



CIS Lectures

26 October 2004

HUMAN TRAFFICKING: COMBATING AN INTERNATIONAL CRISIS

April Palmerlee

Good evening. I'd like to thank Greg Lindsay, Sue Windybank and the CIS for inviting me to give a talk on combating human trafficking. With the UN-sponsored ministerial conference against trafficking starting tomorrow in Rangoon, we thought that this would be an opportune time to discuss this problem, which really is an international crisis.

Human trafficking – the illegal and highly profitable transport and sale of human beings for the purpose of exploiting their labour – is a practice that goes on around the world, even under our noses here in suburban Sydney. The number of persons trafficked each year is impossible to determine, but it is clearly a large-scale problem, with estimates ranging from hundreds of thousands to millions of victims worldwide.

Although trafficking in persons can take on different forms in different contexts, examination of the literature shows certain consistent patterns emerging. Although I will focus on trafficking of women into prostitution for the sake of simplicity here, there are numerous cases of women, children, and men being forced into marriage, bonded sweatshop labour and other kinds of work.

In a typical case, a woman is recruited with promises of a good job in another country or province, and lacking better options at home, she agrees to migrate. There are also cases in which women are lured with false marriage offers or vacation invitations, in which children are bartered by their parents for a cash advance and/or promises of future earnings, or in which victims are abducted outright. Whatever the case, an agent soon makes arrangements for the victim's travel and job placement, obtaining the necessary travel documentation, contacting employers or job brokers, and hiring an escort to accompany the woman on her trip. Once the arrangements have been made, the woman is escorted to her destination and delivered to an employer or to another intermediary who brokers her employment. The woman has no control over the nature or place of work, or the terms or conditions of her employment. Many women learn they have been deceived about the nature of the work they will do, most realize that they have been lied to about the financial arrangements and conditions of their employment, and all find themselves in coercive and abusive situations from which escape is both difficult and dangerous.

Consider the story of Tina, for example. She was a teenager from a rural Indonesian village. She went to an Indonesian migrant labour centre where she undertook four months of domestic service training. For the training and her board, she incurred hundreds of dollars in debt. From there, like many other Indonesian girls, she was transported to Malaysia, believing she would work as a maid. However, working 15 hours a day in a Malaysian couple's family business and sleeping on the floor at night was not what she had in mind. But when she protested, she was told that she had to complete her two-year contract before she would be paid anything. After a good deal of physical abuse, she went to an NGO victims' shelter. A brave girl, this Tina filed a complaint with the police. Her visa has been extended so that she can pursue her case in Malaysia.

In fact, the most common form of coercion is debt bondage. Women are told that they must work without wages until they have repaid the purchase price advanced by their employers, an amount far exceeding the cost of their travel expenses. Even for those women who knew they would be in debt, this amount is invariably higher than they expected and is routinely augmented with arbitrary fines and dishonest account keeping. Employers also maintain their power to "resell" indebted women into renewed levels of debt. In some cases, women find that their debts only increase and can never be fully repaid. Other women are eventually released from debt, but only after months or years of coercive and abusive labor. To prevent escape, employers take full advantage of the women's vulnerable position as migrants: they do not speak the local language, are unfamiliar with their surroundings, and fear arrest and mistreatment by local law enforcement authorities. These factors are compounded by a range of coercive tactics, including constant surveillance, isolation, threats of retaliation against the woman and/or her family members at home, and confiscation of passports and other documentation.

An example of this kind of debt-bondage is the story of Deng: A Thai woman in her late 20's, Deng was recruited to travel voluntarily to Australia where she was told she could make lots of money as a prostitute. Upon arrival here, however, she was met by traffickers who took away her passport and locked her in a house. She was told that she would have to pay off a debt of over \$30,000 by servicing 900 men. She was given one meal a day and was forcibly escorted to a brothel seven days a week, even when she was sick. She was told that if she tried to escape, criminal allies of the trafficking ring would catch her. Deng's exploitation ended when Australian Immigration officials raided the brothel in which she was enslaved.

By now, you're starting to see why people are susceptible to trafficking. These people aren't seeking religious freedom. They aren't being sent to populate new colonies. They aren't fleeing repressive political regimes. Trafficking victims, like most immigrants these days, simply desire better economic opportunities. Their home countries are unable to supply them with feasible alternatives, despite in many cases, significant natural resources, international aid, or development assistance. The difference between regular economic-based immigration and trafficking, of course, is that the latter implies the immigrants will be coerced or forced into certain kinds of labour once installed in their new locations.

It is interesting to note that many developing countries that have achieved some measure of economic success have seen their trafficking problems subside: A few examples in this area would include: The Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Countries where corruption is rampant, societal policies discourage individual freedom, and economic policies promote dependence have seen their trafficking problems increase. Regional examples might include: Laos, The Philippines, and Vietnam.

As regards the Pacific, Fellows at the CIS have published extensively on why aid has failed there. As I just alluded to, I would include among the ways it has failed, with regards to trafficking, is in undermining personal responsibility, initiative, and entrepreneurship, as well as by allowing corrupt government officials to stay in power.

So, I would say that developed and developing countries share the blame for allowing trafficking to flourish and we must work together to find solutions to the situation in which we currently find ourselves.

But before I get to that, let me take a step back and review the broader context of the trafficking debate. The fight against involuntary prostitution first began toward the end of the 19th century. The fashionable term for trafficking at that time was "Traite des Blanches" or "White Slave Trade", which derived from "Traite des Noirs", a term used in the beginning of the century for the African slave trade.

The movement against the white slave trade grew out of the abolitionist movement, which campaigned in Europe and America against prostitution. The so-called abolitionists took up the topic of traffic in women and girls to support their appeal to purify society from what they saw as the immoral vices connected to prostitution. Their campaigns were strengthened by the sensationalist media of the time, which eagerly took up the topic. Sustained and focused media attention resulted in public outrage and, eventually, also contributed to the development of several international initiatives to combat trafficking. For example, in 1904 the first international agreement against white slavery was drawn up at an international conference in

Paris . Several other agreements followed, all of which were superseded by the 1949 United Nations Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.

One may conclude that the scope and nature of trafficking must have been on the rise, thus resulting in the need for increased public attention and calls for numerous international agreements. However, there is discussion today that there was actually not much new about the recruitment techniques leading young women into prostitution, but rather that improved transport and transit had made it easier for women in prostitution to move into different countries. The increased awareness regarding trafficking of women was therefore connected to more general migration waves that were taking place at that time, and which also caused prostitutes to move (in order to respond to increased demand for sexual services among male migrants). But what effect did all of these conventions and agreements on trafficking have? Like most other such documents, not much. After all the protracted negotiating and bureaucratic hand-wringing, the papers were really just words. Without action or consequences behind the lofty goals, they soon were forgotten.

Interest has been revived in the late 20th century by virtue of the spread of AIDS, child prostitution, sex tourism, migration flows, and the feminist movement. Though today's attention to trafficking is still mostly related to prostitution and women, the focus is no longer on white European and American women; now we're talking about women and girls from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and most recently, Eastern Europe trafficked to western countries as well as within their own regions or countries. That is an important point: trafficking doesn't necessarily include crossing national borders: people can be trafficked within their own countries, though such crimes are harder to document than international people smuggling or trafficking.

As I was saying, more attention has gradually been paid to non-prostitution related trafficking, such as domestic work, marriage, begging, and other kinds of exploitative labour and services. Though there has been more recognition that trafficking affects not only women, the overall focus of most organizations, groups, and networks remains on women and children, as they are considered the most vulnerable to trafficking.

The impact of trafficking needs to be considered on an individual as well as a societal basis. First, let's look at the trafficking victims, for they pay a very dear price. They may suffer from:

Physical harm, including disease and stunted growth;

Physical and emotional damage from premature sexual activity;

Exposure to sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS;

Permanent damage to reproductive organs;

Psychological damage from isolation and domination, especially when trafficked to countries where they cannot speak or understand the language;

Missed critical opportunities for social, moral, and spiritual development;

Progressive exploitation: a child trafficked into one form of labor may be further abused in another;

Forced substance abuse; and

Extreme violence.

In addition to the effects on the trafficked individual, there are also societal effects of trafficking that must be considered. Social breakdown is just one of the results of trafficking in persons. The loss of family and community support networks renders the trafficking victim vulnerable to the traffickers' demands and threats, and contributes in several ways to the breakdown of social structures. Trafficking:

Separates children from their parents and families, preventing nurturing and moral guidance;

Interrupts the passage of knowledge and cultural values from parent to child and from generation to generation, weakening a core pillar of society;

produces profits that allow the practice to take root in a particular community, which is then repeatedly exploited as a ready source of victims;

Causes vulnerable groups such as children and young women to go into hiding to avoid it, with adverse effects on their schooling or family structure;

Leads to a loss of education, thus reducing victims' future economic opportunities and increasing their vulnerability to being trafficked in the future;

stigmatizes and ostracizes its victims, requiring continuing social services; and

Leads its victims to become involved in substance abuse and criminal activity.

Another aspect of trafficking is how it ties in to organized crime. The profits from the illegal sale and purchase of human beings are often used to fuel several other kinds of criminal activities. According to the UN, human trafficking is the third largest criminal enterprise in the world. It generates an estimated US\$9.5 billion in annual revenue according to the U.S. intelligence community. As I mentioned, trafficking victims are often subdued through encouraged or enforced substance abuse. As the number of trafficking victims increases, so too does the demand for illegal drugs. It is a vicious cycle because research has shown that even after being rescued from their "slavery" situations, many former trafficking victims remain addicted to drugs and are more likely to commit crimes.

Trafficking is also one of the most lucrative criminal enterprises, and is closely connected with human smuggling, drug trafficking, document forgery, and money laundering. There have also been documented ties to terrorism, such as the profits from trafficking and prostitution being used to support terrorist groups like al-Qaeda. However, most of the specific information I was exposed to the United States is still classified on national security grounds. The point is, though, that where organized crime flourishes, government authority and the rule of law are weakened.

Another grave risk to societies where trafficking flourishes is the loss of human capital. Trafficking has a negative impact on labor markets, contributing to an irretrievable loss of human resources. Some effects of trafficking include depressed wages, fewer individuals left to care for an increasing number of elderly persons, and an undereducated generation. These effects also lead to the loss of future productivity and earning power. Forcing children to work 10-18 hours a day at an early age denies them access to education and reinforces the cycle of poverty and illiteracy that stunts national development.

Government authority also suffers from the unchecked flow of human chattel. In some countries, especially where corruption is prevalent, governments struggle to exercise full control over their national territory. Armed conflicts, natural disasters, and political or ethnic struggles often create large populations of internally displaced persons. Human trafficking operations further undermine a government's efforts to exert its authority, threatening the security of vulnerable populations. Many governments are unable to protect women and children who are kidnapped from their homes and schools or from refugee camps. Moreover, the bribes paid by traffickers impede a government's ability to battle corruption among law enforcement, immigration, and judicial officials.

Fifth, trafficking in persons extracts tremendous economic costs on society. The International Labor Organization (ILO) recently completed a study on the costs and benefits of eliminating the worst forms of child labor—which by definition include child trafficking. It estimated that tens of billions of dollars annually could be gained by eliminating trafficking because of the added productive capacity a future generation of workers would gain from increased education and improved public health.

National and global public health is also rendered more vulnerable when victims of trafficking are exposed to physical, sexual and psychological trauma. Forced prostitution often results in sexually transmitted infections, pelvic inflammatory disease, and HIV/AIDS. Anxiety, insomnia, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder are common psychological manifestations among trafficked victims. Unsanitary and crowded living conditions, coupled with poor nutrition, foster a host of adverse health conditions such as scabies, tuberculosis, and other communicable diseases. Children suffer growth and development problems and develop complex psychological and neurological consequences from deprivation and trauma. These illnesses are often transmitted to the others in society through prostitution, as well as to the women's family or children through regular channels.

Finally, and quite tragically, the most egregious abuses are often borne by children, who are more easily controlled and forced into domestic service, armed conflict, and other hazardous forms of work. Children may be subjected to progressive exploitation, that is, resold several times and subjected to an array of physical, sexual and mental abuse. This abuse complicates their psychological and physical rehabilitation and jeopardizes their eventual reintegration into their societies.

While attention to the issue of trafficking has grown, so too has the number of definitions, approaches, and determinations of the problem. There are several different types of approaches to trafficking these days. I don't intend to imply that I support each of these approaches, but I think it is important to the debate that we table the various ways countries are dealing with the issue of trafficking.

As I have outlined, trafficking has traditionally been associated with prostitution. The debate about trafficking is, therefore, closely related to the debate about commercial sex work in general. A main topic of disagreement is whether trafficking should be defined to include:

only coercive procurement practices themselves;

the procurement of prostitutes as such (even with a woman's consent); or

Whether the recruitment practices and the end result (prostitution) are all part of the same problem.

Obviously, the fundamental difference in opinion here is individual choice: whether or not a person can choose prostitution as a profession, which basically relates to perceptions on force and free choice, or consent, within sex work. These differences in opinion necessarily have a huge impact on the approaches to and initiatives developed by countries and organizations to counter trafficking in prostitution.

The view that prostitution and the accompanying practice of trafficking are morally reprehensible problems underlies a variety of prohibitionist and abolitionist approaches, so let me start with that. Those who view all prostitution as a violation of human rights -- and trafficking as a form of procurement necessarily related to prostitution work -- seek repressive measures to abolish prostitution and treat women in prostitution as victims who need to be rescued and assisted.

Within such an approach, attempts to eliminate prostitution not only involve criminalization of procurers and of others who facilitate prostitution, but also the criminalization of the prostitutes themselves. Women in prostitution are, thus, viewed as deviants who need education or punishment, depending on one's views of criminal justice.

An opposite view holds that there should be recognition of the right to self-determination for adults who voluntarily engage in prostitution, thereby distinguishing between those who choose to enter prostitution and those who are forced, deceived, or tricked into it. Approaches here focus on prevention, protection, and reintegration.

Various sex workers' rights activists have dismissed the free and force distinction altogether. They argue that the harms of prostitution are actually caused by moral attitudes and their legal consequences. In their view, the context and conditions of sexual labour are of paramount concern, which implies the legalization of prostitution, better working conditions, and empowering of those working in the commercial sex

business. This approach is based on the underlying view that an end of exploitation in sex work will also end trafficking in sex work.

A second angle from which trafficking can be approached is related to criminality. Data shows that a focus on trafficking as a criminal problem has been especially popular in countries that attach high importance to the use of criminal law to deal with societal problems. Attention to trafficking as a criminal problem has also been raised due to the increased recognition of the involvement of transnational organized crime structures which not only abuse and exploit persons, but also undermine national and international laws and structures, thereby gaining quite large profits.

This approach pays special attention to the role of the criminal justice system and criminal law in the fight against trafficking. It entails legislative reforms, which often means responding to the call for higher penalties and more stringent laws, training of law enforcement officials, and establishing and strengthening interagency, regional, and international cooperation for the fight against international organized crime, amongst other approaches.

Criminalizing trafficking, however, may be done in many ways and its effectiveness depends on several factors. Due to corruption and lack of enforcement, the criminal system cannot be relied upon in all countries as a reliable instrument to combat trafficking. Besides, where women are themselves criminalized as illegal immigrants or as workers in, for example, prostitution, they have no incentive to report abuse to the police as they may then face arrest and expulsion themselves. In order to deal with such situations, initiatives would have to be developed to decriminalize prostitution, or to provide victim assistance and witness protection programmes.

On a related topic, the protection of human rights has become sine qua non for many counter-trafficking strategies. Framing trafficking as a violation of human rights makes states –the protectors of human rights on their territory and of their citizens –accountable for the fight against trafficking. This accountability is, as such, not new, since states that signed the international convention on trafficking and who designed national laws against trafficking were under these terms already accountable for the fight against trafficking. However, the reference to trafficking as a violation of human rights can be seen as an attempt to raise the issue of the responsibility of states regarding the fight against trafficking, as this responsibility has now also been laid down in national and international human rights laws

Attention has also been paid to trafficking in relation to labour exploitation. The labour approach entails, on the one hand, consideration of the lack of employment possibilities and the bad employment conditions, especially for women, in source countries, thus contributing to trafficking. On the other hand, this approach addresses the fact that trafficking most often takes place for the purpose of supplying cheap, unskilled labour for many difficult, dirty, and dangerous jobs, including sex work, construction, domestic work, and organized begging. Attention is paid to the position of children and women as workers, and efforts are made to eliminate child labour and to improve labour conditions for women and find recognition for their rights in the informal sector.

The initiatives developed focus on the improvement of the employment situation or conditions for migrants. These include the development of alternative livelihood strategies and employment programmes in source countries. In addition, efforts are being made to improve the employment conditions through agreements with employers, labour laws, trade unions, and labour inspection. Other support services aim to strengthen women's position as workers in destination countries by organizing skills training, providing information on their rights, legal matters and health, and by supporting unions, advocacy, and policy development for migrant workers' rights.

Finding support for workers' rights, however, becomes problematic when it concerns activities that are considered illegal, such as commercial sex work and begging, and when it concerns workers who stay in a country illegally. In such cases, countries may rather adopt strategies to inhibit women from migrating for work in the informal sector and reinforce restrictive migrant labour legislation.

Focusing on trafficking in children is another approach to the trafficking debate. Many groups and organizations have addressed the issue with child-focused analyses and strategies. The vulnerability of children, based on the bio-physiological, cognitive, behavioural and social changes taking place during their formative years, distinguishes children from adults, and thus also their trafficking situation. This recognition has contributed to the definition and development of different sets of measures regarding the protection against abuse, coercion, debt-bondage, and sexual exploitation of children.

Still, many initiatives focus on the fight against trafficking in women and children at the same time, as both are considered vulnerable. I would argue, however, that such equalization of the situation of women and children is not helpful. It not only disregards the special situation, need, and developments relevant for minors, but is also reductionist towards women when they are treated like children.

In order to respond to the special situation of trafficking in children, initiatives have been developed concentrating on the protection of children against sexual exploitations and abuse as well as child labour within the framework of child rights. These include initiatives regarding law reform and enforcement, as well as preventative measures such as education for children, especially girls, economic support for families, awareness-raising, and advocacy for the rights of the child. Protection of child victims of trafficking is given in the form of shelter, counselling education, health care, and return and reintegration assistance.

The last approach I will discuss today is the analysis of trafficking in the context of migration. In this stream, attention is given to the increase in migration in general--and of migrant women in particular--to an increasing number of destination regions and countries. It follows that abuse, exploitation and illegal forms of migration are also becoming increasingly prevalent. Some argue that the distinction among trafficking, smuggling, and other forms of population movement has become blurred, as traffickers learn to manipulate legal migration channels in order to gain entry to particular countries at particular times. Yet, bear in mind that trafficking does not only imply crossing national borders. Therefore, it should be considered in relation to internal migration as well.

The responses developed to counter trafficking in the context of migration take on various forms, depending on whether they are developed by a source or a destination country.

From the perspective of destination countries, the issue of the trafficking of migrants has become closely associated with illegal migration. Images of floods of illegal migrants entering countries with the help of criminal gangsters can cause the issue to be viewed in terms of a national security threat. Such an interpretation implies a crack-down on illegal migrants and/or the quick deportation of illegal aliens. Some of the measures adopted include visa restrictions, border controls, or stricter control of foreigners within national territory. This would seem to be the approach of the Howard Government. One criticism of this approach has been that it reverses the problem: criminalizing the victims of trafficking (who are treated as illegal aliens), while making the state into the victim in need of protection against illegal migration movements.

From the view of source countries, while stimulating migration as a source of income, measures may be taken to protect their residents from becoming exploited and abused as migrants in another country. These measures can entail regulation regarding recruitment agencies and procedures, pre-departure training, monitoring of migrants, as well as bilateral agreements with destination countries.

Other measures taken may be more focused on the potential migrant. These vary from migration prevention activities, such as awareness raising campaigns and the development of alternative income-generating possibilities, to activities related to the prevention of abuse and exploitation in migration, protection of migrants in destination countries and/or regions, and return and re-integration programmes for trafficked persons.

So those are some of the approaches. I'm sure what you really want to know is what works. Let me tell you about a few interesting initiatives I'm aware of:

The Colombian Government has authorized its Department of Administrative Security to identify and approach outbound travelers that appear to be potential trafficking victims at airports before they board international flights. The DAS officials attempt to inform potential victims of the risks of trafficking and of fraudulent job offers. In 2003, nine potential victims were persuaded that their employment offers were fraudulent and convinced not to board their international flights.

The Government of Italy has provided funding to the Government of Morocco's "Project Textilia 2000," which funds micro-projects in the region around Khourigba, known for its involvement in clandestine emigration to Italy. The project is intended to provide gainful employment in Morocco that will prevent victims from being trafficked. For victims already in Italy, the country's new anti-trafficking law created a separate budget category for victim assistance programs, and the central government provided 70% of the assistance funds, with regional and local governments providing the rest.

The customary African practice of "fostering" feeds directly into the trafficking in persons trade. Child trafficking begins with a private arrangement between a trafficker and a family member, driven by the family's dire economic circumstances and the trafficker's desire for profit and cheap labor. Families, typically engaged in subsistence agriculture, are told that their child will receive an education and learn a useful trade. In all too many cases the child is trafficked into a situation of forced domestic servitude, street vending, or sexual exploitation. In response, the Government of Ghana conducted "Operation Bring Your Children Home" to encourage parents who sold their children to traffickers to bring them home in exchange for business assistance, job training, micro-credit facilities, and assistance with school fees and uniforms. To raise public awareness of the program, the Ghana police conducted informational meetings at large truck stops in Accra to educate drivers and transport union representatives on the identification of trafficking victims.

The Government of the Philippines regulates and performs surprise as well as routine inspections of the 1,317 licensed labor export agencies; it also provides training and skills tests for overseas foreign workers before they leave the country. Philippine Foreign Service officers are trained, and in some cases actively involved, in searching for housing, and repatriating Philippine trafficking victims. The Philippines has conducted training for other governments in the region, including Indonesia and Vietnam, on how to improve their labor export protections.

The Indonesian Foreign Ministry operates shelters at its embassies and consulates in a number of countries, including Malaysia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Over the past year, these diplomatic establishments sheltered thousands of Indonesian citizens, a number of whom were potential trafficking victims. Indonesian diplomatic missions, in coordination with other government agencies, also assisted with repatriations.

These are all laudable and innovative undertakings, but they only deal with the source countries. We in the destination countries cannot shirk our responsibilities or pretend that the demand side of the equation doesn't play a role. We cannot, we must not, put the entire burden on the source countries, many if not all of which are undeveloped.

But only through a two-pronged approach can we make real and sustainable progress. When destination countries take the decision to end trafficking with serious, hard-hitting measures, we'll start to see a light at the end of the tunnel.

Australia, under the Howard government, seems to be on the right track. Among the recent steps the Australian government has taken to combat trafficking is a \$20 million whole-of-government package announced last year to supplement existing programmes. This new package significantly enhances the detection, investigation, and prosecution of traffickers, as well as improves the range of support available to victims. Perhaps even more significant, however, has been the Prime Minister's tough but fair immigration policy. We all know the Government's stance on asylum seekers, and even regular immigrants are put through very tough checks. As a recent immigrant myself, I can attest to this. But, may I say, it seems to be working. This sort of no-nonsense, concentrated effort is bringing major trafficking through the regular immigration channels down. Alas, tourist visas are still abused for trafficking purposes,

though this is more of a problem in the United States and the European Union, where overstaying is easier than in Australia.

And let me tell you just a bit about what the United States has done over past three years:

Provided more than US\$295 million to support anti-trafficking programs in 120 countries;

Passed the PROTECT Act, which allows U.S. law enforcement to prosecute Americans who travel abroad to sexually abuse minors;

Launched a domestic public awareness campaign to help rescue victims;

Developed the successful Operation Predator initiative to identify, investigate, and arrest child sex criminals, including traffickers;

Awarded a grant to World Vision to conduct a public awareness campaign to deter American tourists in foreign countries from engaging in commercial sexual exploitation of children; and

Secured a commitment from the travel and tourism industry to develop a Code of Conduct to Prevent the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism.

In conclusion, then, the real advances are going to be made when developed countries like yours and mine work together with source countries to dampen both supply of and demand for victims of human trafficking.

April Palmerlee is Director of Potomac Partners, a Sydney-based international policy consultancy. She is also a Visiting Fellow at the CIS. Before moving to Australia, she served as a senior official at the U.S. Department of State, coordinating all U.S. foreign policy concerning women. Prior to that, she was an executive at the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations, the largest non-partisan foreign policy think tank in the United States.