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

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Schloss Leopoldskron, Salzburg, Austria
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Why this topic and why now?

While a new sense of globalism is shared by all countries, it nevertheless still brings with it conflicts and tensions between national groupings. Issues of world-wide concern, such as matters of climate change conflict with commercial imperatives and competition. Cross national groupings emerge even as countries increasingly fragment. Old tensions between major powers re-emerge in spite of common global concerns.

In the face of global changes and shifting power relations, there is a re-conceptualization of “America”. In much of the world, the United States is not just thought of as “America” any longer. It has become a nation among nations. In this sense, the United States has moved beyond itself, beyond just America into a broader world. We are thus living in an era of globalism in which the concept of America and the idea of exceptionalism require a radical re-conception.

These international changes coincide with major internal demographic changes within the United States itself, including the dramatic rise in the Hispanic population and an accelerating polarization of United States’ internal politics. In the face of contemporary shifting power relations, including changes in Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC nations) in Latin America, and in Asian nations, the power and influence of the United States, both in terms of world affairs and in terms of its relations with its hemispheric neighbors in the Americas, is evolving.

Conceptions of power and its appropriate use have also changed. In light of this, can the United States expect to pursue its national interests, using its powerful position in the world, feeling free to intervene in other countries, seizing terrorists in foreign cities, sending drones across national borders, tapping into communications by ordinary citizens and world leaders? Participants and speakers will examine the many global challenges faced by the United States as it seeks a new global balance in the 21st century.

This symposium, the 13th of the Salzburg Seminar American Studies Association (SSASA) and organized in partnership with the Roosevelt Study Center, Middelburg, The Netherlands, will examine the United States’ changing role in the world and the implications of changes in global, regional and national power for the future of the United States as a national state and as a global political, economic and cultural power in the 21st century and beyond.

Participant Profile

This program will include approximately 50 participants from 25 countries around the world. They will include academics teaching about the United States, and professionals involved in the analysis and conduct of foreign policy, as well as individuals interested in America’s search for a new global balance.

Session Format

There will be daily thematic presentations by distinguished speakers followed by plenary discussions. Topical panels will be organized to include participants. In addition, a number of special discussion groups will be scheduled focusing on specific themes related to the symposium topic.

Key Questions

Some questions to keep in mind throughout the symposium:

- To what extent have expectations of the United States and its role in the world shifted as result of globalization?
- In a time of changing world powers, especially including shifts in relative power between the United States, China, India, and Russia, what role should the United States expect to assume?
- What global and regional challenges should the United States anticipate regarding its national interests?
- How might further globalization, technology development and communication changes be expected to affect the search for a new global balance?

Program Goals and Impact

Through this session, Salzburg Global Seminar seeks to achieve the following:

- Provide university professors from around the world with critical thinking about current issues in American foreign policy;
- Examine the challenges faced by the United States as it seeks a new global balance in an era of globalization;
- Encourage critical thinking, analysis and evaluation of the United States’ role in a new world balance.

ABOUT SSASA

Since Salzburg’s founding in 1947, with the first American Studies program at Schloss Leopoldskron, the study of America has played a vital role in the history of this organization. For decades, scores of prominent intellectuals – academic and non-academic – have gathered in Salzburg to examine and debate American politics, foreign policy, economics, literature, history and culture, and America’s role in the world. More than 30 American themed seminars have been organized under the auspices of the Salzburg Seminar American Studies Association and its precursor, the American Studies Center.
Why Salzburg?

The mission of Salzburg Global Seminar is to challenge current and future leaders to solve issues of global concern. To do this we design, facilitate and host international strategic convening and multi-year programs to tackle systems challenges critical for the next generation.

Originally founded in 1947 to encourage the revival of intellectual dialogue in post-war Europe, we are now a game-changing catalyst for global engagement on critical issues in education, health, environment, economics, governance, peace-building and more. From the start, Salzburg Global Seminar has broken down barriers separating people and ideas. We challenge countries at all stages of development and institutions across all sectors to rethink their relationships and identify shared interests and goals.

Today, our program framework has three cross-cutting clusters and addresses the underlying questions that hold keys to human progress: Imagination, Sustainability and Justice.

Our exclusive setting at Schloss Leopoldskron enables our participants to detach from their working lives, immerse themselves in the issues at hand and form new networks and connections. Participants come together on equal terms, regardless of age, affiliation, region or sector.

We maintain this energy and engagement through the Salzburg Global Fellowship, which connects our Fellows across the world. It provides a vibrant hub to crowd-source new ideas, exchange best practice, and nurture emerging leaders through mentoring and support.