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## GREAT DECISIONS 2015

Foreign Policy Association

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Topic	Tuesdays 11:45 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.
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**Durango Public Library**  
1900 East Third Avenue  
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*Brown bag lunch*

The order of topics in the briefing book may be different from the schedule shown above.  
Please follow the schedule.

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## **Great Decisions 2015 Topics**

### **Russia and the Near Abroad** *By Oxana Shevel*

As calls for closer ties with the EU failed to be met, Ukrainians took to the streets in in November 2013. As the movement later known as the Euromaidan, or “Euro Square,” pulled western Ukraine closer to its European neighbors, another powerful force threatened to tear away the country’s eastern half: Russia. Putin’s pushback against European expansionism has the West wondering: If Putin’s Russia isn’t afraid to take an aggressive stance against Europeanization in Ukraine, what does that mean for the rest of Russia’s neighbors?

### **Privacy in the Digital Age** *By Nuala O’Connor*

The idea of “privacy” has undergone significant changes in the digital age, as has the idea of privacy “harm.” Fearful of British spying, influence and intervention, the founding fathers granted citizens significant protections in the Constitution. Now, the tables have turned: Concerns about what some see as a U.S. “dragnet” and unwarranted privacy intrusions have compelled other countries to revamp their own privacy protections. Legislation, both at home and abroad, hasn’t kept pace with technological developments, leaving some wondering if privacy as we know it is long dead.

### **Sectarianism in the Middle East** *By Lawrence G. Potter*

Many of the current conflicts in the Middle East have been attributed to sectarianism, a politicization of ethnic and religious identity. From the crisis in Iraq and Syria to the tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the struggle between Sunni and Shi’i groups for dominance is tearing apart the region and shows no signs of abating. But for all the religious discourse permeating the conflict, much of its roots are political, not religious. How does sectarianism fit into a larger narrative of the Middle East? How have governments manipulated sectarian differences? And finally, what is the U.S. doing about it?

### **India Changes Course** *By Barbara Crossette*

Fed up with corruption, dynastic policies and ineffective public services, Indian voters catapulted Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party to power in the country’s 2014 elections. For voters, Modi embodied real change and an India that wasn’t stumbling, but running, to greatness. But for the U.S., change in India brings its own set of unknowns, heralding an age ruled by a prime minister new to national office and other policymakers who have been out of the public eye for a decade. Now, the U.S. has to determine how to best secure its interests as India asserts itself on the world stage.

### **U.S. Policy Toward Africa** *By Adekeye Adebajo*

Africa is in the midst of an unprecedented transformation. The continent is home to some of the fastest growing economies in the world, and it’s become a draw for foreign investors from across the globe. After the “Obamania” of 2008 died down, though, the realization that Obama wasn’t going to overturn, or even prioritize, U.S. Africa policy kicked in. Still, the U.S. has promised to promote “strong institutions, not strong men” and to favor good governance and healthy economies over profit. How can U.S. policy live up to its promise and values while securing its interests in the region?

### **Syria's Refugee Crisis** *By Rochelle Davis*

Syrians have for a century welcomed over a million refugees from Armenia, Palestine, Iraq and other countries around the region. Now, thanks to a multiyear civil war, they are on track to become the source of the world’s largest refugee population in a matter of months. As Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and other neighbors strive to accommodate the millions of Syrians, the risk of allowing Syrians to become dependent on emergency aid and forming a “lost generation” remains. Ultimately, though, the safety of displaced Syrians rests with the whole international community.

### **Human Trafficking in the 21st Century** *By Joseph Chamie*

Human trafficking represents a multibillion in international trade per annum and continues to be one of the fastest growing criminal industries. While undeniably a global phenomenon, the U.S., as one of the world’s leading human trafficking importers, bears a special responsibility to combat this practice. The U.S. and the international community have adopted various treaties and laws to prevent trafficking, but to truly understand and combat the issue they must find the root causes enabling traffickers to exploit millions of victims.

### **Brazil's Metamorphosis** *By Juan de Onis*

Brazil — it’s the “B” in the acronym BRICS, five emerging economies once seen as soon-to-be superpowers. After economic troubles in the 1990s, Brazil has risen to new global prominence — it’s drawing in more investment, working on global issues ranging from climate change to peacekeeping, and even hosting the 2016 Olympics. But some of Brazil’s trickiest problems — deep divisions over how to tackle serious income inequality, weak civic institutions and poor regional leadership — have held it back.