Chinggis Khaan as a Nationalist Symbol: Is he the egalitarian figure Eurasia needs to stem violence against women? by Emma Lamberton

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Here to Stay: Increasing Militarization of the Wagner Group, the Libyan Civil War, and the Kremlin’s Use of Transnational Actors by Shannon K. Boehm & Cameron Lumley
Letter from the Editors

Dear reader,

It is our pleasure to introduce to you this 12th Edition of the Pitt Policy Journal. The COVID-19 pandemic brought with it enormous uncertainty, which, for a while, made us doubt that this edition would be published. We are incredibly grateful for having achieved this feat and are indebted to more individuals than we can properly thank upon these pages.

First and foremost, we would like to thank all of the authors who submitted their research for consideration. We especially thank the authors whose submissions have been chosen as part of this publication, for working diligently with our editorial team. We recognize that this was not easy at a time of unprecedented isolation and intense workloads. The process of selecting the final papers for publication has been difficult to say the least. Every year, submissions we receive are increasingly impressive and, while it is truly a pleasure to read them, selecting among them has become even more challenging.

We would also like to thank our wonderful team of GSPIA students and faculty volunteers without whom this publication would simply not be possible. Our editorial team worked rigorously and enthusiastically to guide the authors’ revisions and ensure that they are proud of the quality of their work. Our team of officers worked tirelessly in the background to help facilitate all operations, including the design and printing of this edition. We thank our amazing PPJ Online Team, who brainstormed and developed our all-new website from scratch.

A special thanks to our copy editing team: Dr. Charles Skinner, Dr. Jessica Hanson-Defusco, Dr. Jeremy Weber, Mia DiFelice, Paul Gibson, and Ben Saint-Onge. Our copy editors donated their time and provided their skills and attention to detail to finalize papers for publication. We would like to thank our design team: Mia DiFelice and Ellyse St. John. Our designers spent numerous hours preparing our journal for publication and we would not have this edition in print without them.

Last, but certainly not least, we thank GSPIA Dean Carissa Slotterback and Communications Director Katie Weidenboerner, whose genuine interest and commitment to the Pitt Policy Journal helped make this a productive and successful year.

To our readers, we hope that you will be pleased and informed by the following wonderful contributions, just as we all have been through the process of assembling them. We believe that this publication provides excellent examples of how rigorous policy research and analysis can be brought to bear on important social policy issues worldwide and has the potential to generate lasting policy changes that improve the lives of many.

Sincerely,

Dijana Mujkanović
Editor in Chief

Alexandria Smith
Editor in Chief
Vision
A world where humanity’s greatest challenges are addressed by the most rigorous, innovative, interdisciplinary, evidence-based policy solutions grounded in the best contemporary practices of social science research and strengthened by the richness and diversity of epistemologies, theories, and methods it provides.

Mission
Building a respected and reputable platform for the production, display, and dissemination of original, diverse, and exemplary social policy research to encourage creative solutions to major problems and challenges in domestic, international, and foreign policy that affect the lives of ordinary people around the globe and seek to improve them.

Goals & Objectives
To increase the public visibility and professional reputation of the PPJ through greater external outreach and involvement of reputable scholars;

To support the production of graduate student research to generate fresh solutions to tough social policy questions;

To bolster collaboration between established scholars, aspiring scholars, and experienced practitioners in rethinking major social policy issues;

To foster and advance ongoing scholarly debate on a variety of social policy topics and seek to improve the lives of ordinary people.

Support
The publication of the Pitt Policy Journal is sponsored by the Fund for Student Initiatives that was launched in the fall of 2008. We are grateful for the ongoing support of the GSPIA community, including Dean Carissa Slotterback, faculty, staff, and students.

Selection Information
We welcome submissions that explore diverse policy areas and provide insightful perspectives on domestic and global political, economic, and security matters. Our staff prioritizes the selection of quality, thoughtful scholarship that has practical implications for local and national policy makers. All submissions are reviewed anonymously by the Editorial Review Board, which selects the best among each pool of submissions for publication.

Disclaimer
The views expressed in the Pitt Policy Journal do not necessarily represent the opinions of our editorial staff, GSPIA, or the University of Pittsburgh. While each selected entry undergoes a rigorous editing process, contributing authors are ultimately responsible for the accuracy and integrity of their work.

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GENDER EQUITY
EURASIA | UNITED STATES
Chinggis Khaan as a Nationalist Symbol:
Is he the egalitarian figure Eurasia needs to stem violence against women?

by Emma Lamberton, MID '20
Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh

SUMMARY
Cross-country data on violence against women in Mongolia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan is conspicuously absent from reputable databanks like UNDP’s Human Development Data or World Bank Open Data. While measures like the Gender Inequality Index rank these countries as moderately equitable and Kazakhstan with a near perfect score, these measures fail to adequately capture the extreme rates of violence against women in these areas.

It is important to understand the unique combination of ancient nomadic tradition and anti-Soviet sentiment that fuel gender violence in Eurasia today, a combination of socio-political factors not encountered anywhere else in the world. While nationalism in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan is based on nomadic-ethnic heritage, in Mongolia, Chinggis Khaan* is held as the ultimate signal of national identity around which disparate groups are unifying.

While nationalist movements in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have resulted in rises in gender violence and bias, Chinggis Khaan valued women as advisors, appointed his daughters as queens throughout his empire, and was the first world ruler to outlaw the sale of women as well as to support their

* Chinggis Khaan is the Mongolian Latin spelling of the name commonly known in the West as “Ghenghis Khan.”
formal education. Thus, could Chinggis Khaan as a nationalist symbol lead to gender equity rather than oppression?

The purpose of this exploratory, non-experimental study is to shed light on the current state of violence against women in Eurasia, and specifically Mongolia, through the contribution of original data compatible with existing cross-country databanks. The study aims to answer the questions: How does the Soviet occupation and withdrawal from Mongolia impact violence and bias against women today? Specifically, how does the rise of nationalism in Mongolia impact violence or gender biases? The study is mixed-method, combining quantitative survey data (N=513) and long-form qualitative cognitive interviews (N=35). The five-week data collection was conducted in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in May 2019. The survey measures utilized in this paper are gender bias and perceptions of Chinggis Khaan.

Survey questions were taken from a number of previously tested surveys. While some scales transferred, others lost validity in Mongolian culture. This raises important questions as to the validity of well-known surveys despite being designed for multi-cultural use.

**Methodology**

This study is nonexperimental and was not intended to test a particular formal theory. Instead, the study attempts to build on the reported relationship between nationalism and gender violence in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The study does not aim to prove causation, but instead to present evidence through data analysis, literature, historical press writings, values data from other Eurasian countries, and first-person interviews to discuss possible links between these subjects and violence or bias against women. Returning to Mongolia to record time series data would help establish arguments for causation in further research.

The study is composed of two primary components: first, a 79-item survey; and second, a cognitive interview component exploring the reasoning behind survey answers.

To track changes in gender bias and perceptions of Chinggis Khaan, survey respondents are divided into six cohorts, strictly by age. Findings are analyzed through comparison between cohorts.

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<tr>
<th>Cohort 1 (C1)</th>
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<td>Ages 18-25</td>
<td>26-35</td>
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**Survey Methodology**

Composed of 79 total items, the survey was designed to measure four value categories, but two will be utilized for the purpose of this paper: gender equity and perceptions of Chinggis Khaan.

World Values Survey 6 (WVS6) scales were used to measure opinions on gender equity. Originally a four-question scale, one question was removed from the data set after cognitive interviews revealed it lacked concept validity. Asked on a four-point scale whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement “When a mother works for pay, the children suffer,” respondents answered in the affirmative not because they thought a woman should not earn an income, but because in Mongolia it is a very real situation that women who work are often forced to leave even their smallest infants without adult care. Mothers tie their children to furniture to prevent them from wandering away. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon that children die from this forced neglect, freezing to death in negative 50-degree temperatures. This was a cultural perspective not thought of during the scale design. Without cognitive interviews, the data would have shown extreme bias against women, rather than a simple consideration of real-world problems in Mongolia. The remaining questions from this scale were duplicated later in the survey but worded to ask “In the time of Chinggis Khaan...” to see whether respondents recognized Chinggis Khaan's high regard for women.

Only five WVS6 questions were used in this study, and one, or 20 percent, was found to lack construct validity. The World Values Survey has been administered all over the world in six waves since the 1980’s. It is unfortunate that with the amount of energy and resources that have gone into data collection, this study challenges the validity of their data. In further research, the World Values Survey introduced a cognitive interview component to test the construct validity of their 250+ measures.

When understanding Chinggis Khaan as a nationalist symbol, it is important to further determine what he symbolizes to modern Mongolia. The scale measuring respondents’ perception of Chinggis Khaan derives from Shalom H. Schwartz’s Theory of Cultural Value Orientations. In his theory, Schwartz draws a values pie chart. Each slice is a single value category comprised of certain measures. For example, the slice “Embeddedness” is composed of social order, obedience, and respect for tradition. The survey, which was translated and back translated to ensure construct validity, asked respondents which of the values from the pie that they believed Chinggis Khaan valued. For the purposes of this study, two measures from each slice
were selected, and their binary mentions were summed into the value score. Then differences between cohorts were measured.

In addition to these scales, the survey also included the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale⁵ to test the honesty of respondents as we asked about potentially uncomfortable value opinions. The canvassing team consisted of seven members, but most surveys were administered by a woman in her thirties and three male undergraduates in their early twenties. The desirability scale found that the female canvasser collected less-biased results. While the male-collected data was not removed to maintain a large N in each age cohort, the scale was beneficial as best-practice methodology and should be utilized in any large-scale follow-up research.

Additional data included observational gender and class data by the canvasser (based of appearance, location, and time of day), and self-reported education level, location of secondary education institution, and citizenship.

The survey was conducted without the direct presence of the American researcher to eliminate potential bias. However, the researcher did supervise canvassing teams from a distance. Respondents were paid approximately two dollars each when they completed the survey.

Cognitive Interviews
As mentioned above, a primary purpose of cognitive interviews was to test the construct validity of measures used. An additional purpose was to build a better understanding of violence or bias against women as cultural norms. When violence or bias becomes a norm, it is less likely to be self-identified by survey respondents. Databases tracking gender equity legislation and other indicators are also less likely to capture the impact of cultural norms, as these norms often do not reflect official government policy.

Respondents were first asked to explain why they chose their answers to particular questions. After this, respondents were asked to share memories of their own experiences.

Thirty-five cognitive interviews were conducted and respondents were paid approximately four dollars for completing the cognitive interview, enough for two adult meals.

Challenges to Methodology
To track whether a respondent highly respected Chinggis Khaan, one original question was used. Respondents were asked, “What do you have on or above your family’s altar?” As a place of reverence, the altar is home to photographs of loved ones, images from the household religion, and paintings or weavings of Chinggis Khaan. Respondents had to self-identify, and canvassers were instructed not to lead with any questions, except to ask, “who specifically?” if respondents generally mentioned photos or images of people. As discussed in the findings section, this measure would have ideally been supplemented by additional questions seeking to measure the personal reverence to Chinggis Khaan. Additionally, the survey should have included a question simply asking whether the home had an altar. While the majority do, this would have eliminated non-relevant responses rather than biasing the data.

A second challenge was the use of scales from other cross-country databases. Many of these survey questions were not best-practice and could have been easily improved by such simple adaptations as changing four-point scales to five-point, with a neutral option. However, to utilize the data sets available, we did not change the structure of questions.

While other databases contain more direct measures, such as the violence experienced by women within the past twelve months, data for these measures had not been conducted in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, or Mongolia. The WVS6 measures were used due to data availability from two of the three sites.

Nomadic Nationalism and Violence in Eurasia
While there are many aspects of violence against women in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, there is a specific cultural phenomenon that connects this violence to the rise of nationalism and pre-Soviet nomadic traditions: bride kidnappings.

Gyz alyp gashu, a Kazakh phrase meaning “to take and run away,” is the practice of kidnapping women and girls for marriage. Experts estimate that over 12,000 women and girls are kidnapped every year in Kyrgyzstan.⁶ This practice was illegal during the Soviet Union, and still is today. However, many Kyrgyz believe bride kidnapping is a part of their ancient nomadic tradition. Experts say that there is no evidence of this in ancient art or poetry, and that the practice is likely in retaliation to the Soviet Union’s emphasis on gender equality under the Soviet system. There are two types of kidnapping: ceremonial, consensual kidnappings; and violent, nonconsensual kidnappings. In Kyrgyzstan, an estimated 17 percent of violently kidnapped women and girls are raped.

In southern Kazakhstan, violent kidnappings have increased from
zero to 18 percent of yearly kidnappings since 1990. However, violent kidnappings, particularly involving a child under 18, are typically not registered. The true percentage is likely significantly higher, as child marriage in southern Kazakhstan has risen to 11 percent of all marriages. Kazakhstani law prohibits children under 18 from marrying, as does Islamic law. However, lawmakers, police, and communities refuse to systematically combat bride kidnapping. Culturally, the law of nomadic tradition trumps both civil and religious law.

In Mongolia, violence against women is prevalent. One in seven women are reported to have experienced sexual violence after the age of 15. One in ten experienced sexual violence as a child. Thankfully, bride kidnapping is not a common practice in Mongolia, and is not attached to Chinggis Khaan as a nationalist symbol. However, little research has been done to determine how Chinggis Khaan as a symbol interacts with violence against women.

More generally, Chinggis Khaan's representation in Mongolian society has changed continually throughout the last century. Dr. Christopher Kaplonski documents the transitioning narrative in his work “The Case of the Disappearing Chinggis Khaan: Dismembering the Remembering.” In the early 1920s and 1930s, histories published contained divine language, treating Chinggis Khaan as a godlike figure. In the 1940s, the narrative switched to pro-Marxist language, where Chinggis Khaan was portrayed as destroying advanced civilizations and replacing them with archaic Mongolian feudalism. This negative portrayal continued throughout the Socialist period. Post-Soviet rhetoric has since returned to godlike portrayals of the Great Khaan.

In this study, survey respondents commonly acknowledged the importance of women in Chinggis Khaan’s empire. The Great Khaan appointed his mother and wives as strategic advisors and entrusted the daily operation of his vast empire to his daughters. While his sons led his army on the battlefield, it was his daughters who directed military strategy.

Herein lies the central question: if nationalism and nomadic tradition have led to a rise in violence against women in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, could the rise of Chinggis Khaan as a nationalist symbol lead to gender equity in post-Socialist Mongolia?

**Findings**

**Differences in the Role of Women by Gender**

Taken from the World Values Survey 6, the three survey statements that measure gender roles are: (1) A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl. (2) On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do. (3) On the whole, men make better business executives than women do. Respondents were then asked whether they agreed or disagreed on a four-point scale.

While the question regarding gendered access to education maintained validity, cognitive interviews revealed important components to the conflicting reasoning behind answers. As outlined in Table 1, respondents often considered men more than they did women in answering the question. Women who agreed that education was more important for boys did so not because women were inferior, but because they believed lack of male education was creating undue burden for women and leading to societal problems like alcoholism. On the other hand, men who disagreed that education was more important for boys did not do so because they thought girls were of equal ability. While approving of equal access, men often simultaneously stated that men had greater capacity to learn. Thus, the data likely underplays male bias.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree education is more important for boys</th>
<th>Disagree Education is more important for boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Men are better than women. Look at Chinggis Khaan. He is a man.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;All are equal. Today, men are not paying attention. Women are better than men.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Men have the ability to see grand vision.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Women do better than men because they work and care for their children. Men cannot do both.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Men are better.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Men are smarter than women in all ways.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| "It is hard to find a really wise and smart woman. But we are all equal and have the right to education." | "If men are wise and women are silly, how will we live together?"
| "We all have the right to education. Women are better at social work, but men are more visionary." | "My boss is a woman and she leads the company very well." |

Table 1: Chart of Cognitive Interview Responses by Gender regarding Gender Bias Scale
“Boys are better because in the family men are responsible for more things. Women give birth and take care of children.”

“Today, women have better educations than men. Men need education to become responsible.”

“Women have to manage everything. In our society today, women are getting stronger. But men need to be more knowledgeable than women.”

“Men need more education.”

“Men need education. If men grow educated, there will be less people addicted to alcohol.”

“I have three boys and a girl. I can only afford for the first two boys to go to university.”

“People think that men are better, but women are stronger than men. Women are starting to believe in themselves.”

“It is a basic principle for me that everyone should have access to education.”

“We’re all equal. We all have the right. Both boys and girls have to go to school. ...Women are more responsible than men. We take care of children but also work.”

“Women are good at making decisions related to children.”

“Women are at making decisions related to children.”

“We all have the right to education... but it is the unwritten law that men are better at politics than women. Men are more visionary for the future than women.”

“In education, women are better for things like doctors. In mining and manly activities, men are better than women.”

Table 1 also makes numerous mentions of women and their role in childbearing and rearing. While Western viewers may interpret such comments to imply women are inferior, this may not be how such comments are intended, consciously or subconsciously. Since the early 1970s Mongolia has experienced a severe fertility rate decline. As a result, the government has created financial stipends and honorary awards for women that produce certain numbers of children. For example, the “First Order of Glorious Motherhood,” is awarded to women with six or more children. This is considered a high honor, and such medals are proudly worn and displayed by women at formal ceremonies and on holidays. Thus, Mongolians do not necessarily consider women’s assignment to childrearing as inferior.

While potential validity errors were identified, there is still a strong indication that women value themselves much more highly than men value women. Research shows that male participation in gender equality is crucial to change societal gender norms. Men are needed to break cycles of oppression, as managing to reach empowered positions is especially difficult for women.

Table 2: Relationship between Gender and Equity Values

Unfortunately, the female leaders in Mongolia who do achieve power are likely to encounter great difficulty in engaging men in the equity process. Only 17 percent of parliamentary seats in Mongolia are held by women, bringing them far short of the ability to fund and promote programs combating gender violence and inequality. As seen in Table 2, most men and 50 percent of women believe men are better political leaders.

An additional troublesome factor is that bias against women in politics seems to be increasing in Mongolia with respondents under 30, while in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan bias against women in politics is decreasing. This is troubling for any hope of Chinggis Khaan as a nationalist symbol increasing gender equity, as young people are more likely to venerate Chinggis Khaan.

Table 3: Gender Equity Responses by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Mongolia</th>
<th>Kazakhstan</th>
<th>Kyrgyzstan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50+ N=181</td>
<td>&lt;30 N=72</td>
<td>50+ N=420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men make better business executives than women do</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men make better political leaders than women do</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>69.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men make better political leaders than women do</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, there were no significant differences in gender bias between economic classes or education levels, even when absorbing the impacts of gender. This means that Mongolia’s educational system is likely not encouraging gender equity, or at least not in any way that trumps other societal influences. This also indicates that women of power—highly educated and/or wealthy—do not hold views of gender equity that will help other women rise. Given the extreme bias recorded by men, women of power must step up to provide opportunities for other women.

These scales only scratch the surface of the complexity that is gender equity in Mongolia. While simultaneously asserting that women have the right to education and the acknowledgement that Chinggis Khaan valued women, the same respondents also criticize modern women and indicate gender bias. However, results are also complicated by the fact that many answers that appear anti-women are actually critiques of men. Equally troubling is the power imbalance that is likely to grow as the majority of Mongolians believe that men are better political leaders than women. This will undoubtedly make it increasingly difficult for women to get elected in the future, as bias is greater in the younger generation. However, time series data should be collected to determine how values move over time, and whether young people liberalize with age. This would be surprising, as it would be the opposite of social movements seen in the West, where people become more conservative with age.

### Differences by Age and Gender – Beliefs about Chinggis Khaan

To better understand the relationship between Chinggis Khaan and gender in modern Mongolia, respondents were surveyed using a values scale that measured their perception of the historic leader. Questions recording cohort differences in beliefs about Chinggis Khaan produced distinct generational differences. To determine cultural shifts in beliefs about Chinggis Khaan, I took from Shalom Schwartz’s Theory of Cultural Value Orientations. Schwartz outlines seven value orientations that he formats to a circle, where slices of the circle that stand opposite of one another are the furthest apart in values distance. The values measured are harmony, embeddedness, hierarchy, mastery, affective autonomy, intellectual autonomy, and egalitarianism.

While this scale attempted to measure respondent’s beliefs about what Chinggis Khaan valued, cognitive interviews revealed that many perceived the question as “If I were Chinggis Khaan, what would I think was important?” Thus, respondents projected their own values onto Chinggis Khaan.

While results showed differences in age (See Appendix 1), there was also one striking difference by gender. Women were more likely to report that Chinggis Khaan valued affective autonomy, that is, the ability to do what one wants. Sadly, given that respondents are largely projecting their own values onto Chinggis Khaan, here we likely see evidence of frustration at the lack of independence for women in Mongolian society.
Table 5: Table of Individual Logistic Regressions

| Chinggis Khaan in Home          | Coef. | Std. Err. | z    | P>|z| | n  |
|--------------------------------|-------|-----------|------|-----|-----|
| Age                            | -0.879| .037      | -2.36| 0.018| 83  |
| Perceptions of CK’s Value of Women | .692  | .318      | 2.18 | 0.03 | 81  |
| Perception that CK Valued Harmony | -1.581| .656      | -2.41| 0.016| 83  |
| Personal Value of Modern Women  | .0887 | .398      | 0.22 | 0.824| 83  |

While it is a discouraging finding that Chinggis Khaan’s progressive views on women seem to make no impact on the personal views of those who honor him in their homes, a greater diversity of measures is needed to understand the true gender relationship between Chinggis Khaan’s most loyal followers and violence and bias against women in Mongolia today.

Conclusion

Violence against women in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan continues to rise as devotion to nationalism and nomadic tradition increases. While violence against women in Mongolia is prevalent, this study did not reveal that violence is a direct result of Chinggis Khaan as a nationalist symbol. However, there is evidence of extreme bias against women in Mongolian society in the realm of political and economic leadership. It is likely that this data is a window into norms of cultural bias not tracked by many leading databases today (See Appendix 2). More research with a greater diversity of scales should be conducted, both to determine the extent of bias against women, as well as to determine any relationship between Mongolian nationalism and said violence and bias.

While in other countries research shows that nomadic nationalism encourages violence against women, it is discouraging to see that the egalitarianism of Chinggis Khaan does not produce the opposite effect in Mongolia. Reverence for Chinggis Khaan makes no difference in personal gender biases, even while respondents recognize the Great Khaan’s value of women in his empire. In fact, younger generations in Mongolia are becoming more biased while, for the most part, young people in neighboring Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are becoming less so. While by no means conclusive, this measure indicates that gender violence and disparity in Mongolia is likely to grow, as it will become more difficult for women to be elected or run successful business due to the gender bias of the younger generations.

The plight of women in Eurasia is one that is not adequately documented by leading international organizations. This research is just the beginning to uncovering gender violence and biases not adequately captured in cross-country databases to this date. Greater resources must be dedicated to data collection in these countries, as the lived reality of women is much worse than egalitarian government policies indicate to outsiders. In Mongolia, timely intervention is needed to stem the increasing violence and inequality indicated by this study.
It is important to note that in the non-significant boxes, this means that the distribution of scores was varied. Rather than thinking of these as non-significant, these boxes indicate groups with the widest diversity of thought, which is an equally relevant finding. Cohort 3 has the widest diversity of thought. When considering the external variables discussed in the previous chapter, Cohort 3's diversity indicates the impact that growing up in the Soviet Union, experiencing the withdrawal and turbulent transition period as teenagers, and living their adult lives in a new democracy had on their personal value development. Perhaps because of having been exposed to such a diversity of experiences and value systems in their critical development periods, this cohort presents a diversity of thought unlike older and younger cohorts who have spent most, if not all, of their lives under a particular value system.

**Appendix 2**

Table 8: Comments by women relating to cultural norms of violence and bias against women

| “The government prohibits the sale of alcohol on the first day of the month because it is supposed to protect women and children from drunk men. But the men all buy the alcohol the day before and stay home and drink. Then they get drunk in the house and beat their wives.” |
| “I keep trying to apply for jobs in science, but all the posts say the same thing: men only.” |
| “Oh, that’s the apartment where a man threw his girlfriend out the window. He thought she was cheating on him, but he wasn’t. Men kill their girlfriends all the time because of that.” |
| “My aunt’s husband died so she herds the animals in the countryside. She has been raped many times because she is alone.” |
| “Even though girls work very hard, school is easier for boys because teachers make it easier for them. It’s not fair.” |
Analyzing the Discriminatory Policies of the 2020 Remote Bar Exam

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The legal field structure, such as the LSAT exam and other aspects of law school, have proven to be discriminatory towards women and people of color. These institutions continue to be factors that support the discriminatory practices of the Bar exam. Inequity towards women and minorities taking the Bar exam has only been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, with many states issuing an online Bar exam. This online exam postponed the Bar by several months, which left many law students, especially minorities, in severe financial stress. This exam also used Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to monitor cheating, which disproportionately fails when recognizing the faces of women and minorities. With these realities in mind, recommendations are put forth for Bar examiners to acknowledge the Bar exam's biases and to begin their phasing out. It is also recommended that each state be required to report Bar passage rates by demographic. It is concluded that all states should adopt diploma privilege for fall 2020 Bar exam applicants.

BACKGROUND

Preparations for the Bar exam are discriminatory towards women and minorities. Law schools encourage or even require that third-year students take a Bar prep course. These courses can cost anywhere from $1,500 to $4,000 and this cost must be covered by the student. Law students must also take the Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam (MPRE) before taking the Bar exam. This exam requires intense studying, although not nearly as much as the Bar exam, and costs $125 to register, or $220 for late registration. The Bar exam itself is an expensive test and costs range from state to state. For example, in North Dakota, it costs approximately $250 to take the exam, while...
Illinois charges $1,250. Many states do not refund this money if an emergency arises, and most states require the same amount to be paid if the exam taker were to fail and retake the exam. If a student wants to use their laptop during the Bar exam essay, there is an additional $125 fee. When an individual does pass, it costs several hundred dollars to apply for Bar membership in their state and county, which is required in order to practice law.

The Bar is an in-person, two-day exam and is offered only in a few locations in each state. California is consistently one of the states with the most exam takers, with about 7,000 – 8,000 students from the state's twenty law schools sitting for the Bar every year. The state only offers four exam locations, those being in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, and Sacramento. In Pennsylvania, the exam is only offered in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Some states, such as Kansas, only provide one testing center. Exam takers are responsible for their transportation to and from the exam, lodging, food, and any other expenses. Exam accommodations themselves can be hundreds or even thousands of dollars, especially with exam locations usually located in city centers where hotels and food are more expensive.

Perhaps one of the most inequitable characteristics of the Bar exam is that it requires students to take months off from work in order to study. Law schools usually require that students not work during the three to five months they are studying for the Bar. For many, especially minority students, not working for three to five months is not an option. Some students try to balance part-time work with full-time Bar studying, which often leads to falling off the study schedule. Some students decide to take out loans during this period instead, but these loans are often private and have high interest rates. Even if a student has a job lined up after graduation, some employers do not allow them to start until they receive their results, which can take around three months. This means that some students are living up to six months without consistent income.

**Analysis**

There are questions on Bar exams that have been identified as biased, disproportionately affecting the scores of women and people of color. The Bar exam assumes that all law students learned the same information throughout their academic careers and that all students possess similar cultural experiences and opinions. Biased questions fall under several categories, including language barriers and interpretations, the equal experience assumption, promotion of dominant values, and subjective or flawed item selection. Cultural bias is especially relevant on Bar exams because exam questions are largely based on hypothetical situations, which require students to put themselves into the presented circumstance and analyze the facts based on their personal experiences. These hypothetical situations tend to mirror the majority point of view, which favors White, middle-class males. This puts women and minority exam takers at a disadvantage because they may interpret the question differently than the creators intended. While each state administers its own version of the Bar exam, no state provides the option to take the exam in a language other than English. This is a huge disadvantage for many minority students who may feel more comfortable taking the exam in their first language. All of these factors contribute to the disproportionate distributions that are seen today between women and minorities and White men in the legal field.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these disparities. It is important to note that 23 states opted to keep their in-person July 2020 Bar exams. A few postponed their exam and revised it for a shorter, in-person exam later in the fall, but most opted to give an online exam. Most of the online exams were administered on October 5th and 6th, which added three additional months of unexpected test preparation. While this was decided in order to keep people safe, moving the exam to that point in the year had many negative repercussions. Bar examiners also had very specific requirements for their online exams. Students had to have a working computer with the exam software downloaded, a working camera, reliable internet service, and a quiet room to take the exam. When students expressed concern over their ability to meet each of these requirements, Bar examiners referred applicants to their law schools or recommended that the applicant wait until the next in-person exam. Bar examiners recommended that applicants buy new computers that would handle the massive exam program and have a working camera. Part of the exam software was to have the applicant be recorded at all times to discourage cheating. Applicants were told they would immediately fail if anyone or anything entered the room during the exam. This completely disregards individuals who have dependent children or care for elderly parents. In general, the requirements failed to recognize that emergencies happen. They also assumed all applicants have the resources to buy a new computer, find a quiet, empty space, and delegate any other responsibilities during the exam.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) was used to monitor cheating during the online Bar exam. AI has been proven to be discriminatory against women and people of color because these systems are often trained on images of predominantly light-skinned men. To even begin the exam, the AI program first
had to recognize the face of the person taking the exam based on a previously submitted picture. Many minorities and women reported being worried that the software would not recognize their faces.\textsuperscript{18} Even if applicants were able to start the exam without issue, AI recorded and flagged their movements throughout the exam. If the technology picked up any “unnatural movement,” it would be flagged and watched by an examiner to determine if cheating had occurred. It has been predicted that minorities and women were flagged more than their White male colleagues. This is also worrisome because it puts the determination of whether cheating occurred into the discretion of a single Bar examiner.\textsuperscript{19}

**Diploma Privilege**

Diploma privilege should have been adopted by every state during this COVID-19 crisis. While many Bar examiners argued that not administering the Bar would allow “bad lawyers” to practice, states could instead require that each Bar applicant complete a certain number of shadowing hours to be fulfilled in the next several years or require applicants to complete Continuing Legal Education (CLE) courses. The State Supreme Court of Utah implemented emergency diploma privilege in April 2020, which gave students signed up for the July 2020 Bar exam their legal license with the requirement they work 360 hours under the supervision of an experienced licensed attorney, and complete the Utah State Bar New Lawyer Training Program.\textsuperscript{20} The State Supreme Court of Utah adopted diploma privilege because it knew it was impossible to host an in-person exam in July of 2020, but also recognized the importance of allowing new lawyers to help those most impacted by the pandemic, and giving new graduates the certainty and financial stability they and their families required.\textsuperscript{21}

**Recommendation**

The Bar exam should begin to be phased out of use. It has been reported the Bar exam does little to train and prepare applicants for the legal field.\textsuperscript{22} Instead, efforts and resources should go toward law students working directly in the field and experiencing different types of law and practice areas. While the Bar exam is being administered, minorities and women should be included in creating test questions. After the exam is created, diverse oversight boards should approve test questions before they are administered to students. The Bar exam should also be administered in multiple languages for individuals to take the exam in the language they feel most comfortable. Requiring all students to take the exam in English can add a whole new issue for minority students. All states should be required to collect and report Bar passage data by demographic. There is no meaningful way to track, identify trends, or improve upon bias and discrimination issues in Bar exams unless data is collected and published. The American Bar Association should require each state to publish its Bar passage results similar to California and New York.

Many law schools, students, and lawmakers pushed for their states to adopt diploma privilege for all fall 2020 Bar applicants.\textsuperscript{23} This means any student who graduated from an accredited law school would have automatically “passed the Bar” and would have immediately been able to apply to practice in their state. Wisconsin already practices diploma privilege and four states granted it to their students this past fall.\textsuperscript{24} Widespread adoption of diploma privilege would have eliminated test takers spreading COVID-19 and would have completely avoided additional discriminatory policies. For example, granting diploma privilege for 2020 Bar examinees would have allowed students to “stay on track” with starting their legal jobs and would have reduced the amount of time without a paycheck.\textsuperscript{25}

Another possible solution would have been to adopt temporary diploma privilege, meaning 2020 Bar examinees would have received their license on the regular timeline, but would be required to take the exam within the next three years to retain their license. This would have given students the peace of mind of being licensed during the pandemic and, ideally, more time to prepare financially and mentally for studying for a future Bar exam.\textsuperscript{26} This option would have also given employers more time to prepare for the temporary absence of these individuals. The State Supreme Court of New Jersey adopted temporary diploma privilege in April of 2020 and received appreciation from the state’s law schools to allow their students to begin their legal careers and remove the threat of spreading COVID-19.\textsuperscript{27} These recommendations, especially the temporary adoption of diploma privilege, would address the discriminatory policies which surrounded the 2020 online Bar exam.
Appendix

Figure 1. Hardships Across Race During the 2020 Bar Exam Period Throughout the United States

It is clear from this graph that a large majority of applicants who took the fall 2020 Bar exam dealt with issues such as financial insecurity, childcare, and mental health as the Bar exam was pushed back and online exam policies were put into place. These issues were even more prominent for minority individuals. When individuals did express concerns about childcare responsibilities, taking care of a sick family member, or technology fears, Bar examiners recommended applicants take the Bar at a later date. If any person or pet entered the room during the exam or any disruption occurred, the applicant would automatically fail.

Figure 2. Error Rates in Commercial Gender Classification Products

AI technology disproportionately fails to identify women, particularly women of color. It also fails when trying to recognize men of color. It is important to note that in June of 2020, IBM released a statement opposing use of facial recognition software in any type of technology for fear of racial bias. The letter from IBM reads, “IBM no longer offers general purpose IBM facial recognition or analysis software... vendors and users of AI systems have shared responsibility to ensure that AI is tested for bias... and that such bias testing is audited and reported.”

Figure 3. Tweet From Student Struggling With AI Software for New York’s Online Bar Exam

The @ExamSoft software can’t “recognize” me due to “poor lighting” even though I’m sitting in a well lit room. Starting to think it has nothing to do with lighting. Pretty sure we all predicted their facial recognition software wouldn’t work for people of color. @DiplomaPriv4All

Ok @ExamSoft support told me to “sit directly in front of a lighting source such as a lamp.” I’m receiving the same issue preventing me from completing the NY UBE mock exam. Facial recognition technology is racist. @DiplomaPriv4All do y’all think I have “adequate lighting”?

12:05 PM · Sep 11, 2020

399 154 people are Tweeting about this
ENDNOTES

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
7 Boyd (2020).
8 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
28 Newsome (2020).
29 Ibid.
32 Johnson (2020).
Periods don't stop for pandemics: 
An increase in period poverty and inequality in COVID-19

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ABSTRACT*
Stigmatization of menstrual cycles conceals period poverty on a global scale. Period or menstrual poverty is defined as when those who experience monthly cycles do not have their adequate menstrual hygiene management (MHM) needs met. These needs include access to sanitary products, washing facilities, waste management, pain killers, and information about menstruation.1 The COVID-19 pandemic is demonstrating the importance of this understudied dimension of poverty and inequality. Each day during this pandemic, an estimated 800 million women and girls are menstruating worldwide.2 In the United States, those who experience menstruation are facing greater challenges than usual in accessing period products and care, especially with state-wide lockdowns and the resulting economic downturn.

Menstrual Poverty
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 500 million women and girls globally lacked adequate access to MHM, and the pandemic is expected to increase this number further.3 The World Bank predicts that the pandemic will be responsible for the first increase in global poverty since 1998, pushing an estimated 49 million people into extreme poverty.4 The virus is affecting the most vulnerable and marginalized people—demonstrating the flaws in our institutions. Economic, societal, and health pressures from the pandemic are amplifying existing inequalities. Like many dimensions of poverty and inequality, menstrual poverty is worsened during the coronavirus pandemic. Economic and financial pressures threaten to push more people into period poverty.

In the United States, roughly 21.4 million of the 38.1 million people living in poverty are women. The racial, ethnic, and gendered dimensions within this statistic vary—with Black and Hispanic women, and gender non-conforming, non-binary, and transmen facing higher rates of poverty, discrimination, and inequality.5 The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of people falling into poverty. While there are many dimensions to poverty and inequality, menstrual poverty is seldom acknowledged and understudied.

Not having the capability of fulfilling hygienic needs during menstruation can lead to job loss, missed school, and serious health complications. A menstruating person will have an estimated 450 periods during their lifetime. Tampons and pads should be changed every 4 to 6 hours, meaning the average person uses about 23 tampons per cycle. Over a lifetime, a menstruating person could use approximately 10,350 tampons.6 This monthly occurrence is expensive. In the United States, a menstruating person could spend over $2,000 in a lifetime on period products alone. Financial and physical access are the main drivers of period poverty, yet the stigmatization of bleeding silences this kind of poverty.

Stigma of Menstruation
Stigma around menstruation makes the topic a taboo, leading to limiting information on periods and hygiene. The consequences of stigmas and taboos can be detrimental to health and dignity. Inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities in schools have increased negative cultural norms on menstruation—impacting school attendance of girls.8 In Nigeria, 25 percent of surveyed women reported lacking adequate privacy for menstrual hygiene management.9 A UNICEF study finds that 7 percent of surveyed women and girls in Kenya noted using cloths, blankets, chicken feathers, mud, or newspapers when there was no access to pads or tampons.10 In 2018, only 6 percent of schools in Bangladesh provided education on menstrual health and management.11 Lack of dignity and information provided to menstruating people perpetuate the stigma of periods being dirty and taboo. These stigmas and feelings towards a natural and biological monthly occurrence among those who experience periods hinder access to education, hygienic management, and policies addressing inequities. Shedding light on

* Data for people who experience menstruation who do not identify as their assigned gender at birth was not available for the majority of studies. If the study directly says “women and/or girls” then the paper explicitly uses the same term. If it was left ambiguous, this paper adopts more gender neutral terms.
Periods and reducing the stigma are likely to expand policies mitigating period poverty and access to products.

**Periods in the Pandemic**

Globally, COVID-19 is impacting the lives of menstruating people in several dimensions. Those already struggling to access and afford period products feel heightened financial stressors from the pandemic. Further, the lack of access to information and services, due to the stigma of menstruation, and reduced access to clean water, perpetuate this threat of further period poverty. A survey of health professionals in 30 different countries found 73 percent of participants experienced limited access to products due to shortages or disrupted supply chains caused by the pandemic. Access, affordability, and sanitary MHM needs are not being met around the globe—perpetuating period poverty and setting back overall gender equality.

Individuals who previously relied on public institutions for menstrual hygiene products are being impacted by large-scale lockdowns. Many community centers and schools provide free pads and tampons to students experiencing periods. Under lockdown and pandemic restrictions, many of these facilities have had to close their doors to prevent the spread—eliminating the availability of hygiene products to those in need. UNESCO estimates that nearly 90 percent of students enrolled in education programs globally are affected by pandemic lockdowns—around 743 million of the students are girls.

COVID-19 lockdowns not only prevent access to MHM, but impact financial institutions and local economies. Unemployment rates continue to increase, further limiting menstruating individuals’ ability to afford the already expensive products. At the beginning of the pandemic, many shoppers stocked up on period products in bulk when stores closed from lockdowns, wiping out shelves of products and preventing those who can only afford smaller purchases from accessing the products.

During the health pandemic, the danger of inadequate sanitation and hygiene mechanisms heightens and can even become life-threatening. Without access to proper sanitation and clean water, period poverty can threaten the life of a menstruating individual from infection or unhygienic period care. Additional limitations on movement have restricted access to clean water and hygiene facilities. A shortage of resources has made obtaining even soap more difficult. Menstruating people in rural areas might have experienced suspensions in water and waste management during the pandemic—making hygienic care and disposal of period products difficult.

**Menstruating in the United States**

It is easy to see period poverty as an inequality of “elsewhere,” yet in the United States, menstrual products are considered luxury products and thus subjected to taxes in 30 states. In California alone, menstruating people pay over $20 million in taxes on period products. Pads and tampons are some of the most asked for products at food pantries and homeless shelters. Reports of women trading food stamps for tampons highlight the demand. Stigma, shyness, and shame make menstruating people avoid asking shelters and pantries for more products, preventing the facilities from providing adequate supplies.

The stigma of bleeding is widespread. A survey of teenagers finds that 80 percent of menstruating teens felt a negative association with periods—feeling that they were “gross or unsanitary.” Similarly, 71 percent of the teenagers felt self-conscious and embarrassed when on their period. Before the pandemic, many menstruating people already experienced a sense of inequality. COVID-19 shut-downs eliminated the option of many to access free or discounted products from schools and public spaces. While store shelves were being raided for toilet paper, tampons and pads were also impacted by panic buying. From unemployment to lack of access due to panic buying, the pandemic increased the costs associated with menstruation products and hence contributed to the inequality of menstrual poverty.

Many students might depend on their schools for period products because of cultural reasons. At home, menstruation could be taboo, stigmatized, or ignored. In the U.S. before COVID-19, one in five teenagers who experience menstruation reported having struggled to afford period products or were not able to purchase them at all. Thirty percent of New York City public school students live below the poverty line. In 2016, the New York City government introduced free period products in public schools, shelters, and prisons—increasing access and mitigating period poverty. However, COVID-19 prevention has led to public school districts around the country to withhold in-person learning, eliminating schools as a place where menstruating students can access period products.

Lockdown closures have also restricted access to public bathrooms and washing facilities—impacting the health and dignity of the most vulnerable of menstruating people. Those experiencing houselessness and undocumented migrants are particularly affected by this, though data is limited. Decreased access to period products and facilities could pose further health risks during the pandemic. Before the virus, three out of every five students surveyed...
had worn a tampon or pad for longer than four hours due to lack of access to period products or a clean facility. The longer the products remain in use, the higher the risk of infection or Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). Without access to period products, low-income people who menstruate resort to using rags, adult diapers, tissues, paper towels, and toilet paper to manage menstruation. Substitution of period products with anything other than pads, menstrual cups, or tampons also increases the risk of infection and loss of dignity.

**Inequalities Within Period Poverty**

Within period poverty, there are groups of people who are marginalized more than others. Women make up 56 percent of people living in poverty in the United States. However, racial inequities, disability, and gender make menstruating a poverty and inequality issue. Indigenous, Black, and Latinx women experience the highest rates of poverty in the United States. Black women, representing less than 13 percent of women in the U.S. population make up almost 23 percent of women in poverty. Latinx women represent 18 percent of women in the U.S. and make up over 27 percent of women in poverty. Further, 23 percent of women with disabilities live in poverty, in comparison with less than 18 percent of men.

Intersections of discrimination based on gender identity or expression add as an additional indicator of poverty in non-cisgender straight women. In 2019, a survey found that almost 30 percent of transgender and gender-nonconforming people lived in poverty. However, the lack of additional studies and underreporting perpetuate poverty and inequality. Gender non-binary, non-conforming, and trans men who menstruate are greatly affected by period poverty and are often overlooked. Those assigned female at birth but present differently face additional barriers in discrimination when accessing period products. Gender inequality is imminently clear in period poverty—but the dimensions of whom it affects is an inequality even within period poverty. Lack of access to period products is not new to these populations, but additional COVID-19 turmoil and lockdowns further prevent access.

The economic impacts of COVID-19 have increased financial stressors on populations that are already struggling. Households hit the most by the pandemic’s economic fallout have been that of Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and immigrants. There is insufficient basic access to food and shelter in marginalized populations. An estimated one in six adults with children in the household lack sufficient food with Black and Hispanic households being twice as likely to not have sufficient food during the pandemic. Further, one in three Black renters and one in six Latinx renters were reported to be behind on rent. The unemployment rate in October 2020 among Black workers was almost 11 percent, and 8 percent for Latinx workers compared to 6 percent for white unemployment. In April 2020, the unemployment rate among Black workers was almost 17 percent, and for Hispanic workers, there was almost 19 percent unemployment. In almost every state, the number of SNAP participants increased. Women accounted for over 110 percent of job losses in December 2020, most of which were from the service-sector industry with majority Latinx and Black women workers. These additional financial stressors caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are affecting marginalized populations disproportionately.

With increased financial pressures, paying for period products becomes less feasible—forcing low-income people to choose between basic necessities. A 2019 study found that two-thirds of low-income women in St. Louis, Missouri did not have the resources to purchase menstrual products at some point during the year. A menstruating person in the United States spends an average of $7 a month on period products. Unemployment and general economic hardships during the pandemic have made affording these monthly necessities even more difficult. Menstrual hygiene products are not covered by Medicaid, SNAP, or WIC, further limiting access of vulnerable populations. The economic effects of the pandemic have exacerbated the unaffordability of the necessary products.

**Conclusion**

The impact of COVID-19 on marginalized populations in the United States is amplifying existing inequalities at a heightened level. Inability to manage menstrual hygiene can result in missing school or work, societal discrimination, and health consequences—negatively affecting gender equality indicators. Low-income and vulnerable menstruating people in the United States feel the impact of period poverty at an unequal level.

Efforts have been made to mitigate period poverty during the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, Democratic legislators in the United States introduced the Menstrual Equity for All Act (H.R. 1882) which aims to “improve access to period products in schools, incarceration facilities, homeless shelters, businesses, and public federal buildings as well allow period products to be covered by Medicaid and pre-tax flexible spending accounts”. However, the bill is not likely to pass. Under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, legislators pushed for funds from health savings accounts (HSA) and flexible spending accounts (FSA) to be able to be used for period...
products. While the current inclusion of menstrual products in the CARES Act is conditional on the pandemic, these efforts are mainstreaming the necessity of period products. Continued coverage of period products under social safety net programs is a good first step in battling period poverty. Increasing pressure on states to eliminate the “luxury” tax-label on period products will help to combat the stigma of periods.

While the pandemic has shed a light on disparities and inequalities, racial, ethnic, and gendered, menstrual poverty continues to cross all dimensions. Yet stigmatization of the menstruating body prevents menstrual equity. Overcoming this stigma, as well as eliminating the label of “luxury” on menstrual hygiene products, is necessary for achieving menstrual equity. The pandemic’s visible disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable can push policies to further capacitate all. Creating inclusive policies that address the most natural functions of the human body is possible and necessary.

ENDNOTES

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Campaign Against Dengue and other Mosquito-Borne Diseases in Informal Settlements in Guayas, Ecuador

by Brian Bayer, MID '21
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To: Director, Ecuador National Service for the Control of Transmission of Arthropod-borne Diseases

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Comprehensive community-driven campaigns in informal settlements have proven an effective way to combat vector-borne diseases. Mosquitoes are the main vector for many tropical diseases in the developing world—a problem exacerbated by an acute lack of knowledge in impoverished communities regarding prevention or reduction of these diseases. Dengue fever, Zika, malaria, and chikungunya are major vector-borne threats in warm tropical areas with long rainy seasons. The best way to prevent sickness or death from these diseases is prevention from bites. Once a person has been infected, the only treatment is rest, hydration, and acetaminophen for pain relief and fever control.

In Guayaquil, Ecuador, dengue fever is the biggest perennial mosquito-borne threat, followed by sporadic epidemics of Zika and chikungunya. Traditionally, mosquito nets and fogging have been the main mitigation measures to limit the impact of vector-borne diseases in Guayaquil. Sorocaba, Brazil’s response to the 2010 dengue fever outbreak suggests novel additions to traditional measures. These additions could be integral to mosquito control in informal settlements, where standing water is hard to eliminate. Community-driven initiatives and educational campaigns have been identified to help eliminate stagnant water and improve rapid response to infection areas.

This paper proposes the establishment of a comprehensive community-focused campaign against mosquito-borne diseases in the Monte Sinai...
informal settlement in Guayaquil, based on the model of prevention and control in Sorocaba. By quickly mobilizing resources to combat mosquito breeding in areas with infection, disease control will improve.

**BACKGROUND**

The Spread of Vector-borne Diseases in Informal Settlements

The spread of vector-borne diseases in densely populated urban areas and peri-urban slums is well documented. Malaria, common throughout much of the developing world, offers a strong meter stick by which to measure how these diseases spread, specifically in informal settlements. *The International Journal of Health Geographics* notes that “uncontrolled urbanization has altered urban landscapes in ways that may increasingly support vector breeding,” increasing its prevalence and persistence in cities and surrounding areas, and that urban malaria is explicitly linked with human activities such as urban agriculture, construction, and open water storage. Furthermore, the study asserts, “malaria prevalence can be significantly higher in informal settlements than in other urban landscapes due to poor housing infrastructure, lack of bed nets, and inadequate financial resources to buy antimalarial drugs, among others.” The spread of malaria follows similar patterns as the spread of dengue, chikungunya, and Zika.

In planned urbanizations, where standing water can be eliminated with well-drained neighborhood streets and bed nets can be widely distributed and used, mosquitoes pose less of a threat. In informal settlements like those in the outskirts of Guayaquil, Ecuador, eliminating standing water is more difficult since most of the neighborhoods are built without any formal urban plan, running water, or proper drainage. In Guayaquil, “unplanned settlements have developed around the estuary, and therefore were not provided with municipal services ... Therefore, these populations are also likely at greater risk of the persistence of vector breeding habitats, facilitating and sustaining dengue outbreaks.” (See Appendix for maps.) There is a statistically significant correlation between a lack of municipal services, including piped water and sewage and trash collection, and higher rates of dengue.

**Monte Sinai (Mt. Sinai) Informal Settlement**

The community of Monte Sinai is a rapidly expanding informal settlement in the northern outskirts of Guayaquil, Ecuador. With approximately 26,600 homes and more than 133,000 residents, much of this neighborhood was settled outside the purview of the law, on land illegally sold by land traffickers. A 2012 report by Hogar de Cristo (a nonprofit that works in the community) found that 99 percent of the residents had monthly income below the minimum wage, only 52 percent had completed at least primary school, and 48 percent of the houses were made of cane. These are all factors shown to contribute to higher transmission rates of vector-borne diseases in underdeveloped neighborhoods. The report also details poor drainage of the largely unpaved streets and lack of access to clean water—other risk factors for the spread of dengue and other mosquito-borne diseases.

**About Dengue in Ecuador**

![Figure 1. Cases of Dengue Reported in Ecuador](image)

Dengue cases in Ecuador over the past five years demonstrate a sharp decline from 2015–2018, followed by a trending ascent in the number of reported cases. Source: Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization—Platform for Health Information in the Americas.

In Guayaquil, Ecuador, dengue is the most common mosquito-borne disease. Between 2019 and 2020, there have been 25,819 cases of dengue reported in Ecuador, including 87 severe cases and eight deaths. This is a microcosm of an epidemic that has been happening all across the tropical regions of the Americas since 2018 and breached a record-setting 3.1 million cases in 2019, causing 1,500 deaths in Latin America and the Caribbean. While dengue epidemics tend to recur every three to five years, the collision of this epidemic with COVID-19 has caused greater problems both in measuring the cases and treating severe cases, especially in the overwhelmed healthcare system in Guayaquil, Ecuador.
**Model Project: Sorocaba, Brazil**

In 2010, the small Brazilian town of Sorocaba, an hour from São Paolo, managed to successfully control the outbreak of dengue fever to just 365 cases, compared to the nearly 1 million cases that occurred throughout the rest of Brazil that year. The success in Sorocaba was due to a rapid-response task force complemented by GIS mapping, insecticide spraying, and careful testing and tracking of cases.

The lynchpin of the campaign’s success was public engagement. The mayor emphasized this point, indicating that prevention through awareness and changing public perceptions of dengue made the program effective. Since this initial successful campaign, the rate of dengue and other diseases carried by mosquitoes has risen in Sorocaba. Studies point to two factors driving this: Mosquitoes have begun to develop resistance to the insecticides and the warmer temperatures and heavier rainfall of the past decade has increased the prevalence of mosquitoes and how often they bite. This implies that one of the most sustainable strategies for combating the spread of dengue and other vector-borne diseases in informal settlements is with surveillance, public awareness, and public engagement.

**Challenges**

**COVID-19 and other diseases**

The presentation of dengue, Zika, and chikungunya can be similar to the symptoms of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), making accurate recording more difficult. Further, because of the airborne transmission of COVID-19, people ill for any reason are more wary of going to health clinics and hospitals to get tested, for fear of being around COVID-infected individuals.

This also makes surveillance and mapping more difficult, since symptomatic individuals who traditionally would have sought treatment may prefer to use home remedies. Ecuador’s Ministry of Public Health has expanded testing centers and programs to respond to COVID-19. These clinics should be encouraged to channel these resources into improved screening for vector-borne diseases. This would improve the rapid response information pipeline.11

While COVID-19 makes tracking the spread of infectious diseases and treating infected individuals difficult, especially in informal settlements, it has created greater dependence on virtual learning and information sharing that could benefit an information dissemination campaign. When the pandemic broke out, Ecuadorian churches were quick to transition their services online, and when the academic year began in May 2020, schools also followed a virtual model. Access to electronic devices and quality internet connections has been a consistent challenge, but there is now greater familiarity with virtual information sharing. This development could offer a viable, socially distanced avenue to transmit a mosquito eradication campaign to broad numbers of people in a safe way.12

**Accountability, Trust, and Community Participation**

The success of this campaign relies on the widespread adoption of anti-dengue practices, most specifically eliminating potential dengue breeding areas. In a community with over 26,600 homes, it would be a major challenge to make sure that every household is pulling their weight in eliminating these water sources. In informal settlements, community trust—though vital for this program’s success—can be hampered by unwillingness to work together towards a common goal. This can be overcome with transparent communication and proactive stakeholder engagement in decision-making.

The success of a campaign of this nature depends on trust in both institutions and the community. During a similar campaign in Cambodia, many who were surveyed reported feeling uncomfortable asking their neighbors to participate in prevention measures, even though they largely agreed that if someone had asked them to participate, they likely “would be happy to follow their advice.”15

**Information Sharing**

Traditionally, the informational element of these campaigns could be accomplished by canvassing teams going door-to-door and the sharing of information at large social gatherings. Both of these strategies would be relatively unsafe under current WHO guidelines to control the spread of COVID-19, but creative solutions are available. As various elections worldwide have demonstrated, canvassing can still take place if the campaign teams properly use PPE and practice social distancing. And in-person community events are returning to Guayaquil under strict stipulations, so some leeway for physical events is possible. Technology could also be used to spread information more broadly via social media and other media sources, but the campaign coordinators must acknowledge the significant digital divide that leaves many families without access to electronic devices or internet connectivity. Any anti-dengue campaign must be cautious not to incidentally spread an even deadlier disease in their efforts.
**Proposal: Campaign to Limit the Transmission of Mosquito-borne Diseases in the Monte Sinai Informal Community**

Based on the success of the 2010 program in Sorocaba, Brazil, this paper proposes a similar campaign in the informal Monte Sinai settlement, drawing on established best practices for vector control. This campaign must involve stakeholders at every level, including public health officials, community organizations, government agents, and the community members. The efforts to manage the ongoing dengue outbreak should be sponsored by the Ministry of Health, with support from the Pan American Health Organization, and managed by a trusted nonprofit in the Monte Sinai neighborhood focused on health and community development. The campaign must feature several core components:

- Dengue surveillance and GIS mapping
- Rapid community alerts
- Insecticide spraying and fumigation (fogging)

The sustainability of these efforts and the ultimate reduction in the overall number of dengue cases will hinge on the successful deployment of the final component: a community-driven education campaign. Studies consistently confirm that when the community is involved, public health campaigns are more successful. In Monte Sinai, they can look to existing institutions as education centers. Churches, schools, and non-profit organizations can host information sessions where public health officials can present on prevention of mosquito-borne diseases. The educational component must emphasize the importance of eliminating sources of standing, stagnant water where mosquitoes can breed. Such sources include discarded cans and bottles, old tires, open containers, and loose plastic bags, to name a few.

Although COVID-19 presents several challenges to these response measures, it also presents a new opportunity: The educational campaigns can take advantage of the newly developed and strengthened virtual information-sharing channels to distribute information more widely, and the now-abundant COVID-19 testing sites can also offer dengue testing. Positive diagnoses of dengue would have to be shared with the municipal units responsible for rapid response.

**Cost**

Other countries which have implemented vector control strategies have determined through cost-benefit analysis that the cost of the management program is less than the cost of dealing with the disease. In Malaysia, for example, the National Dengue Vector Control Program cost the country US$73.5 million, while the dengue illness itself cost the country US$102.2 million. Community participation models that eliminate mosquito-breeding sites have been found to be a cost-efficient method of dengue control: One multi-country study indicates that the cost of dengue per episode ranges between $141 to $385 for inpatient and from $40 to $158 outpatient and concluded that it is less expensive for countries to mitigate the risk of dengue with preventive measures, such as those suggested here, than it is for the country to shoulder the socio-economic burden of treating those who have become infected.

**Benefits**

- Although dengue only has a <1 percent mortality rate as of 2020, the benefits of reducing and potentially eliminating this disease in Ecuador include regaining lost productivity due to the disease.
- Since any campaign against dengue would also effectively combat other mosquito-borne diseases, this would also help reduce the occurrence of chikungunya and Zika in Guayaquil.
- Reduction in these diseases is especially important during the current COVID-19 pandemic in order to reduce comorbidities and hospitalizations.

**Conclusion**

Dengue fever, carried by mosquitoes, is a major annual threat in the coastal Ecuadorian province of Guayas, claiming the health and lives of residents. In informal settlements that suffer from ubiquitous standing water in storage containers and poor drainage, mosquitoes breed and spread diseases dangerously quickly.

Traditional mitigation measures to reduce the transmission of vector-borne diseases in Ecuador have relied on municipal fogging and the personal use of mosquito nets. This paper recommends the implementation of two additional elements in the campaign against...
mosquitoes in informal settlements: a community education component encouraging individual households to find and eliminate standing water on their property, and a rapid response team deployed to more acute areas of the neighborhood when cases are positively diagnosed based on GIS mapping data.

Based on analysis of similar successful community-driven campaigns, it is reasonable to predict that the cost of this type of campaign would be less than the cost of care for those who become infected. Furthermore, since this campaign would seek to reduce and eliminate mosquito breeding grounds, it would simultaneously tackle the threat of other mosquito-borne diseases like chikungunya and Zika. When the community is engaged and involved as participants, advocates, and proponents of their own health, the positive outcomes are shared by all.

**APPENDIX**

Map of Monte Sinai Informal Settlement in Guayaquil, Guayas, Ecuador

City of Guayaquil Comparative Map

**Figure A:** Guayaquil population density map; **Figure B:** Map of areas lacking municipal sewage; **Figure C:** Map of areas lacking piped water; **Figure D:** Dengue Hotspots; Star indicates Mount Sinai settlement Source: Lippi, C. A., et al. (2018). The Social and Spatial Ecology of Dengue Presence and Burden during an Outbreak in Guayaquil, Ecuador, 2012. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 15(4), 827. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15040827.

**ENDNOTES**

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scholarship, tutoring, and leadership development to youth living in extreme poverty in Guayaquil, Ecuador.” Throughout the pandemic, their team has tried to bridge the technological gap between the connectivity required by the largely remote environment and the lack of resources that people in extreme poverty face. They have tracked how virtual information sharing has been a boon to learning for their students but also a burden for many families who do not have access to computers or internet. For more information on the technology disparities, visit thestarfishchange.org/.


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Food Insecurity in Afghanistan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) 2020 categorizes Afghanistan as one of ten countries experiencing extreme food crises—with 11.3 million people in food crisis in 2019, 37 percent of the country's population needs urgent food and nutrition assistance. Based on the evaluation of previous policies implemented to fight food insecurity, Afghanistan's most effective policy response to this crisis should target water variability and its agricultural sector. While the government has enacted various policies to address poverty and food shortages in the region, lack of access to water undermines any efforts to stabilize food accessibility through other political, social, or economic means.

PROBLEM EXPLANATION

For the last two decades, Afghanistan has suffered from protracted conflict, growing climate concerns, and economic instability. These elements undermined development efforts and resource availability, contributing to the spread of food insecurity in Afghanistan. Food insecurity centers around the availability and accessibility of food, both of which are problematic in a region where drought stifles food production and subsequent price shocks deplete household budgets. In poor areas, the combination of ongoing conflict and unstable wheat production undermines food accessibility for those who need it most.2

A 2007 report by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) identified numerous causes of food insecurity—highlighting conflict, lack of access to drinking water, prevalent indebtedness, lack of employment opportunities, and other vulnerabilities.3 Ten years later, a report by the UN World Food Programme (WFP) added climate change and natural disasters to this list of primary vulnerabilities.4 Due to Afghanistan's semi-arid environment, the country has a history of rainfall variability that undermines crop growth and access to nutrition. The Global Report on Food Crises 2020 highlights the impact of the 2018 drought and subsequent seasonal flooding on Afghan agriculture, a sector that employs 85 percent of the country's workforce.5 Climate models predict continued drought and rising temperatures over time, leading to soil erosion and decreased water supply.6

Furthermore, Afghanistan is composed of 82 percent flat rangeland and 10 percent arable land—a severe disadvantage for crop production.7 The country's unpredictable water availability due to drought, inadequate irrigation infrastructure, and fluctuating grain prices exacerbate its food insecurity crisis. Because agricultural use makes up 90 percent of Afghanistan's total water consumption, water accessibility is a key component of domestic food production and economic well-being.8 The Afghan government estimates that rivers and streams flowing within-country rainfall or snow supply 84.6 percent of the country's irrigation water.9 However, almost all these rivers flow into neighboring countries, with limited means of storing water for future use in Afghanistan.10

POLICY SOLUTIONS

Previous development policies targeted food distribution—one of the largest being the WFP Post-Conflict Relief and Rehabilitation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (PRRO 10427.0). Operating from 2006 until 2008, this project had a broad goal of enhancing the food security of Afghans in remote areas.11 It was spearheaded by a range of actors in every province of Afghanistan and assisted 2.1 million citizens. However, the PRRO 10427.0 evaluation notes that 26.7 percent less than the planned tonnage of food was distributed over three years. Additionally, food distribution in the southern region of Afghanistan had to be suspended in 2007 because trucks carrying food were frequently attacked, and the program evaluation highlighted that food often never reached its intended populations.12

The Afghan government also established the Afghanistan Strategic Grain Reserve (SGR) Project to build silos for grain in preparation for crises and to stabilize the price of wheat.13 The first of these silos opened in 2013 in Kabul with a capacity of 22,000 metric tons of grain, and cost $7.7 million to construct.14 The project concluded in September 2020 with a total of $20.3 million committed to its completion and “unsatisfactory” results listed for the final evaluation's implementation progress.15 While grain reserves ensure that a land-locked country like Afghanistan maintains self-reliance during a crisis, the silos cannot hold enough food to truly sustain its population in any crisis lasting longer than a few months. Furthermore, it was already evident that grain
often did not reach the neediest populations. Afghan officials were arrested for selling the silos’ grain to local markets or diverting it to personal contacts instead of allowing it to reach provinces burdened by food shortage.16

A USAID investigation concluded that domestic grain prices were more volatile as a result of the SGR initiative. The project silos stored grain for times of crisis, but also held wheat the government bought from the domestic grain market when wheat prices were low.17 This was intended to maintain a nationwide price floor to stabilize wheat prices and farmers’ incomes. However, the government did not have the institutional capability to accurately buy and sell grain to positively impact market prices. Instead, the prices of wheat were more volatile, and the initiative failed to support households already struggling to obtain food.

While reliable income for an agricultural sector that employs much of the nation is critical, Afghanistan must find ways to support the sector without the volatility created by market intervention. Ultimately, the private grain market must stabilize itself enough to supply the population’s food needs—even the volatility created by market intervention. The project silos stored grain for times of crisis, but also held wheat the government bought from the domestic grain market when wheat prices were low.17 This was intended to maintain a nationwide price floor to stabilize wheat prices and farmers’ incomes. However, the government did not have the institutional capability to accurately buy and sell grain to positively impact market prices. Instead, the prices of wheat were more volatile, and the initiative failed to support households already struggling to obtain food.

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Policy Recommendation
Historically, Afghan farmers have faced scarce and expensive access to irrigation water, and surface water shortages caused large reductions in domestic crop production. Each time these shortages occur, the price of food skyrockets.19 Foreign agricultural imports and aid have supplemented grain deficits for many years, causing domestic grain prices to fall. This, in turn, reduces future domestic production and does not address the underlying factors of agricultural shortage or local nutritional instability.20 Limited storage capacity for water has long been an obstacle for stable crop production in Afghanistan, which undermines any long-term solutions to stabilize food accessibility.

To address this problem, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) established the Arghandab Integrated Water Resources Development Project, in 2019. ADB committed $348.78 million to increase the height and storage capacity of the Dahla Dam, Afghanistan’s second-largest dam.21 The project will also include upgrading canals to improve downstream irrigation and strengthening water management institutions. Project managers will provide on-farm training and advisory services for farmers to improve knowledge of water productivity and monitoring practices or technologies.22 The project’s overall goal is to improve the reliability and efficient use of water supply in agriculture to encourage sustainable economic growth and greater food accessibility.23

Previously, there was limited construction of new reservoirs to store floodwater and little expansion of water management strategies in Afghanistan.24 After the Dahla Dam was constructed by the United States in 1952 as an irrigation dam, it was gradually neglected and filled with silt during decades of fighting. There were plans to repair the dam and take advantage of its potential for water management in 2011, but conflict and inattention to water infrastructure hindered efforts.25 The dam provides irrigation water for Afghanistan's Arghandab River Valley, along with the urban and village water supplies in the region. Many residents in Kandahar—a city of about 600,000—do not have access to clean water. A portion of the Dahla Dam’s water will be channeled to Kandahar to service its population with safe drinking water.26

By increasing the amount of water stored in the springtime, the region will have increased and more reliable irrigation supplies during the driest seasons and years. The added supply of year-round water from the Dahla Dam will also protect against increased extraction of groundwater, which could present larger ecological and financial problems in the future.27 Additionally, the project increases consumer purchasing power through crop price reductions by eliminating food deficits. Because low household income is another key element of food insecurity in Afghanistan, increasing crop production lowers the market price of crops and ensures households can purchase more food with the money they already have.28 Finally, the project prepares the region for climate disasters by establishing infrastructure to manage water effectively and adapt to seasonal shifts in weather.29

Earlier food distribution and grain reserve programs provide finite relief for certain Afghan populations, but negatively impact domestic markets and do not offer sustainable solutions to food insecurity. However, the ADB grant project targets domestic crop production and related food prices through adequate water supply. By steadying Afghanistan’s food production, this project supports local farmers’ livelihood and maintains the critical resources needed to grow crops. While any comprehensive solution to the issue of food insecurity must be multi-sectoral, this project targets the long-term problem of sustainable natural resource management and food insecurity.

26 The dam provides irrigation water for Afghanistan's Arghandab River Valley, along with the urban and village water supplies in the region. Many residents in Kandahar—a city of about 600,000—do not have access to clean water. A portion of the Dahla Dam’s water will be channeled to Kandahar to service its population with safe drinking water.

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29 Finally, the project prepares the region for climate disasters by establishing infrastructure to manage water effectively and adapt to seasonal shifts in weather.
ENDNOTES


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Brazil's Tragic Paradox: How the world's second-largest food exporter struggles to confront food insecurity at home

by Juliana Monteiro Bernardino, MID '21
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Executive Summary
Brazil is the second-largest food exporter in the world, and yet 40 percent of its population faces food insecurity.1 Access to healthy nutrition reflects the country's social inequalities. Households led by women and people who self-identify as Black and Brown face disproportionately high food insecurity rates. Government policies to eradicate hunger in the country have successfully lifted vulnerable populations out of food insecurity, while supporting small food producers. However, since 2016 these policies have been partially or fully defunded as part of an austerity agenda. As a result, fewer people have regular access to food, and all food insecurity levels have increased in the country.

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic that emerged in 2019, both food production and consumption have been negatively affected. Family farmers, who are responsible for 70 percent of the Brazilian food supply, do not have enough funds to produce or markets to sell their crops. On the other hand, food prices increased by 18 percent during 2020. In response to this economic crisis, the Brazilian federal government provided monthly emergency financial aid to 32 percent of its population from April to December 2020, targeting the most vulnerable groups. Citing insufficient funds, the government ended these cash transfers, leaving 36 percent of its beneficiaries without any other income sources.2 These factors have made food items less accessible.

Reduced investments in policies to reduce hunger combined with the economic crises accompanying COVID-19 have increased Brazil's food insecurity. Lower consumption of nutritious food increases the risk of health issues and reduces productivity. Therefore, the consequences spill over from individuals' livelihood to the national economy.

The Brazilian federal government must increase investments in programs that support small farmers in order to improve the overall health and nutrition of the Brazilian people. Moreover, crops from small farm establishments can be used by local governments, businesses, and nonprofits to supply food to the most vulnerable. The federal government should specifically include in its social protection beneficiaries database the ones who might fall into food insecurity. Members of civil society, such as community leaders, academic experts, and non-governmental organizations, need to be included in the design and implementation of policies to eradicate food insecurity. Considering the Brazilian geographical dimensions and varying socio-economic contexts, including different voices is crucial to propose interventions that are respectful of the country's various socio-economic realities.

Food security in Brazil
In 2017-2018, 40 percent of the Brazilian population faced food and nutritional insecurity to some degree.3 Food and Nutritional Insecurity (FNI) is a state in which an individual “lacks regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life.” 4 It ranges from mild to moderate to severe stages. While mild food insecurity is characterized by uncertainty in food access, moderate levels of FNI indicate an occasional lack of resources to acquire food. Finally, severe food insecurity is the complete absence of food for one or more days.

Brazil is the most socially unequal country in Latin America.5 Such inequalities translate into uneven access to essential resources, such as food, among people of different races, genders, and geographical locations. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, in 2017-2018, more than half of the North and Northeast regions lived without full and regular access to food (57 percent and 51.3 percent, respectively). On the other hand, in more economically developed areas, such as the South, there are fewer food-insecure households (21.7 percent). Gender disparities are also prevalent: While women lead 41.8 percent of homes in the country, 51.9 percent of households with severe food insecurity are headed by women. The same trend is observed with Black and Brown populations, who lead 54.6 percent of households in the country; 67.6 percent experienced some degree of food insecurity.6
Integrated policies had removed Brazil from the Hunger Map in 2014 for the first time in history. For the last two decades, the Brazilian government implemented public policies to eradicate hunger throughout the country in consultation with community leaders, nonprofit organizations, and academic experts. Bolsa Família (Family Allowance), a conditional cash transfer program created in 2003 to eradicate poverty and hunger, had reached more than 14 million households in 2020. Through the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), federal and local governments buy food staples directly from small family farms and provide them to social assistance institutions, public schools, and populations at risk of falling into food insecurity. The National School Meals Program (PNAE), which serves 38 million children in the country, had an average annual budget increase of 22 percent from 2004 to 2015. From 1999 to 2001, the malnutrition rate in Brazil was 11.9 percent. The social policies implemented successfully brought that down to 2.5 percent for 2008-2010.

Despite these achievements, these policies to eradicate food insecurity have faced budget cuts up to 100 percent since 2016. These investment reductions have initially been part of an austerity agenda implemented since 2016 by the interim president Michel Temer and have continued under the Bolsonaro administration. Both governments have created strategies to prioritize large agribusiness exporter companies to the detriment of small family farms, even though the latter produces more than half of the food that feeds the Brazilian population. This happens in a context in which agribusiness owners have considerable political and financial power, holding 44 percent of the seats in the House of Representatives and 39.5 percent of the Senate. Additionally, by defunding programs that support small family farmers, agribusiness owners are more likely to concentrate on expanding their land holdings and increasing their profits. Oxfam estimated that in 2017, agribusiness made up only 0.91 of the rural farms but held 45 percent of the available land suitable for agriculture in the country.

In 2018 the PAA’s budget was only 0.12 percent of the nearly R$610 million it received in 2015, which pushed family farmers into financial vulnerability and food insecurity. Programs to promote sustainable development among traditional communities, such as Indigenous lands and quilombos (communities of formerly enslaved people), were entirely defunded. Financial support for the distribution of essential food supply baskets to these same communities was cut by 67 percent. Additionally, the National Council for Food and Nutritional Security (CONSEA), formed by civil society representatives, was extinguished by presidential order on the first day of Jair Bolsonaro’s administration. The dismantling of CONSEA translated into fewer opportunities for nonprofit organizations, research institutes, youth leaders, and community-led organizations to work with policymakers to combat food insecurity in the country. Finally, there were no governmental initiatives to update the 2016-2019 Pluriannual Plan for Food and Nutrition Security (PPA), a triennial national plan to combat FNI in the country.

Defunding strategies to support food security is worrisome because food deprivation affects individuals’ health and well-being, as well as their ability to generate income, which in turn can perpetuate intergenerational socioeconomic inequality. Globally, around 45 percent of deaths among children under five years of age are linked to undernutrition. Additionally, undernourished preschool children tend to attain fewer grades of schooling throughout their education. This increases the likelihood of persistent poverty, as it is estimated that every additional grade of schooling raises wages by an average of 8 to 12 percent. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, certain cancers, and diabetes. The impacts of food insecurity also challenge government economies. In India, for example, stunting and micronutrient deficiencies led to an annual decrease in productivity of 2.95 percent of the country’s GDP. It is estimated that for every dollar spent in iron supplementation, salt iodization, and vitamin A provision, there is a return of $24, $30, and $40 in economic benefits, respectively. Therefore, increasing food security is an investment for personal and national benefits.

**Food (re)sources**

Family farms produce 70 percent of the food consumed in the country. However, they operate with less land and less than six times fewer public investments than agribusiness. Family farms are characterized by polycultures (simultaneous cultivation of different crops) and provide at least half of the beef, milk, and poultry consumed in Brazil (59 percent, 60 percent, and 50 percent, respectively). Thus, food and nutritional security are intrinsically related to a thriving family farm sector. Governmental programs created to support small-scale farmers have faced budget cuts since 2016. From 2006 to 2017, employment in family farms fell by nearly 18 percent, while jobs in non-family farms grew by 17. A similar trend is observed for the number of farms and area occupied, as demonstrated in Figure 1. These inequalities will lead to further increases in food insecurity in Brazil.

Brazil produces enough crops to export to 180 countries. Most of this production comes from monocultures (the agricultural practice of growing a single crop) owned by agribusiness. In fact, the value exported by this type
of farming corresponds to 60 percent of the country's trade balance. However, agribusiness production is not aimed at feeding the Brazilian population. Budget cuts in programs to eradicate hunger along with lack of investment in family farms, therefore, contribute to the intensified food insecurity in the country. Mild food insecurity was higher in 2017 than in 2004 when most social protection programs began to be implemented. Moderate and severe food insecurity has also increased, as seen in Figure 2. Thus, higher food production in Brazil does not lead to a more nourished population.

The impact of COVID-19 on food security
The coronavirus pandemic has impacted food availability. The pandemic that emerged with the uncontrolled spread of SARS-CoV-2 required lockdowns that shut down parts of food-related establishments, such as restaurants and farmers' markets. Outbreaks of COVID-19 among employees forced food industries to close down. Farmers' markets, for example, were suspended in many regions. Borders between municipalities were closed, which limited food distribution and travel options both for food buyers and producers. Besides the risk of food shortages, these restrictions have a direct impact on family agriculture. This type of farming depends heavily on local food trades and government initiatives, such as the National School Meals Program. This program stipulates that 30 percent of food provided in schools is purchased from family farmers. Thus, the absence of these factors harms family farmers' income and the availability of diverse, nutritious food stocks.

The pandemic forced 14 percent of the Brazilian population into unemployment, while food prices increased by 18 percent. Inflation, which reached its highest point in almost 30 years during the COVID-19 pandemic, was 16 times more acute in the food sector than in other sectors such as education and services. This is mainly driven by the devaluation of reais (the Brazilian currency).

Because prices for commodities are pegged to the U.S. dollar, the local currency's devaluation makes international trade more lucrative than commerce within the internal market. In fact, the exportation of agricultural products increased by 14.6 percent in September 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. As a result, despite increased food production, the food supply has fallen.

Since April 2020, the Brazilian Federal Government provided monthly cash transfers of R$600 to informal workers (R$1,200 to mothers head of the household), social protection beneficiaries, newly unemployed individuals, and micro-business owners. However, in September 2020, the government cut this payment in half. This resulted in incomes of R$300 and R$600 in a country where the average price of an essential food supply basket is R$500. For the one-third of Brazilians whose earnings are equivalent to the minimum wage or less (R$1,045 per month), at least 50 percent of their income is spent on food. Under the context of limited job opportunities, food insecurity will likely increase among the country's most vulnerable groups.

Closing schools due to lockdowns leads to unstable food sources for the 14 million children and teenagers who live under the poverty line. While 49 percent of the country's households reported that changes in their diet were necessary during the lockdown, the rate was 58 percent for the households with children and teenagers. The School Meals Program was adjusted to operate during the pandemic to assist all students who attend public schools, which was 80 percent of all students in the country in 2020. Food kits and food vouchers were distributed at some locations. Despite being an important initiative, this project was not sufficiently funded, and the food delivered that was supposed to last one month was only sufficient for ten days.

Price increases or unavailability of fresh produce has pushed Brazilians to consume ultra-processed food, sales of which increased by 16 percent during the pandemic. Moreover, anxiety, stress, and other mental health issues have been prevalent throughout the pandemic. This can lead to high consumption of unhealthy calories, comprised heavily of sugar and saturated fat. Consumption of ultra-processed food increases the chances of obesity by 26 percent, a condition that affected 22.1 percent of the Brazilian population in 2018.

Recommendations
The Brazilian government needs to identify citizens at risk of falling into FNI specifically. The Single Registry—called Cadastro Unico—created in 2001, functions as a unified database of low-income households and individuals. However, the pandemic has highlighted that not all of the economically vulnerable population is being identified by the government and cataloged in this database. Until the COVID-19 pandemic, 38.1 million Brazilians were not registered as workers of any kind or as beneficiaries of social protection policies. Referred to as “invisibles” by the Brazilian Minister of Economy, Paulo Guedes, even though they are nearly one-quarter of the Brazilian population, they are majority informal workers. They would have continued to go unnoticed if the pandemic had not required a new governmental response. The federal government conducts yearly surveys to
measure the scale of food insecurity in its National Household Sample Survey (PNAD). This survey is applied to household samples and, among other things, it predicts susceptibility of severe food insecurity considering different regions and levels of income. However, this survey does not capture the specificities of minority groups such as Indigenous and quilombos. Therefore, not all realities that lead to food insecurity are well captured by PNAD. It is necessary to invest in measurement tools capable of translating different realities faced by these minority groups.

Emergency financial aid needs to be complemented by social protection schemes of medium-long term coverage. Brazil has a comprehensive scope of social protection programs. The cash transfer Bolsa Família, for example, assists people who live below the poverty line. Brasil Sem Miséria (Brazil Without Extreme Poverty) promotes “cooperation among social programs in education, health, social welfare, sanitation, and electricity, with economic and job policies” to guarantee stable income sources and enhance access to public services. With the end of the emergency financial aid, 60 percent of the population has unstable income sources, if any. According to the IMF, the Brazilian economy is predicted to contract by 9 percent in 2020 and recover only 3.6 percent in 2021. Thus, it is necessary to guarantee that the unemployed, informal workers, and other vulnerable groups have continuous access to income and quality food. Ongoing social protection programs, such as those mentioned above, need to have broader coverage to include all individuals who are likely to face food insecurity.

Direct food channels between family farmers and low-income communities increase access to fresh food. Nearly 12 million people live in the favelas (low-income informal settlements) in Brazil, mostly Black and Brown people. People in these communities have low access to fresh and nutritious food due to financial and geographical constraints. An alternative is to buy crops from small farmers and deliver them to the favelas. Similar projects have been implemented by nonprofit organizations, such as the NGO Campo Favela, which has assisted nearly 80,000 families and supported 1,500 family farms from March 2020 to January 2021. In order to prevent food insecurity more broadly, such initiatives must be implemented at a larger scale by state and municipal governments. Moreover, some quilombos and urban Indigenous territories have limited financial and material resources to produce their own crops. In many cases, fresh and nutritious food becomes geographically or financially inaccessible. With the cuts in agricultural development investments in these communities, quilombos and Indigenous communities must also be included in the food distribution programs.

Members of civil society, such as community leaders, academic experts, and non-governmental organizations, need to be included in the design and implementation of policies to eradicate food insecurity. The pandemic has underscored the rooted inequalities in Brazil. Thus, different socio-economic realities, such as the ones faced by women, Indigenous groups, and the Black and Brown population, must be represented in decision-making environments. The National Council for Food and Nutritional Security, for example, has transformed civil society demands into policy proposals presented directly to policymakers. The absence of such platforms leads to policy designs that do not successfully address the Brazilian population’s different realities regarding access to food.
APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1 – Acronyms and Programs in the original language (Portuguese) and its respective English translation as stated in this paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Term in Portuguese</th>
<th>Term in English (Free translation)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FNI</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Food and Nutritional Insecurity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSEA</td>
<td>Conselho Nacional de Segurança Alimentar</td>
<td>National Council for Food and Nutritional Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPA</td>
<td>Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos</td>
<td>Food Acquisition Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNAE</td>
<td>Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar</td>
<td>National School Meals Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPA</td>
<td>Plano Plurianual</td>
<td>Pluriannual Plan for Food and Nutrition Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNAD</td>
<td>Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios</td>
<td>National Household Survey</td>
</tr>
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APPENDIX 2 – Terms and definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hunger Map</td>
<td>Map created by the United Nations World Food Programme, indicating the prevalence of undernourishment in the population of each country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black and Brown population</td>
<td>A category used by the Brazilian Institute of Geographic Statistics, based on people's self-identification according to their skin color.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

FIGURES

Figure 1. Family farms and Non-Family farms. Variations between 2006 and 2017


Figure 2. Prevalence of Mild, Moderate and Severe Food Insecurity in Brazil 2004-2017 (%)


10 Ibid.


19 Ibid.


SECURITY AND DIPLOMACY

LIBYA | UNITED STATES | PHILLIPINES | RUSSIA | CHINA
Here to Stay:
Increasing Militarization of the Wagner Group, the Libyan Civil War, and the Kremlin’s Use of Transnational Actors

by Shannon K. Boehm, MPLA '21
Cameron Lumley, MPLA '21
Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh

ABSTRACT
The use of transnational actors, notably Private Military Contracting (PMC) groups, has become a core tenet of Russia’s “New Generation Warfare.” To fulfill its national security interests, safeguard economic investments, and reassert itself as a dominant geopolitical power, Russia continues to project its influence in several asymmetric environments around the globe through the deployment of the Wagner Group. Though Wagner is deployed in several theaters where Russia maintains vested interests, the group’s presence in Libya reflects how the organization remains at the forefront of Russia’s effort to assert its influence overseas in key military and political battlegrounds while maintaining a level of plausible deniability. By assessing Wagner’s current capabilities in Libya, notably its growing utilization of offensive and defensive aerial capabilities, it becomes clear the PMC group is further militarizing its services for Moscow’s patrons on behalf of the Kremlin. Consequently, this poses implications for a possible resumption of hostilities in Libya, while also impacting how the Wagner Group will be further integrated into the Russian security apparatus and deployed in future conflicts.

KREMLIN-WAGNER CONNECTION
The Wagner Group, a Russian PMC organization, operates in hostile environments, like Libya, where official Russian military involvement is limited or un-
official. The primary driver behind Russia's deployment of Wagner forces is the desire to maintain plausible deniability in grey zones where the state has vested political and security interests. The company's lack of formal registration as a PMC group in Russia and elsewhere allows the state to utilize Wagner as a conduit to exert an unofficial military presence while abstaining from the domestic, and even international, political backlash that comes with official troop deployments. Wagner Group's lack of legal recognition allows its actions and Russia's presence to remain relatively ambiguous, ultimately providing the state an avenue to project influence overseas and maintain plausible deniability. Russia's use of Wagner also allows the state to uphold its military doctrine of "New Generation Warfare," which emphasizes the importance of "maskirovka," or efforts aimed at misleading the enemy regarding troop capacity, capabilities, and presence. This is reflected in several cases where Wagner personnel deployed to countries where Russia either maintained preexisting political, economic, or security interests, or sought to expand its presence in areas where its influence or military presence was limited or non-existent. Operatives of the PMC group gained initial notoriety while conducting combat operations in southeastern Ukraine in 2014 during Russia's military invasion. Wagner Group activities have expanded transnationally since its initial combat operations and activities in eastern Ukraine, including into Syria, the Central African Republic, Sudan, Mozambique, Venezuela, and Libya.

Wagner's relationship with state military forces also exhibits the Kremlin's strategic view and value placed on the PMC group. Elements of Wagner are known to utilize official Russian military facilities for training purposes. One specific installation is located within Russia's Krasnodar district where Wagner personnel train alongside elements of the 10th Separate Special Purpose Brigade in Russia's military intelligence branch. Wagner's presence alongside Russian conventional and special forces at official state military facilities demonstrates how the PMC group has integrated itself into the Russian security apparatus and enhanced its utility.

Additionally, there have been documented cases of Wagner operatives using transport services and infrastructure provided by the Russian Defense Ministry, specifically exhibited by Wagner personnel travelling into and out of Syria via official Russian military aircraft. With mounting evidence framing Wagner as an unofficial extension of the Russian military capable of advancing state interests in asymmetric environments, the group's presence and activities in Libya provide insight into Russia's continuing strategic outlook towards PMC groups and Wagner's advancing militarized role.

**Background on Russian Interests in Libya**

The Wagner Group and the Kremlin both remain deeply embedded in Libya's ongoing civil war. Contention between the United Nations (UN)-endorsed and Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) and the Benghazi-headquartered and Russian-backed Libya National Army (LNA) continues to define Libya's national political and military landscape. Despite an October 2020 peace agreement, stability in Libya remains fragile with a resumption of open conflict between the GNA and LNA remaining a crucial concern. Russia's deployment of the Wagner Group in Libya to support the LNA, led by Khalifa Haftar, acts as a means to fulfill two objectives: (1) secure access to Libya's economic sectors and (2) potentially secure a mid-to-long term formal or quasi-military presence in the country. Regarding energy assets, the prolonged civil war has resulted in crippling losses for Libya's oil production, reportedly exceeding over $9 billion since the LNA ceased production of oil in January 2020. Though Haftar lifted the ban on oil production in August 2020, he continues to maintain significant control of the country's oil industry. As Russia upholds its commitment to supporting Haftar and the LNA, it retains direct access to Libya's extensive billion-dollar oil industry market. With the LNA maintaining considerable control over the oil market, the Kremlin's support provides Russia the means to safeguard economic assets of Russian companies, such as Rosneft, that are invested in Libya's petroleum sector.

Though Libya's economy remains largely centered and defined by the petroleum industry, Russia can also use its position in the energy sector as a gateway to explore new partnerships with Libyan political bodies to develop future trade agreements and foster greater economic partnership.

Russia's aspirations in Libya almost certainly extend beyond energy-related fulfillments. For the Kremlin, solidifying a Russian outpost in Libya facilitates the expansion of the state's military presence in the Mediterranean, while making advancements that counter the NATO alliance. The mission to expand Russia's footprint into the Mediterranean is a continuing legacy from the Soviet Union's military ambitions, which Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Kremlin seemingly embrace. If Haftar's LNA maintains control over large portions of Libya's coastline and countryside, or successfully emerges as an influential faction in a unified single governing body, Russia may pursue measures to establish permanent military facilities in Libya. Currently, Russia maintains a militarized foothold through the Wagner Group at several air bases in eastern and central Libya, providing the state preexisting military infrastructure to be utilized in the future. Establishing an official military
presence will allow Russia to expand its strategic and operational scope against NATO further into the Mediterranean and North Africa.\textsuperscript{13} Doing so would strengthen Russia's ability to effectively counter NATO's contingency and defense strategies for southern Europe. As a result, the United States and its European allies would need to revise their approach to deterring Russian aggression and expansion, as well as defense plans for potential inter-state conflict.\textsuperscript{14}

Much of Russia's ability to counter NATO's military presence in the Mediterranean and southern Europe relies heavily on its current posture and maintenance of facilities in Syria, such as the Tartus Naval Facility which sees consistent traffic of Russian submarines and other vessels.\textsuperscript{15} Unlike other areas in the Mediterranean and around southern Europe, Libya presents a unique opportunity for Russia to build upon a well-established militarized presence secured by the Wagner Group to develop air stations, naval facilities, and forward operating bases closer to the European continent. Alternatively, Russia can secure its political-military footing through other means, including sustaining a quasi-militarized presence in Libya through the Wagner Group. Such an approach could entail Wagner acquiring security contracts tied to Libya's national defense sector, consequently facilitating the means for Russia to have mechanisms in place to secure influence in the country's security apparatus. Outside of quasi-presence, Russia can also oversee military assistance programs to a newly unified Libyan government or one where Haftar and Russian-aligned actors maintain significant authority in the government. Such an approach may include arms provisions and training-advisory missions to secure influence within the Libyan military. Regardless of how it takes shape, Russia establishing a mid-to-long-term presence in Libya will undoubtedly result in the Kremlin obtaining considerable geo-political leverage against global competitors, like the United States and NATO, as well as regional ones—notably NATO ally Turkey. Though Russia's physical footprint remains largely limited to a sustained quasi-military deployment of the Wagner Group, maintaining a favorable patron in the form of Haftar increases the prospects for the Kremlin to secure sustainable political and military influence in Libya.

Furthermore, cementing a presence in Libya assists the Kremlin in helping facilitate broader Russian expansion throughout the African continent.\textsuperscript{16} As part of its broader geostrategic interests in expanding Russia's political, economic, and military reach, the Kremlin continues to express a desire and willingness to establish long-term military cooperation agreements with several African nations. While cooperation provides the Kremlin new state partners on the continent, it also permits Russia to establish a lasting military presence throughout Africa. Based on a leaked document from the Russian Foreign Ministry, Russia is moving forward with the establishment of military bases in the Central African Republic, Egypt, Eritrea, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Sudan.\textsuperscript{17} The vast majority of these countries are areas where Wagner Group personnel undertook a variety of offensive operations, security details, or other forms of security assistance for political actors. Given the critical role Wagner has played in securing pro-Moscow patrons elsewhere in Africa, a Libya where Russian-leaning figures maintain considerable authority and influence is well positioned to follow a similar path, with Moscow securing a foothold in Libya for the state and affiliated transnational actors like the Wagner Group.

**Deployment and Presence of Wagner Group in Libya**

As in other asymmetric conflicts, the Kremlin's implementation of Wagner personnel in Libya reflects a continuation of the state's use of transnational actors to fulfill security and political objectives, as well as assist in facilitating the expansion of Russian influence overseas. In the case of Libya, Wagner facilitates the majority of Russia's combat support to Haftar's forces. Fighters of the PMC group notably served alongside LNA forces during the 2019-2020 LNA offensive into western Libya.\textsuperscript{18} Prior to the offensive's start in April 2019, Western intelligence sources claimed Wagner deployed 300 operatives to Libya, likely in preparation for the oncoming offensive.\textsuperscript{19} GNA officials in December 2019 later estimated between 600 to 800 Wagner operatives were deployed in Libya assisting the LNA in combat operations during the western offensive.\textsuperscript{20}

The LNA's failure to seize Tripoli, the entrance of Turkish military provisions to the GNA, and the Tripoli government's subsequent recapture of territory prompted Wagner to reinforce its presence in the country through increased troop levels. In contrast to the December 2019 estimates of less than 1,000 Wagner operatives in Libya, June 2020 assessments by United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) and the U.S. Department of State claimed 2,500 Wagner Group personnel were presently engaged in operations in Libya.\textsuperscript{21} Additionally, Wagner sought to further secure and reinforce key Libyan economic and energy infrastructure during this period. In late June 2020, Russian mercenaries believed to be Wagner Group personnel successfully secured portions of oil fields controlled by Libya's National Oil Corporation.\textsuperscript{22}
Wagner Group’s Air Mission in Libya

While Wagner Group is actively engaged in ground combat operations and security details for key points of infrastructure to the LNA, developments reflect the expansion of new militarized roles taken on by Wagner operatives. In November 2019, Libyan media reports suggested Wagner oversaw the deployment of 25 pilots, trainers, and support crewmen to Libya tasked with operating Sukhoi-22 aircraft, a variant of the Soviet Su-17 fighter bomber.23 As of May 2020, USAFRICOM identified several MiG-29 and Su-24 fighter aircraft belonging to the Russian Federation in Libya, which U.S. officials believed were meant to provide combat support for Wagner Group and LNA forces engaged in ground operations.24 Due to the technical knowledge required to operate these aircraft, Wagner Group personnel are better positioned than their LNA counterparts to incorporate these fighters into air operations. Inflections in September 2020 supported this assertion, when a video emerged on Twitter depicting an ejected Russian-speaking pilot waiting for a Russian-made Mi-24 helicopter to exfiltrate him from his landing site.25 This video coincided with reports by Rear Admiral Heidi Berg, AFRICOM J2 Intelligence Director, suggesting that Wagner Group contractors are piloting Russian aircraft in Libya to conduct close air support missions, bombing runs, and other combat missions.26

Wagner personnel operating these aircraft systems illustrates the growing role of Russian PMC groups, which is expanding beyond traditional ground assault and security operations seen elsewhere. In large scale conflict zones, notably Syria, Wagner operatives maintained artillery and armor assets to afford the Russian state “off the books’ and ‘non-attributable’ combat power.”27 Wagner Group involvement in air operations in Syria remained largely limited or non-existent in most cases. Thus, the aerial role fulfilled by Wagner operatives in Libya represents a milestone in the organization’s ability to provide the Kremlin new opportunities for combined arms strategies, which now includes air power, in future combat operations.

The same claims apply to the Wagner Group’s continued operating of air defense and missile systems. Reports of Russian air defense artillery present in Libya date to 2018, when S-300 or S-400 air defense missile systems arrived and were employed at sites near Benghazi and Tobruk and occupied by Wagner operatives.28 The Russian state continues to facilitate the deployment of sophisticated missile systems and support assets to Libya operated by Wagner personnel. Aerial imagery of Al Khadim Airfield in eastern Libya displays the presence of Russian SA-22 air defense vehicles.29 The Wagner Group’s manning of both offensive fighters and defensive missile systems reflects Russia’s continued efforts to secure aerial supremacy against the GNA and other opponents to the LNA. Achieving a tactical advantage in aerial operations allows Russia to assist future LNA operations against GNA forces or other non-state, state-backed actors, while also safeguarding key points of infrastructure—notably assets of the Libyan National Oil Corporation under Haftar’s control. Wagner’s ability to engage in offensive and defensive air coverage for the LNA also permits the PMC group to contest Turkey’s aerial support provisions to the GNA. Turkey’s allotment of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and anti-aircraft systems previously allowed GNA forces to repel ground offensives while deterring aerial bombardments.30 The deployment of Russian aircraft allows the Wagner Group and the LNA to compete for aerial dominance, while also providing them the means to engage in combined arms offensives in future hostilities.

Implications and Outlook

The Wagner Group’s increasing militarization displayed through its air operations in Libya presents several implications for understanding the current and future state of Russia’s intervention in Libya and its “New Generation Warfare” doctrine. By all indicators, the Wagner Group should not be expected to abandon its current posture in Libya. Satellite imagery released in early 2021 depicted the construction of large defensive positions and trenches dug by Wagner Group personnel around the city of Sirte—despite provisions outlined in a peace deal facilitated by the UN requiring their withdrawal.31 The continued presence of foreign fighters runs the critical danger of seeing a resumption of armed violence and confrontation between the GNA and the Wagner-backed LNA. In a February 2021 press statement, GNA Brigadier General al-Fitori Griebel reaffirmed the necessity to expel the Wagner Group and other foreign fighters from Libya immediately, claiming: “This is our country and we will act to expel the mercenaries by all means.”32 The Wagner Group continues to remain active throughout Libya, notably around Sirte, where the GNA claimed on February 24, 2021 to have witnessed the movement of armed convoys leaving the cities of Ajdabiya and Brega heading westward, with one arriving in Sirte.33 While the GNA argued the movement of Wagner personnel violates the October 2020 ceasefire agreement and the established Joint Military Committee, officials claimed newly arrived Wagner personnel are assisting in constructing an oil pipeline in an entrenched area to facilitate the travel of oil from processing areas in the south to the northern
These assertions contest previous claims made by LNA spokesperson Ahmed Mesmari, who denied the presence of Wagner forces “in or outside Sirte.”

The UN and international actors continue to promote the previously agreed upon peace deal. However, both legitimate and alleged ceasefire violations, as well as Wagner’s failure to withdraw from the country and perceptions of the peace agreement being biased in favor of Turkey, are all factors that act as key drivers behind the possible continuation of hostilities and resumption of combat operations in Libya. Now with the full deployment and integration of offensive and defensive Russian aerial systems in Libya, Wagner is positioned to use these assets as a deterrent against the GNA, employ these weapon systems in the event of GNA efforts to uproot Wagner’s presence in Libya by force, or stage new combined arms operations to make possible advancements farther west if the peace agreement deteriorates. As Wagner maintains the capability to support and defend its military standing and assets in the country, the PMC group continues to represent a critical means for Moscow to sustain its stakeholder status in Libya as well as become an emerging competitor in North Africa and the Mediterranean.

Holistically, Wagner’s significant presence in Libya reflects the Kremlin’s full embrace of employing transnational actors to achieve political ends. Wagner is rapidly becoming a more fully integrated extension of the Russian military, reflected not only by using similar training facilities, but also by becoming recipients of advanced military weapon systems provided by the Russian state. Wagner receiving and operating Russian fighter aircraft and air defense systems demonstrates the expansion of their tactical capabilities, making the organization a more effective and lethal belligerent in conflict zones relative to other PMC firms. As Wagner operatives employ these weapon systems on the battlefield, the PMC group will become better situated to expand its operational and tactical services for the Kremlin in current and future conflicts. Advancements in Wagner’s capabilities could influence the Kremlin to consider improving existing operational strategies or develop new models to reflect the heightened lethality of the PMC group, ultimately in an attempt to better incorporate Wagner into Russia’s military operations and geopolitical ambitions.

On the grounds of the Wagner Group expanding capabilities, both within and outside of its traditional ground combat capacity, it is possible the PMC group will begin to operate to a greater extent alongside official Russian forces and state assets elsewhere, such as previous displays of Wagner’s activities and operations in Syria. Yet it is worth noting that the Wagner Group may only be the beginning of this reinforced integration of PMC groups with state military forces. It is unlikely the Kremlin will abandon Wagner due to the high levels of integration in combat operations and the state’s security strategies it has undergone since 2014. However, as Wagner generates increasing levels of attention from the media and the West, other Russian PMC groups may emerge that can preserve the Kremlin’s plausible deniability in future conflicts. For now, Wagner is here to stay and will likely continue to fulfill its role as a reliable transnational actor for the Kremlin to employ to achieve its political ends.


Ibid.


mercenaries-fighting-haftar-libya;


29 U.S. Africa Command Public Affairs. “Russia and the Wagner Group continue to be involved in ground, air operations in Libya.”


libya/


Countering China's Rising Influence Through United States Foreign Assistance in Southeast Asia Strengthening Regional Partnerships

by Gabrielle Sinnott, MPIA '21

Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh

To: The House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

RECOMMENDATION

The House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS), in coordination with the Department of State (DOS) and Agency for International Development (USAID), should appropriate funding above current allocations to strengthen our partnership with the Philippines.

In Fiscal Year 2020, Congress appropriated $152.64 million in foreign assistance outlays to the Philippines. These monies fund health, environment, peace and security, democracy-building, and economic development programs. However, China is investing billions in business-to-business programs, tying itself to the Philippines using low-interest loans.

By fostering economic influence in Southeast Asia, the United States can be a reliable trading partner, increase oversight and administrative judicial assistance in human rights abuses, provide capacities to educate, and build tools to enhance democracy. In doing so, the United States can promote itself as an instrument of peace and limit Chinese influence in the region.

BACKGROUND

The Philippine archipelago consists of 7,641 islands with a population of 106.7 million people. In 2018, 16.6 percent of the population lived below the national poverty line. In 2019, the Philippine GDP growth rate was 6 percent. In 2020, the forecasted GDP decreased by 7.3 percent due to COVID-19-related impacts, the second-lowest forecasted GDP in Southeast Asia. U.S. foreign assistance programs in the Philippines work to improve security, defense, and civilian capabilities to deter aggression and illegal maritime activities; create strong, sustainable, resilient, and inclusive economic growth and social development; strengthen democratic processes and increase transparency and accountability in government; and enhance respect for the rule of law and human rights.

The United States and the Philippines have had a formal strategic alliance since the beginning of the Cold War. In March 1947, they signed a Military Base Agreement allowing the United States to establish more than a dozen bases within the Philippines. Subsequently, the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951 codified a mutual commitment to “peacefully resolve international disputes, separately or jointly developing the capacity to resist attack, and the need for consultation when the territorial integrity, political independence, or security of the U.S. or the Philippines is under threat of attack in the Pacific.”

Under President Duterte, increased trade with China has strained the U.S.-Philippine economic relationship. The Duterte administration recently signed 13 cooperation agreements with China, within which the “financial assistance and investment pledges are estimated to total $24 billion, of which 62 percent is business-to-business and the rest is official development assistance.” The Chinese-Philippine economic relationship expanded under the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement and the Regional Comprehen-
vise Economic Partnership (RCEP). Both agreements will create a new trade structure in the region, reinvigorate supply chains disrupted by COVID-19, and facilitate sustainable trade flows to assist in post-pandemic recovery. The Chinese-Philippine bilateral partnership is expected to grow further under the China-led RCEP.\(^8\)

Decreasing funds to the Peace and Security sector while allocating more funds to the Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance sector and the Economic Growth sector will support the Philippines as per the United States National Security Strategy and Integrated Country Strategy abroad.

**Peace and Security**

Compared to FY2020 enacted, the Bureau recommends decreasing the Peace and Security assistance from $52.34 million to $35 million. In FY2020 enacted, 87 percent of the Peace and Security assistance supported the Stabilization Operation and Security Sector Reform portfolio, supporting “security sector reform through training and operational support” in the Philippines security forces. Philippine security forces include “military, paramilitary, law enforcement, civilian police, specialized units, border security, maritime security, etc.” Due to human rights abuses from the Duterte administration, the House of Representatives referred the H.R.8313 Philippine Human Rights Act to the Committee on Foreign Affairs in September 2020. The Bill limits assistance to Philippine security forces and dictates, “No federal funds may be used to provide such assistance until the Philippines government has taken certain actions, including (1) investigating and successfully prosecuting members of its military and police forces who have violated human rights, (2) withdrawing the military from domestic policing activities, and (3) establishing that it effectively protects the rights of journalists and civil society activists.”\(^9\)

Additionally, the Bureau recommends more congressional oversight to track funds, monitor activities, and provide transparency.

**Democracy, Human Rights, Governance**

Compared to FY2020 enacted, the Bureau recommends increasing Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance assistance from $20 million to $22 million. Since 2016, the Duterte administration has committed significant human rights abuses as reported in the Department of State 2019 Philippines Human Rights Report. The report describes unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and reports of forced disappearance by and on behalf of the government and non-state actors; the worst forms of restrictions on free expression and the press, including violence, threats of violence, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, censorship, and the existence of criminal libel laws; corruption; and unlawful recruitment or use of child soldiers by terrorists and groups in rebellion against the government.\(^10\)

The assistance supports the Philippines Integrated Country Strategy Mission Goal 4: *The Philippines enjoys strengthened democratic processes, increased transparency and accountability in government, and enhanced respect for the rule of law and the full spectrum of human rights*. The increase of funds to this sector supports civil society initiatives, such as strengthening democratic political culture and democratic institutions; good governance programs, like programs supporting government transparency and accountability; and the rule of law and human rights, including initiatives that uphold human dignity and integrity.\(^11\)

**Economic Growth**

Compared to FY2020 enacted, the Bureau recommends increasing Economic assistance from $5 million to $18 million. The Philippines “sustained an average annual growth of 6.4 percent from 2010–2019” and was forecasted to grow “from a lower-middle-income country with a gross national income per capita of $3,850 in 2019 to an upper-middle-income country (per capita income range of $4,046–$12,535) in the near term.” Growth is hindered because of challenges incurred by COVID-19, including a decrease in exports, tourism, and remittances.\(^12\)

The United States must contribute more to the Philippines’ economic growth to remain an influential trading partner in the region. China has significant economic influence in the Philippines, consistently ranked among the Philippines’ top import and export trading partners. In August 2020, “[China] supplied $1.82 billion or 25.3 percent of the country’s imports and took in $732.57 million or 14.3 percent of Philippine exports.”\(^13\) Increased funding for this sector supports critical infrastructure programs to support the “creation, improvement, and sustainability of physical infrastructure;” trade and investment programs to support international agreements and trade techniques; private sector competitiveness to “improve policies, laws, regulations, and administrative practices affecting the private sector’s ability to compete nationally and internationally;” and macroeconomic foundations for growth, which encourage private-sector effectiveness.\(^14\)

**Challenges**

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development...
OECD), China’s international development assistance spending reached $4.8 billion in 2017, up from $3.6 billion in 2016. U.S. policymakers will continue to conduct oversight into Chinese investments and financing, including the Belt and Road Initiative, which remains an area of concern given China’s lack of transparency over the number of projects, terms of financing, and metrics of success.

The Philippines will continue to be a strategic ally for the United States despite the Duterte administration’s inconsistencies over anti-drug policies and its nonconfrontational posture toward China. Increased funding will build long-term trust while enhancing U.S. presence in the region.

Endnotes

Assessing US National Security in Asia: Counter-Strategizing Russia-China Relations

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To: Jake Sullivan, Assistant to the President for the National Security Advisor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

• Hostile U.S. rhetoric and economic policy have inadvertently served to forge a closer relationship between Russia and China.
• A high degree of cooperation between Russia and China concentrates adversarial military and economic power, as well as combines their spheres of influence, which consequently limits the advancement of U.S. interests abroad and in international organizations.
• To limit Russia-China ties, the United States should attempt to occupy the key “hinge” position in the triangular U.S.-China-Russia relationship by improving economic relations with both countries.
• The United States should ease the series of sanctions imposed on Russia in the last several years that have proven ineffective at eliciting compliance and resolve issues with China resulting from the trade war.

RUSSIA-CHINA RELATIONS

The relationship between Russia and China balances on a fine line of common enemies, shared ideology, and mutual interests. Rising international hostility in the form of rhetorical condemnations and economic sanctions have nudged the two countries closer together over the past decade. Russia and China’s cooperation has been primarily in opposition to the U.S. global push for democracy and defense policies, which they see as threatening their political systems and national security.1 Russia and China use political,
economic, and military cooperation to exert greater influence on the world stage. They oppose U.S. measures at the United Nations, bypass U.S. sanctions by trading with each other (Russia supplied 15.4 percent of China’s record-high oil imports in 2020, second only to Saudi Arabia by a margin of 0.25 percent), and they perform joint military exercises.

Nevertheless, Russia and China’s relationship has several points of contention: Russia’s weakened economic state increasingly relegates it to the status of junior partner, Xi is more open to having amicable relations with the United States than Putin, and the two countries struggle for influence in Central Asia and control of the Russian Far East.

**U.S.-RUSSIA RELATIONS**

U.S. relations with Russia are at their lowest point since before the end of the Cold War. Domestic U.S. concerns include Russian interference in the 2016 elections and perceived attempts to influence the 2020 elections. Internationally, the United States condemns Russia’s annexation of Crimea and its advances into eastern Ukraine, and disagrees on other areas of mutual concern, such as Syria and Venezuela. These issues have prompted the United States to impose harsh sanctions on Russia, which have proven ineffective at eliciting policy change from Moscow.

**U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS**

While stronger than U.S.-Russia ties, U.S. relations with China are at their lowest point in decades. Though the United States and China are each other’s top trading partners, China’s economic expansion strains the relationship and gives rise to U.S. fears of being deposed as global hegemon. The United States has accused China of acts of cyber espionage, which China denies, breaking international norms in Hong Kong, and poorly handling the 2019 coronavirus outbreak. Relations soured further when former President Trump initiated a trade war with China in 2018, which heightened existing political and military tensions. The trade war was officially resolved through the Phase One trade deal signed in January 2020, requiring China to purchase a higher quantity of U.S. goods. China has since been unable to fulfill this obligation due to the pandemic.

**IMPlications FOR U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY**

The deepening partnership between Russia and China concentrates power in the East and undermines U.S. foreign policy and national security. Russia and China’s tendency to vote in tandem in international organizations weakens U.S.-backed propositions, and their high degree of economic cooperation subverts U.S. attempts to penalize misbehavior with sanctions. By some measures, China has already surpassed the United States as the world’s largest economy, granting it a significant degree of influence on the world stage. Most pressing for the United States, however, are increasingly close ties between the Russian and Chinese militaries: Joint military exercises between the two serve as a collective show of force, the Russian military shares its field-based combat experience with the Chinese military, and sales of Russian advanced weapons systems to China bolster Chinese capabilities. These forms of Sino-Russian defense cooperation serve as a deterrent to the United States and its allies. The Biden administration has the opportunity to strengthen bilateral relations with these two countries, which in turn will reduce incentives for Russia and China to cooperate with each other.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATION: INCREASE ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA AND CHINA**

The United States should maneuver to regain its “hinge” position as either side’s closer ally in the triangular U.S.-China-Russia relationship, a spot currently occupied by China. The United States should thus usurp China as Russia’s closest ally, while maintaining at least the current level of diplomacy with China. Short- to medium-term projections for strong U.S.-Russia relations are not favorable due to weakness of current ties, so the United States should aim for long-term progress. Increasing economic engagement with Russia and China offers the best chance of aligning interests without requiring any nation to weaken its stance on areas of contestation. A policy of economic integration requires taking the following measures:

1. Maintain a consistent approach to Russia from the different branches of the U.S. government. Start regular dialogue between Washington and Moscow at multiple levels of government to facilitate greater economic involvement.
2. Ease economic sanctions on Russia and China that have driven the two countries closer together and have failed to elicit policy change.
3. Attempt to resolve trade issues with China stemming from the recent trade war.
**Policy Alternative: Only Focus on Relationship-Building with Russia**

The United States could choose to align itself with Russia in opposition to China. This would involve economically engaging Russia and maintaining the current competitive stance toward China. This proposal carries the notable drawback of antagonizing China, which is on a trajectory to superpower status with or without Russia, and in doing so creating a dangerous enemy.

**Monitoring and Evaluating the Policy’s Implementation**

Given Russia and China’s history of reneging on agreements, it is essential to maintain a robust monitoring and evaluation system. We should first create a task force through the Department of State’s Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs’ Russia desk and the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs’ China desk to regularly meet and assess relationship developments with each side. Second, we recommend analyzing trade patterns with the assistance of the Department of Commerce. Increases in trade volume between the United States and Russia due to easing of sanctions would be indicative of an improved relationship. Similarly, decreases in trade between Russia and China that are directly attributable to increased U.S. market share could provide another measure of success.

**Conclusion**

Russia’s steady position as one of the world’s largest military actors and the rapid rise of China has left the United States with much to gain in its triangular relationship with the two powerful nations. If the United States continues its current antagonism, it faces substantial compounding threats from Russia and China’s resulting political, military, and economic cooperation. We recommend improving relations with both countries to advance U.S. interests and maintain leverage. Key functions of this policy proposal include ceasing sanctions on Russia, maintaining friendly trading relations with China, and monitoring changes in trade as an indicator for relationship-building.

**Endnotes**

2. Ibid.
7. Ibid.


Strategies for approaching Cuba's commitment to the Bonn Challenge: A political economy analysis

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INTRODUCTION
In 2011, the German government launched a global initiative to restore 350 million hectares of degraded and deforested landscapes by 2030. Known as the Bonn Challenge, the initiative works within the scope of other international frameworks to drive participating countries toward restoration pledges. Cuba joined the Bonn Challenge in 2019, officially committing to restore 465,000 hectares of forest ecosystems and landscapes by 2030.

This political economy analysis explores Cuba's commitment to the Bonn Challenge and evaluates strategies with respect to formal and informal institutions in Cuba, foundational factors including Cuban sociocultural ties to the environment, and changing political dynamics. Findings indicate that renewed conviction in sustainable ecosystem management and newfound constructive engagement with the international community will support reforestation efforts. However, collective action may be constrained by a severe lack of coordination among domestic enforcement entities, new economic incentives, and weak institutional capacity.

FOUNDATIONAL FACTORS
Cuba's political and economic systems have affected forestry management, both to the detriment and benefit of forest ecosystems. Development within the capitalist and imperialist paradigm of the pre-Revolution period (pre-1959) coincided with deforestation, resulting in the decline of national forest cover from 72 percent to just 14 percent. As of 2014, due to shifts in political motivations and economic orientation, tree cover recovered to 21 percent. This turnaround is remarkable in the context of ongoing global deforestation.
Cuba’s changing approaches to forest management are best understood through an analysis of four interconnected phases of development: the pre-Revolution colonial period, the centralized pragmatism and planning era (1959 – 1986), the Rectification campaign and Special Period (1986 – 1995), and the era of slowly liberalizing socialism (1995 – present). The resultant political and socioeconomic realities will be analyzed with respect to how they influence the prospect of, and possible strategies for meeting Cuba’s Bonn Challenge commitment.

The pre-Revolution period in the early 1900s was characterized by extreme inequality. After economic and political control by the U.S. throughout the early 1900s, formal control ended in 1934 with the Treaty of Relations. However, the United States continued to influence Cuban politics and economy. Americans held 20 percent of arable land, produced nearly all of Cuba’s main crop, sugar, and sold around 80 percent of it back to the United States. The U.S. government continued to manipulate elections and support corrupt political regimes that concentrated power in the hands of the Havana elite. These circumstances engendered neglect of both the massively impoverished population and the environment, illustrated by sustained deforestation.

In 1959, Fidel Castro and his revolutionary allies seized on this neglect and offered an alternative. They sought to instill a socialist consciousness through universal education, health care services, employment, housing, and food access through near-complete collectivization and redistribution. Necessary to attaining these objectives was what revolutionary leader Che Guevara called the ‘new man’: “egalitarian, selfless, cooperative, nonmaterialistic, hardworking (at both manual and non-manual tasks), and morally pure.” Accordingly, it is requisite that all analyses of the evolution of the Cuban political economy acknowledge the primacy of socialist collectivist principles in Cuban development. As Cole notes, “economic exigencies may ‘constrain’ policy initiatives, but they do not determine development priorities.”

Confidence in the socialist project was strong and pervasive during most of the centralized pragmatism and planning period (1959 – 1985). This support had less to do with the birth of a socialist consciousness of the “new man,” but rather the improvement in material welfare. Prior to the revolution and abolition of private property, the poorest 40 percent of the population accounted for 0.066 percent of national income. In the mid-1970s, redistributive policies and state employment improved this distribution to 25 percent. Along with major reductions in inequality, the State promoted mass literacy campaigns and improved their student-to-teacher ratio from 36:1 to 12:1 from 1960 to 1988. Moreover, Cubans gained access to increasingly high levels of health care; in 1996 Cuba became the only third-world country to have a heart transplant program.

On the environmental front, the centralized period saw staunch commitments to conservation, especially relative to the colonial period. Three months after taking power in 1959, the revolutionary government enacted the Reforestation Plan. Massive planting efforts increased reforestation from an average of 51 million native trees planted per year in the 1960s to 136 million in the 1980s. Additionally, The Cuban National System of Protected Areas (SNAP) was instituted to preserve biodiversity and promote sustainability. Moreover, the new Cuban constitution enshrined an individual responsibility, emanating from the idea of the ‘new man,’ to be stewards of the “rich potential of nature.” In the 1970s, the State established the National Commission for the Protection of the Environment (COMARNA), akin to the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States. More bureaucratic reforms followed in 1981, including Law 33, which served as an overall framework for sustainable development efforts.

Despite the legal commitment framed through the lens of Cuba’s socialist ideals, conservation efforts outside of tree planting were not effective for several reasons. First, with the socialist revolution at the forefront, the environment remained a lower priority than the equal provision of basic services for the Cuban people. The Castro regime’s strategy for economic development prioritized industrialization underpinned by reinforcement of the pre-revolution mono-production of sugar. Cuba relied heavily on trading sugar for food and energy imports. Severely hampered by the U.S. embargo, Cuba relied trading with the Soviet Union through the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, CAME in Spanish. This combination of industrialization and large-scale agriculture contributed to environmental degradation.

The intention of participating in CAME was to use import substitution as a stepping stone toward becoming a producer of high-technology secondary goods. These goals were never realized, as the Soviet Union used their economic power to permanently relegate Cuba to a subordinate primary producer. Essentially, the government had to mobilize the country to produce enough sugar so that they could import enough food and energy to meet their needs. This unsustainable model had devastating consequences for both the environment and, later, the Cuban economy. With the need to keep the socialist spirit alive by providing promised services, the State’s fervor for conservation took a back seat.

At the same time, Cuba’s burgeoning command economy contributed to
the inefficacy of conservation efforts. Procurement quotas, lack of credible enforcement, bureaucratic red tape, and corruption by agency managers were hallmarks of planning systems in the centralized period. These drains on the economy hampered development, and Cuba could not break free from its mono-production model. Furthermore, the ad-hoc nature of the new economy translated to weak enforcement mechanisms for environmental responsibility. Although official laws pushed for conservation and sustainability, pervasive resource tenure and property ambiguities led to confusion in the appropriation and use of natural resources.

Importantly, the neglect of low-level state employees by high-level planners stymied conservation efforts. To collaborate and coordinate with CAME, the State had to organize in a specific way, known as democratic centralism, to “efficiently” manage its part of international technical specialization. Bureaucratic hierarchies created spheres of responsibility in which economic priorities were discussed as a collective, but decision-making resided with managers at a higher level. Workers were routinely and arbitrarily excluded from key processes. Instead of the people controlling resources, they were managed by state administrators—usually chosen based on connections rather than skills as environmental managers—with pre-established economic objectives. Administrators also often distributed resources as favors in their municipalities.

A more subtle consequence of collectivization was the loss of connection between the people and the environment. Provision of needs by state rationing eliminated family subsistence land use. Individuals abandoned environmental use practices and intergenerational knowledge was lost. Subsequently, low wages and a loss of environmentalism led to tragedy of the commons issues. People began participating in the black market and illegally taking resources from the land, exacerbating the already detrimental effects of immense agricultural production and modernization.

In the mid-late 1980s, the confluence of the Soviet Bloc’s sharp economic decline and Cuba’s prolonged drought and destructive hurricanes put intense strain on the country’s economic system. While gross national income averaged 3 percent growth from 1976 to 1980 and 8.6 percent from 1981 to 1985, overreliance on a declining CAME led to an economic crisis in 1986. Amidst a population dissatisfied with their loss of political and economic participation, struggles for resources initiated the third period of Cuban development. In response, the government began the Rectification Campaign in 1986, which reasserted socialist ideology and objectives while aiming to revive grassroots mobilization and end democratic centralism. This began a process of decentralization of the micro-level day-to-day activity of local economic managers and an increase in state-promoted local cooperatives to deal with food shortages.

The fall of the Soviet bloc in the early 1990s led to what is known as the Special Period. Between 1989 and 1992, GDP fell by 50 percent due to the end of trade with the Soviet Bloc, which accounted for 75 percent of the entire economy. Dramatic job loss and social problems soon followed. Fuel shortages and electricity outages contributed to health crises. The average Cuban lost 5 to 25 percent of body weight during the Special Period due to the dearth of food imports. Still subject to the devastating U.S. embargo, Cuba’s only option was to turn inwards, leading it to embrace conservation and organic agriculture.

Thus, the third period of Cuban development returned to the idea of stewardship described in the 1959 Constitution. Out of necessity, the government relaxed restrictions on profit-taking by farmers, officially opening farmers markets in 1994. Cubans were encouraged to look to the environment to fill basic needs, including use of previously banned family farms. Those with environmental experience could use more common pool natural resources and diversify their practices. The State also promoted new mutual assistance networks to better allocate increasingly scarce resources. Lastly, state policy made a concerted effort to reorganize large-scale agriculture toward sustainable farming practices.

Though the Special Period led to reengagement with the environment, ongoing fuel and food shortages intensified the draining of common-pool resources. Additionally, the cleavage of people from the environment amidst collectivization during the centralized planning era led to ambiguity over environmental responsibility. To balance decentralization with economic need, the State issued rounds of environmental reforms. These included regulations, directed by the COMARNA, requiring environmental impact studies for major development projects. Other efforts, like Decree Law 118, attempted to address the lack of enforcement mechanisms by explicitly delineating environmental responsibilities to the eight ministries. It also established the Ministry of Science Technology and Environment (CITMA) to ease the chronic enforcement problems rampant in heavily bureaucratized COMARNA.

The current period of Cuban development was born from the struggles of the Special Period. Profit-taking and expanded market activities, though limited, prompted increased private property rights and enterprise. To reduce spending and work toward a ‘rationalization’ of socialist policy, the govern-
ment shifted economic and regulatory responsibilities to consejos populares, local extensions of the government. This decentralization was also necessary to bolster confidence in Cuba's socialist project. Laying new environmental onus on communities also helped curb illegal exploitation of the environment. Furthermore, the State was able to reap benefits from the hardworking conservation efforts of locals without conferring actual ownership of common pool resources to the communities. 42

Cuba also began allowing the international community to work with the government within the country's borders. 43 Cuba's historical commitment toward giving foreign assistance to sympathetic countries—it was once noted that Cuba had more doctors operating in foreign countries than the World Health Organization—makes the prospect of partnerships with environmental NGOs and other international organizing bodies more promising. 44 Increased economic freedoms and market reforms have also made Cuba more attractive to international financing. This is essential to conservation efforts, as local institutions have lacked the resources to realize aspirations of regional decentralization. 45

Internally, a deeply entrenched system called socialism, an institutionalized form of political patronage, is a key determinant in where resources are channeled. 46 This corruption drains financial resources for state-backed conservation projects like the Bonn Challenge. A 2010 World Bank report stated that "the optimal funding for protected-area management in Cuba is estimated to be $36.8 million," while available funding was $14.6 million. 47 Raul Castro promised to crack down on corruption after taking power in 2008. 48 In 2018, for example, the Agency of the Comptroller, created in 2009 with the mandate to audit private and state-run enterprises, reported that nearly 1,500 persons were responsible for millions worth of economic damage. 49 This focus on internal efficiency should contribute to a more attractive investment climate and effective state environmental management.

These developments take place in the context of two decades of liberalizing socialism, during which Cuba has exhibited substantial growth of the private economy and, despite worsening climate-related disasters, relative stability. Current reforestation and wider conservation efforts are growing, though a stronger push is needed if Cuba is to complete the Bonn Challenge. 50

**Rules of the Game**

The foundational factors stemming from Cuba's storied political and economic history have engendered rules of the game—formal and informal institutions—that present unique challenges for Cuba's ability to fulfill its Bonn Challenge pledge. Given recent political developments affecting the landscape of reforestation efforts, these institutions can best be understood within three contexts: progression of environmental policy, institutional shifts toward marketization and political decentralization, and the development of new norms in international cooperation.

Rules of the game relevant to environmental policy are rooted in the drive towards conservation and sustainability accelerated in the Special Period. In 1997, the government passed The Law of the Environment (Rule 81), which established a framework to formally reaffirm and actualize sustainable environment objectives. Rule 81 became the foundation for all subsequent environmental legislation. Importantly, the law required CITMA to be the lead ministry in developing explicit environmental policy, in association with the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAG) and the Ministry of Higher Education. It also created a new environmental education system spanning the youth and all sectors of the economy to heighten popular environmental consciousness. 51

Resulting from the Rule 81 framework, the government passed key legislation vis-à-vis reforestation in 1998 with Forest Law 85. Its main objectives were "to establish general principles and regulations for the protection, increase and sustainable development of forest heritage [...] promote reforestation and silvicultural management [...] promote forests against irrational felling, forest fires, and other actions." 52 Importantly, it placed MINAG in charge of directing and implementing State forestry policy, with provisions to coordinate with CITMA. Law 85 also created the National Forest Development Fund (FONADEF) as the primary entity responsible for sponsoring and financing forestry initiatives. 53

Most environmental projects regarding reforestation are submitted through The Directorate of Forestry, Flora, and Wildlife of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agro-forestry Group (GAF) are subordinate MINAG bodies undertaking reforestation initiatives. Together, these are the chief entities responsible for coordinating initiatives with local communities, institutional actors, and development partners. 54 Interestingly, and likely a source of coordination issues, the government decided that CITMA would be responsible for managing Cuba's commitment to the Bonn Challenge. 55

CITMA's duties in other environmental policy initiatives may explain its selection to manage the Bonn Challenge. The 1999 Decree-Law 201 charged CITMA with implementation of conservation policy within SNAP. Whereas
MINAG has more organizational experience with reforestation projects specifically, CITMA has experience managing land conservation more generally.

Moreover, in 2007, the State created the National Commission of Reforestation to coordinate the development of forestry activity. This interagency commission sits neither within MINAG or CITMA, but subordinate to the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers, where it provides coordination assistance in support of the Forest Development Program.

These institutions developed as part of larger sustainability efforts. When the Special Period instigated the move towards sustainable environmental practices, educational NGOs focusing on environmental awareness proliferated in Cuba. This increased community participation in reforestation programs, such as Plan Manati, in which the State provided resources for tree planting efforts. In addition, the government established an estate system under the purview of Law 85 that promoted the creation of integrated forest farms, where deforested areas are leased to individuals through a contract managed by a state representative.

To integrate these disparate initiatives into a whole of government environmental sustainability orientation, the government created a 100-year plan called Tarea Vida (“Project Life”), which began with a $100 million investment in 2017. Overseen by CITMA, the initiative has strengthened Cuba’s access to international financing mechanisms under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. However, Cuba’s one-party government often puts forth ambitious ad-hoc programs that lack appropriate follow-through measures. This informal norm means monitoring the State’s progress on project goals is necessary to gauge the prospects of reforestation efforts.

Besides environmental policy, marketization, liberalization, and decentralization are major factors affecting Cuba’s capacity for meeting the Bonn Challenge. The year 2019 saw the ascension of the first non-Castro president, Miguel Díaz-Canel, as well as approval of a new Cuban Constitution. The Constitution instituted a host of reforms that included recognition of private property and foreign investment, term limits on certain positions, codification of free enterprise liberties, establishment of newly created Provincial Councils, and the ability to sue the state. These changes codified the trend of decentralization and the move toward a more market-based economy, which have implications for reforestation due to shifting dynamics in regulation enforcement and incentive structures.

Devolution of authority has shifted the onus of environmental policy enforcement to local bodies, especially in agricultural production. This rapid transformation occurred amid local authorities lacking expertise and enforcement infrastructure. However, the adoption of term limits and decentralization has increased the space for institutional pluralism, which may work to strengthen accountability, especially given recent anti-corruption efforts. Furthermore, political liberalization and economic reform—stemming from lessons learned from the inefficient command economy—allow for more competition between local leaders and elites, which may also increase accountability.

Recent reforms also curtail socialismo. A push toward rationalization, characterized by less central planning and more attainable targets, and professionalization, emphasizing results rather than loyalty, have reduced political patronage. This includes a focus on more equitable promotions and requiring provincial and municipal leaders to take political and management courses.

In addition, individual enterprises—which are increasing due to augmented private property rights and reduced restrictions on free enterprise—are participating in burgeoning networks of agricultural cooperatives that exhibit more conservation-oriented principles. These cuentapropistas, or “workers on their own account,” increasingly seek land for agricultural production and are quickly replacing large-scale state agriculture. Though more oriented toward sustainability, cuentapropistas’ ability to retain profits could have negative ramifications for reforestation efforts without proper monitoring systems.

Finally, Cuba’s reforestation capabilities must be considered within the context of its newfound willingness to engage in international cooperation. Where skepticism of foreign investment once reigned, Cuba’s political restructuring, rationalization, and market orientation has created a favorable landscape for internationally funded environmental initiatives. Cuba now outwardly seeks foreign direct investment and has embarked on an impressive slew of development projects in recent years that target reforestation both directly and as a sub-outcome of tangentially related environmental initiatives.

Cuba seeks financing, organizational support, and technical assistance from development partners through bilateral relations, the UNDP, environmental NGOs, and regional sectoral associations. Cuba remains unaffiliated with the IMF, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank. Cuba’s commitment to the Bonn Challenge was formalized in a memorandum of understanding with the Central American Commission for Environment and Development. Cuba belongs to multilateral environmental groups like the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and
International funding for reforestation projects is typically rolled into larger sustainable environment programs. For example, a 2019 effort to mainstream biodiversity in Eastern Cuba, including reforestation projects, is being facilitated by the GEF, FAO, and IFAD through coordination with MINAG. The $33 million budget is funded around 10 percent by the UN, 13 percent by GEF, with the remainder co-financed by the Cuban Government through MINAG. Another $47 million project titled “Incorporating multiple environmental considerations and their economic implications into the management of landscapes, forests and production sectors in Cuba” is co-financed and administered by the UNDP and CITMA.

Development programs that have wide-spanning environmental aims also indirectly support reforestation efforts by reducing strains on ecosystems, such as improving efficiency of non-forest agriculture. This emerging framework aligns with Cuba’s ambitions for nationwide environmental sustainability.

**Here and Now**

International development scholars have lauded Cuba’s remarkable progress in reforestation. Experiences in the Special Period and the government’s ability to mobilize action have created momentum toward conservation goals. Cuba’s newfound internationalism aligns with the global push to address climate change. To that end, reforestation has become a guiding principle in a wide range of conservation projects, which may allow Cuba to overcome major financing impediments. For example, the UNDP BIOFIN project provides specific resources for sustainable management of mangrove forests as part of a wider overarching coastal resilience initiative.

These tailwinds provide more resources and support for domestic initiatives within Tarea Vida. For example, The Cuban Association of Agriculture and Forestry Technicians, a national NGO, has bolstered its sustainable workshop program for small-scale farmers through connections to international NGOs. These domestic actors link the State and international partners. They also promote the exchange of best practices in conservation through hosting international conferences like The Cuban Organic Farmer Association’s work with the United Nations. Fostering harmonization with international aid agencies is especially necessary as political and regulatory decentralization progresses.

However, extensive action on the international development and environmental front is occurring alongside increasing freedoms, both for enterprising individuals and local authorities, as part of Cuba’s political liberalization. Reforestation efforts could be jeopardized in deforested areas that can now be leased or sold. New market incentives may contribute to increased plundering of forest resources and forest fire risks. Registered cuentapropistas have jumped from 150,000 in 2008 to around 580,000 in 2017, with similar increases in land-lease farmers. Encouragingly, the development of peasant cooperatives, organized by the National Farm and Forestry Workers Union, have been more capable than State farms and predecessor co-ops in incorporating more forest conservation-oriented sustainable agriculture techniques.

More generally, augmented private enterprise and conservation activity may exacerbate governance challenges. Local authorities have new regulatory responsibilities and fast-changing political dynamics are allowing some managers and civil society actors to establish connections with outside partners that may influence the regulatory landscape. While the rationalization of government, reduction of socialism, and anti-corruption efforts of Raul Castro’s administration may hinder stealing or patronage by state employees, recent devolution may run counter to these goals. However, Díaz-Canel, a former provincial czar who retains significant social and political capital, may be positioned to increase regulation and coordination efforts among the newly elevated local authorities.

**Dynamics**

Cuba’s environmentalist tradition and collective human experience in the Special Period helps align the goals of different domestic actors. Whereas industrialization in the name of socialism undermined conservation efforts pre-1990, a renewed focus on environmentalism, along with increased individual liberties, ownership, and welfare brought about by reforms, has created new support for sustainability from the people, as evidenced by the Campesino-to-Campesino agroecology movement. Through rationalization, state administrators who once had pre-established economic objectives and were chosen based on their government connections now have more man-
agential discretion and environmental expertise. Access to international financing and technical assistance has helped launch numerous initiatives that provide jobs and institutional learning support.

Despite a sturdy policy framework, the multiplicity of new actors with new institutional responsibilities has encountered significant impediments to collective reforestation action. These issues include: 1) policy and legislative tools do not adequately support an integrated management strategy and lead to compartmentalization; 2) planners and decision-makers lack access to key information; 3) local institutional and technical capacities are inadequate; and 4) Conservation-oriented practices are not prioritized by market participants. Taken together, these barriers produce coordination and technical challenges that lead to collective action problems.

The proliferation of environmental sustainability projects, implemented by a variety of regulatory and implementing bodies, requires strong inter-institutional organizing capabilities. The fact that CITMA oversees Cuba's Bonn Challenge pledge while MINAG is generally responsible for reforestation initiatives presents a coordination problem that is exacerbated when reforestation projects are run down-chain by a plethora of subordinate entities. Government research shows that decision-making power in the forest sector is concentrated in MINAG, CITMA, GAF, and DNFFFS, and participation in forest sector policy implementation is driven by MINAG and INAF. However, CITMA and DFFFS (outside of INAF) have greater technical capacity to generate regulatory results. Coordination among these actors remains elusive yet vital, considering their low institutional capacities in regulation, monitoring, and assessing management of natural resources.

A main reason for this coordination problem is that MINAG and CITMA environmental policies do not make specific mandates for interagency coordination. In essence, the policy framework for conservation exists, but the regulatory and communication infrastructure is lacking. These problems can be traced back to the recent decentralization and professionalization of government. Provincial and municipal entities lower in the chain of command often do not have the resources—both equipment and personnel—to handle regulation/enforcement and thorough communication with other key stakeholders. Moreover, the propagation of new actors without accompanying political infrastructure worsens coordination issues.

Furthermore, policies established by ministries and their subordinates are dominated by single-sector approaches. For example, the GAF has reforestation projects in its portfolio, but its overall mission is sustainable food production, which may lead it to trade off reforestation for agricultural initiatives. Narrow policy visions are especially detrimental in the case of natural resource management because connectivity within ecosystems may mean some projects directly undermine others. For instance, no conservation-oriented policy norms have been established in the agriculture and livestock production sector, whose activities often hamper reforestation efforts. The UNDP finds that current planning and regulatory instruments inhibit integrated approaches necessary for successful reforestation efforts.

Another barrier for successful collective action in reforestation is poor access to quality information. Rules and regulations are updated infrequently, leading to contradictory regulation and inefficiency. In addition, institutional capacities to incorporate new scientific knowledge into policy are weak. Small-scale farmers, for example, cannot access crucial restoration methodologies that are viable in productive landscapes. Even when information detailing procedures for impact assessments and other planning tools is widely available, decision-makers still lack access to key methodological instruments, such as tools to analyze the cost-effectiveness of certain programs relative to the environment, that would help them devise appropriate responses.

Poor information is directly related to the third impediment of reforestation efforts: inadequate capabilities of local institutions. Provincial and municipal regulators often lack technical conservation management experience and know-how. Low environmental expertise of local managers may have its roots in the old system of complete collectivization; lack of ownership and state control over common-pool resources led to the perception that it was the State's responsibility to preserve the environment, causing the loss of environmental management skills. Moreover, local environmental initiatives addressing public safety, such as hurricane preparedness, may be prioritized over restoration projects like reforestation.

The top-down nature of Cuba's political structures leaves local actors last to access new technologies and methodologies. Often, new environmental practices are developed at higher levels of government and are not transferred to local actors who lack equipment or technical training. This points to another driver of low local institutional capabilities: insufficient funding. However, since Cuba's reliance on local stakeholders has been recent and rapid, this could be an unavoidable lag.

A final challenge is the existence of new market forces. Producers are not always incentivized to incorporate conservation practices and increased ability to take profits and grow enterprises might exacerbate this behavior. A single-sectoral approach has reduced the State's capacity to create incen-
tives for producers to develop more sustainable value chains—the lack of certification systems, traceability systems, and other enforcement mechanisms allows producers to operate contrary to stated environmental policy objectives. Moreover, burgeoning civil society actors may have the opportunity for regulatory capture by influencing inexperienced regulators and managers brought on by devolution.

Whereas individual enterprising producers may contribute to tragedy of commons issues, new norms in government may result in principal-agent problems. Even within large state corporations, most decisions are now guided by economic exigency. Rationalization and professionalization of state agencies that have pivoted to focus on results may lead to the proliferation of detrimental environmental practices by managers seeking promotion. Due to speedy devolution, the current indetermination of the functions of different levels of government may leave reforestation efforts vulnerable to predatory rent-seeking behavior.

Implication

Requisite approaches to improving the collective action toward Cuba’s reforestation must address the problems of coordination, information, weak local actors, and misaligned incentives. Natural resource management in this context calls for a deeply integrated approach to rule- and decision-making. One recommendation is to strengthen the National Commission of Reforestation. As a national body that does not sit within a single ministry, the Commission is already situated to support integration. However, the body is focused on supporting the implementation of short- and medium-term development projects, rather than government efficiency. Bolstering its organizational capacity and reorienting its focus toward integrating intra-agency forestry efforts could chip away at the coordination problem.

Simply adding a government unit to provide organizational support is not a panacea. Each ministry requires institutional changes to establish mechanisms that promote communication. Though Cuba may lack experience in designing specific rule changes that incentivize coordination, it would likely garner support from the international community. Indeed, the objectives of development partners like GEF include “improving the effectiveness of environmental management strategies in satisfying conflicting priorities and stakeholder interest,” as well as applying a multi-focal approach that acknowledges the interconnectedness of environmental management.

Outside of improving coordination, the State should strengthen mechanisms for access to and the management of information. The creation of national and provincial working groups to standardize information transfer would help. These bodies could also be responsible for coordinating environmental impact studies and building up infrastructure to disseminate information to relevant stakeholders. GEF is in the process of creating something similar in its inter-sectoral information system and web mapping tool. Other civil society actors could support similar processes. Establishing new and strengthening existing linkages between nongovernmental actors and state environmental managers would also serve to increase accountability. Additionally, the State should make a concerted effort—perhaps by creating a new entity that undertakes regular audits—to compel agencies to frequently update rules and regulations.

To bolster weak local institutions, the State could help create regional associations that represent a variety of local-level stakeholders. Local priorities need to be understood by policymakers and regulators in upper levels of government so that they can provide appropriate capacity building resources. These associations would establish relationships with State integrating bodies and communicate key capability gaps. Furthermore, the State should run workshops—aided by international actors with experience—on strengthening governance structures as well as on technical aspects of conservation.

Local institutions also need strengthened mechanisms for resolving conflicts. Fortunately, there are existing entities—such as local reforestation commissions and municipal administration councils—that can negotiate issues arising from environmental policy. Thus, there should be a focus on supporting their governance by training, channeling resources, and promoting coordination with local authorities.

Lastly, the State must find ways to incentivize producers to act in accordance with environmental goals. One resource-intensive way to accomplish this goal is to implement a sustainability mandate into enterprise law. Audits and inspections into business practices could help with enforcement. However, to promote efficiency, civil society and government could instead encourage the creation of associations of similar types of producers. This might help the State to better understand incentive structures, which could lead to better policy. Associations could also self-impose regulation and accountability. This could be particularly useful among estate lessees who run integrated forest farms. A forest estate association could unearth unsustainable practices and inform how policy should respond.

Enterprise associations could also develop methods for incorpor-
ing sustainability into production processes that individuals may not create themselves. In the same vein, the State could direct resources toward understanding the evolving practices of producers and designing more sustainable ones, then transfer this knowledge to willing individuals and incentivize participation in various ways. In addition, the State could institute harsher penalties to disincentivize illicit forestry activities.

Focusing efforts on augmenting the conservation capabilities of the growing class of individual producers would leverage the promising environmentalism of certain social institutions. Nearly all Cuban peasants belong to the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP), as well as either a credit or production cooperative. These organizations helped to maintain environmental practices that utilize scarce inputs throughout the Special Period and have grown with the move toward marketization. Field work in two eastern Cuban provinces highlighted the conservation orientation of these peasant farmers:

We also saw tremendous new leaf growth on branches that had been stripped. And perhaps most impressive of all, a substantial portion of the trees that had been blown down had been saved by peasant families who stood them back up and covered their roots the first morning after the storm. We also saw many newly transplanted seedlings already growing in the spots left by the trees that were killed. In contrast, there was no evidence of trees having thus been ‘saved’ by the workers on industrial agriculture plantations, and replanting was well behind the pace observed on peasant cooperatives. 119

The actions described in this quote were taken by members of the Campesino-to-Campesino social process methodology, a grassroots effort used by ANAP to spread and further develop sustainable climate-resilient agroecological techniques.120 Akin to promoting enterprise associations, the State could also work with local organizations or international partners to support conservation-minded worker associations.

Implementation of these recommendations would create positive developments in Cuba’s ability to garner collective action toward its Bonn Challenge objective. Though recent institutional changes have given rise to significant collective action problems, Cuba’s historical ability to marshal action on reforestation is a good signal of their current potential. Practitioners can best support these reforestation efforts by contributing to the coordination and informational capabilities of the plethora of actors within Cuba’s environmental management landscape.

Abbreviations:
ANAP - National Association of Small Farmers
CAME - Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CITMA - Ministry of Science Technology and Environment
COMARNA - National Commission for Environmental Protection and Rational Use of Natural Resources
DFFFS - The Directorate of Forestry, Flora and Wildlife and offices of Forestry Services
FONADEF - National Forest Development Fund
INAF - The National Institute of Agro-forestry Research
GAF – The National Agro-forestry Group
MINAG - Ministry of Agriculture
SNAP - The Cuban National System of Protected Areas
UNDP – United National Development Programme
ENDNOTES


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A Hard Decision to Make During the Trade War Extension:
Should the United States exclude Chinese face masks and medical gear from tariffs during the COVID-19 pandemic?

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SUMMARY
As the COVID-19 pandemic spreads in the United States, domestic demand has been high for certain medical supplies such as face masks, respirators, ventilators, and gowns, also known as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). During early 2020, when COVID-19 cases began to increase, there was a severe shortage of PPE supply in almost every healthcare institution in the United States. Most of U.S. medical equipment is manufactured and imported, especially from China. Due to the tough trade stance on Beijing, the Trump administration unleashed a trade war with China and imposed heavy tariffs on PPE. At a critical moment of saving lives, exclusions from import tariffs for dozens of medical products imported from China would effectively relieve the shortage of those supplies. For humanitarian reasons, it was important to approve the tariff exception at the cost of temporary and limited national revenue loss. Therefore, on March 10th and 17th, 2020, the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), then led by Robert E. Lighthizer, announced the temporary tariff reduction of some Chinese medical products.

BACKGROUND
On March 11th, 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak was characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). Over the past year, the
virus has infected more than 110 million people and killed more than 2.5 million.\textsuperscript{4} It has posed a serious public health risk not only for the general public but also healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 patients. PPE has thus proved critical to curbing the spread of the virus and, especially, to protecting medical personnel. In Italy, an estimated 20\% of nurses and doctors quit their work temporarily or permanently due to the lack of PPE.\textsuperscript{5} In the United States, such response would lead to the collapse of the medical system. To stop this from happening in the United States, it is essential to guarantee and prioritize sufficient PPE supplies to frontline healthcare workers.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) statistics, the United States had a strategic stockpile of 12 million N95 masks and 30 million surgical masks before the pandemic, which could only meet 1\% health care workers' needs.\textsuperscript{6} Therefore, the United States was facing the challenge in acquiring these medical supplies in the quantity and speed needed. However, the United States had been heavily reliant on the Chinese manufacturers as other countries did for a long period of time. Much as China dominates the production of automotive, steel, electronics, and other necessities, it is also critical to the global supply of protective medical equipment. For example, China has half of the global mask productivity in the world. The Trump administration asked U.S. companies, including 3M and Honeywell, which had heavily invested in China to produce medical protective equipment, to send their products back to satisfy domestic needs.\textsuperscript{7}

COVID-19 has been plaguing the world for more than one year, during which the United States has intensively imported the necessary medical supplies from China due to limited domestic stockpiles and insufficient U.S. industrial capacity.\textsuperscript{8} If the United States would have maintained all the punitive tariffs on Chinese medical products decided by the Trump administration since the China-U.S. trade war, the heavy duty would have conversely jeopardized U.S. public health.

With all that being said, the tariff exclusion of PPE is critical to achieve the goal of saving lives, or at least contributing to the relief of the shortage.

**Tariff Exclusion Analysis**

In the short-term view, the tariff exclusion has inevitably caused some national revenue loss and therefore benefited related Chinese manufacturers. But considering the following reasons, it is reasonable to believe that the cost of implementing this policy is bearable and worthy.

Firstly, this is a provisional policy adjustment since the pandemic is a temporary emergency. The concern that the tariff exclusion could deepen U.S. dependence on Chinese medical products is reasonable, but the United States can resume the tariffs soon, because the first batch of COVID-19 vaccines have been produced and distributed in the United States since the mid-December last year,\textsuperscript{9} with more coming, and the domestic PPE supply chain has gradually resumed. Moreover, it is also fair to expect a position of advantage created by this temporary exclusion when the new Biden administration renegotiates its trade agreement with China.

Secondly, in terms of value, PPE accounts for a comparatively negligible fraction of China-U.S. trade. Starting in 2018, the Trump administration imposed duties of 15 to 25 percent on some $360 billion of Chinese goods, but only $5 billion of that were medical products.\textsuperscript{10} This is a small number compared to the total value of Chinese imports. It is fair to say that this leniency did not create the impression among the U.S. public that the White House was softening its long-term stance in trade policy, nor that the Trump administration was surrendering to Beijing in the on-going trade war.

Thirdly, the emergency has demonstrated that it is inadvisable to hold tariff rates on these life-saving devices. It would negatively affect the American medical system and probably exacerbate social inequality. The previous tariff rate, in addition to skyrocketing prices and product demand, forced American medical providers to spend extra time and money searching only in certain domestic locations for vital equipment, where such supplies even might not have existed.\textsuperscript{11} In this vicious cycle, the scarcity of product plus the extra tariff would result in higher prices, which would impose heavy financial burden on low-income groups or may completely deprive them of their rights to get access to health service.

Lastly, the unnecessary trade barrier would jeopardize U.S. leadership in dealing with this global crisis. The commitment and policy actions from world leaders, especially the United States, to keep markets open are critical. COVID-19 patients and medical workers around the world need policymakers to guarantee the free flow of essential supplies and equipment to countries in need, as the virus continues to wreak havoc. To minimize the heavy toll that COVID-19 is taking on the world, global cooperation is the only feasible option for countries including the United States. If the United States can set an example of supporting medical supplies flowing freely, it will strengthen U.S. global leadership, which has been eroded and shared by its strategic competitors like China and Russia in handling the global health crisis.
THE TRADE-OFF IN DOUBLING DOWN ON THE DEFENSE PRODUCTION ACT

Given the fact that medical devices are desperately needed across the United States, if the tariff exclusion is out of the question, many have argued that the federal government can expand productive capacity and supply by invoking the Defense Production Act (DPA). Funding and other incentives invested into the domestic medical supplies production will benefit the United States in the long-term. The financial and policy support will not only create jobs and profit but also send a clear signal that the United States is going to reindustrialize to get rid of external reliance in critical industries, which would set an example to encourage manufacturers to return to the United States. However, the DPA is not the most efficient solution to control the coronavirus pandemic. The federal government is unable to substantively allocate the domestic resources and solve logistical problems needed to manufacture complex medical devices. Besides that, carefully certified procedures must be followed at every point in the supply chain to produce life-saving medical technologies. Therefore, for the manufacturers, what they really need are experienced quality managers and manufacturing engineers who know the standards and will help to meet them. Another difficulty is that those manufacturers’ supply chains are global and complex, and they have faced trade restrictions, travel restrictions, port closures, and personnel reductions during the pandemic. It means many components and raw materials may have to be developed and found from scratch, as they often come from overseas sources and are therefore not available during such a crisis period.

It is obvious, due to the characteristics of the U.S. free market economy and the constraints of the government structure, that invoking the DPA does not solve the problem, unless this act further amplifies the administrative power of the president to allocate and mobilize necessary resources. If the United States only relies on the slow resumption of domestic PPE supplies with DPA and ignores the tariff exclusions for immediate supplies, the medical system will be under major pressure in another pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Tariff exclusion is a practical and efficient way to relieve the shortage of medical supplies that are essential to ensuring our medical system can operate sustainably and effectively. Even though implementing this policy would inevitably cause temporary national revenue loss, it is negligible and sensible, because saving lives is a priority second to no other.

ENDNOTES


What Comes Next?:
Strengthening the earned income tax credit
to support American workers beyond
COVID-19

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) structurally harmed the U.S. economy in 2020, as unemployment reached levels not seen since the Great Depression. While there is a growing sense of optimism from the vaccines, the economy remains in a deep hole as economic activity and unemployment fail to adequately rebound. One policy tool that has yet to be fully explored is an expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which has the potential to support workers reentering the labor force and provides critical aid to essential workers in the service sector.¹ The EITC is an effective anti-poverty instrument for workers with children, yet it does little to reduce poverty for childless adult workers. While the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) plans to temporarily provide an EITC expansion, policymakers should establish legislation to permanently strengthen and expand the EITC to provide substantial relief to the entire American workforce as the country grapples with the harsh realities of COVID-19 entering its second year.

BACKGROUND

In the United States, COVID-19 created a shock to the labor force when unemployment reached 14.7 percent in April 2020.² Total nonfarm employment rapidly decreased to 130 million workers at the end of April—a 24 million drop from February 2020—and has recovered slowly despite projections of a V-shaped recovery.³ Closing out the 2020 holiday season, unemployment from the January 2021 jobs report remained at 6.3 percent—when a year ago it hovered at 3.5 percent—while the U.S. economy recovered only 49,000 jobs.³ This total loss of employment increased the poverty rate from 10.5 percent in 2019 to 13.6 percent at the end of 2020, as more than 10 million people fell below the poverty line.⁴ Many job sectors experienced significant losses in 2020, but the service sector—comprised of the “essential” workers and the food services industry—managed to rebound to meet consumer demand during COVID-19.⁵

Due to the threats of COVID-19, service sector employees and essential workers of all ages face stark challenges while working. Half of service sector workers aged 16 to 24 were employed in high-risk industries before the pandemic compared with 24 percent of workers overall, but now face heightened risks due to COVID-19.³ Moreover, one-third of workers under 24 have lost their jobs due to pandemic-related closures, a troubling development as early career interruptions statistically lead to long-term economic damage.⁷ Meanwhile, 14 percent of workers age 65 and older live near or below the federal poverty line, and are placed in the high-risk category for life-threatening symptoms from COVID-19.⁸ These sub-groups share a common bond: they belong to the population of childless adult workers who receive insufficient support from the federal government. Childless adult workers employed in low-income jobs are more likely to see their wages cut during the pandemic, and an even smaller percentage have the capacity to work from home and support themselves in a pandemic economy.⁹

While the vaccine distribution has been a positive development in 2021, more expansive fiscal policy will be necessary to support Americans suffering from the historic job losses. To support the essential and low-income workers, the Biden administration and 117th Congress must broaden fiscal policy to sustain an economic recovery throughout 2021-2022.

CURRENT POLICY APPROACH: FISCAL STIMULUS

The most notable policy developments to support Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic came from three comprehensive fiscal stimulus bills: the CARES Act (which provided $1,200 in direct cash transfers and a weekly $600 unemployment supplement); the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (a $600 direct cash transfer and a $300 unemployment supplement); and now the ARPA.¹⁰ Each of these bills provide a multitude of support mechanisms,
from extending a moratorium on rent evictions and increasing the refundable payroll tax credit for paid sick and family leave, to expanding the child tax credit for workers with children.\textsuperscript{11}

ARPA is expected to provide a third round of stimulus checks equaling $1,400 along with $300 in unemployment benefits until September 2021.\textsuperscript{17} An increase in the minimum wage was rejected by the U.S. Senate parliamentarian as it violated the fast-track process and would not be attached to the legislation.\textsuperscript{13} But one final powerful policy instrument to support American workers—an expansion of the EITC—was only temporarily expanded for childless adult workers.\textsuperscript{14} This new provision expires in 2022, forcing policy discussions on supporting childless adult workers in a post-pandemic economy.

**Policy Recommendation – Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit Beyond 2021**

Figure 1: Earned Income Tax Credit Amount by Earnings Level and Number of Children, 2020

One tool to boost the economy and lift workers out of poverty in a post-pandemic world remains a permanent expansion of the EITC for childless adult workers. The EITC is a refundable tax credit available to workers earning relatively low wages under specific income thresholds, which phases out as an individual receives higher earnings.\textsuperscript{12} It incentivizes employment by providing a refundable tax credit based on their previous year’s income, making each hour of labor more lucrative. In 2020, it was estimated that 27 million households received $69 billion in tax credit refunds.\textsuperscript{13} However, as it stands, the EITC predominantly supports individuals with children, doing little for low-income workers without dependent children, or childless adult workers. For example, a single individual with three children can qualify for a maximum credit of $6,728, whereas a childless adult worker with similar earnings can receive a maximum amount of $543.\textsuperscript{16}

Expanding the EITC would support essential workers such as store cashiers and cooks in the service sector from falling deeper into poverty despite supporting consumers in the U.S. economy. In one example, a store clerk working 35 hours a week while earning the federal minimum wage can earn roughly $13,621 in 2020, just above the poverty line of $12,760.\textsuperscript{17} They would pay roughly $1,200 in combined income and payroll taxes, and would receive an EITC benefit of $160 as a result, causing them to fall below the poverty line. Cases such as this account for more than 5.8 million low-wage workers affected by the federal tax code every year, placing these essential workers into a poverty trap the EITC originally intended to fix.\textsuperscript{18}

A permanent expansion of the EITC would create a historic reduction in poverty, while supporting both older and younger workers. Extending the credit to older workers after the cut-off of age 65 could improve retirement security and encourage older workers to remain in the workforce. Meanwhile, younger workers who must navigate new employment hurdles due to COVID-19 can receive more income for each hour of their labor.\textsuperscript{19} This expansion would provide additional income to over 17 million people, including the 5.8 million childless workers taxed deeper into poverty.\textsuperscript{20}

**2021 Policy Development**

In a positive development, ARPA would temporarily expand the EITC for childless adult workers until 2022 by reducing the minimum age of eligibility from 25 to 19, and lifting the maximum age cap. Childless EITC recipients would additionally receive an increase in the phase-in rate from 7.65 percent to 15.3 percent, which would expand their maximum credit from $543 to $1,502, while extending the income cap (the phase-out rate) from $16,000 to at least

\textsuperscript{12} See Figure 1 which illustrates the maximum credit amount for an individual or married couple per qualifying children. Children must be filed as dependents to the tax filer for eligibility purposes.
$21,000, which allows for more childless adult workers to receive a refund based on their earned income.\textsuperscript{21} A lookback provision was added to allow for tax filers to claim their pre-COVID income as earned income, which allows those who lost their job to reap the EITC benefits of their former job before the pandemic struck.\textsuperscript{22}

The temporary EITC expansion costs $11.9 billion, which is only 1.2 percent of the $1.9 trillion package, and would generate a fiscal multiplier of $1.40 in economic benefit for every dollar spent.\textsuperscript{23} This expansion would provide more net benefit for low-income workers, reducing income inequality, while also providing an incentive to work.\textsuperscript{24} Implementation of this expansion would begin immediately, however individuals would not see money from this policy until next year.\textsuperscript{25} After tax year 2021 ends, the policy will expire.

Permanently expanding the EITC would give economic security to the childless adult workers and essential workers who continue to support the U.S. economy at their own risk. While the Biden administration's legislation will expand the EITC for this population, due to its temporal nature it will be at the center of policy debates in 2022 and beyond. The expanded EITC can and should be a permanent policy utilized in a post-pandemic world to ensure the economic wellbeing of American workers beyond COVID-19.

\textbf{Endnotes}


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Executive Summary

This article explores how the United States has largely failed to prevent the transmission of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) within correctional facilities. A literature review indicates that throughout 2020, COVID-19 infection rates in correctional facilities, and the resulting morbidity and mortality, were disproportionately higher than those seen in the general population. Characteristics of correctional facilities, including overcrowding, environmental factors, and ‘jail churning’ all accelerated transmission of infectious diseases within these facilities. It is necessary for states to research and implement strategies that decrease prison populations to control the spread of COVID-19. Governments also need to review current prison healthcare policies to ensure that those who work, and also those who live, in these institutions are protected.

Current COVID-19 Situation in Prisons

By March of 2021, more than 28 million people in the United States had been infected with COVID-19. Of those, over 626,000 have been in correctional facilities, and approximately 2,790 inmates and correctional officers have died. On average the COVID-19 mortality rate within U.S. prisons is twice that of the general public, with the rate of infection 4 times higher than the rate of confirmed cases in the general population. In 2020, Rikers Island Prison in New York City had the highest rate of COVID-19 infection of any place in the world. The sheer magnitude of COVID-19 cases within U.S. correctional facilities points to the need for improved policies that will protect inmate health.
Prisons and jails have long been identified as major amplifiers of infectious diseases, and in fact, more than 40 of the 50 largest clustered COVID-19 outbreaks in the U.S. have occurred in jails and prisons.⁷ The average prison system occupancy level in 2020 remained at 103 percent of capacity, and due to this, the majority of prisons were unable to maintain the recommended six feet of social distancing between incarcerated individuals and staff, increasing the risk of Covid-19 transmission. In addition, almost 20 percent of the state and federal prison population is over 50 years of age, with 44 percent of prison inmates reporting a chronic medical condition, and 74 percent being overweight, obese, or morbidly obese, all of which have been identified as “high risk” conditions for severe illness should they contract COVID-19.⁸

Infectious disease outbreaks in prisons can have a major impact on local communities because these facilities are not isolated settings. Incarcerated individuals are often transferred between different facilities, while prison staff members commute to work daily.⁹ Black and Hispanic communities especially are at an increased risk for COVID-19 outbreaks due to their over-representation in correctional facilities. Currently, Black Americans make up over 40 percent of incarcerated individuals, despite representing only 13 percent of the U.S. population, and Hispanics account for 23 percent of inmates, while only representing 16 percent of the adult population.¹⁰ It is estimated that nearly one-third of Black men in the United States will face imprisonment while only representing 16 percent of the adult population.¹¹ Many socioeconomically disadvantaged people, and people of color, have been facing a disproportionate risk of infection, severe morbidity, and death from COVID-19, directly related to their disproportionate representation in high-risk settings, like prisons and jails.¹²

**Policy Solutions**

**Decarceration**

Decarceration has been identified as a key strategy for mitigating the spread of COVID-19 within prisons and jails since it presents one of the clearest ways to decrease prison populations, thereby enabling prisons to implement better social distancing measures. By decreasing the size of prison populations, other mitigation strategies are easier to implement, such as improved physical distancing and providing additional space to quarantine and medically isolate high-risk individuals.¹³ In a study conducted for the Texas prison system, the Institute for Crime & Justice found that COVID-19 cases and deaths were minimized by housing individuals at 85 percent capacity or less.¹⁴ Colorado, one of the first states to implement large-scale decarceration efforts, has managed to reduce their jail rates by 31 percent, which researchers estimate has saved over 1,100 lives. Decarceration policies vary by state, but generally revolve around the idea of releasing certain low-risk offenders to mitigate the risks posed to inmates. Research on re-offending has shown that there is no public safety risk to releasing an estimated 39 percent of incarcerated people, and that we are incarcerating more individuals than necessary to maintain public safety.¹⁵

**Preventing Jail-Community Cycling**

An estimated 7.3 million people (3.2 percent of the U.S. adult population) go through what is known as the “jail churn” process every year, in which they are admitted to and released from one of the over 2,800 county jails after a short period of time in custody.¹⁶ In 2018, U.S. jails had over 10 million total bookings.¹⁷ Nationwide, the average time served in county jails is approximately 21-25 days, while the average time served in state or federal prisons is just over two years.¹⁸ Jail-community cycling or “jail churning” is the process in which these individuals are arrested, sent to jail, potentially exposed to COVID-19, and then are released after a short period of time due to either posting bail or being found not guilty. Upon leaving jail, they then re-enter their communities and potentially infect those around them with COVID-19.¹⁹ Reinhart and Chen (2020) found that jail-community cycling accounted for 55 percent of the variance in case rates across ZIP codes in Chicago, and 37 percent of the variance in all of Illinois.²⁰ In California, jails accounted for a 150 percent increase in COVID-19 related deaths in San Diego County, Orange County, Sacramento County, Fresno County, and San Bernardino County.²¹ Jail churning particularly impacts Black communities and highlights the inextricable links between health, race and incarceration.²² Additionally, the majority (66 percent) of those being held in jails are pretrial detainees who are presumed innocent and have yet to be convicted of a crime.²³

Jail-community cycling can be prevented in a variety of ways, such as through encouraging law enforcement officers to use alternatives to arrest, like a summons or ticket, or by encouraging local prosecutors to drop low-level charges against defendants. If prosecutors or law enforcement officers are unwilling or unable to dismiss charges, efforts could be made to reduce bail for vulnerable defendants, enabling them to avoid prolonged detainment before trial. Additionally, efforts could be made to release individuals being held in jails for parole violations. If New York state implemented this measure alone, they would cut their jail population by over 5,000.²⁴
Healthcare Copayment Policies in Prisons

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, all but twelve states and the District of Columbia charged co-payment fees to prisoners who asked to see a doctor. These fees were created in order to discourage prisoners from abusing the medical system by requiring them to share in the cost of their medical care. The average national co-payment fee for inmates is $3.47. While this payment may sound reasonable, it is actually extremely difficult for many prisoners to pay. Incarcerated individuals usually earn between $0.14-$0.63 per hour. A $2-$5 co-payment for physician's fees, medications, and/or testing is the equivalent of charging an un-incarcerated worker $200-500 for a medical visit. These co-payments have created barriers to detecting and treating infectious diseases in prisons. In 2003, the Federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention identified inmate copays as one of the major factors that contributed to an outbreak of MRSA among prisoners in Georgia, California, and Texas. Since March 2020, eleven states have suspended all medical co-pays in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and many additional states have suspended co-pays for prisoners seeking medical care for respiratory and flu-related symptoms. While these efforts represent a step in the right direction, many health officials and human rights advocates continue to advocate for their permanent removal.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the findings presented, this article finds that the COVID-19 pandemic has created the need for the government to re-examine how, and for how long, individuals are being held in jails and prisons. While each of the policy measures listed above could lead to a decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases within correctional facilities, it is important to note the way that these policies are interlinked. Decarceration can improve conditions in prisons and jails by improving the ability for social distancing within facilities, however, without reevaluating the public safety justification for initial arrest and incarceration, there will likely continue to be high rates of jail-community cycling leading to the spread of COVID-19 through affected communities. While some major metropolitan areas, including Baltimore (MD), Los Angeles (CA), and Philadelphia (PA) have already begun to implement policies to reduce jail admissions by making fewer arrests for petty crime, these policies have yet to be adopted widely.

Improvements in managing COVID-19 transmission rates in correctional institutions will require the cooperation of a variety of stakeholders including governors, legislators, judges, criminal justice and public health officials, and community leaders. The cooperation of these stakeholders is necessary because the elimination of pathogen transmission in penal facilities goes beyond simply improving sanitary measures, and instead requires a variety of policy changes at multiple levels of government. State legislators and prison officials should take this opportunity to evaluate the necessity of prisoner medical co-pays, which may hinder individuals from seeking treatment for infectious diseases that can quickly spread through crowded environments. Additionally, state and federal facilities should prioritize efforts to release older and immunocompromised individuals who are at low risk of reincarceration and are at a high risk for severe complications and mortality due to COVID-19.
ENDNOTES


10 Clayton-Johnson, G., Karefa-Johnson, R., & Raskai, T. (2020);


13 Ibid.


26 Ibid.


28 Ibid.
