

U.S. political transitions have a good degree of stability

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Thomas Shannon, U.S. Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, speaks to an audience of Tulane students Tuesday about the transitional process in government following a presidential election. (Photo by Ryan Rivet)

U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon spoke Tuesday about American foreign policy during domestic political transitions in the Freeman Auditorium on the uptown campus.

“Political transitions from a campaign to a new government are challenging under any circumstances, but the genius of our system has allowed the United States to

make most transitions peacefully,” said Shannon.

The U.S. Department of State experiences a fairly clean transition—only 440 of thousands of positions are appointed by the president’s administration, which allows for a high degree of stability and continuity within the department. Foreign policy goals do experience changes between administrations, he said, but ideas about those changes would be speculation at this point in the current transition.

In relation to the “Global Trends 2030” Shannon discussed the issues that the United States will continue to face over the next four years in the foreign policy arena. Four major drivers from that report include: the growth and empowerment of the middle class, the aging of the world’s population, increasing challenges with conflict management in developing countries with large youth populations and the transformation of political power via an increase the participation of non-traditional actors.

“We have to understand and empathize with what is happening elsewhere, and absorb that understanding as a means to challenge and transform ourselves,” said Shannon in regard to those challenges.

Following the discussion, audience members asked questions about the future of climate change policy, visa renewal and immigration concerns, U.S./Latin American bilateral relations, and the United States’ role in preventing global gender-based human rights violations.

The event was sponsored by the department of political science in the Tulane School of Liberal Arts and the Altman Program in International Studies and Business.

Hannah Dean is a senior at Tulane studying Political Science and Latin American Studies.

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