



Fall 2019 Project Menu

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Effects of Peace Negotiations Process on the Battlefield

Analysis, Planning, Programs, and Learning

Conflict and Stabilization Operations

Overview:

Seeking a research paper and accompanying charts/graphs on the following questions:

- What is the relationship between peace processes and battlefield dynamics?
- Does the specific format and design of the peace process affect the relationship?
- What phases of the peace process are the most prone to increased violence? (pre-negotiations, announcement of negotiations, during negotiations, during impasse, during implementation, etc)

Ideally, we would be able to map the timing of battlefield dynamics (ACLED data, conflict monitors, and media) against peace negotiation dynamics (media, mediator reports, etc).

This would be useful to diplomats for several reasons:

- It would help inform decisions to announce/demand negotiations.
- It would help diplomats prepare for likely battlefield changes at different phases of the process.
- It would help messaging when violence increases during negotiations.
- It can inform actions to mitigate increases in violence related to negotiations.

Format of Final Project:

Research paper. Graphs or tables mapping negotiations events to battlefield changes

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Conflict, Stabilization, & Reconstruction; Human Rights; International Law; International Relations; Psychology; Statistics

Comments:

This product will support the work of CSO/APPL's "Peace Process Support Team"

Labor Rights Accountability Mechanisms and Their History

Office of International Labor Affairs

Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

Overview:

We would like a report on the various accountability mechanisms through which labor complaints can be made or labor violations can be highlighted, as well as the history of their use. The International Labor Organization Commission of Inquiry process is probably most important, but there are similar mechanisms at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, at the UN through the Universal Periodic Reviews, as well as in small multilateral organizations such as the Organization of American States and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation. There are also similar mechanisms related to trade in various free trade agreements, the Generalized System of Preferences, and the African Growth and Opportunity Act, among others.

For us, the value of this analysis would be to ensure that we are consistent across the different mechanisms (and have been historically) as well as making sure we are aware of all of the mechanisms that exist.

Format of Final Project:

5-10 page research paper, potentially longer if it turns out there are more mechanisms than we expect.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Civil Society; Democracy & Human Rights; Economic Sanctions; Economic & Finance Issues; Human Rights; International Law; International Relations; Trafficking in Persons; Labor

Comments:

<https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/fs/2018/282293.htm>

Tails You Lose: Exploring the Downside of Cryptocurrencies in Developing Countries

Caucasus Affairs and Regional Conflicts

European and Eurasian Affairs

Overview:

Some analysts have argued smaller developing countries are more likely than larger and better developed ones to encourage the growth of cryptocurrency industries. With their lighter regulatory and administrative burdens and eagerness to seize economic opportunities to address poverty or a lack of modern industry, these countries enjoy greater opportunities and incentives to embrace cryptocurrency. One example is Georgia, which has with government support emerged as a major hub of Bitcoin mining and other cryptocurrency-related operations. The potential benefits of this activity are often discussed by our interlocutors. This study would examine the degree to which there might be potential downsides of developing country investments in the cryptocurrency sector, such as: negative impact on democratic development; negative impact on regional economic connectivity (for example with neighboring countries that have not embraced cryptocurrencies); exacerbation of corruption.

Format of Final Project:

20-30 page research paper

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Economic & Finance Issues; Information & Communication Technology; International Development; International Relations

Comments:

This project would benefit from a multidisciplinary approach, with team members focused on various aspects of the problem.

U.S. Interactions with Unrecognized Entities: A Comparative Review

Caucasus Affairs and Regional Conflicts

European and Eurasian Affairs

Overview:

A number of self-proclaimed political entities exist today that remain unrecognized by all but a few states. Although they maintain delegations or other informal missions outside of their claimed territories, such entities have garnered minimal (if any) formal recognition. Although the United States does not recognize these entities, U.S. officials and citizens interact with residents of these polities to some extent. This study would: compare the development of U.S. official policy with respect to these entities and the way historical patterns and contexts led to varied U.S. approaches in different situations (such as political, military, and economic factors); discuss the practical aspects of non-recognition, e.g., acceptance of travel documents and visa policy regarding unrecognized entities; and analyze the overall effect of these policies on the conduct of U.S. foreign policy.

Format of Final Project:

20-30 page research paper

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Civil Society; International Law; International Relations

Comments:

None.

Using Artificial Intelligence in Training at US Department of State

Office of Educational Policy

Foreign Service Institute

Overview:

Project Purpose: Identify whether chat bots are a viable solution in training of diplomats at the US Department of State.

Overview: A chat bot is an artificial intelligence that conducts conversations with the user via auditory or textual means. From its initial development in the 1960s to today, chat bots provide several benefits to the user. These conversational programs can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and provide assistance to the user at his/her convenience. Additionally, chat bots are compatible for use on both mobile and desktop devices. When used in training, learning becomes integrated into the work day and allows the user to customize his/her learning schedule.

Chat bots could make a positive impact at the US Department of State in the training of diplomats. The Department has locations across the globe, and diplomats at post would require varying degrees of access to training and performance support. Having information at the click of the button at any time could increase efficacy in the support of diplomats.

If the project is selected, FSI's Educational Technology Coordinator and her team will serve as the points of contact for the university team(s). The Ed Tech team will work with FSI instructional units (Language Studies, Professional and Area Studies, Applied Information Technology, Leadership and Management, and the Transition Center) to refine their suggested project ideas, and will work in concert with the university team(s) to provide ideas for chat bot development. Initial ideas that FSI believes will lend themselves to the use of chat bots include:

- Management Process Decision Tree (School of Professional and Area Studies)
- Language translator (School of Language Studies)
- Informational technology technical support (School of Applied Information Technology)

Format of Final Project:

A presentation identifying whether or not chats bots would be a viable solution in training at DOS. A demonstration of a chat bot is desirable as an interactive element of the presentation.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Computer Science; Information & Communication Technology; International Relations; Training

Comments:

The Foreign Service Institute is the U.S. Government's premier foreign affairs training provider, serving the U.S. Department of State and the entire USG foreign affairs community as a strategic enabler of diplomatic excellence. We are dedicated to ensuring the career-long learning opportunities required for success in today's global arena.

Elected Security Council Members and the International Order

UNP

International Organization Affairs

Overview:

This project seeks to answer the following question: How can the United States work with the 10 elected members of the United Nations Security Council to both rehabilitate the Council's position as an effective and authoritative supranational organization while also furthering a rules-based international order? To solve this puzzle, the project team will need to first analyze recent Council history, using a case studies approach on particular failures and successes. Drawing from these lessons, the project team should extrapolate preferred courses of action, with the end goal being a freer, more prosperous, and less violent global order. While imperfect, the United Nations still represents the best of humanity—the desire to transcend national boundaries and cooperate for mutual benefit. As President Roosevelt said in 1945, “We have learned that we cannot live alone, at peace; that our own well-being is dependent on the well-being of other nations far away. [...] We have learned to be citizens of the world, members of the human community.

Format of Final Project:

Final product format is flexible. Teams can choose between an options memo and research paper, or an options memo and a presentation.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Conflict, Stabilization, & Reconstruction; International Relations

Comments:

Our office develops manages the United States' relationship with the United Nations Security Council. This project should not take more than a semester. Faculty and students will have access to discuss the project with the sponsor, H. Zed Tarar, a career Foreign Service Officer.

Who is spreading Disinformation in Sub-Saharan Africa?

Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs

African Affairs

Overview:

Disinformation is not a new means of influencing public opinion, but it is spreading faster than ever online. Those who intentionally spread disinformation seldom have the well-being of their society in mind, and may be trying to fuel distrust, grievances, and divisions in society, between society and government, and between countries. It can be particularly powerful when picked up by normally reputable news sources, and linger even after it is refuted. In order to combat disinformation we need to know who is spreading it, what they are saying, and where they are saying it. We also need to know who is listening and sharing so that we can target those audience, with (for example) educational campaigns aimed at promoting critical thinking. This project will look at various sources of online media and identify the countries and platforms in Sub-Saharan Africa where disinformation is spread. The project should include examples from the Sub-Saharan Africa context.

Format of Final Project:

Please present your findings in a 1-5 page executive summary and a presentation, and share all sources of reference and data used. Presentations may be delivered in person or virtually.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

African Studies; Communications; Conflict, Stabilization, & Reconstruction; Counter Terrorism; Education & Cultural Studies; Information & Communication Technology; International Relations; Psychology; Sociology; Youth Issues;

Comments:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-national-security-advisor-ambassador-john-r-bolton-trump-administrations-new-africa-strategy/>

The Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs handles all press, social media, and exchange programs within the Bureau of African Affairs, Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/p/af/> Research projects for this office should all focus more heavily on society, media, social media, education, and exchange programs. For more information on exchange programs please visit the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs: <https://eca.state.gov/>

Role and influence of Chinese and Russian state media in Sub-Saharan Africa

Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs

African Affairs

Overview:

In his December 13, 2018 speech on the current Administration's New Africa Strategy, National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton stated that "Great power competitors, namely China and Russia, are rapidly expanding their financial and political influence across Africa. They are deliberately and aggressively targeting their investments in the region to gain a competitive advantage over the United States." Media can also be used to gain financial, political, and even military influence. In 2018, three Russian investigative journalists who were investigating Wagner, a Russian paramilitary company, were killed in the Central African Republic. The USG wishes to safeguard the economic independence of countries in Africa and help African nations move towards self-reliance. A free press and transparency is one of the hallmarks of democracy and can help countries safeguard their independence and move towards self-reliance.

This research proposal seeks to gain a clear picture of the role and influence of Chinese and Russia state owned media in Sub-Saharan Africa. This may be used to brief Department of State officers, develop outreach or training strategies for independent media, and develop strategies to combat disinformation aimed at controlling or destabilizing societies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Format of Final Project:

Please present your findings in a 1-5 page executive summary and a presentation, and share all sources of reference and data used. Presentations may be delivered in person or virtually.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

African Studies; Communications; Conflict, Stabilization, & Reconstruction; Democracy & Human Rights; Economic & Finance Issues; Education & Cultural Studies; International Development; International Relations; Sociology

Comments:

The White House recently released a new Africa Strategy which can be found here:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-national-security-advisor-ambassador-john-r-bolton-trump-administrations-new-africa-strategy/>

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Youth Influencers in Sub-Saharan Mega-Cities/Helping youth prosper and believe in the future in Sub-Saharan Africa/Shaping the future through social media in Sub-Saharan Africa

Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs

African Affairs

Overview:

In his December 13, 2018 speech on the current Administration's New Africa Strategy, National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton stated that "ISIS, al-Qaida, and their affiliates all operate and recruit on the African continent, plotting attacks against American citizens and targets. Any sound U.S. strategy toward Africa must address this serious threat in a comprehensive way." Young people with grievances, which may include lack of economic opportunities, are a prime target for violent extremists online. Africa's population is projected to double to two billion people by 2050, and many will be under 18, making Africa the youngest continent. Currently, almost 70 percent of Africans are under 25 years old. This youth bulge will impact the world and we need to ensure African youth are listened to, invested in, and are more confident about their future.

This project will research youth influencers and opinion leaders, whether for good or for ill, in two of the largest cities in Africa; Lagos and Nairobi. Other large cities in Sub-Saharan Africa which may be included include Abdijan, Accra, Addis Ababa, Dar es Salaam, Durban, Johannesburg, Kano, Kinshasa, Luanda, and Mogadishu. Looking at local leaders, social media, and bloggers, non-governmental or independent sources, determine who and what is influencing youth. What is fueling grievances? How can we lay the groundwork to help youth prosper? What are the impediments in youth obtaining good jobs or developing their own non-government organizations or private entities?

Format of Final Project:

Please present your findings in a 1-5 page executive summary and a presentation, and share all sources of reference and data used. Presentations may be delivered in person or virtually.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

African Studies; Civil Society; Communications; Conflict, Stabilization, & Reconstruction; Counter Terrorism; Democracy & Human Rights; Education & Cultural Studies; International Development; International Relations; Psychology; Sociology; Youth Issues

Comments:

The White House recently released a new Africa Strategy which can be found here: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-national-security-advisor-ambassador-john-r-bolton-trump-administrations-new-africa-strategy/>

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Research projects for this office should all focus more heavily on society, media, social media, education, and exchange programs. For more information on exchange programs please visit the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs: <https://eca.state.gov/>

Key factors of public diplomacy in supporting democratic processes in Sub-Saharan Africa

Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs

African Affairs

Overview:

In his December 13, 2018 speech on the current Administration's New Africa Strategy, National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton stated that "...lasting stability, prosperity, independence, and security on the African continent are in the national security interest of the United States... We want our economic partners in the region to thrive, prosper, and control their own destinies." He also said "we will ensure that U.S. taxpayer dollars for aid are used efficiently and effectively." The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor states that "Democratically governed nations are more likely to secure the peace, deter aggression, expand open markets, promote economic development, protect American citizens, combat international terrorism and crime, uphold human and worker rights, avoid humanitarian crises and refugee flows, improve the global environment, and protect human health." In 2018 the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mali, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe had elections for their presidents, and in 2019 Botswana, Cameroon, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa will hold presidential elections.

This research project should compare and contrast recent and/or upcoming elections between two or more of the above countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Based on this comparison, attempt to identify the most effective international, governmental, and non-governmental interventions, (E.g. media training, exchanges, public statements, education, etc.) aimed at promoting free, fair, and non-violent democratic process, and analyze the role and impact of media and/or social networking on said process. Your analysis of international interventions should include U.S. Government statements, and the impact of international observers and election delegations, and may include those of other countries as well.

Format of Final Project:

Please present your findings in a 1-5 page executive summary and a presentation, and share all sources of reference and data used. Presentations may be delivered in person or virtually.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

African Studies; Civil Society; Communications; Conflict, Stabilization, & Reconstruction; Democracy & Human Rights; Education & Cultural Studies; International Relations; Sociology; Statistics; Politics

Comments:

The White House recently released a new Africa Strategy which can be found here:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-national-security-advisor-ambassador-john-r-bolton-trump-administrations-new-africa-strategy/>

The Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs handles all press, social media, and exchange programs within the Bureau of African Affairs, Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/p/af/>

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ID: DipLab1915202

China-Led or US-Led Trilats?

East Asia and Pacific Bureau's Korea and Japan Desk

East Asian and Pacific Affairs

Overview:

There are a number of US-ROK-Japan and China-ROK-Japan trilateral forums from the ministerial level down to the DAS-level. This project would research into the types, frequency, and levels of US versus China led trilateral forums over the past four years; analysis of outcomes from these trilateral forums; analysis on how each individual country loses/benefits; and finally recommendations on where U.S.-led trilateral discussions should delve into in future trilateral discussions and prediction of where China-led discussions will go.

Format of Final Project:

We would appreciate a 5 page research paper, a two-page chart outlining China vs. U.S.-led trilats, and a presentation.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

African Studies; Civil Society; Cyber Security; East Asian/Pacific Studies; International Law; International Relations

Comments:

This project could definitely be completed in one semester.

ID: DipLab1915205

Gulf-Based Extremist Ideology

Office of Countering Violent Extremism

Counterterrorism

Overview:

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) is a key policy priority for the U.S. Department of State. The Bureaus of Counterterrorism and Conflict and Stabilization Operations collaborate to implement initiatives that influence CVE policy globally. One main lines of effort is to seek effective ways to address the global threat of extremist ideology that can help to give rise to terrorist groups like ISIS, al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab, and others. This ideology draws upon highly supremacist, exclusionary, and intolerant interpretations of Islam. This Diplomacy Lab effort will help fill a frequently identified research and analysis gap on the propagation of such ideologies from Gulf region countries – particularly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait – and inform policy on an issue with implications for our national security and global stability.

Format of Final Project:

We would prefer to have a 20-page research paper, 2-4 page recommendations memo, presentation, and any other data the research team(s) would feel useful.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Conflict, Stabilization, & Reconstruction; Counter Terrorism; International Relations

Comments:

We would prefer to have periodic meetings and/or discussions with the researchers to address progress, any challenges, and project direction.

South Korea's Role in the Indo-Pacific

East Asia and Pacific Bureau

East Asian and Pacific Affairs

Overview:

Over the past decade, multiple South Korean presidents have released various iterations of a policy to diversify South Korea's economic, political, and cultural ties towards Southeast Asia and India. Every time, attention to DPRK diverts away from this important priority. The US and ROK are discussing ways to cooperate across their respective Indo-Pacific Strategy and New Southern Policy. This research would lay out where the ROK's have already invested political and economic capital (analysis of private sector and government investment), ROK overall priorities with their NSP; and concrete recommendations for US-ROK cooperation spanning all three pillars of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy (economic, security, and governance).

Format of Final Project:

5 page research paper, two pages of recommendations, and potential presentation to the Korea Desk and the ROK Embassy.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Conflict, Stabilization, & Reconstruction; Cyber Security; East Asian/Pacific Studies; Economic & Finance Issues; International Relations; Public-Private Partnerships;

Comments:

This project is possible in one semester.

Improving victim-centric responses to sexual assault

American Citizen Services - Consular Section

U.S. Mission to Thailand

Overview:

U.S. Embassy Bangkok's American Citizen Services (ACS) unit provides routine and emergency assistance to more than 100,000 U.S. citizens who are estimated to be living or travelling in Thailand at any one time. An important role of the ACS unit is supporting U.S. citizens who are victims of crime in Thailand, including those who have been sexually assaulted.

Reporting sexual assault cases in Thailand can be challenging due to cultural perceptions of sexual assault, language barriers and unclear/varied procedures. U.S. Embassy Bangkok is interested in projects focused on encouraging the police in Thailand to adopt victim-centered approaches to sexual assault.

Format of Final Project:

Embassy Bangkok is seeking two final products, which could be delivered by the same team or by two separate teams. First, Embassy Bangkok seeks a practical presentation that Embassy staff would translate into Thai and deliver to Royal Thai Police officials as part of our relationship-building initiatives. The presentation should include research-driven information about the efficacy of victim-centered investigative processes and practical tips for applying these approaches. The format should include content for a PowerPoint presentation, as well as notes for presenters.

Achieving a cultural and procedural shift in the way sexual assault cases are handled by Thai police will require ongoing, sustained advocacy and collaboration. For a second product, the Embassy is seeking a three-year strategy for working with the Royal Thai Police to implement victim-centric procedures in sexual assault cases. This strategic plan should include a situational overview, case studies (if applicable), and objectives and tactics to support Embassy Bangkok's broader goals for augmenting Thailand's response to sexual assault cases.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Education & Cultural Studies; Human Rights; International Relations

Comments:

In January 2018, the ACS unit responded to four unrelated sexual assaults involving U.S. citizen victims. Each of these cases highlighted deficiencies in Thailand's response to sexual assault. Two issues that repeatedly emerged are the Royal Thai Police's media engagement during investigations and an investigative process that focuses on the character and/or actions of the victim, rather than the impact of the crime.

In two of these sexual assault cases, the police spoke in detail about the cases to the media while investigations were ongoing. In one case, where a U.S. citizen minor reported she was raped, the police publicly expressed doubts in the media about the credibility of the allegations. In the other case, Thailand's Tourist Police conducted a press conference where they insinuated the victim willingly went to her attacker's room – contrary to information she provided in her interview.

More broadly, police investigations of sexual assault have an apparent undertone of skepticism and victim-blaming. Police questioning focuses heavily on the victim's attire, decisions preceding the attack, and alcohol consumption. Investigators equate agreement to be alone together with sexual consent, frequently using CCTV footage as evidence countering assault. In one case, which eventually proceeded to court, the judge admonished the victim for being out alone late at night. Achieving a cultural shift in the way sexual assault cases are handled will require a thorough and sustained strategy. Embassy Bangkok welcomes the opportunity to collaborate on the issue.

ID: DipLab1920208

Sports and Human Rights

Multilateral and Global Affairs

Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

Overview:

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor's Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs' Internet Freedom and Business and Human Rights Team is looking for a dynamic team of students to assess the legacy of human rights impacts on mega-sporting events as we look to develop a set of best practice in engagements with future host governments of these events.

Format of Final Project:

Part one of this project will entail a baseline analysis of the human rights legacy of the past three major mega-sporting events in Rio Summer Olympics, Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, and the Russia World Cup. We would like to explore positive and negative human rights impacts and legacies in each case study.

Part two of the project will be a set of recommendations for the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics, China 2022 Winter Olympics, and the Qatar 2022 World Cup. Final work product will be a paper with an executive summary.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Democracy & Human Rights; International Relations;

Comments:

Internet Freedom and Business and Human Rights Section:

<https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/fs/2017/275867.htm>

Investors, Reporting and Human Rights

Multilateral and Global Affairs

Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

Overview:

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor's Office of Multilateral and Global Affairs' Internet Freedom and Business and Human Rights Team is looking for a dynamic team of students to help us identify best practice in embedding human rights considerations into investment decisions of mainstream investors.

Format of Final Project:

The first part of this project will explore key challenges to making human right a core component of decision-making for mainstream investors.

The second part will examine current legislative reporting initiatives, multi-stakeholder initiatives, human rights benchmarking, and other human rights-related information that might inform investor decisions on human rights-related issues.

Part three of this project will involve using the information gleaned to develop a set of recommendations for the Internet Freedom and Business and Human Rights team on engagement with mainstream investors on these issues. Final work product will be a paper with an executive summary.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Democracy & Human Rights; International Relations

Comments:

Internet Freedom and Business and Human Rights Section:

<https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/fs/2017/275867.htm>

Strengthening the Case for a Human Rights-Respecting Approach to the Internet

Multilateral and Global Affairs

Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

Overview:

An authoritarian approach to the Internet is gaining traction globally. From state sponsored network disruptions to censorship of online content, authoritarian regimes are finding new and innovative ways to stifle human rights online. The trend is not abating; “fake news” legislation is increasingly used to target dissidents and human rights defenders while repressive states use data localization laws to restrict citizens’ data within their borders, where it is accessible by security agencies.

For the fourth consecutive year, Freedom on the Net found China to be the worst abuser of Internet freedom. Key findings from the report indicate: China increased its efforts to promote an authoritarian approach to the Internet both at home and abroad. The Chinese government hosted officials from dozens of countries at seminars on its complex system of censorship and surveillance. Additionally, Chinese companies have supplied data-analytics tools, facial-recognition technology, and telecommunications hardware to governments with poor human rights records, for the benefit of repressive local authorities and Chinese intelligence services. Additionally, China’s growing influence sets a dangerous precedent for other governments navigating the complexities of the Internet. They may look to China for guidance and question why their countries need a free Internet, if China became a world power without one.

As digital authoritarianism is on the rise, democratic societies have struggled to provide a similarly compelling argument for an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable Internet where fundamental freedoms, human rights, and the free flow of information flourish. The State Department’s Internet Freedom and Business & Human Rights (IFBHR) Section, which leads U.S. government policy to promote and protect human rights online as well as with business, globally, seeks to partner with a dynamic team of students to conduct research and provide recommendations on how the U.S. government can more effectively advocate for Internet freedom. This report will enable the U.S. government and its partners in the Freedom Online Coalition, a diplomatic network of 30 governments working to advance human rights online, to strengthen their ability to promote a human-rights based approach to the Internet.

Format of Final Project:

The final project will be comprised of three components. First, a high-level synthesis of key findings from existing research on the economic, political, and social benefits of a human-rights based approach to the Internet. The resources consulted can be both general and geography-specific. Second, case studies of countries that are champions of Internet freedom and have experienced these benefits. Students are advised to develop five case studies, one from each geographic region. Third, recommendations for the U.S. government, and when relevant the Freedom Online Coalition, to more effectively promote a human rights-based approach to the Internet globally. Please include citations.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Communications; Cyber Security; Democracy & Human Rights; East Asian/Pacific Studies; Information & Communication Technology; International Relations; Trafficking in Persons;

Comments:

The IFBHR Section is eager to further students' understanding of Internet freedom and the role of government in this area while providing them with the unique opportunity to impact the field.

The 12,000-pound Whale in the Room: Risks and Opportunities of Recent Developments in the International Whaling Commission

Ocean and Polar Affairs

Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs

Overview:

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) was created through the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) in 1947 to “provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry.” At the IWC, there are three types of whaling considered: commercial, scientific, and aboriginal subsistence whaling. In 1986, due to decades of mismanagement and plummeting whale populations, the Commission established a worldwide moratorium on commercial whaling, which remains in effect. Iceland and Norway both currently commercially whale under a reservation and objection, respectively, to the commercial whaling moratorium (Paragraph 10(e) of the Schedule). The moratorium on commercial whaling does not apply to aboriginal subsistence whaling or scientific research whaling. Since 1988, Japan has conducted its whaling operations under a separate article of the ICRW (Article VIII), which allows for the harvesting of whales under a special permit issued by the whaling government.

In December 2018, Japan announced that it will leave the IWC and resume commercial whaling, outside the regulation of the IWC. Japan cites decades of deadlock within the IWC as its rationale for withdrawal. A three-quarters majority is required to authorize all whaling activities and there has not been sufficient support to lift the moratorium on commercial whaling. At times, the Commission struggles to authorize Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling (which is allowed under the Convention and not subject to the commercial whaling moratorium).

Though the IWC is a multilateral organization consisting of 89 member governments, Japan has had a very strong voice. Japan’s departure from the IWC is seen by some as an opportunity for the IWC to change direction, abandon its “management” responsibilities, and focus solely on conservation issues like bycatch and entanglement. Others view this as an opportunity to reset and rebalance the IWC, refocus its efforts to manage all whaling, while also further developing its conservation efforts. Should the Commission refocus its efforts? Should the Commission agree to regulate commercial whaling in addition to Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling? Should other countries withdraw from the Commission and start another intergovernmental organization to achieve the same, similar, or different goals?

Format of Final Project:

A report and presentation of options for the Commission and its member governments to consider

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

International Relations; Oceans; Fisheries;

Comments:

The IWC has periodically tried to resolve the impasse over whaling over the last several decades. From 1994-2006 the IWC conducted negotiations to develop a commercial whaling regulatory scheme (Revised Management Scheme-RMS); in 1997 there was an “Irish Proposal” and in 2003 a “Danish Proposal” to limit whaling within countries’ Exclusive Economic Zones; and most recently from 2006-2010 the “Future of the IWC” process proposed a limited amount of whaling with significant aspects of the management scheme included. All of these efforts failed to achieve the required three-quarters majority support.

Mapping Third Country Influencers on Burma's Conflicts

Mainland Southeast Asia

East Asian and Pacific Affairs

Overview:

Traditional U.S. diplomacy focuses on conflict actors within a country's borders, but this view does not account for influencers in the diaspora who may contribute ideas, money, and resources that have a significant effect on a conflict not traditionally detected, observed and engaged with by the United States.

Burma would be mapping third country influencers on Burma's conflicts, especially the Rakhine State crisis, and then proposing effective ways the USG could engage and influence these influencers.

For example, a number of Rohingya diaspora leaders (in Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi, Canada, USA, etc) have significant sway with Rohingya in Burma and Bangladesh. Yet we don't know who all these leaders are, nor do we have a plan for engagement. Engaging these diaspora leaders could help shorten and ultimately resolve the Rakhine crisis.

The objective of this project would be to 1) map these third-country influencers re Burma's conflicts, 2) catalog the kind of influences and resources given to conflicts in Burma by these influencers, and 3) recommend suggested engagement strategies and policies for the United States to employ to mitigate conflicts and advance U.S. interests more generally in Burma.

Format of Final Project:

Final project to be discussed with project team. Ideal project would be a concise format aimed at influencing high-level policy makers in the U.S. government (such as 2-page options memo and/or short powerpoint presentation) with a more detailed annex that lists influencers and resources they provide.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Conflict, Stabilization, & Reconstruction; Democracy & Human Rights; East Asian/Pacific Studies; International Development; International Relations;

Comments:

Groups will be expected to be creative and suggest how best to shape the project to uncover useful data and how best to orient policies in response.

Women in Law Enforcement: The Pakistani Experience

Criminal Justice Assistance and Partnership

International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

Overview:

INL Pakistan's Police & Gender program is interested in exploring the evolving role of women in law enforcement in South Asia, with an emphasis on their impact on improving police/community relations and reducing gender based violence.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that women play a positive role as change agents, addressing systemic corruption, religious tolerance, and countering violence in communities. INL's Police Program seeks to promote efforts to increase recruitment and retention of women in law enforcement. Formal research on the value of increasing women in law enforcement would help facilitate current INL programs and also help guide future programming decisions.

The project is focused on Pakistan and should be informed by regional trends (Bangladesh, for example, appears to have achieved some success in this area). The research team will produce a descriptive case study identifying the demographics of police forces in Pakistan, the history of women's participation in Pakistani law enforcement, and reviewing the impact of a gender diverse law enforcement agency on improving police/community relations and reducing gender based violence.

Format of Final Project:

20 page case study

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement; Gender Studies; International Relations; Narcotics & Law Enforcement;

Comments:

N/A

Federal Policing Structures- Mexico and Comparisons

Criminal Justice Assistance and Partnership

International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

Overview:

This research project will review the different mandates/powers between the Policia Federal (Federal Police) and the Policia Federal Ministerial (Federal Ministerial Police under the direction of the Attorney General of Mexico). These two separate agencies are considered “the police” in Mexico with the Policia Federal in charge of basic police functions (like traffic stops, neighborhood watches) and the Policia Federal Ministerial in charge of all criminal investigations. For example, if a robbery committed, the Policia Federal will show up to the crime scene and write an initial report. This report will then be given to the Policia Federal Ministerial to follow up. This is a unique policing structure where these two functions – preventive policing and investigations – are separate.

The research project will address the following questions:

- What is the origin for this this structure exist in Mexico?
- What were the reasons for creating this separate structure?
- Are there any reports or analyses on how this structure works in practice?

Second, as indicated above, this is a unique policing structure and the research project will identify other countries, such as Armenia, that have separated its basic policing powers from its investigative powers.

- What other countries have a similar type of structure, and, in those countries, has it shown to be helpful in terms of police reform or police efficiency?

Format of Final Project:

Research report with case studies of Mexico, and a comparative review of other countries policing structures with a similar bipartite structure for basic policing duties and investigations.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement; International Relations; Narcotics & Law Enforcement; Western Hemisphere Studies;

Comments:

N/A

ID: DipLab1901217

Indo Pacific Narcotics Trafficking

East Asia

International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

Overview:

It is a United States Government priority to combat opioids and synthetic drugs emanating from the Indo-Pacific region. Using open source data, we are asking for a visual data set which maps the flow of narcotics throughout the region, with an emphasis on synthetic drugs and any connections to the United States whether those be direct, secondary, or tertiary. We would like the data set to be used to create a mapping tool that will allow the U.S. government to manipulate and add to the data after the project is completed.

Format of Final Project:

Research paper and mapping tool

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement; East Asian/Pacific Studies; International Relations; Narcotics & Law Enforcement;

Comments:

This project will directly help the U.S. Government better understand narcotics networks in order to better prioritize limited resources.

China's Domestic Drug Problems

East Asia

International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

Overview:

China's Domestic Drug Problems and Efforts to Address Them: Little is known about Chinese domestic drug abuse trends, its chemical and pharmaceutical industry and this industry's role in the illegal drug trade (specifically synthetic drugs), and China's efforts to expand their international cooperation to combat crime and narcotics. We are asking for a comprehensive report/s into these three priority areas.

Format of Final Project:

Report

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement; East Asian/Pacific Studies; International Relations; Narcotics & Law Enforcement;

Comments:

This research will better enable the United States Government engage China in counter narcotics cooperation and better address our own opioid crisis here in the United States.

Southeast Asia Regional Maritime Law Enforcement Cooperation

East Asia

International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

Overview:

Maritime law enforcement (MLE) cooperation has become a United States Government foreign policy priority in the past several years. We are asking for a comprehensive report/s in the following areas: 1) What is the level and nature of MLE cooperation in the South China Sea via formal and informal channels, such as WhatsApp and Viber; 2) what are the MLE capabilities and orders of battle in the South China Sea claimant states, including future projections and the capacities of any maritime militias; and 3) determining a baseline for maritime related crimes (piracy, IUU fishing, etc.) in Southeast Asia to better enable the U.S. government to understand emerging trends. We would also ask for a creation of a tool that would allow us to continue updating the data set and to use that data for visual aids.

Format of Final Project:

Report and visualization tool

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Conflict, Stabilization, & Reconstruction; Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement; East Asian/Pacific Studies; International Relations; Oceans; Political/Military Affairs;

Comments:

This research will have a direct impact on South China Sea policy and regional MLE cooperation priorities.

Focusing the Learning Provision of Kosovo's MakerSpaces

Public Affairs Section

Public Affairs to Kosovo

Overview:

Kosovo has three American Corners. They are small dynamic, program-driven American-style libraries, hosted in public libraries. Two of them (in Pristina and Prizren) intend to provide more intensively practice-based STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) programs. In this regard, they have been provided separate spaces to create or update their makerspace provision. Needs for such programs are huge; however, they operate with certain resource limitations and need to define their STEM focus.

This project intends to support both American Corners to a) identify what subject areas within STEM they need to focus on regarding their makerspace provision; b) basic courses/programs they need to develop and provide, and; c) resources (i.e. staff skills, and equipment/materials) they need to have and develop in order to implement such provision successfully.

The ultimate goal of this project is to support American Corners to create STEM programs that provide alternative venues to youth age 14-30 to develop their hard and soft skills for employment or self-employment. In addition, focusing American Corners' makerspaces will enable youth to match their expectations more easily with the American Corners. These makerspaces should keep the American spirit of learning and teaching methodology and resources, while being locally relevant and support State Department education goals for Kosovo.

Background note on Kosovo's education system: The Kosovo education system is struggling to integrate practice-based learning in many fields, particularly in STEM areas. Generally, this is due to a lack of funding, appropriate training, and resources. It often produces a skill force that is not compatible with the developing trends of the labor market. Higher education institutions are focused on the quantity of students rather than the quality of learning experiences, and university graduates often remain unemployed due to a lack of job opportunities and the failure of the education system to provide students with critical skills needed by the labor market.

Background note on makerspaces in Kosovo: There are few successful alternative makerspaces in Kosovo, such as Bonevet and Prishtina HackerSpace. They provide a variety of learning opportunities and skills for children and youth.

Format of Final Project:

1) A brief report outlining specific STEM subject areas in which American Corners should focus their makerspaces; 2) five program designs for each of the two makerspaces, and; 3) a brief report on what resources American Corners need to have in order to implement these provisions. This can be one report divided into separate sections.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Education & Cultural Studies; International Development; Science and Technology; Youth Issues; Curriculum Development;

Comments:

Information on American Corners Kosovo: <http://ackosovo.com/>

Information on the overall Department of State's vision of American Spaces:
<https://americanspaces.state.gov/>

Department of State's Goals for Kosovo: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/285041.pdf>

U.S. Embassy Kosovo website: <https://xk.usembassy.gov/education-culture/american-spaces/>

Do Employee Recognition Awards Work?

Policy and Public Outreach

Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs

Overview:

The Frank E. Loy Award for Environmental Diplomacy recognizes achievement in international environmental diplomacy. This covers advancement of U.S. interests, analysis and policy development, integration of environmental topics into broader U.S. diplomacy efforts, and interaction with key public and private actors. By creating the award, Frank Loy hoped to recognize and reward outstanding work on environmental topics, to encourage employees to increase emphasis on environmental topics, and to assist these officers on their career promotion potential.

This award is one of several Department of State employee recognition awards focused on rewarding and supporting various specialized aspects of diplomacy. Receiving such an award is considered a high honor, and most come with a significant financial bonus, so they are generally highly competitive and popular. What we do not know is how effective these awards are at stimulating the behaviors they are aimed at, and what effect winning such an award has on the subsequent career of the recipient. In short, are employee recognition awards effective tools to encourage and reward specialization in targeted diplomatic fields, to recognize outstanding individuals, and to advance their careers?

This award has been granted annually for 17 years, and the creator, Frank Loy, is available for an interview. Further, many of the recipients are still working at the Department of State and could be interviewed about their work and the effect that winning the award has had on their career. This research project envisions researching and documenting the career paths of the recipients and establishing what effect, if any, receiving this award has on promoting environmental diplomacy.

Format of Final Project:

Research paper analyzing career paths of award recipients.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

International Relations; Science and Technology; Sociology;

Comments:

Frank Loy, creator and sponsor of the award, is available for interviews on the topic.

Impact Analysis of the 10-Year Visa for Chinese Nationals

Embassy Beijing Nonimmigrant Visa Section

Consular Affairs to China

Overview:

In November 2014, the Department of State increased visa validity for Chinese visitor visas (B1, B2, and B1/B2 visas) from 1 year to 10 years. Given that Chinese travelers represent the largest international share of the U.S. tourism market, this research project aims to answer the question, "What impact, if any, has the change to 10-year validity for Chinese visitor visas had on Chinese traveler behavior and the U.S. economy?"

Sub-questions may include:

- Have the marketing tactics of visa and travel facilitators and the typical profile and travel style of Chinese tourists changed post-November 2014?
- How do Chinese travel patterns correlate with trends in the Chinese economy (for example, province- and city-level GDP changes, or the opening of new flight routes to the U.S.)?
- Has online discussion in Chinese social media reflected any notable changes in attitude toward travel to the U.S.?

The study results will be useful to Embassy Beijing as context for Chinese traveler motivations and typical travel patterns as we continue to facilitate legitimate travel while upholding border security.

Format of Final Project:

- Presentation of Research Findings
- Data Analysis and Corresponding Executive Summary and Report of Findings

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Anthropology; Communications; East Asian/Pacific Studies; Economic & Finance Issues; Education & Cultural Studies; Geography; International Relations; Marketing; Statistics; Tourism;

Comments:

As part of the research project, you will be liaising with the Beijing Nonimmigrant Visa Unit's Metrics Team, who can answer questions, direct research, and serve as a resource on contextual or other information.

Potential sources regarding the economic relationship include news stories, tourism studies, and trackers on U.S.-China investment and travel, for example:

<https://www.cabi.org/leisuretourism/news/25577>

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-01-23/-12-000-trips-abroad-replace-chinese-new-year-treks-to-grandma-s>

<http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/15746/attachments/1/translations/en/renditions/native>
https://www.ustravel.org/system/files/media_root/document/Research_Fact-Sheet_Summary-Country-Profile_China.pdf
<https://rhg.com/impact/china-investment-monitor/>
<http://www.aei.org/china-global-investment-tracker/>

Immigration and Government Aid: Evaluating Cabo Verdean immigrants' reliance on public assistance programs

U.S. Embassy Praia, Consular Section

Consular Affairs to Cabo Verde

Overview:

Cabo Verdeans have a long history of immigration to New England. By some estimates, the community of Cabo Verdean Americans in Massachusetts and Rhode Island may be as large as the population of Cabo Verde itself. The consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Praia, Cabo Verde, is responsible for adjudicating immigrant visa applications for the steady stream of Cabo Verdeans intending to immigrate to join family in the United States. In FY2017, Embassy consular officers adjudicated the cases of over 2200 immigrant visa applicants in Praia.

The Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs recently revised guidance on the "public charge" visa ineligibility, granting broader discretion to consular officers overseas to determine whether a visa applicant is likely to depend on certain types of government assistance in the United States and therefore not qualified to receive a visa. To accurately make these life-changing decisions, the Embassy's consular officers are seeking information regarding Cabo Verdean first generation immigrants' actual use of public assistance programs. We envision a project that may involve both quantitative data regarding use over the past several years of certain categories of assistance by Cabo Verdean immigrants by age, gender, education level and length of time in-country, for example, as well as qualitative assessments through discussion with individual immigrants, community organizations, social workers, and others. Linked to this would be an evaluation of how the Cabo Verdean American community assists new arrivals and patterns of support provided for recent immigrants by their well-established family members.

Format of Final Project:

The ideal deliverable is a report that summarizes the data gathered regarding aid programs used and beneficiaries, and analyzes the qualitative trends. The report would highlight factors that appear tied to use of certain classes of public assistance and conclusions regarding the support that Cabo Verdean immigrants receive from their established family and community.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Anthropology; International Relations; Sociology; Public Policy/Government Studies/Demography;

Comments:

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/cape-verde-towards-end-emigration>

The Overstay Mentality: Understanding Unlawful Immigration of Cabo Verdeans

U.S. Embassy Praia, Consular Section

Consular Affairs to Cabo Verde

Overview:

Cabo Verdeans have strong ties to and a large diaspora in New England. In fact, by some estimates, the community of Cabo Verdean Americans in Massachusetts and Rhode Island is as large as the population of Cabo Verde itself. The consular section at the U.S. Embassy in Praia, Cabo Verde, is responsible for adjudicating tourist visa applications for the steady stream of Cabo Verdeans wishing to visit their family and friends in the United States. In FY2017, U.S. Embassy Praia's consular officers adjudicated nearly 5,000 nonimmigrant visa applications. However, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security estimates that in the same period 13.66% of Cabo Verdean travelers overstayed illegally in the United States, one of the highest overstay rates of travelers from any country.

To accurately make adjudication decisions, the Embassy's consular officers are seeking information about the prevalent overstay mentality amongst Cabo Verdeans. Why are so many Cabo Verdeans overstaying illegally in the United States and how can this trend be discouraged? We envision a project that could be both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitatively, students could examine publicly-available DHS overstay data to see how this trend has changed over time. Qualitatively, students could assess this overstay mentality through discussions with individual immigrants, community organizations, ICE, and CBP, among others. Linked to this would be an evaluation of the education Cabo Verdeans receive about visa regulations and the consequences of overstaying illegally in the United States. Ideally, this project could help U.S. Embassy Praia combat unlawful immigration without dissuading legitimate visitor travel to the United States.

Format of Final Project:

The ideal deliverable is a short analysis memo that includes suggestions on how to combat illegal immigration without dissuading legitimate Cabo Verdean travel to the United States.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Anthropology; International Relations; Sociology; Public Policy/Government Studies/Demography;

Comments:

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/cape-verde-towards-end-emigration>

From research to revenue: U.S. best practices in connecting educational institutions with the market

Public Affairs

European and Eurasian Affairs to Greece

Overview:

The historical and political background in higher education in Greece, particularly in the 20th century, has directed academia to follow a path that is quite independent from the job market. Although several universities in Greece have career Services Offices and Technology Institutes, there are very few programs that focus on bringing university students into the job market, or offering students in the science and technology fields the opportunity to turn their research into products or services. Despite the fact that there is great talent and high levels of scientific research in Greek universities, there are very few university departments that offer entrepreneurship programs and training to students that could help them develop their technology projects into startups. Additionally there are very few, if any, mechanisms in place that connect universities with the marketplace in order to bring university research to the marketplace.

In order to understand the connections between universities and the marketplace, it would be useful to learn more about best practices in the United States for connecting educational institutions with the market. Some questions that come to mind are: What are the best practices followed in the United States that connect education and research with the job market? What are some successful examples of U.S. universities that promote start-up development and entrepreneurship? What are some best practices in career development for students in U.S. universities? What skills do U.S. universities offer to students (as well as professors) to make them successful in their future careers? How do students make themselves more employable and their projects more attractive to the market? Consequently, how are university curriculums updated to sync with future jobs and market needs? How do U.S. universities view the connection between their research and the marketplace? What synergies exist between U.S. universities and private partners? How are those partnerships established? How do universities view those partnerships and what limits do they have? What role does outside funding play in research and development in U.S. universities? What role does the U.S. government play in research and development at U.S. educational institutions?

Format of Final Project:

Data analysis on the role that university research plays in the U.S. marketplace and how that relates to career prospects for students; a paper on the relationship between U.S. educational institutions and the market; 30-minute presentation on U.S. best practices in connecting educational institutions with the market and the benefits in doing so; Resource list including examples of universities with successful programs and partnerships

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Economic & Finance Issues; Education & Cultural Studies; Science and Technology; Youth Issues;

Comments:

Post can connect students with start-ups in Greece that have grown from academic institutions for background information on the local situation in Greece.

Smartphone APP for U.S. History in the Azores

U.S. Consulate Ponta Delgada

European and Eurasian Affairs to Portugal

Overview:

The U.S. Consulate in the Azores, located in the capital city of Ponta Delgada, seeks a creative and tech-proficient team to help research and design a smartphone APP that visitors to Ponta Delgada can use to venture around the city and learn about sites of historical importance to the U.S.-Azores relationship. 2017-2019 marks the centennial anniversary of U.S.-Azores cooperation during World War I, including the U.S. Marines fending off a German U-boat attack on downtown Ponta Delgada, as well as the first flight in the Azores, made by one of the U.S. Marines aviation units in February 1918. The team will collaborate with a local historian to identify a dozen or so points of historical interest (ex, cemetery where U.S. soldiers are buried), then develop text and graphics to inform the public of the many contributions the United States has made in defense of the Azores, one of Portugal's autonomous regions, and with strong ties to U.S. diaspora communities in MA, RI, and CA. This project will help the U.S. Consulate meet our strategic objectives of reinforcing the historic U.S.-Portugal relationship and supporting the growth of the local economy, which is based in large part on tourism.

Format of Final Project:

A working, user-friendly smartphone application.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Computer Science; European & Eurasian Studies; Information & Communication Technology; International Relations; Political/Military Affairs; Science and Technology;

Comments:

Depending on the group's progress, number of sites can be scaled down or increased to include other islands of the Azores. APP should be in English, and local partners can help translate content into Portuguese as an add-on, if there is sufficient time.

Hebrew Translation/Research for Oldest Standing Synagogue in the Azores (Portugal)

U.S. Consulate Ponta Delgada

European and Eurasian Affairs to Portugal

Overview:

This project looks to preserve religious history and promote international religious freedom through a collaboration with the Sahar Hassamaim synagogue-museum in downtown Ponta Delgada, the capital of the Azores Autonomous Region. The team will review and translate from Hebrew into English several primary sources, including handwritten letters, and help document the history of Judaism in the Azores, including connections to Jewish communities in the United States.

Format of Final Project:

30-60 pages of translated text, either as literal translations or shorter English summaries.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Anthropology; European & Eurasian Studies; Human Rights; International Relations; Religious Studies; Hebrew Language;

Comments:

Participating teams must be able to read Hebrew, the source-language of these original documents.

Documents will need to be scanned locally, in some cases reassembled, and then emailed to the team for analysis.

Building an Economy Beyond the Beach: Diversification in Montenegro

Embassy Podgorica

European and Eurasian Affairs to Montenegro

Overview:

Montenegro's incredible natural beauty has contributed to a booming tourism sector. Unfortunately, increasing economic disparity between those who live near the coast and those who live inland is a by-product of that growth. With a population of just 650,000, the Montenegrin labor pool is limited, and many rural Montenegrins with weaker skill sets remain unemployed. Young people who can find work abroad continue to leave the country, contributing to a steady "brain drain." It is both clear that Montenegro needs to diversify its economic base to retain young workers and yet difficult to attract investment needed to build new industry because of its small market.

The Montenegrin government has expressed interest in rebuilding its manufacturing base that was lost after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. There is also interest in encouraging youth to embrace entrepreneurship and in bringing American businesses to Montenegro, NATO's newest member country and an aspiring member of the EU in 2025. The future can be bright in this tiny southeastern European nation - if they can focus on the right types of investments.

The project would challenge students to research and identify economic sectors which have been successfully developed in similar nations - small, tourism-heavy, and middle income. Are there tangential markets on which Montenegro should focus to attract FDI, or to expand on their competitive advantage in tourism? What did other countries in a similar situation do to stimulate entrepreneurial development? What types of jobs are currently being outsourced to economies of this size, education level, and income level?

Your research will help to shape engagement with leaders in the business community and with government officials.

Format of Final Project:

A 10-20 page research paper with case study examples/ success stories that is connected to data analysis would be optimal.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Economic & Finance Issues; European & Eurasian Studies; International Development; International Relations; Public-Private Partnerships; Statistics; Youth Issues; Entrepreneurship;

Comments:

The project should focus on concrete deliverables as opposed to development theory.

Example: Are there certain industries which have found success in similar markets, and why? What were the keys (infrastructure, tax, geography, etc) to bringing that investment to the target country?

Social Media in China: Influence, Identity, and Information

U.S. Embassy Beijing

East Asian and Pacific Affairs to China

Overview:

The U.S. Embassy in Beijing actively engages with Chinese citizens online and so do many other embassies and influencers. There are foreign missions from around the world competing for attention, to influence Chinese citizens, to provide information on travel and study opportunities, and to build a brand for their country. Who is successful? What attracts Chinese netizen attention? Do netizens use social media to voice opinions about the U.S. or about China?

We are seeking a comparative analysis of social media engagement by foreign embassies in Beijing to track engagement on various post types and topics to see what attracts debate, engagement, and where different embassies are successful. We plan to use this data to better target our outreach and engage more meaningfully with Chinese audiences online. Do comments drive engagement? Are cultural topics or policy more effective? What do netizens respond to best? Do netizens also use social media to critique Chinese positions or voice support for U.S. positions?

Format of Final Project:

We are looking for a comparative analysis that will include a high-level overview of the findings as well as the raw, collected data tracking post types by embassy and their effectiveness. We would also like to see proposals on how to attract a targeted audience of urban, educated, middle class audiences in China using social media; especially Weibo and WeChat.

One written report, not to exceed 10 pages, that presents key findings and data visualization in a format that is easily accessible to the layperson with a one page executive summary. The Embassy will provide input and consultation on the other Embassies to use for comparable analysis.

Reports can be sent via e-mail. In addition, team members should expect to be engaged in regular contact, via conference call and/or Skype, with the Embassy team, which will enable the team members to ask questions, clarify parameters and present report findings.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Civil Society; Communications; Computer Science; Democracy & Human Rights; East Asian/Pacific Studies; International Relations; Sociology; Statistics; Social Media, Data Analytics, Evaluation;

Comments:

An understanding of social media, search engine optimization, web navigation and institutional marketing is a plus. Language skills in Chinese are required, but translation software can assist the avid researcher

as well. We are looking for a creative, proactive students who can help us brainstorm and innovate interesting ways to engage foreign audiences using digital tools.

Reaching Underserved Communities Through Virtual Exchange

Collaboratory

Educational and Cultural Affairs

Overview:

Virtual exchanges and other forms of technology-enabled public diplomacy are increasingly important tools for engaging Americans with communities overseas. But the “digital divide” not only exists between developed nations like the United States and its overseas interest. Access to internet connectivity and bandwidth also varies within the United States, particularly along socioeconomic and geographically underserved populations. In this way a technology gap within the United States also becomes a “diplomacy gap.”

Underserved communities, schools, and public institutions that lack the resources for sustained real-time connections for potential exchange partners are unable to take advantage of virtual exchange and digital diplomacy opportunities currently available to other Americans. At the same time, underserved American communities are less visible in our public diplomacy efforts to use to share America’s stories with the world. As innovators and experts in developing virtual exchange programs within ECA, The Collaboratory is interested in assessing how digital divides contribute to diplomacy divides – and explore potential solutions to this emerging problem.

Format of Final Project:

Potential outputs include:

- An assessment of the technological and logistical needs of community colleges and other educational institutions in underserved communities in order to participate in virtual exchanges and other forms digital diplomacy.
- An evaluation of current ECA virtual program engagement with underserved rural and inner-city communities.
- Studies of the effects of a digital diplomacy divide on American foreign policy outcomes.
- Best practice recommendations for technological or social solutions to public diplomacy gaps in underserved communities.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Communications; Education & Cultural Studies; Information & Communication Technology;

Comments:

The Collaboratory is an initiative of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs responsible for helping develop new approaches to public diplomacy in the digital age. The Collaboratory designs, pilots and spreads new exchange models and programs including virtual and blended programs to promote mutual understanding and build reciprocal relationships between Americans and people overseas to advance US foreign policy goals.

Design the State Department's IT School of the Future

SAIT Innovation Sandbox

Foreign Service Institute

Overview:

SAIT strives to empower our workforce to navigate a rapidly developing IT environment while broadening our reach through innovative and impactful learning.

In order to achieve these goals effectively, SAIT needs to continually innovate how we develop and deliver new curriculum, explore and understand emerging technologies while maintaining expertise for legacy systems, and expand our learning ecosystem beyond formal training via microlearning, social and peer-to-peer learning, and informal learning opportunities.

This project will assist SAIT to modernize our curriculum development processes, training delivery methods, and promote procedural and programmatic innovation in the use of IT in American diplomacy.

Format of Final Project:

I. Research Presentation/Whitepaper/Analysis - Design recommendations for the IT School of the Future for the Department of State. Tabula rasa, blue sky thinking, starting from scratch! We want the ideal theoretical design of what a modern IT school supporting the foreign affairs community should be setting aside all historical contexts, political administrations, bureaucratic limitations, and budgetary constraints.

Through a holistic lens, provide data-driven recommendations on overhauling curriculum design, delivery methods, e-learning ecosystems, classroom technologies, and necessary educational skills and strategies IT instructors should have beyond their specific expertise/domain of knowledge.

II. Data Analysis/Report/Dashboard - Development of a business intelligence/data analytics dashboard for SAIT leadership and management to monitor and make decisions in real-time the school's performance in regards to enrollment rates, student data (e.g. level, job series, years at State), instructor data (e.g. podium hours, course load, and areas of expertise), classroom usage data, etc.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Communications; Cyber Security; Information & Communication Technology; Public-Private Partnerships; Training;

Comments:

As the U.S. government's premier foreign affairs training provider, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) is dedicated to ensuring career-long learning required for success in today's global arena. FSI is proud to

serve the U.S. Department of State and the entire USG foreign affairs community as a strategic enabler of diplomatic excellence by providing training for substantive, regional, and linguistic expertise, leadership finesse, and personal resilience and innovative problem-solving.

The School of Applied Information Technology (SAIT) prepares all Department employees for their Foreign Affairs mission by developing proficiency in information technology and business applications; including but not limited to the installation, configuration, administration, troubleshooting, repair, and enterprise use of technology, IT Tradecraft, and information security.

Countering Chinese Influence Operations in Australia and Differentiating the United States as Australia's Partner of Choice

Public Affairs Section

East Asian and Pacific Affairs to Australia

Overview:

The U.S. Mission to Australia Public Affairs Section proposes a research project on Chinese Communist Party (CCP) influence activities in Australia including analysis of the views of Australians (between the ages of 18-35) on Australia's enduring partner of choice (U.S. vs. China). Specifically, the project should identify the factors that cause the Australian public to equate Chinese and U.S. soft power activities in Australia and provide recommended activities/messaging to counter this false equivalency, as well as the false narrative of a rising China replacing the U.S. as Australia's partner of choice.

In the past year, the government of Australia and Australian media have increased scrutiny of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) influence and interference activities. These activities vary from open and legitimate to covert, coercive, and/or corrupt. The release of a prominent book on CCP influence by Clive Hamilton (Silent Invasion), the departure of Sam Dastyari from Australian Parliament due to links with a Chinese "agent of influence," reporting on CCP-sponsored student groups on college campuses, a libel suit brought against two Australian journalist by billionaire Chau Chak Wing, and the passing of Australia's first foreign interference law have all increased the spotlight on this issue over the past year. However, despite these reports, the latest Lowy Institute Public Opinion Poll shows that only 41% of Australians see 'foreign interference in Australian politics' as a critical threat to Australia's vital interests. Furthermore, Australians have virtually equal concerns about Chinese influence as they do about U.S. influence despite very different approaches to soft power and China's use of activities "short of war."

The research project should develop a written report, PowerPoint presentation, recommended educational / outreach activities (with materials), and recommended messaging targeted to the younger Australian demographic.

Format of Final Project:

10-20 Page Research Paper, Executive Memo, PowerPoint Presentation, Program/Education/Messaging Materials/Examples

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Communications; Democracy & Human Rights; East Asian/Pacific Studies; International Relations;

Comments:

N/A

Sargassum in the Eastern Caribbean and its Impact on the Blue Economy

Public Affairs Section

U.S. Mission to Barbados

Overview:

This project is of importance to the islands in our area of responsibility (e.g. Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and, St. Vincent and the Grenadines) because they heavily rely on revenues generated from their blue economies. Sargassum poses a threat to the livelihood of fishermen, marine life and the tourism industry. Assistance in helping these countries mitigate the effects of sargassum is increasingly of paramount importance.

Historically, small quantities of the floating macroalgae naturally drifted into the Caribbean from the Sargasso Sea to the north. Since 2011, however, sargassum from a new source—the north equatorial recirculation region (NERR)—has inundated the region with thick mats of seaweed. These mass accumulations of seaweed devastate marine and coastal ecosystems: they prevent vital sunlight from reaching coral reefs and seagrass beds, and their decomposition saps the water of oxygen and releases toxic hydrogen sulfide. The result is a rapid degradation of seagrass beds, mangroves, coral reefs, and other shallow coastal ecosystems.

Format of Final Project:

- A data analysis of the sargassum (i.e. size of blooms, occurrence, impact on marine life, decline in tourist arrival attributed to sargassum deposits on beaches, etc.) in the Eastern Caribbean.
- A presentation on the impact and strategies that can be implemented to mitigate the negative impacts.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Climate Change;

Comments:

Please see articles below that cover some of the issues caused by sargassum in the Eastern Caribbean.
<https://www.hakaimagazine.com/news/the-eastern-caribbean-is-swamped-by-a-surge-of-seaweed/>
<https://www.hakaimagazine.com/news/the-eastern-caribbean-is-swamped-by-a-surge-of-seaweed/>
<https://antiguaobserver.com/the-attack-of-the-sargassum/>

Global Best Practices for Cryptocurrency Regulation

Office of Monetary Affairs; Communication and Information Policy; Office of Threat Finance
Countermeasures

Economic and Business Affairs

Overview:

Research project to explore and analyze the factors that influence the worldwide economic geography of cryptocurrency development, exchanges, and miners in order to provide U.S. policy makers with recommendations for regulatory best practices that should be pursued both domestically and in international fora to allow innovation, protect consumers, and prevent illicit financing.

Some potential questions to consider include:

- Is there a correlation between a country's regulatory environment and the prevalence of theft/misuse of cryptocurrencies in that market?;
- How important is the regulatory environment in determining where cryptocurrency developers, miners, and exchanges are located?;
- What lessons learned can be drawn from existing global cryptocurrency regulation experiences in terms of which policies work, which don't, and why?;
- Drawing on empirical data, what regulatory balance is necessary to allow innovation, protect consumers, and prevent illicit financing?;
- How susceptible are less sophisticated regulatory environments to offers of "get rich" schemes that could create domestic vulnerabilities and potential negative externalities elsewhere in the global financial system?

Format of Final Project:

A maximum 100 page research study with a 1-3 page executive summary of key findings.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Economic & Finance Issues; International Relations;

Comments:

Potential Preliminary Reading:

https://www.jbs.cam.ac.uk/fileadmin/user_upload/research/centres/alternative-finance/downloads/2017-global-cryptocurrency-benchmarking-study.pdf

<http://www.imf.org/en/About/Key-Issues/Fintech>

Can You See Me Now? – Identifying Camera Problems Autonomously

DS/STO/QAL

Diplomatic Security

Overview:

Over 300 U.S. diplomatic buildings in almost every nation in the world rely on closed-circuit television systems (CCTV) as part of their physical security apparatus. Many video cameras are installed outdoors in harsh conditions of sand, sun, and salt spray and suffer from a range of maladies.

Dust, dirt, salt, lichen, and atmospheric pollution on the camera bubble degrade the quality of an image. A camera that is out of focus suffers a similar loss in quality. A broken camera may not produce an image at all. Pan, tilt, and zoom (PTZ) functions may not function. Over time, foliage can grow to block key parts of a camera view. Each of these situations degrades our ability to protect the people who work at and visit our diplomatic facilities.

Since dirty camera bubbles are the biggest problems, proposals must address this issue at a minimum. Teams can choose to address problems of focus, foliage, missing images, and PTZ functionality, as desired. Teams can also choose to use analog cameras, digital cameras, or both. If requested in the proposals, ST may loan the actual cameras and control systems that we use. Since we are looking for autonomous problem detection, the outcome must notify a person who is sitting at a computer. This could be done through email, SNMP trap or table, or any other method teams come up with.

Format of Final Project:

Teams can choose how they will communicate the results of their research. Keep in mind that the project's sponsor only has about 15 minutes to dedicate to understanding your efforts, as she has several solutions to review. You can provide an in-person demonstration -- recorded on video -- write a short paper, provide a dissertation with an executive summary, or come up with your own way of presenting your results. You must both communicate your results and document your project well enough that someone else can reproduce it.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Science and Technology;

Comments:

For proposal purposes, teams can plan for Samsung SNP-6320H cameras for IP-based systems and SCP-2373 for analog. Both of these are capable of pan, tilt, and zoom; teams can use these features or not. Proposals can request additional hardware to build a system. When a proposal is accepted, ST will provide current hardware from our stock, which may differ from what is requested.

Determine the Value of Kuwaiti Educational and Medical Travel (and Possibly Shrink the U.S. Trade Deficit)

Economic Affairs Section

Near Eastern Affairs to Kuwait

Overview:

Embassy Kuwait seeks Diplomacy Lab assistance to survey, measure, estimate, and report on the total economic value of Kuwaiti spending in the U.S. education and health sectors. Your efforts to track these exports of U.S. services could lead to a material adjustment in the U.S. balance of trade with Kuwait, which is typically reported to be in deficit.

Kuwait relies disproportionately on U.S. institutions to improve the health and education of its citizens, to the benefit of both countries. More than 15,000 Kuwaitis currently study in the United States (one percent of all citizens!) Another 3000 Kuwaitis sought U.S. visas for medical treatment in the past year.

Despite earlier estimates of spending in the billions of dollars annually, we have reason to believe the value of this partnership is materially underreported in official statistics. Embassy Kuwait needs your help to prove (or disprove) this assertion and to create reporting and statistics we can reference in our diplomatic engagement, both in Kuwait and in Washington.

Format of Final Project:

- A short paper (about five pages) summarizing your research efforts and your methodology, including a detailed analysis that explains how you arrived at the dollar values you assigned.
- An estimate of the number of U.S. jobs attributable to Kuwaiti medical and educational travelers, directly or indirectly.
- An estimate of the export value of the U.S. services (and goods) used by Kuwaiti medical and educational travelers while in the United States.
- (if appropriate) a comparison of the U.S. trade flows with Kuwait, in light of growth in trade in services like education and health care. How do your findings compare with existing government statistics?
- (If appropriate) a PowerPoint presentation highlighting your most surprising findings.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Economic & Finance Issues; Education & Cultural Studies; Global Health; International Relations; Middle East/North African Studies; Public-Private Partnerships; Statistics; Youth Issues;

Comments:

The economic section at Embassy Kuwait has sought to quantify the value of Kuwaiti spending on medical treatment and education for some time.

Kuwaitis' unique travel patterns make it difficult to extrapolate from other cost estimates or worldwide averages.

Statistical Analysis of Federated States of Micronesian Citizens in the U.S.

U. S. Mission

East Asian and Pacific Affairs to Micronesia

Overview:

Since the inception of the Compact of Free Association between the United States and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), concerns of the Compact's impact has been a lingering issue, especially in places where the majority of FSM citizens have migrated since the Compact went into effect. The majority of FSM citizens are living in Guam, Hawaii, Washington state, and the mid-west of the U.S. mainland. We do not have detailed statistics on FSM citizens residing in the U.S. and neither does the FSM government. According to perceptions, FSM citizens are a draw on public resources in these locations. It would be helpful to have a detailed study on FSM citizens residing in the United States that includes data on population, employment, income, education, age, mortality and health. The results of this study would help U.S. and FSM governments better understand their needs and conditions impacting their successes and failures; and more importantly, their contributions to society, including their services in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Format of Final Project:

A research paper with detailed statistics.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Statistics; Demographics;

Comments:

The project should take no more than 4 months.

Understanding Perceptions of U.S. Economic Investment in Singapore and Southeast Asia

U.S. Embassy Singapore

East Asian and Pacific Affairs to Singapore

Overview:

There is a widespread perception that China is the dominant economic power in Southeast Asia and that the United States is not engaged economically, and to some extent politically, in the region. This perception does not match reality. U.S. investment in ASEAN is still consistently higher than that of China. American commercial presence in the region has never been stronger and it is continually growing.

Recent polling conducted in Singapore, which is home to 4,200 American companies, many of which serve as regional headquarters for the Asia-Pacific, does not reflect knowledge of the strength of American economic engagement. The polling shows that when asked “which country do you think has the best relationship with Singapore on trade and investment at present?” 46% said China and 26% said USA. When asked “which country do you think will have the best relationship with Singapore on trade and investment in five years?” 55% said China and 20% said USA. When asked “which country do you think has the best relationship with Singapore on technology and innovation at present?” 37% said Japan and 27% said USA. When asked “which country do you think will have the best relationship with Singapore on technology and innovation in five years?” 28% said China and 27% said Japan.

We would like to better understand public sentiments about U.S. economic engagement in Singapore and Southeast Asia. How well do Singaporeans understand the level of American economic investment in the region? To what extent do Singaporeans know about trade between America and the region? How do perceptions about American investments and trade with the region compare to how Singaporeans perceive other countries’ investments and trade in the region? Why isn’t America seen as a leader in technology and innovation in the region? What is the media narrative about these topics? What does survey data show? What messages or approaches would best help the U.S. Embassy to highlight the enduring importance of U.S. trade and investment to Singapore and the region?

Format of Final Project:

Phase 1: Research and analysis of local sentiments toward American trade and investment in Singapore and Southeast Asia, in general and specific to key industries, including a written report of findings and presentation to the U.S. Embassy.

Phase 2: Recommendations for a public messaging campaign to highlight the role of U.S. economic engagement and shift attitudes amongst Singaporeans, including a written report of recommendations and presentation to the U.S. Embassy.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Communications; East Asian/Pacific Studies; Marketing; Business;

Comments:

The lead office for this project will be the Public Affairs Section of U.S. Embassy Singapore, in cooperation with colleagues from the U.S. Commercial Service and other elements of the Mission community.

More information about the Embassy's work can be found at <https://sg.usembassy.gov/>

Designing For Diplomacy: Appropriate Architectural Representation for a U.S. Embassy of the Future and Façade Explorations with parametric Digital Design

PDCS/DE/AD

Overseas Buildings Operations

Overview:

The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) is seeking academic proposals for the study of Embassy design at both the urban scale and at the detailed level of façade exploration utilizing parametric digital design.

Part I: Embassy of the Future: the Urban Scale

The U.S. Department of State has historically commissioned architectural designs for U.S. Embassies through a variety of methods ranging from competitions to mandated standardized designs. The resulting buildings have also ranged from the iconic embassies in Beijing, London and Lima to a more architecturally understated group in Manama, Berlin, and Islamabad.

The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) is seeking academic proposals for the study of appropriate architectural representation through the design of a U.S. Embassy of the Future. Student work should answer these questions:

1. At an urban scale, what is the role of architecture in creating the appropriate representation of the United States diplomatically for its centers for engagement, and define what constitutes that architecture?
2. Further, how does the architecture of an American embassy engage and compliment the culture and context of the host country?
3. How much does the local contemporary or vernacular architectural context, materials, landscaping, climate and infrastructure influence the embassy's design?
4. How can the need for of security and the desire for openness are achieved through design and technological advancements?
5. In times of heightened security how can an American embassy of the future operate as a totally self-sufficient entity?
6. How does the embassy of the future create a better community within for its staff and visitors?

Part II: Façade Exploration

The U.S. Department of State has historically built the new U.S. embassies with poured-in-place concrete due to its inherent strength, versatility, durability, and local availability nearly everywhere in the world. These concrete buildings are often clad in stone, pre-cast concrete, or masonry which is all considered traditional building materials. The biggest challenge in embassy design is how to balance need for security with the desire for openness.

The semesters work shall include the study of advanced building façade concepts and materials using parametric digital design analysis. Proposals could be inspired by ecological design, regenerative design, advanced acoustic design, light weight high strength structural and security products, and technological advances for façade materials that address these two opposing needs

Design proposals shall not compromise the existing levels of security required at U.S. Embassies.

Proposals shall assume that façade materials are backed up with poured-in-place concrete structural

elements, or another material that will provide the necessary levels of physical security. The study must embrace the notion that embassy typology requires principles of standardization such as standard bay sizes and certain building materials, however the typology does not need to result standard building design.

Format of Final Project:

These studies will be conducted as part of an architectural design studio that will address a specific embassy program on a specific site. Façade exploration will be conducted as an additional component of the studio. Studio deliverables will be in the form of 2D and 3D graphic architectural presentations and written text. Façade Exploration deliverables will be in the form of 2D and 3D graphic presentation supported by written text and data analysis.

It is anticipated that once a bid is accepted for this proposal, that Diplomacy Lab and the sponsoring School will enter into a detailed dialogue modifying and tailoring the content of the semesters work to address the goals and objectives of both the School and Diplomacy Lab within the definition of the project.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Architecture;

Comments:

Resources:

<https://overseasbuildings.state.gov/>

<https://de.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/chancery/building/>

<http://www.dw.com/en/new-us-embassy-in-berlin-triggers-architecture-debate/a-3325836>

<https://biomimicry.org/>

<https://living-future.org/lbc/>

<http://www.case.rpi.edu/>

<https://www.regenerative.com/what-is/regenerative-design>

<https://precast.org/2014/11/uhpc-offers-endless-possibilities/>

<http://www.taktl-llc.com/What-is-TAKTL>

ID: DipLab1726125

German Youth Social Media Opinions

Public Affairs Munich

European and Eurasian Affairs to Germany

Overview:

What aspects of the German-American relationship positively resonate most in the minds of German youth as related to social media? What can we message to those positive thoughts and what social media format would be best to message and expand that messaging.

Format of Final Project:

data analysis or presentation or options memo

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Communications; International Relations; Marketing; social media;

Comments:

Thank You!

The Impact of English on Violent Extremism

Regional English Language Office for Central and East Africa

Educational and Cultural Affairs to Tanzania

Overview:

The U.S. State Department's Office of English Language Programs, through its Regional English Language Offices (RELOs) and U.S. Missions around the world, offers after-school English classes to at-risk youth in over 80 countries as a means of introducing U.S. culture, fostering mutual understanding between these host country nationals and Americans, and enhancing eligibility for educational and employment opportunities. Many of these English Access Microscholarship classes are Muslim-majority. Other English language learning programs, including English for imam classes and English/book clubs, are offered to Muslim populations as a way of promoting interfaith dialogue and tolerance. While it can be relatively easy to assess language progress in these programs, measuring changes in attitudes and behaviors—such as radicalization and participation in violent extremist activities—poses greater challenges. While there has been a good amount of research conducted on the correlation between education and radicalization, there is little exploring the effectiveness of language programs in countering violent extremism, one of the department's predominant foreign policy goals. We propose a project that explores this relationship. Is there any evidence that programs advancing language and cultural proficiency can have a tempering effect on radicalization and violent extremism? What realistic ways of measuring changes in attitudes and behaviors of participants in the aforementioned programs are available? Are there successful examples of language/cultural programs from other countries being used to counter violent extremism? Which language and cultural content is most likely to lead to changes (i.e., foster empathy, develop tolerance, build resilience to extremism)? What factors made them successful? Are there successful examples of virtual or online language/cultural programs or exchanges aimed at preventing online radicalization? Are some marginalized populations, such as girls, refugees and internally displaced persons, more likely to benefit from such programs than others? The answers to these questions and more can help inform and shape the development of the department's language and cultural programs—its soft power—so as to be more effective in addressing one of the most prominent issues it faces: Radicalization and violent extremism.

Format of Final Project:

The ideal deliverable is a 20-25 page research paper.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Counter Terrorism; Education & Cultural Studies; English Language Learning;

Comments:

Office of English Language Programs:

<https://eca.state.gov/about-bureau/organizational-structure/office-english-language-programs>

Regional English Language Office for Central and East Africa:

<https://tz.usembassy.gov/education-culture/regional-english-language-office/>

'Access' Program:

<https://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/english-access-microscholarship-program>

Evaluating the Process and Outcomes of Cabo Verde's Graduation: Contributions and the Price of Graduating from Low-Income to Middle-Income

Political/ Economic Affairs

Economic and Business Affairs to Cabo Verde

Overview:

In 2008 Cabo Verde became the second country in the world to graduate from the list of least developed countries (LDC) to become a lower-middle income country (MIC). As an independent country since 1975 and once considered “unviable” by the IMF and the WB, it soon became clear that economic growth would depend on a strong development strategy and vision to face fundamental challenges. Cabo Verde is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS): natural resources – including water – are scarce, the arid climate limits agriculture and industry, and the small market and population make external interest hard to attract (approximately 550,000). Despite substantial difficulties, the progress made on various fronts – education, infrastructure, health, water and sanitation, political will for ambitious reforms, embracing modernization and technology – has been commendable. The graduation to MIC status represents the international community's recognition of this small archipelago's development strategy, its respect for human rights, and its commitment to democracy and socio economic progress. Progress made since 1975 reflects continuous good performance based on two of the three UN established evaluation criteria for graduation: GDP per capita and the Human Development Index. However, Cabo Verde still struggles with a variety of vulnerabilities including addressing poverty, transportation, high public debt and unemployment rates, and other fundamental needs; it is also heavily dependent on external financing such as remittances, official development assistance, and favorable attention from European tourism operators.

Ten years following graduation, it is important to understand and evaluate if and how graduation – as a prize for good performance – is contributing positively and practically towards economic growth and sustainable development. Although graduation is considered a positive development, it can have a complicated impact on the country's relationships with IFIs, IOs, and multi- and bilateral partners. The country's own role in promoting graduation versus remaining at the top end of the LDC list and the role of the international community in the transition period, especially as regards access to finance, are important. Cabo Verde's experience may contribute to smoother transitions for other SIDS.

The proposed project would use a variety of data and analysis (obtained via reports and records as well as direct interviews) including from the United Nations, World Bank, and various entities in Cabo Verde (public, private, academic, and civil society) to evaluate the process, the transition, and the outcomes. The evaluation should address, but not be limited to, the following questions and topics: Who drove the graduation initiative, and why? Was it sufficiently consultative? What has changed in the country, specifically as regards poverty, spending choices, investment, and development? What are Cabo Verde's short- and medium-term future prospects? What lessons learned and recommendations can be made to Cabo Verde and to the IFIs/ IOs who make the decisions? How can Cabo Verde's experience help shape other SIDS' graduation processes?

Format of Final Project:

Strategy paper with actions and actors identified

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

African Studies; Economic & Finance Issues; International Development; International Relations;
International Finance;

Comments:

This question is, clearly, broader than Cabo Verde.

Inclusive Legislation: Advancing Disability Rights – Regional Survey

MLGA/International Disability Rights

Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

Overview:

According to the 2011 World Report on Disability, jointly issued by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, the population of persons with disabilities worldwide exceeded 1 billion, accounting for 15% of the global population. Of these, approximately 650 million persons with disabilities live in the Asia-Pacific region. The number of people living with disabilities worldwide continues to grow, along with the aging population.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol was adopted in 2006. As a legally binding international human rights treaty, the CRPD advances the movement from viewing persons with disabilities as “objects” of charity, medical treatment, and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as “subjects” with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as active members of society.

Although over 170 countries have ratified or acceded to the Convention, many countries also need to more effectively implement and enforce the CRPD through domestic legislation. The State Department’s International Disability Rights Team requests university professors and students concerned about human rights to determine which CRPD parties have enacted and effectively enforced laws upholding the rights of persons with disabilities (and which countries have not). This initial research will target two regions and 44 countries: the East Asian and Pacific Region (31 countries) and South and Central Asian Region (13 countries). Research for the report would seek to understand laws, policies and programs on disability, as well as the inclusion of persons with disabilities in other relevant laws, policies and programs.

Format of Final Project:

The final report analyzing the regions’ efforts to promote laws and legal enforcement, and any particularly successful programs, will help the State Department to promote the rights of people with disabilities around the world by highlighting gaps and identifying effective practices that can be scaled up or replicated elsewhere.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Democracy & Human Rights; East Asian/Pacific Studies; Global Health; Human Rights; International Law; International Relations; South/Central Asian Studies; Disability Rights;

Comments:

The International Disability Rights Team leads the U.S. comprehensive strategy to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities internationally. The United States, as part of our foreign policy, works to remove barriers and create a world in which disabled people enjoy dignity and full inclusion.

Discrimination against people with disabilities is not simply unjust; it hinders economic development, limits democracy, and erodes societies. In pursuing diplomacy that is inclusive and empowering of persons with disabilities, the United States: opposes discrimination against persons with disabilities everywhere and in all its forms; urges foreign governments to combat discrimination, prejudice and abuse against persons with disabilities in their countries, and to protect the rights and ensure the dignity and inclusion of all persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others; encourages and assists governments to learn about the development and effective implementation of laws to protect the rights of persons with disabilities; encourages and assists civil society organizations, including organizations of persons with disabilities and their families, to advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities; and encourages U.S. businesses operating overseas as well as domestic host country businesses to take into consideration persons with disabilities in relation to employment practices and local stakeholder engagement, including in their labor and human rights corporate social responsibility policies, programs, and practices.

ID: DipLab171765

Analysis and recommendation on training satisfaction surveys to law enforcement personnel

Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, INL Mexico

International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

Overview:

INL Mexico is conducting satisfaction surveys to around 7,000 law enforcement officials per year participating in training events, conferences and study tours. We look for a motivated team of students with experience in psychology, statistics and survey design that could help us review the current survey instrument and propose recommendations to improve it. This survey provides important information to decision makers on security cooperation between the U.S. and Mexico.

Format of Final Project:

20 page research paper, data analysis of 2016 and recommended survey instrument

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Psychology, statistics, survey design, Spanish;

Comments:

N/A

Jamaican Lotto Scamming: Root Causes and Policy Alternatives

U.S. Embassy Kingston

Western Hemisphere Affairs to Jamaica

Overview:

Telemarketing fraud, known in Jamaica as “lotto scamming” because of the prominence of the tactic of the fraudsters’ luring American victims with tales of lottery winning, has grown dramatically in recent years. Anderson Cooper 360 did a segment on this crime in 2015 and CNBC’s “American Greed” will devote an entire show to it in 2016. Some of America’s most vulnerable citizens are losing significant sums of money – estimates range from \$300 million to over \$1 billion per year – and this has led to intense human suffering including a spate of suicides. This scourge is also damaging Jamaica’s international reputation and undermining Jamaica’s social stability and rule of law. Scammers are using their immense illicit gains on lavish lifestyles. This distorts the Jamaican economy writ large and serves as a major factor in driving up violent crime, specifically the homicide rate. The cultural justifications of lotto scamming – “Robin Hood”, informal “reparations for slavery” or victim blaming – are widely accepted, most disturbingly and increasingly among children in the regions of Jamaica with a high concentration of this fraud. Jamaican judges tend to give scammers suspended sentences, allowing them to go back to committing the crime. A professor of criminology in Jamaica projected that another major conflict, similar to the 2010 extradition operation in Tivoli Gardens that left 74 dead, could occur between authorities and criminals with lotto scamming ties in the phenomenon’s epicenter, Montego Bay, in western Jamaica. What are the sociological factors driving this epidemic? What are the best policy alternatives, including but not limited to social marketing and economic development, to combat this scourge? What law enforcement practices work best to apprehend and prosecute criminals, deter future scamming, and eliminate this menace? The answers to these questions will help inform the policy that Jamaican and U.S. officials implement to repair the severe damage it has done to Jamaican society and U.S. citizens.

Format of Final Project:

A four-page memo with a presentation and a data analysis describing research findings.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement; Sociology, Public Policy, Psychology;

Comments:

None

Explain A Complicated Process - Passport Website Instructional Videos

Bureau of Consular Affairs, Passport Services, Community Relations (CA/PPT/S/PMO/CR)

Consular Affairs

Overview:

Travel.State.Gov is the only official resource customers can access to get the most up-to-date information on all things passport. The website tends to be text-heavy due to the amount of information that must be communicated to the customer, and a series of videos would help condense that information. This project seeks to develop a series of visually coherent videos that explain the complicated passport process in a way the public understands. The topics would likely include renewing a passport, applying for the first time, and minor passports, but are up for discussion.

Format of Final Project:

A series of 4-5 short videos explaining how to undertake basic passport tasks, such as renewing a passport, applying for the first time, getting a child's passport, etc. Ideal production would include a mix of animation, graphics, and text. Any sound would need to meet current 508 Compliance for the disabled or hard of hearing (example: closed captioning).

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Marketing, Graphic Design, Photography, Film, Advertising, Tourism Studies;

Comments:

We are very open to suggestions for how these videos might look- and we will provide you all of the content you need.

ID: DipLab1908222

Health Systems in the Western Hemisphere

Economic Policy and Summit Coordination (EPSC)

Western Hemisphere Affairs

Overview:

Project teams are expected to research and present (in writing) a comprehensive analysis of national healthcare systems in each country in a sub-region of the Western Hemisphere. This description should include healthcare finance systems (private, public, insurance systems, etc.), physical distribution of healthcare facilities throughout the country, distribution of healthcare workforce, major health challenges, legislation affecting healthcare services, etc.

Format of Final Project:

We would like to receive a 20 page research paper

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

Global Health; Western Hemisphere Studies; Public Health;

Comments:

More information will be provided upon connection with university team.

Commercial “Start-UP” Diplomacy

Economic Section, Embassy Tunis (Tunisia)

Near Eastern Affairs

Overview:

Commercial ‘Start-up’ Diplomacy is a project that aims to connect American start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with international customers and clients with the objective to increase U.S. exports and bilateral trade at the start-up and SME level. The project involves the creation of a database that categorizes the products, services, and core competencies of American start-ups and SMEs that were developed and mentored within an American incubator space. U.S. Embassy Tunis has a strategic objective to lower Tunisia’s unemployment rate. The Government of Tunisia aims to bring down unemployment from 15% to 12% by 2020. Tunisian college graduates represent 40% of the unemployed population. High unemployment is a national security concern. Therefore, this project intends to support job creation at the SME level for Tunisia as well as the United States.

Why should the big companies have all the fun? While the objective for this American start-up database would eventually be utilized by diplomatic posts worldwide, Tunisia will serve as the beta testing ground. Connecting foreign start-ups and SMEs with American partners supports U.S. exports, facilitates cultural exchange, and augments USG capacity to better conduct commercial diplomacy at the SME level. In practice, the database would assist existing USG commercial services. If a Tunisian start-up were developing a device that required a specialized chip, for example, the database would allow commercial officers to locate American start-ups and SMEs that have the ability to design and export the product to the Tunisian customer. When American partners are identified, Commercial and Economic Officers would then facilitate connecting the parties and closing deals.

While there are likely countless incubator workspaces in the United States, university teams would prioritize start-ups housed within, or those that recently graduated from top American incubator spaces identified by Forbes magazine. Students also will consider other factors when selecting incubators so that the database covers regional diversity and a variety of sectors across the United States. Parameters of the database and its usage will be further discussed with the team(s).

Format of Final Project:

We would like a database that has a modern interface, is user friendly, and easy to manage. The objective is to run queries where we can search products, services or core competencies of American start-ups and SMEs. Ideally, the database would have background information of the company including websites, location, and contact information, a description of products, services and competencies as well as pictures if necessary. We are including SMEs because the database would capture start-ups that graduated from an American incubator (within the past 3 years) and are now operating in their own workspaces.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

African Studies; Civil Society; Computer Science; Economic & Finance Issues; Information & Communication Technology; International Development; International Relations; Marketing; Middle East/North African Studies; Statistics; Entrepreneurship, Business, Commerce, Trade, Development,

Comments:

This is the first phase of this database project. Once the beta test is completed in Tunisia. It is our hope that Commercial 'start up' Diplomacy will become managed by the U.S. Department of State or Commerce. Students will also help create a name for the database program.

Incubators:

1. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexkonrad/2017/06/07/best-accelerators-of-2017/> 3073f2610cb6
2. <https://www.forbes.com/pictures/mee45jmk/the-research-park-at-the-university-of-illinois-at-urbana-champaign/> 4118d21b4848
3. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardkestenbaum/2018/05/13/this-is-how-accelerators-and-incubators-build-consumer-businesses/> 42796f37428a
4. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brennancusack/2018/08/22/tunisia-equal-inheritance-law-could-boost-female-entrepreneurship/> 3724b7cf155a

Strengthening Embassies' Capacity to Advance Internet Freedom and Business and Human Rights in Information and Communication Technology Companies

Multilateral and Global Affairs

Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

Overview:

Challenges to human rights online – namely privacy and freedom of speech, association, and peaceful assembly – have been on the rise globally. From state sponsored network disruptions to censorship of online content, authoritarian regimes are finding new and innovative ways to stifle Internet freedom. The trend is not abating; “fake news” legislation is increasingly used to target dissidents and human rights defenders while repressive states use data localization laws to restrict citizens’ data within their borders, where it is accessible by security agencies. From Yahoo!’s role in China to Vodaphone’s role in Egypt, information and communication technology (ICT) companies have also come under increased scrutiny for their role in corporate misconduct allegations. Multinational corporations have experienced damaging media attention for human rights abuses, negatively impacting local communities, the company’s brand, and the reputation of the government that is home to these companies.

Recognizing the role of business to respect human rights in challenging environments, the U.S. government endorsed the UN Guiding Principles – global guidance on business and human rights. The State Department’s Internet Freedom and Business & Human Rights (IFBHR) Section leads U.S. government policy to promote and protect human rights online as well as with business, globally. To better equip our embassies abroad to help advance Internet freedom and business and human rights, the IFBHR Section is seeking to partner with a dynamic team of students to develop a manual for Foreign Service Officers. This resource will equip Officers, posted worldwide, with core knowledge on the Internet freedom and business and human rights challenges pertaining to ICT companies; risks to look out for in their interactions with businesses, civil society, and other governments in country; recommendations on best practice; and resources for further information.

Format of Final Project:

The final project will be a manual providing a brief overview of Internet freedom and business and human rights pertaining to ICT companies; general and issue-specific risks, including state sponsored network disruptions, online censorship, and surveillance technology; best practices; suggested talking points for Officers interacting with businesses, civil society, and governments on these issues; and a recommended reading list. Please include citations. Further guidance will be provided by the IFBHR Section on content, level of detail, and format of the manual.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

African Studies; Communications; Computer Science; Cyber Security; Democracy & Human Rights; East Asian/Pacific Studies; European & Eurasian Studies; Human Rights; Information & Communication

Technology; International Law; International Relations; Middle East/North African Studies; Public-Private Partnerships; Science and Technology; South/Central Asian Studies; Western Hemisphere Studies; Corporate Social Responsibility

Comments:

The IFBHR Section is eager to further students' understanding of Internet freedom and business and human rights pertaining to ICT companies and the role of government in this area while providing them with the unique opportunity to impact the field.

Strengthening Embassies' Capacity to Advance Business and Human Rights

Multilateral and Global Affairs

Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

Overview:

In recent decades, there has been increasing attention on the impact of business on human rights. Economic globalization has brought unprecedented levels of international trade and investment, generating both benefits and consequences. Decentralized global supply chains, have helped to lift millions of people out of poverty. And yet the same privatization and deregulation that contributed to growth has expanded the opportunity for human rights abuses to occur. From the Union Carbide Bhopal tragedy in India to the Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh, multinational corporations have experienced damaging media attention for human rights abuses, negatively impacting local communities, the company's brand, and the reputation of the government that is home to these companies.

Recognizing the role of business to respect human rights in challenging environments, the U.S. government endorsed the UN Guiding Principles – global guidance on business and human rights. The State Department's Internet Freedom and Business & Human Rights (IFBHR) Section leads U.S. government policy to promote and protect human rights online as well as with business, globally. To better equip our embassies to help advance business and human rights, the IFBHR Section is seeking to partner with a dynamic team of students to develop a manual for Foreign Service Officers. This resource will equip Officers, posted worldwide, with core knowledge on the business and human rights challenges across sectors; risks to look out for in their interactions with businesses, civil society, and other governments in country; recommendations on best practice; and resources for further information.

Format of Final Project:

The final project will be a manual providing a brief overview of business and human rights; general and sector-specific risks, including in agriculture, extractives, hospitality, manufacturing, mega sporting events, and renewable energy; best practices; suggested talking points for Officers interacting with businesses, civil society, and governments on these issues; and a recommended reading list. Please include citations. Further guidance will be provided by the IFBHR Section on content, level of detail, and format of the manual.

Potential Areas of Useful Expertise or Interest:

African Studies; Communications; Computer Science; Cyber Security; Democracy & Human Rights; East Asian/Pacific Studies; European & Eurasian Studies; Human Rights; Information & Communication Technology; International Law; International Relations; Middle East/North African Studies; Public-Private Partnerships; Science and Technology; South/Central Asian Studies; Western Hemisphere Studies; Corporate Social Responsibility

Comments:

The IFBHR Section is eager to further students' understanding of business and human rights and the role of government in this area while providing them with the unique opportunity to impact the field.