

A Long Overdue Blow Against Endless War

The Headline

This past Monday marked the 20th anniversary of the United States' invasion of Iraq. As we discussed in our [bonus debrief](#) last week, the [lack of accountability](#) for the people responsible for the disastrous war remains a moral stain that U.S. policymakers carry to this day. Thankfully, though, the Senate looks poised to take an important step to repair the harms of the Iraq War, by repealing the 2002 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) that allowed the war to go forward in the first place.

In the last Congress, the House of Representatives voted to repeal the 2002 AUMF, but with no luck in the Senate. However, after years of activism, congressional dynamics have changed, and we finally have an opportunity to keep executive power in check and prevent a future president from using a two-decade old AUMF as authorization for a new war. We know the danger of AUMF misuse is real, because it has already happened. It was under the Trump administration where the 2002 AUMF was misused to assassinate an Iranian general in 2020, [nearly causing war with Iran](#). The Iraq War was a big enough mistake, one that led to hundreds of thousands of deaths and [cost](#) the U.S. public some \$2.9 trillion. We do not need to allow the legal detritus of that horrible war lead us to destroy countless lives again, whether it be in Iran or elsewhere.

Still, as significant an achievement as repealing the 2002 AUMF would be, it shows how far we still have to go in repairing harms and seeking accountability for the war. Many pundits who once advocated for the invasion of Iraq remain central to our discourse, still audaciously calling for more of the same bellicosity in U.S. foreign policy. Indeed, their influence can be felt in the repeal process, as hawkish Senators have slowed the process by proposing poison pill amendments to scuttle the bill and keep the AUMF in force. Congress and activists both have work to do to reject the hawks' arguments, repeal the 2002 AUMF, and firmly declare that the era of limitless executive power to wage war is over.

What's next: Once the amendment process is over, the full Senate still has to vote on repeal. If it passes as predicted, the GOP-led House will have to take it up next – a challenge, but not an insurmountable one given that [dozens](#) of current House Republicans voted for repeal only two years ago.. When repeal passes the House, President Biden has [pledged](#) to sign it – which would be historic indeed.

The Happenings

March 25th, 12:00 PM EDT: "Yemen Can't Wait: International Online Rally," [Friends Committee on National Legislation \(FCNL\)](#)

March 27th, 9:00 AM EDT: “Declaration of Democratic Principles: Civil society’s critical role in achieving the Summit for Democracy goals,” [Brookings Institution](#)

April 5th, 1:00 PM EDT: “Militarism at Home: Militarism and Border Communities,” [Congressional Progressive Caucus Center \(CPCC\)](#)

The Spotlight

In today’s spotlight, we interview Samira Damavandi, [Global Policy Advocate](#) at the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). You can follow her on Twitter [here](#).

1): What was the first moment you realized you were interested in the overlap of gender equality, reproductive justice, and U.S. foreign policy?

I studied Political Science, Middle Eastern Studies and Gender and Women’s Studies as an undergraduate student, so I have had an interest in the overlaps of these issues for a while now. When I worked in Congress, I also had the opportunity to work on these issues as well and I saw how various programs were funded through the Appropriations process and how important that process is to ensure funding. I became more interested in these issues and wanted to work to advocate for these programs.

2): What is one thing you wish was better or more widely understood about gender equality when it comes to U.S. foreign policy?

One thing I wish was better understood by the foreign policy community is that gender equality is also a tenet of U.S. foreign policy. There are various programs for global gender equality in the State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee on Appropriations and it is a priority of the Biden-Harris Administration. The State Department’s Bureau for Global Women’s Issues and USAID’s various bureaus, among others, emphasize gender equality and women’s empowerment programming. There are also various international accords that the U.S has signed on to relating to gender equality at the United Nations that require it to uphold gender equality principles. It is important for folks to understand foreign policy through a gender equality lens for us to hopefully have a more equitable world. Gender equality is also a prerequisite for democracy, so it’s important to ensure that women and girls are able to contribute to their societies.

3): In a [recent event](#) with ICRW, you said that the overturning of Roe v. Wade is not only a domestic crisis, but may serve to “embolden an anti-abortion and anti-rights movements abroad” and “contribute to the global stigmatization of abortion.” What have you and your colleagues at ICRW noticed globally since the repeal? How will it affect the fight to [repeal the Helms amendment](#)?

The *Dobbs* decision has had severely detrimental consequences in the United States and has led to states being able to implement “trigger bans,” essentially outlawing and criminalizing

abortion. It also has foreign policy implications in the sense that some countries look to the United States and its laws to justify their own. We have heard from implementing partners that the decision has led to a chilling effect. It has created global uncertainty over what this means for U.S. foreign policy, where and when abortion services can legally be provided, and what U.S. government partners are able to do. Although the decision does not change U.S. foreign policy in terms of abortion, it has caused confusion for organizations that receive U.S. funding because they do not want to risk losing funding and may deter partners from providing care. There are already policies such as the Helms amendment in place that prohibits U.S. funds from being used to provide abortion or even information and counseling related to abortion. When the Roe decision was made, it had a domino effect and other countries legalized abortion as well, so this decision has unfortunately also emboldened anti-sexual and reproductive health and rights actors. The fight to repeal the Helms amendment continues to be underway in Congress and requires legislation like the recently re-introduced Abortion is Healthcare Everywhere Act to be enacted.

Buried Ledes

[Chinese Premier Xi Jinping visited Russia this week](#), a first since Moscow launched its full scale invasion of Ukraine. This comes days after the International Criminal Court in the Hague issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for committing war crimes. China called the trip a “journey of friendship, cooperation, and peace,” while U.S. Secretary State Antony Blinken accused China of providing Putin diplomatic cover. Putin praised China for a 12-point peace plan China released last month to end the war in Ukraine. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio [Kishida visited Kyiv](#) this week as well, in a clear response to Xi’s visit.

[Mass protests in France continue against French Emmanuel Macron’s effort to increase the retirement age](#) from 62 to 64. On Monday, [Macron survived a no-confidence vote](#), which received 278 votes in the National Assembly - short of the 287 needed to pass. The mass demonstrations included tens of thousands of people in Paris alone, among the 250 planned protests around the country. They chanted “we are here, even if Macron doesn’t want it, we are here!” while Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin accused the demonstrators of “unacceptable assaults and damage” and said they won’t go “unpunished.” The related strikes have affected garbage pick up, flights, and closed schools.

[Taiwan is recalling its ambassador to Honduras](#), anticipating the end of a diplomatic relationship that goes back more than eighty years. Honduran President Xiomara Castro announced on March 15 that the country is establishing formal diplomatic relations with the Chinese government, which means an end to formal relations with the Taiwanese government, since China demands that countries it exchanges ambassadors with break off official diplomatic ties with Taiwan.. Only 14 countries, including Honduras, have official diplomatic relations with Taiwan. El Salvador was the last Central American country to make the same switch in 2018.

[For the first time in 19 years, Beijing saw its population drop](#). In 2021, the city's population was 21.88 million and in 2022 it dropped to 21.84 million, a decline of 84,000. This matches China's nation-wide population drop in 2022, the first since the Great Famine of the late 1950s and early 1960s. The population decline in Beijing is the result of the now-ended one-child policy, delays in Chinese youth starting families, and the growing cost of raising families in China's increasingly expensive cities.

Remember to “own the feels.” [New Zealand is spending \\$4 million to help teens with breakups](#), in a youth-led effort expressing concern over processing early experiences of love and hurt. It is being called the “Love Better” campaign, which is part of the New Zealand's larger effort to eliminate family and sexual violence.

Mike Check!

A new GOP-led House means a Congress in which congressmen named Michael [outnumber](#) women as committee chairs. Here's Mike Check, an occasional series dedicated to keeping track of what the Mikes are doing with all that power.

Today, we have a kind of Mike tag team, joining forces to push for a bad idea. Mike McCaul and Mike Rogers, chairmen of the House Foreign Affairs and Armed Services committees respectively, joined GOP senators Jim Risch and Roger Wicker to write a letter [advocating](#) for the sale of *cluster bombs* to Ukraine. Folks, this is not a drill. Cluster bombs are indiscriminate weapons banned by over 110 countries and they linger for [decades](#), harming people long after wars are over. Russian cluster bombs are killing and injuring civilians in Ukraine today – there is no need for the U.S. to add to the list of dangers Ukrainians face. It is time for the Mikes and their friends to put the Xbox controller down, turn off whatever edition of Call of Duty they're playing, and be serious about the human costs of their proposals.

[Happy Nowruz](#) from Win Without War! We'll be back with our pop-quiz series soon.