The Changing Nature of Power and Leadership

We may not have the flying cars or teleportation the movies promised, but technology shapes every aspect of our lives today—including international affairs and policy. We see its effects on military conflict, governance, trade, culture, and the environment. It inundates us with noise that needs to be filtered. It redistributes the power of information and reshapes how we build relationships and work with others. It transforms how we learn and how we pass on what we know.

Yet technologies are defined by the people and the contexts that created them. Without context, the forces driving our era of rapid change may be misunderstood—and our responses miscalculated.

Training in international affairs and policy develops the ability to recognize the cultural, economic, social, and political forces at work in the world. Schools’ interdisciplinary curricula and diverse communities integrate differing perspectives. Programs distinguish themselves by their flexibility and adaptability, as well as the teamwork and leadership skills they build. They help students develop a toolkit to evaluate and process information on a global level.

As you search for the right degree, ask how the school incorporates technology into their ways of teaching and their course content. Ask what experiential opportunities will expose you to technology-based and traditional learning. Look at how they bring different voices into the conversation. Examine how they cultivate leadership qualities in students, as well as engage current policymakers, to build the future of international relations.

Even as artificial intelligence and other paradigm-shifting technologies rework the mechanisms of discourse, conflict, economics, and geopolitics, they are still the product of their human creators. Students of international affairs and policy can ensure that a nuanced human lens is applied amid rapid technological change.

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Dynamic Frameworks to Address Complex Geopolitics in Today’s Technological Landscape

What role does technology play in geopolitics and international affairs today?

The role of technology in geopolitics and international affairs is as important as ever, shaping global power dynamics and countries’ strategies. A quarter of global trade is either in semiconductors or in goods that wouldn’t exist if it weren’t for semiconductors. This industry is more concentrated than any other, and it creates not only positions of economic influence but also geopolitical power for those who control access to this technology.

The United States is trying to restrain the technological chip-making progress of China, which is spending billions of dollars to catch up, and China’s leadership is deeply fearful this gives the United States leverage over China that can be used both during peace and wartime.

In response, our curriculum emphasizes the study of digital diplomacy, cybersecurity, and the study of emerging technologies’ political and economic impact. Fletcher students are keen on understanding the connections between these issues, and the curriculum and degree programs are designed to promote intersectional thinking and problem-solving.

What skills do students need in order to understand and manage contemporary crises?

A lot of discussion about technology fails to put it in proper historical context. Everyone’s impulse is to say, “This is fundamentally new,” but usually it isn’t. I first became interested in semiconductors and microchips because of the role they played in the Cold War space race and arms race; these issues have been relevant for decades. Understanding how technology has impacted politics and international relations historically is key to making sense of its relevance today.

To understand and manage crises, students need a combination of critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. My classes at Fletcher focus on cultivating analytical abilities, decision-making under pressure, and devising effective crisis communication techniques. Many classes involve simulated crisis scenarios and case studies to enable students to develop practical crisis management skills.

How do you best prepare a student to be adaptable in a fast-changing global environment?

With complicated problems, you need complex frameworks to make sense of them. Fletcher’s approach to every issue is to bring multiple different analytics to bear on problems. One of my main goals in the classroom is to get students excited about seeing these new frameworks. Gaining new analytical purchase on difficult issues is something students finding enlightening.

My classes at Fletcher try to draw explicit connections between academic thinking and real-world problems. The study of history—which my classes focus on—provides case studies that help students develop analytical toolkits that can be deployed to future dilemmas. We ultimately can’t predict the crises that we’ll have to address in the future, especially when it comes to the interaction of new technologies and politics. But understanding the impact of technology and international affairs in the past provides templates for making sense of the present and future.
The Role of Digital Technology in Geopolitics and Sustainability in the Asia-Pacific Region

The Asia-Pacific region has varying degrees of digital development. While the digital divide remains wide and digital technology profoundly impacts geopolitics in the Asia-Pacific region, it is expected to play a crucial role in realizing sustainability. Digital technology has facilitated the spread of information, enhanced connectivity, and reshaped the economic landscape. Moreover, it has also intensified the competition for regional dominance. Countries in the Asia-Pacific are increasingly engaged in cybersecurity and information warfare, seeking to protect their national interests and influence the regional narrative. Digital platforms have become battlegrounds for strategic messaging, propaganda, and influence operations.

How does fake news impact countries?
Fake news, misinformation, and disinformation impact both within and across countries, and they struggle to counteract it. In countries where mass media information is unreliable or heavily controlled, social networking sites serve to communicate the truth. In many movements for democratization, social networking played a crucial role. As social media is gaining importance, fake information negatively affects the country’s stability, especially regarding political and human rights issues. In addition, generative artificial intelligence (AI) can affect the dissemination of fake news. Deepfakes, which can be visual or auditory, and manipulated images, can be used to spread false information and misrepresent individuals. Generative AI makes it difficult for people to distinguish between genuine and artificially generated content, which amplifies the potential for fake news to spread rapidly and deceive a broad audience. It can also be leveraged to personalize and target fake news content to specific individuals or groups.

How can societies balance regulating false information and freedom of speech?
It has been argued that the spread of disinformation should be subject to regulatory and legal restrictions since spreading false information and misinformation can have harmful consequences, such as undermining public trust, inciting violence, or influencing essential decision-making processes. However, regulatory measures raise concerns about potential abuse of power, censorship, and stifling of legitimate speech. While there are countries in the Asia-Pacific where freedom of expression is not ensured, there is a movement toward democratization in many parts of the region. The balance between regulating false information and upholding freedom of speech has been debated in many societies.

What role is education expected to play?
Education plays a crucial role in combating the spread of fake information. The Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies (GSAPS) provides an education that equips individuals with the tools to navigate and evaluate the vast information available by promoting critical thinking, media literacy, and information source evaluation skills. GSAPS’ curriculum ensures that students develop these skills as an integral part of their education. Of course, we must remember the importance of building trust—especially at the individual level—in the classic sense: by building mutual understanding through increased mutual trust across the Asia-Pacific.
Graduate programs at the Diplomatische Akademie Wien-Vienna School of International Studies (DA) prepare students to excel in a range of international careers. Located in the heart of Vienna, the DA is near international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, diplomatic missions, and cultural institutions. With its vast alumni network in over 120 countries and 14 active alumni chapters worldwide, the DA offers an excellent balance between theoretical and practical approaches.

How is the role of technology in geopolitics and international affairs changing? How is this reflected in your curriculum or ways of teaching?

Technology developments have always affected geopolitics and international affairs: as history teaches, they play a major role in both armed conflicts and social changes. The speed at which discoveries and products are nowadays developed and made accessible to the public has increased exponentially—effectively speeding up the process to a previously unimaginable tempo. The curriculum at the DA is designed to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to comprehend and engage with these transformations in a timely and effective manner, by implementing a holistic interdisciplinary approach through a wide and varied course offer.

What skills are needed to help students prepare to understand and manage crises?

As the oldest professional school in the world, the DA has prepared students throughout the centuries to understand and manage crises, as attested by its numerous distinguished alumni throughout history and all over the globe. The current curriculum focuses on interdisciplinary approaches to support the development of the skillset needed to educate adaptable and capable professionals. Particular attention is reserved for multilingualism and intercultural dialogue, further fostered by the various cultural and interest-based societies, which allow for advocacy and independent student activities. The DA’s students and alumni distinguish themselves for their sound academic background, think-outside-the-box mentality, and flexible approach to complex issues—all skills honed with their training.

How do you best prepare a student to be adaptable in a fast-changing global environment?

The DA focuses on state-of-the-art education, offering three post-graduate courses that cater toward different demographics: the Diploma Program, a one-year course aimed at preparing professionals for the international arena, with the Class of 2023 as its fifty-ninth graduating class; the Master in Advanced International Studies, a two-year master’s degree hosted in cooperation with the University of Vienna; and the Master of Science in Environmental Technology and International Affairs, hosted in cooperation with the TU Wien. A Master of Science in Digital International Affairs is currently being established.

The curriculum offered at the DA is diverse and well-balanced, spanning from digital diplomacy to trade law, international history to crisis management, environmental economics to ethics of technology, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence. The choice between theoretical and practical courses is well-balanced, allowing students to seek out and tailor their education to their professional objectives and personal academic interests. The DA prides itself on expanding its curriculum every year, hosting visiting academics and conferences to focus on current issues and keeping in stride with all recent developments and discoveries.
Facing Policy Challenges as Technology Evolves

When you think about human rights and social justice globally, what are the main risks and rewards you see as technology evolves?

I worked on human rights and international justice at the U.S. State Department when the Assad regime increased its killing of civilians in the Syrian civil war and ISIS showed its depravity to the world by beheading captives. These conflicts present a great example of both the risks and rewards of technology. We saw how a regime or terrorist organization could use social media for propaganda and disinformation operations, while human rights defenders shared videos of atrocities to galvanize world action and civil society organizations debunked misinformation, such as the investigative journalism group Bellingcat, who geolocated and validated alleged atrocities depicted in social media posts.

What informs your thinking about these challenges?

The School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) and UC San Diego prepared me with two incredibly useful tools: an analytic framework and cross-cultural understanding. At GPS, we looked at policy challenges through the lens of incentive structures by identifying key stakeholders and influencers, understanding their interests, and identifying conflicts and commonalities in desired outcomes. Cultural understanding came from a combination of the diverse student body and array of outside learning opportunities offered on campus. In the evolving technology space, applying these tools can generate critical insights into needs, such as stress-testing generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools in ways they could be exploited by violent extremists, or ensuring diversity and inclusion are incorporated into product design, such as developing phone cameras that capture outstanding photos of all skin tones.

In addition to collaboration and teamwork, what skills will prepare graduates of the future to manage crises and analyze risk?

Two skills stand out for me: quantitative proficiency and writing for brevity.

Senior officials and executives hope for a quantified measure of a crisis or risk whenever possible. It allows for prioritization relative to other crises and risks and creates the opportunity for measuring when you have successfully transitioned out. While it may take a greater aptitude to be the person designing the quantification system, at minimum it is important to be proficient enough to understand its operation, application, and outputs. The GPS curriculum ensures quantitative proficiency while offering opportunities for those interested to gain advanced skills. Also, within private and public sector institutions, decision processes are driven mostly by short memos as opposed to long papers, especially when informing or influencing senior executives or government officials. If a paper is too long, it will not be read—and GPS requires expertise in short-form writing for impact, thereby positioning students for success.

How do you collaborate with current students?

I regularly connect with current students to help expand their outlook on job opportunities. For example, someone interested in online mis/disinformation and dreaming of a job at Google may not be aware of positions of interest with federal government agencies. Or someone interested in foreign policy may not know that USAID and the Department of Commerce have their own foreign services. Other alumni and the GPS career and professional development center exponentially expanded my awareness of professional possibilities, and I enjoy paying it forward.
Nina Kelsey  
Associate Professor of Public Policy and International Affairs  
The Elliott School of International Affairs  
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Intersections of Science, Technology, and International Affairs: Navigating Challenges and Seizing Opportunities

Cybersecurity. Artificial intelligence (AI). Climate change. Decarbonization. 5G—and 6G. Smart cities. Adaptation to climate stress and disasters. The rise of commercial space programs. Nuclear security. Smart agriculture. Offshoring and homeshoring of critical industrial technologies. Technology transfer for innovations such as critical drugs, genetically modified crops, or cutting-edge energy technologies.

Today, the most interesting problems in international affairs are all intertwined with science, technology, and innovation. There are two ways to respond to this trend: specialize or generalize. Policy practitioners need to do both.

On the one hand, international affairs work will increasingly require specialized knowledge. Deep science and technology expertise helps practitioners do things such as translate the science of climate change for policymakers, assess cybersecurity risks, handle biosecurity and disease management cooperation problems, and understand the ways AI could upend competitive advantage in industry or even how humans see and understand the world.

On the other hand, to cope with the rapidity and unpredictability of technological change, practitioners also need to be able to quickly grasp new developments and adapt to change. That requires fast, flexible, rigorous thinking and communication, with broad science and policy literacy and versatile problem-solving skills.

The Elliott School offers an unmatched playing field to pursue both.

We’re a great place to specialize. You’ll dig deep into specialized programs, institutes, and courses from cybersecurity to space policy to sustainable development—many taught by active policy practitioners. Moreover, George Washington University offers an unusual range of other schools that can further your expertise, in engineering and applied sciences, public health, law, public policy, business, media and public affairs, and arts and design.

At the Institute for International Science and Technology Policy, where I work, connecting students to the right expertise is a core part of our mission.

But we’re also a great place to generalize and get practical experience. What excites me about my teaching and research in climate policy is that I’m often dealing with policy problems that haven’t been solved. How do we get to a zero-carbon energy grid? How do we protect ecosystems from unprecedented pressures? It’s people such as my students that will go on to create those solutions.

My teaching emphasizes rigorous, open-ended approaches to break down the important aspects of a problem—technologically, socially, politically—and figure out how those building blocks could be changed or rearranged to allow a novel solution. I focus on tools to do that: frameworks for organized, critical thinking, efficient research skills, and practice in concise, clear policy writing.

There’s no better place to learn this than Elliott—not just because of our own resources but because the opportunities to turn theory into practice are so accessible. Given our location in the heart of Washington, many of my students work next door in the executive branch, the World Bank/IMF, K Street, or leading nonprofits. The unique fun of being here is that what we discuss in class one day may be what a student wrestles with at work the next.
Understanding Technology-Driven Changes through an Interdisciplinary Lens

What sets Fordham IPED apart from other international affairs programs?

Fordham’s Master’s program in International Political Economy and Development, or Fordham IPED, offers a unique, rigorous, and innovative approach to analyzing contemporary global economic relations. Issues in international economic relations and in international development are understood from both a political and an economic perspective. We provide a strong quantitative methods foundation that allows our students to develop robust analytical skills in data analysis, project assessment, and computer programming. We also stress professional experience outside of the classroom. And we only admit a select group of about 20 students each year.

How does Fordham IPED prepare its students in anticipating changes in the international affairs landscape brought about by technological innovations?

Our core curriculum, consisting of economic, political, and quantitative courses, provides our students with an advanced interdisciplinary knowledge of global economic relations. Our electives allow students to specialize in the fields of international development studies, international and development economics, development and finance, international banking and finance, or in global environmental and resource economics. These give our students the analytical expertise to anticipate and adapt to shifts in the global economy brought about by technological innovations. A pressing concern to many of our faculty is understanding the technological changes needed to develop a green economy that will promote poverty reduction in the developing world.

What unique advantages are available for students in Fordham IPED?

Our curriculum and our location in New York City are ideal for anyone who wishes to be at the center of the world economy. Our location affords our students a wealth of internship opportunities, ranging from the United Nations and international nonprofit organizations to international think tanks and Wall Street. Through an endowed summer intern fellowship program, we fund a number of field placements for our students to gain practical experience not only here in New York but also in Washington D.C., as well as in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America.

We complement our classes with a weekly lecture series and various career trips that feature a broad range of professionals, highlighting the practitioner perspective on contemporary issues in international affairs.

We have a small class size of roughly 20 students, providing the opportunity for close interactions with our supportive and distinguished faculty. Our students, drawn from around the world, come from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds. We admit our students from among the top 40% of all applicants to U.S. graduate programs and offer generous scholarships to exceptional students.

Lastly, we have a strong alumni network and close association with various international organizations. Our placement record is strong, with about 38% of alumni in the private sector, 23% in the nonprofit sector, 30% in government, and the remaining 9% in academia. Our graduates have a strong record of winning various prestigious awards, such as Fulbright fellowships, U.S. Presidential Management fellowships, and international development fellowships.
What is it like studying international affairs in the heart of Silicon Valley?
Technology is front and center in international affairs. Digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning systems, cloud computing, semiconductors, and quantum technologies, have both civilian and military applications in a geopolitical context of interdependent economies. Societies’ increasing reliance on them is an opportunity for strengthening social, political, and economic bonds but also a vulnerability that threat actors can exploit.

Many of the innovations and companies behind these technologies were created in Silicon Valley by Stanford researchers and students. So, we feel a heightened sense of responsibility to the world for maximizing the chances that digital technologies are used ethically to advance peace and prosperity.

How do you prepare students for leadership in international affairs?
The curricular heart of our master’s in international policy (MIP) program is the core, which emphasizes policy problem-solving skills. Students also choose a specialization. We offer four, including the one I lead: Cyber Policy and Security. The program concludes with participation in capstone projects with world-class, external partner organizations.

The MIP degree is also customizable: beyond the core, capstone, and specialization requirements, students “choose their own adventure.” Faculty and staff help students map out their coursework, and students rely on each other for advice as well.

Overall, the MIP experience helps students build the intellectual infrastructure to take any problem, break it down into smaller parts, identify stakeholders, build coalitions, design implementable solutions, and communicate them effectively. Students graduate with the tools and mindset necessary to be effective leaders and problem-solvers.

What does leadership look like, especially when it comes to the intersection of digital technologies and geopolitics?
Technological advances happen so fast that it is essential for students to develop and practice foundational skills: how to lead people and organizations, and how to triage problems and prioritize the most urgent ones. Being an effective communicator is also critical. These are skills woven through our curriculum and that students carry through their careers, no matter what policy issues they are working on.

Do MIP students have opportunities to enhance their technical skills?
We want our students to become changemakers in whatever career path they choose. This means having foundational analytical, quantitative, and interpersonal skills and the confidence to use them. It also requires knowledge about the technical dimensions of digital technologies—how they work, how they fail. We encourage students to supplement their policy coursework by taking advantage of the myriad opportunities that Stanford offers for delving deeper into the underlying technologies, whether through coursework or broader engagement with the Stanford and Silicon Valley innovation ecosystems.

We have no prior expectations about our students’ technical abilities or lack thereof. That is because different career paths require vastly different degrees of technical depth—some paths require a “conversational” level of fluency in tech, while others require true fluency. We help students map this out when they get here. They also help each other out—the MIP community is small and tight-knit, and our students often coordinate taking more technical courses together.
Preparing Future Leaders, Inspiring Change in the Digital Era

What makes Sciences Po and the Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA) unique?

Founded 150 years ago, Sciences Po’s uniqueness is remaining faithful to its original approach: multidisciplinary collaboration in both research and teaching in social and human sciences, permanent dialogue between sciences and applied knowledge, and international openness and social inclusion.

At PSIA, we continue this tradition by providing students education and professional training in the most salient fields of international affairs. Located in Paris, at the heart of Europe, and with English as the language of instruction, we attract students from over 100 countries and diverse academic backgrounds. Our specialized master’s programs and wide range of thematic and regional concentrations allow students to personalize their curriculum and chart their very own career paths.

Per QS World University Rankings, PSIA is a global leader, as reflected in Sciences Po’s continuous top-three ranking for politics and international studies since 2019.

How does PSIA prepare students to shape global affairs?

We attract the brightest students from across the planet and instill these future leaders with the knowledge, skills, and experiences to understand, navigate, and shape the complexities of our world. By the end of their two years in PSIA, graduates are ready to be agents of change in the public and private sectors.

World-renowned professors and leading practitioners teach specialist courses that balance conceptual foundations with the most up-to-date operational training and best practices. Students at PSIA have regular opportunities for hands-on practice and to engage with world leaders and scholars through our extensive series of public events, including our annual intergenerational flagship youth and leaders summit.

You’re launching a dual degree Master’s in Technology and Global Affairs this year. Why?

Technology is increasingly shaping international affairs. It drives innovation and enhances connectivity at a global scale, but it also presents fundamental ethical and security challenges to our societies, our economies, and our forms of governance. This groundbreaking degree, jointly delivered by PSIA and IE University in Madrid, will help students gain knowledge in technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, augmented realities, or cybersecurity tools. They will learn about the impact these technologies are having on citizenship and rights, geopolitics and security, and prosperity and sustainable growth, as well as the role that technology can play to address global pressing challenges, such as climate change. Students will explore what kind of global architecture is needed to govern them.

You joined PSIA, having held senior roles at the United Nations and in the Spanish government. What qualities do tomorrow’s leaders need to be successful?

In my experience, leadership transcends titles and positions. It is about embodying values such as compassion, fighting intolerance, and rejecting injustice; coherence, as incoherent leaders are not only inefficient but also build mistrust; commitment, not just holding on to power but rather using it for a purpose, and, courage, daring to succeed but also to fail. These are values that PSIA cherishes and cultivates in leaders. Ultimately, it is about a sense of responsibility toward addressing global challenges that makes us rise higher together.
Debak Das
Assistant Professor
Korbel School of International Studies
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Developing a Diverse, Critical, and Practical Toolkit to Tackle a Fast-Changing Global Environment

How is the role of technology in geopolitics and international affairs changing? How is this reflected in your curriculum or ways of teaching?

The role of technology has expanded manifold in geopolitics and international affairs. From cyber security to artificial intelligence (AI), autonomous systems, hypersonics, and nuclear weapons to the use of cryptocurrencies as tools of democratic activism—especially in the Global South—emerging technologies now shape international affairs more than ever.

At the Korbel School, we grapple with these issues not only from the point of view of present challenges in international affairs but also through theoretically informed historical analysis. For example, in my emerging issues in international security class, we focus on how each new technological development in international relations affects a broad range of issues, such as climate change, energy security, biosecurity, the war in Ukraine, security in the Indo-Pacific, and the role of the Global South in international affairs.

What practical experience do you provide for students with both technology-based and traditional discourse?

We equip students with both hands-on experience and a broad range of analytical skills. Beyond providing students with the tools to critically analyze the intersection between technology and international affairs, we also ensure that students are exposed to policymakers and practitioners in the government, private sector, and civil society through guest lectures and short courses. Many master’s degrees at Korbel also require students to have internships in either international organizations, U.S. government agencies, think tanks or other nongovernmental organizations. These provide students with the practical experience required to be successful after their degrees are complete.

What skills are needed to help students prepare to understand and manage crises?

To manage a crisis, students first need a clear understanding of the issue’s historical background. They also require critical thinking and strategic analytical skills along with the ability to produce thoughtful—yet realistic—solutions. Managing crises also requires quick thinking and the ability to make difficult decisions under pressure. In the classroom, I get students to practice all these skills in wargames and simulation exercises based on current international crises. At a broader school level, my colleagues and I run the Sié Simulations, hosted by the Sié Chéou-Kang Center for International Security and Diplomacy, that apply wargames to real-world crises. These dynamic exercises teach students to think through different constraints faced by decision-makers, alongside practicing policymaking firsthand at a granular level.

How do you best prepare a student to be adaptable in a fast-changing global environment?

The key to being adaptable in a fast-changing environment is to have a diverse toolkit at your disposal. I aim to equip students with the tools of critical thinking and analysis with a focus on enhancing substantive knowledge, historical understanding, and evidence-based argumentative skills. Experiential learning is key to this process. It helps our students have analytical frameworks and heuristics at hand to be able to distil information in a sharp and coherent way and adapt to any new challenges that they are faced with.
Georgetown’s School of Foreign Service: Expanding and Innovating to Meet the Moment

How is the School of Foreign Service (SFS) adapting its academic offerings to meet the changing global landscape, including technological advances?

The School of Foreign Service was the first school in the United States dedicated to preparing leaders to understand the world and to change the world in the face of newly emerging global challenges. As we look to our next century, those challenges are deeply connected with how technology is changing international affairs. And SFS is changing to meet those challenges.

For example, with total grants of over $100 million, SFS created the Center for Security and Emerging Technology (CSET), which has now become the leading provider of data-driven analysis on the security implications of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), advanced computing, and biohazards. With sixty-five full-time staff and hundreds of student research assistants since 2019, CSET has been transforming the policy dialogue in Washington by bringing leading experts on technology and security together with SFS’s world renowned faculty in international affairs. Researchers at CSET have taught more than twenty classes at SFS on the impact of emerging technologies on global security and international relations, and SFS students regularly serve as research assistants and co-authors of policy briefs at CSET, launching them on careers in these critical areas.

We’ve also created a whole new range of courses across our master’s degree programs that look at the impact of new technologies on all aspects of international affairs. Students can focus on science, technology, and international affairs through a concentration in our Master of Science in Foreign Service (MSFS) program that examines how all aspects of science and technology are reshaping security and diplomacy. Importantly, this year, we are launching a new master’s degree in environment and international affairs that looks deeply into the science of climate change and environmental degradation and how they are shaping international affairs and global public policy. We are also launching a new master’s degree in migration and refugees, which has been reshaped not only by politics but by core issues, such as global warming and environmental change, leading to record numbers of forced migration around the world. With these new programs, SFS is once again leading the way in shaping a new generation of leaders to confront a new set of global challenges.

What differentiates SFS from its competitors in graduate education?

With our Washington, DC location, we have always been dedicated to linking together the worlds of analysis and practice to develop sustainable solutions to pressing global problems. Especially when it comes to fast-moving emerging technologies, it is critical to combine the experience of practitioners deeply engaged in problem-solving with the analytical rigor of the country’s best professors of international affairs. Washington, DC is the hub for decision-making that will ultimately determine how we deal with the risks and opportunities presented by new technologies in international affairs. With its century-old history, SFS is the place where those decision makers gather to grapple with these new issues. There has never been a more exciting and consequential moment to be at SFS.
Studying International Relations at the Intersection of Technology and Geopolitics

As the director of School of Diplomacy’s National Security Fellowship (NSF) program, how is the changing role of technology in international affairs reflected in the research your students are doing?

Over the years, we have witnessed a rapid evolution in the use of technology and its implications for national security, geopolitics, and international relations. From cybersecurity to strategic messaging and information warfare, our graduate students’ research reflects a growing recognition of the critical interplay between technology and geopolitics. Their research explores the risks and opportunities, ethical considerations, policy implications, and international cooperation required to navigate the evolving landscape of technology in international affairs and national security. All these elements are incorporated and presented to U.S. government agencies with real-world impacts and recommendations.

Specifically, how does artificial intelligence (AI), social media, and other forms of new technology factor into the classroom experience?

Artificial intelligence, social media, and other forms of technology play a crucial role in our fellowship when assessing how the intersection of technology and geopolitics impacts national security. As our national security fellows conduct research and develop their policy recommendations, they do real-time analysis of social media and open-source intelligence. They develop case studies to support their policy recommendations and implications. Overall, social media, AI, and other technologies are integral to all our research projects for U.S. government agencies.

What practical opportunities, both technology-based and through traditional discourse, does the NSF program provide for students?

During the year, our national security fellowship students can wed their research skills with unique access to data to develop policy recommendations. In partnership with FNA—a deep technology, AI, and machine learning firm specializing in advanced network analytics and simulations—the NSF students can develop statistical analysis models to enhance their recommendations along with an assessment of the potential impact their recommendations could have to policy.

What skills do students need to prepare to understand and manage crises in the global arena?

From critical thinking and analysis to collaboration and teamwork, our students learn to work across their teams in a manner that will acclimate them to the crises and strategic surprises of the real world. By developing these skills, students will better understand, navigate, and manage crises in the global arena and thereby contribute to effective crisis response, conflict resolution, and long-term stability.

Any advice for young professionals considering a career in international affairs?

Develop a strong academic foundation, cultivate critical language skills, gain real-world experience, network and seek mentorship, keep abreast of local, national, and international developments, be adaptive and never stop learning. Pursuing a career in international affairs requires patience, perseverance, and continual learning. Begin by being proactive and seizing opportunities; be open to diverse paths and possibilities, and remember that your passion, dedication, and commitment will guide you in the right direction.
How is the role of technology in geopolitics and international affairs changing? How is this reflected in your curriculum or ways of teaching?

We live in an exponentially changing world, with breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, biotechnology, energy storage, and quantum computing. It is therefore imperative that we study the political, economic, and societal implications of change and that we advance solutions to the challenges it brings.

From a global order perspective, technology has become a full domain for foreign policy—one where our strategic interests and values are at stake. This is why technology is present in all our programs. The twenty-first century will be impossible to navigate without an understanding of technology and its impact on societies. Our economics students dive into the implications of automation, e-platforms, and the circular economy. Our international relations students learn about tech diplomacy, the geopolitics of emerging technologies, or the intersection of technology and democracy. We are also currently designing a joint Master in Technology and Global Affairs with Sciences Po to allow for a singular training path for those with a clear interest in these matters.

What practical experience do you provide for students with both technology-based and traditional discourse?

IE University is among the most innovative academic institutions in the world. We see the arrival of disruptive technologies as an immense opportunity to enhance our pedagogy and mold responsible leaders. At the same time, we have always emphasized the ethical use of emerging technologies.

An example of our work in this area is the Tech4Democracy program, an initiative we lead in partnership with the U.S. Department of State, which supports startups in the field of democracy-affirming technologies, such as data for policymaking, fact-checking, digital trust, or GovTech.

What skills are needed to help students prepare to understand and manage crises?

We firmly believe that learning outside the classroom is just as important as learning inside of it. This is why we adopt a practice-based approach, organizing a series of simulations, role-play exercises, and competitions.

Our students, for example, built a mock refugee camp and designed a humanitarian response. Through this, they learned the advantages of proper team management in uncertain contexts. In other exercises, students simulated the negotiation of trade agreements.

This applied learning methodology produces very effective graduates, and IE University has been consistently ranked among the best in employability worldwide.

How do you best prepare a student to be adaptable in a fast-changing global environment?

We give students the tools they need to be adaptable and resilient. Our unique international environment and outlook shapes global citizens, able to navigate complex economic, political, and social dynamics that go beyond borders and cultures.

On top of our applied learning methodology, students also engage with global speakers through events and outreach activities. We recently organized a transatlantic conference, which fosters debates on the U.S.-Europe relationship and broader Ibero-American issues, as well as or the Concordia Europe Summit, with seventy-five decisionmakers having high-level and interactive conversations centered on the theme of democracy, security, and geopolitical risk.
Ted Wittenstein
Executive Director, International Security Studies
Lecturer in Global Affairs
Yale Jackson School of Global Affairs

The Yale Jackson School Focuses on Artificial Intelligence, Emerging Technologies, and National Power

How is the role of technology in geopolitics and international affairs changing? How is this reflected in your curriculum or ways of teaching?

Technology is the backbone of our global commerce and communication and defense systems and a key aspect of the critical infrastructure that powers our modern civilization. Technologies and information spread instantaneously, while the world economy and supply chains are integrated to a degree unprecedented in history.

Yet despite the immense benefits that have resulted from this global connectivity, significant vulnerabilities persist and threats are on the rise. Competition over strategic technologies and contests for advantage are growing but without standard international rules of the road. Moreover, the future likely will prove even more transformative due to advances in artificial intelligence (AI). Machines capable of sophisticated information processing, toward the frontier of autonomy, pose tremendous opportunities for economic growth and societal well-being. But the potential threats also are extraordinary: autonomous weaponry, AI-augmented cyberwarfare, sophisticated disinformation campaigns, and geopolitical instability as nations race to deploy these unpredictable technologies.

A signature new initiative of Yale’s Jackson School of Global Affairs and International Security Studies (ISS), the Schmidt Program on Artificial Intelligence, Emerging Technologies, and National Power examines how AI has the potential to alter the fundamental building blocks of world order. The Schmidt Program offers a new yearlong course, team-taught by faculty across the university, that spans the disciplines of computer science, data science, economics, engineering, history, international relations, law, philosophy, physics, and political science. Through this exposure to leading scholars across multiple fields, this innovative course equips aspiring policy leaders with the requisite technical fluency to identify and respond to emerging threats and opportunities.

What practical experience do you provide for students with both technology-based and traditional discourse?

Students familiarize themselves with AI tools through traditional classroom discussion combined with hands-on demonstrations, simulations, and group project work. For example, rather than merely discuss the challenge of disinformation and its impact on global affairs, students design their own disinformation bot and learn to utilize AI to detect disinformation online. The result is that non-STEM students appreciate the technical aspects of the challenge, while STEM students gain great exposure to the broader legal, policy, and ethical implications of the basic scientific research.

How do you best prepare a student to be adaptable in a fast-changing global environment?

In today’s hyper-connected and high-tech world, future thinkers need to be flexible thinkers, creative problem-solvers, and work well in interdisciplinary teams. In the Schmidt Program, students engage in group project work designed to simulate realistic scenarios and solve global challenges. For example, students participate in the Yale-Renmin Student Dialogue on AI, emerging technologies, and U.S.-China relations, in which they engage in actual diplomatic exchange with Chinese counterparts. Another student group composed of global affairs and computer science students developed a new startup company based on a group project from class. From their interdisciplinary expertise, they sought to utilize AI for commercial imagery analysis to aid in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Yale JACKSON SCHOOL OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS
Leveraging Technology Requires a Human Touch

Over four decades, Lionel Johnson’s career has encompassed the government, nonprofit, and private sectors. He has been president of the Pacific Pension and Investment Institute since July 2014 and previously served as senior vice president of the Initiative for Global Development. He was vice president and director of international government affairs at Citigroup. As a member of the U.S. Foreign Service, Johnson was assigned to embassies in Haiti, the Philippines, and Kenya and served as special assistant to Secretaries of State George P. Shultz and James A. Baker III. In addition to teaching, he directs Maxwell’s graduate international relations internship program in Washington, D.C., and other sites.

How do you prepare students to adapt to a world driven by technological advances?
First, the ability to hear and listen is just as important as the ability to articulate in both written and verbal terms. Second, we have instant telecommunications and artificial intelligence in this era, but it’s essential to analyze and think critically. Nothing is ever what it appears to be, and you must be willing to invest the time and resources to get to a position based on facts. Fact-based decision-making is critical. It’s learning to discern, think, and formulate points of view about complex issues that have been vetted by as many people and institutions as possible.

How do you help students understand their place in this changing environment?
I encourage them to think about their career as a continuum of various opportunities and experiences, not only in government and the nonprofit space but also in the private sector. Government resources are finite across the board. Institutional investors such as pension funds, endowments and companies have a responsibility and need to be at the table. It’s not just about profits but also about using that capital responsibly and sustainably to help address common problems. We have so many impressive innovators worldwide that, given a little bit of opportunity, capital can bring new ideas to fruition. The fundamental issues related to income and wealth disparity that we see around the world and are driving so much unrest require a response that brings in the talent and the insights of a range of people and institutions.

What practical experience helps students engage with these opportunities?
Students come into Maxwell internships with a commitment to learning, and they finish with an appreciation of how complex the world is and how difficult decision-making can be. I am finding that they are shocked by how much they are exposed to in their internships’ early days. The U.S. Agency for International Development, the State Department, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation all have Maxwell students. There is a vibrant nonprofit community in Washington where students are in places such as the Council of the Americas and Oxfam America. Those interested in the policy side get opportunities on Capitol Hill; I would add how impressed I’ve been with the number of students interested in the intelligence community. Those deployed in places such as the National Security Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency are also getting meaningful experiences.
How the Persian Gulf is Reshaping the World: Technology and Threats

Dr. Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar
Associate Professor
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Region of instability
Nuclear technology and its geopolitical consequences have regained center stage in recent years. Increasing tensions among great powers and the spread of nuclear weapons to other states, combined with new technologies in weapons systems, cyberspace, and media, all threaten to undermine global and regional order.

Long dominated by oil and religious politics as well as armed conflicts, many Persian Gulf and broader Middle East states are now competing for advanced nuclear technology for strategic and domestic leverage. Iran has effectively established itself as a nuclear threshold state, and in response, Arab states have taken steps to develop civilian nuclear reactors. Some have even sought alternative nuclear suppliers in China and Russia, given U.S. refusal to provide an indigenous enrichment program, a critical element for states seeking the weapon option.

Arab states in the Persian Gulf have now established strong energy and economic ties with U.S. rivals. Multitrillion-dollar sovereign wealth funds are flowing across the globe, including to Chinese businesses and their high-tech sectors. This massive surge of wealth and investments has led some experts to state that the Persian Gulf is reshaping the world. The nexus of energy, nuclear ambitions, and chronic instability makes the region an evolving hotspot in international politics in the coming years.

Why the Bush School?
The Bush School is equipped to train the next generation of policymakers focused on proliferation and recent technological advances. Having both academic and practitioner backgrounds, our faculty have contributed to scholarship and debates on critical foreign policy issues. My own research on Iran’s foreign and nuclear policy has appeared in international relations journals as well as policy outlets such as Foreign Affairs.

Armed with theoretical foundations and methodological tools, students learn to conduct research, analyze contemporary issues, and be informed participants in policy debates. They delve into primary sources and examine declassified documents to understand how policy is made and implemented, and then further shaped by social media.

What practical experiences do you offer students?
Students complete a capstone project for a real-world client in their final semester. We offer a wide range of cutting-edge topics covering diplomacy, cyber, defense, intelligence, and more for government and nongovernmental entities in and outside of the United States. In the past decade, my capstone students have reported to the Department of State and the National Security Council on topics such as proxy warfare, Iran’s nuclear politics, U.S. strategic options toward Iran, the role of Russia and China in the Middle East, and hostage diplomacy.

This intense course pushes students to learn quickly about a topic they may know little about and produce a nuanced yet concise report for policymakers. They conduct interviews and background conversations with national security advisors, ambassadors, policy experts, academics, and journalists. Thanks to the ever-advancing communication and media technologies, our students engage with experts with diverse opinions and backgrounds, which, in turn, further elevate their critical thinking and communication skills.
Technology’s Impact on International Relations

How is the role of technology in geopolitics and international affairs changing?

Looking back in history, the steam engine developed by James Watt in 1769 not only revolutionized the power of machines but also revolutionized locomotion when applied to steamships and steam locomotives. The invention of textile machinery, such as the flying shuttle invented by John Kay in 1940, revolutionized production. These inventions brought about a dramatic change in the international position of Britain. Technological innovations in chemistry, electricity, petroleum, and iron and steel since the 1870s have greatly contributed to the development of the United States and Germany and subsequent changes in international relations. Nuclear development was crucial to relations between the two great powers during the Cold War.

Even today, semiconductor technology has decisive significance in the security and economic relations between the United States and China and is the focus of the United States’ decoupling/derisking policy.

At the Graduate School of International Relations (GSIR), guidance is provided so that students can consider the meaning of these technologies in international relations while comprehensively clarifying international relations from political, economic, and cultural perspectives. This includes, for example, the implications of things such as the development of dual-use technology for U.S. security policy, agricultural technology development in sub-Saharan Africa on food security, and nuclear development in North Korea on relations with the United States.

How does GSIR best prepare a student to be adaptable in a fast-changing global environment?

Our curriculum offers four clusters of programs in global international relations. These clusters are global governance, sustainable development, culture, society, and media, and global Japanese studies. They are aimed at students with diverse backgrounds and interests from over thirty-two countries, some of whom are working policymakers from overseas, sponsored by their governments, or on scholarship programs from the Japanese government. The courses are provided by scholars and practitioners, including experienced external lecturers such as diplomats, economists, journalists, managers of nongovernmental organizations, and entrepreneurs from the private sector.

Our curriculum gives students opportunities to promote their understanding of what is happening in the real world and encourages them to find clues to address global issues. We also offer more practical courses, such as professional training that provides hands-on experience in international development in Asia and beyond, from practitioners who have experience working for national, regional, and international organizations. The global Japanese studies cluster encourages students to learn from the experiences of Japan and other Asian countries, developing alternative and critical insights into global affairs beyond Western paradigms. Furthermore, GSIR has been strengthening the double master’s degree program, which offers qualified students an opportunity to study at overseas partner universities and research institutes in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Asian and European nations. Through this program, students can earn two master’s degrees in as short as two years. This program prepares them to work in a rapidly changing world. We continue to update our program to maintain relevance to the changing needs of professional schools in international relations.
Meeting Tomorrow’s Security Challenges Today

How is international affairs changing due to rapid advancements in technology?
Campbell: Technology is reshaping every aspect of international affairs. Disinformation and foreign influence operations undermine democratic processes. Drones, robotics, and bioweapons change how defense officials evaluate offensive and defensive capabilities. Innovations in surveillance technology affect human rights, including privacy, intellectual property, freedom of assembly, and political advocacy. Due to cultural differences and the intrinsically borderless nature of many technologies, debates about international norms and the regulation of technology are a new area of contention within international and regional bodies. New innovations in generative artificial intelligence (AI) and quantum computing will reshape things further. We are reshaping what we teach to prepare practitioners.

Bradshaw: Today’s complex challenges require a multidisciplinary approach that provides students with both a theoretical and analytical toolkit to understand, evaluate, and act on the biggest questions of our time. New technologies, such as drones, change the power balance between state and non-state actors; we talk about how this affects the nature of conflict and how policymakers can limit harmful or unanticipated effects. Misinformation spread on social media raises difficult questions about the boundaries of speech; students explore how platforms balance competing social and cultural obligations with profit. Advancements in AI provide new tools for public safety, hiring and recruiting, education, banking, and healthcare, but they also risk perpetuating bias and inequality: how can technologists ensure that these systems are built in ways that are both just and effective? We want to be part of that conversation.

How do you build in real-world experiences to prepare students to adapt in a fast-changing global environment?
Campbell: Internships and practica are great opportunities to network and make connections. When I served in government, managing crises was critical; this will be even more important as technology increases connectivity, bringing things occurring abroad closer to home and speeding up decision cycles. Analytical and communication skills are both critical in this regard. Our ability to bring practitioners to campus as teachers and panelists means students hear firsthand accounts of difficult decision-making. Many of our courses also include simulations and scenarios during which students practice crisis management skills.

Bradshaw: We incorporate opportunities for both a practicum and an internship, usually with government, industry, or nongovernmental organizations, which give students real-world experiences in project management and consulting. For the practicum, students spend one semester working in teams with clients, including U.S. and international government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and businesses, to conduct policy and program analyses. Students draw on their research and their qualitative and quantitative skills to prepare final oral and written analyses and recommendations.
How are new technologies changing the global security field?

There’s a lot of excitement around artificial intelligence (AI) and how it can enhance the work of governments and private sector compliance professionals in detecting criminal activity, such as financial sanctions evasion and cross-border smuggling.

More criminal activity is migrating online and being conducted with alternative communication methods and payment methods. So, we need to keep up with “older” technologies, such as blockchain forensics. Criminals may not be using Bitcoin as often as they did, but we have the technology to track what they’re doing on other blockchains.

Beyond my field of financial crime, my colleagues have been using open-source tools to monitor extremist group hate speech and satellite imagery to monitor shipping traffic and nuclear weapons facilities.

How is this shifting power dynamics? What do you see as the peril and the promise of these new technologies?

With the advent of ChatGPT and digitally manipulated voice and video, we’re starting to see what AI is capable of. Just as AI can help the good guys, it can also be abused by the bad guys. I worry about what awaits us once criminals and rogue states master their own AI capabilities.

What skills are most critical for students to build so they can understand and address emerging threats in a fast-changing global environment?

Traditional communication skills, including written and spoken communication, cross-cultural communication, and foreign language skills, will always be important, especially because many threats are transnational and require close collaboration with foreign counterparts. Language translation technology is no substitute for building interpersonal cross-cultural relationships.

Blockchain forensics for tracing crypto assets is another exciting development. We train our financial crime students in advanced blockchain analytics techniques and how to use public tools that highlight the flow of funds and recognize patterns.

Other critical skills include data analytics, which is getting more sophisticated. Coding classes, such as Python and SQL, are becoming standard components of data analytics curricula.

What do you see on the horizon? Where do you see emerging needs and opportunities for people entering this field in the coming years?

While it’s entertaining to watch movie characters such as James Bond and Jack Ryan and their high-speed car chases, most of the exciting work in the international security space will be done with a computer. While there will always be a need for digital skills within federal agencies, law enforcement, and the military, there is also a need for these skills in the private sector—it’s a growth industry.
Educating Leaders to Address the Global Cyber Landscape

How is the Green School of International & Public Affairs preparing students for cybersecurity’s crucial role in international relations and government policy?

Through programs such as the Cybersecurity and Technology Policy track of the Master of Arts in Global Affairs program, students gain knowledge and skills to navigate an increasingly complex cybersecurity landscape. Multidisciplinarity, experiential learning, and practical skills prepare students for the global cyber policy workforce. The multidisciplinary curricula includes faculty from the Green School, College of Law, and College of Engineering as well as practitioners from government and industry. Coursework topics include cyber warfare and cybersecurity policy and its legal and ethical dimensions. By emphasizing pathways to internships, providing research opportunities, and engaging students with the workforce, students acquire practical knowledge and insights into the challenges and best practices of cybersecurity.

What skills are needed so Green School students will understand the impact of technology in global affairs and how to effectively harness it?

We emphasize hard and soft skill development to ensure graduates are prepared to enter global cyber and technology policy workforces. This includes a sophisticated understanding of the existing and emerging technological landscape—for example, artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, Internet of Things, quantum computing—and how technologies impact societies, governance, security, economics, and international relations. Students must develop critical thinking and analytical abilities to assess implications of technology adoption, evaluate risks and benefits, and formulate strategic policies—and have the communications skills necessary to inform and influence policymakers.

How can tomorrow’s leaders combat crises and threats posed by AI and social media—and utilize them as positive forces?

Graduates must be prepared to tackle unprecedented challenges due to the speed and breadth of technological disruption. Artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, mobile technologies, extended reality, and biotechnologies will have a profound impact on societies and their interactions in the international system. Aspiring professionals should embrace a wide range of multistakeholder approaches to innovating policy solutions for the greater good, including collaborative governance, international engagement, agile policy development, and running policy innovations through testbeds such as regulatory sandboxes and pilot programs.

What sets the Green School apart from other graduate programs in international relations and public policy?

Our programming emphasizes multidisciplinarity, experiential learning, and practitioners in the classroom. Faculty provide meaningful exposure to technical and legal curricula to ensure students are equipped to think holistically about persistent cyber policy issues. Experiential learning engages students in policy-relevant research and includes partnerships with government agencies and industry leaders. For example, the Gordon Institute for Public Policy leads a Cyber Threat Intelligence Fellowship program that provides students with specialized curriculum, professional development activities, near-peer mentorship from alumni in the workforce, and internship opportunities. The program has a placement rate of over 80% and was highlighted before the U.S. Congress by the Honorable Avril Haines, Director of National Intelligence. Such dimensions provide a comprehensive and forward-thinking education, equipping students to address complex challenges in international relations and public policy in the twenty-first century.
Dr. Sanjeev Khagram
Director General and Dean
Thunderbird School of Global Management
Arizona State University

Shaping Higher Education for the Fourth Industrial Revolution

How is the role of technology in politics and international affairs changing?
The first Industrial Revolution was powered by the steam engine, the second by the automobile, and the third by the Internet and personal computer. Today, in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, we have at least twelve interacting technologies. From artificial intelligence to augmented reality and virtual reality, biotechnology, blockchain, distributed ledger and geoengineering, this is the most complex combination of transformative technologies ever witnessed in our planetary and human history.

Technologies are reshaping individual lives, transforming business processes, changing societal dynamics, and influencing government policies. At Thunderbird, we have one of the most technologically advanced global headquarters of any leadership, management or business school in the world. The F. Francis and Dionne Najafi Thunderbird Global Headquarters brings the world’s leading technology directly to the hands of our students and faculty. The building spans five floors and features state-of-the-art flexible classrooms and 1,600 square feet of displays with more than twenty million pixels of direct-view LED screens showcasing presentations and events worldwide. The building features a green screen studio, a full XR production and development studio, and a volumetric capture studio that creates full three-dimensional renderings for faculty and student initiatives. This technology is used to incorporate immersive language learning, allowing Thunderbird students access to learn new languages and meet with students and faculty from every corner of the globe.

We in higher education can help by developing leaders who will put technology to work to solve our greatest challenges. We can help empower students, our current and future leaders, to positively impact our world by encouraging the desire to overcome boundaries and cooperate across disciplines and by fostering an entrepreneurial mindset in all that we do.

How does Thunderbird help students prepare to manage global challenges?
Businesses today compete in a global marketplace characterized by some combination of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. As we face political, environmental and technological challenges on a global scale, it is imperative that we have the right leaders to help guide the way.

Our job at Thunderbird is to prepare the next generation of global leaders. That includes young people but also people in the workforce looking to assume leadership positions and senior executives who are already facing crises and challenges of the current era. Thunderbird’s degree programs are taught by world-renowned faculty with extensive experience in global business. They are action-oriented and thrive on developing solutions for the most complicated global scenarios. These leaders teach both career professionals and companies the specializations and tools necessary to obtain a true global mindset, the cornerstone of Thunderbird’s degree offerings.

Our programs help train future leaders to resolve global challenges by sharing insight, knowledge and understanding of other cultures and languages, emphasizing the importance of the world beyond our borders, and enabling students to discover the value of an interconnected world. Our role at Thunderbird is to shape leaders who can leverage the new tools of this era in ways that will empower the most vulnerable workers, communities and societies—leaders who will make sure that everyone contributes and shares in the wealth of the future.
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