National Program

With more than one-third of Council members living outside of New York and Washington, DC, the National Program provides a forum for members across the country and around the world to discuss pressing foreign policy issues and contribute to the Council’s research and publications. National Program activities take place in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, London, Los Angeles, Miami, Phoenix, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Fe, Seattle, and Tokyo.

The National Program Roundtable series builds on the expertise of members, Council fellows, and other leaders. This year’s series, Global Challenges, addressed a range of issues, including global health in Seattle with PATH’s Christopher Elias and in Atlanta with CARE’s Helene D. Gayle and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Stephen B. Blount; the consequences of neglecting infrastructure in Atlanta, Miami, and Seattle with Council Senior Fellow Stephen E. Flynn; global trends in evangelical Christianity in Boston with Boston University’s Peter L. Berger and Council Adjunct Senior Fellow Timothy Samuel Shah; and Latin American democratic transformation in Boston with Georgia State University’s Jennifer L. McCoy. National members discussed U.S. foreign policy and the 2008 presidential elections with Council President Richard N. Haass in Boston, Chicago, London, Los Angeles, Miami, and San Francisco. Also in San Francisco, Harvard University’s Joseph S. Nye discussed presidential leadership; in Boston, Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer of Austria outlined Europe’s globalization strategy; and, in San Diego, permanent representative of India to the United Nations Nirupam Sen spoke on the future of the United Nations and India.

The roundtable series also focused on regional hotspots. In Chicago, Dallas, and Houston, Gary Samore, the Council’s vice president and director of Studies, explored Iran’s nuclear ambitions; in Boston, Harvard University’s Xenia Dormandy discussed the future of Pakistan; and in London, American International Group’s Frank G. Wisner outlined the scope of U.S.-Angola relations. In Los Angeles, RAND’s David L. Aaron addressed the Middle East challenges facing the next administration; in Dallas, Houston, and Los Angeles, Council Fellow Steven A. Cook explored military and political development in Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey; in Atlanta, Senior Fellow Stephen Biddle discussed the future of the United States in Iraq; and in
Dallas, former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia Robert W. Jordan reflected on U.S.-Saudi relations, while Military Fellow Jeffrey B. Kendall analyzed NATO’s role in Afghanistan.

In cooperation with local foreign policy organizations, the National Program organized private and public programs across the country. Council fellows who spoke nationally about their books included Michael J. Gerson on Heroic Conservatism, Michael A. Levi on On Nuclear Terrorism, Walter Russell Mead on God and Gold, and Noah Feldman on The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State. Members discussed Paul Collier’s The Bottom Billion and Jack L. Goldsmith’s The Terror Presidency as part of the Council Book Club series, and spoke with both authors in interactive conference calls.

As in past years, the National Program leveraged the latest technology to connect members from coast to coast and beyond. International and domestic policymakers were made accessible through teleconferences and webcasts of select New York and Washington, DC, meetings. In addition, the National Program Conference Call series, chaired by Vice President for the National Program and Outreach Irina A. Faskianos, featured scholars and experts on current issues and crises. Audio and video files of on-the-record meetings are downloadable to iPods or MP3 players through RSS feeds and regularly updated podcasts and may be accessed through CFR.org, the iTunes Music Store, and Yahoo. Full-length recordings are also available on Princeton’s University Channel and at FORA.tv.

Involving National Members in the Council’s Work

A primary goal of the National Program is to convene Council members who live outside New York and Washington, DC, for seminars at which Council fellows discuss their research and writing. The purpose of these seminars is to involve members in the Council’s research and expose the fellows to members’ perspectives.

This year, Michael A. Levi led seminars on the draft report of the Council-sponsored Independent Task Force on Climate Change in Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle. Shannon K. O’Neil and Julia E. Sweig led sessions on the draft report of the Council-sponsored Independent Task Force on U.S. Policy toward Latin America in Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami, and San Francisco. Adam Segal met with members in Phoenix to discuss chapters from his forthcoming book. National members reviewed drafts before each seminar and contributed their feedback to help shape the final product.
The National Conference is the premier event of the National Program, bringing together members from around the world to the Council’s New York headquarters for two and a half days of discussions with fellow members and other leading thinkers and practitioners. The Thirteenth National Conference, underwritten by a grant in memory of Peter E. Haas, was held from June 5 to 7, 2008, and featured the following speakers, topics, and sessions:

- Melinda French Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with Council Board member and NBC News special correspondent Tom Brokaw on how governments and nonprofit organizations interact;
- Zbigniew Brzezinski, CSIS counselor and trustee, and Council President Richard N. Haass, with New York Times deputy editorial page editor Carla Anne Robbins, on prospects for American influence;
- Former deputy U.S. trade representative Karan Bhatia and Council Co-Chairman and former U.S. treasury secretary Robert E. Rubin, with Council Director of the Center for Geoeconomic Studies Sebastian Mallaby, on the economic challenges ahead;
- A panel on Islam and the future of U.S. foreign policy with Reza Aslan, a fellow at the University of Southern California’s Center on Public Diplomacy; Noah Feldman, Council adjunct senior fellow; and Farah Pandith, senior adviser at the U.S. Department of State’s bureau of European and Eurasian affairs, with NPR’s foreign correspondent Deborah Amos;
- A conversation between Dennis McDonough and Randy Scheunemann, the foreign policy advisers respectively to Senators Barack Obama and John McCain, the 2008 presidential candidates;
- U.S. ambassador to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker, with KERA-TV’s Lee Cullum, on the future of the United States in Iraq; and
- An evening at the UN headquarters with permanent representatives to the United Nations Maged A. Abdelaziz of Egypt, Thomas Matussek of Germany, and Heraldo Muñoz of Chile, with Anne-Marie Slaughter, Council Board member and dean of Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

Members also had the opportunity to interact with foreign policy experts, business leaders, former high-level government officials, and leaders of nongovernmental
organizations in smaller regional and topical discussion groups, as well as several town halls, on the following subjects:

- energy security and sustainability, with Edward L. Morse, Vijay V. Vaitheeswaran, and Diana Farrell;
- immigration, with Steven A. Camarota, Tamar Jacoby, and Edward Alden;
- terrorism, with Roger W. Cressey, Ellen Laipson, and Steven Simon; and
- trade, with Jeff Faux, Jim Kolbe, and Merit E. Janow.