

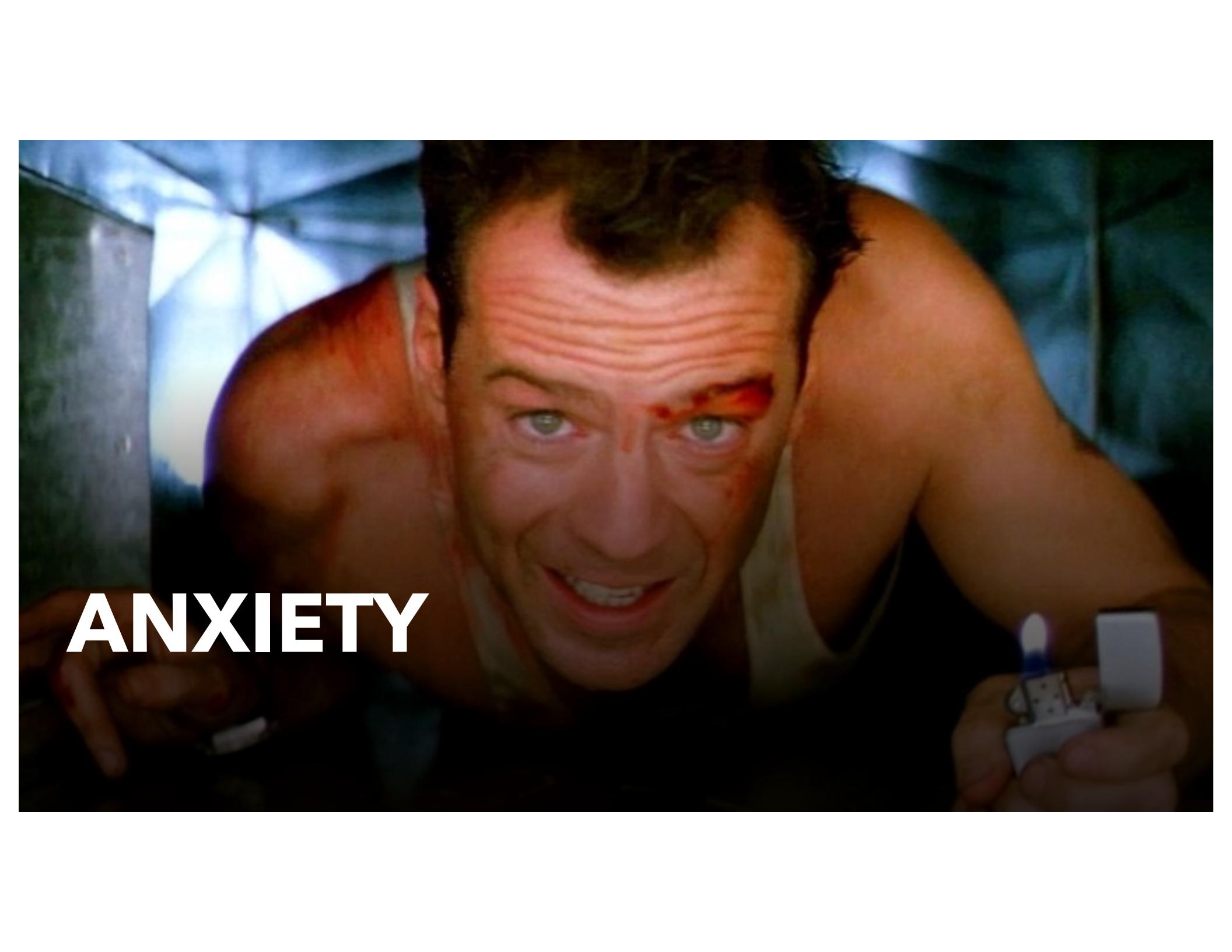
Week 1: 'Publics' and 'Privates' on the 'Pacific Rim': A Liberal Orientation

COR2614 Publics and Privates on the Pacific Rim

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A close-up shot of Bruce Willis as John McClane from the movie Die Hard. He is shirtless, looking intensely at the camera with a worried expression. A red smudge is visible on his right eye. He is holding a white remote control in his right hand. The background is a green screen.

ANXIETY

...there is an anxiety over whether the 'liberal' dream of the 'Pacific Rim' can work out...

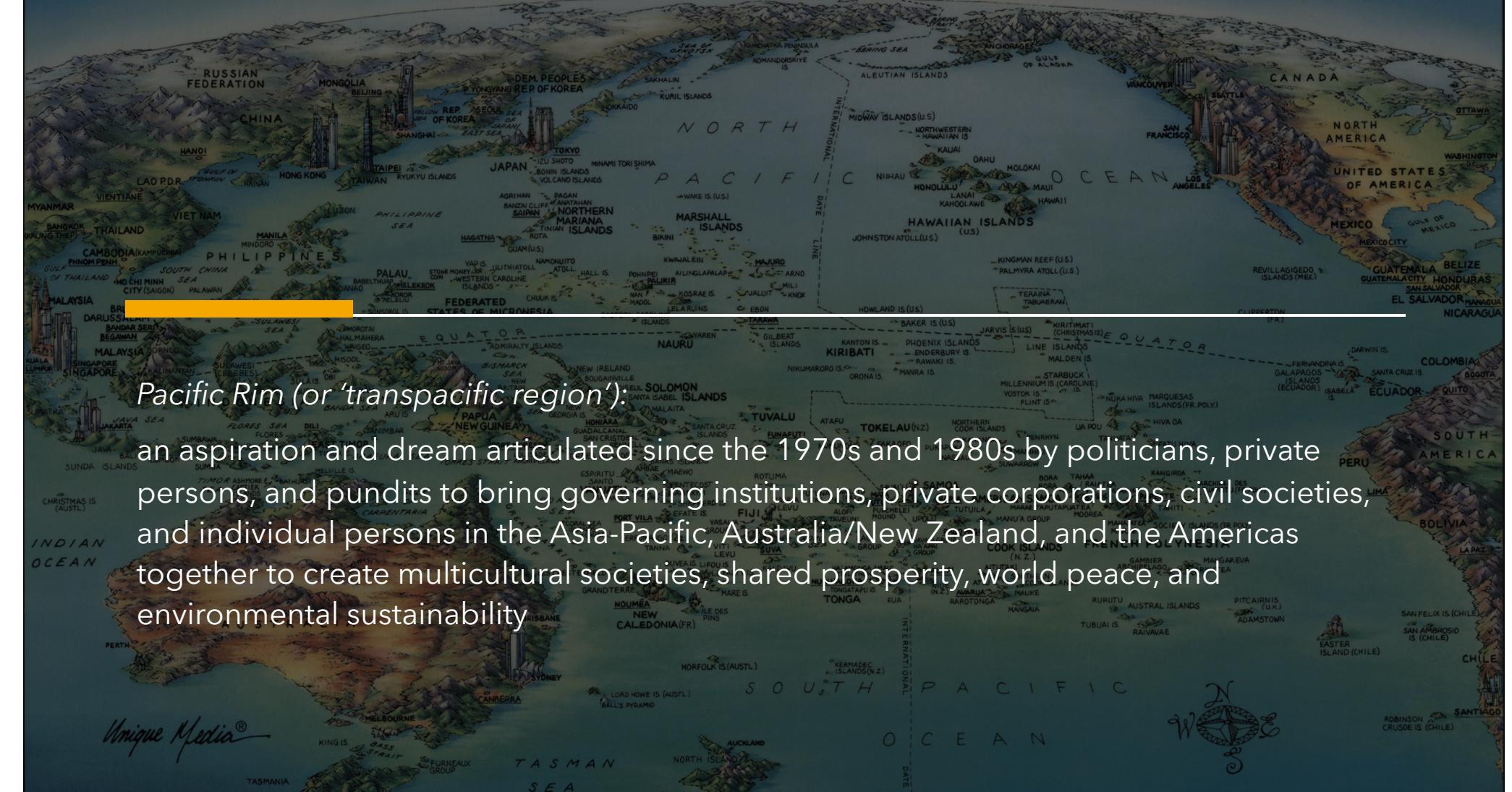
ideology:

an imagination (or an 'imaginary') of how the world should be.

liberalism:

an imagination that dreams of freedom can manifest into a public commons that is premised on private liberties

THE PACIFIC RIM

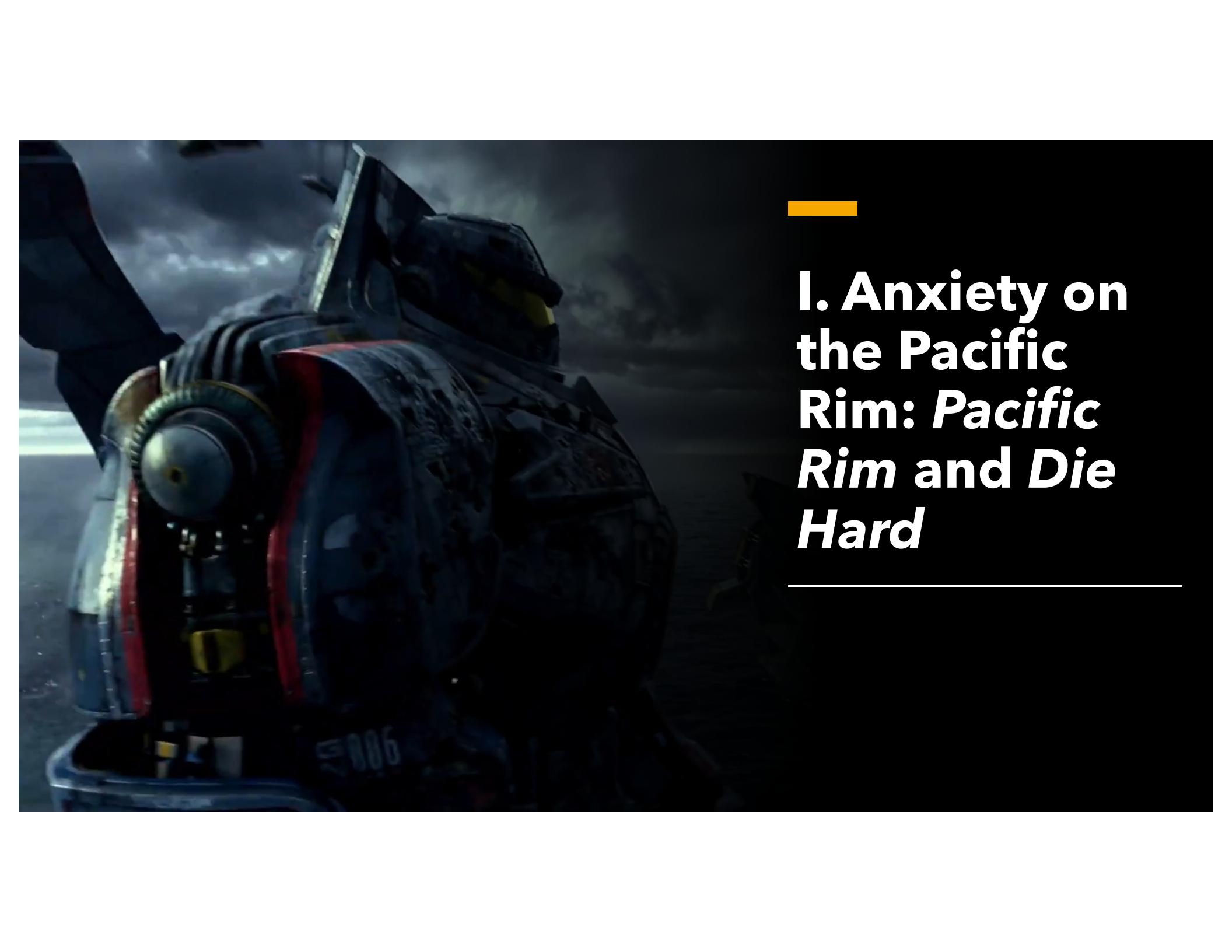


Pacific Rim (or 'transpacific region'):
an aspiration and dream articulated since the 1970s and 1980s by politicians, private persons, and pundits to bring governing institutions, private corporations, civil societies, and individual persons in the Asia-Pacific, Australia/New Zealand, and the Americas together to create multicultural societies, shared prosperity, world peace, and environmental sustainability

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...there is an anxiety over whether the 'liberal' dream of the 'Pacific Rim' can work out, because what if the 'privates' don't actually turn into 'publics'?

- I. Anxiety on the Pacific Rim: *Pacific Rim* and *Die Hard*
- II. Transpacific Anxiety: The 'Pacific Rim' as a Dream
- III. Explaining the Anxiety: Fukuyama's 'End of History' and Arendt's *Human Condition*



A dark, atmospheric image of a Pacific Rim Jaeger robot in flight against a cloudy sky. The robot's body is dark with glowing red and blue highlights, and its cockpit area is visible. The background is filled with dramatic, dark clouds.

I. Anxiety on the Pacific Rim: *Pacific Rim* and *Die Hard*

BEASTS FROM THE DEEP

Erin Suzuki

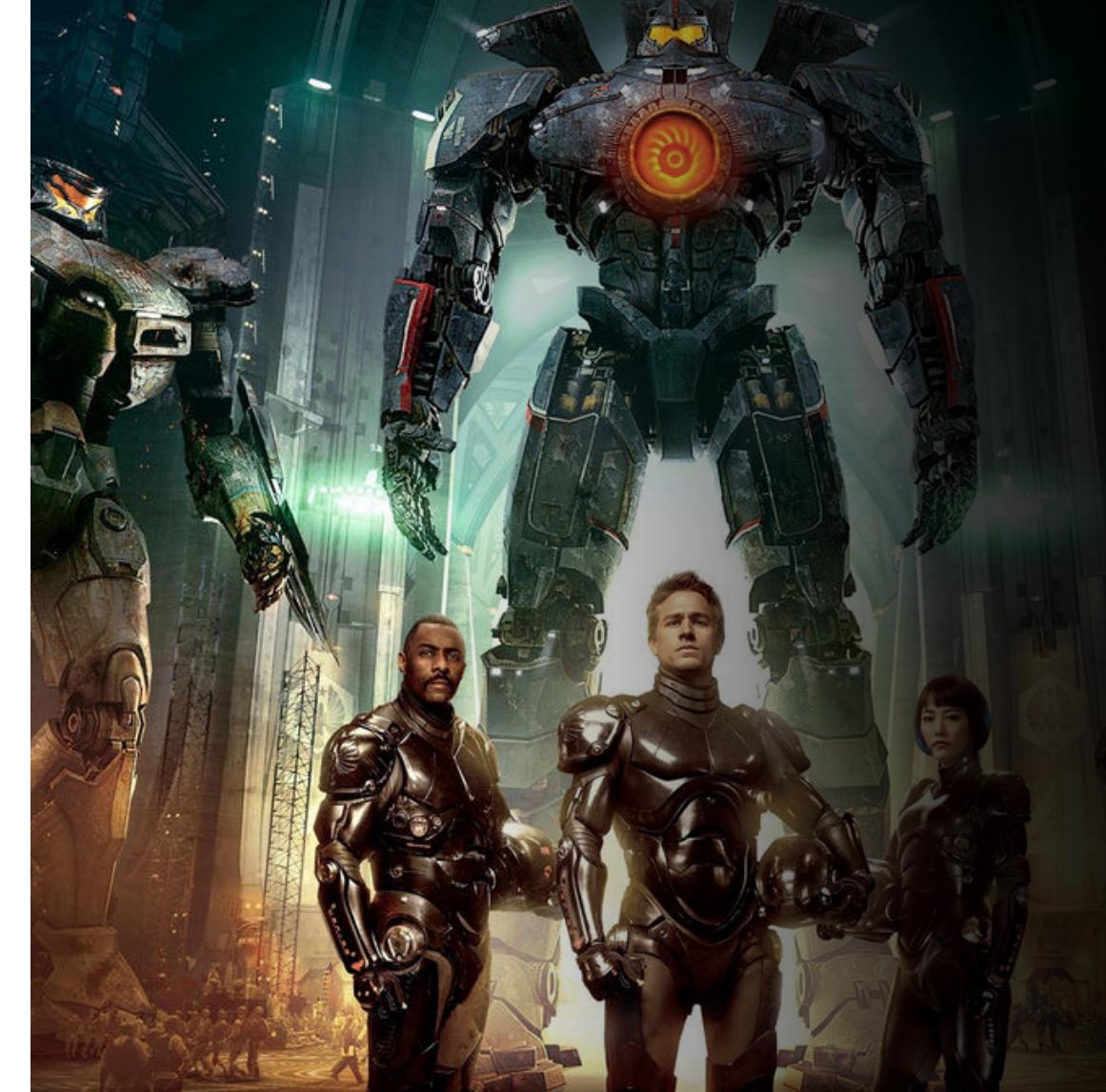
ARE YOU ready? Why do so many monsters ply the deep waters of the Pacific? The Pacific has been a breeding ground for all kinds of fictional beasts bearing apocalyptic significance, from Moby Dick to Godzilla. This article analyzes three sci-fi movies from the early 2010s—Peter Berg's *Battleship* (2012), Guillermo del Toro's *Pacific Rim* (2013), and Gareth Edwards's remake of *Godzilla* (2014)—to argue that the films' aquatic antagonists operate as allegories for the hopes and anxieties surrounding the emergence of transpacific networks and alliances designed to secure and stabilize the region for free trade in the twenty-first century. I further argue that the monsters' intimate connection to the ocean environment gestures toward the peoples and ecologies of the Pacific Ocean and its islands, whose histories and materialities are largely evacuated in many contemporary discourses of the transpacific. Borrowing from ecocritical and indigenous critiques of settler colonial futurity, I conclude by speculating about ways that concepts of intersubjectivity and relationality might engage with the neoliberal architectures that are simultaneously deployed and destroyed by these beasts from the deep.



techno-orientalism:
imagining Asia and
the Pacific region to
be a place of
futuristic technology

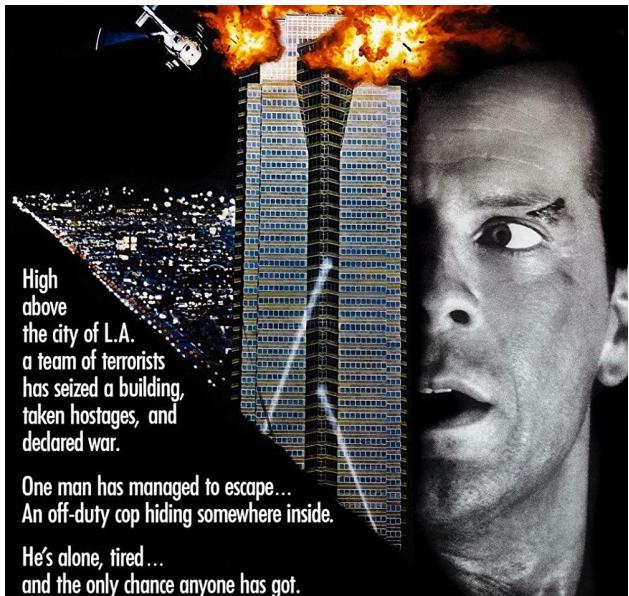
neoliberal: a 'new'
(‘neo’) way of doing
liberalism that
emphasizes private
action in making a
common world





Anxiety in *Pacific Rim*

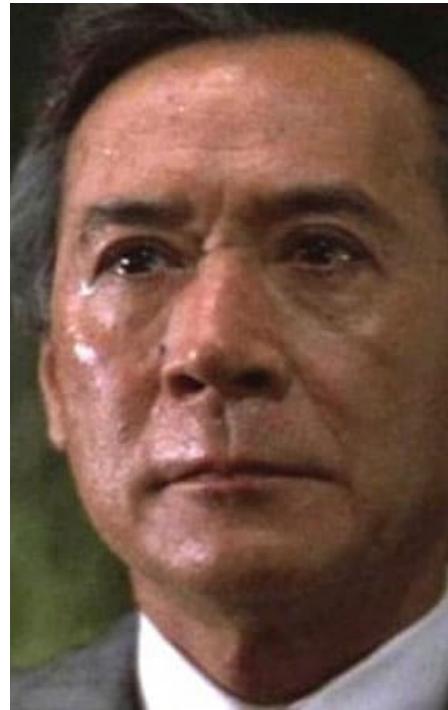
- What if Jaeger pilots are not able to pilot a Jaeger anymore?
- What if the Jaeger program is too expensive?
- What if the world leaders' 'coastal wall' program doesn't actually keep the *kaiju* out?
- What if the Jaeger pilots, who are from different nation-states on the Pacific Rim, don't get along in a 'multicultural' program?
- What if dealings on the black market to find out more about the *kaiju* don't work out?



High above
the city of L.A.
a team of terrorists
has seized a building,
taken hostages, and
declared war.

One man has managed to escape...
An off-duty cop hiding somewhere inside.

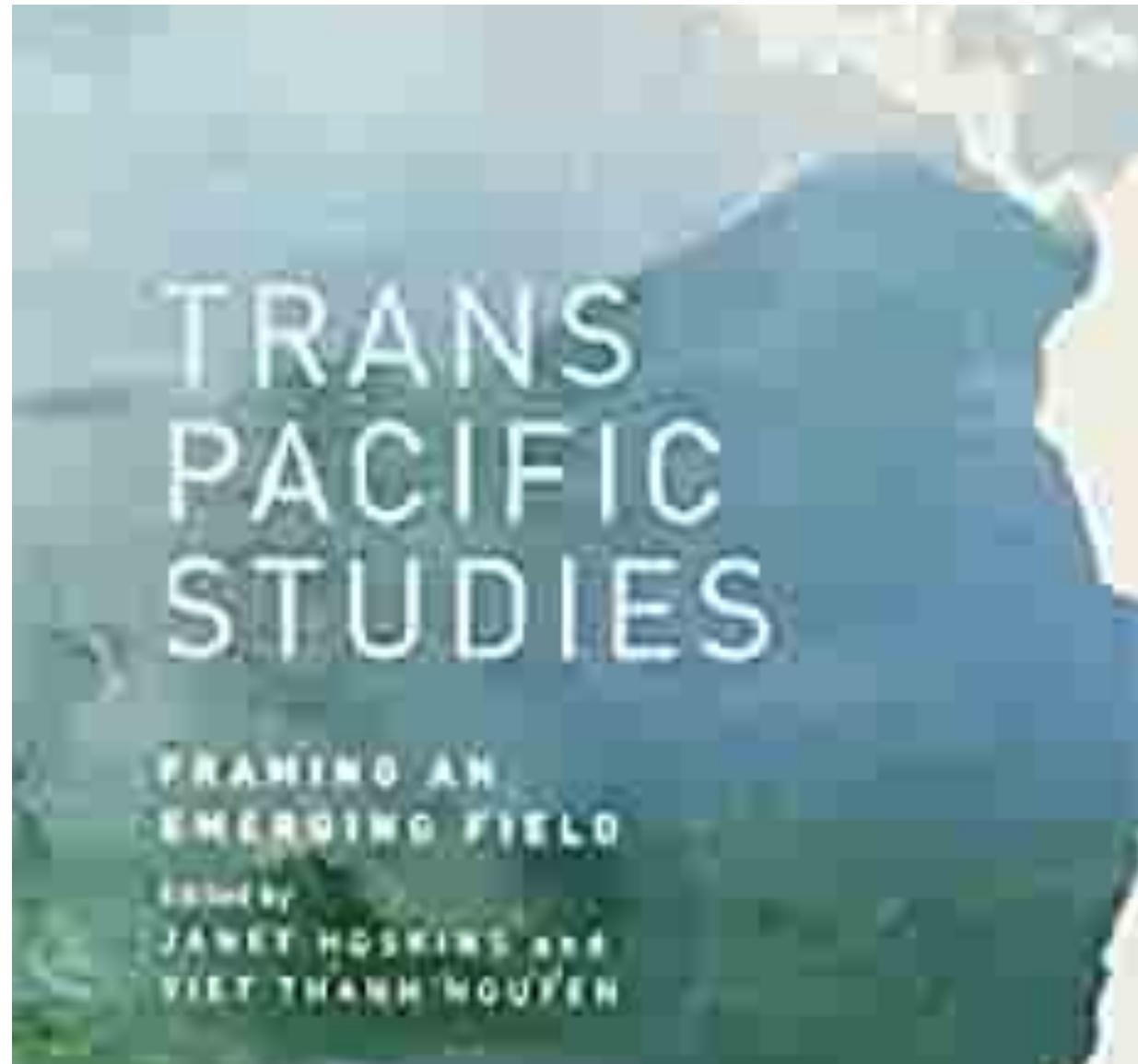
He's alone, tired...
and the only chance anyone has got.



'California!' in *Die Hard*



II. Transpacific Anxiety: The 'Pacific Rim' as a Dream



and collaboration.¹ In the European, American, and Asian imaginations, the idea of the Pacific is inseparable from fantasies of economic expansion and domination, with terms such as the Pacific Basin, the Pacific Rim, and Asia-Pacific having been created to name this strategic zone of contact. All of them have been limited in their own way, and all of them bear connotations of capitalist development.² The “transpacific” is the most recent effort at naming this contact zone. While the word itself is not new, it has attained significance recently both through intellectual efforts to theorize it and through state and corporate efforts to deploy it through the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) of twelve countries that border or are in the Pacific: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Mexico, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, and the United States.³ Like APEC’s naming of the Asia Pacific as a space of economic cooperation (and not of conflict or colonization), the TPP signals

how the ocean is not only an Asian Pacific and North American space of interaction.

THE PACIFIC RIM

- Pacific 'theater' (World War II, 1930s-1945)
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (1967)
- Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) (1989)
- 'Pacific Century' (Hillary Clinton, 2011)
- Trans-Pacific Partnership (2014)
- Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (2022)

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The Pacific Rim 'tigers': Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea (cf. Arif Dirlik, *What's in a Rim?* (1993))

'The notion of the "Pacific Rim" became a geographic term that anticipated an optimistic future zone of cooperation - a Pacific Rim discourse...of a euphoric regional ideology that focused on rapid economic growth and paid little attention to those who were excluded from or paid the cost of this expansion of transnational commerce...Pacific Rim discourse celebrated the "miracles" performed by "tigers" (newly industrialized countries that soared into affluence) and neglected the other countries more appropriately described as "water buffaloes" (still trudging through the mud of rural economies and mired in poverty).'

Viet Nguyen and Janet Hoskins, 'Introduction: Framing an Emerging Field,' in *Transpacific Studies*, p. 7

THE POWER OF A DREAM: PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS

(institution: some kind of organized corporate or networked set of structures that allows people to make a more effective impact on the worlds they are making, e.g. states, universities, banks, firms, non-profit organizations, clubs, churches, activist collectives)

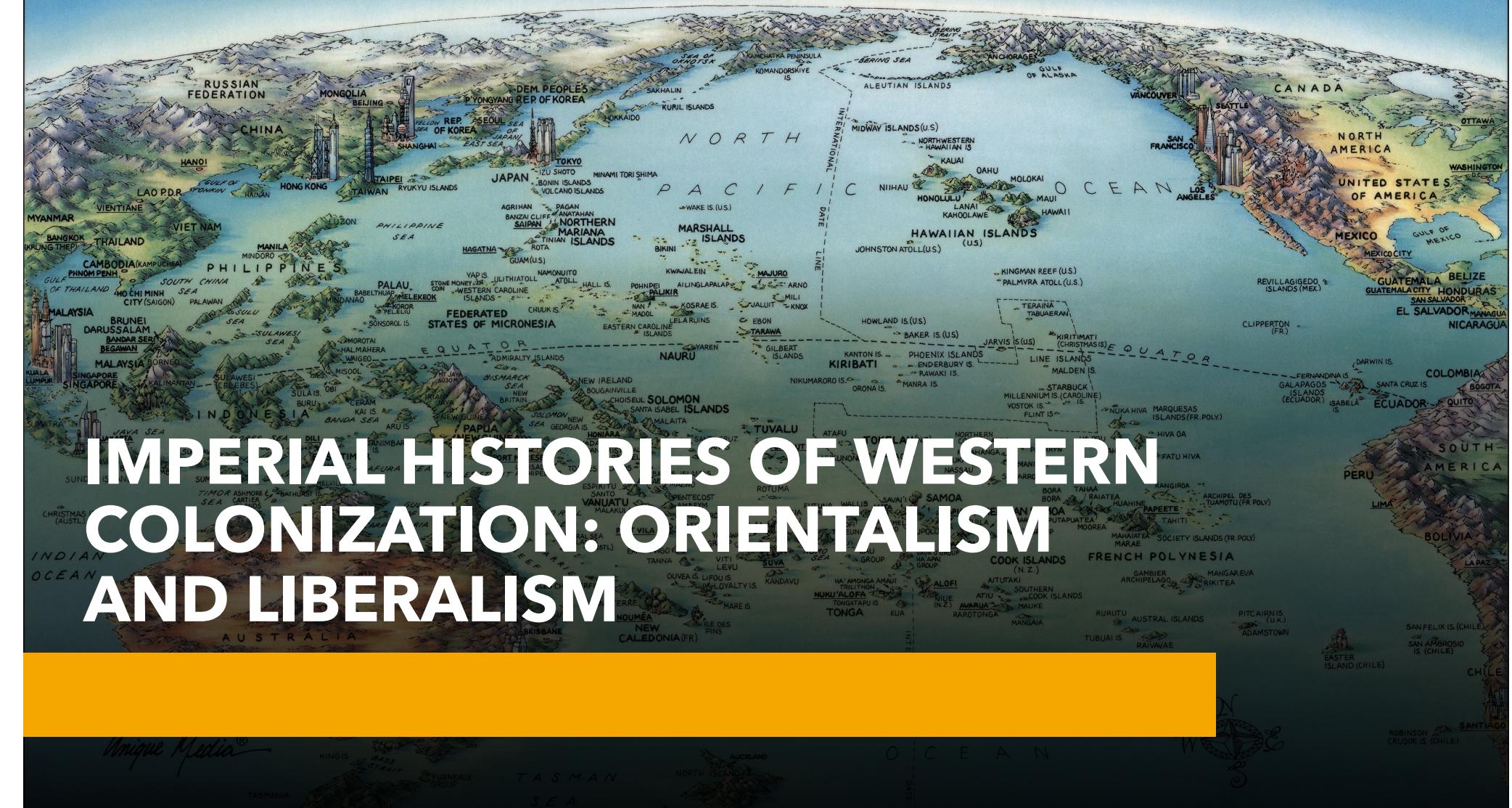
People and institutions move (migration)

People and institutions trade and manage (political economy)

People and institutions create new identities (multicultural and minority politics)

People and institutions imagine the future (academic and creative production)

THE PACIFIC RIM



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KING IS.
TASMAN
TASMANIA
PURBECK GROUP

TASMAN
NORTH ISLANDS
AUCKLAND
S. A.

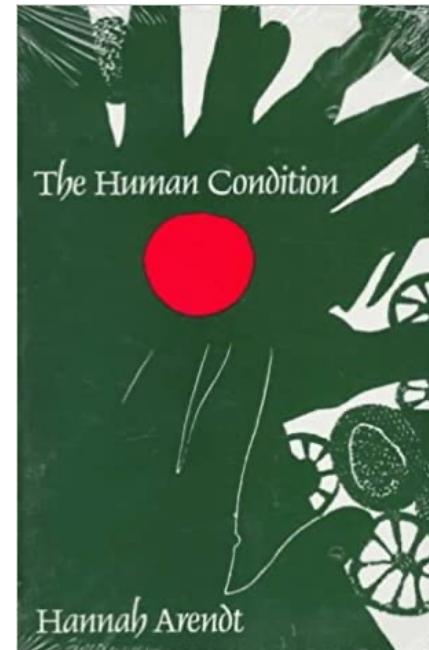
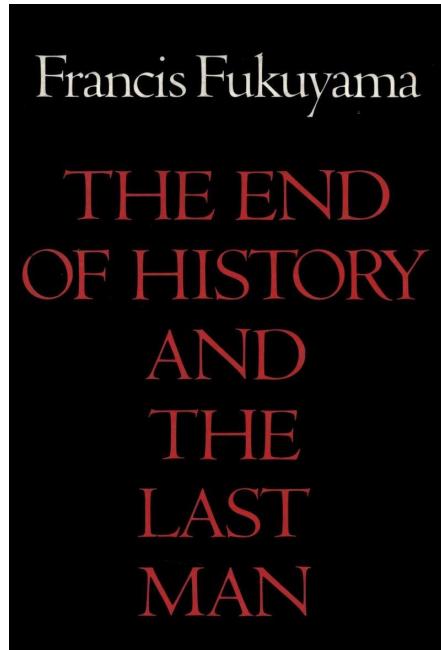


OCEAN



ROBINSON CRUSOE IS. (CHILE)
SAN AMBROSIO IS. (CHILE)
SANTIAGO

III. Narrating the Anxiety: Fukuyama's 'End of History' and Arendt's *Human Condition*





'Western liberalism' in Asia: the evidence for Fukuyama's 'End of History' (the triumph of 'liberal democracy' over 'fascism' and 'communism' in twentieth-century ideological struggle)

'The triumph of the West, of the Western *idea*, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism. In the past decade, there have been unmistakable changes in the intellectual climate of the world's two largest communist countries, and the beginnings of significant reform movements in both. But this phenomenon extends beyond high politics and it can be seen also in the ineluctable spread of consumerist Western culture in such diverse contexts as the peasants' markets and color television sets now omnipresent throughout China, the cooperative restaurants and clothing stores opened in the past year in Moscow, the Beethoven piped into Japanese department stores, and the rock music enjoyed alike in Prague, Rangoon, and Tehran.'

-Fukuyama, 'End of History?' *National Interest* (Summer 1989), 3



Surely the most remarkable changes have occurred in Asia. Due to the strength and adaptability of the indigenous cultures there, Asia became a battleground for a variety of imported Western ideologies early in this century. Liberalism in Asia was a very weak reed in the period after World War I; it is easy today to forget how gloomy Asia's political future looked as recently as ten or fifteen years ago. It is easy to forget as well how momentous the outcome of Asian ideological struggles seemed for world political development as a whole.

-Fukuyama, 'End of History?' *National Interest* (Summer 1989), 10

Anxiety in Fukuyama

'The end of history will be a very sad time. The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one's life for a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism, will be replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands...I can feel in myself, and see in others around me, a powerful nostalgia for the time when history existed. Such nostalgia, in fact, will continue to fuel competition and conflict even in the post-historical world order for some time to come. Even though I recognize its inevitability, I have the most ambivalent feelings for the civilization that has been created in Europe since 1945, with its north Atlantic and Asian offshoots. Perhaps this very prospect of centuries of boredom at the end of history will serve to get history started once more.'

-Fukuyama, 'End of History?' *National Interest* (Summer 1989), 18



'Publics' and 'Privates' in Hannah Arendt's Human Condition: A Modern Tangled Mess

- **Privates:** enclosures of property that are managed by persons to ensure their own basic survival (Arendt, p. 58)
- **Publics:** common worlds where persons speak and act to build a world together (Arendt, p. 52)
- **Economies:** the imagination that **society** is actually a private household with property to be managed, even though it is supposed to be public (Arendt, p. 68)
- **The real problem on the Pacific Rim:** *if all we have in Western liberalism in Asia are privates, then is the making of a transpacific public world actually possible within this ideology?*

Reflections, due Friday, 11:59 pm:

Why does it seem that people are so worried that the Pacific Rim won't work out as an imagined world?

What does that anxiety have to do with the relationship between publics and privates?

What does that worry have to do with the ideology called 'liberalism'?

What do the readings have to do with publics and privates on the Pacific Rim?

Die Hard

Pacific Rim

Discussion/Lecture: Week 1

Nguyen and Hoskins

Suzuki

Fukuyama

Arendt