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It covers (1) U.S. Federal government documents, especially those from executive branch departments and those from the Congressional branch; (2) policy briefs from major private think tanks; (3) major reports from professional associations; and (4) articles.

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Reports

Item#1

A War of Priorities in Syria. YaleGlobal. Chris Miller. December 3, 2015.

The international coalition targeting the Islamic State's tenuous hold of communities in Syria and Iraq has divided interests that could prolong the war in Syria. "The war is driven by multiple, interlocking layers of conflict," explains Chris Miller. The priorities vary and desire to maintain influence in the region runs high: The United States, France and Russia disagree about a role for the Assad regime; Turkey worries about Kurds demanding independence; and Shia and Sunni sects are at odds, both at the national level with the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia and among militias fighting on the ground. Mistrust lingers between the West and Russia since the latter invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea in early 2014. A mixed bag of priorities overshadow the diplomacy required for bringing peace to the region.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/war-priorities-syria> [HTML format, various paging].

Item#2

Air War May Be Satisfying, But Won't Defeat ISIS. YaleGlobal. Mohammed Ayoub. November 19, 2015.

Air strikes pounding strips of territory in Iraq and Syria controlled by the Islamic State won't destroy the ideology and can inflict civilian casualties, according to the author. Analysts concur that ground troops are needed to deliver precise attacks. Public opinion in the United States and the European Union won't permit use of their ground troops, and such force would only reinforce extremist claims about the West waging war against Islam. Ayoub analyzes the opposition from Turkey and Saudi Arabia for the participation of such troops. Russia and the United States are coordinating strategy, and Ayoub urges rapid regional coordination, too, as Islamic State leaders order terrorist attacks in cities as far away as Paris and bring devastation to the Middle East.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/air-war-isis-may-be-satisfying-won%E2%80%99t-defeat-terror-group> [HTML format, various paging].

Item#3

The Syrian Refugee Crisis and U.S. National Security. RAND Corporation. Seth G. Jones. November 19, 2015.

This is a testimony presented before the House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security on November 19, 2015. The hearing is entitled, "The Syrian Refugee Crisis and Its Impact on the Security of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program." Jones divides his comments into three sections. The first provides an overview of the foreign fighter problem from Syria, the second focuses on the terrorism threat to the United States, and the third examines the implications for Syrian refugees and the U.S. homeland.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT444/RAND_CT444.pdf [PDF format, 11 pages, 0.2 MB].

Item#4

Profile of Syrian Immigrants in the United States. Migration Policy Institute. Jie Zong. November 2015.

Approximately 86,000 Syrian immigrants resided in the United States in 2014, including 2,261 resettled refugees. This fact sheet provides information on the Syrian immigrant population in the United States, focusing on its size, socioeconomic characteristics, and geographic distribution.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/profile-syrian-immigrants-united-states> [HTML format with a link to the full text PDF file].

Item#5

The High Cost of Resettling Middle Eastern Refugees. Center for Immigration Studies. Karen Zeigler and Steven A. Camarota. November 2015.

As Americans continue to debate what to do about the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East, the analysis estimates the costs of resettling refugees from that region in the United States. According to the analysis, in their first five years in the United States each refugee from the Middle East costs taxpayers \$64,370, 12 times what the UN estimates it costs to care for one refugee in neighboring Middle Eastern countries. The cost of resettlement includes heavy welfare use by Middle Eastern refugees; 91 percent receive food stamps and 68 percent receive cash assistance. Costs also include processing refugees, assistance given to new refugees, and aid to refugee-receiving communities. Given the high costs of resettling refugees in the United States, providing for them in neighboring countries in the Middle East may be a more cost-effective way to help them.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

http://cis.org/sites/cis.org/files/camarota-refugees-15_0.pdf [PDF format, 10 pages, 1.01 MB].

Item#6

ISIS Rampage: A Threat to Cultural Heritage That Belongs to All. YaleGlobal. James Cuno. November 26, 2015.

The self-proclaimed Islamic State is ruthless in imposing its version of Islam on others. The rigid beliefs cannot withstand the joys of the modern world or a cultural heritage and ancient history that is a connecting force for Judaism, Christianity and Islam. ISIS contends the world is borderless and belongs to Allah – and claim their leaders alone interpret Allah’s wishes. According to the author, while protecting people is a priority, the international community must also develop new methods to stop trade in artifacts that contributes to funding for the Islamic State. The international community could designate safe havens for confiscated artifacts rather than returning them to war zones.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/isis-rampage-threat-cultural-heritage-belongs-all> [HTML format, various paging].

Item#7

The Korean Pivot and the Return of Great Power Politics in Northeast Asia. Atlantic Council. Sungtae Jacky Park. November 23, 2015.

As China reemerges, Japan revitalizes, and the United States rebalances toward Asia, competition over Korea will likely return. Park examines Korea's strategies toward great powers, discusses the future of the strategic dynamic on the Korean peninsula, explores the potential North Korean collapse scenario, and offers policy recommendations for the United States.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/20151123_Korean_Pivot.pdf [PDF format, 24 pages, 3.03 MB].

Item#8

COP21: China Prepares to Act on Climate Change. YaleGlobal. Isabel Hilton. December 1, 2015.

At COP21, the world leaders confronted overwhelming scientific evidence that catastrophe is inevitable if countries continue to rely on fossil fuels. Global awareness runs high about the increasing economic and security threats of volatile weather patterns, including food and water shortages, infrastructure damage and rising insurance costs, as well as mass displacement of communities. China, poor and underdeveloped only a few decades, once opposed target-setting on emissions. The Chinese government now strives to lead on developing and financing renewable sources of energy and endorses a cap-and-trade program.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/cop21-china-prepares-act-climate-change> [HTML format, various paging].

Item#9

Africa's Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking Crisis. Center for Strategic & International Studies. Jennifer G. Cooke and Derek Schlickeisen. November 16, 2015.

The illicit trade in wildlife products has undergone a dramatic escalation in the last decade, developing into a multibillion dollar global criminal enterprise that is increasingly militarized, sophisticated, and deadly. In Africa, poaching and trafficking in ivory and rhino horn have had a devastating impact on conservation efforts. Equally alarming is the growing danger trafficking networks pose for human security and development and the growing nexus of wildlife trafficking, armed militant groups, deepening insecurity, and government corruption. The report examines the drivers of the current crisis and highlighted ways that African governments and their partners are working to combat wildlife poaching and trafficking.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

http://csis.org/files/publication/151113_Cooke_AfricaWildlifePoaching_Web.pdf [PDF format, 24 pages, 2.24 MB].

Item#10

Today's Washington Press Corps More Digital, Specialized. Pew Research Center. December 3, 2015.

The story of who is covering federal government is a striking illustration of the shifting power dynamics within American journalism at large. Reporters for niche outlets, some of which offer highly specialized information services at premium subscription rates, now fill more seats in the U.S. Senate Press Gallery than do daily newspaper reporters. As recently as the late 1990s, daily newspaper staff outnumbered such journalists by more than two-to-one.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

http://www.journalism.org/files/2015/12/PJ_2015-12-03_Washington-Press-Corps_FINAL.pdf [PDF format, 47 pages, 952.3 KB].

Item#11

Beyond Distrust: How Americans View Their Government. Pew Research Center. November 23, 2015.

A year ahead of the presidential election, the American public is deeply cynical about government, politics and the nation's elected leaders in a way that has become quite familiar.

Elected officials are held in such low regard that 55% of the public says "ordinary Americans" would do a better job of solving national problems. Yet at the same time, most Americans have a lengthy to-do list for this object of their frustration: Majorities want the federal government to have a major role in addressing issues ranging from terrorism and disaster response to education and the environment. And most Americans like the way the federal government handles many of these same issues, though they are broadly critical of its handling of others – especially poverty and immigration.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.people-press.org/files/2015/11/11-23-2015-Governance-release.pdf> [PDF format, 198 pages, 4.11 MB].

Item#12

Global Support for Principle of Free Expression, but Opposition to Some Forms of Speech. Pew Research Center. Richard Wike and Katie Simmons. November 18, 2015.

Although many observers have documented a global decline in democratic rights in recent years, people around the world nonetheless embrace fundamental democratic values, including free expression. The survey finds that majorities in nearly all 38 nations polled say it is at least somewhat important to live in a country with free speech, a free press and freedom on the internet. And across the 38 countries, global medians of 50% or more consider these freedoms very important.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2015/11/Pew-Research-Center-Democracy-Report-FINAL-November-18-2015.pdf> [PDF format, 59 pages, 1.53 MB].

Item#13

Americans' Debt Styles by Age and over Time. Urban Institute. Wei Li and Laurie Goodman. November 16, 2015.

The report reviews five years of consumer credit data on more than 5 million consumers from a major credit bureau to understand the debt styles of American consumers. While many patterns that emerged are not surprising, there were some unexpected findings: Consumers who have no debt have weaker credit scores than those who have debt; Consumers who have auto debt in combination with any other type of debt generally have lower credit scores than those who do not have auto debt with their other debt; Borrowers in their 20s and early 30s with both mortgage and student loan debt have higher credit scores than borrowers in their later 30s and 40s with the same combination; And those borrowers who hold only one type of debt generally hold less of that type of debt than those who hold more than one type of debt.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/2000514-Americans-Debt-Styles-by-Age-and-over-Time.pdf> [PDF format, 46 pages, 803.95 KB].

Item#14

Electronic Surveillance of Mobile Devices. RAND Corporation. Edward Balkovich et al. December 10, 2015.

The report explores the challenges surrounding law enforcement use of user data collected through mobile phones and describes a prototype tool that could aid in understanding what types of mobile data exist and applicable legal protections.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR800/RR800/RAND_RR800.pdf [PDF format, 65 pages, 1.9 MB].

Item#15

Paid Parental Leave: Lessons from OECD Countries and Selected U.S. States. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Willem Adema et al. November 19, 2015.

The United States is at a crossroads in its policies towards the family and gender equality. Currently America provides basic support for children, fathers, and mothers in the form of unpaid parental leave, child-related tax breaks, and limited public childcare. Alternatively, the United States' OECD peers empower families through paid parental leave and comprehensive investments in infants and children. The potential gains from strengthening these policies are enormous. Paid parental leave and subsidised childcare help get and keep more women in the workforce, contribute to economic growth, offer cognitive and health benefits to children, and extend choice for parents in finding their preferred work-life strategy.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/5jrqqvqgb4vb.pdf?expires=1448023758&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=7DF31F81C0E7E8B851BAF45EF4E263B2> [PDF format, 131 pages, 3.35 MB].

Information Resource Center

Beijing American Center

Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy Beijing

Tel: (86-10) 6597-3242

Email: ircbeijing@state.gov

Web Site: <http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/irc.html>