foes and competing nation states. Others are rising powers or terrorist networks. There are also emerging opportunities to forge alliances

Symposium Director Marty Gecek,
Salzburg Global Vice President
Clare Shine and US Ambassador to
Austria Alexa Wesner

with new actors and expanding powers and to use technology to help advance common interests. The question is which challenges and opportunities will America focus on, and what impact are those decisions likely to have on the broader global community?

Global crises have the particular perversity of simultaneously demonstrating how deeply linked the US is to the rest of the world and the need for some form of recognizable US leadership in addressing these challenges. This drives a considerable segment of the US public and political leadership to call for a limit to global engagement. There are others who would like to create a “fortress America” to keep those inside safe and to limit the ability of those outside to negatively affect American lives and fortunes. Based on how the world operates today, this is a pipe dream at best, if not a dangerous illusion. But it is a distinct challenge, as Nye points out. For the first time since the Pew poll began in 1964, more than half of Americans surveyed agreed that they did not want the role of global problem solvers. The exact statement that they agreed with was: “The US should mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along the best they can on their own.” This may suggest a rather naïve, or myopically hopeful, sense that America can shut the doors to the outside world and create a safe haven for its own citizens. Recent events indicate that, whether one agrees it is desirable or not, it simply is not possible. The challenge for the next administration will be how to strike a meaningful balance between domestic concerns and the absolute requirement to engage in the world.



The Role of Journalism, Media and Technology

There is little question that the advent of the Internet has completely changed the ability of citizens and the general public to access magnitudes of information. This is true even in cases where digital access remains limited and/or is censored. Information access has simply grown at a speed and volume that no one could have foreseen. The lines around reporting, journalism, and citizen observation are increasingly blurred. The public, generally speaking, is much more actively engaged in providing basic data and information that at one point would have been left largely to professionals. This does not mean that all of the information being fed through various news channels and other information sources is always accurate, but the fact remains that the public can access more information, in more detail, through more channels than ever before, and the field is still evolving on a daily basis. There are implications for both the creation and conduct of foreign policy.

Media and technology give “voice” to people, such that not only governments speak on an international stage. Power, at least soft power, is now highly devolved. Citizens are able to see and interact with people that they will never meet in person. Information about countries and cultures is no longer just filtered through public relations campaigns and official government information channels. These varied channels can demonstrate a diversity of opinion, build bridges at the citizen level, and create a sense of “global citizenship” that has some meaning beyond government, the diplomatic classes and elites.

The field of journalism would like to maintain the neutral role of the media and believes that professional media are not advocates for particular viewpoints or positions, but focus more on reporting facts, enabling “consumers” to draw their own conclusions. They should focus on encouraging people to think, not telling them what to think. Journalism should continue to be guided by clear principles, distinct from social media.

In theory, all forms of media are democratizing. However, it was also pointed out that, regardless of media form, there is a diversity of voices and movements that gain attention, whether those of women, or marginalized communities in any society, including marginalized voices in the global community. To be more democratic will require access by more voices and opinions in public debate. An “undemocratizing” force that raised concerns is censorship, whether in the form of government control, pressure groups, the need to appeal to advertisers/investors, or self-censorship. Participants noted that the dominance of English-language in the international media leaves out opinions of a huge portion of the globe. Further, use of particular terms can also “spin” a story in different directions. How journalists decide what terms to use was a point of debate, with the only resolution being that extra care should be taken to understand the meaning and connotations behind term choice, for example, “migrants” vs “refugees.”

But does the rapid growth of social media, in particular, directly affect foreign relations and policy? Governments are held to more immediate and stronger accountability by citizens that know when new policies are announced or actions initiated. People may openly challenge, can undermine, and can publicly affect the course of government decisions. Public awareness can be raised within hours and create movements to demand, directly or indirectly, government action. Of course, the calls for action may not have been the intention of a particular posting or story, but the power of social media is demonstrated by how quickly stories and photos can simply go viral, with often unintended consequences. It is the difficulty, if not inability, to control social media that makes it both a potentially powerful and potentially destructive tool. Lastly, as a “reality check” participants pointed out that, generally speaking, America is still very myopic, with most reporting and information, regardless of the form of media, focused on domestic issues and concerns. Therefore, the actual impact on foreign policy is necessarily still limited.

As a number of the speakers made comments under Chatham House Rules, the rest of the report does not reference specific individuals, but rather seeks to summarize discussions and comments without specific attribution.



G.H. Joost Baarssen



Niels Bjerre-Poulsen



Martyn Bone

Looking (from) Abroad

As noted, the participants represented nearly 30 different countries and regions. Their views were the primary focus of the program, seeking to understand what the international perspectives are on the role of America going forward. While countries and individuals outside of the US do not have a direct say in American policy-setting, their lives are quite directly impacted by what America does. For that reason, hearing those voices and understanding both how America is viewed from abroad and what people hope will define America's role in the world in the coming period is important. The US does not function in a vacuum, and its policies are not determined in a vacuum. The program sought to consider both context and effect by identifying select challenges, as well as potential challengers to US primacy, focused on geographical regions.

Europe and Russia

Though part of a contiguous region, there are very significant differences in the relations between Russia, the various countries of Europe and America, and in expectations for America's role. America's closest allies are based in Europe. Cultural, historical, socio-political, defense and economic ties are both close and significant. The European Union is America's largest trading partner, and there are major transatlantic investments in both directions. The EU and US are currently working on completing the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), a new free trade agreement that will bind the regions even more closely.⁶ And, even 70 years past the end of the Second World War, many continue to use the crucially important, and somewhat improbable, US foreign policy decisions that led to implementation of the Marshall Plan⁷ as a benchmark of positive American intervention. While relations with the EU are important, America continues to work more closely with individual countries in Europe, rather than the multilateral organization. Certain country ties are closer and strategically more important. In addition, the EU continues to stumble in its attempts to set coherent foreign policy on behalf of its members. From the US perspective, it is simply more efficient and effective to work directly with State governments than the EU. In terms of global balance, the EU is a force that matters, but seems so interconnected to the US that it is not clear how strong a counterbalance it does or could provide on its own. The EU is a significant

6 "Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership" Office of the United States Trade Representative, Executive Office of the President, <https://ustr.gov/ttip>

7 "Marshall Plan, 1948" Office of the Historian, US State Department, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/marshall-plan>



trading partner for other regions of the world and a large development donor, which gives it influence. Economically it is highly attractive to other neighboring countries, but what seems to matter more for European States outside the EU is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO⁸), which continues to be the primary security vehicle that border countries aspire to join, due largely to the US security guarantee.

While one needs to be careful not to generalize across a region, there are some serious challenges that are particular to small States that were part of the USSR and that have had a more difficult experience in claiming complete independence from Russia and taking control of their own destinies. Violent conflict, disputes over borders, and charges of occupation mark the recent history and current situation of a number of the former Soviet States, including Georgia, which featured prominently in the discussions in Salzburg. The ongoing tension between Georgia and Russia⁹ highlights both the perceived power and the limitations on the power of the USA. While the US is committed to supporting independent democracy, it also has strategic interests that sometimes create conflict with that commitment. This conflict is felt deeply by, as it directly affects, many countries around the world, including many of those represented at the program – which see their own policies and socio-economic development opportunities as well as security either impeded or supported by the US. Even when support is offered, it is not always consistent, further exacerbating challenges. Often the smaller nations are left perplexed.

(Left to right) Jonas Urbanavicius,
Kees van Minnen, Irakli Alasania and
Oleg Ivanov

⁸ “What is NATO?” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, <http://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/index.html>

⁹ For background, see: “United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia” United Nations, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unomig/background.html>



When the USSR collapsed, the relationship between the US and Russia changed rapidly and dramatically. Russia was no longer the foe, but rather a friend, or at least a professed ally. Recent years, however, have seen a resurgence of the former enmity and high levels of distrust. Some accuse Putin's Russia of fearing the "contagion of liberal democracy," and one result is a very clear opposition to the expansion of NATO. There have also been accusations that Russia's primary foreign policy tool, and mechanism to control the political aims of its neighbors, is its military might, either through direct confrontation or via proxy support. Analysts can point to a "grand strategy" for dealing with the USSR during the decades-long Cold War, but the current state of affairs with, and varying responses to, Russia indicates that America does not have a clear and coherent strategy for how to deal with Russia. Critics suggest that the Obama administration is "always on its back foot," always reacting, not taking proactive steps to achieve its own goals. In their eyes, this enables Putin to have primary control and weakens America's stature.

From the Russian side, there are calls for a pragmatic approach to international relations and a sense that much of America's rhetoric is overly ideological. They consider it a basic truth that global security relies on some level of cooperation between Russia, the US, and Europe. At a minimum, coordination of policies is necessary to avoid direct confrontation. There are also suggestions that Russia is subjected to unfair suspicion and unwarranted criticism, and the West sees Russian actions through a prism of a desire to build a new empire. Russia counters that America is not willing to concede power to a multipolar system, but wants to maintain hegemony. What it sees is a country that does not just promote its national values, but seeks to "force" them on other countries while claiming they are the international



Eunsook Chung



Avner Cohen



Babacar Dieng

norm, ignoring the values and interests of other countries when they diverge from those of the US. Russia claims to prefer to focus on shared interests and harmonization with US and Europe, rather than the current situation that stresses divisions and leads to increased militarization.

In terms of counterbalances to American power, Europe has created mechanisms to set up a common foreign policy, which ought to operate as the counterpart to the US State Department and help create balance as another “pole” in a multipolar world. The lack of coordination within the EU de facto means that the US continues to work more closely with individual European countries rather than with the EU per se. Different European countries have different priorities and international policy concerns. This has ramifications for balancing American power and still leaves the US in a much stronger position. As or if the EU begins to coordinate policies more closely, it could be a counterweight to American power in the future. There are steps in that direction on select policy concerns, especially counter-terrorism, trade, and economic development.

Looking ahead, Russia does pose a continued concern and challenge to some of America’s strategic interests. The future is less certain, as considerable attention has rested on the current leadership. The participants seemed rather divided in their thinking about how deep the concerns are and whether new leadership in Russia could help establish a more cooperative relationship with America relatively quickly. Regardless, there is no question that the US needs to continue to navigate complex issues in consultation with Russia, where strategies conflict, and possibly goals as well, including anti-terrorism, relations with Ukraine, North Korea, nuclear proliferation, energy policy, and human rights. Russia, at this point, seems a challenger to a number of America’s goals globally and in Russia’s spheres of influence, Europe and the Middle East in particular.



Asia

One of the key policy announcements in recent years from the Obama administration was the “pivot to Asia”¹⁰. Even if the “American Century” is not over, it is clear that Asia will account for the largest portion of global growth and development in 21st Century. In that recognition, Obama announced that more focused attention, diplomatic, economic, military, etc., would be directed to Asia. Obama placed considerable effort into achieving the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP¹¹) trade deal. While it was a key piece of economic and foreign policy for Obama, many analysts suggest the actual financial implications are limited since China is not participating. However, as a show of commitment to and investment in Asia, it is important, and economically it could become quite significant if China were to join in the future.

Japan remains America's strongest ally in Asia. At the end of World War II, Japan received considerable financial and political investment from the US and also received security guarantees to ensure it would not re-arm. While the US has unquestionably been important to Japan, the reverse is also true. America has looked to Japan to help balance various regional powers in Asia and has been able to count on Japanese support in the international arena. Japan's influence, however, seems to be on the wane. While it still has the

10 “The Obama Administration's Pivot to Asia” The Foreign Policy Initiative, <http://www.foreignpolicyi.org/content/obama-administrations-pivot-asia>

11 “The Trans-Pacific Partnership” Office of the United States Trade Representative, Executive Office of the President, <https://ustr.gov/tpp>

(Left to right) Wang Dong, Ryo Sahashi and Joshy M. Paul





third largest economy, its geo-political influence seems to have lessened in recent years. It favors America's "pivot to Asia" and believes in the benefits of heightened regional engagement and the critical role of a strong American presence. Rising tensions in the region, in particular between Japan, China and South Korea, and the erratic and aggressive actions of North Korea are cause for concern, not just in the region, but for America and for broader global stability. While the parties themselves need to settle their disputes (with the exception of North Korea which has been accused of crimes against humanity, which are the role of the international community to address), America is in a position to help negotiate peaceful resolutions. This is a role particularly suited to the US, and it will continue to rely on Japan to help calm tensions. Within Japan, the primary narrative casts the US as "protector" that has provided them with a way back into the global community. Things have not always been smooth, of course, with various points of tension over the decades, including a period of intense economic competition, but Japan has remained one of the most steadfast allies of the US. The Japanese population has an overall positive view of the US, although resistance to the continued presence of US military bases has led to some domestic problems in Japan. Overall, Japan values America's championing of universal human rights, democracy, and also stability. It wants to deepen military cooperation with the US, including monitoring and surveillance in the Straits of Japan. It thinks that the US is the only power capable of containing China and believes that is necessary for stability in the region.

India, which has the third greatest GDP in the world (based on purchasing power parity (PPP) valuation) behind the USA and China, and is second only to China terms of population, is rapidly growing, both economically and demographically, and thus could offer new strategic opportunities. Despite its size and rapid development, India's domestic concerns with poverty



Pawel Frankowski



Christian Gilde



Ildiko Hortobagyi



Lois E. Horton



Gwi IL Jung



Curd Knuepfer

and environmental issues and with regional rivalries, most notably with Pakistan, will occupy it more than global engagement. The current leaders have a good rapport, and that has helped to strengthen American-Indian relations since Narendra Modi was elected prime minister in May 2014. The historical relations between the two countries in India's post-colonial period have been somewhat tense, with India leaning to the USSR during the Cold War and the US appearing more supportive of Pakistan, including during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War. In addition, India's refusal to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and its decision to develop nuclear weapons resulted in sanctions levied against it, which also caused resentment. But there is now defense cooperation between the two countries, and the US wants to continue that trajectory by building a stronger alliance with India as a rapidly growing economy. India seems similarly disposed to strengthening an alliance with the US and gaining more recognition as a key regional power. It is interested, in particular, in technology transfers from the US that will enable it to continue to develop its own military capabilities.

Both within the Asian context, and writ globally, **China** is the biggest question mark. This is a fairly recent development. As China reminds others, it still has considerable development challenges at home and was not previously seen as a global player of note, beyond perhaps its military capacity. While China currently has the second largest share of the global economy, it lags significantly in terms of GDP per capita. In terms of military spending, while it has garnered considerable attention, the Chinese are quick to clarify that spending remains capped at approximately 2% of GDP. There is much speculation about China's intentions and what role it sees for itself in the global arena. Does it see it itself as a global superpower? Does it want to challenge America's predominance? China's response to America's "pivot to Asia" was not wholly enthusiastic, but recent statements indicate that China sees America's continued presence as important to stability. and President Xi noted that "The vast Pacific Ocean has enough space for two large countries like the United States and China."¹² Other regional actors took exception – hearing in that statement a Chinese desire to divide up the region between China and the US. But China explains it differently, indicating that it does not want a "collision" with the US and does not see a threat in America's increased attention to and investment in the region. While there certainly is much to gain by strategic cooperation between the two largest global economies, there are still notable differences in their positions on key issues including human rights, intellectual property, limiting carbon emissions, cyber security, and trade regulations.

12 "Chinese leader Xi Jinping joins Obama for summit" BBC News, (June 8, 2013), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22798572>



China sees a positive trajectory in terms of building trust and cooperation with the US, and it has appeared increasingly willing to take on more responsibility in the global arena, which is in the US' interest as well. Another example is the recent creation of the New Development Bank,¹³ previously referred to as BRICS Development Bank, established by Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, which is headquartered in Shanghai, China and has as its goal to “mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries.” It is relatively small in terms of capital, but seeks to provide an alternative to the World Bank and what is seen as a US/European-dominated global banking system. It is a way to influence economic development in the emerging economies and, to a lesser degree, international relations, as it provides the founding nations some leverage, especially with smaller nations. It is not a geopolitical platform, but it can influence development and increases South-South cooperation.

The China-US relationship can best be characterized as both collaborative and competitive. There is more than \$500 billion in bilateral trade and high levels of direct investment in both directions. People-to-people interaction and cultural exchange is also increasing. On the occasion of Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent trip to the USA, Obama announced the “One Million Strong” initiative¹⁴ with a goal to have one million students in the US learning Mandarin by 2020. Currently, Chinese students make up more than a quarter of all foreign students in the USA. China states that it welcomes

¹³ New Development Bank, <http://www.ndb.int>

¹⁴ “1 Million Strong” 100,000 Strong Foundation, <http://100kstrong.org/initiatives/1-million-strong>



Barbara Liberska



Michał Makocki



Louis Mendy



these opportunities to increase understanding and build mutual respect. It does not currently deploy many “soft power” tools. Its primary tool in terms of global influence is its economic might. It is giving more attention now to cultural and education exchanges. China sees itself as a “rising power,” not a superpower, and does not seek to supplant America. It believes, however, that power sharing is essential for stability and development in the region, as well as globally.

In terms of Beijing’s aspirations, participants questioned whether there is a “Beijing Consensus” distinct from the “Washington Consensus.”¹⁵ Has a particular Chinese economic development model been developed, or are things evolving as they go? There are features that distinguish it from the dominant American development model, but whether it is a distinct set of policies that other countries can follow is less clear. China does challenge the current understanding of modernity as intertwined with democracy and free market economy. China contends it is seeking its own path to modernity, exploring other models than those used in the West. But, it maintains that it is not seeking to supplant the West or challenge America’s dominant role on the global stage.

15 John Williamson, “Beijing Consensus versus Washington Consensus” in *Handbook of Emerging Economies*, ed. Robert E. Looney, (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), available: <http://www.relooney.com/NS3040/Washington-Consensus-Chapter.pdf>

The Americas

Although hemispheric cooperation was formally initiated in 1889 with the founding of the Organization of American States,¹⁶ there is a continuing sense and reality of separateness from Mexico southwards. The dominant languages, cultures, and colonial experiences were much more similar for those under Iberian Spanish or Portuguese rule. With independence, most of the former Iberian colonies decided to set up systems different from the European colonial powers. They looked at what the US had accomplished, having gained its independence from Britain some decades earlier, and thought they could count on US support. That did not materialize, and while it is far too simplistic to say that set the tone for future relations, there is an element of truth to it. Many other factors have strained relations across the two continents, including America's response to the Cuban revolution and the resulting US policies in support of conservative, often highly repressive, governments in Latin America. This led to deep disillusionment on behalf of the populations that were fighting for greater freedom and democracy and to growing waves of anti-Americanism.

As new governments eventually gained power across the region, they determined to look "inward" and forge their own models rather than looking to the US for material support or guidance. This inclination was further strengthened following disillusionment with the Washington Consensus which helped to usher in the so-called "pink tide."¹⁷ This saw more active State involvement in the economy and the crafting of a new social contract. The initial results showed gains in GDP, decreases in poverty, and modest declines in inequality. People were also revising their concepts of citizenship and social welfare. Unfortunately, the effects of the global financial crisis and localized political concerns have eroded some of those gains and raised questions about the longevity of the model. Brazil, Venezuela, and Argentina are all facing problems. Even so, the rise of regional institutions, like the Union of South American Nations,¹⁸ an interregional trade promotion body that also promotes deeper integration across the region, demonstrates the continued "independence" of the southern portion of the region to be distinct from the US. There are also increasing bilateral agreements made outside the region, including looking to China as a strategic partner. There is definitely a

It was suggested by participants that "American Studies" should encompass all of the Americas, North and South, not just the USA, and that it should have more focus on pan-Americanism.



Michael Muellneritsch



Daniela Naydeva



Michael O'Neal

¹⁶ Organization of American States, <http://www.oas.org/en>

¹⁷ Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, "The Pink Tide in Latin America: An Alliance Between Local Capital and Socialism?" *Global Research* (Centre for Research on Globalization, April 2, 2013) available: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-pink-tide-in-latin-america-an-alliance-between-local-capital-and-socialism/5333782>

¹⁸ "Explainer: What Is UNASUR?" Americas Society / Council of the Americas, <http://www.as-coa.org/articles/explainer-what-unasur>



1. Christopher Wylde

2. Marcos Aurelio Guedes de Oliveira

3. Silvia Nunez Garcia

relative decline in US power and influence in the region, though participants felt it probably was not in absolute terms.

Mexico, which has had both a closer and more troubled relationship to the US, was discussed separately. Mexico lost a devastating war to the US in the mid-19th Century and lost nearly half of the land it had to the US as a result. It is well-known that the current border between these countries is a point of enormous tension. Mexico is a crucially important partner for the US, as the third largest bilateral trade partner of the US. There is continual and extensive cross-border traffic, with many Mexicans traveling to and living in America, and vice versa. The shared geographic border means there are many shared issues too, including environmental concerns, legal and illegal migration, organized crime, and drug trafficking in particular. Current border tensions focus primarily on people crossing illegally from/through Mexico into the US, although recent statistics indicate that there is now a larger flow back to Mexico. And while that conversation dominates in the media at present, trafficking in drugs and arms is perhaps the larger concern. There is high pressure on the Mexican government to deal with drug trafficking, but from the Mexican perspective, too little attention is paid to the demand side of the equation, which is largely in the US, and also on the easy availability of weapons in America that then flow into Mexico, exacerbating the problems.

There is real concern about the current rhetoric in America indicative of growing xenophobia and nativism. While this was raised specifically in regard to Mexico, and most recently regarding Syrian refugees, many of the participants agreed that it is a growing concern globally. Many negative stereotypes about Mexicans persist in the media and the current US presidential race is only making it worse. As one person articulated,

the US and Mexico have a “complicated relationship of asymmetric interdependence.” One mechanism to try to counter the negative aspects of the relationship is to seek closer integration. Mexico would likely benefit, over the long term from greater attention from the US, the border and related comments notwithstanding. Mexico feels that integration of the Americas without the US will not be sufficient to their needs. The US will remain an essential actor in the hemisphere, and there is a hope that it will take on a more responsible role going forward, seeing itself as an integral part of the Americas. The demographic changes in the US will, many hope, assist that process. They see the “browning” of America as a positive change that will likely bring many more opportunities for constructive engagement.

The Middle East

The region that is arguably of greatest concern currently to the US, at least in terms of security, is the Middle East. In general, economic integration and cultural ties with this region, with the exception of Israel, are much less significant. The Arab-American population makes up less than 2% of the population and have come from a diverse range of countries. What commands US attention in the region most closely at this time are war, violence, the so-called “Islamic State,” and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Security concerns and fears of terrorism dominate the domestic US rhetoric about the region. It is a region that is also stereotyped in the US media and there is a deep lack of knowledge of, or appreciation for, the diversity of the peoples, the culture, and the complexity of the region. Here, too, the colonial legacy runs deep and destructive. America’s role has also been problematic. Despite public rhetoric about supporting democracy and human rights, the



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1. Hasan Ayoub

2. Raphael Cohen-Almagor

US seemed to prefer stability to democracy and chose to support strong-men leaders across the Middle East for decades. When the US has intervened, most notably the Iraq War, the interventions have led to greater violence and destabilization. This also feeds a narrative that has been gaining support in the US; that the US is better off not intervening at all and should simply let events unfold as they will. Current events suggest that is also not an optimal decision, with US interests being squeezed by key actors in the region.

Many analysts describe the current wars and violence as being largely proxy wars, with **Saudi Arabia** and **Iran** the two key regional powers that are supporting fighting factions in multiple countries. There is a real fear of the two countries escalating tensions to the point of direct confrontation. The results of their proxy actions are already devastating. A full-on war between these two countries would significantly magnify it. Even so, the picture is more complex than that, because extremism takes on a life of its own and many of the combatants are ruthless in their quest for domination. They are also proving attractive to would-be combatants from outside the region, expanding the problem and the potential theater for violence. Currently, the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or, as it is more often called in the region, **Daesh** (an acronym formed from the Arabic for ISIS – al Dawla al-Islamiya fil Iraq wa'al Sham), is the chief concern. They have expanded rapidly, have proven deft at using social media, and are well-resourced. Local troops on the ground, with the exception of Kurdish forces, have proven unable to stop them. Initially, some analysts suggested that while Daesh was brutal where it dominated, the US and the West did not have as much to fear from them as they had from Al Qaeda, given their different strategies. But as the brutality grows and the violence expands, the US is forced to reconsider its position and try to identify actions to limit, and eventually dismantle Daesh.

Those from the region agreed that there are no easy answers, especially given how far and quickly the situation has progressed. And recent “case studies” also offer no clear guidance. The one point that many participants in Salzburg seemed to agree with was that the US should not have invaded Iraq in 2003, and that it gravely eroded what good will and support it had following the 9/11 attacks by doing so. Obama came into office promising to get American troops out of Afghanistan and Iraq. There was no desire to continue fighting, let alone move into any new areas of conflict. The decision to help bring down Qaddafi in Libya and the decision to not get involved in Syria have both had very negative results. There is a “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” quality to it for the US. Ultimately, the US decides to act based on what will be most beneficial to its own national interests. But that belies the sympathy for the suffering of those who are caught in these wars. The US is quick to point out that it provides by far the most financial support to assist refugees by providing medical aid and humanitarian assistance. There are other facets of American power and influence that receive less attention but are crucial. The other key facet of American power is political influence and here is where criticism may be sharpest in regards to the Middle East. There is understanding for the lack of military engagement, whether people agree with the decision or not. There is some appreciation for humanitarian aid, but the seeming absence of America’s voice and a push for political settlements in the various conflicts was harder for participants to accept.

The other key issue that received focus and emphasis in Salzburg was the **Israeli-Palestinian** conflict. Although the so-called “Arab Spring” and the subsequent violence that has swept the region have often overshadowed the ongoing conflict, it remains both a high priority, and a serious problem for the US government. The special relationship between the US and Israel and the security guarantees provided to Israel have deep historical roots that are well known. And although no one questioned that America’s commitment will change, many questioned whether there might not be a more effective way to support an actual peace process that feels more even-handed. One participant pointed out that support for Israel within the US is changing with the rising generations. There is no suggestion of a policy change in the near term, but polls that reveal changing attitudes raise questions about what may happen in future. Participants discussed the spill-over effect of US support for Israel and how that damages American credibility in the region. They also pointed out that the other countries in the region have not actually stepped up to support Palestine in meaningful ways, suggesting there is a convenient narrative countries could call upon in order to excuse their own lack of constructive engagement. It may be true that peace will not be found in the region until the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is solved, but the violence in other areas of the region has so completely overshadowed all other concerns that Israel-Palestine may slip farther down the list of priorities.



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Nike Pulda



Sepp Reidlinger



Francisco J. Rodriguez



Rob Singh



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Working Group Output

Over the course of the program, the participants met multiple times in working groups in order to focus on select cross-cutting themes, including the impact of social media on the conduct of foreign relations, discussion of the readings from the Nye and Bremmer books, and the role of the US in world affairs. Many of the takeaways from the working groups are reflected in the preceding sections. What follows is a brief review of the group reports.

Social Media and Foreign Relations

The groups noted that most of the “evidence” was based on anecdotal examples and participants’ impressions generally segmented based on age and level of familiarity/comfort with social media. Participants who see social media as a generally positive development, were optimistic about its role in the conduct of foreign relations. They noted that it allows much more interaction between government representatives and populations, enabling the creation of feedback loops for policymakers and unfiltered communication directly to populations they are seeking to reach. It also helps to enable specific events to affect public opinion and policy decisions directly. One example provided was the photograph of the dead child on the Turkish shore that went viral and caused a public outcry across Europe to do more to address the refugee crisis. Another example was the “Occupy Wall Street” movement that used social media to bring more citizens to the streets and raise the profile of issues of income inequality in the US. The flip side, however, was also cited, with examples such as ISIS/Daesh using social media to simultaneously spread fear and recruit new combatants. Some said social media can cause confusion when individual politicians react over social media or adopt an opinion that people conflate with an official government position.

Participants who were either less comfortable with, or more suspicious of, social media tended to see its effects less positively. The speed of delivery via social media can be both positive and negative. It can help hold governments accountable, but it can also result in overly simplified responses, or a “dumbing down” of complex issues. It can provide a multitude of new resources for information, but can also be manipulated to spread propaganda and misinformation. It can help spread democratic movements, but can also be used by governments to increase surveillance on citizens. And although, in theory, it creates options for dialogue between policymakers and the public, it continues to be used more as a one-way communications tool. While public opinion influences foreign policy decisions, participants generally felt that those decisions are still largely State-driven. And to the degree that social media does impact the decision-making process, it may ultimately be more negative than positive in that it demands quicker responses and more reactive



decisions from leaders, instead of thoughtful analysis and careful strategic problem solving.

Two things resounded clearly. First, the participants felt that social media is a “double-edged sword,” which brings both positive and negative impacts. Second, while it is an important tool altering how governments interact with domestic and foreign populations, it doesn’t necessarily change the basis for foreign policy decision making.

Discussion of *Is the American Century Over?* and *Superpower: Three Choices for America’s Role in the World*

The groups observed that there is no “blueprint” to which Obama can refer in dealing with foreign policy. Generally, participants agreed that the US is less able to project its power on the world and noted that in terms of domestic politics, it seems that conservatives are more concerned about perceptions of “respect” in the international arena. They suggested that it is not possible to reify decline and that there is no concrete way to measure decline in a meaningful way. Certain notions that are used tend to focus on GDP or military strength, but these are poor stand-ins for understanding whether a country can actually solve a given problem. As has been observed, no state has ever been able to solve all crises on its own. This led to discussion of distinctions between power and influence. Participants reflected that under George W. Bush, soft power declined and more emphasis was placed on hard

(Left to right) Edith Chapin,
Oleg Ivanov, Wang Dong and
Matthew Tracy



Monica Stancu



Eva Eszter Szabo



Jorrit van den Berk

power, and under Barack Obama, there has been an effort to reinvigorate soft power with “smart power” and to reduce military deployments. Yet, it seems to have made little difference to the desirability of America as an ally. People may be more or less disillusioned with America and may be more or less frustrated with American policies and practices, but it is rare that any country, or group, ultimately discounts America’s role. Even so, participants also underscored how vitally important American soft power is in terms of its appeal to the international community. Even though its effectiveness cannot be measured, there was a strong inclination to continue to invest in soft power. In fact, some suggested that only when other rising powers, in particular China, start investing in more soft power tools is there a chance of really challenging US dominance.

They noted that the texts referred to in the session were intended to, and did, provoke reflection on important issues. They also noted that the choices as presented were far too complex to be analyzed in distinct terms.

The Role of the US in World Affairs

The groups returned more diverse views on this topic. Some decided that even if there is a perceived decline in US power, it is not a real decline, and may be more cyclical in nature. Others noted that the US has not always been considered a global power; it is really a post-WWII occurrence. Even if its prominence is declining, that should not be of grave concern. It was also observed that the rise of other powers is beneficial to global balance if conflict is avoided. The groups also debated whether more American intervention in global affairs was desirable or not, and whether Americans would support more American activity abroad. They acknowledged the reality that even if domestic concerns draw attention away from international affairs, there is no question that America would take action if there is a perceived security threat.

They discussed four possible roles that they see for America in the world:

Benign Hegemon

While this could be cast as a noble role, intervening to maintain international security or for humanitarian reasons, this is closely associated with colonial intentions and participants felt should be rejected.

Status Quo Leader

Participants observed that global chaos and insecurity increases if American leadership is absent. This role would be welcomed, if the majority of the international community provides interventions crafted in consultation with key stakeholders and if the US adopts the role of “honest broker.”



Working group discussions in the
Max Reinhardt Library

Multipolar Leadership

While this role might sound appealing, participants noted that it is not feasible. There are too many competing interests and concerns that other leading countries would do more to limit freedoms rather than support them. There was also a feeling that it would not, ultimately, assist global problem solving, with participants pointing to the UN Security Council as an example of how multipolar approaches often stymie problem solving.

Region-led Leadership with American Global Role

In this scenario, participants envisioned more active and effective regional alliances that could focus on regional problem solving without US direct intervention. There was no concern that America might become isolationist because its role will continue to be indispensable for the foreseeable future. But it would envision a reality of America investing more focus domestically, while still being an important balancing presence in the world.

Ultimately, the group recommended that the US maintain a leadership role, but focus more on interdependence and acknowledge the interests of others as well as its own interests. They also noted that the US is likely to continue to swing between “rivals,” namely China and Russia, collaborating on certain strategic concerns and competing on others. They suggested that global stability requires that America maintain a leadership role, but also that the US stand behind its stated values and not give “lip service” only to them while acting in ways that contradict the rhetoric.



Ewelina Wasko-Owsiejczuk



Artur W. Wroblewski

Looking Ahead

Ultimately, the US is very constrained in its ability to get the results it wants by operating unilaterally. There are any number of situations and conflicts that the US simply cannot control nor move to a desired resolution. While the US certainly can take decisions unilaterally, the likelihood of gaining the results it wants is very slim, except perhaps in very discreet cases. At the same time, American action is a necessary requisite to get movement toward resolution of most global, and many regional, challenges. How, where and when America decides to intervene is determined internally, and the factors and voices that influence those decisions are changing. So too are the external interests in America's role in the world, and those "winds of change," seem to be blowing in all directions.

Domestically, demographics, values, political polarization, growing income inequality, fears of terrorism, infrastructure declines, limited economic growth, failing education systems, and technology and innovation, to name just a few, are factors that push and pull priorities in many directions. And there are many perspectives on how to deal with each given challenge, including in the foreign policy arena. Many policymakers favor setting long-term strategies using soft power to build positive change. Others believe security rests solidly on military defense. Most believe in a mix, weighting strategies differently depending on the challenge. History suggests a pendulum that moves between poles, but it also appears that the pendulum may be swinging more quickly.

Fellows, faculty, and staff of the 13th symposium of the Salzburg Seminar American Studies Association (SSASA) *The Search for a New Global Balance: America's Changing Role in the World*



Currently, the American appetite for international intervention seems quite small. That does not suggest a withdrawal, but it may well suggest a period of “retrenchment.” What that means for the rest of the global community is not clear, but given the resounding calls for continued American engagement and cooperative leadership, it is probably not the response most people are hoping for. Certainly there is a balance to be struck. The participants were generally critical of American “commands” like “you are either with us or against us” but also seemed to favor a “commanding” American presence, provided it is in concert with other key actors. This was certainly true as it relates to major challenges such as terrorism, climate change, migration and refugees, financial systems and trade, nuclear weapons, and cyber security. Clearly this is not a list of problems for the US to solve. But it is a list of problems that are likely unsolvable without active US participation and leadership.

The participants questioned where the counterweights to American power might be. While they acknowledged many strong global actors including Russia, the EU, some individual European countries, India, and China, the general consensus was that none were in a position to challenge American predominance or to be a true equal to American power. While most participants indicated that US power is important, there also seemed to be mixed feelings about whether the current set of relations are optimal to solve global challenges collaboratively and to sustain a more peaceful future. Security concerns, especially terrorism, economic vulnerabilities, and climate change, were all identified as key challenges that need strong leadership from America. Cooperation was emphasized as the way power should be held and exercised among the key actors and not just among the most prominent States. They also emphasized the deep and lasting influence of US soft power, including the use of social media, which is becoming a model for government transparency. They strongly advised that the next American president should not underestimate the efficacy of soft power, including supporting universal human rights, investing in the work of embassies, promoting culture and education exchanges, providing language and business training, and offering humanitarian aid and development assistance.

Participants recognized that while nation-States will remain pre-eminent bases for power, global changes are occurring. Over time, America’s role may evolve as much or more as a function of changing forms of power, rather than because of power shifts among States. Many factors including a global civil society, multinational companies, regional and multilateral institutions, and cyber governance could prove to be true game changers. But for the foreseeable future, if the session’s diverse participant experts are a guide, America should seek strategic partners with which to work to be the “good neighbor” in an ever more diverse world community.



Laura Raffaela Wurm



George Vital Zammit

Appendix – Participants List

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Cornelis (Kees) van Minnen

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Chairman, Free Democrats - Political Party, Tbilisi, Georgia

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James D. Boys

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Edith Chapin

Executive Editor, National Public Radio News, Washington, DC, USA

Ted Widmer

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Guest Lecturer

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Editor

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Communications Intern

Margarita Kotti

Program Intern

Hyejeong Yoo

Program Intern

Rapporteur

Nancy Smith

Independent Philanthropy
Consultant, Salzburg, Austria
(USA)

All positions are correct at time
of program (September 2015)

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Heather Jaber, *Communications*
Kanzi Kamel, *Library*
Margarita Kotti, *Development*
Lucia Malvarez, *Program*
Hyejeong Yoo, *Program*

Report Author:

Nancy R. Smith is currently an independent consultant supporting international nonprofit and philanthropic organizations, including Salzburg Global Seminar. She has more than 15 years of experience working towards greater equality, social justice, and the rights of women and girls. Most recently, she served as the director of philanthropy and gender programs at Salzburg Global, where she began working in 2000 and also held positions as senior program director and director of initiatives. Previously, she served as executive associate and international coordinator at Girls Incorporated, a US-based youth development organization. She also worked as a consultant at the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (now part of UN Women), including supporting the Secretariat at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. Ms. Smith earned a B.A. in politics from Mount Holyoke College, MA, USA and an M.A. in international relations from the University of Lancaster in England.

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Salzburg Global Seminar

Salzburg Global Seminar is an independent non-profit institution founded in 1947 with a distinguished track record of convening emerging and established leaders to address global challenges and drive progress based on **Imagination, Sustainability** and **Justice**. It convenes imaginative thinkers from different cultures and institutions, implements problem-solving programming, supports leadership development, and engages opinion-makers through active communication networks, all in partnership with leading international institutions.

FOR MORE *info*. PLEASE VISIT:
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Salzburg Seminar American Studies Association (SSASA)

Since Salzburg Global Seminar's founding in 1947, as the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies, the study of America has played a vital role in the history of the organization. American Studies as an academic discipline in Europe began with the first American Studies program at Schloss Leopoldskron. For decades, scores of prominent intellectuals, academic and non-academic professionals, have gathered in Salzburg to examine and debate American politics, foreign policy, economics, literature, history and culture, and America's role in the world. From 1994 to 2003, the Center for American Studies focused sessions on research for new curriculum with the use of academic technology. After a decade of such programs by the Center, the Salzburg Seminar American Studies Association (SSASA) was established to continue the vital work of analyzing the global impact of US policies, culture and actions. The September 2015 program was 13th SSASA program since the Association began operating in 2004.

FOR MORE *info*. PLEASE VISIT:
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