

## Comments Summaries

Dr. Michael Pillsbury

China's Dream: The Hundred-Year Marathon

Sarasota/Venice 1/5/16

There were 131 evaluations out of an audience of 418 (Venice?). Pillsbury received an overall rating of 91.2% (Red) and 88.5% (Green). A frequent criticism (but still less than 10%), was that “he was selling his book.” This appeared in both Sarasota and Venice comments. Yet even one evaluation which said he was “pushy” about the selling of his book, gave him all “5’s” on the evaluation form.

Some labelled his presentations “wonderful,” and many were just short of this accolade; but a few wrote that his speech was “blatant tease vs information.” Another wrote “...China is a complicated subject that demands a carefully crafted, organized approach, and that’s not what we got...” and “(he) doesn’t convey much information ... a light touch.” “Too much past history and too many references/quotes (for) most to process effectively.”

Over 90% want the subject (China) to be addressed next year and 86% indicated that Pillsbury should be invited to return in the next two years.

There were two comments on “audio:” 1. Place a microphone in the center of the room; 2. Provide a portable mic for Q&A.”

And one comment quoted in its entirety for possible follow up: “There was a loud fan blowing during the entire presentation (1/5/16) making it difficult to hear and concentrate on speaker. Can facilities management do anything to resolve this?”

Summary: China ranks very high as a desired SILL topic; Pillsbury satisfied far many more in the audiences than he disappointed; he elicited many enthusiastic reactions; he should be invited to return (when?); and his sponsor needs to counsel him about book promotions. And moderators need to a better job of encouraging audiences to fill out evaluations.

Nolan Peterson  
The War in the Ukraine  
Sarasota 1/12/16

Some folks found him to be a refreshing change of pace:

"Excellent to have a young speaker. Thank you."

"Great to have a journalist speak."

"It was refreshing hearing the truth from a journalist instead of a coverup."

"Thank you for bringing us a speaker who has actually currently been to the area he is speaking about. A breath of fresh air!"

"Very moving and knowledgeable speaker. No political theories. Just first hand knowledge of tragedy."

"So informative, passionate and personal!"

On the other hand, some decried the lack of history and context:

"The speaker was excellent. However his presentation might have been fuller if the time would have been spent discussing how/what precipitated the conflict....His presentation was very enjoyable on a personal basis, but not from a geo-political situation and what the future holds."

"Speaker had vivid insights into the nature of the war and how it could expand....SILL would be better served by a broader perspective on the conflict."

"Sentimental, biased talk. However, he writes well."

"The speaker should introduce the background of the start of the conflict."

The biggest issue was the audio:

"Wonderful and interesting, but everyone had difficulty hearing."

"The audio left much to be desired."

"The audio system is poor. Hard to understand the speaker."

"Sound was muffled on the right side."

Mark Lowenthal  
Current Issues in U.S. Intelligence  
Venice/LWR 1/15/16

- One of the best in years
- I could listen to him for hours
- Entertaining and informative
- Knowledgeable, informative, and entertaining
- Organized and prepared
- Fabulous and humorous
- Talked too fast and dropped voice at the end of sentences
- Wanted to know more about why intelligence agencies don't work together more closely
- Loved the speaker but didn't necessarily want the same topic covered next year

David Shambaugh  
China Goes Global: The Partial Power  
Sarasota 1/21/16

Those who rated him highly tended not to make comments

Otherwise, comments fall into 4 areas:

- 1) It was a "dry" talk, a little too academic and professorial, but came more alive in the Q&A when he was more animated and expressed opinions.
- 2) Covered so much material that to some it seemed disorganized and should have been focused on fewer areas.
- 3) He referred to his book too frequently.
- 4) There were many comments about the problem with Power Points, and basically unable to be read.

Dr. Gary Burtless

Surging American Inequality: How Much and Why?

Sarasota 1/28/16

- Too many statistics and as a consequence, "boring".
- No suggestions on how to improve the situation
- "Nothing new" or "I already knew that".

George Biddle

The Global Refugee Crisis – Unprecedented in Scope and Scale

Sarasota 2/2/16

- A well organized presentation with lots of detail and explanation and by a pleasant but authoritative speaker who was very responsive to questioners.
- Power point was effective, and in general speakers should use it, but still hard to see (this was in Venice).
- It would have been improved with more pictures of the refugees and more pictures of them and perhaps videos of them expressing their opinions.

Amb. Kenneth Yalowitz

The Arctic

Sarasota 2/11/16

Most comments were positive and enthusiastic:

"Speaker covered area with good, clear information."

"Knowledgeable and interesting."

"Logical, informative, clear, interesting."

"Very relevant and important topic and has many ramifications globally."

However, one audience member voiced a desire for a different kind of speaker: Maybe it's just me, but it seems like most (not all) of the speakers have been academics. I would like to see SILL invite businessmen who are subject matter experts."

"Interesting topic, but somewhat irrelevant."

"Monotone speaker on a marginally interesting subject."

And two Canadians were, predictably, unhappy:

"How can a speaker talk about the Arctic and totally ignore Canada?"

Carlotta Gall  
After Bin Laden  
Sarasota 3/2/16

- Terrific, rarely hear from someone with long term experience in area.
- Great to have people share experiences, but nice to balance with Carlotta who is in the middle of everything.
- One of the best I've heard over years.
- Clear explanation of source of problems.
- Speaker fantastic, clear educational. Great to hear from someone who works through the problems in real life.
- Outstanding, best of year.
- Interesting, also depressing.
- Topic vital, excellent credentials, narrative examples, but speaker needs more animation in presentation.
- Difficult to understand, Church too cold.
- Would have been interesting to explain how U.S. reconciles support for Saudi Arabia with corrupt Royal family, Wahabi and funding of Islamists.
- Knowledgeable, message important.
- Hearing problem with English accent.
- Visuals would help, hard to understand.
- Today's program excellent, overall program mixed.
- Too many ums.
- More info on how to stop situation, or life examples of what help USG provides, or comments on what it is like to be a female correspondent.
- Speaker should be more analytical less anecdotes. I liked the soldier turned journalist and the speaker on data driven medicine. Gall did good job making proposal and giving evidence.

Dr. Frank Mora

Measuring and gaining U.S. influence in Latin America and the Caribbean  
Sarasota, March 3, 2016

**Speaker:**

*Positive comments;*

- Effective speaker.
- Replies to questions were excellent.
- Very interesting premise and well presented. I wish he would have taken the premise further: 1) what is the impact longer term of this influence; 2) what threatens our Latin American relationships; 3) Could these same influences work for us effectively elsewhere or is L.A. a uniquely fertile ground.
- Very provocative.
- I liked the speaker's approach which opened up my eyes to looking at how we evaluate our sphere of influence in Latin America. He spoke clearly and explained his position clearly. He gave good answers to questions from the audience. Very few of the audience left during the Q & A.
- Ask him back!
- Wonderful presentation!
- This speaker was excellent and engaging.
- I liked this man – I could understand him!
- Dr. Mora spoke clearly, knew what he was talking about – most positive talk in a long time.

*Negative comments:*

- Takes too long to get to the point; too few specific examples.
- Made the same point too many times.
- More visuals needed to emphasize statistics.
- Speaker's manner of presenting was dull.

**Topic**

*Positive comments:*

- He should be invited back to discuss other developing issues in the region, but not to repeat this topic.
- Wow – new definition of “foreign aid” – borders less important. Great!
- Wonderful topic not discussed enough.
- A new insight not only into Latin America but gives an alternate paradigm for viewing all “foreign” policy.

-- I think U.S. – South American relationship is a very important topic to continue learning about. Whether it is this speaker or another, I think the topic should be included in next year's itinerary.

*Negative comments:*

- More specifics would help –like the Peace Corps etc.
- Needed to be more specific.
- A little boring.
- Did not mention a single South American country.

*Unrelated comments:*

- Please no more power point lectures – boring and lazy.
- It is really cold and drafty in the church.
- Daily ticket sales should not be open early – they often take prime seats from season ticket holders who should have preference.

Dr. Nabeel Khoury

## **The Iran Deal and Its Implications**

Venice 3/11/16

"Very clear, fair, informative lecture."

"Well presented. Clear, concise, with info not commonly known."

"Please do not invite speakers whose purpose is to sell books!" (He didn't have a book.)

"The Iran agreement is too new to address whether it's effective."

"Change the topic, make it broad and keep the speaker. So much great info."

Christopher Hill

## **Facing a World of Challenges**

Sarasota 3/17/16

-- One of the best.

-- Good Speaker, are there any currently able to cover the topics?

-- Sound system improved; invite back.

-- Best speaker of the year. Disappointed in many speakers, not renewing.

-- Knowledgeable, wish he had more time to speak.

-- Timely, important and clear.

-- Best "Big Picture".

-- More questions than answers. Hopefully in next 2 years, more answers might be suggested.

-- Hill proficient in diplomatic negotiations. Should speak on that issue as well as policy influences of political forces.

-- Answers to questions too long, but raised additional topics.

-- Effective speaker, subject too broad, not deep. Want to hear about North Korea in depth or integration of Eastern Europe into EU and the political stress it causes.

Richard Boucher  
Global Middle Class Instability  
Sarasota 3/24/16

- Speaker needs to speak louder with more animation.
- Speaker drops voice at end of sentence.
- Charts need to be larger, more readable. Informative, but not on advertised topic.
- Superficial treatment of important subject, see Ken Wilbur's (sic) work.

Ambassadors Panel  
Sarasota 3/30/16

- Excellent format. Panel members and their knowledge and experiences were superb! Please repeat with greater frequency than once a year. Also please give consideration to expanding to multiple days with varying formats. Thank you for all of the work necessary to put on an event of today's scope. I personally am in awe of SILL.
- Excellent discussion! Very knowledgeable panel.!
- Longer program.
- SILL has been the highlight of our experience while living in Venice this winter. Keep up this valuable work. Thank you.
- This was the best of all the wonderful sessions this year. Only fault was insufficient time. More please.
- Good format to mix in with individual speakers. One of the few times the focus was on present/future, not just the past. "Excellent! We thoroughly enjoyed all of the lectures as well as the Ambassadors' Program today.
- Excellent format. Should be increased in next year's program.
- Time didn't allow enough depth for each speaker.
- I would have wanted to hear much more about Europe. He was the weakest speaker.
- The ambassador, who talking about Latin America was on point---good job.
- Once or twice a season is enough in addition to the other sessions.
- One panel okay for very broad topics.
- Three speakers is too much.
- Wow! Just amazing bits of information! I would hear it all over again!
- Panels need more time than single speakers!
- Great people talked to us today. Thanks! The format only works with frank, experienced and smart people. Lectures are good too.
- Panel format is great. Very interesting!
- It was too short for full discussion of three experienced ambassadors.
- Very interesting as an additional, but not as a replacement.

- Topic and questions were too broad.
- A huge topic that needs more time.
- Very enlightening and different points of view, which was good.
- Program would benefit from expanded time (say, 90 minutes)
- Try to do more panel discussions during regular SILL season.
- Big subject, too little time.
- Probably the one hour format is too short for panel presentations.
- The format needs to have a longer time.
- Moderator's last question was too negative.
- Too broad. Narrow the topic next time.
- Great!
- Excellent concept!
- Too cold in here!