

Looking Ahead  
The Cornell Roosevelt Institute  
Policy Journal



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**Meet the Center for Foreign Policy & International Affairs**

# About the Cornell Roosevelt Institute

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The Roosevelt Institute at Cornell University is a student-run policy institute that generates, advocates, and lobbies for progressive policy ideas and initiatives in local, university, state, and national government. Members write for our campus policy journals, complete advocacy and education projects in the local community, host research discussions with professors, write policy and political blogs, and organize campus political debates and policy seminars.

The Roosevelt Institute at Cornell University is divided into six policy centers:

Center for Economic Policy and Development  
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# Letter from the Director

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Dear Readers,

The Foreign Policy Center welcomed almost ten new members from a variety of academic backgrounds this semester. Their multidisciplinary perspectives were timely, as 2014 saw a proliferation of new international conflict as well as a continuation of ongoing strife. Issues such as the rise of ISIS in Iraq, the Maidan Revolution in Ukraine, and the increased emigration of children from Central America posed new challenges and changed the way we dealt with existing ones.

As lines were redrawn in the international order, lines were also blurred between foreign policy and domestic policy. You will notice that this journal includes topics not traditionally addressed under international affairs—this is a challenge to the traditional frame and scale within which we approach international and domestic conflict.

The image on the front cover spoke to me because it demonstrates the devastating consequences of international turmoil. However, it also presents us with an image of optimism and hope for the future. As you read this semester's issue, I hope that's what these proposals instill in you.

Sincerely,

Hazel Guardado

Anthropology (A&S '16)

Director, Center for Foreign Policy and International Affairs

# Yearning to Breathe Free: Ensuring Safety for Unaccompanied Minor Migrants

By Hannah Cashen, Major: Industrial and Labor Relations '16, Email: hbc33@cornell.edu

*Children crossing the border into the United States from Central America are often placed in inhumane environments before being sent back to their countries of origin.<sup>1</sup> The US should treat illegal minors with dignity and respect and ensure their safety by working with leaders from the minors' countries of origins, streamlining the status received by children upon arrival, and funding a rehabilitation of illegal drug trade in relation to US demand, gang crime, and youth involvement.*

## **History:**

Immigration from the “isthmus”- Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala- to the United States across the Texas border has increased exponentially in recent years. We are concerned primarily with the issue of unaccompanied minors. These children are pushed by gang violence and dangerous living conditions at home to cross the border. They are left stranded in the United States, often unable to contact their family members at home or those already in the US. These children are often placed in inhumane temporary holding areas before being sent back to their country of origin.<sup>2</sup> Current legislation was created before the massive recent influx of immigrants began and is insufficient for the huge numbers currently entering the country. An example is the 2008 William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act mandates that “ any department or agency of the Federal Government that has an unaccompanied alien child in custody shall transfer the custody of such child to the Secretary of Health and Human Services not later than 72 hours after determining that such child is an unaccompanied alien child.”<sup>3</sup> This has turned into a hugely partisan issue, with Republicans and Democrats at odds with each other and President Obama as thousands of children are left in flux in the meantime. President Obama’s recent speech stirred the controversy further when he evaded Congress (which he deemed ineffective) to essentially allow 5 million immigrants to avoid deportation. Although this action will have to be reinstated by the following president to retain legitimacy, its radical nature strengthens the opposition from strong conservative factions such as the Tea Party and brings President Obama’s legitimacy into question.<sup>4</sup>

## **Key Facts:**

- More than 68,000 children were found crossing the US border in the past year.
- More than ¾ of those children come from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala.
- The biggest and most recent surge of children migrants entering the US began in 2012.

## **The Policy Idea:**

The focus of the bill should be on diminishing the push factors in Central America that are sending so many children into Texas and should increase funding to these countries to combat the petty crime and gang violence that currently reigns. Secondly, the Department of Homeland Security should develop a program that would streamline and expedite children’s entry in the US to the Department of Health and Human Services. President Obama’s recent speech made bold claims about the importance of including immigrants in the American economy. President Obama did not shy away from a thorough and harsh criticism of the ineptness of Congress. In the speech, he highlighted- primarily in the first person, underscoring his individual convictions- his projected commitment to amnesty and permitting safe legal immigration by extending the temporary status of migrants. His actions have already gleaned bipartisan criticism: conservatives fear that his actions will encourage more dangerous illegal immigrants to cross the border, and liberals don’t think his maneuvers provide sufficient assistance to already underprivileged migrants. Thus although President Obama’s convincing speech is certainly a step in the right direction, it reflects all of the already existing omnipresent biases and clearly shows the party-formed glass ceiling any immigration legislation must combat.

## **Analysis:**

The US has a moral obligation to help these children; this is an unavoidable issue and one immediately relevant to the US since the unaccompanied minors are entering our own borders. The most important aspects of the bill

would be the actions of the US to diminish the prominence of drug cartels and gang violence in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. The first step would be to greatly increase the punishment for individuals found dealing and using drugs in the United States and utilize the strongest available intelligence to intercept and arrest key players in the largest drug cartels. Additionally, the creation of a mandatory federal education program for young children about the dangers of drugs to be administered the year before high school would be effective in educating children of the dangers of drugs. There would also be the creation of a fund in which states could apply to that would establish public rehabilitation centers with a strict drug rehabilitation program as an alternative to jail time for individuals who qualify in order to decrease the rate of recidivism in addicts. These steps would all help to decrease the United State's demand for drugs which would decrease the money accessible to the drug cartels, thereby diminishing their power. Lastly, the bill would provide a large amount of funding in increments over a period of 10 years to Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

### Talking Points:

- Policy makers would ensure that all children found within the US border are treated with dignity and respect and given safe living conditions.
- Consistency would be established for detainment and within the Department of Health and Services.
- Actual changes to the horrifying living conditions in Central America would be made in conjunction with collaboration with leaders in those countries.

### Next Steps:

Policy makers should move forward by first investigating the exact numbers of children who are being held in unfair detainment. Policy makers should first address helpful ways to create crime-reducing policy in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador and talk with local leaders to figure out how to best implement it. They should then establish a norm of dealing with all children who cross the border illegally so there is not confusion with parents sending children alone and expecting them to cross without any issues.

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# Educating Employers: Improving the Rights of Migrant Agricultural Workers

By Gabriella Johnston, Major: Industrial and Labor Relations '16, Email: grj28@cornell.edu & Alexander Seton, Major: Industrial and Labor Relations '16, Email: as2722@cornell.edu

*Migrant agricultural workers are particularly vulnerable to violations of their labor rights. Mandatory education programs for employers on their legal responsibilities to employees will partially shift the burden of compliance to employers and significantly improve the rights and working conditions of agricultural laborers in the Ithaca area and nationally.*

## **History:**

Migrant agricultural laborers in the United States are a distinct group of workers who suffer egregious violations of their rights and are routinely exploited. These rights are insufficiently protected by national and state legislation that is outdated and heavily biased towards agricultural employers. Additionally, the nature of the agricultural industry itself is inherently unstable due to the weather, seasonal changes, time, and the availability of a sufficient labor force. Unfortunately, this instability is reflected in the poor working conditions experienced by migrant agricultural laborers. These workers often receive low wages, work extremely long hours without any overtime pay, face harsh and sometimes dangerous working conditions, and experience temporary/irregular employment. Above all, many of these workers are unaware of the scope of their rights and when their rights are actually being violated by employers. While the United States Department of Labor requires that employers disclose to workers the terms of their working arrangement for prospective employment (wages, itemized statement of earnings, safety standards, housing (when applicable), worker compensation information etc.), language barriers and unfamiliar work-culture values often lead migrant workers to enter into working arrangements without fully understanding the extent of their implications.

When considering the predicament of migrant agricultural workers, the media and legislators focus heavily on the highly publicized workers' rights conflicts in border states such as Texas, New Mexico, and California. However, these workers represent just one group of the millions of migrant and seasonal farmworkers that serve as the backbone for the multi-billion dollar U.S. agricultural industry. In fact, there is a sizeable and largely disregarded migrant agricultural population, consisting of Asian, Caribbean, Hispanic, and African American workers, in Ithaca, New York, a region that relies heavily on the contributions that its agricultural industry makes to its local economy.

## **The Policy Idea:**

The most effective way to improve the labor rights and working conditions of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in Ithaca, New York entails the cooperation between university academics (specializing specifically in labor relations and agricultural economics) and local activist groups to educate employers about the responsibilities that they have toward their workers and the repercussions that they could face for neglecting these responsibilities. In other words, our policy proposal focuses on shifting the burden of understanding and complying with

## **Analysis:**

Currently, the trend in the field of labor relations relies heavily on the employee fully comprehending the scope of his/her rights and initiating a grievance process if and when these rights are violated. However, this can be particularly difficult for agricultural workers, the majority of whom are foreign born, due to the language barriers that they often face which precludes them from comprehending the full extent of their rights and how these rights may conflict with conditions of their working arrangements.

### **Key Facts:**

- Agricultural employees are not considered employees under the National Labor Relations Act and are therefore excluded from the protections it provides to workers. Furthermore, they are specifically excluded from the overtime pay provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act.<sup>5</sup>
- While the average number of victims referenced per labor trafficking case was 3.4 victims, cases involving labor trafficking in agriculture referenced an average of 16.9 victims per case.<sup>6</sup>
- 33 victims of labor trafficking in agriculture contacted the national human trafficking hotline directly. Of these 33 victims, 61% indicated that found the (NHTRC) through the Department of State's "Know Your Rights" pamphlet.<sup>7</sup>

Described as a “successful liberal enclave in a largely conservative region,” Ithaca is an ideal place to implement policy reform for migrant agricultural workers.<sup>1</sup> Agriculture is an integral part of Ithaca’s local economy and culture, creating a \$90 million export industry for the city. The total value of agricultural products is approximately \$4,431,000, and there are approximately 3,412

acres of agricultural lands in the area, along with 40,000 square feet of greenhouses.<sup>2</sup> It is also important to note the political affiliation of Ithaca and the various laws passed regarding agriculture. In 1999, Ithaca’s legislature implemented the Agricultural Land Preservation Program and, in 2011, the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. Additionally, Ithaca has its own Agriculture Committee comprised of local farm owners.<sup>3</sup>

Our policy proposal is innovative and realistic because it can be implemented without relying on legislative change which is often exceedingly slow, inefficient, and uncertain.

### **Talking Points:**

- High school students are graduating unprepared and uninterested in pursuing STEM fields.
- The need for STEM is growing, with women and minorities continuously underrepresented.
- Community partnerships for internships and project-based learning will engage more students, particularly underrepresented, in the field.

### **Next Steps:**

Our policy proposal relies heavily on the cooperation among Cornell University, local workers’ rights activist groups, and employers. Cornell, in conjunction with local groups such as the Cornell Farmworkers Initiative, the Cornell Organization for Labor Action (COLA), and the Tompkins’ County Workers’ Center, would conduct workshops for employers, educating them on the importance of the fair treatment of workers, the economics of agriculture, and the legal responsibilities that employers have towards their workers.

The partnership between resident labor groups, local universities, and agricultural employers can develop in other regions without the need for state-wide or national legislation. They can simply arise from a grassroots, concerted effort by any local community dedicated to making a positive change for their agricultural workers. Finally, the ultimate goal of our policy proposal is to create a program funded jointly by the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Department of Agriculture (DOA) requiring agricultural employers to take these “courses” in order to receive their registration with the DOL.

### **Endnotes:**

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# Balancing China: Increasing U.S. Military Ties with Vietnam

By Matthew McGee, Major: China and Asia-Pacific Studies '17, Email: mem366@cornell.edu

*China has recently been challenging the strategic interests of both the United States and Vietnam in the Asia-Pacific. In order to counter this, the U.S. must begin to further increase military cooperation.*

## History:

As the People's Republic of China has become more assertive in the Asia-Pacific region over the past few decades, the U.S. and Vietnam have been compelled to work together to preserve their interests in containing the growth of Chinese influence. The conflicts Vietnam is currently facing are very similar to those of the Philippines, Japan, Taiwan, and other states with which the U.S. has traditionally had closer ties. Since occupying the Spratly and Paracel Islands in 1974, there have been sporadic clashes between Vietnam and China.<sup>1</sup> Most notably, last May China deployed an oil rig to disputed waters; while it still remains fairly uncertain as to whether or not one party successfully forced the other to back down<sup>2</sup>, it is clear that the majority of Vietnamese lawmakers prefer to appease China.<sup>3</sup> However, while significant surveys of resources contained in the disputed territories have not yet occurred, it is believed that the Spratly Islands may contain up to 5.4 billion barrels of oil and 55.1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.<sup>4</sup> Over the past few years there have been a number of conferences between U.S. and Vietnamese officials<sup>5</sup>, there is still not the level of trust and cooperation shared by the U.S. and other states in the region.

## Key Facts:

- From May to July of 2014 China deployed an oil rig to waters that it claims yet are widely recognized as being part of Vietnam's sovereign waters.
- China is currently by far Vietnam's largest trading partner.
- In October the United States announced that it was easing its arms embargo on Vietnam.

## The Policy Idea:

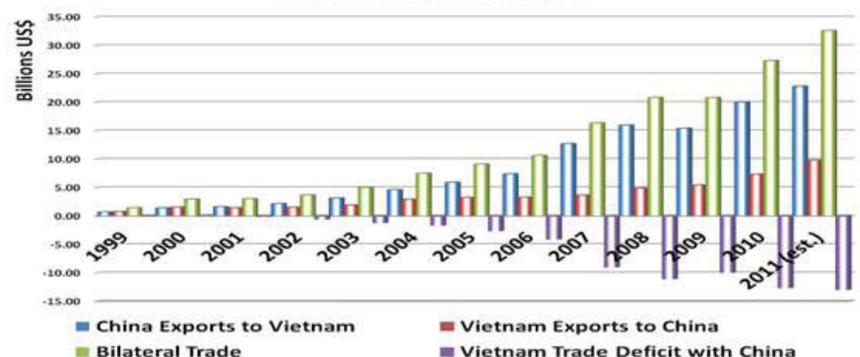
Increasing U.S.-Vietnamese military ties through joint exercises, intelligence sharing, and a further relaxation of current arms embargoes must be pursued to ensure that Vietnam is able to confidently stand up to pressure from China and protect its territorial sovereignty. Undoubtedly, this will lead to economic consequences from China, Vietnam's largest trade partner. To counter this, the U.S. must help build up Vietnam's export capabilities and increase its foreign direct investment.

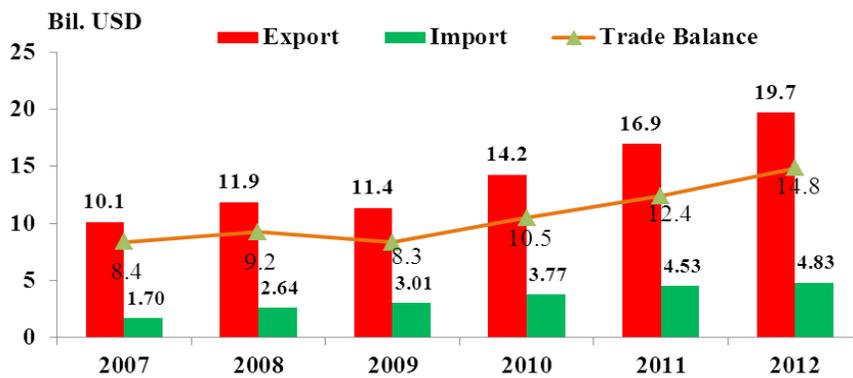
## Analysis:

While it is good that steps towards closer military integration have been taken, it is imperative that further be action be taken as soon as possible, as it will be beneficial to both the United States and Vietnam by helping to preserve mutual strategic territorial interests as well as lead to increased bilateral trade. Figures 1<sup>6</sup> and 2<sup>7</sup> demonstrate that while both China and the U.S. have increased trade with Vietnam over the past few years, China has done so at a far greater rate, and therefore has a great deal of influence over Vietnam. Now that Beijing has been able to establish a precedent of direct involvement in disputed territories through its deployment of an oil rig there for several months earlier this year, there is a high possibility that China will return to enforce its perceived sovereignty<sup>8</sup>.

Even though Vietnam will never be a military or economic power on par with China, it is still important to lift trade embargoes with Vietnam at a quicker rate than is currently happening. By furnishing the Vietnamese armed forces with modern U.S. technology and expanding intelligence sharing, the Vietnam will be able to better deter China from infringing on their territorial and mineral rights. Having this contested area controlled by a nation friendly to

**Figure 1. Vietnam - China Bilateral Trade and Trade Balance**





the U.S. in turn will allow the U.S. to maintain hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region as part of its pivot to Asia policy. Though arguments against increasing military ties primarily center on the negative economic impacts China would be able to inflict on Vietnam as punishment the recent Trans-Pacific Partnership will be able largely negate these negative sanctions. For example, Vietnam can shift exports of rice and other agricultural

goods to Australia, Europe, and the United States where there is a large demand.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, if U.S. military aid is expanded to the point where Vietnam can successfully expand mineral extraction in the contested areas, both economies would benefit from the increase sale of oil.

### Next Steps:

The United States and Vietnam must increase the number of annual summits between their respective military leaders to define future plans for trade, training, and defense. Furthermore, the possibility of an increase of the U.S. Navy's use of the strategic Cam Ranh Bay must be explored, as well as other areas for potential joint naval exercises to deter Chinese aggression in the area. However, economically speaking China is much more important to Vietnam than the United States is. For this reason, before increasing lethal military sales to Vietnam and participating in large military exercises, there must be plans in place for Vietnam to diversify its exports in the event of Chinese sanctions.

### Talking Points:

- Building off of agreements already made, it is important to strengthen Vietnam's military capabilities, particularly air and naval defense.
- Now that China has established a precedent of directly encroaching on Vietnam's territories, there is a high probability that such incursions will increase in number and intensity if they are not deterred.
- Over the past decade, U.S.-Vietnamese trade has already skyrocketed, and there would be market demand in many Western countries for Vietnamese products.

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# Addressing Concerns of Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East

By Nate Jara, Major: Government '16, Email: natejjara@gmail.com

*The United States should use economic incentives like sanction relief to compel the Islamic Republic of Iran to reduce its uranium enrichment operations.*

## **History:**

The United States' hostile relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran has prolonged since the Revolution in 1979 that ousted the American-backed Shah, and replaced him with an authoritarian theocracy led by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini. Bad blood between the two nations has been fueled by events like the Iran Air Flight 655 incident, in which a US destroyer shot down a commercial airliner over the Persian Gulf, resulting in 300 casualties. Then-President George H.W. Bush refused to apologize for the incident, and it took eight years for the United States to reluctantly pay reparations to the families of those who perished. The United States also provided aid, weapons, intelligence, and technology for producing chemical/biological weapons to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War in the mid 1980s. It is estimated that Iran suffered about 100,000 casualties from the use of chemical weapons. Iran has also had a very contentious relationship with Israel, and the inflammatory, often violent rhetoric used by many Iranian leaders calling for the destruction of Israel has drawn the ire of many policymakers in the United States, who view the preservation of the strength and security of Israel as key to maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East. The Iranian nuclear program was founded in the early 90s, and Iran continues to enrich uranium today, claiming its intentions are strictly to use it for the peaceful production of nuclear energy, which the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) asserts it has a fundamental right to do. Many policymakers in the United States, Israel, and Europe are skeptical of these claims, and suggest that Iran is abusing the nuclear energy protections of the NPT to construct a nuclear weapon. They argue that the potential of a nuclear Iran is unacceptable, and presents a fundamental threat to the welfare of the Middle East.

## **Key Facts:**

- Iran currently has the ability to construct a functional nuclear weapon in a matter of months, if it decided to do so.
- The United States would like to extend Iran's "breakout capacity" to one year.
- Negotiations between the two have failed to produce a substantive agreement, but the prospects of reaching a deal in the future are still promising.

## **The Policy Idea:**

In order to dissuade Iran from pursuing a nuclear weapon, the United States has led a coordinated economic sanctions program against the Islamic Republic, targeting key sources of revenue like oil. These sanctions have hindered, but not crippled the Iranian economy, though Iran would certainly like to see these sanctions lifted. The United States ought to use these sanctions as bargaining leverage, by offering to scale back the sanctions in exchange for a more favorable compromise on Iran's uranium enrichment program.

## **Analysis:**

Just four months ago, Iran agreed to dilute its existing stockpile of about 200kg of 20%-enriched uranium, or about enough to produce one warhead. 20%-enriched uranium can easily be used to arm a nuclear weapon, despite repeated statements from Tehran that the uranium is purely for peaceful purposes. Iran also possesses over 20,000 centrifuges necessary for the enrichment process, which the United States would like to drop to 2,000.<sup>1</sup>

There is certainly room for compromise here. Iran wants relief from the harsh sanctions punishing the Iranian economy, while the United States would like to see further diluted uranium, reduced numbers of centrifuges, and the expansion of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regulations, which is currently limited to the nuclear sites Iran allows it to inspect. Sanctions relief is a powerful bargaining chip that the United States is not fully utilizing, and offering to reduce or even lift the sanctions (depending on the extent to which Iran is willing to meet American demands) could fundamentally change the future of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

The political landscape of Iran under President Hassan Rouhani has shifted significantly by becoming increasingly moderate, and Iran has been more compliant with IAEA inspections and regulations under Rouhani than under any administration in recent memory. Now is as good of a time as any for President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry to push hard for a more comprehensive nuclear deal that could ease tensions and break new ground for two bitter foes.

### Talking Points:

- Sanctions relief is a top priority for the Iranian leadership.<sup>3</sup>
- Offering economic incentives to Iran for dismantling its nuclear program is most plausible way of reaching an agreement.
- A successful compromise could fundamentally change the future of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.
- Limiting nuclear proliferation in the Middle East is key to preserving what little stability remains in an already unstable region.

### Next Steps:

The most recent talks in late November failed to reach a deal, but extended the self-imposed deadline to find a middle ground to July 2015.<sup>2</sup> Negotiations are expected to resume in December, leaving ample time for the two nations to find an agreement that eases tensions.

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# Books Over Bombs: Targeting Women in the Fight Against Extremism

By Svati Pazhyanur, Major: Policy Analysis and Management '16, Email: sp836@cornell.edu

*In order to promote virtues such as history, cognitive development and educational equality, policymakers should strive to revitalize the presence of cursive handwriting in American schools.*

## **History:**

As the threats of ISIS and global extremism continue to plague the Middle East and rest of the world, the focus on “solutions” has largely revolved around militaristic interventions. Air strikes, ground forces and logistic coordination with factionalized moderate groups dominate the discussions about fighting battles and winning wars. These extremists use arms to fight their battles in the short term, but, to hold ground in the long run, they also combat Western education and women’s empowerment.<sup>1</sup> They know that illiteracy and oppression of women create the petri dish in which extremism can flourish.

Crimes against prominent women, including the Islamic State’s kidnapping, torturing and public execution of Samira Salih al-Nuaimi, a brave Iraqi woman and human rights lawyer in Mosul, demonstrate ISIS’ fear of empowered women overthrowing their efforts.<sup>2</sup>

ISIS’ crimes against women include forcing Yazidi

women into sexual slavery, rapes as weapons of war, and prohibiting women’s education in areas it controls.<sup>3</sup>

While there are numerous organizations fighting against these acts, such as Owfi (Organization for Women’s Freedom in Iraq), Madre (an international women’s human rights organization) and IHAO (Iraq Health Aid Organization); funding and exposure remain obstacles to reaching women across Iraq and Syria.<sup>4, 5, 6</sup>

The three million Syrian refugees mostly in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon — especially girls — can get schooling. Right now, many are getting none, and Syria had the worst reversal in educational attainment in recent history, with enrollment rates for Syrian children in Lebanon at less than half the level of those in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>7</sup>

## **The Policy Idea:**

The US should allocate money to women’s empowerment organizations, such as Owfi, Madre and IHAO to fund shelter, medical care, humanitarian aid, literacy, vocational and business training. By targeting the most vulnerable and displaced people in the conflict, this would also access a unique opportunity to mobilize resistance and long-term conflict prevention.

## **Analysis:**

The United States’ airstrikes have slowed the advance of the Islamic State and averted a genocide against the Yazidi population in Iraq, but it’s very difficult to win a war from the air.<sup>7</sup> That’s why the Taliban still thrives in Afghanistan after 13 years of American air attacks. By vastly over-relying on the military toolbox and under-employing the education toolbox, the women’s empowerment toolbox, and the communications toolbox, any chances of winning an ideological war are slim.

The United States military campaign against the Islamic State, which is also known as ISIS and ISIL, will cost at least \$2.4 billion a year and up to \$6.8 billion, depending on the intensity of air strikes that continue.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, Obama seems to have dropped his 2008 campaign promise to establish a \$2 billion global fund for education.

The United States gives the Global Partnership for Education, a major multilateral effort that the UN has partnered with, about \$40 million annually-less in a year than what is spent weekly in Syria and Iraq.<sup>9</sup>

Education and humanitarian aid are not a panacea. Still, the historical record of the last half-century is that education tends to nurture a more cosmopolitan middle class and gives people a stake in the system. In Hong Kong today, it is evident that educated youth are demanding democracy, but peacefully. Targeting girls’ education is especially effective, partly because educated women have markedly fewer children. The result is lower birthrates and less of a youth bulge in the population, which highly correlates to civil conflict.<sup>10</sup>

### **Key Facts:**

- Four years into the Syrian crisis, over half a million Syrian refugee children are out of school – and the numbers are rising.
- One in five displaced Iraqi children is in formal education- an enrollment rate below that of sub-Saharan Africa.
- Education and income are the two most significant determinants of radicalism. Increasing years of formal education is highly correlated with decreased radicalism, lower birth rates and increased economic opportunity.<sup>11</sup>

## Next Steps:

Beyond judicious airstrikes in the short term, the United States must prioritize women's protection, aid and empowerment in its policy combating extremism. This should be done primarily by increasing its contributions to UNICEF, which in turn partners with local and international organizations to provide shelter, protection and education to women in Iraq and Syria. The UN has increased its public-private partnerships with organizations including Madre, Owfi and IAHO to tie its funds with actors on the ground- increasing its funding will in turn increase its ability to partner with and support these organizations. In particular, a starting point should be to ensure that Syrian refugees and displaced Iraqi women are provided basic literacy and vocational training.

## Talking Points:

- Without addressing the humanitarian crisis and root causes of extremism, military strategies against ISIS are unlikely to have lasting impacts on violence.
- Investing in women's education is a highly cost effective and long-term solution to poverty, high birth rates and radicalism.
- The cost of maintaining high-intensity airstrikes against ISIS is unsustainable, while investments in education provide higher returns on investment in human capital.

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# Let the Working Parents Work: Reforming Unequal Childcare Aid in America

By Jennifer Kim, Major: Government & Statistics '17, Email: jennik.133@gmail.com

*As soaring child care costs prevent working families from providing sufficient care for their children, federal policies for child care assistance must reform to better benefit their target recipients: low-income families.*

## **History:**

Childcare has rapidly grown as a major concern for families with working parents for two reasons: the increase of women in the workforce and the skyrocketing costs of childcare. While in the 1960s, less than 30% of women with children under the age of 5 held any form of employment, today, the majority of mothers are employed.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, however, the annual cost of childcare for one child under the age of five at a childcare center has rapidly risen to an all-time high at around \$170 a week, or approximately \$9,000 a year.<sup>2</sup> This presents an urgent, unsolvable dilemma for many families: leaving one parent at home is unfeasible for families needing the income, but paying for childcare is likewise unfeasible.

The difficulties of finding affordable childcare not only increase unemployment but also perpetuate poverty, as the constant struggle to find feasible arrangements limit the time parents can devote to work, training, and education. While federal aid is meant to prevent these issues, existing aid is either shockingly insufficient or biased towards higher-income families. The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is estimated to cover only one out of every six to eight children eligible for the benefits.<sup>3</sup> The single largest income support program for low-income families with children is the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which allows parents to report up to \$3,250 of childcare expenses per child, for a maximum of \$5,372 for two children and \$6,044 for three or more qualifying children. Parents can then receive a tax credit of 20-35% of this amount depending on their adjusted gross income. However, as opposed to its stated intentions, it actually disproportionately favors higher-income families, with many low-income families unable to benefit or obtain the maximum benefits.<sup>4</sup>

## **Key Facts:**

- The annual cost of child care for an infant at a child care center is higher than the cost of tuition at an average four-year public institution in most states.
- 22 States had waiting lists for receiving child care assistance in 2011.
- Low-income families spent on average 49.5% of income on child care in 2016.
- 3 out of 4 Americans support policies that would increase both the quality and affordability of childcare.

## **The Policy Idea:**

Although the ideal move to aid families with childcare would be to simply increase funding, simply pouring money into inefficient policies would both harm the US economy and prove ineffective in actually aiding the target recipients. Instead, the government should seek to first improve their current policies—specifically the EITC. In reforming the EITC, it should focus on one major issue: making it fully refundable.

## **Analysis:**

Not only does the EITC currently hold the greatest impact on childcare for low-income families, but also as a form of determining of tax liability instead of pure welfare, it presents a lesser chance of increasing dependency on federal grants. Thus, it is the best policy to invest in. The largest concern of the EITC is that it has been proven to favor higher-income families as opposed to those who actually need the aid the most, its target recipients. On paper, the EITC appears to be catered towards low-income families: the credit system is inversely proportional, with higher credit rates going to families with lower income. However, because the EITC is mostly non-refundable, only families who owe federal income taxes can benefit. Because many low-income families owe little or no federal income taxes, they often fail to qualify for the maximum benefit.<sup>5</sup> In 2013, it was estimated that the largest average benefits among families claiming the EITC went to those with incomes between \$100,000 and \$200,000. As well, families in the highest income quantile received the greatest share of the benefits.<sup>4</sup> By making the EITC refundable, it can aid its actual targeted recipients, and concerns of fraud are unsound considering research has proven a person has no more incentive to fraudulently claim a refundable tax credit than a nonrefundable credit.

## Next Steps:

In order to move forward, further investigation by the federal government will be necessary to re-evaluate the actual expenses of child care accumulated by working families, particularly low-income families. Using this more up-to-date information, federal legislators should then draft and propose a new bill that will revise the EITC to 1) become fully refundable and 2) raise the ceiling for the maximum level of eligible expenses to the 75% percentile of eligible families and the maximum level of eligible credits to 50%.

## Talking Points:

- Many low-income families are hindered by their inability to find affordable childcare in their search for and continued employment efforts.
- Current federal legislation is not only vastly insufficient in aiding all eligible families with childcare expenses, but it also favors higher-income families.
- Reforming the EITC to become fully refundable would shift the base of its recipients from higher-income to low-income families, its intended beneficiaries.
- Improved childcare assistance policies are supported by the majority of Americans and are vital for keeping many parents able to continue working.

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# Stronger Together: The Case for a Supranational Central American Union

By Blake Michael, Major: Government '17, Email: bam272@cornell.edu

*The Central American Integration System, signed on 13 December 1991, should be strengthened in order to combat the collective problems- drug violence, poverty, and structural underdevelopment- of member countries.*

## **History:**

The Central American Integration System includes the seven nations which comprise Central America and the Dominican Republic, and is comprised of over forty specialized entities. However, it is paralyzed from offering meaningful steps toward integration due to its perception as being inept and toothless.<sup>1</sup>

The system includes the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) to which one member, Costa Rica, refuses to send delegates because of perceived worthlessness.<sup>2</sup> Four member nations- Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala- allow

free movement of their citizens vis-à-vis the Central America-4 (CA-4) Border Control Agreement<sup>3</sup>, signed in June of 2006.<sup>4</sup> The piecemeal nature of the organization and its institutions prevents the system from achieving maximum results, demonstrating a clear need for further economic integration.

The need for a unified approach toward shared challenges has become clearer in the last few decades, as Central American nations moved from the civil wars of the late 20th century to the drug violence of the early 21st.<sup>5</sup> The regional violence has become a problem which is, particularly when combined with economic and social issues, simply too massive for any one state to solve on its own. Violence has led to a migrant crisis, peaking in the summer of 2014, as children and other endangered parts of the population attempted to flee.<sup>6</sup> As the region descends into chaos stemming from collective action problems, collective solutions become all the more vital.

## **The Policy Idea:**

This economic integration may be focused on several key components: the addition of all member states into the CA-4 Agreement and the PARLACLEN, the introduction of a common currency and subsequent consolidation of national debt, the bestowing of the requisite powers for the regulation of a shared currency to the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), and the expansion of the powers of the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC) to include economic regulation of the transnational agricultural sector.

## **Analysis:**

Central America (including the Dominican Republic) has a population of 54.275 million people and a GDP of \$423.233 billion, with a collective governmental debt of \$192.79 billion.. When taken as a whole, five out of the eight nations hold a lower debt-to-GDP ratio (purchasing power parity) than they do individually.<sup>7</sup> Based upon European economic reflexes during the adoption of the Euro, the shared currency implemented within the system can expect to hold more value than any individual currency currently used by members, with the exception of the US Dollar used by Panama.

The necessary mechanisms by which this policy may be implemented have already been formed and accepted by the majority of the pertinent states, making the entire process much easier than parallel historical developments. By relinquishing political powers required for the successful management of policies surrounding a common currency, the CAIS may avoid many of the problems facing the Eurozone.

Agriculture has been playing increasingly important role of agriculture in the regional economy, with the percentage of the agricultural sector's share in the national GDP increasing in five out of eight of the member nations between 2011 and 2012. Cooperation on agricultural policy in member nations is the responsibility of the

### **Key Facts:**

- Collectively, the member nations form a supranational union with a population larger than Spain's and a GDP higher than Sweden's.<sup>9</sup>
- From the start, the Euro held more value than the currencies of any of the nations which adopted it.<sup>10</sup>
- The Euro is volatile not because of economic policy but because of the lack of a supranational political system in which it can be successfully managed.<sup>11</sup>

Agricultural Council of Central America (CAC), which brings together the agricultural ministers of the respective states to discuss shared challenges.<sup>8</sup>

### **Next Steps:**

The CAIS must enlarge the CA-4 treaty to include all member nations in order to allow for the free movement of all members of the union. Furthermore, Costa Rica must join the PARLACEN in order to give legitimacy to the legislative body as a governing entity within the union. These institutions must then give the authority to the

CABIS to both issue a single currency and purchase the national debts of each member nation in order to bind the region together economically. The CAC must be given the authority to implement policy which will allow the agricultural sectors of the member economies to increase regional competitiveness in foreign markets while neutralizing internal disputes.

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### **Talking Points:**

- The nations of Central America and the Dominican Republic share a system by which meaningful economic and political integration may be accomplished but have yet to realize its full potential.
- The lessons of the Eurozone for the region suggest that a shared currency may be very successful, but only if the states are willing to offer the political tools required to share adjustment costs.
- By forming a supranational union, the nations of Central America and the Dominican Republic can face shared challenges without relying on international aid.

# Stop the Terror: Rethinking Extraordinary Rendition

By Yu Chen Xue, Major: Government '17, Email: yx68@cornell.edu

*The United States should end or substantially alter its practice of extraordinary rendition to ensure greater adherence to international law.*

## **History:**

The United States has long maintained that it does not condone or participate in the practice of torture.<sup>1</sup> However, through the practice of extraordinary rendition, whereby the government can essentially abduct individuals suspected of terrorist involvement and transfer them for interrogation to third-party nations where torture is a norm of interrogation, it has essentially outsourced torture.<sup>2</sup> These countries include Poland, Romania, Afghanistan, Syria, Jordan, Morocco, Egypt and Uzbekistan, some of which have been roundly condemned by the international community and the United States itself for practicing psychological and physical torture.<sup>3</sup> In the aftermath of 9/11, President Bush signed a classified order that gave the CIA carte blanche for extraordinary rendition.<sup>4</sup> While President Obama has closed black sites and publicly condemned torture, he has continued this practice.<sup>5</sup>

### **Key Facts:**

- Egypt interrogated “60 or 70” detainees between 9/11 and May 2005.<sup>12</sup>
- 136 prisoners subjected to “detention and extraordinary rendition” since 9/11.<sup>13</sup>
- 54 governments hosted CIA “black sites” and/or participated in American extraordinary rendition.<sup>14</sup>

The international community has strongly condemned the United States’ practice of extraordinary rendition. Other Western nations who employ the practice have far greater oversight over the process and more stringent criterion for nations to which individuals are transferred. There is overwhelming evidence that, for the United States, the process is mired in coercion, ineptitude, and inefficiency, and that the means of obtaining information in this process are conducive only to eliciting confessions, with little regard for truth or accuracy.<sup>6</sup> The American public has also registered its disapproval of the practice; a survey in 2006 showed that 57% of Americans opposed extraordinary rendition, and this percentage has only increased in the interim.<sup>7</sup>

## **The Policy Idea:**

The United States government must either end or dramatically overhaul its practice of extraordinary rendition. If the former, individuals can be interrogated on American soil in accordance to domestic and international law. If the latter, the government must create and follow a more stringent set of guidelines for the process that adheres to the Convention on Torture. It must also be more selective about the third-party nations to which it sends these individuals, or ensure that individuals will not be subject to torture or other inhumane treatment.

## **Analysis:**

Individuals like Khaled al Masri, Osama Nasr, Maher Arar, and Mamdouh Habib demonstrate how the fallibility and lack of accountability of extraordinary rendition result in the detainment and interrogation of innocents.<sup>8</sup> The lack of oversight or need for a warrant gives agencies extraordinary power and discretion. That these men were transferred without being charged and tortured, even though they have since been proved innocent, shows the ineptitude of extraordinary rendition in identifying, removing, and interrogating security threats.

The use of torture in many of the third-party nations also damages America’s international reputation. Diplomatic assurances from third-party nations that prisoners will not be tortured are informal, perfunctory - “a farce.”<sup>9</sup> This practice has prompted international disapproval and accusations of American hypocrisy. This perceived violation of international norms has also weakened America’s in pushing for international action on human rights vis-à-vis countries like China and Russia.

The information gained is also unreliable. Numerous studies have questioned the veracity of confessions secured through torture.<sup>10</sup> Because American officials cannot monitor or participate in the interrogation process, there is no assurance of the accuracy of the information.<sup>11</sup> If extraordinary rendition is about information, then

its benefits have not been realized, and would regardless be outweighed by the rise of anti-American sentiment and damage to America's reputation as a defender of human rights.

### **Next Steps:**

The United States should end or substantially alter its practice of extraordinary rendition. If the Obama administration wishes to honor its pledge to end the use of torture, then there is no substantive reason to transfer individuals to third-party nations that practice "enhanced interrogation". If the practice of extraordinary rendition must continue, the president should create an oversight committee to monitor extraordinary rendition and ensure that individuals are being treated in accordance to the Convention on Torture and international law. Furthermore, "diplomatic assurances" can no longer suffice. Formal agreements must be secured and means for ensuring they are followed implemented, or individuals should be transferred only to nations where such practices are not condoned. The creation of a committee or court through which individuals might bring their complains or demands for compensation would also improve transparency and accountability.

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### **Talking Points:**

- Extraordinary rendition damages legitimacy of American cause and leads to anti-American sentiment abroad.
- Government claims extraordinary rendition does not violate Convention on Torture, but has transferred individuals for interrogation to Egypt, which it condemned as "a practitioner of official, state-sponsored torture."<sup>15</sup>
- Information procured through extraordinary rendition is often unreliable.
- United States must follow international law and norms when detaining and questioning.

# Advancing Health in New York State: Providing Undocumented Immigrants with Access to Health Coverage

By Christopher Hanna, Major: Development Sociology '18, Email: cjh327@cornell.edu

*Many of New York State's undocumented immigrants lack access to comprehensive health insurance and care, imperiling the financial viability of the health system. The State should absorb vulnerable populations — including the undocumented community — into the health system by independently developing a universally accessible insurance product.*

## **History:**

It was estimated that in 2010, 3.2% of the New York State population was undocumented or lacking legal residential status in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Undocumented immigrants in New York State are eligible for only three state health programs, given that they meet

the program-specific criteria: Child Health Plus, Medicaid for Pregnant Women, and Medicaid for the treatment of an Emergency Medical Condition.<sup>2</sup> In order to provide minimal care to vulnerable populations, the federal government has established Migrant Health Centers and Federally Qualified Health Centers, which are blind to the immigration status of patients. Further, the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act allows for the subsidization of undocumented persons' emergency room procedures through Medicaid. However, undocumented immigrants are ineligible for federal programs that cover non-emergency care; thus, they cannot enroll in non-emergency Medicaid or participate in the Affordable Care Act's subsidized state health exchanges, which explicitly exclude even financially sound undocumented immigrants.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the undocumented population is able to utilize subsidized emergency care and has limited access to taxpayer-funded health programs and centers, but cannot purchase insurance and access comprehensive preventative care. Evidence shows that access to comprehensive health care and use of preventative services greatly improve one's long-term health outcomes, thus minimizing health care costs.<sup>5</sup> Because the undocumented population is largely barred from participating in the insurance market and depends on costly, subsidized emergency care, care for undocumented immigrants accounts for a whopping \$10.7 billion in taxpayer-funded health spending annually.<sup>6</sup>

## **Key Facts:**

- 600,000: The number of undocumented persons in New York State.<sup>1</sup>
- 59%: The percentage of undocumented persons that are uninsured, compared to 14% of U.S. citizens.<sup>10</sup>

## **The Policy Idea:**

In order to provide health insurance for undocumented immigrants who are barred from participating in the ACA Exchange or otherwise lack access to the insurance market, New York State should independently establish a non-federal insurance program that is accessible to undocumented persons. This would be accomplished by allowing employers, as well as individuals, to purchase Family Health Plus and Child Health Plus insurance. Employers would be required to cover FHS and CHS plans for all employees, regardless of immigration status, with subsidies provided for the coverage of low-income employees. Further, individuals would be able to buy insurance at subsidized premium rates tied to one's ability to pay. Premiums would be subsidized for individuals up to 600 percent of the poverty level. This expansion of health coverage access would be explicitly and fully blind to immigration status.

## **Analysis:**

Providing undocumented persons with access to the health insurance market would streamline undocumented access to care, boost utilization of preventative care, and provide public cost savings.<sup>7</sup> The comprehensive health benefits currently offered by FHS — including dental and prescription drug coverage — would be extended to undocumented persons, thus decreasing their reliance on costly emergency care. 1,519,000 adults, including thousands of undocumented persons, will become newly eligible for health coverage.<sup>8</sup> This plan involves the charging of premiums, which differentiates it from unpopular means-tested programs. Undocumented persons will likely welcome this feature as reducing the stigma surrounding their utilization of public programs.<sup>9</sup> This policy expands health access within the state's existing health infrastructure, and thus requires no fundamental reorganization of the existing system. Assuming no federal contribution, the total cost of this policy five

years after its implementation would be \$4.8 billion.<sup>10</sup> This investment will enable undocumented persons to have full health insurance and access compensated, preventative care, thus yielding savings for the state, taxpayer, and health sector.

### **Talking Points:**

- The Obama administration's health reforms have failed to expand health insurance access to the undocumented community.
- Restrictions on undocumented access to health insurance are inefficient and costly for society.
- New York State has the ability to independently absorb its undocumented population into the insurance system by pursuing reforms that universalize access to health insurance in the state.

### **Next Steps:**

The state legislature or the governor should establish a task force consisting of health experts to address the undocumented population's current status in the state health system. The experts should be tasked with the duty of evaluating the proposed policy and other proposed policy solutions. Additionally, a public hearing on the issue of the undocumented population's access to health coverage and care should be convened. Together, these actions should push the issue under consideration to "agenda status" for New York State's policymaking community. The state government's prioritization of expanding health coverage to undocumented persons will ideally lead to substantive legislative action.

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# A New Approach to Population Control in India

By Frances Yang, Major: Sociology '17, Email: fvy2@cornell.edu

*India's efforts to curtail population growth have come under scrutiny for their ineffectiveness and violations of basic human and reproductive rights. A new policy, implemented with the help of international NGOs, will focus on educating and engaging the public to empower citizens to make voluntary and informed decisions regarding their health and wellbeing while controlling population growth.*

## History:

India's family planning program was first introduced in 1952 as a means of placing voluntary controls on overpopulation, but these initiatives have become coercive in nature since their inception. In 1975, India underwent a state of emergency that mandated mass sterilizations of over 8 million young men, 700 of whom died as a result to inadequate medical treatment and police brutality. After international outcry emerged in the name of human and civil rights, India has since returned to a more voluntary system in 2002 to "provide need-based, demand-driven high quality, integrated reproductive and child health care."<sup>1</sup> However, the lines between coercion and voluntary participation begin to blur when dealing with a vulnerable population. Today, population control methods have centered on permanent female sterilizations and sometimes even forced abortions.<sup>2</sup> These methods disproportionately target impoverished and illiterate young women living in urban slums who may not necessarily have the power to do understand the risks associated with the procedure.<sup>3</sup>

India's population control efforts have generated worldwide attention after news broke in early November 2014 that over a dozen women had died after undergoing sterilization procedures in a government sterilization "camp." There have been also been a number of allegations about toxic antibiotics and malpractice and about doctors trying to reach government-set sterilization quotas.<sup>4</sup> Proponents of the current system of sterilization argue that the family planning program has been successful—with the replacement rate decreasing from 5.7 to 2.7<sup>5</sup> in the over the course of forty years.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, opponents assert that the program unfairly coerces a vulnerable population into sterilization and actually poses a danger to the citizens the policy aims to help.

## The Policy Idea:

A policy implementing a family planning program that focuses on educating the public instead of mass sterilization will be more effective in promoting sustainable population growth while respecting the human and civil liberties of all parties involved. Through interventions at both the state and local level, combining elements of public education, male engagement, and encouraging later and farther spaced births will create a healthy way of promoting social good.

## Analysis:

Current policies around India's family planning program have strayed far from legislative intentions—these policies remain coercive in nature given the circumstance of those the program serves. Maintaining these programs as they are now will lead to continued coercion of impoverished and illiterate women. To the women who are offered payments amounting to a month of family income, agreeing to a sterilization procedure is more a means to survival rather than a voluntary choice.<sup>7</sup> This desperate decision is also too often a misinformed one, as these women largely uneducated and illiterate; they proceed with surgeries without understanding the full extent of the risks involved. Current practices highlight the unjust targeting of a vulnerable population and perpetuate social inequality.

A policy focusing on public education will tackle issues within India's family planning program, and has the potential to be more effective in reducing population growth rates more so than present approaches. Evidence

## Key Facts:

- Over 5000 permanent female sterilization surgeries are conducted each year, many of which were done against health regulations under coercive circumstances.<sup>13</sup>
- An estimated 40% of women in India undergo permanent sterilization, in comparison to the 10% of men who undergo permanent sterilization.
- Encouraging women to have children later in longer intervals will lower population growth by 52 million by 2050, relative to an approach on mass sterilization.

demonstrates that literacy is an independent determinant of contraceptive use between couples;<sup>8</sup> illiterate couples consistently have the highest rates of permanent female sterilization. Gender norms similarly contribute to the many misconceptions about sexual health leading mass female sterilization. Interventions should also encourage women to have children later in their lives in longer intervals—projections by Matthew et al. calculate that if these interventions are implemented, that the population in year 2050 will be additionally reduced by 52 million.<sup>9</sup>

### **Talking Points:**

- India's current approach to family planning mainly involves female sterilizations that pose a concern to human and reproductive rights.
- Educating and engaging both men and women in India will help to develop public understanding and curtail population growth in a safe manner. An approach that targets the root of the problem rather than policing reproductive rights will be more effective.
- Later births with longer in-between intervals have shown to lower the birth rate more effectively than sterilization.

### **Next Steps:**

While many international NGOs have turned their attention to other countries who are farther behind in the developing process,<sup>10</sup> their presence in India is still necessary to promote a sustainable and long-lasting solution to control population growth that also preserves the dignity of India's citizens. A shift in interest and attention is absolutely necessary. Intervention by humanitarian and health organizations have historically had considerable influence over policy in India, and this influence should help to promote a new family planning program framed around engaging men in the program and helping to educate and develop the socio-economic status of the entire public.

The proposed policy will target public awareness and misconceptions about family planning, advocating for elevating and education women's statuses without infringing on the reproductive rights. Working side-by-side with Indian health officials and integrating a presence with both state and local government will be crucial in effectively disseminating information. Additionally, engaging men through interventions that inform against cultural stigmas surrounding contraceptives and vasectomies is absolutely essential.<sup>11</sup> The World Health Organization in 2007 found that these cultural interventions to engage men have been effective in curtailing the growth rate.<sup>12</sup>

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# Forging a New Legal Framework to Deter and Intervene Against Acts of Terror

By Morgan Greene, Major: Government & Near Eastern Studies '16, Email: mhg84@cornell.edu

*A clear outline of internationally approved law must be established to allow for justifiable prevention and intervention against terrorist threats.*

## **History:**

The Geneva Conventions establish useful standards for the treatment of civilians and soldiers during times of war. With changing international dilemmas – most notably the rise of terrorist organizations across the globe- a need for a new Geneva Convention, to define acts of terror, has arisen. Terrorism is often defined as “criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of person or particular persons for political purposes...” Over the past few decades there have been more than 14 multilateral and regional treaties established to create law through which to prosecute terrorism. These include provisions against bombings, financing, and nuclear terrorism. Despite attempts to define and address terrorist concerns, international policy still falls short.

Useful and definitive law against terrorism remains elusive. This is largely due to a host of Arab countries arguing, “terrorism must be defined by the intention of the act and not exclusively by the consequences or victims, so that attacks in defense of ‘national liberation’ movements and ‘self determination’ might not be defined as terrorism.” This lack of international agreement presents clear issues for U.S. and other countries that seek to intervene against terrorist threats. The lack of clear law to combat terrorist regimes is present in the U.S.’s shaky legal claim for intervention against the Islamic State in Syria. To intervene, the U.S. legally needs approval from the UN Security Council, Syria’s consent, justifiable claims of self-defense or collective self-defense. There is room in the international legal framework for another exception–intervention on the biases of combating an international terrorist threat– yet this legislation does not yet exist.

## **The Policy Idea:**

The United States should call a fifth Geneva Convention to establish an internationally agreed upon clear definition of terrorism. With this definition a legal framework could be established to allow for prevention and intervention against terrorist organizations. An international prosecution process would be established which would try terrorists as neither criminals nor soldiers. Beyond creating a legal basis for action, the terrorism convention would establish key international norms to deter future terrorist activity.

## **Analysis:**

Although some argue that terrorism can be addressed through the reinterpretation of existing international law, for an issue tense with core social and political beliefs, clear text must be established. There are many areas of law and policy in which states have the right and the reason to write their own unique law. In this sphere strong norms and taboos, as have been established with nuclear weapons, only come with international consensus.

Beyond clearly definitive language, it is necessary to create a structure for prosecuting terrorists in a moral way and that deters future activity. A key hurdle in trying terrorists currently is that they are not soldiers, criminals, or civilians – they are all three. Soldiers may be “detained without being charged or tried until the end of the war” while criminals are “endowed with the rights and privileges accorded to citizens of democratic societies who have been accused but not yet convicted of having committed a crime.” Neither of these arrangements is operative for terrorists. Terrorists often do not care for their own well being, thus the deterrent effects of criminal law are not useful. Detaining terrorists like soldiers is also ineffective as they are not agents of a state. Thus an international court system must be established to hold terrorist groups, not just individuals responsible. The deterrent capacity lies within the whole group – not individuals that are willing to die for the cause.

## **Key Facts:**

- 70% of U.S. population believes international terrorism is a critical threat to the United States.<sup>6</sup>
- 73% of the U.S. population said the “UN Security Council should have the right to authorize the use of military force... to stop a country from supporting terrorist groups.”<sup>7</sup>
- 90% of the U.S. population said they favored “working through the UN to strengthen international laws against terrorism and to make sure UN members cooperate in enforcing them.”<sup>8</sup>

### Next Steps:

The first step for improving the structure for international terrorism law is to call a Geneva Convention. At said convention a legal definition would be established, a framework for the prosecution of and intervention against terrorist groups would be laid out. Presently undefined terrorist crimes such as mass casualties and suicide terrorism should be factored in to the newly established configuration.

### Talking Points:

- Lack of clear internationally agreed upon definitions and laws regarding terrorism undermine ability to take action against threats
- Need for an international meeting in the form of a Geneva Convention to redefine rules of war in the modern context
- A framework for trying terrorists must be established as they are neither soldiers nor criminals

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# Establishing a Peaceful Middle East Through the Kurds

By Marc Getzoff, Major: Industrial and Labor Relations '16, Email: mdg255@cornell.edu

*The Kurdish people in Iraq and Syria have long suffered from oppression, violence, and discrimination. In order to help the Kurdish people establish a reliable ally and to effectively combat ISIS, the U.S should recognize the nation of Kurdistan and work to provide military aid as well as help in establishing a moderate and stable government.*

## **History:**

The Kurds have been a determined yet silenced group in their quest for autonomy.<sup>1</sup> Numbering over 30 million,<sup>2</sup> they primarily reside in the area called Kurdistan which crosses over the borders of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

In recent years, the Kurds have been attempting to unite Syria Kurdistan and Iraqi Kurdistan. They

established Iraqi Kurdistan as an autonomous region that is recognized by much of the world and the Iraqi government.<sup>3</sup> In Syria, the Kurdish forces have established a de facto area of autonomy but still are not recognized by most prominent countries.<sup>4</sup> These two regions have yet to be unified.

Throughout much of the 20th century, the U.S worked to back multiple governments in Turkey and Iraq which have silenced Kurdish calls for autonomy.<sup>5</sup> Recently, the United States has altered its stance and now relies heavily on the Kurdish forces (namely the Peshmerga<sup>6</sup>) in the war against ISIS.

The current conflict in Iraq in Syria has resulted in a mire of devastation. Over 17,000 people have been killed in Iraq since 2011 and ISIS has established control over large areas of land, including Anbar Province.<sup>7</sup> In Syria, roughly 200,000 people have been killed and ISIS has made attempts to take key cities that border along Kurdish towns.<sup>8</sup>

## **The Policy Idea:**

The U.S should recognize an expanded Kurdistan that includes both Iraqi Kurdistan and Syrian Kurdistan. After formally recognizing the new nation, the U.S should establish serious diplomatic ties with the new nation, including providing military expertise, political advisors, and establishing an embassy from which they can coordinate their campaign against ISIS.

## **Analysis:**

The Kurdish forces present the most effective way to combat ISIS. Supporting other groups with military aid has proved ineffective. Many Sunni militants have joined ISIS or are unwilling to side with a Shia-dominated Iraqi government. The Iraqi government's armed forces have largely fled in the face of ISIS's advance despite having larger numbers and modern weaponry.<sup>9</sup> It is not feasible to utilize American forces on a large scale in Iraq or Syria amongst the anti-western sentiment and the complex allegiance and rivalries that are prevalent in the conflict.

The Kurdish people are relatively moderate, espousing greater equality between men and women as well as respecting the borders of other nations.<sup>10</sup> Multiple nations around the region, even Turkey, have claimed that they would be willing to accept a united Kurdistan which has been a major front in the conflict with ISIS.

In order to minimize the influence and power of ISIS, the U.S must empower the Kurdish people and support them in their military struggle. It would both create a zeal for defending their homeland and would help improve logistical capacity and the ability of the Peshmerga to reinforce key cities (such as Kobani<sup>11</sup>). Finally, the U.S would be able to establish a fundamental ally in the region who's military and reliance can be counted on.

## **Next Steps:**

The U.S should recognize a united nation of Kurdistan. This new state will include the areas of Iraqi Kurdistan

## **Key Facts:**

- The ISIS advance into Kurdish areas in Syria have caused over 300,000 Kurdish refugees to flee into neighboring Turkey.<sup>12</sup>
- Peshmerga forces numbers roughly 200,000 soldiers.<sup>13</sup>
- The combined area of Iraqi Kurdistan and Syria Kurdistan would encompass 10.9 million people.<sup>14</sup>
- Roughly 4.5 to 8 million people currently live under the rule of ISIS.<sup>15</sup>

and Syrian Kurdistan. After officially recognizing the region and its autonomy, the United States should provide economic and political aid to the expanded nation in order to help facilitate both communication lines and to help form a coherent government. Afterwards, the U.S must work to aid the Kurdish fighting forces by sending military advisors to help train the soldiers in the Peshmerga and to develop a strong military strategy for fighting ISIS. The last step would be to create a permanent embassy in the new state in order to maintain strong relations.

### **Talking Points:**

- The Kurdish people have been constantly oppressed and deprived of their right to sovereignty.
- Kurdish fighting forces present the best method for combating and diminishing ISIS in both Iraq and Syria.
- Recognizing the expansion of Kurdistan would help the Kurdish fighting forces to organize as well as energize the population to defend their territory.

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# Removing the Legal and Regulatory Market Barriers of Foreign Aid

By Christopher Cho, Major: Government '18, Email: cgc73@cornell.edu

*The effectiveness of foreign aid is often hindered by markedly self-centered regulations. Protectionist policies, such as tied aid, ensure that donor countries are the chief beneficiaries of development assistance—and signal a growing need for reform. Furthermore, less emphasis should be placed on the UN 0.7% target as it encourages increased, rather than efficient, aid.*

## History:

The UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 2626 in 1970 with the aim of reducing poverty rates on a global scale.<sup>1</sup> The agreement delineated an ambitious goal: for the affluent nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

to give 0.7% of their GNP (now GNI) as aid to developing countries by 1975. When the designated year arrived, however, only two countries, Sweden and the Netherlands, had managed to uphold their commitment. Since then, almost all wealthy nations have consistently failed reach the target codified by the UN resolution.

OECD aid volumes stood at roughly 0.33% at the time the resolution was passed and underwent little change throughout the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>2</sup> In spite of rapidly falling aid rates in the immediate post-Cold War era, affluent countries renewed their commitment to the 0.7% target in 2002. Two years later, global development assistance levels soared at an all-time high.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, despite the notable increases, OECD aid rates are still far below the 0.7% mark. More alarming, however, is the increasingly self-centered nature of purportedly altruistic foreign aid. Protectionist policies such as tied aid, for instance, ensure that donor countries are the chief beneficiaries of development assistance.

## The Policy Idea:

OECD countries must direct aid with the aim of encouraging financial development in least developed countries (LDC). The purpose of aid is undermined when the interests of donor nations trample those of the recipients. Furthermore, the 0.7% target prioritizes increased aid over efficient aid and should therefore receive less emphasis.

## Analysis:

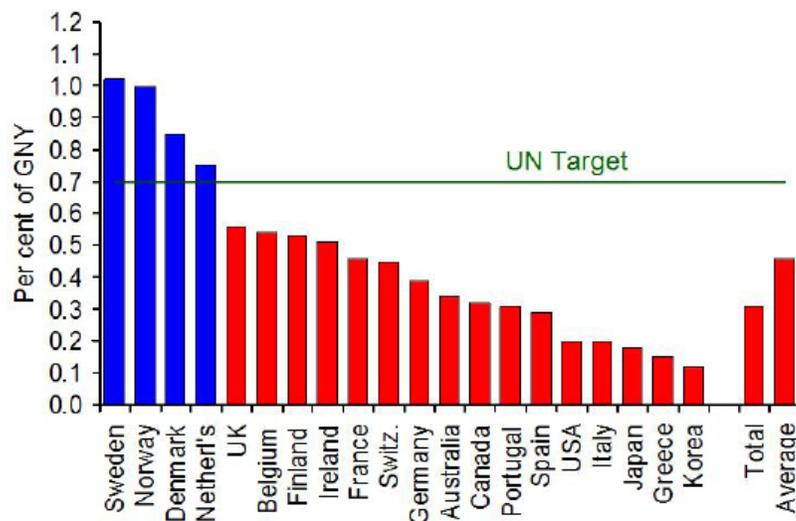
The 0.7% target is an idealistic and, ultimately, impractical means of measuring aid. Indeed, the percentage itself lacks economic and political justification. It inadvertently downplays the significance of otherwise impressive aid increases as “substandard.” Moreover, it is unrealistic to hold the sundry economies encompassed

by OECD accountable to an arbitrary number. For instance, the U.S. is, by far, the largest donor in terms of dollars, contributing \$32 billion to official development assistance (ODA) in 2013. Yet, the U.S. ranks among the lowest in terms of meeting the 0.7% target while Norway, Sweden, Luxembourg, and Denmark, comparatively small donors, have reached the goal.<sup>4</sup> The target, evidently, is biased against larger economies.

ODA, however, has problems beyond the 0.7% target. Foreign aid has been increasingly characterized by protectionist caveats that undermine the financial development of recipient countries. Often, these policies are thinly veiled efforts to maximize profits for the donor country at the expense of the aid recipients. For example, many

## Key Facts:

- U.S. contributed \$32 billion in aid, but ranks among the lowest in meeting the 0.7% target.
- 31% of bilateral aid is ‘tied’ as of 2012.



Source: Based on data from *International Development Statistics online databases* (OECD)

ODA (% of GNY, 2011)

developed nations provide financial assistance in the form of tied aid, or loans given on the condition the money is spent on services or goods produced by the donor country. For the recipient, tied aid is counterproductive because the products offered by the affluent nation are generally more expensive than the local equivalents. Furthermore, dependence on foreign companies ratchets up the cost of development projects that ultimately fail to reap sustainable profits for the local community.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, lobby groups and businesses of the donor nation benefit substantially from 'aid' that essentially translates to a government subsidy.

### **Talking Points:**

- The 0.7% target codified by UN Resolution 2626 is inadvertently biased against larger economies.
- Donor nations should not seek financial profit from developmental aid given to LDCs
- Protectionist policies such as tied aid act, essentially, as tax subsidies for donor countries' businesses.
- Tied aid denies recipient countries access to markets and hinders economic development
- The United Nations should enact guidelines of aid eligibility to hold recipient countries accountable to their donors.

### **Next Steps:**

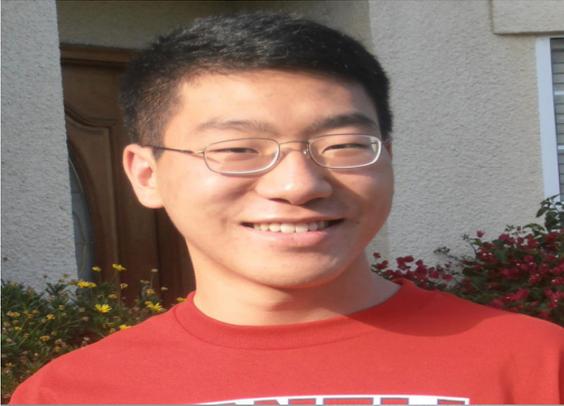
The focus of improving ODA must shift away from meeting an arbitrary, ineffective target percentage and instead toward more efficient spending. In doing so, OECD countries would be honoring a decade old commitment to untie aid to LDCs.<sup>6</sup> Tied aid, which constitutes 31% of bilateral aid as of 2012, is an entirely counterproductive form of ODA that penalizes those it ostensibly seeks to help.<sup>7</sup> Recipient nations, however, must also be held accountable. The United Nations should adopt aid guidelines determining eligibility based on governance and policy performance. Furthermore, the funding should be revoked if the recipient country breaks its compact.

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## **Christopher Cho**

Christopher Cho is a freshman Government Major in the College of Arts and Sciences. He takes a keen interest in international affairs and joined the Cornell Roosevelt Institute with the aim of examining foreign policy. Also a member of Rice Magazine and CAPSU's First Year Initiative Program, he hopes to explore his Asian American identity during his college years.



## **Christopher Hanna**

Christopher Hanna is a freshman majoring in Development Sociology in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. In addition to his role as a policy analyst at the Roosevelt Institute, he writes editorials for the Cornell Daily Sun and belongs to the Caceres-Neuffer Genocide Action Group. His areas of interest include human rights, social policy, development, and international politics.



## **Blake Michael**

Blake is a member of the Class of 2017, majoring in Government and Modern Romance Language in the College of Arts and Sciences. Blake is an aspiring immigration lawyer, and is particularly interested in immigration policy within the European Union and the United States. From Frankton, IN, Blake is also involved with Ready for Hillary and the Committee for U.S./Latin American Relations (CUSLAR) on campus.



## **Frances Yang**

Frances Yang is a sophomore hoping to study Policy Analysis. She has experience working at WorldTeach, a non-profit that sends volunteers abroad to teach in rural and impoverished regions, and would like to continue learning about what kinds of policies and programs make the greatest social impact. She hopes to one day pursue a career in international public health administration. Frances is also a coder for the Hudson Valley Project and an active member in Alpha Phi Omega.

# Meet the Foreign Policy Center

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## Jennifer Kim

Jennifer Kim is currently a sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences, double majoring in Government and Statistics. She is particularly interested in studying international politics and culture, with a focus on methodological approaches. Aside from the Roosevelt Institute, she is also a competitive Model United Nations team member and crisis director for the Cornell International Affairs Society, as well as a member of Design for America.



## Matt McGee

Matt is a sophomore from Chesapeake, VA, majoring in China and Asia-Pacific Studies. Besides Roosevelt Institute, he is very involved with the Cornell International Affairs Society.



## Yu Chen Xue

Yu Chen is a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences double-majoring in English and Government. On campus, she is a tutor at the Knight Writing Institute and an intern at the Avon Global Centre for Women and Justice. Hoping to pursue a career in either law or international relations, she is especially interested in the foreign policies of and diplomatic relations between China and the United States.



## Svati Pazhyanur

Svati is a junior in the College of Human Ecology majoring in Policy Analysis and Management and minoring in Global Health, Math, and International Relations. Outside of the Roosevelt Institute, she is involved in the Cornell Debate Team, Cornell Health International, a student-run global health organization, and the Training Committee for Cayuga's Watchers. She is studying abroad in Durban, South Africa next semester to take courses and conduct research in community health and social policy.



# Meet the Foreign Policy Center

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**Marc Getzoff**

Marc Getzoff is a junior in the school of Industrial and Labor Relations here at Cornell University. He participates in multiple start-up companies and is interested in Human Resource management. He aspires to become a writer for foreign policy directives in the U.S government.



**Hannah Cashen**

Hannah is a junior in ILR with minors in International Relations and Law & Society. Along with writing for the Roosevelt Institute, she is a coxswain on the men's lightweight rowing team, a member of Humor Us! sketch comedy, and a copyeditor for the Cornell International Affairs Review. She hopes to go on to law school and eventually practice immigration law.



**Sarah Cutler**

Sarah Cutler is a junior at Cornell University double-majoring in Near Eastern Studies and Government. As a member of the Cornell International Affairs Society and an employee of Cornell's Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, she hopes to work in international relations in the future. In particular, she aspires to be an intelligence analyst focusing on the Middle East.



**Hazel Guardado, Director**

Hazel is a junior majoring in Anthropology and minoring in International Relations. She is particularly interested in immigration, asylum, and refugee policy. Besides the Roosevelt Institute, Hazel works for the Committee on U.S.-Latin American Relations and is a member of the Cornell Anthropology Exchange. She is passionate about languages and speaks Spanish, French, and Russian to varying degrees.



“We have learned the simple truth, as Emerson said, that the only way to have a friend is to be one. We can gain no lasting peace if we approach it with suspicion or mistrust or with fear.”

-Franklin D. Roosevelt