Alumni Reunion Panelists 2016
International Relations

Panelists:
Dana M. Brown ‘96
Political and Economic Counselor, U.S. Embassy, Havana

Dana began working for the U.S. Department of State in 1998 and joined the Foreign Service in May 2000. She is currently serving as the Political and Economic Counselor in U.S. Embassy Havana, Cuba, helping to reestablish normal diplomatic relations for the first time in more than five decades. Her most recent assignment prior to Havana was in the capacity of Deputy Director of the State Department’s Office of Andean Affairs in Washington D.C. She was responsible for furthering bilateral relations between the United States and Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. Since joining the Foreign Service, Dana has also represented the United States as the Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d’Affaires in Praia, Cape Verde; Political-Economic Chief in U.S. Embassy Pristina, Kosovo; Advance Officer and Staff for Secretary Colin Powell; and as a Political Officer in the U.S. embassies in Lisbon, Portugal; Bogotá, Colombia; and Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Dana Brown is an alumna of Brown University in international relations and Hispanic studies and of the University of California, San Diego in international relations and Pacific studies. She is fluent in Spanish and Portuguese.

Ambassador Rufus Gifford ’96
U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark | Department of State

As someone never afraid of a challenge and willing to take risk with a smile, Ambassador Rufus Gifford prides himself on looking to the future, wanting to do his small part to create a world which is more engaged, innovative, modern and secure.

Ambassador Gifford presented his credentials to HM Queen Margrethe II on September 13, 2013, thus becoming the 60th representative of the United States to the Kingdom of Denmark. As Ambassador, his mission is to transform a historically great relationship to meet the challenges of the future by engaging Danes – especially younger Danes – on issues that matter. His three main priorities are enhancing trade and economic opportunity while combating climate change, making the world safer for all through security cooperation, and partnering with Denmark and Greenland in the Arctic region, especially as the United States assumes the Arctic Council Chair in 2015. The Ambassador firmly believes that Americans and Danes have a lot to learn from each other, and that our partnership has made and will continue to make a positive difference in the world.

Following graduation from Brown University in 1996, Ambassador Gifford left his native Massachusetts to pursue a career in the entertainment industry. In the years that followed, he helped produce such family blockbuster films as the Dr. Dolittle franchise and Garfield: The Movie. In 2004, at the age of 29, Ambassador Gifford took the bold step to leave the entertainment industry and enter the world of
politics. Two months into an unpaid internship on (now-Secretary of State) John Kerry’s Presidential Campaign, Ambassador Gifford was hired as the Deputy Finance Director for the Western States based in Los Angeles.

Following the 2004 election, Ambassador Gifford started his own political consultancy business and worked for numerous U.S. Senators and California politicians before meeting then-Senator Barack Obama in January 2007. He worked on President Obama’s 2008 Presidential race in California and moved to Washington, DC following Obama’s historic election. There he took the fundraising reins of the Democratic National Committee in 2009 as Finance Director. At the start of the 2012 election, Ambassador Gifford moved to Chicago to help launch the re-election campaign of the President. He served as a Senior Staff member and Finance Director of the campaign – ultimately responsible for its more than billion dollar budget.

An avid runner, cyclist, and sailor, Ambassador Gifford enjoys the outdoors. With his partner, veterinarian Dr. Stephen DeVincent, and dog Argos, he looks forward to continuing to explore Danish parks, forests and coastlines during his time in Denmark. Together, Ambassador Gifford and Dr. DeVincent are focused on the preservation of human rights around the globe, fighting the effects of climate change, and the preservation of wildlife.

Matthew McGuire ’91
United States Executive Director of the World Bank Group

The Honorable Matthew McGuire is the United States Executive Director of the World Bank Group. He was nominated by President Obama and confirmed by the United States Senate, on June 15, 2015. As the U.S. Executive Director, he represents the United States as the largest shareholder on the executive boards of the World Bank Group institutions. Previously, Dr. McGuire served as Director of the Office of the Business Liaison at the U.S. Department of Commerce. In this capacity, he managed the Secretary’s relationships with business leaders globally, and he worked closely with policy making entities across the Obama Administration, including the National Economic Council, the National Security Council, and the President’s Council on Jobs and Competitiveness.

Prior to coming to Washington, DC, Dr. McGuire worked as a senior executive in the financial services industry, helping to build three dynamic and entrepreneurial firms in Chicago, IL. He has also run non-profit programs in the U.S. and abroad, focusing in particular on the fields of workforce development and affordable housing development. McGuire has been involved with various civic endeavors throughout his career, acting as a board member with number of not-for-profit organizations, including Public/Private Ventures, Chicago Public Media, and PeacePlayers International. He earned his Ph.D. in Anthropology from Harvard University and a BA from Brown University, as well as a Certificate of Religious Studies from the University of London.

Most importantly, he is married and has two remarkable daughters.
Ambassador Richard Olson ’81  
Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan  

Ambassador Richard Olson assumed duty as U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP) on November 17, 2015 after concluding his service as the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan. Previously, he served as the Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Affairs, at U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan, from 2011 to 2012. U.S. Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates from 2008 to 2011. He is a member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister Counselor, and was recently recommended for promotion to Career Minister.

Olson joined the U.S. Department of State in 1982. He has served in Mexico, Uganda, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates, (where he served in Abu Dhabi and Dubai), and in Najaf, Iraq. He was also Deputy Chief of Mission at the United States Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). His Washington assignments include: State Department Operations Center (twice), NATO Desk, the Office of Israel and Palestinian Affairs (twice, including as Director), and the Office of Iraqi Affairs, including as Director. He graduated from Brown University in 1981, receiving an A.B. in Law and Society (Honors) and History.

Olson has been awarded the Presidential Distinguished Service Award, the Secretary of State’s Award for Public Outreach, the State Department’s Superior Honor Award (three times), and the Secretary of Defense’s Exceptional Civilian Service Award (for his service in Iraq).

Moderator:  
Jessica Ashooh ’06,  
Deputy Director, Middle East Strategy Task Force for the Atlantic Council  

As Deputy Director of the Atlantic Council’s Middle East Strategy Task Force, Dr. Jessica Ashooh focuses on how US foreign policy can more comprehensively address the growing challenges of state failure and violent extremism in the Middle East. Prior to joining the Atlantic Council, Ashooh spent more than four years based in Abu Dhabi, where she worked as a Senior Analyst in the UAE Foreign Ministry's Policy Planning Department. In this capacity, she specialized on the crisis in Syria, and worked in close cooperation with the UAE Special Envoy for Syria to support the UAE's participation in the Geneva II peace process and with moderate elements of the Syrian opposition. Ashooh has also worked as a consulting adviser to the Kurdistan Regional Government's Ministry of Planning in Erbil, Iraq.

Ashooh holds a doctorate and a master's degree, both in international relations, from the University of Oxford (St. Antony's College), which she attended as a Marshall Scholar. Her doctoral research focused on ideological and bureaucratic infighting in US foreign policy toward the Middle East. Ashooh also holds a bachelor's degree in international relations from Brown University. Her writing has appeared in outlets including the New York Times, Foreign Policy, and The National Interest, and she is a frequent commentator on SkyNews, Al Jazeera, Voice of America, and others. She speaks Arabic, French, and Spanish.
**About the Middle East Strategy Task Force**

Under the bipartisan Co-Chairmanship of former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former US National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, the Atlantic Council convened the Middle East Strategy Task Force in February 2015 to examine the underlying issues of state failure and political legitimacy that drive extremist violence and threaten fundamental interests broadly shared by the people of the region and the rest of the world. The Task Force brings together a broad array of regional stakeholders and international experts to collaborate in identifying ways in which people in the Middle East can build and support governing institutions that offer legitimacy, opportunity, and an alternative to violence. The Task Force is an initiative of the Atlantic Council’s Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East in cooperation with the Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security.