THE FP SURVEY: THE IVORY TOWER

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Amid all the doom and gloom about declining U.S. power and respect abroad, Americans can take solace in the fact that their university system remains the envy of the world. But at a time when the United States faces a host of new challenges—from the Arab Spring to the global financial crisis—does anyone in power care what the academics think? A small circle of scholars makes their views known in op-eds and blog posts, or by taking sabatical inside the Beltway, but the views of most academics remain unchanted in Washington.

So what does the Ivory Tower think about the pressing issues of the day? Below are some highlights of our 2011 survey of international relations scholars at U.S. universities. This year, for the first time, we also separately surveyed practitioners who have worked on national-security issues within the U.S. government—the people who run America’s foreign-policy machine. And from global warming to the rise of China, we found that the academics and the policymakers don’t always see eye to eye.

Top Foreign-Policy Problems Facing the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Academics</th>
<th>Policymakers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global debt crisis</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arab Spring</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<td>Global climate change</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>COLLAPSE OF THE MIDDLE EAST</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>War in Afghanistan</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Failed states</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global poverty</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global nuclear proliferation</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cybersecurity</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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Practitioners are even more alarmed than scholars about the rise of China, with 42 percent listing it as one of the most important issues facing the United States today and 54 percent regarding it as a pressing issue in 10 years. More policymakers than scholars worry about the global debt crisis, while the Arab Spring makes the list of the top three problems. But some security concerns remain more salient for policymakers than for scholars.

A Safer America

IR scholars believe that the United States is a safer place than in the recent past. A 60 percent majority of academics surveyed believe that terrorists’ ability to strike the U.S. homeland is lower than it was prior to Sept. 11, 2001, and only 2 percent of respondents believe it is greater.

Fading Camel. Rising Dragon?

Although the Middle East may get all the headlines, IR scholars pick East Asia as the region of greatest strategic importance to the United States today, with 45 percent identifying it as the most significant area, up from 30 percent who did so in 2008. Policymakers are in line with the professors: Half of the practitioners surveyed agree with this assessment today, and 85 percent think East Asia will be the most important strategic region for the United States in 20 years.

War With China?

The consensus among IR scholars is that there is still time before China overtakes the United States in political influence. On a scale from 0 to 10, IR scholars rate the two countries:

- China 3.3
- United States 6.0

A Safer America

- Less dangerous than during the Cold War: 31/45%
- More dangerous than during the Cold War: 21/45%

Change They Can Believe In

While the public may not be thrilled with President Barack Obama’s job performance on the economy, IR scholars believe he is doing quite well in his role as commander in chief. Obama scores higher than both George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, but not as high as George H.W. Bush, who was at the helm during the collapse of the Soviet Union. Some of Obama’s predecessors fared worse than others.

The IR crowd identified George W. Bush as the worst recent commander in chief. This cannot be explained by partisanship alone; George H.W. Bush actually received the highest rating. Ideology does matter—conservatives gave much lower ratings to Obama and Clinton—but Bush senior outscored Clinton among liberals.

Average presidential job performance, on a scale of 0 to 10

- All respondents: 6.5
- Conservatives: 7.7
- Liberals: 5.6

Barack Obama: 6.5

Bill Clinton: 3.5

George W. Bush: 2.2

George H.W. Bush: 5.6
Who Inhabits the Ivory Tower?

While the academy is still dominated by men, the number of women in the Ivory Tower is increasing rapidly. In 2006, only 23 percent of our respondents were women. Today, that figure has risen to 32 percent, and increasingly women show up on the lists of scholars doing the “most interesting” work. In 2011, three of the top 10 scholars on that list were women, including George Washington University’s Martha Finnemore, who is ranked No. 1 by her peers.

Theoretical Schools of Thought

The year 2011 represented a changing of the guard in more ways than one. For the first time, more scholars adopted a constructivist approach than either a realist or liberal framework. The surge in constructivist work, which focuses on the role of ideas and identity in shaping state preferences and international outcomes, started in the 1990s and shows no signs of leveling off.

Constructivist: 22%
Liberal: 21%
Realist: 16%
Marxist: 2%

Top Scholars

When academics and policymakers were asked to rank the contributions of IR scholars within their respective areas of expertise, there was little overlap. Scholars were asked to list their peers who have had the greatest influence on and done the most interesting work in the field of international relations, while practitioners were asked to list the scholars with the greatest influence on U.S. foreign policy in the past 20 years.

The Rankings

We asked scholars to rank the top five institutions worldwide that offer Ph.D.s, terminal master’s degrees, and undergraduate education in international relations. IR scholars know the most about top Ph.D. programs—who are the core members of the faculty, what kind of training students get, and what graduates actually get academic jobs.

Ph.D.s

Rank
1. Harvard University
2. Princeton University
3. Stanford University
4. Columbia University
5. Yale University
6. University of Chicago
7. University of California/San Diego
8. University of California/Berkeley
9. University of Michigan/Ann Arbor
10. Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Undergraduate

Rank
1. Harvard University
2. Princeton University
3. Stanford University
4. Columbia University
5. Yale University
6. University of Chicago
7. Brown University
8. Duke University
9. University of California/Berkeley
10. University of California/San Diego

The Pipeline to the Beltway?

In a parallel survey, practitioners were asked to rank which schools train the best candidates for jobs with the government.

Ph.D.

Rank
1. Georgetown University
2. Johns Hopkins University
3. Harvard University
4. Columbia University
5. Tufts University
6. Columbia University
7. George Washington University
8. American University
9. London School of Economics
10. University of Chicago

Undergraduate

Rank
1. University of California/San Diego
2. University of California/Berkeley
3. University of Chicago
4. Stanford University
5. Washington University
6. Rice University
7. Boston College
8. University of California/Los Angeles
9. University of California/Long Beach
10. New York University

For the full survey results visit, ForeignPolicy.com/IvyTower.