



SALZBURG
GLOBAL
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Images of America: Reality and Stereotypes

SESSION REPORT

SSASA
XIV



SALZBURG SEMINAR AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

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SSASA 14

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Images of America: Reality and Stereotypes

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Table of Contents

05 About the Salzburg Seminar American Studies Association

06 Introduction

06 *Opening Remarks*

06 *Session Purpose*

07 *Opening Evening Presentation:
Historic Origins and Nature of America's Self Image*

08 Images and Stereotypes

08 *Soft Power is Hard*

09 *Cultural Images from Motown to Trap-Fordism, Post-Fordism,
and (Sub) Urban Pathologies*

11 *Playing America: Images, Performance, and Transnationalism*

12 *Topical Discussion Groups*

14 Projections – Exports and Imports

14 *Land of the Free?*

16 *Portrayals of America in Cinema, Literature, and Mass Media*

17 **INTERVIEW:**

Martha Bayles – New Images of America: The Urban Singles Sitcom

19 *Images of America in China*

20 *Café Discussion Groups*

The Image of Arabs/Muslims in the US

Transcultural Reception of American Images through Hollywood Films

Image Politics of Literature

How to Conduct a Research Project on Images of America

The Role of the US in Shaping International Order

Entertainment and Pop Culture Blog on National Public Radio

22 *The US Presidential Election: Good for the Media, Bad for Democracy*

23 Images and International Politics

23 *Current Images and International Politics*

24 *Policy Implications and Complications of Images for Cultural Diplomacy*

26 Conclusions

APPENDIX

28 **Participants List**

About the Salzburg Seminar American Studies Association (SSASA)

Since Salzburg Global Seminar's founding in 1947 as the "Salzburg Seminar in American Studies," promoting critical dialogue and understanding of American history, literature, culture, politics, and economics has played a vital role in our organization's development and legacy.

Over the last 70 years, scores of prominent intellectuals and 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. Today, the American Studies Program at Salzburg Global Seminar is one of the oldest continuously-running independent American Studies programs in Europe. Since 2003, the American Studies programs have been run under the auspices of the Salzburg Seminar American Studies Association (SSASA). Through SSASA symposia and curated networks, Salzburg Global Seminar continues to make a vital contribution to promoting open international dialogue on themes critical to the future of American Studies.

In 2016, SSASA held its 14th session on the theme *Images of America: Reality and Stereotypes*. This report provides a summary of the key discussions and learnings from that session.

Fellows and faculty of the 14th SSASA symposium *Images of America: Reality and Stereotypes* gather for the traditional group photo on the Schloss terrace



Introduction

Opening Remarks

Stephen Salyer opened the American Studies session presented by the Salzburg Seminar American Studies Association (SSASA), *Images of America: Reality and Stereotypes* held at Schloss Leopoldskron, September 23-27, 2016. He welcomed the 61 participants and guests from 25 countries by reflecting that the founding session, held in 1947, was based on understanding that is hinged upon open discussions that dissect the conundrums, puzzles, and contradictions of America and its images. He added that the high level of this year's participants ensured the continuation the tradition of the early founders as well as Salzburg Global's commitment to American Studies sessions and topics.

Session Purpose

The goal for participants over the course of the four-day program was to identify and investigate the common images of America: how they generate meaning, as well as how those images are formed and circulated. In doing so, the questions of relationships between countries, their people, and their governments are analyzed in personal, national, political, cultural, and economic terms. The outcomes of these discussions seek to lead to better understanding of the images of America abroad and to provide a positive personal and professional experience.

1. Salzburg Global President
Stephen L. Salyer
2. SSASA Program Director
Marty Gecek
3. Session co-chair Ron Clifton



Opening Evening Presentation: *Historic Origins and Nature of America's Self Image*

The program was opened by co-chair of the session, Ron Clifton, retired Associate Vice-President and Adjunct Professor of American Studies at Stetson University, with a contextualizing presentation on the *Historic Origins, Nature and Implications of America's Self Image* and why such “images” deserve a rigorous examination. Citing the historical origins and implications of the US self-image – which itself encompasses a number of now well-established stereotypes – Clifton argued that American culture has historically been and remains aggressive, powerful, and pervasive as an international force. It has from earliest exploration triggered emotional as well as intellectual reactions.

Soft power purveyors of images such as television, movies, trade, diplomacy, the internet, travel and educational exchanges, etc. are tools of cultural proliferation that result in stereotypes – sometimes not the intended ones. Other nations are affected by America, whether they choose to be or not, thus elevating the influence that America has on them.

The influence of American culture on other nations brings an awareness of America in a way that is both unique and invasive. This influence can be seen as pervasively intrusive or as attempted cultural influence. Conversely, it can be viewed as welcomed and invited, depending on a country's cultural and foreign policy interaction with America. As negative results are sometimes unintended, America and Americans are often puzzled by attitudes expressed towards it. This results in a love/hate relationship with the United States, both publicly and governmentally, which diplomats, international traders, and scholars of American Studies outside of the US continue to investigate and attempt to resolve. Perception of images is based on experience, and whether this perception reflects reality or not is often tainted with a bias toward or against the other involved party. The presentation asserted that national interests dictate and motivate governmental actions and those interests shape the messages governments send, reflecting sometimes stereotypes, both positive and negative. Images play a role in determining how effective a nation is in achieving its policy goals and therefore in fulfilling its national interests.



Diana Almeida



Cristina Alsina Risquez



Tapan Basu



Ilias Ben Mna

As the session was held under the Chatham House Rule, the report does not reference specific individuals, but rather seeks to summarize discussions and comments without direct attribution.

Images and Stereotypes

The session was organized by daily thematic topics, and was launched with the theme *Images and Stereotypes* in a presentation that focused on the uses and directives of soft power.

Soft Power is Hard

In American image-building, popular culture often becomes public diplomacy replacing military coercion and economic pressure. The presenter advocated for “hopeful pragmatism,” a soft power approach aiming for diverse yet harmonious coexistence between global communities while recognizing the limits of political and cultural differences.

Two opposing sides of soft power exist. Several examples were given to illustrate how ill-planned courses of action to solve a problem can have devastating effects. This secondary approach can be characterized as tactics employed by US political, social, and economic bodies as “quick-fix utopianism” that identifies no limits on potential achievements and believes that problems can be solved post-haste and cheaply. This approach identifies other people’s problems, then suggests an immediate solution, too often unworkable to fit the nation and culture. When failure looms, the project is prematurely abandoned. The problem is left unsolved, money has been ill-spent, and attitudes have been damaged. This “quick-fix utopianism” sees religion replaced by modernity and perceives progress as the iconography under which America aims to save the world from itself.



In addition to “quick fix” solutions, cultural exports such as TV sitcoms, blockbuster movies, and popular music videos deliver and reinforce images to nations outside the US. These fictional cultural productions act as the dominant images of America and Americans accessed across the globe. As session faculty member, Martha Bayles explores in her book *Through a Screen Darkly: Popular Culture, Public Diplomacy, and America’s Image Abroad* (2014), most of the world perceives America through a screen, and accordingly as hyper-violent, overtly sexual, without family, and lacking in a work ethic despite maintaining affluent lifestyles. As tools hoping to exert positive soft power on the global stage, these popular culture products provide a damaging, rather than a positive, promotional image of America abroad. It also results in contemporary writers’ and directors’ fascination with the darker side of American identity.

Bayles reports that successes of contemporary soft power are most effective when approaches employing open discussion and mutual understanding are used. Her travels and research in multiple settings and countries were amply cited in her seminal book and reiterated in this opening discussion in Salzburg.

Cultural Images from Motown to Trap-Fordism, Post-Fordism and (Sub) Urban Pathologies

The daily theme was further explored through an insightful analysis of “trap” music as reflective of post-2008 crash American dream fulfilment. Following a detailed history of the development of Motown alongside the Ford car industry in 1960s Detroit, the presenter made connections between the techno-music that replaced Motown’s chart dominance and the post-Fordism mechanical workforce, with human sounds and movement replaced by technology and machines. Classifying techno-music as the more intellectual, metaphoric response to post-Fordism, gangster rap was identified as the proletarian equivalent growing from grassroots, thriving in the suburbs rather than the ghettos.

As the city evolved from a place of commodity production to a place of consumption, so, too, did this gangster rap reform into trap; it was defined by highly repetitive beats and lyrics, electronic sound creation, and references to drug dealing, exploiting women, luxury items, and escaping the law. Trap, both the music and the lifestyle, had a figurative as well as literal meaning. Once in, there was no way out. The drug money was laundered by some music companies and some proceeds found paths to strip clubs, online pornography, and popular movements, including even feminism advocacy. Bling and extreme consumption became standards in the trap culture to the point that vulgarity and slumming were not only acceptable, but expected.



Amy Bride



Christina Dokou



Anne-Marie Evans

1. Thomas Ærvold Bjerre
2. Christopher Bigsby
3. Linda Holmes, Sonia Caputa and Irina Makoveeva
4. Alex Seago

Accordingly, this evolution can be read as a response to the need to secure the American dream through purchase power. The exclusion of blacks from the achievement of prosperity formed an outlet through intrinsic legal means. As a result, trap music has become a continuation of chain-gang songs, essentially singing about work on a production line that now feeds the drug market. Critically, it can be asserted that the iconography utilized by successful trap musicians in videos and films plays to and reinforces racially-fueled stereotypes. The essence of this music is sincere, in that it genuinely reflects the reality of daily life within these communities. Unlike the soft power sitcom or propaganda pumped out through official channels, the proponents of trap music utilize established stereotypes to communicate what they feel to be an authentic reality.





Playing America: Images, Performance, and Transnationalism

The final presentation examined a more positively-intended adoption of stereotypes in the popularity of ethnic drag known as “pow-wow” festivals in Germany. In this and other settings, people dress in Native American costumes in order to recreate battles and perform fancy dancing as part of a beer and music festival. One can ask how those receiving images of America are supposed to make sense of the conflict between those of “original” America(ns) and global mimicry, particularly in light of the silencing and marginalization of native people by the US itself. Starting by the white man’s mistake in the naming of the indigenous people of America and then becoming the white man’s fantasy of brave warriors and noble savages, the Native American was constructed and remolded to suit the needs of Anglo-American identity creation.

The presenter maintained that the image of the Indian is recognizably American and suited to those playing, singing and acting Indian who sometimes inspire action, especially in environmental issues. Some people maintain that the use of the image of the Indian being appropriated outside of the US is in order to define European groups who also suffered at the hands of American colonial force. Likewise, the American Indian is paralleled as an apparent mascot of defeat. A well-respected theater critic was cited by the presenter as asserting that the use of the American Indian image can help with Europeans’ attempts to cope with the Holocaust and other crimes or assaults. Many of the people, known as hobbyists, who re-enact Indian cultural events, dances, and songs are fully serious in their imitations. In this regard, the roots of the transportation of the American Indian image into European cultures as well as attempts to understand this cultural mimicry deserves more study.

Astrid Fellner presents from the podium in Parker Hall



Marzenna Gustek-Sikorska



Jena Habegger-Conti

Topical Discussion Groups

Continuing on the daily theme of “Images and Stereotypes,” the participants joined one of three afternoon discussion groups:

- How does literature project images of America;
- Views of America through the lens of TV and cinema; and
- American images in the Middle East.

Group rapporteurs agreed that the discussions “generated important conversations,” “produced interesting insights,” and concluded that the “nature of images of America is, indeed, complex.” They reported that their group topics furthered the discussion of the general, overall theme of the session. The format of small group discussions enabled participants to explore more deeply their opinions, positions and interchange with other group members.

How does literature project images of America?

The group noted that American literature, across the genres, offers criticism of the US from a wide range of perspectives. Participants discussed themes of disillusionment, challenges between the duty of authentic representation and viable fiction, as well as American values reflected across the spectrum of authors and producers. Literature exposes topics and attitudes regarding immigration, American women, ethnicity, myths and folklore, and more. A question posed requiring more attention and study, the group rapporteur maintained, was “Does the image of America change depending on the reader?”



Barbara Berendt-Metzner,
Odette Vassallo and
Melvyn Stokes



Views of America through the lens of TV and cinema

The second group noted that it is challenging to keep abreast of research in a field that is rapidly changing. The success/failure of American “screen” was discussed in regards to the culture of the receiving country. Some views are relatively constant while others may be changed by political events or other forces. The general agreement that this group reached was that there was opportunity to discuss a variety of topics such as reality TV, dubbing and its effects, mono-culturalism in American TV, cultural receptivity, and race in American TV.

American images in the Middle East

From perspectives offered by two Middle Eastern panelists, the group focused on politics as the major influence and shaper of the image of America. The Arab Spring was seen as a change agent of perceived images of America. Some countries formed different perceptions of the US as a reflection of its positions toward the various countries’ revolutions. There is a level of selectivity in receiving and interpreting reactions and events and then transforming them into understandable images. The group concluded that images are partly oversimplified compared to reality due to the complexity of deep-seated issues.

The groups generally reported that there were high levels of participation and that many challenging questions were explored. Discussions were “lively,” and professional links were formed.

Ilias Ben Mna and Radojka Vukcevic



Muhammad Hamdan



William Hart



Adam Hjorthén



Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss

Projections – Exports and Imports

The second daily theme, *Projections – Exports and Imports* was explored in a variety of formats: a presentation, several panels, theme oriented discussion groups and an evening fireside chat. Emphasis, again, was given to participant involvement. Thus, questions and answer periods were included in each format.

Land of the Free?

Reflecting on the tension between projected and perceived images presented on the previous day, the opening presentation of the second thematic day considered the notion of American freedom as outlined in American President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” speech: the freedom of speech, the freedom of religion, the freedom from want, and the freedom from fear. Providing a wide breadth of statistical information, he claimed that discrepancies exist in the actuality of the freedoms and the notion of freedoms expressed in their guarantees.

While Americans readily recognize the four freedoms, there are conflicting instances of attainment and realization of those freedoms. For example, one in seven lives in poverty or at levels set below the Federal Poverty Guidelines. The Pew Commission reported that the US had the second highest level of





economic inequality among nations in the world in 2014. Freedom from fear issues involve high crime rates and alarming gun ownership. Freedom of speech issues arise from the likes of incidents of colleges and universities issuing guides and handbooks limiting or banning usage of certain words or terms on its campuses. Prayer in public places is both permitted and banned.

Soft power could be re-categorized as a corrosive industry in which corporate corruption infects democracy and filters down throughout the class system. There exists a gap between America's claim to characterization as "home of the brave and land of the free" and the historical, pervasive, and widespread disenfranchisement and discrimination of social underclasses defined by race, sex, gender, religion, and wealth, and thus the US requires an active suspension of belief in order to sustain a positive self-image. Perhaps the myth is preferred to reality.

During the discussion period, participants considered whether the pursuit of happiness can be more important and satisfying than its actual attainment. Further, participants remarked that the fascination of the US is rooted in the American dream of freedom. Additionally, it was noted that the American desire for improvement acted upon by US citizens, action groups and governmental agencies represents possibilities many people in other countries would love to have.

Session co-chair Christopher Bigsby addresses the Fellows gathered in Parker Hall at Schloss Leopoldskron

Portrayals of America in Cinema, Literature, and Mass Media



Ksenija Kondali



Daniel Littlefield



Marta Lysik



Enikő Maior

While the historical contexts of American literature change and evolve, the images produced most often revert to the same stock stereotypes. As one panelist posited during this discussion, the image of America itself does not progress past an almost standardized dichotomy between hero and foreign villain. Using an analysis of the classic Western vs. Southern Gothic literature, one can read the former as communicating the metaphoric wagon train of Western progress and the latter as the walled fort that the wagon train leaves behind; these landscapes and ideologies can still be found in contemporary literature. Understandably, trauma-driven 9/11 literature and “war on terror” fiction return to the idea of the enemy or villain as an un-American, faceless savage, as popularized in the Westerns. Progress and modernization give way to new characters, such as Middle Eastern nations, becoming the new equivalents of the walled territory.

As well as images of America, the panel also considered images held by Americans of other countries, such as how the Polish are viewed by Americans. In the case of the Polish in America, stereotypical views are based on misunderstood or unfamiliar cultural practices; for example, Polish weddings present different religious and social practices that, unfortunately, because of a lack of understanding tend to leave an impression of wildness or raucous behavior. As another example of lack of understanding, Polish immigrants who are unable to obtain prestigious jobs were viewed as uneducated or lazy. Many of these negative stereotypes of Polish people have been depicted in political cartoons.

Russian/Soviet images of Americans have vacillated between skeptical optimism and negative views of Americans as the treacherous enemy. Depending on current relations between the governments, views can change widely; each historical epoch has altered perceptions. Even so, Americans are generally and widely held in some degree of contempt or suspicion. The images projected for the audience in Salzburg were vivid and shocking examples of politically-related stereotypes of Americans corresponding to the status of relations and conflicting national interests between Russia and the United States.

New Images of America: The Urban Singles Sitcom

Keynote speaker Martha Bayles speaks to Salzburg Global about the perpetuation of myths through American television exports

The ubiquity of young Americans living independently in affluent urban areas seems to be a common thread among many popular American sitcoms from the nineties through to the present.

“As I discovered through talking with over 200 informed observers of pop-culture in many different countries, the urban singles sitcom, from *Friends* to *Sex and the City* to *The Big Bang Theory*, now offer the world a new version of the American dream,” explains Martha Bayles.

Bayles, a writer as well as a professor in the Arts and Sciences Honors Program at Boston College in the US, spoke about the impact of American cultural exports, namely, television shows and movies, on other countries perceptions of Americans, during the session, *Images of America: Reality and Stereotypes*.

Speaking at the session, Bayles noted: “The original American dream was about ordinary people working hard to give their children a better future. That dream is now global needless to say, but so is the new American dream portrayed in these urban singles sitcoms. In the new one, there are no ordinary people, very little hard work and certainly no families. There is a fantasy of young, unattached men and women living in affluent urban settings, with little or no contact with their families or communities of origin and enjoying personal freedom, including sexual freedom, that is unheard of in most societies.”

Bayles has long studied and written about American popular culture. Her most recent book, *Through a Screen Darkly: Popular Culture, Public Diplomacy, and America’s Image Abroad*, considers the spread





Bayles with session co-chair Ron Clifton

of American culture spread to most corners of the globe and how what is viewed on the screen creates images of America that are often juxtaposed with many Americans' realities.

In discussing American sitcoms, she references the highly popular nineties sitcom, *Friends*, saying, "According to its producers at Warner Brothers, this sitcom about young, single Americans living in New York has been telecast in 135 different countries, reaching an average of 14 million viewers per telecast.

"What I learned through my travels is that this [image] is rather alluring to many young Nigerians, Egyptians and Indians, but that allure also has a downside. I spoke with a young woman from a Bedouin village about her impending visit to America, and as she put it, 'Americans don't have families – in the media they are always alone.'"

Bayles remarks that people who had never been to America were likely to believe that the sitcoms and entertainment they watched from the US were largely reflective of America as a whole: "Some of the people I spoke to were big fans of US popular culture and some were not, but even the biggest fans – if

they had not been to the United States or did not know many Americans – tended to assume that the values portrayed in popular culture are shared by most Americans."

While the divergence between reality and perceptions of America exists in regards to American cultural ideals of youth, freedom and connectedness to families, its largest, most potent gap appears in reference to images of Americans with deadly weapons as well as a perpetuation of violence.

"More poignant than this image of Americans without families, was this image of Americans with deadly weapons. To Europeans, there is probably no aspect of our popular culture more unsettling than this ever vivid blood and gore. Yet while America is more violent than most modern democracies, it is nowhere near as violent as the images portrayed on the screen," Bayles explains.

Bayles highlighted a concern raised frequently during the session: How does popular culture and the multitude of images portrayed in American media perpetuate misconceptions as well as form opinions about America and American society?

"In my mind, screen violence, is only a symptom of a deeper problem, namely the entertainment industry's present obsession with the most lurid aspects of American life – drugs, crime, family breakdown, and dysfunctional government."

Bayles believes that the over-exaggeration of these parts of America, making them seem more prevalent than they in fact are, creates great friction in how other nations may view a modern America – often analyzing these facets in cultural exports as a depiction of US modernity – as they question what modernity means in their own societies.

Images of America in China

Drawing on the books *Western Civilization with Chinese Comparisons* and *Thinking through China*, co-authored by session faculty members Jerusha McCormack, who taught in China and the English Department of University College Dublin for 30 years, and John Blair who taught in Geneva for many years and in Chinese universities since 2001, this discussion considered America's image projection to the East. Participants and panelists considered a two-way comparison between countries – American-Chinese as well as Chinese-American – as the dichotomies of each culture lend understanding when those contradictions are analyzed.

Comparisons, however, can be very difficult since important values in each culture are often interpreted in opposite terms by the other. For example, whereas Americans see themselves as hard-working, the Chinese may see this as money-grabbing and greedy. The one sees prosperity as a desirable thing when good government provides for it, but a luxurious standard of living is not acceptable.

Anti-American cartoons in China portray Americans as lazy, fat, drunk, and self-important. Greediness and consumption are seen as root causes of disorder, which is difficult for Chinese to accept or comprehend since disorder is not permitted in China. It is the antithesis of humility – a valued tenant for the Chinese. Face-saving is viewed as extremely important and the public face and the private face must be the same. The most shameful blight for the Chinese is to lose face. The reception of images of American democracy, global dominance, and daily life in terms of “face” were discussed leading to a conclusion that it is the most fragile element of social and national interaction. Heart and mind are seen as one. This, accordingly, is incorporated with the most revered value – “care” – meaning that the individual is harmoniously attuned with society.



Elisabetta Marino



Frank Mehring



Abdoulaye Ndiaye



Tetiana Ostapchuk

John Blair and Jerusha McCormack
with their book *Thinking through
China*





Kristin Pearson



Geoffrey Pitcher



Stefan Rabitsch



Brett Rosenberg

Due to the need to maintain face, Chinese cultural rhetoric now acts upon the notion that China has been repeatedly humiliated by the West since the nineteenth century and the First Opium War, and that only by the nation coming together as a collective led by the Party, will China regain its rightful place on the global stage. The belief is that national pride must be restored and reasserted. China, therefore, sees America as the attacker who must be reprimanded for its assaults on Chinese face. In this regard, China sees the image of American life as an incorrect way to live.

Café Discussion Groups

This was organized as a new format at SSASA to increase opportunities for full dialogue by participants. Six groups had a constant moderator and participants were asked to participate in a group for 20 minutes, after which they rotated to a new table and discussion group. The day’s theme – Projections – Exports and Imports – was highlighted in each group.

The Image of Arabs/Muslims in the US

Several consensus points were reached by this group: there is misinformation about Arabs/Muslims in the US; there is a need to educate the American public about Arab/Muslim cultures; and Arabs/Muslims are visible in a negative way which is related to American foreign policy. Importantly, they are also viewed in a positive way as well due to their successful assimilation in American society.

Transcultural Reception of American Images through Hollywood Films

This group discussed the dangers of over-generalization when depicting diverse nations as unitary cultures. It is difficult to escape stereotypes for that very reason. The discussion and debates led participants to a better understanding of the broadness of the approaches in films and other genres.

Image Politics of Literature

The salient points discussed in the group were “hyper-real” images, how fiction is produced and consumed, and the future of fiction. The group noted that especially when literature becomes sensationally hyper-detailed, its content and long-term value can suffer.

How to Conduct a Research Project on Images of America

Qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods were discussed especially in terms of obstacles to be overcome when conducting research. Issues of “cultural specificity” affect the definition of America and studying perceptions of America can lead to better mechanics of study.

The Role of the US in Shaping International Order

This group discussed the notion of the US in the role of maintaining international order versus taking a stance of isolationism which would allow regional powers to facilitate regional order.

Entertainment and Pop-Culture on National Public Radio

The group that focused on entertainment and pop-culture on NPR was interested in culture questions as related to television and streaming platforms. Participants also were interested in questions about public media and how public radio functions.

1. Octavian More
2. The Robison Gallery hosted the first ever Knowledge Cafe at a SSASA session
3. Bohdan Szklarski
4. Rim Latrache



The US Presidential Election: Good for the Media, Bad for Democracy

During the informal evening “fireside chat,” participants discussed the series of conditions that helped the media propel Donald Trump as the Republican nominee for President of the United States.^{*} The initiation of super-delegates was highlighted as having given rise to more power of the media. Cross-funding was also identified as a key factor in the move to build and sustain profit for the networks, and subscription media such as cable, radio stations, etc., foster dissenting and contrasting views. In efforts to gain viewership and subscription, (and, therefore, profit) media entities shift their coverage towards the news “grabbers.”

Attempts at regulation has led to both the tightening and removal of restraints on the media. Results are varied, but the media, as a business enterprise, seeks profit. For example, one panelist reported the president of a large TV network as indicating that Trump is bad for America, but good for his network.

Candidates receive both paid and unpaid time by the media, and Trump’s unpaid exposure was exponentially larger than Clinton’s. This is due to his negativity and iconoclastic views and actions. Participants considered questions of Trump’s support base by asserting that correctness meets trash talk, and that political unrest in the US has paved the way to Trump’s rise in a democratic society based on the principle of freedom of speech. Like him or not, his believers and supporters declare that it is Trump’s right to speak the truth as he sees it. Asked to assess the damage that Trump has done to the US and the Republican Party, one pessimistic panelist replied that it is going to get worse before it gets better, however they also noted that there is not much that Trump can do domestically – but this does not stop the worry about what he could do internationally.

Fellows gather in the Great Hall of Schloss Leopoldskron for the “fireside chat”

* The session was held in September, two months before Trump’s electoral defeat of Clinton



Images and International Relations

International aspects of current images of America engaged participants from several countries, including practitioners in the field of diplomacy, to discuss the plurality of exchanges and collaborations that emerged during the session. While not all perspectives could be addressed, there was breadth and depth of discussion during the time scheduled.

Current Images and International Politics

The panel sought to examine anti-American expressions and feelings about the US, ideas of partnership and equality, information wars, propaganda, and the ever-lingering love/hate relationship countries have with the US.

One panelist highlighted the portrayal of America in Russian political cartoons, arguing that it is not crucial for Russia to be seen to defeat the US, but that Russian national diplomacy demands it to be seen as physically, morally, and politically elevated above the poor standard set by the US. Russia regards the US as a genuine threat to global stability and security; Russian media presents highly popular anti-Obama sentiments bolstered in multiple forms of their media, disseminating this negative message, for example. Although anti-American sentiments are deeply rooted, there are counter-punches to these underlying feelings. For example, US Secretary of State John Kerry received a warm welcome. This was quickly followed, however, with a cartoon depicting the US as a menace to Russian values.

As another panelist explained, Egyptians have very confusing images of the US. Issues of weapons versus human rights, opportunity and tolerance, political stances about Israel, and the lure of Egyptian oil are components of the complexities of feelings that make up Egyptian images of America. These contradictions may not be removable from the Egyptian consciousness, but efforts of public awareness are seen to be present. Especially because of US political interests in the area and because of the availability of their oil, Egyptian interest in the US will remain high. Images towards America appear to be becoming more aggressive mainly due to Egyptian as well as US media.

Issues of introspection, global connectivity, and sustaining the fundamentals of human rights were also discussed. As one panelist noted, conflict escalation results when what she maintains as “reality leaks” occur. For example, freedom versus security: when airport restrictions are imposed this can cause conflict and misunderstanding. Self-examination leads to attempts to define what it means to be a global citizen.



Andrea Schlosser



Kornelia Slavova



Mareike Spychala



Christian Stenico

Policy Implications and Complications of Images for Cultural Diplomacy

Session co-chair Ron Clifton, a former US public affairs diplomat who, in addition to two Bureau assignments in Washington, served overseas in South Asia, North Africa and Europe, moderated the panel discussion on *Policy Implications and Complications of Images for Cultural Diplomacy*. The purpose of the session was to explore the hands-on work of diplomats in their conduct of cultural diplomacy. More than 25 countries were represented in the combined work of the members of this panel.

As one cultural attaché remarked, they see their role as an American diplomat to connect with foreign publics, to develop understanding in order to build connections while promoting American interests, and to develop trust among the nations. In dealing with the various images of America abroad, the cultural attaché tries to foster openness which leads to credibility. A diplomats' tools are short, medium and long term. Short-term matters include the daily topics presented by the media and press; medium-term approaches encourage meetings, travel and programs; and long-term goals are actualized by exchanges between students, teachers, artists, government

1. Israel Waismel-Manor
2. Victoria Zhuravleva and Amal Hamada
3. Moshe Fox
4. Michelle Logsdon and Mark Wenig
5. Cristina Blanco Sío-López





officials, etc. Fulbright Scholars represent the third category, reflecting US Senator J. William Fulbright’s belief that understanding is better and greater than submarines. Countries’ feelings towards America can be simultaneously conflicting and that they can change over the course of time. Awareness and involvement are keys to good diplomacy.

Another panelist, who had served twice as a diplomat to the US, talked about the complicated comparative images of the US and Israel have of each other. He identified the adoption of Biblical imagery in the image characterization of America as a “salvation nation.” For example, when comparing the US to Israel, as the site of negative morality for Israelites immigrating to the US, he talked of a self-produced, distorted view of America that pre-empts actual experiences of those traveling. This problematizes the relationship between the two nationalities when incorporated into a hyphenated identity. It also challenges the reception of Israeli cultural exports into the States by those who now occupy this hyphenation. This, in spite of the popularity of Israeli art, music, and theatre in America, indicates a disparity between the externally and internally projected images of each nation in exchange with each other.

As another American cultural attaché pointed out, working directly with people is the primary goal. At the same time, diplomats must work within the US policy guidelines and public affairs budgets play a big role in public diplomacy. Diplomacy is affected by a myriad of issues such as developing countries, governmental suspicion of intentions, and attitudes towards policy, such as New Zealand’s reaction towards the nuclear policy in their country. For many diplomats, the biggest plus is the people-to-people interaction.

1. Sonia Farid

2. Dag Blanck



Tom Swoveland



Nina Yancy



Gwili Clifton

Conclusions

It was obvious from presentations, discussion panels and groups, as well as from informal conversations between participants and faculty that there are always multiple images of America in any country and that the notion of reality is problematic and changing.

Furthermore, there are disparities and conflicting images between America and Americans in many countries. Hence, the often puzzling “love/hate” image is not uncommon. To the extent that there is a “real image” of America, there is an obvious distinction between the perceived and the “real” and between the stereotype and reality.

It seems quite clear that among the many factors that contribute to shaping the image of the United States abroad, especially between major world powers, the most important may well be national interests. When interests conflict the image can quickly turn political and ugly. In terms of image, cultural, artistic and social involvement give way to the reality of political, economic and military conflicting interests. In other words, the “soft” cultural power inherent in “image” becomes less important in relationships than the hard power reality factors.

While the images of America may not be manageable by any single player involved, the nature and influence of the image in any particular country can be influenced positively by people-to-people and government-to-government public diplomacy. Stereotypes play an important role in forming images,



and whatever role facts may have to play in cross-cultural relationships, stereotypes for many are functional and therefore they form a reality that must be considered in international relationships. Images of America and Americans are rather durable and are not easily changed, and as such, a country's self-image often does not match what is received.

In all, the variety of speakers, national perspectives, and approaches to information dissemination and debate meant that the seminar was as engaging as it was productive. The Salzburg Global Seminar program demonstrated an innovative approach to the structure of conferencing while ensuring intellectual rigor in the quality and focus of panels. While the broad themed-focus of the session meant that not every answer, perspective, or image of America could be addressed, this also invited responses from a wide range of disciplines and professionals that enhanced the potential of every discussion, the result of which was that the topics covered were done so with both breadth and depth.

A strong trend began to build between presentations, positioning the fictional portrayal of America as more powerful, valuable, and recognizable than the reality of the nation itself.

Not surprisingly, the final conclusion of the seminar is that there is not one image of America but images of Americans, the plurality of which was reflected in both the diversity of the participants and in the discussions about the post-election image of America which is continuing through our post-session online communications.



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Gwili Clifton has had a professional career largely in the field of education, having taught in secondary schools in the US, Belgium, and the UK, worked as an ESL teacher in India and Tunisia, and taught at the university level in Ireland. Other experience includes a year working in First Lady Hillary Clinton's press office in 1993 as well as serving for several years (1994-1996) as Program Associate in the then-newly founded American Studies Center in Salzburg (Global) Seminar. Since that time, Clifton remains engaged in the Salzburg Seminar American Studies Association, of which her husband Ron Clifton is a leading member. Mrs. Clifton holds a B.A. from Stetson University, FL, USA and an M.A. from The George Washington University, Washington, DC, USA.

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