



Revisiting "National Security, Epidemics, and US Immigration Policy" During a Pandemic

Tuesday, May 26, 2020 | 12:00PM - 1:30PM

Will be held via Zoom



Robbie Totten, PhD

Associate Professor of Politics and Global Studies at American Jewish University (AJU). He has been serving as AJU's Interim Chief Academic Officer since fall 2019. He previously was a Visiting International Relations Assistant Professor at UCSB. His research has appeared in journals and edited volumes, and it has centered on transnational issues, security, U.S. immigration policy, and the American Founding. He feels privileged to coach AJU's undergraduate Model United Nations team.

While a CCIS pre-doctoral fellow, Robbie Totten, PhD, wrote an [article](#) on historical relationships between security, epidemics and US immigration policy that, by citations and view statistics, was met with a yawn. It began by underscoring how the Obama administration in 2014-15 characterized Ebola as a national security issue, opposed to seeing it as purely a humanitarian concern. This may have seemed a hyperbolic framing by Obama at the time, but it now looks like a prescient characterization, with authorities comparing U.S. responses to the coronavirus as akin to waging a war. Totten's article then reviewed epidemics through history to show how contagions can alter the fates of civilizations, explicated ways that epidemics jeopardize states' national security, and reviewed American immigration policies over the past three hundred years to protect against contagions. After finishing the article, Totten did wonder to what extent the historical findings from centuries ago had pertinence for a modern world with vaccines and sophisticated medicine, but he now unfortunately has an answer to this musing with COVID-19 spreading and creating havoc across the globe in a few months. In his talk, Totten will revisit his article and how its findings has relevance to coronavirus, international security, and U.S. immigration policy.

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