

2020 Summer Fellows Testimonials



Caroline Bryant
Wake Forest University '21, Chapter President
American Enterprise Institute

I am so grateful to the Alexander Hamilton Society for providing funding for my internship at the American Enterprise Institute this summer. Working with President Robert Doar, I wrote memos on poverty and welfare policy in addition to researching, editing, and fact-checking articles over the course of the summer. I was able to broadly assist various departments in AEI as I conducted projects on immigration, climate change, and the impact of COVID-19 legislation on lower-income families. I also had the opportunity to join the Foreign and Defense Policy team in

starting a post-COVID-19 Defense Budget Simulator. This simulator will be used by the government and various private sector companies to examine spending options with a smaller budget following COVID-19.

My work at AEI was complemented by the thoughtful and rigorous virtual AHS programming. In the spring and early summer, I participated in my first AHS seminar on Henry Kissinger's masterpiece, *Diplomacy*. The seminar was a true highlight as it weaved lessons from war, politics, and leadership into an exemplary sweep of international relations and diplomacy in the 20th century. I also particularly enjoyed both book talks focused on China: Dr. Markey provided unique perspectives of the local and regional politics outside of China through his book, *China's Western Horizon*, while Dr. Kroenig warned of the dangers of the return of great power competition with Russia and China through his book, *Great Power Rivalry*. Practically, I was grateful for advice from Deloitte and Northrop Grumman executives on private-sector careers in national security.

While COVID-19 dramatically altered my summer, I was able to retain an internship and numerous educational opportunities through my generous AHS fellowship this summer. I look forward to continuing to engage in AHS virtual programming in the fall.



Will Brzezinski
Tulane University '22
U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations

This summer I interned on the majority side of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in the office of Chairman James Risch (R-ID). During the internship, I performed a wide range of tasks that varied on a day-to-day basis, the most common of which were research for staffers, preparation for hearings and business meetings, contributions to ongoing committee projects, and aiding in the logistical functioning of the Committee. One of the most interesting research projects I contributed to was a report on China's Belt and Road Initiative; here I worked to find, read, and summarize energy investments made by the Chinese Communist Party in specific European countries. Another recurring task was the formulation and organization of binders that provided background, important notes, and suggested questions for the Chairman during the Committee's hearings. The last hearing I attended was focused on the State Department budget and I had the great opportunity to sit in person and listen to the Senators and Secretary of State Pompeo discuss US foreign policy. My role as an intern has given me a thorough appreciation for how Capitol Hill functions and great insights into how American foreign policy is formed. I am now excited to return to the classroom with a significantly expanded understanding of the wider context in which the practices and mechanisms of government and foreign policy formulation take place.

This summer I not only wanted to take a deep dive into American government and foreign policy through my internship, I also wanted to leverage the many opportunities AHS offers to get a head start on a career after graduation. This summer I took full advantage of AHS's Virtual Summer Experience seminars to both expand my knowledge in my fields of study and to better understand how to approach a career in foreign policy after graduation. In my reading group on American Exceptionalism, I have been reading Samuel Huntington's *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony* and thoroughly enjoyed the class's discussion on the gap between the American political ideals and the different reality that many Americans face regarding these political ideals. Huntington's book not only triggered thought-provoking discourse but forced me to scrutinize a different dimension of the American experiment that I would not normally have addressed in my studies. I also looked to take advantage of AHS's career advancement opportunities. Early on in the summer I participated in a constructive application writing workshop that has helped me reshape my resume and cover letter. During the AHS Summer Fellows meetings, I had the opportunity to practice public speaking skills and even practice networking by getting to know the other fellowship winners. By pushing me to expand my understanding of American foreign policy and guiding me in how to prepare for a career after graduation, AHS has been key in helping me realize my goals for this summer. For that I am extremely grateful and look forward to working with the Alexander Hamilton Society more in the future.



Devin Davidson
American University '21, Chapter President
National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence

Over the course of these past 12 weeks I have had the incredible opportunity to intern with the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence, an independent Commission established by the 2019 NDAA to consider the methods and means necessary to advance the development of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and associated technologies in order to comprehensively address the national security and defense needs of the United States.

To say that this experience has been eye-opening would be an understatement. My time with NSCAI has been both intellectually stimulating and has helped me forge a future path for myself

professionally. My internship provided me with the fortunate chance to participate in engagements with former Under Secretaries of Defense, JAIC officials, current ODNI staff, and numerous industry partners. To be able to listen to the perspectives of both those who have committed and those who continue to commit themselves to public service will act as an important source of inspiration as I pursue the values and missions which I wish to commit myself to. This experience also yielded the opportunity to put on my policy hat, having been tasked with recommending how best to restructure the National Security Council in order to address challenges associated with emerging technologies and China as a competitor within this domain. Being given the space to work on a project of this magnitude was truly an unparalleled learning experience. While I was able to study historical models of organizational change and interview former NSC staffers for this project, it also provided me with a true understanding of teamwork and co-authorship. Subsequently, I gained an immense amount of respect for the work of this profession and an aptitude for the loyalty and commitment which it requires. Additionally, I was able to build out a series of vignettes highlighting specific examples of successes and failures in the adoption and scaling of AI applications across industry, the Department of Defense, and the Intelligence Community, with the possibility that these will be published in the Commission's Final Report.

While the knowledge I have gained this summer is insurmountable, the opportunity to participate directly in my field of study has been paramount. I owe a huge thank you to the Alexander Hamilton Society for providing me with the financial stability that allowed me to accept this unpaid internship. Without the support of the Alexander Hamilton Society's Summer Fellowship, my summer experience truly would not have been what it was.

In addition to enabling my professional growth and expanding my perspectives in the field of defense policy, AHS did a wonderful job supplementing this experience with both professional and educational programming of their own, even despite the transition to a virtual format. From speaker events with distinguished scholars on key challenges facing the United States, to a personal favorite of mine - book talks, I witnessed first-hand the intersection between the Alexander Hamilton Society's initiatives and the work I was involved in throughout my internship. Having been able to listen to Christian Brose discuss his book, *The Kill Chain: Defending America in the Future of High-Tech Warfare*, and ask General (Ret.) David Petraeus his thoughts on how AI will shape future combat operations, is a very testament to the work AHS does to ensure it is educating and preparing its members for the challenges facing our country and world today.

I will be forever grateful to the Alexander Hamilton Society for enabling this experience of mine. It has been an absolute privilege to take part in the 2020 Summer Fellows Cohort and I look forward to giving back to the AHS network through my involvement in American University's Chapter in the upcoming year.

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Brayden Helwig
Hillsdale College '22
Hudson Institute

Like many of my counterparts, I expected to spend this summer interning in Washington and attending in-person AHS events. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 outbreak scrambled my plans. After spending much of the spring applying for internships and fellowships, I landed a remote summer internship at the Hudson Institute, and was selected as one of this year's AHS Summer Fellows.

While at Hudson, I worked as a National Security & International Affairs Research Intern under Senior Fellow (and AHS speaker) Nadia Schadlow. Much of my research focused on the future of the U.S.-China relationship, the return of geopolitical rivalry, and the technological side of the U.S.-China competition. Working with Dr. Schadlow meant being mentored by one of our country's brightest strategic minds—a tremendous opportunity for an aspiring strategist like myself. I will continue working with Dr. Schadlow through the end of the fall semester.

Through AHS's virtual summer programming, I also attended a series of book talks, conversations, and class sessions with policy analysts, thought leaders, and current and former government officials. Taking a five-week seminar on American grand strategy, taught by Princeton's Aaron Friedberg, ended up being one of the highlights of my summer. I also enjoyed book talks with Daniel Markey, on Chinese influence in Eurasia; and with Christian Brose, on his thought-provoking book *The Kill Chain*.

As Gen. David Petraeus put it during his conversation with this year's fellows, "luck is a combination of preparation and opportunity." That combination encapsulates my experience as an AHS Summer Fellow quite nicely. On one hand, AHS's robust summer programming proved a valuable resource as I sought to understand today's complex foreign policy challenges. On the other, my internship at Hudson provided me with opportunities, from valuable professional connections to chances to research and write on pressing policy questions. Both preparation and opportunity are key to getting a career in foreign policy off the ground, and no organization brings these pillars together like AHS.

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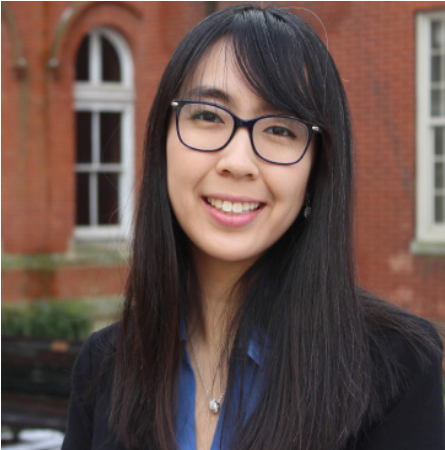


Adam Hoffman
Princeton University '21
The White House

On my first day interning at the White House, my supervisor remarked that I had entered the “history factory.” How right he was. As a speechwriting intern, I worked on the team which shapes the President’s legacy. It is the President’s hallmark speeches which will be studied for generations to understand today’s moment. In communicating with the people themselves, presidential speechwriting penetrates through bureaucratism and technocratic policy; it offers a glimpse into the reasons behind policy decisions and touches on political theory. During my internship, I was able to focus on the grand ideas that prompted the President’s success and drove Americans to vote for him. Through memos, briefs, research,

and writing, I was privileged to work with the speechwriting team to produce hundreds of pages for the President’s speeches.

The Alexander Hamilton Society played a special role in helping me realize my goals for the summer. AHS provided crucial funds for me to live in Washington DC and take part in my internship -- without AHS, I could not have participated in the internship program. Significantly, AHS also offered meaningful programming throughout the summer. The conversations that I had with AHS helped me to contextualize my work at the White House: Who has been here before me? Why am I here? What can I achieve? AHS’s programming pushed me to learn about the past and understand my potential. Even over Zoom in our unpredictable times, I am grateful to have engaged with and learned from AHS’s speakers and conversations throughout the summer. I look forward to working with AHS’s over the coming school year and beyond.



Sonya Hu
Georgetown University '22
U.S. Trade and Development Agency

Thanks to the Alexander Hamilton Society's generous financial support, I was able to complete a summer internship with the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA). I primarily focused on expanding the Agency's water, environmental technologies, and healthcare portfolios in the Indo-Pacific. USTDA had recently renewed its efforts in these three sectors, particularly healthcare, which was recently promoted to a priority sector. I conducted general market research about the three sectors on a global, regional, and national scale. I also investigated specific companies that USTDA could contract with and evaluated their viability, goals, and compatibility with U.S. interests. My time with USTDA was truly incredible, and it granted me hands-on experience with international development and trade policy. I also had the opportunity to connect with hundreds of people across the Agency and the broader federal government. USTDA heavily emphasized building community, even in a virtual setting, and organized multiple informal socials, panel discussions, and lectures.

Similarly, I had the opportunity to attend many of the Alexander Hamilton Society's incredible events this summer. I started the AHS Summer Fellowship Program with a delightful meeting with the other summer fellows. We discussed the role of individual leaders in international politics and engaged in a fruitful and interesting debate. Over the course of the summer, I also participated in a number of AHS's general programming. I had the privilege of attending Professor Kenneth Pollack's course, War and Politics. Our discussions were engaging and insightful, and truly challenged the way I thought about the intersection of armed conflict and domestic politics. AHS's many book talks and discussions, particularly the debate on China's strategy endgame, the panel discussion on lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the lecture on the crisis in Xinjiang, were truly a phenomenal way to learn more about global events and hear from a variety of perspectives. AHS also provided numerous opportunities for professional development, including a writing and editing workshop with Patricia Dorff, as well as LinkedIn and resume workshops. The fellowship ended with an insightful discussion with General David Petraeus, who offered profound comments on the American role in global politics and the lessons he learned from his career.

All in all, I cannot thank the Alexander Hamilton Society enough for the remarkable opportunities it has offered over the course of this fellowship program. Not only did it enable me to intern with the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, permitting me to explore a new realm of careers and interests, but AHS also offered innumerable chances for professional development, networking, and engagement with complex issues in U.S. foreign policy.



Kevin Petersen
Columbia University '22
Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation

It goes without saying that this summer has been an extraordinary one. Just like everybody else in the country, all of my plans were drastically changed as the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world. My initial summer internship abroad was canceled and I had to go through the re-application process once again in the hopes of securing something last minute. Serendipity, however, had a hand in things. Not only did I secure remote internships at two organizations I have long admired—the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation and PEN America—but the Alexander Hamilton Society Summer Fellowship made the summer much

more meaningful than I initially imagined.

My two part-time internships certainly kept me busy throughout the summer. As the Events and Operations Intern at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, I was involved with planning and carrying out much of the foundation's public programming along with helping with the day-to-day operations of a political advocacy program. Despite my relative inexperience in such political work, however, I was quickly integrated into the extensive workstream. It was not an atypical day where I would help run an event featuring a pre-eminent Cuba scholar, put together spreadsheets of mailing addresses to connect high school teachers with texts for teaching, and respond to inquiries about the organization all before lunch. Similarly, my work at PEN America was just as involved. As one of four interns working in the Washington D.C. Free Expression program, my fingerprints can be seen on a countless number of press releases, memos, databases, and reports dealing with all things "freedom of speech." Most excitingly, the transnational prominence of PEN America allowed me to work with an eye on both the foreign and domestic spheres of speech politics. Additionally, while PEN America doesn't deal directly with foreign policy, the opportunity to view the world through the singular focus of free expression gave me a profound understanding and appreciation for the work of non-governmental organizations in the realm of international politics.

What made this summer especially valuable, however, was the additional programming provided by the Alexander Hamilton Society. Throughout the summer I participated in career-building sessions that taught the basics of LinkedIn and cover letter writing, gained a deeper understanding of editing and writing from the CFR Editorial Director Patricia Dorff, and heard from prominent actors in foreign affairs such as Mrs. Bonnie Glick of USAID, Mr. Eliot Cohen of Johns Hopkins University, and Mr. Paul Lettow of the NSC. Most memorable for me, however, was the chance to attend a seminar with General David Petraeus. Not only has he long been an intellectual and military role model of mine, but the encouragement and advice he personally gave out to all of us in the meeting will continue to influence my thinking as I decide on the direction of my career.

Despite the rocky start, this summer proved to be one of the most enriching ones of my college years. Not only did I gain valuable office and political experience that will serve me well in the future, but the connections I made and the mentorship I received through the Alexander Hamilton Summer Fellowship will stay with me for a long time to come. As I said at the beginning of this essay, this summer has certainly been extraordinary—though in all senses of that word.

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Allison Pluemer
Wake Forest University '22
Hudson Institute

This summer was not the experience I had expected or anticipated back in early March, what with my internship becoming virtual and losing the opportunity to live and work in D.C. for the summer, but for that reason, I am all the more grateful to the Alexander Hamilton Society Fellowship. Without AHS, I would not have had the opportunity to network, make peer connections, or attend events with such prominent speakers this summer. The AHS Fellowship enhanced my summer and internship experience with the Hudson Institute professionally and academically.

During my internship at Hudson, I worked for Dr. Patrick Cronin, the Asia-Pacific Security Chair, performing research and analysis on national security issues in the Indo-Pacific region. I started my internship in January during a semester program in D.C., so fortunately I was able to shift to a virtual work environment easily because I already knew Dr. Cronin, his expectations, and the work environment at Hudson. I spent the majority of my time developing an analytical framework for assessing the actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) and Kim Jong Un's threat perceptions to support a research project addressing the North Korean nuclear challenge. With this work, I composed in-depth case studies researching and analyzing lethal provocations and the DPRK's military and asymmetric capabilities in order to better understand the areas in which the DPRK poses a severe national security threat and the ways in which the United States and its allies can counter and deter these actions and capabilities.

Due to my internship being narrowly focused, my interactions with AHS perfectly supplemented work with the Hudson Institute by providing me with opportunities for engagement with speakers of all backgrounds and events on a wide variety of subjects. I attended meetings ranging from a career lessons talk with Dr. Paul Lettow to hearing Christian Brose speak on his new book, *The Kill Chain: Defending America in the Future of High-Tech Warfare*. These diverse events allowed me to listen in on calls relevant to my internship, expand my horizons with new topics, and gain professional development insight and tips throughout the summer. Even though the events were virtual, AHS remained involvement-oriented and created an environment in which participation was highly encouraged.

In addition to my summer fellowship experience, the Alexander Hamilton Society will continue to enrich my life as a student and young professional through the new AHS chapter that I am helping found at Wake Forest University in the fall. I look forward to my continued growth as a chapter officer learning new skills, meeting professionals in the national security and international affairs career field, and further exploring the ideals of the Alexander Hamilton Society.

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Michael Sauer
University of Wisconsin '21
American Enterprise Institute

For the summer of 2020, the Alexander Hamilton Society afforded me fantastic opportunities to pursue engaging internships, cultivate professional excellence, and learn from the best foreign policy minds of the day. When the pandemic brought shock and disruption to our summer plans, AHS rose to the challenge with its innovative suite of programming to make this fellowship remarkable.

As the South Asia & International Security Intern at the American Enterprise Institute, I provided research assistance for AEI scholars Dr. Hal Brands, Sadanand Dhume, Dr. Paul Wolfowitz, and Dr.

Ivana Stradner. Every day, I received an inside glimpse on domestic and strategic issues commanding the attention of policymakers across the Indo-Pacific region by reviewing news, government reports, and scholarly analyses. I also had the opportunity to add my voice to this mix by co-authoring an article in *The Diplomat*, where I argued for the U.S. to pursue bold, innovative policies to stimulate India's economic growth and ascent as an Indo-Pacific power.

Additionally, I completed an internship with the Eisenhower School's Strategic Leadership Department at National Defense University. Here, I developed quick-resource documents for faculty to consult, cite, and apply in seminars educating America's next generation of strategic leaders. I grappled with nuanced issues involving design and military leadership, chaotic warfare, wicked problems, and Chinese military ethics.

To complement my professional experiences, AHS pioneered terrific workshops throughout the summer. I had the honor of receiving exclusive insight into constructing an effective resume, developing a strong LinkedIn presence, and writing professionally. These sessions equipped me with the practical knowledge to sharpen my candidacies in future applications, for which I am very grateful.

Last but not least, AHS brought in a wonderful slate of speakers – both practitioners and scholars – to discuss their books, ideas, and passion for national service. I learned so much from reading their works, asking questions, and thinking critically about America's place in the world. As part of this, I participated in the "American Grand Strategy" summer seminar, taught by Dr. Aaron Friedberg. Guided by his expertise and an intelligent cohort, I examined the evolution of U.S. grand strategy from its founding to the present day.

In summary, AHS made this summer richly rewarding with generous financial support, educational content, and career assistance. To everyone at the Alexander Hamilton Society – thank you for an incredible summer, but more importantly, for your untiring work to make America a beacon for the world.



Tara Shirazi
Princeton University '21
U.S. Treasury, Office of International Affairs

This summer I was an international finance intern at the Department of the Treasury's Office of International Affairs. I was specifically staffed on the Middle East and North Africa desk, with a fantastic team of economists. The office works closely with the IMF, the World Bank, and maintains close relations with Foreign and Finance Ministers across the Middle East. As such, I had the opportunity to contribute and participate in Treasury's engagements with such figures by preparing preliminary research, memoranda and briefings for our officials. One of the main focus issues this summer was the impact of COVID on the economies of the region. Energy and tourism are key industries in the Middle East, and both were battered due to the virus. In response, my team worked in collaboration with the IMF to develop financing agreements to fill in immediate gaps. It was an honor contributing to such projects and collaborating with officials in our government.

Some of the best parts of my summer were conversations I listened in on or participated in through AHS. As a rising senior in college, I particularly appreciated the career talks, which were refreshingly honest, candid and informational. Many of the speakers this summer were scholars at my workplace last summer, but I didn't get the chance to connect with them. Thus, I appreciated the opportunity to engage with them on their literature. I also appreciated connecting with like-minded students and learning about their backgrounds – particularly those who have experience or will be serving in our military. I feel empowered by the Alexander Hamilton Society's alumni network and more confident about my job search going forward. Thank you so much for a great summer!

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Benjamin Simon
Harvard University '21
American Enterprise Institute

This summer was a fulfilling one for me, thanks in no small part to the support of the Alexander Hamilton Society.

Though I wish it had been in person, my internship at American Enterprise Institute was enjoyable and productive. As an intern in the social, cultural, and constitutional studies division, I had the privilege of working closely with and learning from Dr. Yuval Levin, and various events throughout the summer afforded me the opportunity to interact with some of the other resident scholars as well. I spent the bulk of my time aiding Dr. Levin with his latest project on American political institutions. More specifically, I spearheaded the initial literature review for his research by compiling, analyzing, and sorting through the most important books and academic articles on Congress and the Presidency from the past 10 years. The task was daunting—there is a great deal of literature out there!—but it was also enlightening, even more so because I was able to review my findings with Dr. Levin to hear his thought process and to learn about his analytical framework.

The AHS fellowship activities and webinars proved to be excellent supplements to my internship at AEI. I very much enjoyed the networking sessions, even though they were remote, and even followed up with some of the other fellows separately to do one-on-one meetings. I also found the webinars interesting, timely, and quite helpful (from a professional development standpoint). My favorite of these webinars was the discussion with Dean Eliot Cohen, who spoke eloquently and inspiringly about the importance of a strong and values-driven America on the world stage.

It became apparent to me early on, and was only reinforced throughout the summer, that AHS cares deeply about its mission to cultivate the next generation of leaders—leaders who believe in our country and its founding ideals, and who will strive to ensure that both continue to flourish despite the constant threats against them. It was an honor to be a part of this fellowship, and I look forward to continuing to be a part of AHS in the future.

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Ryan Zhang
Harvard University '21
Poverty Action Lab, Massachusetts Inst. of Technology

As an AHS Summer Fellow, I interned at the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), global research center headquartered at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that works to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. In 2019, the co-founders of J-PAL received the Nobel Prize in Economics “for their experimental approach to alleviating global poverty”.

During my time at J-PAL, I studied whether public policies in India were successful in increasing economic opportunity for underprivileged communities, and I analyzed government responses to COVID-19 and considered long-term effects of the pandemic on economic growth and the informal economy. I also composed policy landscapes for the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development. Throughout all of my work, in line with AHS’ mission, I considered what role United States foreign aid could play in increasing its soft power and alleviating poverty around the world.

Over the summer, the Alexander Hamilton Society offered critical personal and professional support. The grant I received as an AHS Summer Fellow made it financially feasible for me to pursue my virtual internship, while near-weekly lectures, webinars, and workshops nurtured critical discussions and offered fresh insights. More broadly, over my past three years on Harvard’s campus, AHS has played an indispensable role in my education. Guest speakers broadened my worldview, while national security simulations honed my critical thinking, writing, and verbal communication abilities – lessons that are not always taught in conventional classroom settings. Unequivocally, AHS has reinforced my goal of pursuing a career in international relations and international development; with AHS’ strong professional network, I feel confident that after graduation, I will be able to take my first steps