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### 1AC – Innovation

#### Contention one: Innovation

#### Dominant digital platforms gatekeep access to markets by both operating a platform and marketing their own goods on it – only structural prohibitions prevent barriers to entries posed by companies’ structure, not just the scale of their market power.

Khan ’19 [Lina; Chairperson @ Federal Trade Commission, JD @ Yale Law School; “The Separations of Platforms and Commerce,” *Columbia Law Review* 119(4), p. 973-1098; AS]

A handful of digital platforms exert increasing control over key arteries of American commerce and communications. Structuring access to markets, these firms function as gatekeepers for billions of dollars in economic activity. By virtue of setting marketplace rules for the millions of merchants, producers, and developers dependent on their infrastructure, dominant platforms today “function as regulators.”3

As these platforms further concentrate market power, there are rising concerns about their size—usually in reference to the large share that each firm captures of its primary markets.4 Yet an equally important question concerns not the scale of these companies but their structure. One feature dominant digital platforms share is that they have integrated cross business lines such that they both operate a platform and market their own goods and services on it. This structure places dominant platforms in direct competition with some of the businesses that depend on them, creating a conflict of interest that platforms can exploit to further entrench their dominance, thwart competition, and stifle innovation.5 Consider Spotify’s effort to reach users through Apple’s iPhone while Apple sought to promote Apple Music. In 2016, Spotify revealed that Apple had blocked the streaming application from the App Store, “continu[ing] a troubling pattern of behavior by Apple to exclude and diminish the competitiveness of Spotify on iOS and as a rival to Apple Music.”6 Or take the challenge faced by Yelp, Foundem, and scores of online services to reach internet users while Google sought to build out its own competitor offerings.7

In Europe and India, competition authorities have found that Google ranks its own services higher than those offered by rivals, a “search bias” that means anyone competing with Google properties may effectively disappear from Google search results.8 Merchants that rely on Amazon to reach consumers are in a similar bind: Not only must they jostle for placement against Amazon’s own goods, but they also face the constant risk that Amazon will spot their bestselling items and produce them itself.9 Facebook, equipped with technology that lets it detect which rival apps are succeeding, would often give companies a choice: Be acquired by Facebook, or watch it roll out a direct replica.10 Competing with one of these giants on the giant’s own turf is rife with hazards.

Venture capitalists now factor this risk into their investment decisions.11 Indeed, the power of these gatekeeper platforms to steer the fate of countless other firms is described by entrepreneurs and investors as “having a profound impact on innovation in Silicon Valley”12 and “choking off the start-up world.”13 Venture capitalists now discuss a “kill-zone” around digital giants—“areas not worth operating or investing in, since defeat is guaranteed.”14 Discussing how tech platform giants today use their integrated structure to undermine rivals, a product manager who worked for Microsoft leading up to its antitrust suit observed, “It’s what we did at Microsoft.”15

Indeed, the way in which dominant online platforms threaten to undermine competition and distort markets today is not entirely new. At its core, the problem traces to a basic challenge posed by firms that capture control over a critical network or channel of distribution. Regulators and competition authorities have traditionally harnessed a set of tools to ensure that bottleneck facilities do not distort competition. These tools include common carriage, which requires firms to offer customers equal access on equal terms,16 as well as interoperability, which requires networks to maintain an open interface, enabling users to switch between platforms with ease.17 These policies respond, respectively, to problems of discrimination and lock-in.

In digital markets, however, third parties that depend on a platform risk not just discrimination and lock-in but also appropriation. Because dominant platforms monitor with unrivaled precision the business activity of third parties while also competing with them, a platform can harvest insights gleaned from a producer at the producer’s expense. This Article argues that these combined problems of discrimination and information appropriation invite recovering common carriage’s forgotten cousin: structural separations. Structural separations place clear limits on the lines of business in which a firm can engage. Rather than prohibit particular business practices, separations proscribe certain organizational structures. In antitrust, structural remedies are contrasted with behavioral ones: Whereas behavioral remedies seek to prevent firms from engaging in specific types of conduct, structural remedies seek to eliminate the incentives that would make that conduct possible or likely in the first place.18

Structural prohibitions have been a traditional element of American economic regulation. They have been applied as a standard regulatory tool and key antitrust remedy in network industries, often to prohibit a dominant intermediary from competing with the businesses that depend on it to get to market. While common carriage regimes prevent a firm from discriminating—requiring equal service on equal terms—structural prohibitions eliminate one source of the incentive to discriminate. In this way, common carriage and structural separations often functioned as complements in the service of nondiscrimination.

Today, structural separations have largely been abandoned.19 At the same time that lawmakers have significantly weakened or outright eliminated sector-specific regulatory regimes, judicial interpretation of antitrust law has drastically narrowed the forms of vertical conduct and structures that register as anticompetitive. And when antitrust enforcers have targeted these forms of conduct and structures in recent years, they’ve applied remedies that generally (1) fail to target the underlying source of the problem and (2) overwhelm the institutional capacities of the government actors assigned to oversee them.20 Neglecting structural separations results in both substantive harms and institutional misalignments—effects that are especially pronounced in digital markets.

#### Case-by-case adjudication creates slow, ambiguous enforcement and deprives legal participation – regulatory uncertainty substantially disadvantages entrants.

Chopra & Khan ’20 [Rohit; Commissioner @ Federal Trade Commission; and Lina; Chairperson @ Federal Trade Commission, JD @ Yale Law School; “The Case for “Unfair Methods of Competition” Rulemaking,” *The University of Chicago Law Review* *87*(2), p. 357-380; AS]

Antitrust law today is developed exclusively through adjudication. In theory, this case-by-case approach facilitates nuanced and fact-specific analysis of liability and well-tailored remedies. But in practice, the reliance on case-by-case adjudication yields a system of enforcement that generates ambiguity, unduly drains resources from enforcers, and deprives individuals and firms of any real opportunity to democratically participate in the process.

One reason that antitrust adjudication suffers from these shortcomings is that courts analyze most forms of conduct under the “rule of reason” standard. The “rule of reason” involves a broad and open-ended inquiry into the overall competitive effects of particular conduct and asks judges to weigh the circumstances to decide whether the practice at issue violates the antitrust laws. Balancing short-term losses against future predicted gains calls for “speculative, possibly labyrinthine, and unnecessary” analysis and appears to exceed the abilities of even the most capable institutional actors.1 Generalist judges struggle to identify anticompetitive behavior2 and to apply complex economic criteria in consistent ways.3 Indeed, judges themselves have criticized antitrust standards for being highly difficult to administer.4 And if a standard isn’t administrable, it won’t yield predictable results. The dearth of clear standards and rules in antitrust means that market actors face uncertainty and cannot internalize legal norms into their business decisions.5 Moreover, ambiguity deprives market participants and the public of notice about what the law is, thereby undermining due process—a fundamental principle in our legal system.6

Decades ago, former Commissioner Philip Elman observed that case-by-case adjudication “may simply be too slow and cumbersome to produce specific and clear standards adequate to the needs of business~~men~~[people], the private bar, and the government agencies.”7 Relying solely on case-by-case adjudication means that businesses and the public must attempt to extract legal rules from a patchwork of individual court opinions. Because antitrust plaintiffs bring cases in dozens of different courts with hundreds of different generalist judges and juries, simply understanding what the law is can involve piecing together disparate rulings founded on unique sets of facts. All too often, the resulting picture is unclear. This ambiguity is compounded when the Supreme Court assigns to lower courts the task of fleshing out how to structure and apply a standard, potentially delaying clarity and certainty for years or even decades.8

The current approach to antitrust also makes enforcement highly costly and protracted. In 2012, the American Bar Association (ABA) published the report of a task force that sought to “study ways to control the costs of antitrust litigation and enforcement.”9 The task force, the authors explained, was “a response to concerns” about both “the costs imposed on businesses by the American system of antitrust enforcement” and “the length of time required to resolve antitrust issues both in litigation and in enforcement proceedings.”10 Out-of-control costs undermine effective antitrust enforcement by agencies and private litigants, but may advantage actors who profit from anticompetitive practices and can treat litigation as a routine cost of business.

Professor Michael Baye and Former Commissioner Joshua Wright have noted that generalist judges may be ill-equipped to independently analyze and assess evidence presented by economic experts.11 Because determining the legality of most conduct now involves complex economic analysis, courts have effectively “delegate[d] both factfinding and rulemaking to courtroom economists,” making courtroom economics “not just inevitable but often dispositive.”12 In fact, paid expert testimony now is often “the ‘whole game’ in an antitrust dispute.”13

Paid experts are a major expense. Some experts charge over $1,300 an hour, earning more than senior partners at major law firms.14 Over the last decade, expenditures on expert costs by public enforcers have ballooned.15 In a system that incentivizes firms to spend top dollar on economists who can use ever-increasing complexity to spin a favorable tale, the eye-popping costs for economic experts can put the government and new market entrants at a significant disadvantage.16

Another component of the burden is that antitrust trials are extremely slow and prolonged.17 The Supreme Court has criticized antitrust cases for involving “interminable litigation”18 and the “inevitably costly and protracted discovery phase,”19 yielding an antitrust system that is “hopelessly beyond effective judicial supervision.”20 That it can easily take a decade to bring an antitrust case to full judgment means that by the time a judge orders a remedy, market circumstances are likely to have outpaced it.21 The same 2012 ABA report suggested that lengthy, costly litigation may be contributing to reduced government-enforcement efforts over time relative to the expansion of the US economy.22

Lastly, the current approach deprives both the public and market participants of any real opportunity to participate in the creation of substantive antitrust rules.23 The exclusive reliance on case-by-case adjudication leaves broad swaths of market participants watching from the sidelines, lacking an opportunity to contribute their perspective, their analysis, or their expertise, except through one-off amicus briefs.24 Nascent firms and startups are especially likely to be left out—despite the vital role they play in the competition ecosystem—given that they do not comprise a significant portion of the parties represented in litigated matters, and they usually lack the resources to engage in amicus activity. Furthermore future entrants, whose interests should be carefully considered in all aspects of competition law and policy, have no voice.

Firms, entrepreneurs, workers, and consumers across our economy vary wildly in their experiences and perspectives on market conduct. Enforcement and regulation of business conduct can more successfully promote competition when it incorporates more voices and evidence from across the marketplace.

The ambiguity of the laws, the administrative and resource burdens of enforcing them, and the exclusivity of the current process tend to advantage incumbents and suppress market entry. For example, when courts disagree with one another on the legality of particular conduct, new entrants are likely to eschew the practice, since the threat of litigation could prove fatal at an early stage. Incumbents, by contrast, will be more likely to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of engaging in a potentially unlawful practice, since they are likely to have higher tolerance for protracted litigation and deeper pockets to fund it. Continued ambiguity and complexity also create business opportunities for lawyers, economists, and lobbyists, who effectively profit from the lack of clarity

#### FTC rulemaking improves the speed, clarity and certainty of enforcement to level the playing field for market entrants.

Chopra & Khan ’20 [Rohit; Commissioner @ Federal Trade Commission; and Lina; Chairperson @ Federal Trade Commission, JD @ Yale Law School; “The Case for “Unfair Methods of Competition” Rulemaking,” *The University of Chicago Law Review* *87*(2), p. 357-380; AS]

II. THE CASE FOR RULEMAKING UNDER “UNFAIR METHODS OF COMPETITION”

Legislative history is clear that Congress sought to advance competition law outside the courts as well as through them.25 Two decades into enforcement of the federal antitrust laws, Congress was frustrated with the exclusively common law approach to antitrust. In particular, lawmakers worried that the case-by-case approach to enforcement was yielding a body of law that was inconsistent, unpredictable, and unmoored from congressional intent.26 The solution, lawmakers decided, was the creation of a new expert administrative agency: the Federal Trade Commission.

Congress established the FTC to supplement the authority of the Attorney General.27 While both institutions were tasked with enforcing the antitrust laws, lawmakers designed the FTC with two distinct features: (1) delegated authority to interpret and prohibit “unfair methods of competition,” as established by § 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act28 (FTC Act) and (2) extensive authority to collect confidential business information and conduct industry studies, as established by § 6(b) of the FTC Act.29

By designing the Commission this way, Congress sought to create a regime where the law developed not just through the judiciary but also through an expert agency. Congress envisioned that the Commission’s data collection from market participants would ensure that the agency stayed abreast of evolving business practices and market trends, and that it would use this expertise to establish market-wide standards clarifying what practices constituted an “unfair method of competition,” even as the market evolved. This unique role would complement adjudication pursued by the Attorney General, state attorneys general, and private parties.30 Indeed, Congress expected that federal judges and other policymakers would defer to the Commission on competition matters because it would “serve as an indispensable instrument of information and publicity, as a clearinghouse for the facts by which both the public mind and the managers of great business undertakings should be guided.”31 It would, in other words, be “unusually expert.”32

The Commission, at times, has drawn on its expansive information collection authorities to follow market trends and establish expertise on industry practices. For example, in the 1970s the FTC ordered over 450 of the country’s largest firms to report certain financial information. The Commission used this data to identify uncompetitive areas of the economy and to guide industrywide investigations into potential antitrust violations.33 More recently, the FTC has used this § 6(b) authority to study the business practices of patent assertion entities and data brokers, as well as the efficacy of the FTC’s merger remedies.34

As a whole, however, the Commission has fulfilled its mandate to promote competition by functioning less as an expert agency and more as a generalist enforcer and adjudicator.35 This is not to say the agency lacks expertise; indeed, the Commission’s work with particular markets has provided indispensable insights into the marketplace. But, on competition matters, the agency has rarely used this expertise to affirmatively identify what conduct or practices constitute an “unfair method of competition.” Instead, the Commission has sought to define “unfair methods of competition” on a case-by-case basis.

Former Commissioner Wright and Jan Rybnicek have observed that relying exclusively upon adjudication has “thus far proved incapable of generating any meaningful guidance as to what constitutes an unfair method of competition,” resulting in a “boundless standard.”36 They have described this “failure to identify what precisely comprises an unfair method of competition” as “an unfortunate and persistent black mark on the Commission’s record.”37

We agree that relying solely on adjudication to define the substance of § 5 has generated persistent ambiguity. However, relying on courtroom battles to create precedents that set expectations for the marketplace is not the only vehicle through which the Commission can establish what conduct constitutes an “unfair method of competition.” The Commission has in its arsenal a far more effective tool that would provide greater notice to the marketplace and that is developed through a more transparent and participatory process: rulemaking. Through engaging in rulemaking, the Commission could define “unfair methods of competition” through processes established by the Administrative Procedure Act38 (APA).3

There is an enormous body of literature on the choice between adjudication and rulemaking, and this Essay does not seek to fully address the various trade-offs.40 Instead, our goal is to reflect on the current state of antitrust enforcement and consider ways to address the ambiguity, burdens, and democratic deficiency that we discuss above.

“Rulemaking” often evokes the idea of government imposing some inflexible prescription upon the marketplace. This is not what we are suggesting. As former Commissioner Elman rightly noted, rulemaking can also be related to “standards, guidelines, pointers, criteria, or presumptions.”41 Rules come from courts, legislative bodies, and agencies. While they were not promulgated as agency rules, certain elements of the merger guidelines eventually came to serve as rules once courts adopted them.42 The merger guidelines stipulate the analytical framework that the agencies rely on to enforce the merger law. Agency rulemaking could do the same for “unfair methods of competition.”

We see three major benefits to the FTC engaging in rulemaking under “unfair methods of competition,” even if the conduct could be condemned under other aspects of antitrust laws. As we describe above, the current approach generates ambiguity, is unduly burdensome, and suffers from a democratic participation deficit. Rulemaking can benefit the marketplace and the public on all of these fronts.

First, rulemaking would enable the Commission to issue clear rules to give market participants sufficient notice about what the law is, helping ensure that enforcement is predictable.43 The APA requires agencies engaging in rulemaking to provide the public with adequate notice of a proposed rule. The notice must include the substance of the rule, the legal authority under which the agency has proposed the rule, and the date the rule will come into effect.44 An agency must publish the final rule in the Federal Register at least thirty days before the rule becomes effective.45

These procedural requirements promote clear rules and provide clear notice. As the Supreme Court has stated, a “fundamental principle in our legal system is that laws which regulate persons or entities must give fair notice of conduct that is forbidden or required.”46 Clear rules also help deliver consistent enforcement and predictable results. Reducing ambiguity about what the law is will enable market participants to channel their resources and behavior more productively and will allow market entrants and entrepreneurs to compete on more of a level playing field.

Second, establishing rules could help relieve antitrust enforcement of steep costs and prolonged trials. Identifying ex ante what types of conduct constitute “unfair method[s] of competition” would obviate the need to establish the same exclusively through ex post, case-by-case adjudication. Targeting conduct through rulemaking, rather than adjudication, would likely lessen the burden of expert fees or protracted litigation, potentially saving significant resources on a present-value basis.47

Moreover, establishing a rule through APA rulemaking can be faster than litigating multiple cases on a similar subject matter. For taxpayers and market participants, the present value of net benefits through the promulgation of a clear rule that reduces the need for litigation is higher than pursuing multiple, protracted matters through litigation. At the same time, rulemaking is not so fast that it surprises market participants. Establishing a rule through participatory rulemaking can often be far more efficient. This is particularly important in the context of declining government enforcement relative to economic activity, as documented by the ABA.48

And third, rulemaking would enable the Commission to establish rules through a transparent and participatory process, ensuring that everyone who may be affected by a new rule has the opportunity to weigh in on it, granting the rule greater legitimacy.49 APA procedures require that an agency provide the public with meaningful opportunity to comment on the rule’s content through the submission of written “data, views, or arguments.”50 The agency must then consider and address all submitted comments before issuing the final rule. If an agency adopts a rule without observing these procedures, a court may strike down the rule.51

This process is far more participatory than adjudication. Unlike judges, who are confined to the trial record when developing precedent-setting rules and standards, the Commission can put forth rules after considering a comprehensive set of information and analysis.52 Notably, this would also allow the FTC to draw on its own informational advantage—namely, its ability to collect and aggregate information and to study market trends and industry practices over the long term and outside the context of litigation.53 Drawing on this expertise to develop rules will help antitrust enforcement and policymaking better reflect empirical realities and better keep pace with evolving business practices.

#### There are no neatly bounded ways to capture all dimensions platform power – delegating rulemaking authority to an expert agency allows separations regimes to match market realities.

Khan ’19 [Lina; Chairperson @ Federal Trade Commission, JD @ Yale Law School; “The Separations of Platforms and Commerce,” *Columbia Law Review* 119(4), p. 973-1098; AS]

D. Application: Challenges and Unresolved Questions

Implementing a separations regime presents some first-order questions and challenges. First, how do we define platforms and to which platforms should a separation apply? Second, how does one identify the parameters of the platform, especially when integration provides heightened functionality? Third, what should be the scope of the prohibited activity and how should the prohibition be structured? And fourth, what is the proper institutional mechanism for implementing the separation? This section offers some initial suggestions for how to approach these questions. Arriving at a complete analytical framework for structuring separations in digital markets will require deeper engagement with these issues.

1. Defining Platform. — Offering a clearly bounded definition of “platform” is challenging. Most definitions look to the role that the entity plays in intermediating activity by others. One definition, for example, is “a firm that controls a network, facility, or essential input that those providing a complementary good or service” must “rely on.”635 Another set of definitions focuses on the infrastructure-like role that these firms play, by structuring access to markets or facilitating transactions.636 And some discussions use the terms “network,” “infrastructure,” and “platform” interchangeably.637

Recent studies by policymakers have also settled on the idea that dominant platforms play a unique role that regulators should recognize. In March, the Digital Competition Expert Panel—a panel convened by the U.K. government to study digital markets—issued a report proposing, among other ideas, that dominant platforms that enjoy a “powerful negotiating position” be designated as having a “strategic market status” and be required to abide by a special code of conduct.638 A report commissioned by the European Commission, meanwhile, noted that, by designing marketplace rules that govern millions of users, dominant platforms “function as regulators” that should face a special responsibility to “ensure a level playing field” on their marketplace and “not use [their] rule-setting power to determine the outcome of competition.”639 Given the challenge of offering a bounded definition of “dominant platform,” any definition will likely be under- or over-inclusive. But any definition should seek to capture the degree of market power that the platform enjoys over users.640 How essential is the platform’s infrastructure? To what degree do other businesses depend on the platform to reach users, and what is the cost to businesses of avoiding this platform and using alternative channels? Relevant factors could include: (1) the extent to which the entity serves as a central exchange or marketplace for the transaction of goods and services, including the level of market power that it enjoys in its platform market; (2) the extent to which the entity is essential for downstream productive uses, and whether downstream users have access to viable substitutes for the entity’s services; (3) the extent to which the entity derives value from network effects, and the type of network effects at play; (4) the extent to which the entity serves as infrastructure for customizable applications by independent parties; and (5) the size, scope, scale, and interconnection of the company.

There are no neatly bounded ways to capture these dimensions of platform power. When implementing “maximum separation,” the FCC initially used operating revenue as the criterion for determining which carriers must comply.641 In the context of digital platforms, market share may prove a better proxy than operating revenues, given that it is the platform’s role as a gatekeeper or bottleneck—for which there are no real adequate substitutes—that gives rise to the relevant harms.

The prohibition should be centered on the activities that the platform facilitates as a bottleneck. Since a key goal of the separations regime is to eliminate the conflict of interest that arises when a dominant platform directly competes with the firms using the platform,642 only activity that would place platforms in direct competition in this way would be subject to the prohibition. This would not prevent platforms from integrating into lines of business that do not rely on the platform market. Nor would such a separations regime target conglomeration or vertical integration categorically; it would instead focus on platform entry into markets that creates the ability and incentive to discriminate, to leverage dominance, and to use information collected on firms as customers against them as competitors.

2. Distinguishing Between Platform and Commerce. — Applying separations to digital platforms would likely raise the challenge of identifying what constitute distinct products or services. In Microsoft, for example, the court had to determine whether the operating system and the browser—the two products the government claimed Microsoft had “tied”—should be considered a single integrated system.643 Microsoft argued that bundling new functionality into old products was a basic component of technological evolution.644 A similar issue may arise with digital platforms: Android, for example, could claim that certain apps must be integrated with its operating system in order to provide basic functionality or for technical necessity.

The traditional metric for assessing whether a set of bundled products constitute separate products is consumer demand. In Microsoft, the D.C. Circuit relied on Jefferson Parish’s consumer-demand test to determine whether consumers preferred a choice in browsers.645 Applying a similar inquiry in the platform context could similarly help identify whether integration of distinct functionalities should be viewed as an integrated system or as a platform. Regulators would also have the capacity to determine, over time, whether certain apps or features were necessary for basic functionality and whether the benefits of integration were sufficiently high to offset any potential harms to innovation. There may also be specific apps or functionalities where innovation is less likely to be transformative, and therefore where integration may prove fewer risks. As with earlier regimes, periodic reassessment and revisions would prove necessary to ensure the separation continued to accord with and reflect evolving market realities.

3. Institutional Mechanism and Timing. — A separations regime separating platforms and commerce could be implemented through statute or rulemaking or as antitrust remedies (under existing or new antitrust law). A statute from Congress could also establish the principle of separating platforms from commerce—as was the case with banking— with the specific authority to design and implement separations delegated to an agency. This approach would benefit from having an expert agency design and revisit the separation. Absent new legislation, the FTC could use its Section 5 authority to implement a separations principle through rulemaking.646 Designing separations only through rulemaking would require the agency to create rules of general applicability and— absent a specific congressional mandate—could limit the agency’s ability to structure highly tailored separations. Antitrust remedies would be costlier and take significantly longer, requiring the government or a private party to successfully show anticompetitive conduct and effects stemming from a digital platform’s involvement in multiple markets.

Given the enfeebling of antitrust doctrines that police single-firm anticompetitive conduct—and the judicial requirement that remedies be carefully tailored to competitive harm—this path is likely to be significantly more challenging.647 Previous instances of structural separations offer a few models for structuring these prohibitions. An operational or functional separation requires the firm to create separate divisions within the firm, requiring that a platform wishing to engage in commerce may do so only through a separate and independent affiliate, which the platform may not favor in any manner. A full structural separation, by contrast, requires that the platform activity and commercial activity be undertaken through separate corporations with distinct ownership and management. For example, the functional approach would permit Alphabet to operate Google search and vertical services that produce content so long as the two complementary services are structured as separate affiliates. The second option would prohibit Alphabet from running both the platform service and the complementary service, requiring that one be spun off and run by an independent owner.

It’s not clear that anything short of a full structural separation would be sufficient, especially given the risks of information misappropriation. While running complementary services as affiliates could be accompanied by information firewalls, the efficacy of firewalls requires close monitoring.648 Evidence shows that the antitrust agencies have neglected to fully monitor and enforce conduct remedies in the past.649 Moreover, firewalls may prove especially difficult to monitor in the context of digital platforms, given the heightened information asymmetries between private platform firms and public enforcers. It is possible that the risk of information misappropriation may vary by platform—but dominant platforms should carry the burden of establishing why operating complementary services as affiliates would not be anticompetitive.

Finally, a basic challenge facing regulators and enforcers when dealing with high-tech industries is the role of timing. Because these markets can evolve quickly, market changes can render regulatory interventions obsolete.650 Similarly, the failure to intervene can leave exclusionary conduct unchecked, resulting in path-dependent reductions in innovation. Any subsequent attempt to impose separations should include a built-in review process every two to three years, to ensure that the remedy still matches the market conditions.65

#### Start-up innovation creates the conditions for post-pandemic growth – competition generates a virtuous cycle of innovation and investment that locks in productivity gains.

Manyika ’21 [James; Chair and Director @ McKinsey Global Institute; and Michael Spence; Philip H. Knight Professor and Dean Emeritus @ Stanford University's Graduate School of Business; “A Better Boom: How to Capture the Pandemic's Productivity Potential,” *Foreign Affairs* 100(4), p. 107-117; AS]

Surprising as it may seem, out of the deepest economic crisis since World War II could come a new era of productivity gains and prosperity. Whether that happens will depend largely on the decisions that governments and businesses make as they prepare to exit the pandemic in the coming months. In the short and medium term, the prospects for increased productivity-and prosperity-are encourag2 ing, as the United States and other countries spend heavily on economic recovery and businesses reap the benefits of digitization. But the outlook is less optimistic over the long term, since governments cannot spend indefinitely and consumer and investment spending may not fill the gap.

Governments and businesses must therefore seek to create the conditions for sustained productivity growth and prosperity, in particular by facilitating the diffusion of technological and organizational innovations and bolstering consumer demand. Out of a major global crisis could come a major jolt of productivity growth-but only if policymakers and business leaders make the most of this moment.

THE PRODUCTIVITY PARADOX

The history of productivity growth can be understood as a succession of technological revolutions, from the steam engine to the computer. Each offered the promise of accelerated productivity and economic growth, and each eventually delivered. But there has often been a delay between innovation and adoption, and another between adoption and economic impact. The economist Robert Solow summed up these apparent discrepancies in a 1987 article in The New York Times Book Review, writing, "You can see the computer age everywhere but in the productivity statistics." His formulation became known as "the Solow paradox."

But then came the revolution in information and communication technologies between 1995 and 2005, a decade in which the Solow paradox was temporarily resolved. Widespread adoption of these technologies was accompanied by a simultaneous acceleration in productivity, which grew at an annualized rate of 2.5 percent in the United States, a full percentage point faster than the rate between 1970 and 1995. Companies invested heavily in information and communication technologies and reorganized their operations and managerial practices around them. They did so out of the desire to gain a competitive edge, but also because of relatively robust consumer demand for their products.

Productivity growth accelerated in several sectors as a result, driving growth in the U.S. economy as a whole. This period was characterized by an unusual combination of large spurts in productivity growth in a few big sectors employing many workers, such as retail and wholesale, and even larger productivity growth in smaller sectors, such as those that produced computers and electronic products. In both bi and small sectors, there was a virtuous cycle of employment growth to meet demand and even faster growth in the value of the output from these sectors. The value of outputs across all sectors of the economy grew by 3.4 percent per year between 1995 and 2005, whereas the total number of hours worked grew by only 0.9 percent per year.

But the boom did not last. Between 2005 and 2019, annual productivity growth in the United States fell by more than half, to 1.0 percent. In the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, from 2010 to 2019, it was even lower, at 0.6 percent. Unlike the United States, z European countries had not experienced rapid productivity gains in the 1995-2005 period, but they did experience the postcrisis decline. r Between 2010 and 2019, annual productivity growth fell below one percent in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

The Solow paradox was back. After a decade of rapid productivity gains, the information technology revolution had reached a point of diminishing returns. But the next wave of technology-the digitization of processes, big data and analytics, cloud computing, the Internet of Things-was not yet ready to fill the gap. Despite early breakthroughs in image recognition and natural language processing, few firms had begun to make use of artificial intelligence technologies, and digitization was proceeding slowly. We estimated, based on a sector-by sector assessment, that in 2015, the United States had reached only 18 percent of its digital potential and Europe had reached only 12 percent. Moreover, a gap had opened up between the firms that were digital leaders and those that were digital laggards-a gap that other researchers found was correlated with a gap in labor productivity.

This gap in technology adoption was widening at a time of weak consumer demand for goods and services, in large part due to the aftereffects of the financial crisis. Firms scaled back their investments, and fewer new businesses were created. Making matters worse, the share of income that flowed to top earners and the owners of capital increased, while the share that went to labor decreased, further weakening demand.

Across the United States and Europe, the vast majority of sectors experienced declines in productivity growth. Only four percent of all sectors recorded productivity jumps in 2014, compared with an average of 18 percent of sectors that achieved substantial increases in productivity in the previous two decades. Growth in gross value added-a measure of a firm's or a sector's contribution to GDP-declined from 3.4 percent annually between 1995 and 2005 to 1.8 percent between 2005 and 2019. Growth in hours worked remained roughly unchanged, at 0.7 percent, throughout both periods.

These two very different periods of economic activity in the United States reveal much about the underpinnings of productivity growth. It stems first and foremost from the widespread adoption of technological innovations, especially general-purpose technologies such as electricity and the Internet. But it also stems from the managerial innovation and reorganization of functions and tasks that occur when firms adopt new technologies. Both of these processes must spur leaps in productivity growth in many sectors, or at least in a few large ones, so that productivity jumps in the economy as a whole. Finally, adoption and reorganization within and across sectors must be driven by competition, which incentivizes firms to innovate and helps spur technological diffusion.

Not all productivity growth is created equal, however. Productivity growth can be achieved through gains in the volume or value of outputs for a given number of hours worked, or it can come about as a result of a reduction in hours worked for a given output. Often both happen at the same time. But it is when the former exceeds the latter that a virtuous cycle is created in which innovation and investment generate growth in employment and wages, which in turn generates demand for increased (or more valuable) output. This is what happened during the period from 1995 to 2005. When the latter source of productivity growth exceeds the former, however, a vicious cycle results in which firms reduce labor costs faster than they grow the volume or value of their outputs, which in turn puts pressure on employment and incomes.

POST-PANDEMIC POTENTIAL

The pandemic has primed advanced economies for another period of rapid productivity growth. It is too early to say for sure whether such growth will be the product of a virtuous or a vicious cycle, but signs point to the former. Despite uncertainty, stress, and plummeting economic activity in the early days of the covID-19 crisis, many firms boldly deployed and used new general-purpose technology-especially digital technology-in ways that have driven virtuous productivity gains in the past. In October 2020, we surveyed 900 C-suite executives in various sectors and countries and found that many had digitized their business activities 20 to 25 times as fast as they had previously thought possible. Often, this meant shifting their businesses to online channels, since roughly 60 percent of the firms we surveyed experienced a significant increase in customer demand for online goods and services as a result of the pandemic.

Before the pandemic, e-commerce was forecast to account for less than a quarter of all U.S. retail sales by 2024. But during the first two months of the covID-19 crisis, e-commerce's share of retail sales more than doubled, from 16 percent to 33 percent. And that growth did not just reflect brick-and-mortar firms setting up shop online for the first time. Firms that were already highly digitized before the pandemic significantly expanded their online capabilities to meet the surge in demand. They also reorganized their operations, including their logistics, to complement what they were doing digitally-for example, by expanding their direct-to-home delivery capabilities.

Businesses also strove to become more efficient and agile. In Europe and North America, nearly half of the respondents to our survey said that they had reduced their operating expenditure as a share of revenue between December 2019 and December 2020. Two-thirds of senior executives said they had increased investment in automation and artificial intelligence, whether to help warehouse and logistics operations cope with higher e-commerce volumes or to enable manufacturing plants to meet surging demand. Many companies used technology to reduce the physical density of their workplaces or to enable contactless service-for instance, by expanding self-checkout in grocery stores and pharmacies and employing online ordering apps for restaurants and hotels. Other businesses, such as meatpacking and poultry plants, accelerated the deployment of robotics to reduce their need for labor. If there was one lesson from the pandemic, it was that digital capability and resilience go hand in hand.

But even as the arrival of vaccines has made it possible to imagine a return to relative normalcy in parts of the developed world, continued digitization and the adoption of other technological innovations promise to deliver still more productivity gains. The largest of these gains-roughly an additional two percentage points per year-could come in the health-care, construction, information technology, retail, pharmaceutical, and banking sectors. In health care, for instance, accelerating the use of telemedicine beyond the pandemic could drive incremental productivity growth for years. According to one recent U.S. poll, 76 percent of patients expressed interest in using telemedicine in the future, and industry experts project that the services for 20 percent of health-care spending could be delivered virtually-up from 11 percent before the pandemic. Other sectors, including automotive, travel, and logistics, show less-but still substantial-potential for productivity growth as a result of more flexible task scheduling, leaner operations, and smarter procurement.

Overall, these innovations and organizational changes could accelerate productivity growth by around one percentage point per year between now and 2024 in the United States and the six large European economies that we analyzed (France, Germany, Italy, Spain Sweden, and the United Kingdom). This gain would result in a productivity growth rate twice as high as the rate after the 2008 global financial crisis, and in the United States, it would expand per capita GDP by roughly $3,500 by 2024. That would be a stunning outcome, but it will hinge on continued technology adoption by firms and the maintenance of robust demand.

Even more productivity gains could be on the horizon thanks to other advancements. The accelerating revolution in biology, for instance, could transform sectors from health care and agriculture to consumer goods, energy, and materials. Biological innovation has already enabled the rapid development of new vaccines for covID-19. Equally impressive revolutions in energy could make possible the widespread adoption of solar and wind power, especially in light of recent progress toward better (and cheaper) batteries. Artificial intelligence is also advancing rapidly, but is still a long way from being deployed widely across companies and sectors. When and if that happens, the productivity gains could be enormous.

FOLLOW THE DIGITAL LEADER

Future gains in productivity, even those that boost overall growth, are likely to be uneven. We analyzed metrics that have the potential to unleash future productivity growth-such as research-and-development spending, revenue, capital expenditures (including digital expenses), and mergers and acquisitions-and found that especially in the United States, a small number of large superstar firms accounted for a disproportionately large share of the activity in all these categories. From the third quarter of 2019 to the third quarter of 2020, U.S. superstars (defined as the top ten percent of firms by profit) saw much shallower declines in capital expenditures and revenue than did other companies. During the same period, U.S. superstars spent $2.6 billion more on R & D than they did the previous year, while all other firms spent just $1.4 billion more.

If this investment, innovation, and technology adoption gap between superstars and the rest of the large firms and smaller, less profitable firms persists, any post-pandemic acceleration in productivity growth could fall short of its potential. Small and mediumsized enterprises have been hit disproportionately hard by the covID-19 crisis. As a result, many of them are unable to make big investments in future productivity and are therefore liable to fall even further behind the superstars. This is what happened in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, when only a minority of companies achieved productivity growth.

But there is room for cautious optimism about the ability of nonsuperstars to close some of the gap. Before the pandemic, the superstars tended to be highly digitized and innovative in their managerial approaches, as well as more profitable and resilient. They were therefore better placed to weather and even take advantage of the shock. But as the hardest-hit firms and sectors recover, and as early digital adaptors demonstrate the enormous potential of these technologies, many of the digital laggards could begin to catch up. Indeed, in another survey of executives we conducted in December 2020, about 75 percent of respondents in North America and Europe said they expected investment in new technologies to accelerate substantially between 2020 and 2024, up from 55 percent between 2014 and 2019. This expected uptick was similar across firm sizes.

Another reason for optimism is that in 2020, a year that saw the darkest economic days of the pandemic, 24 percent more new businesses were created in the United States than in 2019. Europe lagged behind the United States on this metric, with new business creation staying roughly flat in 2020 in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom and declining by more than 15 percent in Italy and Spain. If the American increase in business dynamism persists, however, it should contribute to more productivity growth.

Investment, innovation, and technology adoption are only one-half of the virtuous cycle of productivity growth, however. The other half is demand for the expanded output that results-in other words, income growth from increased productivity has to flow to people who will spend that additional money. In the short term, the outlook for demand is good, especially for countries that have made progress toward vaccinating their populations and could be among the first to open up their economies. Pent-up demand and savings from the pandemic could be unleashed all at once, resulting in a strong initial bounce in demand led by consumers. In the United States, President Joe Biden's $1.9 trillion economic support bill should push demand even higher.

In the medium term, the outlook for demand is also relatively solid, although it will depend on the size, deployment, and longevity of government spending. In the United States, Biden now has set his sights on a large infrastructure package. As his administration shifts its focus from economic relief to investment in productive areas, it could also increase productivity growth by raising demand to match potential supply, creating a high-pressure economy, that is, one with low unemployment and high growth. The outlook in continental Europe, where large-scale government economic support is harder to coordinate, is less certain. Nonetheless, the EU has put in place an unprecedented plan totaling some $900 billion to boost investment in the digital and green energy transitions.

But government spending on this scale will likely be time-limited, making the long-term outlook for demand less rosy. Moreover, long neglected problems, including the falling share of firms' income going to workers, rising inequality, and the long-term decline in private investment, could drag down demand. Roughly 60 percent of the postpandemic productivity gains that we estimate could come from innovations and organizational restructuring-the one percentage point of acceleration per year between now and 2024-would stem from firm-level measures, such as automation, designed to cut labor and other business costs. Unless firms do more to boost the volume or value of their output and help workers transition by acquiring new skills, the drive for efficiency will risk generating productivity gains through a vicious, rather than a virtuous, cycle, undermining wages and jobs and weakening consumption-driven demand and investment.

A NEW AGE OF DYNAMISM?

What can businesses and governments do to capitalize on the positive short- and medium-term outlook for productivity and to improve the long-term outlook? First, they should work to speed up technology adoption and managerial innovation, helping these changes spread within and across sectors. As the recovery begins, firms that have until recently been focused on crisis management and survival should follow the lead of superstar firms by investing in technology and reorganization. The superstars can assist in this process by supporting their broader ecosystems, in particular by doing business with smaller firms that offer complementary products and services. Governments can support the process, as well, by investing in research and development.

Policymakers should also seek to strengthen competition and business dynamism. In a healthy economy, the firms that add the most value prosper and grow, while the firms that add the least value shrink or disappear: so-called creative destruction. Policymakers can revive and reinforce this natural sorting process by revising competition rules, bankruptcy procedures, and product and labor-market regulations.

#### Incremental innovation by incumbents makes markets less dynamic and means ROI will soon equate the cost of capital – the plan ignites a gale of creative destruction to induce drastic innovation.

Rizzo ’21 [Andrea Minuto; Head of International Affairs @ Italian Competition Authority; “Digital Mergers: Evidence from the Venture Capital Industry Suggests That Antitrust Intervention Might Be Needed,” *Journal of European Competition Law & Practice* 12(1); AS]

In recent years, a debate about the possible existence of a kill zone around technology incumbents has gone beyond venture capital circles to involve a broader audience.33 In the kill zone, incumbents allegedly have both the ability and the incentive to foreclose promising potential competitors. Their position allows them to collect large amounts of data and to identify emerging trends early and to react to them, whether by adopting aggressive exclusionary practices to protect their core market or by pre-emptive acquisitions of innovative start-ups at generous multiples.34 Exclusionary conduct and acquisitions may actually be complementary strategies, rather than substitutive ones, as the former may allow the incumbent to reduce the acquisition price.35

Despite the growing concern that the possible existence of a kill zone might negatively impact innovation, the venture capital industry itself has diverse views about the need to increase antitrust scrutiny against large digital incumbents changing the current approach to M&As. In particular, among the venture capitalists that have actively engaged with US antitrust enforcers36, even those that acknowledge the existence of a problem at the same time express their fears for the possible unintended consequences of changes introduced with the best of intentions.

Tackling incentives to innovate in the digital sector represents a multifaceted phenomenon, where the opposing sides are nevertheless part of the same coin. On one hand, venture capital has so far greatly contributed to the transformation of high-risk start-ups into fully fledged independent companies, participating in the creation of the most valuable public companies globally. Moreover, start-ups benefit in many ways from the ecosystems created by large technology incumbents, among others, by using their platforms as effective distribution channels.

Furthermore, the incumbents might simply offer a better product or service. On the other hand, however, there seems to be evidence, on the investment side, highlighting a possible reduction of venture-backed start-ups operating in the same space where digital incumbents are active. As stated during these debates ‘funds have a limited size and they have to allocate capital and they would much rather pursue a market that has tailwinds behind it as opposed to a market that has matured and that has deep entrenched incumbents’.37 In markets dominated by incumbents, ‘(... ) start-ups building superior products (... ) may also find it difficult to secure VC investment’.38

In addition, some venture capitalists have expressed their views that competition to digital incumbents might likely arise from adjacent markets. A ‘viral’ success in a separate vertical could, as it grows, spill into the core market of a dominant player. These adjacent markets might be an area where antitrust agencies could focus more.

Some of the evidence described in the previous section is consistent with the existence of reduced first-time venture-backed funding in markets dominated by digital incumbents. Despite the evidence still being limited, it nevertheless provides suggestive food for thought and should trigger more detailed research on this complex topic. First of all, the existence and the magnitude of this reduction have to be further verified, for example, through a precise identification of the companies actually competing in the same space of digital incumbents and their evolution. The second step should then verify the existence of a causal link between the alleged aggressive behaviour of the incumbents in the kill zone and the reduction of venture capital financings, especially in the early stages of start-ups.

This reduction might, indeed, not necessarily pertain to the antitrust domain as it could stem from changing requirements of start-ups themselves as their technological and commercial needs evolve. The widespread ‘blitzscaling’ 39 strategy—where start-ups enter a digital niche with a narrow focus then gradually expanding—has been made possible by developments—such as the advent of smartphones, social media and cloud computing40—that allow for global reach and scalability41 at almost no initial technological cost, while marketing and human capital budgets may be on the rise at successive stages of the start-ups’ development.42

Moreover, changes have taken place also in the investment industry landscape through an expansion of the types of capital provided. Among others, non-traditional newer investors and sovereign wealth funds have invested in later-stage companies.43 Lastly, as for the exits through a sale, generous acquisitions might, as well, reflect prospective efficiencies deriving from the synergies between the acquirer and the acquired start-up.

However, the evidence thus far collected does suggest that current digital incumbents face very little threat of entry. Competition for the market dynamics are not necessarily symptomatic of the presence of the exploitation of market power, provided that incumbents still face, actual or potential, competitive pressures and could be substituted by a more efficient rival.44 What is needed is not just incremental innovation, but the drastic innovation that makes market leadership highly contestable. This is especially true for technology markets, where, as stated by Google itself, ‘changes tend to be revolutionary, not evolutionary’.45

Some recent studies and antitrust agency reports suggest that digital markets are becoming progressively less dynamic. Among others, the UK’s Digital Competition Expert Panel (UK Report46) observes that competition for the market does not appear to be able to solve competition issues linked to winner-take-all outcomes, as the next technological revolution is likely to focus on data that existing firms control to a large extent and that successful new entrants are generally acquired by incumbents. Moreover, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) research suggests that, in digital-intensive sectors, mark-ups are increasingly higher47 while the decline in business dynamism occurs faster than in other sectors of the economy.48

As highlighted by the Stigler report49, key players in the digital industry remained the same over the last two technology waves, staying dominant through the shift to mobile and the rise of artificial intelligence, without significant impact on market share or profit margins.

Lastly, worrying evidence emerges also from the application of profitability analysis to digital incumbents. High profits substantially and persistently above the cost of capital 50 could signal that the market is not functioning properly, as in the long term, return on investment should equal the cost of capital. In that regard, the UK’s Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has found, in the context of the sector enquiry into online platforms and digital advertising51, that the return on capital employed (ROCE) of Google and Facebook has been well above any reasonable estimate of a competitive benchmark for many years. In 2018, the estimated cost of capital for both Google and Facebook was around 9%, compared to actual returns on capital of over 40% for Google and around 50% for Facebook. Even though these results have to be interpreted with caution52, they seem to indicate that digital platforms are not facing the threat of entry and this evidence is consistent with the actual exploitation of market power.

Schumpeter 53 highlighted the prospect of new competition and innovation as incessantly playing a key role in fostering dynamic competition and economic efficiency. The evidence so far described may indicate that this impulse for creative destruction is fading in digital market.

#### Slow growth causes nuclear war.

Oppenheimer ’21 [Michael; Clinical Professor in Center for Global Affairs @ New York University, Senior Consulting Fellow @ Scenario Planning at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Former Executive Vice President @ The Futures Group, Member @ Council on Foreign Relations, Member in the Foreign Policy Roundtable @ Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, Member @ The American Council on Germany; “The Turbulent Future of International Relations,” in *The Future of Global Affairs: Managing Discontinuity, Disruption and Destruction*, p. 23-43]

Four structural forces will shape the future of International Relations: globalization (but without liberal rules, institutions, and leadership)1; multipolarity (the end of American hegemony and wider distribution of power among states and non-states2); the strengthening of distinctive, national and subnational identities, as persistent cultural differences are accentuated by the disruptive effects of Western style globalization (what Samuel Huntington called the “non-westernization of IR”3); and secular economic stagnation, a product of longer term global decline in birth rates combined with aging populations.4 These structural forces do not determine everything. Environmental events, global health challenges, internal political developments, policy mistakes, technology breakthroughs or failures, will intersect with structure to define our future. But these four structural forces will impact the way states behave, in the capacity of great powers to manage their differences, and to act collectively to settle, rather than exploit, the inevitable shocks of the next decade.

Some of these structural forces could be managed to promote prosperity and avoid war. Multipolarity (inherently more prone to conflict than other configurations of power, given coordination problems)5 plus globalization can work in a world of prosperity, convergent values, and effective conflict management. The Congress of Vienna system achieved relative peace in Europe over a hundred-year period through informal cooperation among multiple states sharing a fear of populist revolution. It ended decisively in 1914. Contemporary neoliberal institutionalists, such as John Ikenberry, accept multipolarity as our likely future, but are confident that globalization with liberal characteristics can be sustained without American hegemony, arguing that liberal values and practices have been fully accepted by states, global institutions, and private actors as imperative for growth and political legitimacy.6 Divergent values plus multipolarity can work, though at significantly lower levels of economic growth-in an autarchic world of isolated units, a world envisioned by the advocates of decoupling, including the current American president.7 Divergent values plus globalization can be managed by hegemonic power, exemplified by the decade of the 1990s, when the Washington Consensus, imposed by American leverage exerted through the IMF and other U.S. dominated institutions, overrode national differences, but with real costs to those states undergoing “structural adjustment programs,”8 and ultimately at the cost of global growth, as states—especially in Asia—increased their savings to self insure against future financial crises.9

But all four forces operating simultaneously will produce a future of increasing internal polarization and cross border conflict, diminished economic growth and poverty alleviation, weakened global institutions and norms of behavior, and reduced collective capacity to confront emerging challenges of global warming, accelerating technology change, nuclear weapons innovation and proliferation. As in any effective scenario, this future is clearly visible to any keen observer. We have only to abolish wishful thinking and believe our own eyes.10

Secular Stagnation

This unbrave new world has been emerging for some time, as US power has declined relative to other states, especially China, global liberalism has failed to deliver on its promises, and totalitarian capitalism has proven effective in leveraging globalization for economic growth and political legitimacy while exploiting technology and the state’s coercive powers to maintain internal political control. But this new era was jumpstarted by the world financial crisis of 2007, which revealed the bankruptcy of unregulated market capitalism, weakened faith in US leadership, exacerbated economic deprivation and inequality around the world, ignited growing populism, and undermined international liberal institutions. The skewed distribution of wealth experienced in most developed countries, politically tolerated in periods of growth, became intolerable as growth rates declined. A combination of aging populations, accelerating technology, and global populism/nationalism promises to make this growth decline very difficult to reverse. What Larry Summers and other international political economists have come to call “secular stagnation” increases the likelihood that illiberal globalization, multipolarity, and rising nationalism will define our future. Summers11 has argued that the world is entering a long period of diminishing economic growth. He suggests that secular stagnation “may be the defining macroeconomic challenge of our times.” Julius Probst, in his recent assessment of Summers’ ideas, explains:

…rich countries are ageing as birth rates decline and people live longer. This has pushed down real interest rates because investors think these trends will mean they will make lower returns from investing in future, making them more willing to accept a lower return on government debt as a result.

Other factors that make investors similarly pessimistic include rising global inequality and the slowdown in productivity growth…

This decline in real interest rates matters because economists believe that to overcome an economic downturn, a central bank must drive down the real interest rate to a certain level to encourage more spending and investment… Because real interest rates are so low, Summers and his supporters believe that the rate required to reach full employment is so far into negative territory that it is effectively impossible.

…in the long run, more immigration might be a vital part of curing secular stagnation. Summers also heavily prescribes increased government spending, arguing that it might actually be more prudent than cutting back – especially if the money is spent on infrastructure, education and research and development.

Of course, governments in Europe and the US are instead trying to shut their doors to migrants. And austerity policies have taken their toll on infrastructure and public research. This looks set to ensure that the next recession will be particularly nasty when it comes… Unless governments change course radically, we could be in for a sobering period ahead.12

The rise of nationalism/populism is both cause and effect of this economic outlook. Lower growth will make every aspect of the liberal order more difficult to resuscitate post-Trump. Domestic politics will become more polarized and dysfunctional, as competition for diminishing resources intensifies. International collaboration, ad hoc or through institutions, will become politically toxic. Protectionism, in its multiple forms, will make economic recovery from “secular stagnation” a heavy lift, and the liberal hegemonic leadership and strong institutions that limited the damage of previous downturns, will be unavailable. A clear demonstration of this negative feedback loop is the economic damage being inflicted on the world by Trump’s trade war with China, which— despite the so-called phase one agreement—has predictably escalated from negotiating tactic to imbedded reality, with no end in sight. In a world already suffering from inadequate investment, the uncertainties generated by this confrontation will further curb the investments essential for future growth. Another demonstration of the intersection of structural forces is how populist-motivated controls on immigration (always a weakness in the hyper-globalization narrative) deprives developed countries of Summers’ recommended policy response to secular stagnation, which in a more open world would be a win-win for rich and poor countries alike, increasing wage rates and remittance revenues for the developing countries, replenishing the labor supply for rich countries experiencing low birth rates.

Illiberal Globalization

Economic weakness and rising nationalism (along with multipolarity) will not end globalization, but will profoundly alter its character and greatly reduce its economic and political benefits. Liberal global institutions, under American hegemony, have served multiple purposes, enabling states to improve the quality of international relations and more fully satisfy the needs of their citizens, and provide companies with the legal and institutional stability necessary to manage the inherent risks of global investment. But under present and future conditions these institutions will become the battlegrounds—and the victims—of geopolitical competition. The Trump Administration’s frontal attack on multilateralism is but the final nail in the coffin of the Bretton Woods system in trade and finance, which has been in slow but accelerating decline since the end of the Cold War. Future American leadership may embrace renewed collaboration in global trade and finance, macroeconomic management, environmental sustainability and the like, but repairing the damage requires the heroic assumption that America’s own identity has not been fundamentally altered by the Trump era (four years or eight matters here), and by the internal and global forces that enabled his rise. The fact will remain that a sizeable portion of the American electorate, and a monolithically proTrump Republican Party, is committed to an illiberal future. And even if the effects are transitory, the causes of weakening global collaboration are structural, not subject to the efforts of some hypothetical future US liberal leadership. It is clear that the US has lost respect among its rivals, and trust among its allies. While its economic and military capacity is still greatly superior to all others, its political dysfunction has diminished its ability to convert this wealth into effective power.13 It will furthermore operate in a future system of diffusing material power, diverging economic and political governance approaches, and rising nationalism. Trump has promoted these forces, but did not invent them, and future US Administrations will struggle to cope with them.

What will illiberal globalization look like? Consider recent events. The instruments of globalization have been weaponized by strong states in pursuit of their geopolitical objectives. This has turned the liberal argument on behalf of globalization on its head. Instead of interdependence as an unstoppable force pushing states toward collaboration and convergence around market-friendly domestic policies, states are exploiting interdependence to inflict harm on their adversaries, and even on their allies. The increasing interaction across national boundaries that globalization entails, now produces not harmonization and cooperation, but friction and escalating trade and investment disputes.14 The Trump Administration is in the lead here, but it is not alone. Trade and investment friction with China is the most obvious and damaging example, precipitated by China’s long failure to conform to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles, now escalated by President Trump into a trade and currency war disturbingly reminiscent of the 1930s that Bretton Woods was designed to prevent. Financial sanctions against Iran, in violation of US obligations in the Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action (JCPOA), is another example of the rule of law succumbing to geopolitical competition. Though more mercantilist in intent than geopolitical, US tariffs on steel and aluminum, and their threatened use in automotives, aimed at the EU, Canada, and Japan,15 are equally destructive of the liberal system and of future economic growth, imposed as they are by the author of that system, and will spread to others. And indeed, Japan has used export controls in its escalating conflict with South Korea16 (as did China in imposing controls on rare earth,17 and as the US has done as part of its trade war with China). Inward foreign direct investment restrictions are spreading. The vitality of the WTO is being sapped by its inability to complete the Doha Round, by the proliferation of bilateral and regional agreements, and now by the Trump Administration’s hold on appointments to WTO judicial panels. It should not surprise anyone if, during a second term, Trump formally withdrew the US from the WTO. At a minimum it will become a “dead letter regime.”18

As such measures gain traction, it will become clear to states—and to companies—that a global trading system more responsive to raw power than to law entails escalating risk and diminishing benefits. This will be the end of economic globalization, and its many benefits, as we know it. It represents nothing less than the subordination of economic globalization, a system which many thought obeyed its own logic, to an international politics of zero-sum power competition among multiple actors with divergent interests and values. The costs will be significant: Bloomberg Economics estimates that the cost in lost US GDP in 2019- dollar terms from the trade war with China has reached $134 billion to date and will rise to a total of $316 billion by the end of 2020.19

Economically, the just-in-time, maximally efficient world of global supply chains, driving down costs, incentivizing innovation, spreading investment, integrating new countries and populations into the global system, is being Balkanized. Bilateral and regional deals are proliferating, while global, nondiscriminatory trade agreements are at an end. Economies of scale will shrink, incentivizing less investment, increasing costs and prices, compromising growth, marginalizing countries whose growth and poverty reduction depended on participation in global supply chains. A world already suffering from excess savings (in the corporate sector, among mostly Asian countries) will respond to heightened risk and uncertainty with further retrenchment. The problem is perfectly captured by Tim Boyle, CEO of Columbia Sportswear, whose supply chain runs through China, reacting to yet another ratcheting up of US tariffs on Chinese imports, most recently on consumer goods:

We move stuff around to take advantage of inexpensive labor. That’s why we’re in Bangladesh. That’s why we’re looking at Africa. We’re putting investment capital to work, to get a return for our shareholders. So, when we make a wager on investment, this is not Vegas. We have to have a reasonable expectation we can get a return. That’s predicated on the rule of law: where can we expect the laws to be enforced, and for the foreseeable future, the rules will be in place? That’s what America used to be.20

The international political effects will be equally damaging. The four structural forces act on each other to produce the more dangerous, less prosperous world projected here. Illiberal globalization represents geopolitical conflict by (at first) physically non-kinetic means. It arises from intensifying competition among powerful states with divergent interests and identities, but in its effects drives down growth and fuels increased nationalism/populism, which further contributes to conflict. Twenty-first-century protectionism represents bottom-up forces arising from economic disruption. But it is also a top-down phenomenon, representing a strategic effort by political leadership to reduce the constraints of interdependence on freedom of geopolitical action, in effect a precursor and enabler of war. This is the disturbing hypothesis of Daniel Drezner, argued in an important May 2019 piece in Reason, titled “Will Today’s Global Trade Wars Lead to World War Three,”21 which examines the preWorld War I period of heightened trade conflict, its contribution to the disaster that followed, and its parallels to the present:

Before the First World War started, powers great and small took a variety of steps to thwart the globalization of the 19th century. Each of these steps made it easier for the key combatants to conceive of a general war.

We are beginning to see a similar approach to the globalization of the 21st century. One by one, the economic constraints on military aggression are eroding. And too many have forgotten—or never knew—how this played out a century ago.

…In many ways, 19th century globalization was a victim of its own success. Reduced tariffs and transport costs flooded Europe with inexpensive grains from Russia and the United States. The incomes of landowners in these countries suffered a serious hit, and the Long Depression that ran from 1873 until 1896 generated pressure on European governments to protect against cheap imports.

…The primary lesson to draw from the years before 1914 is not that economic interdependence was a weak constraint on military conflict. It is that, even in a globalized economy, governments can take protectionist actions to reduce their interdependence in anticipation of future wars.

In retrospect, the 30 years of tariff hikes, trade wars, and currency conflicts that preceded 1914 were harbingers of the devastation to come. European governments did not necessarily want to ignite a war among the great powers. By reducing their interdependence, however, they made that option conceivable.

…the backlash to globalization that preceded the Great War seems to be reprised in the current moment. Indeed, there are ways in which the current moment is scarier than the pre-1914 era. Back then, the world’s hegemon, the United Kingdom, acted as a brake on economic closure. In 2019, the United States is the protectionist with its foot on the accelerator. The constraints of Sino-American interdependence—what economist Larry Summers once called “the financial balance of terror”—no longer look so binding. And there are far too many hot spots—the Korean peninsula, the South China Sea, Taiwan—where the kindling seems awfully dry.

Multipolarity

We can define multipolarity as a wide distribution of power among multiple independent states. Exact equivalence of material power is not implied. What is required is the possession by several states of the capacity to coerce others to act in ways they would otherwise not, through kinetic or other means (economic sanctions, political manipulation, denial of access to essential resources, etc.). Such a distribution of power presents inherently graver challenges to peace and stability than do unipolar or bipolar power configurations,22 though of course none are safe or permanent. In brief, the greater the number of consequential actors, the greater the challenge of coordinating actions to avoid, manage, or de-escalate conflicts. Multipolarity also entails a greater potential for sudden changes in the balance of power, as one state may defect to another coalition or opt out, and as a result, the greater the degree of uncertainty experienced by all states, and the greater the plausibility of downside assumptions about the intentions and capabilities of one’s adversaries. This psychology, always present in international politics but particularly powerful in multipolarity, heightens the potential for escalation of minor conflicts, and of states launching preventive or preemptive wars. In multipolarity, states are always on edge, entertaining worst-case scenarios about actual and potential enemies, and acting on these fears—expanding their armies, introducing new weapon systems, altering doctrine to relax constraints on the use of force—in ways that reinforce the worst fears of others.

The risks inherent in multipolarity are heightened by the attendant weakening of global institutions. Even in a state-centric system, such institutions can facilitate communication and transparency, helping states to manage conflicts by reducing the potential for misperception and escalation toward war. But, as Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu argues in his chapter on the United Nations, the influence of multilateral institutions as agent and actor is clearly in decline, a result of bottom-up populist/nationalist pressures experienced in many countries, as well as the coordination problems that increase in a system of multiple great powers. As conflict resolution institutions atrophy, great powers will find themselves in “security dilemmas”23 in which verification of a rival’s intentions is unavailable, and worst-case assumptions fill the gap created by uncertainty. And the supply of conflicts will expand as a result of growing nationalism and populism, which are premised on hostility, paranoia, and isolation, with governments seeking political legitimacy through external conflict, producing a siege mentality that deliberately cuts off communication with other states.

Finally, the transition from unipolarity (roughly 1989–2007) to multipolarity is unregulated and hazardous, as the existing superpower fears and resists challenges to its primacy from a rising power or powers, while the rising power entertains new ambitions as entitlements now within its reach. Such a “power transition” and its dangers were identified by Thucydides in explaining the Peloponnesian Wars,24 by Organski (the “rear-end collision”)25 during the Cold War, and recently repopularized and brought up to date by Graham Allison in predicting conflict between the US and China.26

A useful, and consequential illustration of the inherent challenge of conflict management during a power transition toward multipolarity, is the weakening of the arms control regime negotiated by the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Despite the existential, global conflict between two nuclear armed superpowers embracing diametrically opposed world views and operating in economic isolation from each other, the two managed to avoid worst-case outcomes. They accomplished this in part by institutionalizing verifiable limits on testing and deployment of both strategic and intermediate-range nuclear missiles. Yet as diplomatically and technically challenging as these achievements were, the introduction of a third great power, China, into this twocountry calculus has proven to be a deal breaker. Unconstrained by these bilateral agreements, China has been free to build up its capability, and has taken full advantage in ramping up production and deployment of intermediate-range ground-launched cruise missiles, thus challenging the US ability to credibly guarantee the security of its allies in Asia, and greatly increasing the costs of maintaining its Asian regional hegemony. As a result, the Intermediate Nuclear Force treaty is effectively dead, and the New Start Treaty, covering strategic missiles, is due to expire next year, with no indication of any US–Russian consensus to extend it. The US has with logic indicated its interest in making these agreements trilateral; but China, with its growing power and ambition, has also logically rejected these overtures. Thus, all three great powers are entering a period of nuclear weapons competition unconstrained by the major Cold War arms control regimes. In a period of rapid advances in technology and worsening great power relations, the nuclear competition will be a defining characteristic of the next decade and beyond. This dynamic will also complicate nuclear nonproliferation efforts, as both the demand for nuclear weapons (a consequence of rising regional and global insecurity), and supply of nuclear materials and technology (a result of the weakening of the nonproliferation regime and deteriorating great power relations) will increase.

Will deterrence prevent war in a world of several nuclear weapons states, (the current nuclear powers plus South Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Turkey), as it helped to do during the bipolar Cold War? Some neorealist observers view nuclear weapons proliferation as stabilizing, extending the balance of terror, and the imperative of restraint, to new nuclear weapons states with much to fight over (Saudi Arabia and Iran, for example).27 Others,28 examining issues of command and control of nuclear weapons deployment and use by newly acquiring states, asymmetries in doctrines, force structures, and capabilities between rivals, the perils of variable rates in transition to weapons deployment, problems of communication between states with deep mutual grievances, the heightened risk of transfer of such weapons to non-state actors, have grave doubts about the safety of a multipolar, nuclear-armed world.29 We can at least conclude that prudence dictates heightened efforts to slow the pace of proliferation, while realism requires that we face a proliferated future with eyes wide open.

The current distribution of power is not perfectly multipolar. The US still commands the world’s largest economy, and its military power is unrivaled by any state or combination of states. Its population is still growing, despite a recent decline in birth rates. It enjoys extraordinary geographic advantages over its rivals, who are distant and live in far worse neighborhoods. Its economy is less dependent on foreign markets or resources. Its political system has proven—up to now—to be resilient and adaptable. Its global alliance system greatly extends its capacity to defend itself and shape the world to its liking and is still intact, despite growing doubts about America’s reliability as a security guarantor. Based on these mostly material and historical criteria, continued American primacy would seem to be a good bet, if it chooses to use its power in this way.30

So why multipolarity? The clearest and most frequently cited evidence for a widening distribution of global power away from American unipolarity is the narrowing gap in GDP between the US and China. The IMF’s World Economic Outlook forecasts a $0.9 trillion increase in US GDP for 2019–2020, and a $1.3 trillion increase for China in the same period.31 Many who support the American primacy case argue that GDP is an imperfect measure of power, that Chinese GDP data is inflated, that its growth rates are in decline while Chinese debt is rapidly increasing, and that China does poorly on other factors that contribute to power—its low per capita GDP, its political succession challenges, its environmental crisis, its absence of any external alliance system. Yet GDP is a good place to start, as the single most useful measure and long-term predictor of power. It is from the overall economy that states extract and apply material power to leverage desired behavior from other states. It is true that robust future Chinese growth is not guaranteed, nor is its capacity to convert its wealth to power, which is a function of how well its political system works over time. But this is equally the case for the US, and considering recent political developments is not a given for either country.

As an alternative to measuring inputs—economic size, political legitimacy, technological innovation, population growth—in assessing relative power and the nature of global power distribution, we should consider outputs: what are states doing with their power? The input measures are useful, possibly predictive, but are usually deployed in the course of making a foreign policy argument, sometimes on behalf of a reassertion of American primacy, sometimes on behalf of retrenchment. As such, their objectivity (despite their generous deployment of “data”) is open to question. What is undeniable, to any clear-eyed observer, is a real decline in American influence in the world, and a rise in the influence of other powers, which predates the Trump administration but has accelerated into America’s free fall over the last four years. This has produced a de facto multipolarity, whether explainable in the various measures of power—actual and latent—or not. This decline results in part from policy mistakes: a reckless squandering of material power and legitimacy in Iraq, an overabundance of caution in Syria, and now pure impulsivity. But more fundamentally, it is a product of relative decline in American capacity—political and economic—to which American leadership is adjusting haphazardly, but in the direction of retrenchment/restraint. It is highly revealing that the last two American presidents, polar opposites in intellect, temperament and values, agreed on one fundamental point: the US is overextended, and needs to retrench. The fact that neither Obama nor Trump (up to this point in his presidency) believed they had the power at their disposal to do anything else, tells us far more about the future of American power and policy—and about the emerging shape of international relations—than the power measures and comparisons made by foreign policy advocates.

Observation of recent trends in US versus Russian relative influence prompts another question: do we understand the emerging characteristics of power? Rigorously measuring and comparing the wrong parameters will get us nowhere at best and mislead us into misguided policies at worst. How often have we heard, with puzzlement, that Putin punches far above his weight? Could it be that we misunderstand what constitutes “weight” in the contemporary and emerging world? Putin may be on a high wire, and bound to come crashing down; but the fact is that Russian influence, leveraging sophisticated communications/social media/influence operations, a strong military, an agile (Putin-dominated) decision process, and taking advantage of the egregious mistakes by the West, has been advancing for over a decade, shows no sign of slowing down, and has created additional opportunities for itself in the Middle East, Europe, Asia, Latin America, the Arctic. It has done this with an economy roughly the size of Italy’s. There are few signs of a domestic political challenge to Putin. His external opponents are in disarray, and Russia’s main adversary is politically disabled from confronting the problem. He has established Russia as the Middle East power broker. He has reached into the internal politics of his Western adversaries and influenced their leadership choices. He has invaded and absorbed the territory of neighboring states. His actions have produced deep divisions within NATO. Again, simple observation suggests multipolarity in fact, and a full explanation for this power shift awaiting future historians able to look with more objectivity at twenty-first-century elements of power.

When that history is written, surely it will emphasize the extraordinary polarization in American politics. Was multipolarity a case of others finding leverage in new sources of power, or the US underutilizing its own? The material measures suggest sufficient capacity for sustained American primacy, but with this latent capacity unavailable (as perceived, I believe correctly, by political leadership) by virtue of weakening institutions: two major parties in separate universes; a winnertake-all political mentality; deep polarization between the parties’ popular bases of support; divided government, with the Presidency and the Congress often in separate and antagonistic hands; diminishing trust in the permanent government, and in the knowledge it brings to important decisions, and deepening distrust between the intelligence community and policymakers; and, in Trump’s case, a chaotic policy process that lacks any strategic reference points, mis-communicates the Administration’s intentions, and has proven incapable of sustained, coherent diplomacy on behalf of any explicit and consistent set of policy goals.

Rising Nationalism/Populism/Authoritarianism

The evidence for these trends is clear. Freedom House, the go-to authority on the state of global democracy, just published its annual assessment for 2020, and recorded the fourteenth consecutive year of global democratic decline and advancing authoritarianism. This dramatic deterioration includes both a weakening in democratic practice within states still deemed on balance democratic, and a shift from weak democracies to authoritarianism in others. Commitment to democratic norms and practices—freedom of speech and of the press, independent judiciaries, protection of minority rights—is in decline. The decline is evident across the global system and encompasses all major powers, from India and China, to Europe, to the US. Right-wing populist parties have assumed power, or constitute a politically significant minority, in a lengthening list of democratic states, including both new (Hungary, Poland) and established (India, the US, the UK) democracies. Nationalism, frequently dismissed by liberal globalization advocates as a weak force when confronted by market democracies’ presumed inherent superiority, has experienced a resurgence in Russia, China, the Middle East, and at home. Given the breadth and depth of right-wing populism, the raw power that promotes it—mainly Russian and American—and the disarray of its liberal opponents, this factor will weigh heavily on the future.

The major factors contributing to right-wing populism and its global spread is the subject of much discussion.32 The most straightforward explanation is rising inequality and diminished intergenerational mobility, particularly in developed countries whose labor-intensive manufacturing has been hit hardest by the globalization of capital combined with the immobility of labor. Jobs, wages, economic security, a reasonable hope that one’s offspring has a shot at a better life than one’s own, the erosion of social capital within economically marginalized communities, government failure to provide a decent safety net and job retraining for those battered by globalization: all have contributed to a sense of desperation and raw anger in the hollowed-out communities of formerly prosperous industrial areas. The declining life expectancy numbers33 tell a story of immiseration: drug addition, suicide, poor health care, and gun violence. The political expression of such conditions of life should not be surprising. Simple, extremist “solutions” become irresistible. Sectarian, racial, regional divides are strengthened, and exclusive identities are sharpened. Political entrepreneurs offering to blow up the system blamed for such conditions become credible. Those who are perceived as having benefited from the corrupt system—long-standing institutions of government, foreign countries and populations, immigrants, minorities getting a “free ride,” elites—become targets of recrimination and violence. The simple solutions of course, don’t work, deepening the underlying crisis, but in the process politics is poisoned. If this sounds like the US, it should, but it also describes major European countries (the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic), and could be an indication of things to come for non-Western democracies like India.

We have emphasized throughout this chapter the interaction of four structural forces in shaping the future, and this interaction is evident here as well. Is it merely coincidence that the period of democratic decline documented by Freedom House, coincides precisely with the global financial and economic crisis? Lower growth, increasing joblessness, wage stagnation, superimposed on longer-term widening of inequality and declining mobility, constitute a forbidding stress test for democratic systems, and many continue to fail. And if we are correct about secular stagnation, the stress will continue, and authoritarianism’s fourteen-year run will not be over for some time. The antidemocratic trend will gain additional impetus from the illiberal direction of globalization, with its growth suppressing protectionism, weaponization of global economic exchange, and weakening global economic institutions. Multipolarity also contributes, in several ways. The former hegemon and author of globalization’s liberal structure has lost its appetite, and arguably its capacity, for leadership, and indeed has become part of the problem, succumbing to and promoting the global right-wing populist surge. It is suffering an unprecedented decline in life expectancy, and recently a decline in the birth rate, signaling a degree of rot commonly associated with a collapsing Soviet Union. While American politics may once again cohere around its liberal values and interests, the time when American leadership had the self-confidence to shape the global system in its liberal image is gone. It may build coalitions of the like-minded to launch liberal projects, but there will be too much power outside these coalitions to permit liberal globalization of the sort imagined at the end of the Cold War. In multipolarity, the values around which global politics revolve will reflect the diversity of major powers, their interests, and the norms they embrace. Convergence of norms, practices, policies is out of the question. Global collective action, even in the face of global crises, will be a long shot. To expect anything else is fantasy

Unbrave New World and Future Challenges

At the outset of this chapter we described these structural forces as interacting to produce more conflict and diminished prosperity. We also predicted a world with shrinking collective capacity to address new challenges as they arise. What specifically will such a world look like? We address below three principal challenges to global problem solving over the next decade.

Interstate Conflict

In the world experienced by most readers of this volume, conflict is observed within weak states, sometimes promoted by regional competitors, by terrorist groups, or by great powers, acting through surrogates or by indirect means. Sometimes, as in Syria, this conflict spills over to contiguous states and contributes to regional instability, and challenges other regions to respond effectively, a challenge that Europe has not met. Much of this will continue, but the global significance of such local conflicts will be greatly magnified by increasing great power conflict, which will feed—rather than manage or resolve—local instabilities and will in turn be exacerbated by them. Great powers will jockey for advantage, support their local partners, escalate preemptively. Conflicts initially confined to failing states or unstable regions will be redefined by great powers as global in scope and significance.

This tendency of states to view local conflicts in the context of a zero-sum, global struggle for power is familiar to students of the Cold War, but now with the additional challenges to collective action, expanded uncertainty and worst-case thinking associated with the power transition to multipolarity. We can easily observe increased conflict in US–China relations, as we will in US–Russia relations as future US administrations try to make up for ground lost during the Trump presidency, especially in the Middle East. We can observe it among powerful states with mutual historical grievances, now with a weakening presence of the hegemonic security guarantor and having to consider the renationalization of their defense: Japan-South Korea, Germany-France. We can observe it among historical rivals operating in rapidly changing security landscapes: India-China. We can observe it within the Middle East, as internal rivalries are appropriated by regional powers in a contest for regional dominance. We can observe it clearly in Syria, where the regime’s violent suppression of Arab Spring resistance led to all-out civil war, attracted outside support to proxy forces by aspiring regional hegemons Saudi Arabia and Iran, enabled the rise of ISIS, and eventually to great power intervention, principally by Russia. In a world of effective great power collaboration or American primacy, the Syrian civil war might have been settled through power sharing or partition, or if not, contained within Syria. The collapse of Yugoslavia, occurring during a period of US “unipolarity” and managed effectively, demonstrates the possibilities. Instead, with the US retrenching, Middle East rivals unconstrained by great powers, and great power competition rising, the Syria civil war was fed by outside powers, then metastasized into the region, and—in the form of refugee flows—into Europe, fundamentally altering European politics. Libya may be at the early stages of this scenario.

This is not the end of the Syria story. Russia has established itself as a major player in Syria and the Middle East’s power broker, the indispensable country with leverage throughout the region. China is poised to reap the financial and power benefits of Syrian reconstruction. The US has just demonstrated, in its act of war against the Iranian regime, its willingness, without consultation, to put its allies’ security in further jeopardy, accentuating the risks of security ties with Washington and generating added opportunities for Russia and China. The purpose here is not to critique US policy, but to point out the dramatically shifting power balance in a critical region, toward multipolarity. The dangers of such a shift will become apparent as some future US president attempts to reassert US influence in the region and finds a crowded playing field.

Can a multipolar distribution of power among several states whose interests, values, and political practices are divergent, all experiencing bottom-up nationalist pressures, all seeking advantages in the oversupply of regional instability, be made to work? I think not. Will this more dangerous world descend into direct military confrontation between great powers, and could such confrontation lead to use of nuclear weapons? Here the question becomes, what will this more dangerous world actually look like; what instruments of coercion will be available to states as technology change accelerates; how will states employ these instruments; how will deterrence work (if at all) among several states with large but unequal levels of destructive capacity, weak command, and control, disparate— or opaque—strategies and simmering rivalries; can conflict management work in a world of weak institutions? The collapse of the Cold War era nuclear arms control regime, the threat to the Non-Proliferation Treaty represented by the demise of the JCPOA, and multiple indications of an accelerating nuclear arms race among the three principle powers, augurs badly. Given the structural forces at play, and without predicting the worst, we are indeed entering perilous times.

Global Poverty and Inequality

Despite the challenges of volatility and disruptive change inherent in globalization, the world under American liberal leadership has managed a dramatic reduction of extreme poverty. According to World Bank estimates, in 2015, 10 percent of the world’s population lived on less than $1.90 a day, down from nearly 36 percent in 1990.34 In fact, as of September 2018, half the world is now middle class or wealthier.35 The uneven success of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) exemplifies this achievement, and demonstrates what is possible when open markets are managed through strong global institutions, effective leadership and interstate collaboration. What this liberal hegemonic system did not achieve, however, was a fair distribution of the gains from globalization within states, and among those states that for various reasons were not full participants in this system.

This record of partial achievement leaves us with a full agenda for the next fifteen years, but without the hegemonic leadership, strong institutions, ascendant liberalism or robust global growth that enabled previous gains. There are powerful reasons to question the sustainability of these poverty reduction gains, leading to doubts about the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, which have replaced the MDGs as global development targets.36 (See Jens Rudbeck’s chapter and Sidhu’s UN chapter for SDGs). Skeptics have pointed to slowing global growth, specifically in China, whose demand for imported commodities was a major factor in developing country growth and job creation; growing protectionism in developed country markets, fueled by bottom-up forces of nationalism, and from top-down by a weakened global trading regime and increased geopolitical rivalry; the effects of accelerating climate change on agriculture, migration and communal conflict in poor countries; and the growth burst among poor countries from the rapid transition to more efficient use of resources, a transition that is now slowing down.37

Perhaps the greatest concern in this scenario is a general deterioration in the developing country foreign investment climate. Foreign direct investment (FDI) has been a major contributor to growth, job creation, and poverty alleviation among poor countries. It has incentivized growthfriendly policies, reduced corruption, introduced technology and effective management practices, and linked poor countries to foreign markets through global supply chains.38 It has stimulated growth of indigenous manufacturing and service companies to supply new foreign investments.

It has been the major cause of economic convergence between rich and poor countries. From 2000 to 2009, developing economies’ growth rates were more than four percentage points higher than those of rich countries, pushing their share of global output from just over a third to nearly half.39 However, FDI flows into poor countries are imperiled by the structural forces discussed here. Political instability arising from slower growth and environmental stress will increase investors’ perception of higher risk, reinforcing their developed country bias. Protectionism among developed countries will threaten the global market access upon which manufacturing investment in developing countries is premised, causing firms to pare back their global supply chains. As companies retrench from direct investment in poor countries, the appeal to those countries of Chinese debt financed infrastructure projects, under the Belt-Road Initiative with little or no conditionality, but at the risk of “debt traps,” will increase.

Global Warming

The question posed at the beginning of this section is whether the international system, evolving toward multipolarity and rising nationalism, will find the collective political capital to confront challenges as they arise. Global warming is the mother of all challenges, and the weakness in the system’s capacity to respond is clear. With the two major political/economic powers and greenhouse gas emitters locked in deepening geopolitical conflict (and with one of them locked in climate change denial, possibly through 2024), the chances of significantly slowing global warming or even ameliorating its effects are very slim. We are reduced to the default option, nation-specific adaptation to climate change, which will impose rising human, political and economic costs on all, and will widen the gap between rich countries with adaptive capacity (of varying degrees), and the poor, who will suffer deteriorating economic, political, and social conditions. (For a contrary, optimistic view see Michael Shank’s chapter, which credits new actors—like cities—as playing a more constructive role in climate mitigation.) This would bring to a close liberal globalization’s greatest achievement; the raising of 1.1 billion people out of extreme poverty since 1990,40 with all its associated gains in quality of life (in the WHO Africa region, for example, life expectancy rose by 10.3 years between 2000 and 2016, driven mainly by improvements in child survival and expanded access to antiretrovirals for treatment of HIV).41

Several forces are at work here. The problem itself is graver—in magnitude and in rate of worsening—than predicted by climate scientists. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the major source of information on global warming, has consistently underpredicted the rate of climate deterioration. This holds true even for its “worst-case scenarios,” meaning that what was meant as a wake-up call has in fact reinforced complacency.42 (see Michael Shank’s chapter for further discussion of climate change). The IPCC, in its 2019 report, has tried to undo the damage by emphasizing the acceleration in the rate of warming and its effects, the only partially understood dynamic of climate change, and—given wide uncertainty—the possibility of unpleasant surprises yet to come. This strengthens the scientific case for urgency—to both severely limit greenhouse gas emissions, and to increase investment in ameliorating the effects.

Unfortunately, the crisis comes at a moment when the climate for collective action is ice cold. Geopolitical competition incentivizes states to out produce each other, regardless of the environmental effects. Multipolarity complicates collective action. Economic stagnation mandates job creation, making regulation politically toxic. Bottom-up nationalism/populism causes states to pursue “relative gains,” meaning that if the nation is seen as gaining in a no-holds-barred economic competition with others, the negative environmental effects can be tolerated. A post-Trump presidency would help, with the US rejoining the Paris Agreement, and lending its weight to tighter regulation, increased R and D, and stronger economic incentives to reduce carbon emissions. Keep in mind, however, that President Obama was fully behind such efforts, but in a deeply polarized America was unable to implement measures needed to fulfill the Paris obligations through legislation, and his executive orders to do this were swiftly overturned by Trump.

Conclusion

It may be tempting to hope that post-Trump, the US can regain its global leadership and exert its considerable power in a liberal direction, but with enough self-awareness of its relative decline to share responsibility with others. This was, I believe, the broad direction of the Obama strategy, evidenced by the JCPOA and the Trans-Pacific Partnership: liberal, collective solutions to global problems, as US dominance receded.

This would constitute an optimistic scenario, and it confronts two major problems: can US internal politics support it (can, for example, the country legislate controls on carbon, essential for the global credibility and durability of such commitments); and is the world ready to reengage with American leadership, given the damage to its reputation and the structural forces discussed in this chapter?

My educated guess is no, on both counts. The rot within is extensive, the concrete evidence clear in the economic inequality/immobility numbers, the life expectancy numbers, the deep political polarization, between the two major parties, between regions, between cities and rural areas. We are in fact a long way from fitness for global leadership, and the recognition of this by others will accelerate the decline of American influence. The rest of the world is well on its way toward adjusting to post-American hegemony, some by renationalizing their defense, or by cutting deals with adversaries, by building new alliances or by seizing new opportunities for influence in the vacuum left by American retrenchment. The evidence for this will accumulate. Observe the current and emerging Middle East, where all these post-hegemonic strategies are visible.

#### Dominant platforms fuel digital authoritarianism – separations and start-up entrance decouples US platforms from Chinese markets.

Sitaraman ’20 [Ganesh; Co-founder and Director of Policy @ Great Democracy Initiative, Professor of Law @ Vanderbilt University; “Too Big to Prevail: The National Security Case for Breaking Up Big Tech,” *Foreign Affairs* 99(2), p. 116-126; AS]

But the national security case against breaking up Big Tech is not just weak; it is backward. Far from competing with China, many big technology companies are operating in the country, and their growing entanglements there create vulnerabilities for the United States by exposing its firms to espionage and economic coercion. At home, market concentration in the technology sector also means less competition and therefore less innovation, which threatens to leave the United States in a worse position to compete with foreign rivals. Rather than threatening to undermine national security, breaking up and regulating Big Tech is necessary to protect the United States’ democratic freedoms and preserve its ability to compete with and defend against new great-power rivals.

DESTINATION: CHINA

Competition with China will define U.S. national security conversations for decades to come, and Americans need to think carefully about the role technology will play in this increasingly competitive environment. But to claim that the likes of Amazon and Google are helping counter China’s technological and geopolitical rise simply because they are American companies makes little sense.

Almost all big U.S. technology companies have extensive operations in China today. Google announced plans for an AI research center in Beijing in 2017 and is exploring a partnership with the Chinese Internet behemoth Tencent. Microsoft is expanding its data centers in China and has recently built an entire operating system, Windows 10 China Government Edition, for the Chinese government. Amazon’s cloud service in China is second in popularity only to that of its Chinese counterpart, Alibaba. Apple famously designs its phones in California but manufactures them in China. Facebook, notably, does not operate in China—but not for lack of trying. The company repeatedly attempted to gain access to the Chinese market only to be blocked by Chinese government officials.

Merely operating in China may seem harmless. Yet according to scholars, U.S. government officials, and even American business associations, any U.S. technology company working in China could very well be supporting the Chinese state and the expansion of digital authoritarianism. In the course of their operations in the country, U.S. companies routinely interact with Chinese companies, some of which are run or partly owned by the state. Those that are not still have informal ties to state and Communist Party officials and face strong incentives to behave as the state wishes even without direct pressure from the government. Because the Chinese market and the state are intertwined in this way, Chinese companies that partner with foreign ones are highly likely to pass along operational and technological developments to the Chinese government and military, including in ways that could advance Beijing’s emerging surveillance state and accelerate its ability to spread its model of digital authoritarianism around the world.

These challenges are particularly clear in the case of AI, as commercial innovations in that field can also have military implications. Under Beijing’s doctrine of “civil-military fusion,” Chinese researchers and private companies are working ever more closely with the government and the military, which means that technological innovations that may have originated with a foreign company active in China can find their way to supporting the People’s Liberation Army. “If you’re working in China,” Ashton Carter, a former U.S. defense secretary, has said, “you don’t know whether you’re working on a project for the military or not.”

In addition to widely known concerns about Chinese espionage and surveillance, integration with the Chinese market also opens Big Tech—and the United States—to pressure from China, which can use that influence to hurt U.S. interests. Scholars refer to this tactic—turning economic interdependence into political leverage—by a variety of terms, including “geoeconomics,” “reverse entanglement,” and “weaponized interdependence.” Whatever it’s called, China has a long track record of doing it, across countries and industries. To retaliate against South Korea’s adoption of a U.S. missile defense system in 2017, China blocked Chinese travel agencies from offering trips to the country. And after the dissident Liu Xiaobo was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010, China temporarily blocked imports from Norway.

To avoid offending Chinese officials and potentially losing access to the country’s large market, companies are adapting their behavior even outside China’s borders. Hollywood studios have been accused of rewriting scripts and editing scenes for that purpose: choosing to blow up the Taj Mahal instead of the Great Wall of China in the movie Pixels, according to Reuters, and replacing China with North Korea as the main adversary in the 2012 remake of Red Dawn, according to the Los Angeles Times. In 2019, Daryl Morey, the general manager of the NBA basketball team the Houston Rockets, tweeted in support of pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong; soon thereafter, he deleted the post. In the days that followed, the owner of the Rockets wrote that Morey did “NOT speak” for the team, and the NBA said it was “regrettable” that Morey’s views had “deeply offended many of our friends in China.” (After a public outcry, the NBA clarified that it would not censor or fire Morey.) A year earlier, Mercedes-Benz had posted a quote from the Dalai Lama on Instagram. After an online backlash in China, the automaker quickly erased the quote, and its parent company, Daimler, said that the post had contained an “erroneous message” and had “hurt the feelings of people” in China. The People’s Daily, China’s largest newspaper, later branded Mercedes-Benz as an “enemy of the people.”

Such conduct by Western companies illustrates a broader point: they act based on their commercial interests, not in the name of abstract democratic principles or for the cause of U.S. national security. The same is true when these companies try to influence government policy. The potential stakes are high. The U.S. Department of Commerce, for instance, has the power to set export restrictions on some sensitive technologies, including AI; those restrictions may be important from a national security standpoint, even if they negatively affect some companies’ bottom lines. Yet the dominant ideology among corporate lawyers today holds that the sole aim of managers is to maximize shareholder profits, and corporate lobbyists are thus likely to advocate public policies that support those profits even if they run counter to U.S. national interests.

Practically all U.S. companies active in China are subject to such pressures to one degree or another, and how to address that predicament is another question altogether. But the size and dominance of American technology companies are part of the problem. As the U.S. technology sector becomes more concentrated and the few players in it become more dependent on the Chinese market for consumers and profits, these firms—and, by extension, the United States—become more vulnerable to pressure from Beijing. Antimonopoly policies could help remedy this problem: in a fractured market with many players, the sheer number of firms would all but guarantee that some would build supply chains that circumvented China, or build their products wholly in the United States, or simply choose not to engage in the Chinese market—whether because of idiosyncratic preferences, competitive dynamics, product differentiation, higher costs, or other factors.

Consider another industry whose structure resembles that of Big Tech: Hollywood. Like the technology industry, today’s entertainment sector consists of a handful of studios that are increasingly dominant at the box office and able to pressure theaters to give their content preferential treatment. If these big, integrated companies comply with Chinese censors out of a concern for market access, then U.S. consumers will not see content that offends the Chinese government. By contrast, in a system with a large number of small studios and competitive distribution channels, many companies would lack the size, scope, or desire to cater to the Chinese market, let alone be dependent on it. Nor would they have the power or scale to lock out new competitors through vertical integration. The result would be a market in which Americans had a range of content choices, including entertainment that might not accord with the views of foreign censors.

Of course, in theory, it is possible that a small number of big U.S. technology firms, each with monopoly-like power, might be so profitable as to have no need for the Chinese market, whereas small companies with razor-thin profit margins might depend more on that market for consumers and profits. But this hypothesis has not been borne out. The current technology sector is already highly concentrated, and yet today’s technology companies are not forsaking the Chinese market; instead, they are desperate to expand their business there.

As they do so, they will likely be subject to the same pressures bearing down on Hollywood, the NBA, Mercedes, and other entities that want to operate in China. Companies such as Amazon and Google, which both produce their own content and distribute it through their platforms, may over time be tempted to make that content palatable to Chinese censors. And because those firms have immense market power within the United States, American consumers will be left with no serious, scalable alternatives.

A more competitive technology sector, with many smaller players, would also mitigate the ill effects of lobbying, for much the same reasons. Fewer companies would be dependent on the Chinese market, and those that were would be differentiated enough to often end up on different sides of policy debates. Their lobbying efforts would be less likely to cut in a single direction and thus less likely to capture government.

THE VIRTUE OF MONOPOLY

Big Tech’s market dominance, some will argue, has benefits: free of constant worries about vicious competition, technology giants can focus on the big questions. They have the time and resources to invest copiously in cutting-edge research, where success is rare but the potential payoff—for technological innovation and thus for U.S. competitiveness and national security—is massive.

Whether or not they say it explicitly, those who want to protect Big Tech from antitrust laws and other regulations are advocating a “national champions” model—a system in which the state shields a few select big companies from competition, allowing them to spend on research and development. But there is strong evidence that this approach is imperfect, at times even counterproductive. As the legal scholar Tim Wu has noted, it is usually competition, not consolidation, that fosters innovation. Competitors have to find ways to differentiate themselves in order to survive and expand. Large, protected firms become lethargic, are slow to innovate, and rest on their laurels.

Recall the race for supremacy in the electronics industry that played out between the United States and Japan in the 1980s. Japan, according to Wu, chose to protect its national champions, giving direct government support to such powerhouses as NEC, Panasonic, and Toshiba. The United States took the opposite tack. Its largest electronics firm at the time, IBM, came under antitrust scrutiny by U.S. authorities, and the ensuing decade-long legal battle discouraged the company from engaging in conduct that might run afoul of antitrust laws. That created the space for a variety of other hardware and software companies, among them Apple, Lotus, and Microsoft, to flourish. Competition led to innovation and the creation of some of the most forward-looking companies of the era.

National champions also have an incentive to hide breakthroughs that might undermine their market power. Bell Labs, one of the pillars of AT&T’s telecommunications empire, has long been celebrated for its role as an “ideas factory.” But Bell Labs and AT&T also suppressed innovations that threatened their business model. Starting in the 1930s, for example, AT&T’s management sat on recording inventions that could have been used for answering machines, for fear this innovation might jeopardize the use of the telephone.

Skeptics might argue that this time is different—that today’s next-generation technologies are so resource-intensive that smaller companies in a competitive environment couldn’t afford the necessary investments. But even if broken up and regulated, Big Tech’s main players would have considerable money left to spend on AI, robotics, quantum computing, and other next-generation technologies. Facebook would still have billions of users without Instagram and WhatsApp. Amazon’s platform would still have enormous market power in online sales even if it wasn’t allowed to produce its own products.

Whatever resource constraints did arise could be offset by greater public investment in R & D. As the economist Mariana Mazzucato has argued, such government spending has historically been a significant driver of innovation; the Internet, for example, began as a U.S. Defense Department network. There is no reason the government could not play the same role today.

Unlike research by national-champion firms, research funded by public investment would not be tied to the profit motive. It could therefore cover a wider range of subjects, extend to basic research that does not have immediate or foreseeable commercial applications, and include research that might challenge the incumbency and business models of existing companies. Public research could also de-emphasize areas of inquiry that may be profitable but are socially undesirable. For many of the biggest technology companies, surveillance, personalized targeting, and the eliciting of particular behavioral responses lie at the heart of their business models, which means that their efforts to innovate are geared in no trivial way toward improving those tactics. An authoritarian country may see those as valuable public goals, but it is not at all clear why a free and democratic society should.

Public investment in R & D also has the potential to spread the benefits of technology, innovation, and industry throughout the United States. At present, much of the country’s technological and innovative prowess is concentrated in a few hubs—the most prominent being Northern California, Seattle, and Boston. This is not surprising, as unlike the government, technology companies have no reason to want to spread development evenly. Amazon’s competition to decide the location of its second headquarters is a good example. After inviting countless pitches from cities across the country and much public attention, the company settled on New York and Washington, D.C.—two cities that hardly need an economic boost. Public investment, as the economists Jonathan Gruber and Simon Johnson have argued, could remedy these geographic imbalances and spur successful economies in dozens of midsize cities all over the country, with spillover benefits for their regions.

Mountains of data are needed to improve AI’s precision and accuracy, and some might think that only Big Tech can collect and handle data in such vast quantities. But this need not be the case, either. The United States could create a public data commons with data collected from a variety of government sources (and regulate it with strict rules about personal privacy), for use by businesses, local governments, and nonprofits to train machines. Any new data would be fed back into the data commons, allowing the quality and quantity of the information to improve over time. Alternatively, the government could require technology companies to make their data available in interoperable formats. If those companies effectively have monopoly power over data, then they could be regulated as monopolies—with public access to the data sets as a condition for their continued protection as monopolies. No legal obstacles stand in the way of these options, and both would enable innovation and expand the number of players working on important technological developments.

SQUEEZING THE GOVERNMENT

For the moment, such public initiatives exist only as proposals. Big technology companies have considerable market power, and the U.S. government increasingly relies on their services, including to run its national security apparatus. Technology is, of course, a crucial aspect of warfare, and firms such as Amazon and Microsoft have contracts to provide cloud services to U.S. defense and intelligence agencies. These technology companies are fast becoming part of the United States’ defense industrial base—the collection of industries that are indispensable for U.S. military equipment. As they do so, the curse of monopoly capitalism that already affects the country’s overconsolidated defense sector—causing higher costs, lower quality, reduced innovation, and even corruption and fraud—will likely grow worse.

To see the challenge ahead, consider the present state of the U.S. weapons industry, which is already remarkably uncompetitive. In 2019, the Government Accountability Office found that 67 percent of 183 contracts for major weapons systems did not have a competitive bidding process. Almost half the contracts went to one of five companies—a stunning testament to the dominance of a handful of firms. And in 2018, the Defense Department released a report on the military’s supply chain that listed numerous items for which only one or two domestic companies (and in some cases none) produced the essential goods. Perhaps most striking of all, the report found that the United States no longer had the capacity to build submarines on a rapid timetable because of single suppliers and declining competition.

Unsurprisingly, as Frank Kendall, a former head of acquisitions at the Pentagon, has pointed out, large defense contractors “are not hesitant to use this power for corporate advantage.” In a recent article in The American Conservative, the researchers Matt Stoller and Lucas Kunce argue that contractors with de facto monopoly at the heart of their business models threaten national security. They write that one such contractor, TransDigm Group, buys up companies that supply the government with rare but essential airplane parts and then hikes up the prices, effectively holding the government “hostage.” They also point to L3 Technologies, a defense contractor with ambitions, in the words of its one-time CEO, to become “the Home Depot of the defense industry.” According to Stoller and Kunce, L3’s de facto monopoly over certain products means that it continues to receive lucrative government contracts even after it admitted in the settlement of a 2015 civil fraud lawsuit that it had knowingly supplied defective weapons sights to U.S. forces.

As technology becomes more integral to the future of U.S. national security, Big Tech’s market power will likely lead to much the same problems. Technology behemoths will amass defense contracts, and the Pentagon will be locked into a state of dependence, just as it is currently with large defense contractors. Instead of healthy innovation, the government will have created what Michael Chertoff, a former homeland security secretary, has called a “technological monoculture,” which is unwieldy and vulnerable to outside attack. The cost to taxpayers will increase, whether due to higher prices or fraud and corruption, and much of their money—funding that could have been available for innovation—will become monopoly profits for technology executives and shareholders.

A WAY FORWARD

That technology companies do not want to be broken up is unsurprising. They are profitable, growing, and powerful. Nor is it a mystery why they try to play the trump card of invoking national security in their defense. But even from the viewpoint of national security, the case for shielding Big Tech from competition is weak. Technology companies are not competing with China so much as integrating with it, at significant risk to U.S. interests.In the United States, competition and public investment in R & D, not today’s consolidated technology sector, will provide the best path forward to innovation.

Policymakers should embrace proposals to break up and regulate big technology companies: to unwind mergers and acquisitions such as Facebook’s decision to buy the social networking and messaging services Instagram and WhatsApp. They should require technology platforms such as Amazon to separate from businesses that operate on their platforms. They should apply nondiscrimination principles drawn from public utilities and common carrier laws to digital platforms. And they should adopt stringent privacy regulations.

In this era of great-power competition, the best way to remain competitive and innovative is through market competition, smart regulations, and public spending on R & D. Breaking up Big Tech won’t threaten national security; it will bolster it.

#### Digital authoritarianism causes nuclear miscalc via global-info wars.

Manstead ’20 [Katherine; Non-Resident Fellow @ Alliance for Securing Democracy and Senior Adviser for Public Policy @ Australian National University’s National Security College; “Strong Yet Brittle: The Risks of Digital Authoritarianism”; https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Strong-Yet-Brittle-The-Risks-of-Digital-Authoritarianism.pdf]

While digital authoritarianism can enhance regime durability and national power, it also introduces deep-seated vulnerabilities, eight of which are considered below. Significantly, digital authoritarians may find themselves in a state of constant contest with other regime types, trapped in cycles of overreach and backlash, and prone to strategic miscalculations that pull them into interstate conflict. The current turn to digital authoritarianism therefore also has broader implications for international peace and stability.

Brittle Legitimacy

Reliance on information control makes authoritarians brittle. Small chinks in their information control armor could have existential consequences, particularly during political or economic crises (i.e. when the regime needs to rely on control for legitimacy because it is not delivering for citizens). The information and ideas most dangerous to authoritarians include:

• the identity of opposition groups and leaders and their levels of support; 17

• technical means for subverting control of communications and surveillance technologies;18

• ideas about values that transcend state sovereignty, such as liberalism and human rights;19

• evidence that the central government is not delivering efficient outcomes;20 and

• ideas that undermine the myths and narratives used to legitimize authoritarian rule or the power of the ruling elite.21

Constant Contest

Since technologies and ideas are dynamic, the battle for information control is a constant struggle. It can never be ‘won.’ Authoritarians are therefore in a perpetual state of information warfare, inside and outside their regime, and feel perpetually insecure. This dynamic may lead authoritarian governments to assess that it is worth engaging in information or cyberattacks to discredit liberal ideas at their foreign source or to shape or disable systems that jeopardize their information control—despite real risks of conflict escalation and global pushback.

Overreach and Backlash

The fundamental importance of information control to authoritarians increases the likelihood of overreach, leading to cycles of backlash and reprisal. Many perceive China’s heavy-handed narrative warfare in Hong Kong and confrontational efforts to control narratives about coronavirus to be strategic missteps. For example, CCP efforts to stifle dissent by punishing online gaming company Blizzard and the National Basketball Association (NBA) arguably aided Hong Kong protester narratives;22 while CCP obfuscation about coronavirus has prompted unprecedented diplomatic rebukes from world leaders.23 Despite rising international awareness and condemnation of China’s sharp power tactics,24 China is accelerating, not muting, these behaviors.25 One explanation for this is that the CCP calculates that the risks of international backlash (and occasional overreach by its officials) are acceptable, compared with the risk of letting domestic information control falter.

Impaired Feedback Mechanisms

Authoritarians embrace technology to increase the legibility of their societies. But legibility requires cooperation from society. It is facilitated by an open information ecosystem, robust civil society, mechanisms of transparency, and protections for political speech.26 Conversely, information control and technology-enabled systems of surveillance and enforcement discourage accurate reporting and punish whistleblowing, while incentivizing officials to conceal failures and exaggerate successes.27 In 2007, Le Keqiang (before he became China’s premier) described China’s national income figures as “man-made” and unreliable, and noted that more objectively verifiable proxies should be preferred to official statistics collected by provinces.28 Without elections, authoritarians can also struggle to understand public sentiment, a problem highlighted by the Chinese government’s mismanagement of massive ongoing protests in Hong Kong. Party leaders wrongly assessed that the protestors’ grievances were primarily economic rather than political and that they did not enjoy broader public support.29 As Zeynep Tufekci has observed, the costs of China’s “authoritarian blindness” have been immense: a solvable issue (demands to withdraw a relatively unimportant extradition treaty) became “a bigger, durable crisis” with ongoing political consequences.30

China’s delayed reaction to coronavirus is a stark example of the authoritarian legibility and feedback problem. Local officials and hospital administrators in Wuhan suppressed information about the outbreak and punished doctor whistleblowers—depriving other provinces and the central government (not to mention international authorities) of vital signals that would have allowed swifter action to control the pandemic.31 Once authorities acknowledged the pandemic, China deployed the full weight of its digital surveillance capabilities. It was able to implement top-down lockdowns quickly; marshal its tech sector to build health apps; force citizens to download these apps; and access vast commercial holdings of personal data to cross-check compliance. However, it lacked critical bottom-up feedback systems that may have obviated the need for such draconian measures in the first place.32 Indeed, controlling for income and population size, authoritarian regimes appear to be more lethal than democracies during epidemics, arguably because of their closed information ecosystems.33

Overreliance on Technological Systems which ‘Fail Hard’

Many authoritarian governments are embracing AI-driven surveillance and control methods—from ‘smart cities’ to digital currencies, e-payment platforms and social apps. However, when AI systems fail, they tend to fail in unpredictable, often catastrophic ways. While citizens in democracies lament slow adoption of digital governance, authoritarians’ speed comes with the risk that authorities roll out unsafe or vulnerable systems.34 Imagine a critical failure of China’s social credit system—whether by accident or sabotage—which affected the integrity of records. The implications for regime stability could be significant.

AI systems do not need to fail to produce problematic results. They draw insights and make predictions based on correlations in vast datasets but are not good at identifying causal mechanisms. This means that AI systems often produce outcomes which humans cannot reverse engineer or routinely evaluate. Like using asbestos to build a city, AI governance systems might produce good results in the short-term, but inconsistencies or oversights in their approaches could lead to cascading failures that humans struggle to identify, let alone rectify.35

Unintended Consequences from High-Tech Modernism

Fixation by central governments on achieving targets or deploying certain technologies creates incentives for local officials to deploy “technology placebos” that do little to address underlying economic and social concerns. For example, many so-called smart city projects in authoritarian societies have failed to meet development and economic goals. They are fraught with issues such as “unclear strategic goals” (e.g. they often optimize for surveillance, not development) and “inadequate implementation.”36 This problem may be particularly pronounced for less-developed authoritarian governments which have been persuaded, for strategic reasons, to buy Chinese-exported digital surveillance tools that are not customized to local circumstances. These cities may also become locked into unstable or insecure technical architectures37 and economic dependence on China.38

Commitments to targets, and ideological fervor about technology, can also distort commercial decisions and raise unrealistic public expectations. Analysis of China’s AI industry, for example, suggests that companies are eschewing investment in basic research and focusing on quick wins in applied research.39 Additionally, China is already behind on meeting a number of its technology targets40—a lag that will likely be exacerbated by the global economic downturn following the coronavirus pandemic, and rising security fears in foreign markets about the security of Chinese technology and IP theft by its companies.

From a strategic perspective, there are risks that authoritarian governments’ fixation on technology-centric strategies will lead them to overestimate what technology can in fact achieve. For example, Chinese military strategists have posited that AI could lift the ‘fog’ of war and eliminate uncertainty and confusion on the battlefield. This is an ahistorical and unlikely prediction that could inspire miscalculation.41 Russian strategists theorize about how psychological operations might subdue adversaries without a shot being fired—an approach that may overestimate what cognitive warfare can achieve, at least without being combined with other elements of national power.42

Challenges to Social Cohesion

The medium- and long-term social consequences of digital authoritarianism are yet untested. Overreliance on surveillance and enforcement systems could attenuate relationships within a society, exacerbating authoritarians’ underlying low trust problems. Since they tend to reduce citizens to data inputs, these systems may deny citizens’ intrinsic desire for dignity and identity—with unexpected results.43 Information control tactics—such as flooding—can repress opposition, but long-term may exacerbate public uncertainty and decrease business confidence and trust in official information, with implications for social cohesion and economic progress.44

Dysfunctional Innovation Ecosystems

Information control and state-led pushes for technology dominance risk hampering innovation. For example, to achieve Xi Jinping’s ‘Made in China 2025’ goals, the CCP is supporting high-tech monopolies, restricting international collaboration, and yoking the state and market together.45 However, monopolies are notoriously inefficient and cross-border collaboration is an important driver of innovation. Further, innovation works best under free market conditions and in open societies.46 Some analysts argue that China’s success in deploying AI applications is an exception to this rule. However, there is a risk that Chinese companies are prioritizing shortterm breakthroughs (e.g. analyzing existing datasets to find new insights) at the expense of long-term investment in basic research.47 While authoritarians may excel at developing and deploying AI applications, conceptual research is arguably the real engine of AI advancement—and something that will continue to thrive in open societies.

Summary and Further Research

All states face risks in the information age, but the extent to which regime type affects the relative likelihood of these risks materializing, and their magnitude, is understudied. For example, much has been written about liberal democracies’ vulnerabilities to propaganda and foreign interference via social media.48 But while information warfare against open societies is more likely, arguably it is a higher magnitude threat for authoritarians, where control of information is core to regime survival. Similarly, analysts often lament that democratic governments have been slow to digitize governance systems and craft forward-looking technology policy.49 But while digital authoritarians might outcompete democracies in the roll-out of advanced technologies, this creates new vulnerabilities and risks. Inappropriate safeguards and accidents may result in cascading failures, while heavily digitized governance systems may be susceptible to foreign attack. Regime type may also affect the relative ability of authoritarians and democracies to mitigate their information age risks. For example, a democracy can build resilience to cyber and information threats through a variety of civil society and market-based interventions. Digital authoritarians must rely on a more limited set of top-down policy tools. Ultimately, a more systematic effort to map the comparative strengths and vulnerabilities of authoritarians and democracies in the information age could help both to better understand the other’s threat perceptions and manage escalation risks. It might also highlight ways in which democracies can hold digital authoritarians’ core interests at risk, in order to deter authoritarian interference in their own digital environments.

### 1AC – Plan

#### The United States federal government should adopt the principle of separating platforms from commerce for platforms in the private sector.

### 1AC – Systemic Risk

#### Contention two: Systemic Risk

#### Societal collapse is inevitable – dominant platforms are too big to fail – digitalization is equivalent to financialization.

Curran ’20 [Dean; Assistant Professor in Sociology @ University of Calgary, PhD in Sociology; “Connecting risk: Systemic risk from finance to the digital,” *Economy and Society* 49(2), p. 239-264; AS]

The risks of tightly-coupled universal intermediaries

Irrespective of the importance of these insights into systemic fragility, insofar as we are interested in its impacts on overall social life, then the identification of the fragility of a system is only part of the problem. The other key question is: how important is this specific system to the overall functioning of society? To provide one set of contrasting examples, both pre-2008 finance and the Ryanair flight network in the summer of 2017 were systems that exhibited extremely low levels of redundancy and significant fragility to disruption (see Financial Times, 2017). Yet, Ryanair’s cacophony of cancelled and delayed flights was an inconvenience to a small portion of the population of Europe, while the stuttering of the credit provision system in finance resulted in a massive social crisis. As such, not only is the risk that a system will cease to function properly important, but insofar as we are oriented to systemic social risk and the potential for social crises, we must also focus on the level of dependence of society on this system. While existing approaches have focused on the fragility of a network, insofar as the intention of the analysis is to tack closely to the point of the social science study of risk – the potential damages to society – then the vulnerability of society to breakdowns in the network is just as important as the vulnerability of the network in itself.

This is what makes systemic financial risk so problematic in the twenty-first century. Firstly, finance has become interconnected to the point where it is a single, though highly uneven, system in which almost all parts are vulnerable to any other part of the financial system. Secondly, society as a whole exhibits very little redundancy vis-à-vis this single private finance system. Through its monopoly on credit provision and the near universality of employment of credit by corporations and private individuals, this network of contemporary privately-run financial institutions is increasingly emerging as a universal intermediary. Finance itself does not make anything, but it has increasingly become a single network that is a fundamental means to the provision of a vast array of other social functionings.13 Credit has become so central to economic processes across society that some bankers could speculate that, if the state had not intervened after the Lehman bankruptcy, grocery stores could have run out of food as their credit ran dry (Luyendijk, 2015). In this context, through financial institutions’ role as fundamental intermediaries in complex financial networks of interdependence, the failure of the system of privately owned finance would have disrupted everything else that depends on these networks of financial interdependence for continued functioning. Consequently, the ‘financialization of daily life’ (Langley, 2008; Martin, 2002), in which credit plays an increasingly fundamental role in commercial transactions, is not merely a massive sea change in subjectivities and a financial strategy for financial institutions to increase the scope of profit-making activities – it is also a systemic increase in the tight-coupling of society vis-à-vis the financial system. In this way, the proper functioning of the credit system itself has become a necessary condition to the reproduction of an ever greater number of social functionings – thus causing a massive increase in social dependence on this single, private system of finance.

Insofar then as universal intermediaries exhibit systemic fragilities there is significant potential for systemic social risk that can result in social crises, as emerged from the global financial crisis of 2008. Reducing this vulnerability can proceed via either making the system that is the intermediary more stable or through reducing its power as a necessary condition by generating other, independent ways of securing the goods to which this system is a means. This point, while not made explicit in the risk literature, is an important insight that can be generated by bringing together literatures on organizational and legal power and ecological, systemic risk. Almost all of the literature on contemporary finance focuses on making the system more stable, though there are also important treatments on replacing the private system of credit provision with a public system. Yet, from a social systemic risk perspective, the contemporary financial system is so dangerous not only because it is fragile and susceptible to crises, but because there is no back-up or alternative to contemporary global private finance for society. Reducing social dependence on credit and/or providing other forms of credit provision, including public and non-profit that are not integrated into the networks of interconnection of the existing private system, could not only provide greater security from systemic financial risk, but also massively reduce the necessary-condition-power of private finance that makes bailouts so difficult to avoid.

This is likewise where the ‘networked digitalisation of daily life’, akin to the financialisation of daily life, is increasingly important. As with the role of finance as an intermediary, digital giants are developing massive platforms that increasingly mediate almost all the basic functionings that human beings seek to achieve (Mansell, 2012; Srnicek, 2017).14 With the status of increasingly a universal intermediary for different social functions, if any of these platforms were to fail, all of the networks of dependence that rely on that platform would in turn fail. As banks enjoyed intermediary power as a means of enjoying market power, the major digital companies, including Apple, Alphabet, Amazon, Facebook and Microsoft are doing all they can to heighten their intermediary power by making themselves increasingly indispensable to more and more social and economic functions.

As with finance, this growing systemic risk should not be viewed simply as a relatively exogenous process of growing interdependencies due to globalization and technological development (cf. Centeno et al., 2015; Goldin & Mariathasan, 2014; World Economic Forum, 2015), but rather as fundamentally intensified by the pursuit of private efficiencies and monopoly power so as to realize profit and value maximization. Exemplified in the Silicon Valley ideology of ‘Unless you are breaking stuff … you are not moving fast enough’ (Zuckerberg in Anthony, 2017), the dependence of society on specific digital platforms continues to grow. The potential for ‘Schumpeterian profits’ from impeding competition by occupying the role of essential intermediaries for different social functions thus likewise intensifies the systemic risk associated with the failure of any of these digital giants.

As with contemporary finance, these digital giants seek to exhibit universal intermediary power. Insofar as they are necessary conditions to key functionings of our life, they exhibit a kind of dual power, that enables them to appropriate massive levels of economic rents due to their monopolistic position (Mazzucato, 2018), while also creating immense risks for society when they fail to successfully fulfil their roles – thus making it a core social interest that they not fail in their function. In these cases, companies, through what has been called ‘infrastructural imperialism’ (Vaidhyanathan, 2011) have sought to insert themselves as a universal means to the goods of our lives. More recently, cities themselves have been increasingly targeted by ransomware, which have threatened to bring urban governance to a halt. After a cyber attack hobbled Atlanta in 2018, which cost millions of dollars to recover from, in 2019 more than 40 municipalities in the United States have been hacked. These include major cities such as Albany and Baltimore, several smaller cities in Florida, along with 22 towns across Texas, which have been simultaneously afflicted (Fernandez & Sanger, 2019). As Wu (2010), has shown, insofar as digital companies appropriate these public ‘common carrier’ positions – including providing the infrastructure through which cities function – they become part of the critical infrastructure of social life. Yet, by enabling such a systemically risky system as the contemporary digital economy to develop in a manner that both amplifies the risk of the system itself and the social dependence on this system, we repeat the mistakes that were made in the lead-up to the 2008 financial crisis.

While at this point these cyber-attacks may be considered a considerable harm rather than a crisis, the growing infiltration of networked devices throughout our basic infrastructure associated with the revolution in IoT 15 and the potential for an entire networked smart city means that a level of interconnectedness implicit in current dynamics of innovation would turn a penetration at the scale of WannaCry or NotPetya, or the cyber-security and safety failures of AWS or Mirai, into a social catastrophe, in which the basic infrastructure of the city or an entire region could be disabled, or used as a tool for even more damaging cyber or infrastructural attacks. While cybersecurity is sophisticated and more can be done on this front, it is in many ways fighting a losing battle of trying to patch over an excessively interconnected and fragile system, on which we are increasingly intensely dependent. As Hypponen declares, summarizing the security status of digitally interconnected devices, ‘Whenever an appliance is described as being ‘smart’, it’s vulnerable’ (Hypponen & Nyman, 2017, p. 5). And yet the current trajectory is ever-greater damages as companies continue to work towards their goals of ever-greater network integration of social, material and political life with the digital economy.

With the growing complexity of digital interconnections – both within the digital system and at the human-digital interface (see Greenfield, 2017) – mismatches between the knowledge of programmers who create the code for software and the impacts that software’s vulnerabilities have continue to grow. This mismatch thus further intensifies the space for avoiding responsibility for the damages promulgated across these systems. As Naughton (2017) has highlighted, legal responsibility in the digital economy is rarely even close to commensurate to the damages wreaked through the failures of their created products. That it has not been seriously broached that any of the companies above be held even partially legally culpable for the collateral damages due to the breaches of their software exemplifies the extent to which the digital economy is dominated by intermediaries that are always seeking to further install themselves in people’s basic functionings and general capabilities, but are not held responsible when their intermediary roles are suspended – even when there are enormous path-dependent negative side-effects from breaches and breakdowns. The massive complexity of the networks of information they have contributed to creating and the inchoate nature of the damages they enable, which interact with many other causes – that is, they are not solely responsible for Russian political influence or the damaging of political discourse, but their business models play a definite, but indeterminate role in these processes – institutionalizes a kind of structural recklessness and irresponsibility at the centre of digital innovation.

While a critical, reflexive systemic risk analysis cannot be used to predict the future, it can aid in identifying important vulnerabilities that create the potential for system-wide risks. High levels of interconnectedness, complexity, low redundancy and high levels of mismatch between activity and knowledge, alongside low culpability is a toxic combination that created the conditions for a social crisis in 2008. Likewise this toxic combination is increasingly being manifested in the contemporary networked digital economy, which could generate another systemic social crisis that, given the existing scope and granularity of dependence of social life on digitally networked devices, potentially could be of even greater proportions.

#### 1 – Interconnectedness and lack of redundancy – it guarantees global internet and infrastructure collapse.

Curran ’20 [Dean; Assistant Professor in Sociology @ University of Calgary, PhD in Sociology; “Connecting risk: Systemic risk from finance to the digital,” *Economy and Society* 49(2), p. 239-264; AS]

Systemic financial and digital risk

The digital economy, which comprises ‘those businesses that increasingly rely upon information technology, data, and the internet for their business models’ (Srnicek, 2017, p. 4), is increasingly presenting itself as a hegemonic business model, which requires its own analytical treatment (Srnicek, 2017; see also Bauer & Latzer, 2016; Elder-Vass, 2016). Issues of risk and crisis raised by the financial crisis are particularly relevant to the emerging study of the digital economy in the face of the significant impacts from recent cyberattacks WannaCry and NotPetya and several breaches of confidential data, including 145 million people’s data held by Equifax and over 100 million held by Capital One.

While the shorthand of ‘digital economy’ is often and usefully used (Bauer & Latzer, 2016; Elder-Vass, 2016), core to this revolution is not simply the shift from analogue to digital, but in particular, the shift towards the use of computing devices that are networked. 4 As such ‘digital economy’ is employed as shorthand for the ‘networked digital economy’. This section further develops the framework for investigating emerging systemic risk proposed above, while also advancing evidence for the claim that the contemporary digital economy is manifesting systemic risk characteristics that have important similarities to the systemic risk characteristics of pre-2008 crisis finance. To pursue this dual task, I briefly develop a comparative systemic risk analysis of pre-crisis finance and the digital economy with respect to the following characteristics: interconnectedness and redundancy; interactive complexity, and mismatches between scope of knowledge and activity. Each of these subsections introduces brief illustrative cases to both clarify how to use this framework, or ‘toolbox’ of the political economy of systemic risk, and to provide prima facie evidence that significant digital systemic risk, and as is subsequently shown below, significant social systemic risk, is emerging from the current trajectory of the digital economy.

Problems of interconnectedness and redundancy in finance and the digital economy

As has been widely discussed in the literature on the 2008 financial crisis, in the lead-up to the crisis, the financial institutions that comprised the financial network became much more interconnected to the rest of the network, which increased the likelihood that solvency problems of one financial institution could threaten many other institutions in the network (Goldin & Mariathasan, 2014; Haldane, 2009; May et al., 2008). Alongside the growing interconnectedness of the financial network was a trend towards reduced redundancy, as banks significantly increased their leverage levels (Haldane et al., 2010). With increasing levels of leverage (the ratio of assets to equity), each financial institution had less back-up equity to employ when one of its investments failed to provide its anticipated return.

In the context of high interconnectedness and low redundancy, the failure of a small number of investments (such as when two of Bear Stearns’ hedge funds collapsed in July 2007) or, alternatively failure by an institution’s counterparty to meet their obligations (as occurred with Lehman Brothers in September 2008) could propagate risk across the network as these losses in turn created problems of liquidity and solvency for other counterparties and so on throughout the entire network (see Haldane, 2009). As the literature has previously discussed, with many investment banks having leverage ratios of 30 to one, losses of little more than 3 per cent could cause a bank to be insolvent (Curran, 2015; Haldane et al., 2010). With such a tightly connected network of firms and such little redundancy, the network was primed to have losses cascade throughout the network, until an institution with much greater levels of redundancy, the state, stepped in and ended the cascading losses through bailouts and stimulus packages.

In terms of analysing interconnectedness in the digitally networked economy, it is one of those few sectors that is considered to be even more connected than global finance. The growing scale of computing devices and their connection via the internet is a widely noted phenomenon (see Goldin & Mariathasan, 2014), with the internet being described as the world’s largest network (Perrow 2007, p. 249), and as a ‘world-spanning living organism’ (Pentland 2009, in Zuboff, 2015, p. 85). Moreover, this growth of connectivity has been extremely rapid, with not only massive increases in the number of digitally interconnected devices, but also the types of devices that are being connected continuing to proliferate (Schneier, 2018).

In terms of redundancy, while the internet is a massive network – which enables potential connection between any two devices that have IP addresses – it has been noted that the physical infrastructure of the internet exhibits a reasonably high level of redundancy. Even if one of the root-level servers was to be disabled, the system would be able to adjust, thus enabling continued availability of internet services (Perrow, 2007). Nevertheless, on top of this physical infrastructure of the internet has developed a series of oligopolistic or monopolistic providers of key services on the web such as Amazon, Apple, Google, Facebook and Microsoft, while Alibaba, Baidu and Tencent, occupy similar levels of market dominance in China (Webb, 2019). While monopolistic market structures are primarily viewed from a pricing perspective, market dominance also raises important questions from a systemic risk perspective that have only been addressed within the sector of finance. As such, while there is some recognition of the importance of ‘systematically important financial institutions’ (FSB, 2011), there has not yet been a corresponding regulatory recognition of the systemic risk associated with ‘systematically important digital institutions’. These dominant firms have become key nodes that support a vast array of web services, which in turn support a multitude of social practices. Google has eight products that have over one billion users, while Amazon, Microsoft, and Facebook exhibit similar levels of market dominance in their respective markets (Lardinois, 2018; Mazzucato 2018). This political economic structure of the digital economy, which benefits from the network effects of digital information markets (Hindman, 2018; Srnicek, 2017), alongside light-touch regulation (Curran, 2018), consequently has built a much more centralized functional web onto of the distributed technology of the internet.

Given the interoperability and interdependencies within these companies, the monopolistic, centralized nature of the web provision creates the potential for vulnerabilities to cascade widely through the web, even if the physical infrastructure is distributed. As Perrow (2007) has emphasized, having many systems that utilize the same software systems leaves them open to ‘commonmode’ failures, where a potential failure or breach anywhere in the network can lead to multiple, potentially cascading failures due to the systems being vulnerable to the same failure. The economic centralization of the infrastructure of the web thus leads to the potential for the identification and exploitation of a single vulnerability leading to the failure of thousands or even potentially millions of computing devices, which are vulnerable to the same weakness.5

The WannaCry cyberattack exemplifies the growing importance of the systemic fragilities involved with cyber risk, and on a truly global scale – affecting over 100 countries worldwide – based on the identification and exploitation of a single key vulnerability in Microsoft software (Larson, 2017). In terms of its impacts, one-third of the UK’s National Health Service (NHS) was rendered inoperative, Chinese students were locked out of their university files, over 1,000 computers at Russia’s interior ministry were disrupted, as were billion dollar businesses, such as FedEx and Telefónica. In total it is estimated that over 230,000 computers were infected by WannaCry (Thomas, 2019) and the costs of the attack are estimated at somewhere between $4–8 billion (Greenberg, 2018). For WannaCry, the malware took advantage of a vulnerability in Windows, which had been previously developed by the US-based NSA into an attack tool for its own hacking operations. This penetration tool, EternalBlue – based on a key ‘zero-day vulnerability’ for Windows operating systems – was stolen from the NSA and subsequently leaked on the internet in 2017 so that others could use it for cyber-attacks.

In evaluating cyber-threats there are three commonly discussed criteria for computer security: confidentiality, availability and integrity (Schneier, 2018). Confidentiality is that only parties that are authorized gain access to the information held on a system. Availability involves the continued access and functionality of computing services to authorized parties. Integrity involves only authorized parties making changes in a computer system.6 In the lead-up to WannaCry, one of, if not the most, sophisticated hacking groups in the world, the NSA, were unable to keep their own hacking tools confidential.

The EternalBlue vulnerability was again used the following year in the NotPetya malware. The NotPetya ransomware attack is considered the most costly attack yet, with estimates that it cost companies over $20 billion, while also shutting down key infrastructure (Clarke & Knake, 2019, p. 18). In this case, it was vulnerabilities in the update servers of a Ukrainian software company, Linkos, that provided a back door to thousands of computers in Ukraine, which enabled the hackers to release the NotPetya malware (Greenberg, 2018). NotPetya ‘crippled multinational companies including Maersk, pharmaceutical giant Merck, FedEx’s European subsidiary TNT Express, French construction company Saint-Gobain, food producer Mondele¯z, and manufacturer Reckitt Benckiser. In each case, it inflicted nine-figure costs’ (Greenberg, 2018).

Again, as with WannaCry, there were cascading effects on economic and material life. One example of its impacts is instructive, especially given the primary business model of the internet of maximizing connectivity and data collection and analysis.7 The Danish logistics company, Maersk, was hobbled by the attack. While Ukraine was the original target, given Maersk’s role in the global supply chain, ‘an attack on Maersk strikes everywhere at once’ (Greenberg, 2018). With a single breach of Maersk’s systems due to the installation of the unknowingly infected software in Odessa, this led to problems around the globe, as the malware caused the failure of a key ‘choke point’ in its shipping terminal system. This led to the closure for the day of 17 of its 76 terminals, including New Jersey, Los Angeles, Algericas (Spain), Rotterdam, and Mumbai, leading to massive delays and further problems given the focus on efficiencies and just-in-time deliveries in the global supply chain (Greenberg, 2018; see also Goldin & Mariathasan, 2014). While the software on Maersk’s ships were not infected, the terminals’ software had been wiped away, such that for ‘days to come, one of the world’s most complex and interconnected distributed machines, underpinning the circulatory system of the global economy itself, would remain broken’ (Greenberg, 2018).

The NotPetya attack is estimated to have cost Maersk $300 million; however, luckily the fundamental principle of the digital economy – connect (and collect) everything – was unintentionally violated in this case. In seeking to rebuild the logistics systems that plan how to sort and arrange their shipping process, a copy of the ‘domain controllers’, which serve as a map to the network, needed to be found. Maersk though had been syncing together all 150 domain controllers, and hence, in a clear case of the risks of the ethos of growing, almost reckless interconnectivity, all were wiped out by the NotPetya malware, except one, which remained exempt from the syncing process because a blackout in the Ghanaian office prior to the NotPetya infection had rendered the machine offline and disconnected from the network when NotPetya struck.8

As this case illustrates, a component can only serve effectively as redundancy if it is not too tightly-coupled to the network. If there is a high correlation between the failure of the part and its ‘back-up’ then there is not effective redundancy; yet the push to connectivity tends to infect all the parts in the case of an infection. In this case, redundancy was achieved, through a core principle of systemic risk minimization (modularity) unintentionally trumping the business model of the digital economy, of maximizing connectivity and interdependence.

Software increasingly functions as a core part of the infrastructure of our economic, social and political world. Yet, unlike the modularity of conventional infrastructure, networked software exhibits a series of interdependencies and potentialities for ‘common-mode’ failures that provides scope for an initial, single infection somewhere in the globe to cascade across the globe. Yet, despite the growing accumulation of costly ‘near-misses’ (see Perrow, 1984) little has changed in the fundamental business model of the digital economy, or of governments’ refusal to regulate for the systemic risk that is emerging from this massive growth in interconnectedness. In fact the digital economy aims to ever further increase the connectedness of life through the Internet of Things (IoT) (Schneier, 2018).

#### 2 – Complexity – monopolization of the digital economy makes the IoT vulnerable to cyber-attacks.

Curran ’20 [Dean; Assistant Professor in Sociology @ University of Calgary, PhD in Sociology; “Connecting risk: Systemic risk from finance to the digital,” *Economy and Society* 49(2), p. 239-264; AS]

Complexity in finance and the digital economy

In addition to the risks emerging from being a highly interconnected and low redundancy network, high levels of complexity in finance played a key role in the lead-up to the financial crisis of 2008. Perrow (1984) provides a basis for distinguishing between the risk properties of different types of complexity through his differentiation between linear complexity and interactive complexity. Linear complexity involves a system with many parts, but the interactions between these parts are linear, visible and generally predictable. Interactive complexity involves relations between parts that are not linear, such that there is a much greater chance of one component of the system interacting with and impacting components in many different parts of the system.9 This distinction is akin to Haldane’s (2009) distinction between more modular complexities, where there are relatively separable sub-structures, and interactively complex systems, where any part of the system exhibits a higher likelihood of dependence on any other part of the system in highly unpredictable, irregular ways. For the purpose of exposition, these two types of complexity will be called separable complexity and interactive complexity.

The lead-up to the financial crisis is widely acknowledged as having experienced a massive increase in the complexity of the financial system. Simple, short-chain securitization is consistent with risk reduction strategies (Engelen et al., 2011); however, complex forms of securitization led to such a level of opacity and unpredictable interactions between different financial transactions, and ultimately financial institutions, that a ‘modest increase of seriously delinquent subprime mortgages’ of 3 per cent ($34 billion) led to the fundamental disruption of the $57 trillion US financial system (Dodd, 2007).

In terms of the level of complexity that was reached in the years leading up to the 2008 crisis, ABS CDOs (Collateralized Debt Obligations in which the underlying assets are Asset-Backed Securities), can provide a useful illustrative case. ABS CDOs were a particularly complex security, in which the underlying components were bundles of different tranches of a series of ABSs. The tranches of these ABSs were built out of thousands of mortgages, with the different tranches classified based on the probability of default of their underlying mortgages, with the AAA tranches offering lower rates of return due to greater security, while the lower tranches (including BBB and BB) offering higher rates of return in compensation for a higher probability of default (see Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, 2011, p. 73). ABS CDOs (which the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission just calls ‘CDOs’) were then made out of the ‘mezzanine tranches’ of ABSs, in particular the AA, A, BBB and BB tranches, which were more difficult to sell because of the higher risk attached to them. Through constructing a new security by pooling together these different tranches, the sellers of these investments were able to claim that the process of creating ABS CDOs reduced correlation between assets through diversification and hence these mezzanine tranches were then sold as securities in which the majority of the ABS CDO was rated AAA (80 per cent), despite being made almost solely of higher probability of default securities (see Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, 2011, pp. 127–129). The repackaging of these securities provided important arbitrage opportunities, especially because of the symbolic value attached to AAA rated investments. The resulting losses from these complex forms of securitization though played a key role in the lead-up to the 2008 financial crisis (MacKenzie, 2011, pp. 1779, 1782–1786).

In addition to high levels of interconnectedness and low redundancy, high levels of complexity are another key feature of the digital economy. In particular, the digital economy manifests not just a high level of complexity, but in particular a high level of interactive complexity, in which wide-ranging and unpredictable interconnections between different parts of a system are possible. Many of the software programs that are necessary to the web are immensely complex – much too complex for even the most sophisticated programmers in the world to adequately understand. Windows, for example, has over 60 million lines of code (Gisel & Olejnik, 2018).

Pasquale (2015) highlights an important element of contemporary power dynamics in that digital companies implement a two-sided mirror. They seek to know everything about their users, while their users know nothing about how they function. Yet, from a risk perspective there is also the larger point that given this level of complexity of these programs, no one, whether inside the company or outside, can hope to have a comprehensive picture of the interactions between these different lines of code – much less, how this software interacts with the external, social world. Even with the best programmers in the world, the complexity of these software systems regularly creates unanticipated mistakes in coding.10 When this level of complexity intersects with how tightly-coupled many software systems are, the exploitation of a single key vulnerability can lead to the complete breakdown of a computer or network of computers, as occurred with WannaCry and NotPetya. This complexity is so much more problematic in the context of the particularities of cyber-security. That is, it does not matter how many attacks are repelled because a single breach is enough to potentially generate a ‘class break’, in which a number of devices with similar software vulnerabilities can have their confidentiality, availability, or integrity breached (Schneier, 2018).

Yet, despite the continuing failures of cyber-security and the fragility of the system, the current trajectory of the business model of the digital economy, of seeking monopolistic network effects and of collecting as much data as possible, incessantly drives further growth in the size and complexity of the network (Hindman, 2018; Srnicek, 2017; Zuboff, 2019). While this is manifested by many trends, the pivot towards the Internet of Things (IoT) – as associated with projects such as the ‘smart home’ of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019) and ‘smart cities’ (Kitchin & Dodge, 2019) – exemplifies this in particularly stark terms. The addition of billions of further devices to the internet has not only immensely increased the ‘attack surface’ of interconnected devices on which cyber-security depends; it has also amplified the complexity of potential interactions between internet connected devices (see Schneier, 2018).

The Mirai botnet11 exemplifies well the potential risks of the interactive complexity of the contemporary networked digital economy, as well as some of the particular risks involved in shifting from a modular infrastructure to an interconnected infrastructure that is exposed to weaknesses anywhere across the global digital network. Unlike WannaCry and NotPetya, which involved sophisticated teams of computer hackers, the original source code for Mirai was developed by three 21 year olds in the United States. The botnet in turn was built out of this source code – which the original hackers had released onto the web (as an attempt to hide their identities from the FBI). Other, as of yet unidentified hackers, using the Mirai botnet to take control of IoT devices that had default passwords (security cameras, DVRs, routers (Graff, 2017)) used them to pursue a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) against the company Dyn. This attack caused widespread problems across the web because of Dyn’s core infrastructural role in the internet through its role as a Domain Name System (DNS) for other websites. This attack led to large parts of the internet on the Eastern Coast of the United States not working, causing disruptions to Twitter, Amazon, Spotify, PayPal, Reddit and Airbnb amongst others, while also disrupting parts of the internet in the rest of North America and in Europe (Graff, 2017). As a DNS, Dyn helps web browsers translate written addresses into numbered IP addresses and vice versa and thus is a core part of the functionality of the web. At the height of the attack, hackers were able to use over 600,000 infected devices through the Mirai botnet to launch an unprecedented record attack of 1.2 terrabits of network-clogging traffic to Dyn’s servers, which overloaded their servers, thus disrupting their ability to fulfil their normal functions (Graff, 2017).

While the disruption from this attack was felt in the United States and Europe, the insecure, infected devices did not come from these areas. Highlighting the complex interdependencies of the global nature of the internet and how any two devices with an IP address can be directly and instantaneously connected, this was ‘harm at a distance’ at its best, as the infected devices were primarily from Brazil, Columbia and Vietnam, while China, South Korea, Russia, Turkey and India also exhibited significant levels of infection (listed in descending order (Bursztein, 2017)). Contrary to separable complexity, interactive complexity functioned across the system as devices of different types (DVRs versus core infrastructure DNS) and geographical locations (Asia and South American versus the United States and Europe) became intricately interconnected because of a breach of a seemingly distant and disparate part of the system.

#### 3 – Mismatch between knowledge and activity – malfunctions are likely and trigger a global domino effect.

Curran ’20 [Dean; Assistant Professor in Sociology @ University of Calgary, PhD in Sociology; “Connecting risk: Systemic risk from finance to the digital,” *Economy and Society* 49(2), p. 239-264; AS]

Mismatches between scope of knowledge and activity

In addition to high interconnectedness, low redundancy and high interactive complexity, pre-crisis finance also exhibited a significant mismatch between the scope of knowledge and activity. As Tett (2009, p. xiv) argues ‘The modern world is littered with these silos – pockets of specialist knowledge, where technical experts work in mental and structural silos. Indeed, these silos are proliferating, for as the pace of innovation speeds up, and spreads further and further around the globe, our world is becoming more technologically complex by the day’. As such, while Tett (2009, 2015) primarily focuses her critique on increasing silos of knowledge, as her quote suggests we are witnessing an even more dangerous process in which we have a dual process of the production of increasingly complex and interconnected systems, alongside the increasingly narrow, cordoned bases of knowledge and responsibility for those who are cumulatively producing this externalized complexity. This process is clearly on display in the lead-up to the financial crisis.

While, as discussed above, the complexity of interconnections between Mortgage Backed Securities grew the scope of knowledge of its producers did not correspondingly grow – in fact, in many ways it constricted. Rather than carefully investigating the different potential risks, ‘Mortgage lending had become an assembly-line affair in which loans were made and then quickly reassembled into bonds immediately sold to investors’ (Tett, 2009, p. 112). Even when key additional layers of complexity were added through the development of ABS CDOs, there was little additional knowledge or orientation to the additional connections that were being generated. Ultimately, the primary knowledge base and orientation of the producers and sellers of ABS CDOs was how to attain the desired credit rating on these investments – all other portions of complexity were externalized by the vast majority of those formulating these investments. Consequently, once the model of the Gaussian copula was identified as a way to solve the problem of estimating correlations, the complexities were neglected, with the Gaussian copula functioning as the ‘combustion engine of the CDO world’ (Tett 2009, p. 119–122). As MacKenzie’s (2011) discussion of different clusters of evaluation practices likewise shows, those who made and rated the ABS CDOs lacked a sufficient basis of knowledge to fully understand their actual activity – both in terms of the vulnerabilities of the investments they packaged and the vulnerability of the financial system to these extremely complex investment vehicles. As emphasized above, these mismatches between knowledge and activity not only left open the potential for creating extremely risky financial transactions, but also tended to shield those who created and benefitted from the risk from responsibility for the consequences of these risks.

The digital economy likewise manifests extreme mismatches between the scope of knowledge of those developing computing programs and the interdependencies that emerge on top of them. As emphasized above, contemporary computer programs exhibit a level of complexity well beyond the comprehension of a single person or group of people. Alongside this complexity then is a massive mismatch between the extremely small part of an overall program that any one set of programmers develop and understand – which even then can contain flaws in itself (Schneier, 2018) – and the emergent intersections of these units into larger systemic fragilities across the network. As interactive complexities build on top of interconnected and low redundancy systems and intensify the problems emerging from these features, this mismatch between scope of knowledge and activity intensifies these problems of interactive complexity. Moreover, problems of interactive complexity are amplified by how tightly-coupled computing systems can be – massive automated systems can be ~~disabled~~ [harmed] by even a single mistake as computers do not possess the type of hermeneutic interpretability that living agents do (see Kernighan, 2017). Yet, it is not only the physical nature of computing that leads to the potential for a single mistake to cascade through a computing device; the emerging monopolistic business model of the digital economy creates greater interdependencies as large digital companies seek to insert themselves as a universally necessary part of the ‘stack’ of digital computing services (Nunan & Di Domenico, 2017). An illustrative example, the cascading failure of websites in February 2017, exemplifies well how the interconnectedness and complexity of the web interacts with mismatches between the knowledge of specific individuals and the massive ramifications that their actions can have.

In February 2017, several websites on the East Coast of the United States stopped functioning properly, including the websites of Slack, GitHub, GitLab, Quora, Medium, Expedia, Adobe Cloud, with reports of Xero, SiriusXM, and Nest internet-connected devices also ceasing to function properly (Nichols, 2017). In fact, outage monitoring sites DownDetector and isitdownrightnow.com were also not functioning properly due to the overloading of the sites because of a massive spike in internet users checking on the functionality of these other websites (Nichols, 2017). Ultimately, this five-hour breakdown in availability of these websites and services was traced back to the malfunctioning of Amazon Web Services (AWS), a core cloud computing provider. The malfunctioning had occurred due to a single typo by an Amazon employee. The employee was debugging a billing system and ended up taking offline more servers than were intended. This ‘error started a domino effect that took down two other server subsystems and so on … ’ (Del Rey, 2017). AWS had also suffered a significant outage due to human error years earlier in 2011. In upgrading its primary servers, the traffic that the server usually manages was sent to a back-up server rather than being sent to the rest of the network. This back-up server was not intended to handle this much higher level of traffic, thus causing a significant amount of the traffic to get ‘stuck’. Despite this single mistake of redirection to the back-up server, if the system had functioned properly, the problem would not have cascaded in this way, but this mistake interacted with other as of yet previously unidentified bugs, thus amplifying the breakdown in service (Goldman, 2011).

The massive outage in February 2017 is estimated to have damaged the business of 54 of the top 100 internet retailers, with an estimated total economic impact of $150 million (Bort, 2017). This has led to the incident being described as ‘Amazon and the $150 million typo’ (Hersher, 2017). Reflecting on the systemic importance of a single cloud computing company, it was noted that AWS has ‘quietly become responsible for keeping much of the internet running’ and that ‘AWS has come to underpin so much of our daily life that we hardly even notice how important it’s become — until it stops working’ (Swearingen, 2018). Yet, different parts of AWS malfunctioned again in September 2017 and then in March 2018, hitting Alexa, Slack and Capital One. While Amazon apologized and promised changes, the cascading impacts of AWS outages continue to be felt. As with interconnectedness and low redundancy, the growing complexity and mismatch between knowledge and impacts in the digital economy, though shaped by the technology, is not an inevitable dimension of the technology, but rather massively intensified by the monopolistic characteristics of the digital economy and the goal of digital giants to grow as large as quickly as possible (see Hindman, 2018).

#### Geopolitical rivals will inevitably conduct large-scale cyberattacks against dominant platforms to accelerate great power competition – only creating redundancy solves.

Frantzman ’21 [Seth; 10/5/21; Senior Middle East Correspondent and Middle East affairs Analyst @ The Jerusalem Post, PhD @ Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Former Research Associate @ Rubin Center for Research in International Affairs at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya; “After Facebook, big tech outages may be doomsday scenario in future conflict – analysis”; https://www.jpost.com/international/after-facebook-big-tech-outages-may-be-doomsday-scenario-in-future-conflict-analysis-681083]

The impressive trajectory of the Internet age and social media’s dominance of how we get our information was put on display Monday night when Facebook and its companies, Instagram and WhatsApp, crashed worldwide.

Large swaths of the world rely on these platforms and services, which are largely unregulated by governments, to send messages, make calls, receive information and coordinate meetings and daily life.

This is not just a small part of people’s lives in the modern age. The age of the Internet has rapidly shifted power into the hands of a few large tech giants that operate as monopolies for hosting, distributing and disseminating information.

However, they also control other networks that increasingly serve as stand-ins for phone networks.

When the Internet age began in the 1990s, it provided a radical new way for people to access information; previously, there was only print media, television and radio. The nature of the Internet, interactive in ways the other three weren’t, meant it rapidly began to inhabit a multiplicity of places in people’s lives that hitherto were not thought possible.

Soon after, the Internet provided an alternative way to watch television – streaming sites and YouTube. This quickly became true for radio and other mediums. News went online, battering major legacy media and challenging its survival. Product sales, or shopping, moved online, as did the creation of portals for people to chat, message, communicate and create virtual versions of themselves.

The most recent revolution has been the binding of these various elements under the power of Big Tech companies – like Facebook. What this means is that while the Internet age of the late 1990s and early 2000s was a unique free-for-all Wild West, the new age reflects more the era of the robber barons of the US in the late 19th century – the monopolies and trusts that came to dominate the industry through horizontal and vertical integration.

Big Tech companies are so large they now have gobbled up swaths of the Internet and control the way in which most information and communications flow.

AN OUTAGE like the one that occurred on Monday is not unprecedented. Various large Big Tech sites have crashed in the past, usually for a short time. There has also been an increase in cyber incidents over the last few years, including cyberattacks that have targeted critical infrastructure, whether in Israel, the US or other places.

The question that should be asked increasingly by governments is how they can replicate or maintain communication and major Internet systems in case of an outage among major companies that are too big to fail.

This is not an arbitrary thought experiment.

The world is entering an era of uncertainty, reflected not only in the pandemic, but also in great power competition. This is because the world order that emerged after the Cold War, which led to the global dominance of the United States, has now shifted to a league of authoritarian countries that are at odds with Washington and Western democracies.

Most of them also censor certain parts of the Internet or fear widespread citizen use of it as a whole. This includes Turkey, Iran, China, Russia and other states.

Big Tech companies often must weigh the demands of authoritarian regimes to crack down on them, balancing them with their own budgets and business goals. This means, in some cases, succumbing to the authoritarians.

For example, Big Tech companies, after complaints from Western leaders, have labeled some information as “misinformation” in order to do what they deem is a public service during the pandemic. They might also sometimes cater to the authoritarian request to remove groups linked to dissidents in places like Turkey. They must struggle with those questions.

Large authoritarian regimes may realize that Big Tech is the soft underbelly of the Western democracies. Let enough people rely on just one or two tech giants for everything they do, and you create a Pearl Harbor-like vulnerability. The exception is that in this case, it’s even bigger than a Pearl Harbor incident because it sits astride so much of what happens in the world.

IN A future rife with growing conflict between the US and other regimes, will Big Tech be a target? And how will it respond if it is not regulated and closely monitored by governments that have an interest in maintaining its security?

Do groups of countries like the Five Eyes (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK and US) have an interest in protecting the workings of things like WhatsApp, for instance?

While it is true that the corporations that run these platforms are private, Western governments have understood that when it comes to large corporate networks – whether phone companies, radio, rail or transportation – even if some aspects of the industry are private, there is a need to use these industries in times of peril.

For this very reason, there is an emergency broadcast system in the US. Governments that value the role Big Tech has in our lives would be smart to begin to think about how to step in and maintain these systems should they be under attack or go “dark” in the future.

They should consider duplicating or archiving these systems, rather than relying on private corporations to do so. There is no doubt there is already a partnership between major governments and Big Tech because messaging, such as relating to vaccines, is already part of the way large Western governments encourage Big Tech to disseminate information. There is already a dialogue.

Unregulated and without checks and balances on their operation, Big Tech could be a threat to the West; this revelation is one of the important lessons of the recent outage.

#### Cascading collapse escalates every nuclear dyad and causes reactor meltdowns.

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But what exactly is a global system? Our planet itself is an autonomous and selfsustaining mega-system, marked by periodic cycles and elemental vagaries. Human activities within however are not system isolates as our banking, utility, farming, healthcare and retail sectors etc. are increasingly entwined. Risks accrued in one system may cascade into an unforeseen crisis within and/or without (Choo, Smith & McCusker, 2007). Scholars call this phenomenon “emergence”; one where the behaviour of intersecting systems is determined by complex and largely invisible interactions at the substratum (Goldstein, 1999; Holland, 1998).

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is a case in point. While experts remain divided over the source and morphology of the virus, the contagion has ramified into a global health crisis and supply chain nightmare. It is also tilting the geopolitical balance. China is the largest exporter of intermediate products, and had generated nearly 20% of global imports in 2015 alone (Cousin, 2020). The pharmaceutical sector is particularly vulnerable. Nearly “85% of medicines in the U.S. strategic national stockpile” sources components from China (Owens, 2020).

An initial run on respiratory masks has now been eclipsed by rowdy queues at supermarkets and the bankruptcy of small businesses. The entire global population – save for major pockets such as Sweden, Belarus, Taiwan and Japan – have been subjected to cyclical lockdowns and quarantines. Never before in history have humans faced such a systemic, borderless calamity.

COVID-19 represents a classic emergent crisis that necessitates real-time response and adaptivity in a real-time world, particularly since the global Just-in-Time (JIT) production and delivery system serves as both an enabler and vector for transboundary risks. From a systems thinking perspective, emerging risk management should therefore address a whole spectrum of activity across the economic, environmental, geopolitical, societal and technological (EEGST) taxonomy. Every emerging threat can be slotted into this taxonomy – a reason why it is used by the World Economic Forum (WEF) for its annual global risk exercises (Maavak, 2019a).

As traditional forces of globalization unravel, security professionals should take cognizance of emerging threats through a systems thinking approach.

METHODOLOGY

An EEGST sectional breakdown was adopted to illustrate a sampling of extreme risks facing the world for the 2020-2030 decade. The transcendental quality of emerging risks, as outlined on Figure 1, below, was primarily informed by the following pillars of systems thinking (Rickards, 2020):

• Diminishing diversity (or increasing homogeneity) of actors in the global system (Boli & Thomas, 1997; Meyer, 2000; Young et al, 2006);

• Interconnections in the global system (Homer-Dixon et al, 2015; Lee & Preston, 2012);

• Interactions of actors, events and components in the global system (Buldyrev et al, 2010; Bashan et al, 2013; Homer-Dixon et al, 2015); and

• Adaptive qualities in particular systems (Bodin & Norberg, 2005; Scheffer et al, 2012)

Since scholastic material on this topic remains somewhat inchoate, this paper buttresses many of its contentions through secondary (i.e. news/institutional) sources.

ECONOMY

According to Professor Stanislaw Drozdz (2018) of the Polish Academy of Sciences, “a global financial crash of a previously unprecedented scale is highly probable” by the mid-2020s. This will lead to a trickle-down meltdown, impacting all areas of human activity.

The economist John Mauldin (2018) similarly warns that the “2020s might be the worst decade in US history” and may lead to a Second Great Depression. Other forecasts are equally alarming. According to the International Institute of Finance, global debt may have surpassed $255 trillion by 2020 (IIF, 2019). Yet another study revealed that global debts and liabilities amounted to a staggering $2.5 quadrillion (Ausman, 2018). The reader should note that these figures were tabulated before the COVID-19 outbreak.

The IMF singles out widening income inequality as the trigger for the next Great Depression (Georgieva, 2020). The wealthiest 1% now own more than twice as much wealth as 6.9 billion people (Coffey et al, 2020) and this chasm is widening with each passing month. COVID-19 had, in fact, boosted global billionaire wealth to an unprecedented $10.2 trillion by July 2020 (UBS-PWC, 2020). Global GDP, worth $88 trillion in 2019, may have contracted by 5.2% in 2020 (World Bank, 2020).

As the Greek historian Plutarch warned in the 1st century AD: “An imbalance between rich and poor is the oldest and most fatal ailment of all republics” (Mauldin, 2014). The stability of a society, as Aristotle argued even earlier, depends on a robust middle element or middle class. At the rate the global middle class is facing catastrophic debt and unemployment levels, widespread social disaffection may morph into outright anarchy (Maavak, 2012; DCDC, 2007).

Economic stressors, in transcendent VUCA fashion, may also induce radical geopolitical realignments. Bullions now carry more weight than NATO’s security guarantees in Eastern Europe. After Poland repatriated 100 tons of gold from the Bank of England in 2019, Slovakia, Serbia and Hungary quickly followed suit.

According to former Slovak Premier Robert Fico, this erosion in regional trust was based on historical precedents – in particular the 1938 Munich Agreement which ceded Czechoslovakia’s Sudetenland to Nazi Germany. As Fico reiterated (Dudik & Tomek, 2019):

“You can hardly trust even the closest allies after the Munich Agreement… I guarantee that if something happens, we won’t see a single gram of this (offshore-held) gold. Let’s do it (repatriation) as quickly as possible.” (Parenthesis added by author).

President Aleksandar Vucic of Serbia (a non-NATO nation) justified his central bank’s gold-repatriation program by hinting at economic headwinds ahead: “We see in which direction the crisis in the world is moving” (Dudik & Tomek, 2019). Indeed, with two global Titanics – the United States and China – set on a collision course with a quadrillions-denominated iceberg in the middle, and a viral outbreak on its tip, the seismic ripples will be felt far, wide and for a considerable period.

A reality check is nonetheless needed here: Can additional bullions realistically circumvallate the economies of 80 million plus peoples in these Eastern European nations, worth a collective $1.8 trillion by purchasing power parity? Gold however is a potent psychological symbol as it represents national sovereignty and economic reassurance in a potentially hyperinflationary world. The portents are clear: The current global economic system will be weakened by rising nationalism and autarkic demands. Much uncertainty remains ahead. Mauldin (2018) proposes the introduction of Old Testament-style debt jubilees to facilitate gradual national recoveries. The World Economic Forum, on the other hand, has long proposed a “Great Reset” by 2030; a socialist utopia where “you’ll own nothing and you’ll be happy” (WEF, 2016).

In the final analysis, COVID-19 is not the root cause of the current global economic turmoil; it is merely an accelerant to a burning house of cards that was left smouldering since the 2008 Great Recession (Maavak, 2020a). We also see how the four main pillars of systems thinking (diversity, interconnectivity, interactivity and “adaptivity”) form the mise en scene in a VUCA decade.

ENVIRONMENTAL

What happens to the environment when our economies implode? Think of a debt-laden workforce at sensitive nuclear and chemical plants, along with a concomitant surge in industrial accidents? Economic stressors, workforce demoralization and rampant profiteering – rather than manmade climate change – arguably pose the biggest threats to the environment. In a WEF report, Buehler et al (2017) made the following pre-COVID-19 observation:

The ILO estimates that the annual cost to the global economy from accidents and work-related diseases alone is a staggering $3 trillion. Moreover, a recent report suggests the world’s 3.2 billion workers are increasingly unwell, with the vast majority facing significant economic insecurity: 77% work in part-time, temporary, “vulnerable” or unpaid jobs.

Shouldn’t this phenomenon be better categorized as a societal or economic risk rather than an environmental one? In line with the systems thinking approach, however, global risks can no longer be boxed into a taxonomical silo. Frazzled workforces may precipitate another Bhopal (1984), Chernobyl (1986), Deepwater Horizon (2010) or Flint water crisis (2014). These disasters were notably not the result of manmade climate change. Neither was the Fukushima nuclear disaster (2011) nor the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004). Indeed, the combustion of a long-overlooked cargo of 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate had nearly levelled the city of Beirut, Lebanon, on Aug 4 2020. The explosion left 204 dead; 7,500 injured; US$15 billion in property damages; and an estimated 300,000 people homeless (Urbina, 2020). The environmental costs have yet to be adequately tabulated.

Environmental disasters are more attributable to Black Swan events, systems breakdowns and corporate greed rather than to mundane human activity.

Our JIT world aggravates the cascading potential of risks (Korowicz, 2012). Production and delivery delays, caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, will eventually require industrial overcompensation. This will further stress senior executives, workers, machines and a variety of computerized systems. The trickle-down effects will likely include substandard products, contaminated food and a general lowering in health and safety standards (Maavak, 2019a). Unpaid or demoralized sanitation workers may also resort to indiscriminate waste dumping. Many cities across the United States (and elsewhere in the world) are no longer recycling wastes due to prohibitive costs in the global corona-economy (Liacko, 2021).

Even in good times, strict protocols on waste disposals were routinely ignored. While Sweden championed the global climate change narrative, its clothing flagship H&M was busy covering up toxic effluences disgorged by vendors along the Citarum River in Java, Indonesia. As a result, countless children among 14 million Indonesians straddling the “world’s most polluted river” began to suffer from dermatitis, intestinal problems, developmental disorders, renal failure, chronic bronchitis and cancer (DW, 2020). It is also in cauldrons like the Citarum River where pathogens may mutate with emergent ramifications.

On an equally alarming note, depressed economic conditions have traditionally provided a waste disposal boon for organized crime elements. Throughout 1980s, the Calabria-based ‘Ndrangheta mafia – in collusion with governments in Europe and North America – began to dump radioactive wastes along the coast of Somalia. Reeling from pollution and revenue loss, Somali fisherman eventually resorted to mass piracy (Knaup, 2008).

The coast of Somalia is now a maritime hotspot, and exemplifies an entwined form of economic-environmental-geopolitical-societal emergence. In a VUCA world, indiscriminate waste dumping can unexpectedly morph into a Black Hawk Down incident. The laws of unintended consequences are governed by actors, interconnections, interactions and adaptations in a system under study – as outlined in the methodology section.

Environmentally-devastating industrial sabotages – whether by disgruntled workers, industrial competitors, ideological maniacs or terrorist groups – cannot be discounted in a VUCA world. Immiserated societies, in stark defiance of climate change diktats, may resort to dirty coal plants and wood stoves for survival. Interlinked ecosystems, particularly water resources, may be hijacked by nationalist sentiments. The environmental fallouts of critical infrastructure (CI) breakdowns loom like a Sword of Damocles over this decade.

GEOPOLITICAL

The primary catalyst behind WWII was the Great Depression. Since history often repeats itself, expect familiar bogeymen to reappear in societies roiling with impoverishment and ideological clefts. Anti-Semitism – a societal risk on its own – may reach alarming proportions in the West (Reuters, 2019), possibly forcing Israel to undertake reprisal operations inside allied nations. If that happens, how will affected nations react? Will security resources be reallocated to protect certain minorities (or the Top 1%) while larger segments of society are exposed to restive forces? Balloon effects like these present a classic VUCA problematic.

Contemporary geopolitical risks include a possible Iran-Israel war; US-China military confrontation over Taiwan or the South China Sea; North Korean proliferation of nuclear and missile technologies; an India-Pakistan nuclear war; an Iranian closure of the Straits of Hormuz; fundamentalist-driven implosion in the Islamic world; or a nuclear confrontation between NATO and Russia. Fears that the Jan 3 2020 assassination of Iranian Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani might lead to WWIII were grossly overblown. From a systems perspective, the killing of Soleimani did not fundamentally change the actor-interconnection-interactionadaptivity equation in the Middle East. Soleimani was simply a cog who got replaced.

#### Cyberattacks go nuclear.

Klare ’19 [Michael; November 2019; Professor Emeritus of Peace and World Security Studies @ Hampshire College, Senior Visiting Fellow @ Arms Control Association; “Cyber Battles, Nuclear Outcomes? Dangerous New Pathways to Escalation”; https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-11/features/cyber-battles-nuclear-outcomes-dangerous-new-pathways-escalation]

Under the Obama administration’s NPR report, released in April 2010, the circumstances under which the United States would consider responding to non-nuclear attacks with nuclear weapons were said to be few. “The United States will continue to…reduce the role of nuclear weapons in deterring non-nuclear attacks,” the report stated. Although little was said about what sort of non-nuclear attacks might be deemed severe enough to justify a nuclear response, cyberstrikes were not identified as one of these. The 2018 NPR report, however, portrayed a very different environment, one in which nuclear combat is seen as increasingly possible and in which non-nuclear strategic threats, especially in cyberspace, were viewed as sufficiently menacing to justify a nuclear response. Speaking of Russian technological progress, for example, the draft version of the Trump administration’s NPR report stated, “To…correct any Russian misperceptions of advantage, the president will have an expanding range of limited and graduated [nuclear] options to credibly deter Russian nuclear or non-nuclear strategic attacks, which could now include attacks against U.S. NC3, in space and cyberspace.”1

The notion that a cyberattack on U.S. digital systems, even those used for nuclear weapons, would constitute sufficient grounds to launch a nuclear attack was seen by many observers as a dangerous shift in policy, greatly increasing the risk of accidental or inadvertent nuclear escalation in a crisis. “The entire broadening of the landscape for nuclear deterrence is a very fundamental step in the wrong direction,” said former Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz. “I think the idea of nuclear deterrence of cyberattacks, broadly, certainly does not make any sense.”2

Despite such admonitions, the Pentagon reaffirmed its views on the links between cyberattacks and nuclear weapons use when it released the final version of the NPR report in February 2018. The official text now states that the president must possess a spectrum of nuclear weapons with which to respond to “attacks against U.S. NC3,” and it identifies cyberattacks as one form of non-nuclear strategic warfare that could trigger a nuclear response.

That cyberwarfare had risen to this level of threat, the 2018 NPR report indicated, was a product of the enhanced cybercapabilities of potential adversaries and of the creeping obsolescence of many existing U.S. NC3 systems. To overcome these vulnerabilities, it called for substantial investment in an upgraded NC3 infrastructure. Not mentioned, however, were extensive U.S. efforts to employ cybertools to infiltrate and potentially incapacitate the NC3 systems of likely adversaries, including Russia, China, and North Korea.

For the past several years, the U.S. Department of Defense has been exploring how it could employ its own very robust cyberattack capabilities to compromise or destroy enemy missiles from such states as North Korea before they can be fired, a strategy sometimes called “left of launch.”3 Russia and China can assume, on this basis, that their own launch facilities are being probed for such vulnerabilities, presumably leading them to adopt escalatory policies such as those espoused in the 2018 NPR report. Wherever one looks, therefore, the links between cyberwar and nuclear war are growing.

The Nuclear-Cyber Connection

These links exist because the NC3 systems of the United States and other nuclear-armed states are heavily dependent on computers and other digital processors for virtually every aspect of their operation and because those systems are highly vulnerable to cyberattack. Every nuclear force is composed, most basically, of weapons, early-warning radars, launch facilities, and the top officials, usually presidents or prime ministers, empowered to initiate a nuclear exchange. Connecting them all, however, is an extended network of communications and data-processing systems, all reliant on cyberspace. Warning systems, ground- and space-based, must constantly watch for and analyze possible enemy missile launches. Data on actual threats must rapidly be communicated to decision-makers, who must then weigh possible responses and communicate chosen outcomes to launch facilities, which in turn must provide attack vectors to delivery systems. All of this involves operations in cyberspace, and it is in this domain that great power rivals seek vulnerabilities to exploit in a constant struggle for advantage.

The use of cyberspace to gain an advantage over adversaries takes many forms and is not always aimed at nuclear systems. China has been accused of engaging in widespread cyberespionage to steal technical secrets from U.S. firms for economic and military advantages. Russia has been accused, most extensively in the Robert Mueller report, of exploiting cyberspace to interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Nonstate actors, including terrorist groups such as al Qaeda and the Islamic State group, have used the internet for recruiting combatants and spreading fear. Criminal groups, including some thought to be allied with state actors, such as North Korea, have used cyberspace to extort money from banks, municipalities, and individuals.4 Attacks such as these occupy most of the time and attention of civilian and military cybersecurity organizations that attempt to thwart such attacks. Yet for those who worry about strategic stability and the risks of nuclear escalation, it is the threat of cyberattacks on NC3 systems that provokes the greatest concern.

This concern stems from the fact that, despite the immense effort devoted to protecting NC3 systems from cyberattack, no enterprise that relies so extensively on computers and cyberspace can be made 100 percent invulnerable to attack. This is so because such systems employ many devices and operating systems of various origins and vintages, most incorporating numerous software updates and “patches” over time, offering multiple vectors for attack. Electronic components can also be modified by hostile actors during production, transit, or insertion; and the whole system itself is dependent to a considerable degree on the electrical grid, which itself is vulnerable to cyberattack and is far less protected. Experienced “cyberwarriors” of every major power have been working for years to probe for weaknesses in these systems and in many cases have devised cyberweapons, typically, malicious software (malware) and computer viruses, to exploit those weaknesses for military advantage.5

Although activity in cyberspace is much more difficult to detect and track than conventional military operations, enough information has become public to indicate that the major nuclear powers, notably China, Russia, and the United States, along with such secondary powers as Iran and North Korea, have established extensive cyberwarfare capabilities and engage in offensive cyberoperations on a regular basis, often aimed at critical military infrastructure. “Cyberspace is a contested environment where we are in constant contact with adversaries,” General Paul M. Nakasone, commander of the U.S. Cyber Command (Cybercom), told the Senate Armed Services Committee in February 2019. “We see near-peer competitors [China and Russia] conducting sustained campaigns below the level of armed conflict to erode American strength and gain strategic advantage.”

Although eager to speak of adversary threats to U.S. interests, Nakasone was noticeably but not surprisingly reluctant to say much about U.S. offensive operations in cyberspace. He acknowledged, however, that Cybercom took such action to disrupt possible Russian interference in the 2018 midterm elections. “We created a persistent presence in cyberspace to monitor adversary actions and crafted tools and tactics to frustrate their efforts,” he testified in February. According to press accounts, this included a cyberattack aimed at paralyzing the Internet Research Agency, a “troll farm” in St. Petersburg said to have been deeply involved in generating disruptive propaganda during the 2016 presidential elections.6

Other press investigations have disclosed two other offensive operations undertaken by the United States. One called “Olympic Games” was intended to disrupt Iran’s drive to increase its uranium-enrichment capacity by sabotaging the centrifuges used in the process by infecting them with the so-called Stuxnet virus. Another left of launch effort was intended to cause malfunctions in North Korean missile tests.7 Although not aimed at either of the U.S. principal nuclear adversaries, those two attacks demonstrated a willingness and capacity to conduct cyberattacks on the nuclear infrastructure of other states.

Efforts by strategic rivals of the United States to infiltrate and eventually degrade U.S. nuclear infrastructure are far less documented but thought to be no less prevalent. Russia, for example, is believed to have planted malware in the U.S. electrical utility grid, possibly with the intent of cutting off the flow of electricity to critical NC3 facilities in the event of a major crisis.8 Indeed, every major power, including the United States, is believed to have crafted cyberweapons aimed at critical NC3 components and to have implanted malware in enemy systems for potential use in some future confrontation.

Pathways to Escalation

Knowing that the NC3 systems of the major powers are constantly being probed for weaknesses and probably infested with malware designed to be activated in a crisis, what does this say about the risks of escalation from a nonkinetic battle, that is, one fought without traditional weaponry, to a kinetic one, at first using conventional weapons and then, potentially, nuclear ones? None of this can be predicted in advance, but those analysts who have studied the subject worry about the emergence of dangerous new pathways for escalation. Indeed, several such scenarios have been identified.9

The first and possibly most dangerous path to escalation would arise from the early use of cyberweapons in a great power crisis to paralyze the vital command, control, and communications capabilities of an adversary, many of which serve nuclear and conventional forces. In the “fog of war” that would naturally ensue from such an encounter, the recipient of such an attack might fear more punishing follow-up kinetic attacks, possibly including the use of nuclear weapons, and, fearing the loss of its own arsenal, launch its weapons immediately. This might occur, for example, in a confrontation between NATO and Russian forces in east and central Europe or between U.S. and Chinese forces in the Asia-Pacific region.

Speaking of a possible confrontation in Europe, for example, James N. Miller Jr. and Richard Fontaine wrote that “both sides would have overwhelming incentives to go early with offensive cyber and counter-space capabilities to negate the other side’s military capabilities or advantages.” If these early attacks succeeded, “it could result in huge military and coercive advantage for the attacker.” This might induce the recipient of such attacks to back down, affording its rival a major victory at very low cost. Alternatively, however, the recipient might view the attacks on its critical command, control, and communications infrastructure as the prelude to a full-scale attack aimed at neutralizing its nuclear capabilities and choose to strike first. “It is worth considering,” Miller and Fontaine concluded, “how even a very limited attack or incident could set both sides on a slippery slope to rapid escalation.”10

What makes the insertion of latent malware in an adversary’s NC3 systems so dangerous is that it may not even need to be activated to increase the risk of nuclear escalation. If a nuclear-armed state comes to believe that its critical systems are infested with enemy malware, its leaders might not trust the information provided by its early-warning systems in a crisis and might misconstrue the nature of an enemy attack, leading them to overreact and possibly launch their nuclear weapons out of fear they are at risk of a preemptive strike.

“The uncertainty caused by the unique character of a cyber threat could jeopardize the credibility of the nuclear deterrent and undermine strategic stability in ways that advances in nuclear and conventional weapons do not,” Page O. Stoutland and Samantha Pitts-Kiefer wrote in 2018 paper for the Nuclear Threat Initiative. “[T]he introduction of a flaw or malicious code into nuclear weapons through the supply chain that compromises the effectiveness of those weapons could lead to a lack of confidence in the nuclear deterrent,” undermining strategic stability.11 Without confidence in the reliability of its nuclear weapons infrastructure, a nuclear-armed state may misinterpret confusing signals from its early-warning systems and, fearing the worst, launch its own nuclear weapons rather than lose them to an enemy’s first strike. This makes the scenario proffered in the 2018 NPR report, of a nuclear response to an enemy cyberattack, that much more alarming.

Yet another pathway to escalation could arise from a cascading series of cyberstrikes and counterstrikes against vital national infrastructure rather than on military targets. All major powers, along with Iran and North Korea, have developed and deployed cyberweapons designed to disrupt and destroy major elements of an adversary’s key economic systems, such as power grids, financial systems, and transportation networks. As noted, Russia has infiltrated the U.S. electrical grid, and it is widely believed that the United States has done the same in Russia.12 The Pentagon has also devised a plan known as “Nitro Zeus,” intended to immobilize the entire Iranian economy and so force it to capitulate to U.S. demands or, if that approach failed, to pave the way for a crippling air and missile attack.13

The danger here is that economic attacks of this sort, if undertaken during a period of tension and crisis, could lead to an escalating series of tit-for-tat attacks against ever more vital elements of an adversary’s critical infrastructure, producing widespread chaos and harm and eventually leading one side to initiate kinetic attacks on critical military targets, risking the slippery slope to nuclear conflict. For example, a Russian cyberattack on the U.S. power grid could trigger U.S. attacks on Russian energy and financial systems, causing widespread disorder in both countries and generating an impulse for even more devastating attacks. At some point, such attacks “could lead to major conflict and possibly nuclear war.”14

These are by no means the only pathways to escalation resulting from the offensive use of cyberweapons. Others include efforts by third parties, such as proxy states or terrorist organizations, to provoke a global nuclear crisis by causing early-warning systems to generate false readings (“spoofing”) of missile launches. Yet, they do provide a clear indication of the severity of the threat. As states’ reliance on cyberspace grows and cyberweapons become more powerful, the dangers of unintended or accidental escalation can only grow more severe.

#### Grid collapse destroys vital infrastructure – kills millions.

Weiss ’19 [Matthew and Martin; May 29; National Sales Director at United Medical Instruments, UMI and Research assistant at the American Jewish University; Neurosurgeon at UCLA-Olive View Medical Center; Energy, Sustainability, and Society, “An assessment of threats to the American power grid,” vol. 9]

Consequences of a sustained power outage

The EMP Commission states “Should significant parts of the electrical power infrastructure be lost for any substantial period of time, the Commission believes that the consequences are likely to be catastrophic, and many people will die for the lack of the basic elements necessary to sustain life in dense urban and suburban communities.” [67].

Space constraints preclude discussion on how the loss of the grid would render synthesis and distribution of oil and gas inoperative. Telecommunications would collapse, as would finance and banking. Virtually all technology, infrastructure, and services require electricity.

An EMP attack that collapses the electric power grid will collapse the water infrastructure—the delivery and purification of water and the removal and treatment of wastewater and sewage. Outbreaks that would result from the failure of these systems include cholera. It is problematic if fuel will be available to boil water. Lack of water will cause death in 3 to 4 days [68].

Food production would also collapse. Crops and livestock require water delivered by electronically powered pumps. Tractors, harvesters, and other farm equipment run on petroleum products supplied by an infrastructure (pumps, pipelines) that require electricity. The plants that make fertilizer, insecticides, and feed also require electricity. Gas pumps that fuel the trucks that distribute food require electricity. Food processing requires electricity.

In 1900, nearly 40% of the population lived on farms. That percentage is now less than 2% [69]. It is through technology that 2% of the population can feed the other 98% [68]. The acreage under cultivation today is only 6% more than in 1900, yet productivity has increased 50 fold [69].

As stated by Dr. Lowell L Wood in Congressional testimony:

“If we were no longer able to fuel our agricultural machine in the country, the food production of the country would simply stop, because we do not have the horses and mules that used to tow agricultural gear around in the 1880s and 1890s”. “So the situation would be exceedingly adverse if both electricity and the fuel that electricity moves around the country……… stayed away for a substantial period of time, we would miss the harvest, and we would starve the following winter” [70].

People can live for 1–2 months without food, but after 5 days, they have difficulty thinking and at 2 weeks they are incapacitated [68]. There is typically a 30-day perishable food supply at regional warehouses but most would be destroyed with the loss of refrigeration [69]. The EMP Commission has suggested food be stockpiled for a possible EMP event.

A prescription for failure

Even if all the recommendations of the Congressional EMP Commission were implemented, there is no guarantee that the grid will not sustain a prolonged collapse. There should therefore be contingency plans for such a failure.

There is also another consideration. The foundational pillars of prior American nuclear defense policy, in today’s climate, are of uncertain validity. Mutual assured destruction is the Maginot line of the 21st century. Nonproliferation will prove difficult to resurrect.

The consequences of a widespread nuclear attack have been positioned to the public as massive deaths from blast effects, and then further lingering deaths from the effects of radiation. We suspect there will be no electricity, and there will be no electricity for a very long time.

#### Structural separations maintain system stability by valuing redundancy over efficiency.

Khan ’19 [Lina; Chairperson @ Federal Trade Commission, JD @ Yale Law School; “The Separations of Platforms and Commerce,” *Columbia Law Review* 119(4), p. 973-1098; AS]

Preserving System Resiliency

Another justification that recurs is promoting the resiliency of systems. Because several of the entities subject to structural separations serve an “infrastructural” role—structuring access to markets or to an essential good or service—the public has a strong interest in maintaining their stability and shielding them from disruption.497 Crashes that cripple these infrastructural services can have an outsized effect on economic activity, and involvement in multiple lines of business can increase the likelihood of system crashes. For this reason, policymakers treated strict limits on entry and exit as one way to shield critical services from undue risk.498 Structural separations in banking and telephony, too, were partly justified on grounds of promoting system stability.499

Precisely because banking services constitute a critical good, ensuring the soundness and stability of banking is a central goal of banking policy. Lawmakers and regulators have argued that preventing banks from expanding into commercial activities may help insulate banks from the vagaries of other sectors.500 This line of argument is premised on the idea that exposing banks to manufacturing, physical trading, or other commercial activities “increases the vulnerability of the banking and payments systems, the federal deposit insurance fund, and thereby the broader economy.”501 A question frequently raised during the 2013 debates around banks’ expansion into physical commodity trading was: What would happen if Morgan Stanley repeated the BP oil spill? Would taxpayers be on the line for the $61.2 billion in damages? In this way, a structural separation helps eliminate the risk that instability or disruption in commercial markets could necessitate a financial bailout.502 To be sure, not all commercial activities are inherently more risky than financial activity—and, some might argue, expanding into these spheres may help banks diversify risk. That said, it is true that some commercial activities—like drilling oil or mining—pose particularly expensive risks to which federally insured depository institutions should not be exposed.503

Concerns about system stability and resiliency also informed the FCC’s Computer Inquiries. The carriers argued that, in order to promote efficiency, they should be permitted to use excess capacity for data processing.504 The Commission stated, first, that “the potential abuses inherent” in the system far outweighed any purported efficiencies,505 and, second, the carriers should have a “‘back-up’ system” that “should be designed to meet foreseeable breakdowns of equipment dedicated to public service” and “should be available instantly for that purpose without the conflicting claims of other users.”506 In other words, the FCC privileged redundancy over efficiency, recognizing that the former would serve the public by helping to ensure the stability of communications services and networks. Although expanding into data processing wouldn’t necessarily heighten the risk of a crash, keeping that capacity for backup would enable the system to absorb any shocks, helping promote resiliency.

### 1AC – Disinformation

#### Contention three: Disinformation

#### Dominant platforms undermine the free exchange of information – loss of independent publishers generates propaganda, misinformation, and polarization.

Stoller ’19 [Matt; 10/17/19; Fellow @ Open Markets Institute, Director of Research @ American Economic Liberties Project, Former Senior Policy Advisor and Budget Analyst @ Senate Budget Committee; “Tech Companies Are Destroying Democracy and the Free Press”; https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/17/opinion/tech-monopoly-democracy-journalism.html; AS]

These two phony Facebook pages illustrate the crisis of the free press and democracy: Advertising revenue that used to go to quality journalism is now captured by big tech intermediaries, and some of that money now goes to dishonest, low-quality and fraudulent content.

This is the first presidential election happening after the business model for journalism collapsed. Advertising revenue for print newspapers has fallen by two-thirds since 2006. From 2008 to 2018, the number of newspaper reporters dropped 47 percent. Two-thirds of counties in America now have no daily newspaper, and 1,300 communities have lost all local coverage. Even outlets native to the web, like BuzzFeed and HuffPost, have laid off reporters. This problem is a global one; for example, in Australia from 2014 to 2018, the number of journalists in traditional print publications fell by 20 percent.

The signaling functions of news brands and the cultural barriers meant to guard against distorting effects of advertising have broken down. In their place, a dysfunctional information ecosystem has emerged, characterized by polarization, addiction and conspiracy theories. In Europe and in the United States, young men learn race science on YouTube. In Brazil, citizens learn that Zika is spread by vaccines. As the Center for Humane Technology puts it: “Today’s tech platforms are caught in a race to the bottom of the brain stem to extract human attention. It’s a race we’re all losing.”

There are two drivers of this crisis. The first is the concentration of online advertising revenue in the hands of Google and Facebook — global monopolies sitting astride public discourse, diverting money that used to go to publishers to themselves. The second is an ethical breakdown — a natural consequence of advertising financing an information utility like a social network or search engine — which I call “conflicted communications.”

It’s tempting to blame the rise of the internet for all of this, but it’s important to recognize that technology is shaped by law. Advertising, publishing and information distribution operate in publicly structured markets. In the past 40 years, the rules underlying these markets have undergone a radical reorganization.

As the communications historian Richard John argues, for roughly 200 years (beginning with the creation of the Post Office in 1791), American policymakers generally sought to decentralize media power and keep communication networks neutral. In the late 1970s, policymakers reversed their presumptions. They relaxed antitrust law, eliminated the fairness doctrine and eventually allowed the creation of large media conglomerates through the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

Enabled by a loose merger policy, there was a roll-up of the internet space. From 2004 to 2014, Google spent at least $23 billion buying 145 companies, including the advertising giant DoubleClick. And since 2004, Facebook has spent a similar amount buying 66 companies, including key acquisitions allowing it to attain dominance in mobile social networking. None of these acquisitions were blocked as anti-competitive.

Data is now the key input into advertising: If you know who is looking at an ad, that ad space becomes much more valuable. Google and Facebook now know who is looking at every ad, and their competitors for ad dollars — newspapers — do not. Further, newspapers now must also rely on Google and Facebook to reach their customers, and hand them valuable subscriber and reader data; when The Wall Street Journal refused to abide by Google’s formatting terms, Google removed it from its search ranks and the newspaper’s traffic dropped by 44 percent.

In other words, it wasn’t just technology but also a pro-concentration philosophy that shaped the information revolution of the 1990s and 2000s. Google and Facebook grew to control important information utilities, like general search, social networking and mapping. New forms of advertising — underpinned by unregulated use of data and sold through opaque and complex auctions — then undermined the bargaining leverage of publishers and enabled new forms of fraud using bots and falsified content.

A result of these policy changes is a radical centralization of power over the flow of information. Tech platforms now control online advertising revenue, which is the primary source of financing for news. But this is not just a problem of the monopolization of an industry — these new monopolists are not simply more powerful media behemoths taking share from smaller publishers. Google and Facebook are not in the journalism business at all; they are in the communications business, running information utilities with revenue that used to go to journalism.

Advertising financing presents an inherent conflict of interest, because advertising is a third party paying to manipulate someone. In traditional media, advertising can influence editorial choices. There are a series of ethical structures designed to inhibit excessive control of advertisers in media industries, a result of debates for hundreds of years among public figures on the nature of advertising and publishing. Some of these include the signaling effects of differentiated news brands, a diversity of news outlets, the separation of advertising and editorial departments, and guilds to protect journalistic integrity from publishing business interests. But such ethical debates have yet to occur around information utilities. Consequently, the manifestation of the distorting effect of advertising — addiction, manipulation, fraud, tearing of a collective social fabric — has been met with little cultural immunity, policy response or institutional defenses.

Before Google became an enormous advertising company, the company’s co-founders — Sergey Brin and Larry Page — noted this problem. They looked at the problematic search engine market of the 1990s — with companies offering advertisers the chance to pay to be listed as an organic search result — and argued that financing a search engine business through advertising was fundamentally corrupting. Such information utilities would then have an incentive to keep users on their properties so that they could keep selling more ads. They would also have an incentive to self-deal, putting content in front of users that benefits the utility rather than the end user. And they would have an incentive to surveil their users, so that they could target them more effectively.

Mr. Brin and Mr. Page were right about the corrupting influence of advertising. This business model of conflicted communications is where the addiction, surveillance, fraud and clickbait come from. Unfortunately, we are living in the world they foresaw.

The combination of these two dynamics — the concentration of power and the new ethical quandaries presented by the financing of information networks by advertising — has created a crisis for democracy. The monopolization of ad revenue starves legitimate outlets of financing. More subtly, the signaling functions of news brands and the dense cultural barriers meant to guard against distorting effects of advertising have broken down. The task of policymakers is now to put together the ethical structures to mitigate these conflicts.

The collapse of journalism and democracy in the face of the internet is not inevitable. To save democracy and the free press, we must eliminate Google and Facebook’s control over the information commons. That means decentralizing these markets and splitting information utilities from one another so that search, mapping, YouTube and other Google subsidiaries are separate companies, and Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook once again compete. It also means barring or severely curtailing advertising on any of these platforms. Advertising revenue should once again flow to journalism and art. And people should pay directly for communications services, instead of paying indirectly by forgoing democracy.

#### Concentration incites Russian fake news campaigns – separations inhibit Russian operatives.

Hendrickson ’17 [Clara; 12/7/17; Research Analyst @ Brookings; and William Galston; Ezra K. Zilkha Chair and Senior Fellow in Governance Studies @ Brookings; “Big technology firms challenge traditional assumptions about antitrust enforcement”; https://www.brookings.edu/blog/techtank/2017/12/06/big-technology-firms-challenge-traditional-assumptions-about-antitrust-enforcement/; AS]

THE NEW TECHNOLOGY TRUSTS

So while fear that big tech can wield excessive influence in our democracy may reflect broader misgivings outside the realm of antitrust law and enforcement, some political concerns about big tech appropriately fall under the purview of antitrust regulation. As Sally Hubbard, a Senior Editor at the Capitol Forum who covers monopolization issues, recently stated in an interview with Vox’s Sean Illing, “Companies like Facebook and Google have had an outsize effect on political discourse because of the ways their algorithms help to promote and spread fake news and propaganda. Even if it’s not their intent, their business model invariably contributes to this problem.” More competition between rival platforms would have introduced a greater number of algorithms for Russian operatives to navigate, and probably would have mitigated the impact of the fake news that successfully targeted voters during the 2016 U.S. election.

Similarly, because the services offered by the likes of Google and Facebook are free (or low cost in the case of Amazon), tech companies have escaped the predatory pricing concerns typically triggered by anticompetitive high prices. However, Financial Times columnist Rana Foroohar has argued that we incur non-monetary costs when we use these services, handing over our attention and personal data.

Of course these two examples do not immediately elicit a clear solution for antitrust enforcement reform one way or the other, but they do illustrate that the dynamics of the tech era will require an updated conception and application of current antitrust law. While what this looks like remains unclear, a consensus is emerging that the Chicago School consumer welfare framework, formulated by Robert Bork and Richard Posner among others, has failed to capture today’s market power. In a widely-read note published in the Yale Law Journal, Lina Khan, a fellow at the Open Markets Institute, shows that the focus on low prices as the exclusive goal of antitrust cannot account for Amazon’s dominance.

#### Russian propaganda campaigns cause miscalc – goes nuclear.

Trenin ’18 [Dmitri; 1/25/18; Director @ Carnegie Moscow Center; “Avoiding U.S.-Russia Military Escalation During the Hybrid War”; https://carnegiemoscow.org/2018/01/25/avoiding-u.s.-russia-military-escalation-during-hybrid-war-pub-75277; AS]

FEATURES OF THE HYBRID WAR

This Hybrid War’s most distinguishing feature is that it is being fought in a truly global, virtually borderless environment. International interaction is no longer restricted by walls or other state-imposed barriers. Traditional distinctions between strategy and tactics have been all but erased. The hybrid warriors include many more players than was the case during the Cold War—from national governments and transnational corporations to nongovernmental actors and even private individuals.

The war is being fought simultaneously in a number of spheres, on different levels, and in the never-ending, twenty-four-hour news cycle. This aspect of warfare is particularly true of the field of information, which is of prime importance in the Information Age that emerged with the end of the Cold War. From cyber conflicts and the use of artificial intelligence to the predominance of propaganda and fake news, the main battles of the Hybrid War are taking place outside of the purely physical realm and in the domain of new information technologies. Just as important to the Hybrid War is economics, which has been the key driver of globalization that paralleled the rise of these innovative information technologies. The prominence of the U.S. media and the United States’ immense financial power give it a huge advantage in both fields. As a result, the weapons of choice in the Hybrid War are those that use information and economic power to discredit and sanction one’s adversaries.3

Politically, the Hybrid War includes the outside stimulation of political changes in other countries through street activism and the promotion of specific values, parties, or popular movements. It has been characterized by interference in elections, political transitions, and other political processes, including various efforts to hack sensitive information, spread compromising or damaging materials and fake news, encourage character assassinations, and impose personal and other noneconomic sanctions (for example, restrictions on travel, seizure of assets, imprisonment, or deportation) on opponents. The existence of a common information space makes waging political warfare on foreign territory much easier and more attractive than ever before. Cross-border promotion of democracy and support for the color revolutions that dominated the 2000s (for example, the 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia and the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine) have now found counterparts in emerging solidarity among those who espouse more conservative and traditionalist values, such as political systems based on authoritarian models and strict national sovereignty.4

Military power is not out of the picture—though its use is different than in the Cold War. The static standoff of million-strong armies in Europe and the long shadow of the nuclear arms race have drawn down or faded. Nuclear deterrence between Russia and the West remains in place but at lower and more stable levels than during the Cold War. Today’s risks of miscalculation derive from potential incidents involving conventional forces. A token military standoff has reemerged along Russia’s border with NATO countries, but, to date, this standoff bears no resemblance in either scale or scope to the forces that faced each other during the Cold War. The main focus is on developing new military technologies and novel means and ways of prosecuting warfare—from outer space to cyberspace—that blur or eliminate the distinction between wartime and peacetime. Like its predecessor, the Hybrid War is a war in the time of peace. Even more than in the past, however, the onus is on national leaderships to minimize the number of casualties, ideally to zero.

Russian military strategists had developed the concept of hybrid warfare even before the actual conflict broke out in earnest between the United States and Russia in early 2014. Analyzing the experience of the post-Soviet color revolutions and the 2011 Arab Spring, Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov wrote in February 2013 that the “consequences of new conflicts are comparable to those of a real war”; in many cases, nonmilitary methods “are substantially more effective than the power of arms,” and greater emphasis is placed on “political, economic, information, humanitarian, and other nonmilitary means” and “covert military measures,” including “information warfare and actions by special forces.” In this environment, “overt use of military force, often in the form of peacekeeping or crisis management, takes place only at a certain stage, mainly to achieve final success in a conflict.” With regard to the U.S.-Russia confrontation, another key feature has surfaced: asymmetry between the sides’ capabilities.

POWER ASYMMETRIES AND ASYMMETRIC ACTIONS

Although Gerasimov was referring to a hybrid war when discussing new means and methods of warfare, this analysis uses the newly fashionable term to describe the current U.S.-Russia confrontation. Unlike its Cold War predecessor, this conflict is asymmetrical. At least since the 1970s, the Soviet Union was the United States’ equal in terms of both nuclear and conventional military power. Even beyond its own vast land mass and immediate sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, it wielded considerable ideological power in many Western countries and in the Third World and presided over a system of alliances in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. The Russian Federation, by contrast, has few formal allies, no satellite states, and a handful of protectorates, if one includes the self-proclaimed states of Abkhazia, Donbass, South Ossetia, and Transnistria. It has no ideology to compare with the comprehensive dogma of Marxism-Leninism, and although it is still a nuclear superpower, it lags far behind the United States in non-nuclear military capabilities. Economically, Russia—with its estimated 1.5 percent of the global gross domestic product—is a dwarf.

Neither the balance nor the correlation of forces, however, will determine the outcome of this confrontation. Despite the glaring asymmetries in the national power of the two sides of the conflict, the course of events is not predetermined. As a nonlinear, highly asymmetrical conflict, the outcome likely will result from domestic developments in Russia or the United States or both. Both countries are facing serious problems that could prove decisive in the final calculations of the Hybrid War.

The United States is going through a triple crisis of its political system, exemplified but not caused by the arrival of President Donald Trump and the virulent domestic opposition to him and his policies. A crisis of social values lies beneath this political crisis and points to a widening gap between the more liberal and the largely conservative parts of the country. At the same time, the United States faces a crisis within its own foreign policy as it struggles to reconcile the conflict between the more inward-looking U.S. national interest and the international liberal order of the U.S.-led global system.

Russia, though outwardly stable, is approaching its own major crisis as the political regime created by Putin faces an uncertain future after the eventual departure of its figurehead. Putin’s Kremlin is already working on a political transition that would rejuvenate the elite and improve its competence and performance, but, at the same time, Russian society is also changing and Putin’s heirs cannot take its support for granted. Gross inequality, sluggish economic growth, low vertical mobility, and high-level corruption will present a range of serious challenges to the future Russian leadership.

The eventual outcome of the Hybrid War could be reminiscent of the downfall of the Soviet Union, which was far less the result of the U.S.-Soviet Cold War than of a misguided effort to reform the Soviet Union itself. Russia might break down and break up again, or it might decide on a foreign policy more geared toward its economic needs than to a certain concept of world order. As for the United States, it might decide to limit its global commitments and redesign its international role as the world’s preeminent but no longer dominant state. Yet, in doing so, it will need to accept that its change in status will come with a certain price and that it will not be able to take advantage of the benefits of the position it once enjoyed.

Asymmetries in power lead to asymmetric actions, which as Gerasimov suggested are intended to “neutralize the enemy’s superiority in warfare” or “identify and exploit the enemy’s vulnerabilities.”5 By an order of magnitude—or more—Russia is outgunned, outmanned, and outspent by the combined forces of the United States and its allies. To stay in the fight, it must rely on its few comparative advantages and seek to use them to maximum effect. These advantages include the geographical proximity of some of the main theaters of operation, such as Crimea and eastern Ukraine, where Russia has escalation dominance; the Russian political system, which allows for secretive, swift, and decisive action; and Moscow’s willingness to take much higher risks in view of the disproportionally higher stakes involved for the Russian leadership and a national culture that historically has tolerated higher losses in defense or protection of the Motherland. Through swift decisions and actions, made without prior warning, Russia is capable of surprising its adversaries and keeping them off-balance. This situation promises an uncertain, hard-to-predict, and risky environment, where miscalculation can lead to incidents or collisions that, in turn, lead to escalation. Granted, these incidents would be of a different kind than the tank standoff at Berlin’s Checkpoint Charlie in late October 1961 or the Cuban Missile Crisis barely a year later. Escalation resulting from miscalculation would not be automatic, but the wider damage it could cause needs to be taken seriously.

#### Monopoly on information undermines democratic governance.

Fukuyama ’21 [Francis et al; Senior Fellow @ Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies; Barak Richman; Katharine T. Bartlett Professor of Law and Professor of Business Administration @ Duke University School of Law; Ashish Goel; Professor of Management Science and Engineering @ Stanford University; “How to Save Democracy From Technology,” *Foreign Affairs* 100(1), p. 98-110; AS]

Since 2016, Americans have woken up to the power of technology companies to shape information. These platforms have allowed hoaxers to peddle fake news and extremists to push conspiracy theories. They have created "filter bubbles," an environment in which, because of how their algorithms work, users are exposed only to information that confirms their preexisting beliefs. And they can amplify or bury particular voices, thus having a disturbing influence on democratic political debate. The ultimate fear is that the platforms have amassed so much power that they could sway an election, either deliberately or unwittingly.

Critics have responded to these concerns by demanding that the platforms assume greater responsibility for the content they broadcast. They called for Twitter to suppress or fact-check President Donald Trump's misleading tweets. They lambasted Facebook for stating that it would not moderate political content. Many would like to see Internet platforms behave like media companies, curating their political content and holding public officials accountable.

But pressuring large platforms to perform that function-and hoping they will do it with the public interest in mind-is not a long-term solution. This approach sidesteps the problem of their underlying power, and any real solution must limit that power. Today, it is largely conservatives who complain about Internet platforms' political bias. They assume, with some justification, that the people who run today's platforms-Jeff Bezos of Amazon, Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook, Sundar Pichai of Google, and Jack Dorsey of Twitter-tend to be socially progressive, even as they are driven primarily by commercial self-interest.

This assumption may not hold up in the longer run. Suppose that one of these giants were taken over by a conservative billionaire. Rupert Murdoch's control over Fox News and The Wall Street Journal already gives him far-reaching political clout, but at least the effects of that control are plain to see: you know when you are reading a Wall Street Journal editorial or watching Fox News. But if Murdoch were to control Facebook or Google, he could subtly alter ranking or search algorithms to shape what users see and read, potentially affecting their political views without their awareness or consent. And the platforms' dominance makes their influence hard to escape. If you are a liberal, you can simply watch MSNBC instead of Fox; under a Murdoch-controlled Facebook, you may not have a similar choice if you want to share news stories or coordinate political activity with your friends.

Consider also that the platforms-Amazon, Facebook, and Google, in particular-possess information about individuals' lives that prior monopolists never had. They know who people's friends and family are, about people's incomes and possessions, and many of the most intimate details of their lives. What if the executive of a platform with corrupt intentions were to exploit embarrassing information to force the hand of a public official? Alternatively, imagine a misuse of private information in conjunction with the powers of the government-say, Facebook teaming up with a politicized Justice Department.

Digital platforms' concentrated economic and political power is like a loaded weapon sitting on a table. At the moment, the people sitting on the other side of the table likely won't pick up the gun and pull the trigger. The question for U.S. democracy, however, is whether it is safe to leave the gun there, where another person with worse intentions could come along and pick it up. No liberal democracy is content to entrust concentrated political power to individuals based on assumptions about their good intentions. That is why the United States places checks and balances on that power.

#### Democratic regress causes global war.

Diamond ’19 [Larry; 2019; Professor of Sociology and Political Science and at Stanford University, Ph.D. in Sociology from Stanford University; Ill Winds, “Conclusion: A New Birth of Freedom,” Ch. 14]

In such a near future, my fellow experts would no longer talk of “democratic erosion.” We would be spiraling downward into a time of democratic despair, recalling Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s grim observation from the 1970s that liberal democracy “is where the world was, not where it is going.” 5

The world pulled out of that downward spiral—but it took new, more purposeful American leadership. The planet was not so lucky in the 1930s, when the global implosion of democracy led to a catastrophic world war, between a rising axis of emboldened dictatorships and a shaken and economically depressed collection of self-doubting democracies.

These are the stakes. Expanding democracy—with its liberal norms and constitutional commitments—is a crucial foundation for world peace and security. Knock that away, and our most basic hopes and assumptions will be imperiled.

The problem is not just that the ground is slipping. It is that we are perched on a global precipice. That ledge has been gradually giving way for a decade. If the erosion continues, we may well reach a tipping point where democracy goes bankrupt suddenly—plunging the world into depths of oppression and aggression that we have not seen since the end of World War II. As a political scientist, I know that our theories and tools are not nearly good enough to tell us just how close we are getting to that point—until it happens.

#### Disinformation and polarization undermine international commitments – clear presidential signals are key to credibility.

Trubowitz ’19 [Peter; 5/16/19; Associate Fellow in US and the Americas Program @ Chatham House; and Peter Harris; Assistant Professor of Political Science @ Colorado State University; “Will Dysfunctional Politics Finally End the American Century?”; https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/05/will-dysfunctional-politics-finally-end-american-century; AS]

Can the United States continue to shape international politics as it has done for the past 70 years, or is the era of US dominance coming to an end? Most attempts to answer this question focus on America’s relative power – that is, the balance of material capabilities between the US and its geopolitical competitors. However, today the most pressing checks on US leadership come not from foreign competitors, but rather from America’s increasingly dysfunctional domestic politics.

America is suffering from a shortage of functional or ‘usable power.’ While relative power as measured by its military arsenal vis-à-vis those of its rivals has held steady, the domestic political ability of US presidents to turn the country’s tremendous power and wealth into international influence is declining. This has been the case for some time now. America’s deficit of usable power did not begin with Donald Trump, but it has grown measurably on his watch as president.

Presidents’ usable power depends on their ability to win the support of a broad cross-section of the voting public for their foreign policy agenda. Historically, presidents have relied on three tools to gain public buy-in: bipartisanship on Capitol Hill, the leader’s ability to set the terms of debate and the design of economically inclusive policies. Each contributed mightily to the public consensus underpinning US foreign policy for decades after the Second World War. Today, all three are in short supply.

Bipartisanship was the norm in foreign policymaking during the Cold War. Democratic presidents could count on the support of moderate eastern Republicans in Congress; Republican presidents relied on the support of conservative southern Democrats. Domestic voters, who worried about presidents’ partisan motives, found such bipartisan support reassuring.

So did America’s allies and friends overseas. They worried that in the absence of bipartisan support, international commitments taken by one president would be reversed or soft-pedaled when the party out of power gained control of the White House.

This is exactly what has happened since the end of the Cold War. Foreign policymaking has become increasingly partisan and erratic. Incoming presidents now look for opportunities to undo their predecessors’ legacies, something that rarely happened during the Cold War.

George W Bush withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol on climate change and opposed the Rome Statute creating the International Criminal Court. Barack Obama ended US involvement in Iraq. Donald Trump withdrew the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, pulled out of the Paris Agreement on climate change and renounced the Iran nuclear deal. US relative power may not have changed much since the 1990s, but these examples show decline in America’s willingness to engage and commit internationally as well as in how credible others view its international pronouncements.

If hyper-partisanship has made US commitments worth less internationally, the absence of a shared vision of America’s international purpose has made bipartisanship harder to produce domestically. To build lasting bipartisan coalitions, presidents must structure the national conversation in ways that convince voters that their administration’s preferred international policies will strengthen national security and increase economic opportunity while making it hard for their political opponents to mount an effective challenge.

During the Cold War, presidents enjoyed considerable success in structuring debate over America’s role in the world. The existence of a ‘clear and present danger’ to national security helped by making it possible for to frame the case for creating and sustaining an expansive (and expensive) American-led international order in terms of national security and anti-communism.

This formulation contributed to some forms of extremism (such as McCarthyism) and overreach (the Vietnam War). At the same time, it put internationalism on firm bipartisan footing and gave presidents considerable latitude to advance internationalist causes.

Since the end of the Cold War, presidents have struggled to secure domestic support for their foreign policies. In absence of a Soviet-style threat, Bill Clinton, George W Bush and Barack Obama all found their efforts to breathe new life into internationalism buffeted by partisan division and public pressure to ‘do less internationally’. Mounting public disillusionment with globalization compounded matters. This disillusionment is related to the problem of (non)inclusive growth.

There was a time when presidents made sure that their foreign policies paid economic dividends for average Americans. Teddy Roosevelt’s ‘Square Deal’ and Franklin Roosevelt’s ‘New Deal’ both linked grand strategic ambitions abroad to benefit-sharing policies at home. This was also true of US foreign policy during much of the Cold War. Presidents and lawmakers alike could advocate internationalist foreign policies – military preparedness, free trade, foreign aid and so forth – safe in the knowledge that most economic sectors and congressional districts would benefit from their actions.

Even before the Berlin Wall came down, support for internationalism had started to weaken. From the 1980s onward, less regulation, lower taxes, anti-union policies and de-unionization, and higher profits for the few meant less economic security for the many. As the costs of this neoliberal agenda continued to mount in the 1990s and 2000s, growing numbers of middle- and working-class Americans came to see globalization not as a means to improve their personal circumstances, but rather as a source of growing income inequality and economic insecurity.

The chickens finally came home to roost in November 2016, when America elected a president running on an avowedly anti-internationalist platform.

Donald Trump’s ‘America First’ narrative has tapped into Americans’ economic anxiety. There is little realistic chance, however, that it will bridge the chasms that separate Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals, and internationalists and nationalists.

Trump’s harsh stance on immigration has proven to be very unpopular with the majority of voters, even if it appeals strongly to his base. His embrace of economic nationalism is more popular, but opinion polls show that even Trump’s staunchest supporters in rural America are having second thoughts about his trade war with China. Meanwhile, under Trump, partisanship in Washington has increased to hitherto unimaginable levels.

Can the US put its foreign policy house in order? Yes, but to do so, it is critical to recognize that the source of the problem does not lie in Beijing or Moscow.

The decline in US foreign policy efficacy has deep roots in domestic politics in the US. Restoring America’s usable power will require political spadework on the home front: bipartisan bridge-building, an inclusive political vision to connect national priorities with foreign policy and a sustained commitment to more equitable growth-promoting and redistributive policies. This will be a tall order, to be sure, but presidents have successfully navigated such troubled waters in the past.

#### Uncertainty surrounding commitments prompts prolif.

Bell ’18 [Mark S. Bell, Joshua D. Kertzer, Bjorn Jerden, Hemal Shah; assistant professor of political science at the University of Minnesota, assistant professor of government at Harvard University, head of the Asia Program at The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, director for India and Regional Markets at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Global Innovation Policy Center; 3/23/18; “ASSESSING THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO ALLIES IN ASIA AND BEYOND”; https://www.gmfus.org/publications/assessing-us-commitment-allies-asia-and-beyond; German Marshall Fund; TV]

Just as scholars of international relations often worry about how uncertainty makes it harder for actors in international politics to cooperate with one another,9 political psychologists argue that uncertainty has at least two important implications for how we think and behave. First, when faced with an uncertain world, individuals respond by trying to reduce the uncertainty they experience: uncertainty makes us cling to our “ingroups” (the groups to which we feel like we belong) and focus on threats to our identity.10 Uncertainty about the credibility of U.S. commitments thus not only incentivizes allies to “hedge” by looking into other arrangements to protect themselves, but also has the potential to exacerbate competitive dynamics. For example, it is not surprising that debates within South Korea, Japan, and even Germany about acquiring independent nuclear weapons are suddenly becoming more politically mainstream. If, for example, South Korean policymakers are uncertain about the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence, investing more in South Korean capabilities reduces the downside risk of relying on the United States. But this, of course, has the potential to exacerbate tensions with other states in the region, such as Japan, China, and North Korea. Allies investing more in their own defense and adopting more independent foreign policies also have the potential to increase tensions with the United States itself, creating a feedback loop that may further undermine the strength of the alliance.

#### Proliferation causes nuclear war.

Bass ’20 [Gary J; professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton University, PhD from Harvard University; April 2020; “Just and Unjust Proliferation”; https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/gjbass/files/bass\_ethics.pdf; Ethics, Vol. 130; TV]

New nuclear confrontations in South Asia, East Asia, or the Middle East may prove unstable.130 Scott Sagan points to Japan’s 1941 surprise attack on Pearl Harbor—despite Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku’s prescient warning that it could lead to the fiery obliteration of Tokyo by US bombers—as an example of how deterrence can fail even when the target country has robust military forces and can credibly threaten devastating retaliation.131 As Albert Wohlstetter warned in a classic 1959 article, the ability to retaliate rests on maintaining a reliable peacetime deterrent force which could weather a first strike, having surviving leaders capable of deciding to counterattack and conveying that command to the remainder of the armed forces, as well as the ability of the retaliatory weapons to reach enemy territory and penetrate both active and passive defenses.132 Smaller nuclear arsenals are inherently more vulnerable to attack, which tempts enemy states to destroy a nascent nuclear program now rather than allow a hated neighbor to break out as a nuclear-armed adversary.133

Great powers, too, may be galvanized to smash a hostile country’s emerging nuclear programs before they reach fruition, as the United States considered before China got the bomb.134 Many newly nuclear-armed countries are close to each other, forcing lightning reaction times. In impoverished or unstable countries, command-and-control or retaliatory launch capabilities may be weak, which also tempts enemy predation. As Sagan argues, even established and new nuclear powers have been frighteningly subject to accidents and errors.135 Rickety governments are at risk of coups or upheaval during an international crisis, replaying the Kennedy administration’s fears that Nikita Khrushchev had been toppled by Soviet hardliners during the Cuban missile crisis. And some of the new proliferators are embroiled in enduring rivalries intensified by ideological or nationalist hatreds, such as the Indo-Pakistani or Arab-Israeli conflicts.

One might expect more robust deterrence when only one side had nuclear weapons. Yet the record is not clear-cut. As Vipin Narang concludes in a study of the nuclear postures of China, France, India, Israel, Pakistan, and South Africa, the possession of secure second-strike nuclear forces was not enough to systematically deter conventional war.136 There are five cases when states without nuclear weapons have attacked states which had them, including China striking the United States in Korea in 1950, Argentina invading the British-held Falklands in 1982, and the devastating Egyptian and Syrian surprise attack against Israel in 1973—one of the most perilous moments in Israel’s existence.137

There is some evidence that acquiring nuclear weapons can make certain states more aggressive, rather than less, because of what political scientists call the stability-instability paradox: since both sides know that escalation from conventional conflict to nuclear war would be devastating, their nuclear forces cancel each other out and may leave them freer to engage in conventional warfare.138 Following that logic, both Amartya Sen and Scott Sagan have argued that the Kargil War was in part sparked by Pakistan’s new possession of nuclear weapons, emboldening the Pakistan army to pick a conventional fight with India.139 Similarly, Victor Cha claims that North Korea’s recent belligerence is motivated by a sense among its leadership that their nuclear arsenal makes them invulnerable to retaliation from foreign powers.140

Realists could reasonably quarrel with any part of this analysis. Those are important debates to have, and this brief discussion is hardly meant to close them. Yet it is difficult to be sanguine about nuclear proliferation as it is unfolding today. It is certainly plausible that in stable dyads, nuclear weapons have a robust deterrent effect, but social scientists are not sure exactly how strong it is—whether it would afford protection against miscalculation, hair-trigger decisions, nationalist hatred, or the sheer desperation of a government such as Imperial Japan in 1941. Absent more certainty, nuclear skeptics would not feel freed from their moral qualms.

When dicing with death, the odds matter. As McMahan notes,“whether it would be wrong to form the conditional intention to use nuclear weapons will always depend on questions concerning the evaluation of outcomes and the assessment of probabilities.”141 Some of us might be prepared to risk a 1 percent chance of the greater evil of a nuclear war in order to avoid the 99 percent chance of the lesser evil of conventional aggression, while no sensible person would accept a 50 percent chance of nuclear war to stop a 50 percent chance of conventional attack. But what about a 20 percent chance of nuclear conflagration to forestall, say, a 60 percent chance of conventional aggression? What if the odds of nuclear war were “somewhere between one out of three and even,” as Kennedy later reckoned about the Cuban missile crisis?142 Even if a deterrence breakdown is highly unlikely, each newly armed state could add to the chances of apocalypse. The argument from peaceful effects rests heavily on these probabilities of greater and lesser evils, repeated with each new nucleararmed state, but it is hard to share the robust confidence of the proliferation optimists about them.

#### Structurally separating the communications networks firms operate from their ad businesses promotes media integrity.

Khan ’19 [Lina; Chairperson @ Federal Trade Commission, JD @ Yale Law School; “The Separations of Platforms and Commerce,” *Columbia Law Review* 119(4), p. 973-1098; AS]

b. Media Diversity. — As in the past, integration by dominant platforms today could undermine the richness and diversity of outlets providing media and news. At first blush, this may seem counterintuitive, given how much easier and cheaper the digital age has made it to disseminate information. But the proliferation of information in the digital age—the age of information overload—means that the firms organizing and delivering desired and valued information gain in importance. The dominant platforms have emerged as powerful gatekeepers and network distributors in part because they serve as digital portals, and “choosing and switching among different portals entails cognitive costs.”579 This stickiness helps explain why a portal that achieves early dominance can prove so challenging to dislodge.

Critics have argued that Amazon’s outsized power to cut off publishers and authors from the online marketplace threatens First Amendment values.580 Google and Facebook’s role as dominant portals of news and media, meanwhile, may undermine the health and diversity of the media ecosystem. For one, the need to be visible in search rankings and the News Feed incentivizes publishers to invest in content that the platforms’ algorithms favor. Facebook’s emphasis on video content, for example, spurred publishers to fire hundreds of journalists in favor of video producers—only to learn that Facebook had inflated its video numbers.581 A market structure in which two companies set the metrics determining whether internet content gets seen is not a system that promotes diversity. In recent years, questions about news bias by Facebook and the black-box nature of Google search rankings have prompted a larger discussion about whether permitting two firms to capture control over digital information mediation undermines the integrity of our news ecosystems.582

This algorithm-chasing dynamic is primarily a feature of Google and Facebook’s horizontal dominance. But Facebook and Google also vertically compete with the news publishers that depend on their platforms for greater exposure to readers.583 This dual role they play—as a competitor in the sale of digital ads and as an intermediary in the distribution of information—diverts advertising revenue from publishers to the dominant platforms, helping them maintain their duopoly in the digital advertising market.584 The news industry, meanwhile, is on life support: Hundreds of local and regional newspapers have been rolled up or shuttered, such that two thirds of counties in America now have no daily newspaper and 1,300 communities have lost all local coverage.585 Even outlets native to the web, like Buzzfeed and the Huffington Post, are laying off reporters.586

Insofar as this dual role played by Facebook and Google deprives publishers of digital advertising revenue, structurally separating the communications networks these firms operate from their ad businesses could potentially be justified on the basis of protecting the news media. Rather than separating platforms from commerce, such a separation would target a particular business model in order to promote media diversity and protect journalism.587 Careful analysis would be needed to determine precisely what kinds of limits on behavioral-ad based business models might be justified.

# 2AC

## Innovation

### 2AC – AT: China

#### China is a revisionist power. Their goal is to expand and overturn the international order.

Jagannath P. Panda, Research Fellow and Coordinator of the East Asia Centre at MP-IDSA, New Delhi, 5-19-20, ‘“China as a Revisionist Power in Indo-Pacific and India’s Perception: A Power-Partner Contention” JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY CHINA2020, AHEAD-OF-PRINT, 1-17https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epub/10.1080/10670564.2020.1766906?needAccess=true

The evolving international order has mostly been divided into two categories of powers: status quo and revisionist. The latter, as the term signifies, are powers who aim to revise the existing global systems or order by altering it gradually or overthrowing it completely through new measures or initiatives. A gradual change would indicate the rise of an evolutionary revisionist power, while a sudden or rapid change indicates a revolutionary revisionist power. Essentially, a revisionist power aims to enhance its power, status and authority in global decision-making process, seeking to remodel the international system, and eventually the order, in its favor. A revolutionary revisionist power views such an endeavor through the lenses of realism. 13 Alternatively, an evolutionary revisionist power follows the idealist school of thought, or a gradualist path: it would not necessarily confront the established great powers in seeking to change the existing international systems and order. 14

Scholars, such as John Mearsheimer and Suisheng Zhao, argue that rising powers such as China and India, with the potential to emerge as major (or great) powers, would continue to pose challenges for the existing international system and order. 15 The intensity to compete, perhaps to challenge the existing system or order, is more noticeable in China than in other powers, highlighting that China is more ‘revisionist’ than a normal ‘status quo’ power. 16 The reasons behind China’s perception as a revisionist power in Indo-Pacific are appositely clear. These include authoritarian and unilateral initiatives to bring out fast-track infrastructure development along with connectivity through the flagship Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and assertive claims in the maritime domains, such as the South China Sea and East China Sea disputes. Further, mounting claims over land territories and attempts to create a distinct order through the creation of international institutions or forums that are evidently linked to China’s national interests are also important factors. 17 On account of this, the tag of revisionism on Beijing appears today to be justified. 18

Defining a status quo power is fairly simple: they are powers that are primarily content with the fundamental characteristics of the prevailing global order and power distribution. 19 Accepting globalization and international organizations by willingly participating or being a part of them is a key trait of a status quo power. Despite the reservations that it holds on a range of subjects pertaining to the established institutions or organizations, Beijing has been an active member, participant and beneficiary of the international liberal order or the Bretton Woods institutions and other existing international or regional multilateral organizations. Long has China reaped the benefits of the Bretton Woods institutions, even though it has always expressed its displeasure, stating that these institutions are not developing society friendly mannerisms and are primarily dominated by the Western influence. Equally, China established the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO); has been an active partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); is a founding member of the United Nations (UN); and holds a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), to enhance its international interest. 20

In contrast, a revisionist power is one that is dissatisfied with the global order and wants to change the existing norms that have been created by the status quo powers. As explained by political scientist Randall Schweller, a revisionist state wants to ‘undermine’ the existing order so as to increase its own power in the system. 21 In the case of China, an article by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the creation of ‘two China’s’ in the United Nations highlights the country’s dissatisfaction with the established order, and mainly the US. 22 Such dissatisfaction is no more a secret phenomenon in the Chinese public discourse. Most domestic debates in China are centered around the dialogue on how Beijing’s rise must bring revisions to the existing international systems or create new systems. Nevertheless, the emerging ‘great’ power does not seem to fall clearly under either category. It has recently started advocating for a far more active role in the UN; and since assuming a permanent seat in the UNSC in 1971, used its veto power only 14 times, the lowest of the permanent five. 23 At the same time, it has become an increasingly assertive regional power that has, since the launch of its BRI in 2013, factored greatly on the US watch as a ‘threat that is greater than terrorism’. 24

Revisionism also draws greatly from the power transition theory of international relations. 25 It was A.F.K. Organski who in his book World Politics first propagated the power transition theory while simultaneously predicting the possible rise of China and the effect it would have on international power politics. 26 Power transition theory has two major premises: (1) internal growth or development is the source of power for a country and (2) the existing international order during the time of another power’s ‘rise’ is shaped by a hegemon. 27 China’s economic growth in the past decade has been nothing short of a miracle; from a primarily agrarian economy, China has developed into an industrial dynamo, more importantly emerging as a donor country. 28 It is this very remarkable growth that has marked China, in the eyes of the US, as a revisionist power—in 2014, China overtook, although briefly, the US as the largest economy of the world, in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP). 29

It is important to note that efforts by the reigning dominant power to allay the concerns of the challenging powers can lower the possibility of a power transition conflict. However, that did not happen in the case of the US vis-à-vis China. The election of Donald Trump as president in 2016 marked a major turning point in the US approach towards China. 30 Unlike the previous US administration, Trump’s hostility to Chinese advances, from bilateral to regional dealings, has been vocal, direct and critical. 31 Fortunately, until the time China’s military strength is able to match that of the US, major war between the two competing powers in not really foreseen. As Schweller argues, a key characteristic of a revisionist power is that it will ‘employ military force’ in order to disrupt the status quo; this has not been the case with China in respect to the US. 32 While Chinese military assertiveness in the South China Sea and within its own borders has been open, it has not engaged in a military conflict with the US, the dominant power. The trade war between the US and China, however, represented a geo-economic conflict between both the powers. The trade war intensified in 2019, although the finalizing of a ‘phase one’ deal at the beginning of 2020 marks an optimistic sign. 33 The inking of the deal allayed fears that the US–China relations were deteriorating faster than they could be mended.

## Systemic Risk

## Disinformation

### 2AC – AT: DPT

#### DPT is empirical law.

Imai ’21 [Kosuke; PhD in Political Science @ Harvard, Professor in the Department of Government and the Department of Statistics @ Harvard University, “Robustness of Empirical Evidence for the Democratic Peace: A Nonparametric Sensitivity Analysis,” *International Organization*, p. 1-19]

The democratic peace — the idea that democracies rarely fight one another — has been called “the closest thing we have to an empirical law in the study of international relations.” Yet, some contend that this relationship is spurious and suggest alternative explanations. Unfortunately, in the absence of randomized experiments, we can never rule out the possible existence of such confounding biases. Rather than commonly used regression-based approaches, we apply a nonparametric sensitivity analysis. We show that overturning the positive association between democracy and peace would require a confounder that is 47 times more prevalent in democratic dyads than in other dyads. To put this number in context, the relationship between democracy and peace is at least five times as robust as that between smoking and lung cancer. To explain away the democratic peace, therefore, scholars must find far more powerful confounders than already those identified in the literature.

## K

### 2AC – AT: K

#### Evaluate the plan in terms of political context, not abstract ethical demands. We cannot reduce political behavior to an ethical standpoint.

Simon **HAILWOOD** Philosophy @ University of Liverpool **’19** in *Rethinking the Environment for the Anthropocene* eds. Manuel Arias-Maldonado & Zev Trachtenberg p. 123-126

Over recent decades a critique of the allegedly excessive moralism of much Anglophone political philosophy has developed under the heading of ‘political realism’. This comes in different forms with different points of emphasis. It is useful to distinguish four interrelated components of the critique.1 Firstly, much political philosophy distorts our understanding of politics by focusing on specific moral values (often justice) to the detriment of a range of ‘political’ values, such as legitimacy, order and stability. Secondly, moralistic political philosophy under-appreciates the extent to which the values it asserts as fundamental may be ideological. Thirdly, it under-appreciates the importance of strongly contextual forms of political judgement sensitive to concrete political conditions. This is badly served by abstract ‘grand theories’ apparently supposed to generate prescriptions for all political situations.

I will be touching on each of these issues, and especially, towards the end of the chapter, the matter of ideology. But I take the central charge to be this fourth one: much political philosophy proceeds with little or no regard to the concerns of politics as a realm more or less autonomous from morality. It presents itself as applied moral philosophy, adopting a moral standpoint prior to politics that is then expected simply to conform to that standpoint. Bernard Williams, for example, criticises ‘political moralism’ for either regarding the political as a mere instrument of the moral, or for taking morality to constrain what politics ‘...can rightfully do. In both cases, political theory is something like applied morality’ (Williams 2005, p.2). In full moralist mode, then, political philosophy proceeds ‘unrealistically’ by ignoring features internal to ‘the political’ that aren’t a matter simply of ‘doing the right thing’ as defined by an independent moral standard.

The dichotomy here between morality and politics can be drawn more or less strictly, depending on the degree of autonomy the political is given from the moral or ethical2 (Rossi & Sleat 2014, pp.690–93). Thus we can think of a ‘realism’ dimension at one end of which the logically strongest political realism (hereafter SPR) asserts full autonomy: moral normativity is unsuitable to politics, where specifically political forms of normativity hold sway. At the opposite end is pure political moralism, which regards politics as ideally a domain entirely of moral enactment or constraint. Lying between these two extremes weaker forms of realism don’t deny a place for morality in politics, but claim that political philosophy should give greater weight than it often does to the autonomy of distinctively political concerns and constraints. This is probably Williams’ view. I think weaker versions are the most defensible and their definitive central claim plausible: morality is hardly unimportant in politics, but political philosophy shouldn’t proceed simply as applied moral philosophy without regard to distinctively political concerns. I will shortly offer some reasons in favour of weaker political realism and argue that the figure of the political moralist is at least often a strawman. I will then go on to discuss parallels with analogously strong forms of Anthropocene advocacy; analogous that is to SPR. Firstly though, it might be thought that I am myself setting up a strawman in talking about the strongest form of political realism as if it was actually held by anyone. Surely no one thinks that politics ought to be thought a completely autonomous domain where morality is altogether out of place? Maybe not. I am not committed to claiming that anyone does hold SPR in a fully unqualified form;3 I am taking it as an ideal limit defining the end of a spectrum of views.

There are clearly strong and familiar reasons for preferring weaker forms of rea- lism over SPR. One is motivated by sensitivity to our historical context as one of value pluralism and disagreement. The fact of pluralism and disagreement is a definitive problem of modernity and this is a reason for us not to identify political philosophy with a comprehensive ethical standpoint. Many are bound to disagree, and it is pointless to posit a merely theoretical consensus and derive normative political conclusions from that. On the other hand, although political thought is needed to consider how to accommodate pervasive disagreement and secure the legitimacy of coercive institutions despite it, it is difficult not to see this as a moral question as well as a political question.

#### Permutation do both – care work requires state intervention to actualize social provisioning.

Sheila **NEYSMITH** Professor and Associate Dean of Research, Faculty of Social Work @ University of Toronto **ET AL** ’**12** *Beyond Caring Labour to Provisioning Work* [Additional Authors: MARGE REITSMA-STREET Professor of policy and social work in the Faculty of Human and Social Development @ Victoria, STEPHANIE BAKER COLLINS Social Work @ Victoria, AND ELAINE PORTERwith Judy Cerny and Sandra Tam. p. 149-162

In chapter 2 we used excerpts from 'Bread and Roses' to signal themes that we considered central to the dilemmas that women face as they strive to provision for those with whom they have relationships, of responsibility. The fact that these well-known words are meaningful today signals the troubling persistence of the shape of work in women's lives. Bread is needed, and thus so are the means for acquiring it; the procurement of resources through precarious employment, demeaning social assistance requirements, and the informal labour market of many participants meant 'sweating from birth until life closes' just to make ends meet. However, participants also talked about the work they did that was associated with other dimensions of the provisioning responsibilities that they carried: the hours spent doing caring labour, volunteer work, maintaining health, ensuring safety, and making claims for themselves and others. These are documented, often in graphic detail, in the preceding chapters. This work, and the social significance of it, is far more than is usually captured under the apparently polar opposite terms of breadwinner and caring. As the data reveal, the former is but a small part of the work women do. Incorporating caregiving into the picture contributes to an important conceptual expansion. Nevertheless, much of the range and complexity of women's work remained below the surface, unnamed and undocumented. The research that informs this book set out to map this territory in some detail.

To pry open the concept of work, its meaning and worth, from the confines of the market, we began with the concept of provisioning, a term retrieved from an earlier approach to economics that focused on how humans materially provided for themselves. This wider approach to economics contrasts with its current definition as the allocation of scarce resources to satisfy wants within a market economy. Feminist economists such as Nelson (1993) and Power (2004) have revitalized the term to expose all the work that women do that is uncounted in the market economy. An important assumption in these writings is that such work is central, not peripheral, to economic life in the older sense of the word.(Figart, 2007). Caring labour, household labour, and volunteer work are arenas of activity that have so far received the most documentation. To go beyond these established arenas into more unexplored areas, we followed pathways of responsibilities associated with relationship trails as we recorded individual and collective provisioning work that was connected to family, friends, neighbours, and community organizations.

After a careful assessment of this provisioning terrain, the question remains: so where are the roses? What was envisioned by the marchers as they talked of 'life's glories'? Flow can they be realized? Today such ideas might be captured by phrases such as well-being or quality of life. Admittedly, they are contestable conceptual tools, but they do have the virtue of encompassing more than merely income as measures of desirable outcomes in life. Glimmers of some of the invisible work done by individuals and collectivities of women seen when women's relationships are used as the compass, show the myriad ways in which women contribute to social reproduction, adding value to the lives of those for whom they have taken responsibility. Our point is that these are not sideshows around the central characters of the labour market. If the drama is about quality of life, the storyline consists of activities that are attached to relationships of responsibility, and paid work is one segment of it. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that in a market economy paid work is reified and many essentials of life are commodified. The resulting injustice is that having money would have allowed our participants to circumvent a lot of the relentless work they had to do that was not recognized or valued.

The plot thickens as we turn our attention to the script of neoliberal social policies that write off the provisioning of women as a free good,without considering its true costs and benefits. Feminist political economy has issued the proviso that without women's contribution to the economy, the burdens of social reproduction fall disproportionately on marginalized populations, and because the capitalist class benefits from this oppression, the state needs to intervene and support the essential work of women. Our study furthers arguments that the terms of citizenship need to be widened (Howell, 2007; Isin & Nielson, 2008; Plummer, 2004; Stasiulis & Bakan, 2003) in ways that recognize the contributions and agency of women individually and collectively, in private as well as public spaces. Currently, social policies reward the full rights of citizenship to those who are fortunate enough to land the market-player parts - although it could be argued that some of these characters should be cast as villains in the citizenship drama.

The data from the research sites presented in the previous chapters suggest a number of important theoretical ideas that are discussed in this chapter. These we see as ingredients, the nutrients needed if the rose of citizenship is to be realized for women such as the participants in this study. We also indicate in this chapter methodological points that we think were conducive to revealing the many dimensions of provisioning. The chapter concludes by rejecting ideas of citizenship that are limited to market notions of rights and responsibilities and/or that recognize only engagement in formal voluntary organizations as participation in civil society. It presents a model of social provisioning in which the state is positioned as a key player with institutional, economic, and ideological power to shape the lives of its citizens.

Dimensions of Women's Working Lives

In chapter 2 we referred to the range of provisioning responsibilities that women carried. This general term was specified in chapters 3 and 4. In the former we articulated two major domains (activities and strategies), each encompassing six different types of work done by the individuals we interviewed. In chapter 4 the work required to keep community groups going was revealed and organized into three domains. As the quotes highlighted, women's work does not fall into silos, although to facilitate the mapping of this work we classified the data into categories and organized them along dimensions labelled individual and collective provisioning. This approach highlighted the complexity, as well as the amount, of work done, and made visible the fact that, despite neoliberal discourse denying its existence, women carry provisioning responsibilities in collective as well as individual spaces, in public and private spheres. Consider these categories as bookmarks in a provisioning story that needs to be written more fully as the language to describe these domains becomes more accessible to women. As language and concepts are clarified and developed into models, we anticipate that the borders of provisioning domains will be permeable, in several aspects. In each chapter we underlined how the data make visible the existence of pathways, based on relationships of responsibility, between domains of work. This allowed us to track relationships without being stopped at the borders of family and/or paid work. Transgressing these borders revealed a range of relationships that could not be classified validly in one of the traditionally defined family, work, or volunteer spheres rather than another. It was not the sphere that determined the meaning of the relationship but rather the relationship that determined what responsibilities were assumed, how and why provisioning was done. As several of the quotes under transformative strategies suggest, participants speak of the desires and difficulties they face in negotiating their provisioning responsibilities, including those associated with commitment to the goals of the organization. They fulfil the responsibilities that these commitments entail through personal and organizational relationships. These trans-domain pathways follow relationships-, and thus costs and benefits travel along with persons on these pathways (Emirbayer, 1997). These connections must be built into theory and policy models if they are to support women.

Another key finding is a clearer understanding of how current boundaries associated with ideas of public and private spheres are powerful shapers of women's lives. Fortunately, there is now a rich theoretical literature on boundaries (see Howell & Mulligan, 2005; Lamont & Molnar, 2002, for a review; Yuval-Davis & Stoetzler, 2002) that helped in exploring participants' responses. Our point is that women's provisioning requires that women attempt to cross these barriers. As does Dorothy Smith (1990), we argue that these borders and boundaries have presence and power when they are operationalized into policies and programmes and their effects are documented. The analyses in the preceding chapters show how boundaries operate in ways that result in women having to negotiate them - yet another work demand. This work is not a direct provisioning activity but is a necessary strategy to further both individual and collective provisioning. In a neoliberal society the market, state, family, and civil society spheres are real in the sense that there are powerful social structures defining them. The boundaries can be as solid as concrete, requiring determined hammering to get through them (recall in chapter 3 a participant's list of the work she did in response to the questioning of a social assistance official). The boundaries can be spongy, seemingly penetrable, but are impermeable when pushed - as when the grandmother is chastised by her son for taking a mental/physical health break in the form of a walk rather than staying in the house to care for the grandfather. Others can best be compared to fencing where there are openings, but what is on the other side is difficult to discern - one might squeeze through and land on safe ground, or fall into an abyss of the unknown. For example, job training seems to promise a way out of poverty but our data and that of others suggest that it is more often a pathway to dead-end jobs with minimal pay. The work of figuring out the structure of boundaries and strategizing how to cross them is seldom recognized, or it gets named as something else when it is. For instance, finding out what is allowed, or not, under social assistance regulations is dubbed as 'exploiting the system'; setting limits on the demands of family for caring labour is called 'shirking family responsibilities.'

When well-being is equated with the market, employment, and individual consumption choices - and value is measured in dollars, collective spaces as arenas for support and action tend to fade from view. Ways of talking about these spaces - theories that capture their shape and activities - seem unnecessary when the dominant discourse is about markets, choice, and individual responsibility. In chapter 2 we noted how collective spaces where women could come together were disappearing. Funds to support them have diminished in the last decade, and those that remain are tightly hooked to delivering services, with accompanying accountability criteria. All chapters show that services are an important component of the resources that women access to meet their provisioning responsibilities.

Our concern was that the raison d'etre of these organizations was being narrowed to that of a service agency - carrying on functions performed traditionally by the state or voluntary sector. Community capacity-building in any form was being squeezed out as funding criteria favoured short-term service programmes. We have purposefully documented the work that occurs in these spaces, to provide empirical evidence that there is much work in keeping groups going that is not counted in the costs of providing services. However, our concern goes beyond a call to recognize undocumented work, as important as that is. Viewing these events through a critical feminist lens suggests that these collective spaces are being shut down because they counter a market ethos and thus are seen to hinder the efficient operation of a market economy. In fact, it is in these collective spaces that women's provisioning is supported in order to keep individuals from placing even greater demands on the state and the economy. Using a methodology that can document complexity is a critical ingredient in research that is aimed at building theory. While analysing data from multiple sites, one is constantly reminded of its complexity, how different types of provisioning work are related, and how classification schemes will change over time as new data are entered. We agree with McCall (2005) that categories are methodologically useful for documenting complexity - as long as they are recognized as place holders that reflect theoretical assumptions. In chapter 3 we noted how the final categories of provisioning activities and strategies used by participants were the result of coding that started separately within a few sites, followed by the development of cross-site draft categories to be used to code new data in these and the other sites. After all data were collected, two people very familiar with the sites examined codes and content, suggesting final naming for the categories of individual work. The naming of organizational work was also finally determined only after all the data had been collected and community advisory groups had debated the findings. Research team members then agreed upon the naming of the categories. Assuming the position that categories are best regarded as provisional, useful for a period of time, but needing to be modified as phenomena are better understood, the types of provisioning, and their names, done by women as individuals and as members of collectivities will change, we expect, as their breadth and depth become better understood. Furthermore, our understanding of how relationships shape the provisioning responsibilities carried by women is in its infancy. Hopefully the categories - the descriptors we are using, will soon be outgrown as research and theory about women's provisioning grow and mature.

Our choice of sites and approach to analysis were influenced by considerations of important structural inequalities and the effects of 'spheres' and their boundaries on the complexity of the work that women do and the relationships they maintain. Participants were purposefully sampled across six sites to reflect differences in geography, age, income, and organizational type. The women who participated in this research came from very different social locations. They brought to their provisioning responsibilities different priorities, experiences, and identities. The realities they faced differed. A woman of eighty-five with several chronic health conditions had struggles that were different from those of the refugee mother trying to raise a pre-schooler in a high-crime area. Thus, the specifics of their provisioning activities and the strategies they used to provide differed; the collective spaces that they found useful and to which they contributed also differed.

In recent years, the concept of intersectionality has been used to capture how this diversity affects people's lives and actions (see McCall, 2005; Simien, 2007). However, the concept can seem ambiguous, because it has been used in different ways. It is frequently employed to emphasize the fact that individuals have multiple dimensions to their identities, although many are rooted in social structures. For instance, an individual participant in our research might be young and poor, have one child, and be a second-generation immigrant from Jamaica. The attributes used to describe the participant in the previous sentence reflect both the diversity of individuals and the structural dimensions that define privilege and marginalization in Canadian society. However, an individual embodies only some aspects of each. Depending on what these are and how they come together, their relative importance/ influence will differ in people's lives. These intersections affect work and relationships and how they vary across social locations. It is important to articulate in theory and policy which dimensions of privilege and oppression are relevant, and why and determine their relative importance vis-a-vis each other in affecting the quality of life of different groups of citizens.

Challenging Citizenship Claims

Discussions of citizenship reappeared in the eighties as global movements of goods and peoples brought into question the meaning of national borders and the entitlements of those who resided within them. Although this discussion originated in concerns about the meaning and power of nation states when flows of capital no longer recognize national borders, the debate has widened to include what constitutes the basis of citizenship claims and who can claim them. The 'what' is defined in terms of rights and responsibilities, while the 'who' can be found in policies on immigration and refugees (Dobrowolsky, 2008; Yuval-Davis, Anthias, & Kofman, 2005), transient workers (Sharma, 2006), and international caring labour chains (Browne & Braun 2008; Hochschild, 2000b). As the data from Jane's Place (chapter 6) revealed, responsibilities and accompanying funds flow regularly through relationships to kin in other countries. However, since most of the participants in our study were Canadian residents, in the following paragraphs we limit our focus to explicating how their rights and responsibilities were filtered through gendered ideas of what constitutes citizen-like activities.

Marshall's classic post-Second World War articulation of the social rights of citizenship within a welfare state underwent a sea change during the eighties. Marshall's welfare state citizen enjoyed certain entitlements based on the fact that 'he' lived within certain national borders, that 'he' belonged to a nation state. However, Marshall's idea of civil, political, and social rights, despite their social policy strengths, were tied to notions of paid work (Marshall, 1950; Marshall & Botto- more, 1992). State benefits frequently stemmed from this connection. Women's work, particularly unpaid caring labour, is excluded in debates and policies rooted in such a framework (Cohen & Pulkingham, 2009; Lister, 2003).

During the retrenchment of the 1980s, the importance of this exclusion of women's work became pronounced as neoliberal ideology took hold and the idea of an active state, along with funding, retreated. The entitlement-bearing citizen was transformed into a more active citizen, and responsibilities were given more emphasis than rights (see, for example, Etzioni, 1995). The consequences fell disproportionately on women, whether as sole support mothers or as members and staff of different types of publicly funded organizations (Dobrowolsky, 2008; Dobrowolsky & Jenson, 2004; Jenson & Phillips, 2001). The decimation of these organizations resulting from the rise of neoliberalism silenced their critique of its effects on women. Canadian women have won some visibility of their rights over the years - perhaps highlighted by the insertion of equality clauses into the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. However, even here, rights and claims focus on the individual. Disappearing in such debates is the responsibility of the state to meet the needs of its citizens. So dominant is the discourse of individual responsibility that it is difficult to see what/who fades from view in such discussions. As chapters 4 and 9 show, collectivities offer critical spaces for women to understand the actions of the state.

The new active citizen is expected to shoulder responsibilities by participating in paid work and in civil society. The effects of this expectation on the well-being of women on social assistance is well documented (Gazso, 2009; Little & Morrison, 1999). In a contorted twist of logic, for those on social assistance who could not find employment, volunteer activity was defined as a substitute arena for participation. However, much formal volunteering privileges a culture characteristic of affluence rather than the informal volunteering that is more characteristic of people with low incomes (Williams, 2003, as cited in Orton, 2006, p. 255). Most of the arenas in which our participants were involved as members and volunteers were viable options for them, because these organizations also provided material resources. In a nutshell, we are arguing that it is only the privileged who can afford to join organizations that do not help citizens meet their practical needs as well as addressing their strategic interests. If participation in civil society is limited to NGOs that separate the two, then the voluntary sector is yet another sphere with concrete borders that shut out women, such as those in this study, and thereby disconnect women from exercising their strategic interests. This is what social exclusion looks like locally.

Democracy allows for different ideals of civic life and many forms of engagement in different spaces for different people. Participation in meaningful groups exercising some form of democracy can take place in more arenas than party politics or formal voluntary organizations. A variety of groups that can be missed in such narrow definitions may include self-help groups such as NIMBY (not-in-my-back-yard) local interests (Schudson, 2006). Regardless of whether or not one agrees with the goals of such groups, they can be places in which to practise democracy and learn the skills of communication and working together. A variety of spaces are needed to facilitate learning that builds on the diverse capacities of individuals and communities. Even some seemingly therapy-focused groups, such as self-help networks, might lead to turning private troubles into public issues, although we lack empirical evidence showing how and when such private-public connections are made.

As previous chapters (particularly chapters 4 and 9) concluded, the collectivities we studied can foster the potential for making connections between individual problems and larger social forces. The family networks in which women with low incomes play key supportive roles are not likely to have the kinds of resources that can sustain them, and the people who rely on them and may drain their resources. The work of Dominguez and Watkins (2003) shows that ties with professionals in agencies were able to offer both instrumental and emotional support and that the latter proved to be unexpectedly robust. Our research also looks at how women from low-income neighbourhoods build relationships with people in community agencies (Fuller et al., 2008). Even when women were participating in the formal social service sector, their motivations for participation meshed material interests with a host of other strategic interests that can be interpreted as showing agency (Fuller, Kershaw, & Pulkingham, 2008) or the balancing of social support and social leveraging (Dominquez & Watson, 2003), even in relatively hostile environments for doing so.

Our data on women's work in collectivities allowed us to see that the provisioning of the social space was the catalytic source for women's ability to realize some of 'life's glories.' The organizations we studied made special efforts to involve participants in organizational processes and decision making, and thus to minimize the extent of differences among members. As a result, we could see that it was the interchanges among these women that had a catalytic effect on their growth. Change cannot happen if individuals are isolated by poverty or other types of social exclusion. Others are needed to imagine and discuss alternatives. In such arenas, 1 + 1 + 1 does not equal 3; interaction effects among participants result in conversations that are exponential - accompanied by the potential that different possibilities will emerge as a result.

Unfortunately, as we argued in chapter 9, current policy in Canada is following a model that equates not-for-profits with for-profit firms, that expects voluntary organizations to become more business-like so that they can take on the responsibilities being off-lQaded onto them from government (Stivers, 2002, as cited in Campbell, 2005, p. 702). Closing down collective spaces means cutting off these relationship pathways and the associated linkages that make transformation possible. We argue that what is needed is an examination of the capacity of groups such as those in the six research sites to bolster participation and engage in a critical analysis of what is happening to poor women.

Re-Enter the State to Assume Responsibility for Social Provisioning

The lens of provisioning used in the previous chapters showed that rights and responsibilities came together in the lives of women; the division between the two in theory and policy debates did not hold in lived experience, although the tension did. The provisioning responsibilities of women were shown to be extensive and often costly to their own welfare. Women talked poignantly, and with distress, about the shrinking of these spaces in which they could debate and practise negotiations of rights and responsibilities and examine how these affect their lives - and those for whom they carry provisioning responsibilities.

Because we collected data at both the individual and collective levels, we were able to trace the importance of the collectivities for women's well-being. When we discuss the term social provisioning, we do not use it to refer to the individual level, as Marilyn Power (2004) did in her discussion of the networks in which women provision. We endorse her premise that, in order to understand women's work, one needs to look at caring and unpaid labour as fundamental to economic activity; use well-being as a measure of economic success; analyse economic, political, and social processes and power relations; include ethical goals and values as an intrinsic part of the analysis; and interrogate differences by class, race /ethnicity, and other dimensions of inequality (Power, 2004). We hope that this was visible in the methodology and analyses throughout the book. Our rationale for keeping the term provisioning as central to our study reflects a policy focus in which the concept of social provisions is used to describe some of the responsibilities carried by an active state so that not everything is left to the so-called active citizen. An active state is essential if future cohorts of women are not to continue marching for bread and roses.

Of particular concern is the retreat of the state, as evidenced by the withdrawal of social provisions since the 1980s. At the same time that a North American and European discourse was taking hold about the development of civil society as a cornerstone for democracy, the power of nation states was being transformed by a globalized economy. During this time, the state increasingly abdicated responsibility for social provisioning on the one hand, while on the other, the particular types of actions that defined the active citizen, and the spaces within which participation was recognized, shrank. Those spaces in which women were participating and meeting their provisioning responsibilities were not seen as 'real' centres of civil society participation. Thus women were not seen as responsible active citizens. Their organizations were shut down, while the state withdrew supports, and voluntary agencies were turned into service providers. Such are the dynamics of oppression in that they undermine women as active citizens.

In order to enhance the well-being of citizens such as the women who participated in this study, the starting place is to recognize that low- income women carry many provisioning responsibilities. They are not scrambling to offload them. Many, but not all, are assumed willingly because they are tied to meaningful relationships. What is sought is recognition that these commitments, and the associated work, do exist with consequences for the women doing the provisioning! Defining non-employed people as dependents excludes them from entitlements that accompany those seen as contributing members of society - those who are employed. Likewise, thinking in terms of what types of provisioning women do does not position individuals as simply givers or receivers of care. The concept is more concerned with highlighting how responsibilities flow along pathways of relationships.

Where women's rights are based on policies focused on getting women into low-paying jobs, women with provisioning relationships are just further burdened. It is the labour market that is the problem, not the women. Part of the answer is to establish policies that recognize that citizens live multi-dimensional lives. Paid work is privileged in a market economy because it is the arena for earning money - an activity that is valued and brings prestige. All other types of work are devalued. Thus employment policies are needed that modify the effects of this privilege. Currently, the contradictions between competing sets of demands can be avoided only by those women who have resources to buy some assistance with their unpaid work. The resulting inequities actually exacerbate the situation of poor women.

Gender-based incentives to promote equity have utilized Nancy Fraser's idea of the universal caregiver. This approach engages men in performing their fair share of caregiving if women are to succeed in the Fight for bread.' However, as Olson (2003) cogently argues, even if a universal caregiver approach informs an active state policy approach, operationalizing such a model in a market economy where democracy is usually equated with an individual's right to exercise choice does not easily happen, even when active labour legislation encourages it. For example, until the mid-nineties Sweden's parental leave policy had salary replacement rates of up to 94 per cent. Despite such a strong incentive, examination of the Swedish experience revealed that income-replacement policies were not sufficient to attract men in the same numbers as women to take care leaves. Labour market priorities seemed to dominate individual and household decision-making. In this case, it revealed the dynamic that individuals incur costs beyond lost wages when they interrupt their labour force careers and, by contrast, shows the plight of poor women whose 'careers' begin with the testing grounds of women's collective efforts.

Paid work will continue to be privileged as the most valued approach to acquiring the needed resources for living. This will not disappear in a market economy, but a provisioning state can provide key resources that are now available only to households with higher incomes. The areas of child and elder care come readily to mind. Numerous studies document the need and the models used within and across countries. In Canada, women's groups have repeatedly argued that a viable national childcare policy is essential to women's autonomy. Yet multiple campaigns to institute one have met with stiff resistance over the years. Instead, a patchwork of tax benefits and subsidies keeps reappearing under different names. A parallel scenario is repeatedly enacted around calls for a national home- and community-care policy for elderly persons. These policy examples illustrate how class privilege interlocks with gender, race, class, and age to oppress particular groups of Canadians. The holistic concept of provisioning suggests that future research, and policies based on it, follow women's relationship pathways as trails to understanding citizens' need for both T>read and roses.' Policies that position people as citizens who carry a range of individual and collective provisioning responsibilities would increase the capacity of women to choose to engage in various forms of participation, including politics. From such spaces, other possibilities can develop.

Conclusion

This book has focused on the provisioning work that women do. We have argued that this work is done as individuals and as members of collectivities. This work is tied to the responsibilities that women carry. No matter what the work is, or whether it is engaged in by choice or coercion, relationships are central. The sites in which the data were collected allowed us to explicate the amount and complexity of this provisioning work. Along with these empirical data from participants, each chapter interrogated the socio-political context within which individual and group-based provisioning was occurring. What becomes clear from a trans-site perspective is that the state continues to have a powerful presence in the lives of women like the participants in this study - and in the collectivities of which they were members. Funding policies hooked to narrow definitions of service programmes, and social assistance payments based on women positioned as part of a labour market pool, are technologies of ruling that regulate behaviour and suppress resistance.

In 2012, many of the premises of Marshall's welfare state, along with its gendered assumptions, no longer hold. What we support is the spirit, the commitment to collective well-being, that gave rise to it. Our concern about the current civil society / active citizen discourse is that it excludes segments of the population and loads responsibility onto individuals like our participants while letting the state elude its responsibility to do social provisioning. One should expect to look to the state for social provisions that enable, support, and in some cases relieve the provisioning work carried by citizens. The state has the power to intervene in all spheres, but in the current neoliberal regime support is limited to the market sector. Any illusions that the state has shrivelled in a market economy should have been wiped away after seeing state responses to the recession of 2008-9 when market forces seemed to be jeopardizing the welfare of several nation states. As noted in chapter 1, central governments were called on to infuse millions into financial and industrial markets. As this chapter is being written, it seems that the intervention did stabilize these sectors of the society. It is unnerving to witness how the types of behaviour that led to the crisis are reappearing - quite literally it is business as usual; the excesses are criticized but accepted as the price to be paid if a market economy is to grow. This is the political economic context within which low-income women struggle to meet their provisioning responsibilities. The point to be taken is that the character of the non-interventionist state in the neoliberal drama is a myth - a guise assumed until powerful market players call upon it to exercise the tremendous powers at its disposal. Those same powers can be used to promote the quality of life of all citizens.

#### Alternative is neoliberalism in disguise – antitrust increases state power over the market.

Vaheesan ’19 [Sandeep; Legal Director @ Open Markets Institute, JD @ Duke; “The Profound Nonsense of Consumer Welfare Antitrust,” *The Antitrust Bulletin* 1(16); AS]

III. The False Naturalization of the Market

A market economy is a state-constructed institution. Government action establishes the foundational rules of an economy—rules without which an economy cannot function. Among other things, government at different levels creates property rights, enforces contracts, charters corporations, issues money, awards copyrights and trademarks, and establishes consumer and worker rights. Antitrust rules are part of this dense layer of rules that enable and shape market activity. Despite frequent invocations of “free markets” and the “private sector” in public discourse, a market does not emerge spontaneously but depends on extensive state action.

The Supreme Court and the DOJ and the FTC, explicitly or implicitly, suppress the constitutive function of state action. Instead, in line with the paradigm of the law and economics school in general, they rely on a false conception of the market. The Court and the agencies treat existing market arrangements as somehow natural or efficient and view antitrust as exogenous government intervention that should be circumscribed. Rather than treat antitrust law as part of the stateconstructed system of market rules, judges and enforcers view antitrust as an incursion on the Edenic marketplace.

A. The State Construction of the Market

Government, at federal and state levels, establishes the conditions and rules necessary for a market to function. It creates and protects property rights, enforces contracts, charters corporations, and issues money. These are illustrative and just some examples of the state structuring and governance of the market. Without these rules and a coercive authority to enforce them, a market activity could not exist, let alone flourish. In other words, a market economy is not and cannot be “free” but is instead constructed through government action.

The state defines and enforces rules of property. The state decides what qualifies as property and offers holders of property rights, whether in land or over intangibles, the right to call on coercive state action when their interest has been infringed. And the question of what constitutes property is not stable. State action has both narrowed and broadened property. For example, the Civil War and the ratification of the 13th Amendment abolished and outlawed slavery—property rights in human beings.31 In other ways, the state has expanded the scope of property. Property over intangibles has expanded over the course of American history. For example, Congress and the courts have broadened the subject matter entitled to exclusivity rights32 and extended the length of copyright terms.33 The Supreme Court in Goldberg v. Kelly in 1970 recognized that the meaning of property is indeterminate and that common law conceptions are not preserved in an amber encasement for eternity.34

The government also facilitates the making of contracts. Courts stand ready to enforce contracts and award relief in the event one party fails to fulfill its commitments and breaches the contract. Without this coercive power, contracts would not carry the force of law. In ruling that racially restrictive covenants in housing are unconstitutional, the Supreme Court described how the purportedly private world of contract is backed by public power. The Court stated:

These are not cases, as has been suggested, in which the States have merely abstained from action, leaving private individuals free to impose such discriminations as they see fit. Rather, these are cases in which the States have made available to such individuals the full coercive power of government to deny to petitioners, on the grounds of race or color, the enjoyment of property rights in premises which petitioners are willing and financially able to acquire and which the grantors are willing to sell.35

Courts also withhold enforcement of other contracts. For instance, in many states, credit contracts with interest rates in excess of the state cap are unenforceable.36 Similarly, the State of California bars the judicial enforcement of noncompete clauses against workers.37

Market governance is not and cannot be neutral. In addition to being illustrative of how state action constructs a market, property and contract show how the state decides who wields power in the economy. The government through property, contract, tort, banking regulation, consumer protection, and numerous other areas of law not only sets the rules of the game but also allocates who has enforceable rights.

In expanding or narrowing legal rights, the government decides who possesses power and who does not. Workers who can organize boycotts and sympathy strikes have much greater power to unionize firms and industries and reach favorable terms with employers than workers who do not possess this right, such as American workers at present. Similarly, consider state law on noncompete clauses. A state that enforces noncompete clauses against workers tilts the balance of power in the employment relationship in favor of employers, relative to a state that does not enforce these restraints.

Against this background of market-creating state action, antitrust modifies existing legal entitlements and redistributes power within the economy. It reconfigures state construction of the economy. The late antitrust scholar John Flynn situated antitrust against this background of state action and wrote:

Antitrust policy should be viewed as it originally was in the legislative history of the antitrust laws and the Addyston Pipe & Steel case as part of the fundamental laws defining the scope of property and contract rights, rather than as a bothersome limitation upon the unfettered right to invoke the community’s law to exercise such rights.38

Consider two important ways in which antitrust reshapes common law legal entitlements. First, antitrust limits the ways in which property holders can acquire and use these legal entitlements. For example, the Clayton Act abridges the right of businesses to acquire the property rights of competing or otherwise related businesses.39 In limiting the property rights of some entities, it grants greater freedom to customers, suppliers, and others affected by the power associated with concentrated property holdings. Second, the antitrust laws limit the scope of contract law. The Sherman Act prohibits contracts that restraint trade or monopolize markets. For instance, it prohibits price-fixing contracts that raise or lower prices.40 In limiting the contractual freedom of certain parties, the Sherman Act protects, for instance, consumers from unduly high prices for essentials and workers from unfairly low wages for their labor.41

Antitrust law is analogous to nuisance law. Nuisance law restricts how property owners exercise their rights—for example, by prohibiting the operation of furnaces that produce noxious fumes that are carried downstream by the wind—to protect other property owners’ right of quiet enjoyment on their land. In a similar vein, antitrust law restricts the liberty of powerful actors to use their property rights as they wish and thereby protects the property rights and liberty of others. Like nuisance, antitrust law does not abridge rights categorically but instead reallocates them, limiting the discretionary power of corporations and enhancing the freedom of consumers, sellers, small firms, and rivals.

B. The Supreme Court and Federal Court Naturalize the Common Law Rules of the Market

In adopting and implementing consumer welfare antitrust, the Supreme Court and the antitrust agencies have naturalized the legal construction of the market. Much of this has been implicit. Their embrace of consumer welfare meant an embrace of the law and economics ideology that asserts self-regulating markets in which the state “intervenes” after the fact, for better or for worse. Against this background of a natural market and natural common law rules, antitrust is treated as a “statist” encroachment that should be treated skeptically and circumscribed. While this market naturalization is generally implicit in antitrust opinions and guidance documents, the FTC does surface it in its competition advocacy work and reveals its belief in an Edenic, prepolitical marketplace.

The law and economics ideology that has informed contemporary antitrust submerges the state action underlying a market economy. Indeed, law and economics has more deeply shaped antitrust than any other field of law. The framework of law and economics posits a market preexisting the state. The market emerges as a force of nature. The state follows and intervenes in response to discrete market failures in which existing markets do not conform to certain textbook criteria (the optimistic view of the state) or in response to political pressures from well-connected individuals and organizations (the pessimistic view of the state). In this framework, the legal construction of the existing market and economy is erased.

By naturalizing the existing rules, this ideology obscures the legal and political choices that created today’s market. Indeed, the political choices that created today’s market economy are implicitly deemed “efficient” or superior to proposed alternative rules. This denial, however, cannot erase these political choices. In a 1987 essay, Duncan Kennedy captured the relationship between law and economics and the legal construction of the market. He wrote:

The judge-made private law rules that define the market are really just the common law as it stood at some hypothetical moment in the nineteenth century. But these rules have a peculiar, almost sacred status as symbols of ‘the efficient market solution.’ Most economists don’t seem to have or to feel the need for any knowledge of their content, or of the reality of their supposed inner responsiveness to the ideas of property and contract. They appear as a neutral background in everyone’s interest (efficiency), that is constantly threatened by the more partial, political, interest-group based or ideologically based initiatives of legislatures.42

Applying this worldview of “natural” common law rules, courts and agencies treat antitrust as an irksome encroachment. The courts, in applying consumer welfare antitrust, restrict antitrust “intervention” to discrete market failures, generally tied to “artificial” market power. Enforcers and courts define this market failure as the elevation in price or reduction in output due to some business practice.43 The judicial adoption of the rule of reason, which typically requires showing of anticompetitive effects (defined as short-term increases in price and/or reductions in output), in place of per se rules and presumptions of illegality reflects this ideological shift.44 Outside of horizontal price fixing and similar collusion, antitrust enforcers should, in the absence of the showing of so-called anticompetitive effects, stay their hand and allow the market to flourish.45 In other words, the existing configuration of state action and market rules are given a strong presumption of validity and legitimacy. Antitrust should “intervene” under only exceptional circumstances. Courts and agencies assert a justness or efficiency to current market rules that should be modified only in rare cases.

#### Algorithmic bias impact:

#### Data combats bias – the alternative is subjective judgement, which is worse.

John Zerilli 18, Professor of law and philosophy at the University of Sydney, with; Alistair Knott, James Maclaurin, and Colin Gavaghan; 9/5/18, “Transparency in Algorithmic and Human Decision-Making: Is There a Double Standard?” https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13347-018-0330-6#Sec4

Human bias is often intrinsic, in the above sense, because it bears an important relation to emotion, itself a constitutive feature of personality (Angie et al. 2011; Pohl 2008; Stephan and Finlay 1999). Racial bias is a good example of intrinsic bias in human beings, because the connection with emotion is relatively clear (the emotion being fear), as is its tolerance to falsifying evidence. When someone has been conditioned to believe that an ethnic minority poses a threat to safety, or is more susceptible to crime, merely supplying that person with evidence to the contrary may be insufficient to dislodge a lifetime of encrusted prejudice (Bezrukova et al. 2016). Racist conditioning may permanently (or semipermanently) affect the way a person processes information and makes decisions. Of course this is not to say that intrinsic bias is always irrational. Many human biases could be thought to result from the misfiring of an ancient and conserved cognitive adaptation to make generic judgements (Begby 2013; Leslie 2017). Because such judgements are based on dispositional rather than probabilistic factors, they too tend to be resistant to disconfirming evidence.

As against intrinsic bias, bias that is not intrinsic (i.e. extrinsic) derives from a system’s inputs when they do not effect a permanent change in the system’s internal structure and rules of operation. In these cases, false information may affect a system’s outputs, but so long as the information is corrected, the outputs will be unbiased pro tanto. Thus, if a person is given information that leads them to the erroneous belief that p, and the belief that p plays a relevant role in decision-making, leading to the decision that q, the person will be nonintrinsically biased towards the decision that q if, upon receiving the correct information, the person no longer believes that p, and either abandons or revises the grounds for the decision that q.

Overall, while it is true that an algorithm can be intrinsically biased (see below), nonintrinsic bias is probably the bigger issue for AI (Friedman and Nissenbaum 1996; Johnson 2006). The so-called dirty data problem is a neat illustration. Errors and biases latent in data training sets tend to be reproduced in the outputs of machine learning tools (Barocas and Selbst 2015; Diakopoulos 2015). This is a significant problem, and one that is compounded—of all things—by copyright and intellectual property laws, which presently limit the access users have to better quality training data (Levendowski 2017).Footnote9 But nonintrinsic bias is still in principle less difficult to overcome than intrinsic bias. Most of these problems arise from the use of unrepresentative data sets. For instance, face recognition systems trained predominantly on Caucasian faces might reject the passport application photos of Asian persons, whose eyes appear closed (Griffiths 2016). Speech recognition systems, too, are notorious for being less accurate when decoding female voices than male ones (Tatman 2016). Both situations arise from a failure to include members of diverse social groups in training data. The obvious solution is to diversify the training sets (Klingele 2016; Crawford and Calo 2016). While there are political and legal barriers in the way of this, as Levendowski (2017) documents in her careful analysis of intellectual property laws, it is not nearly as intractable a problem as the one posed by intrinsic human bias (Bezrukova et al. 2016; Plous 2003a; Allport 1954).

#### Algorithms key to solve climate and resource sustainability.

**Cho ‘18** [Renee Cho, Renee Cho is a staff blogger for the Earth Institute. She has written over 140 blogs for State of the Planet on a broad range of topics. She was previously published by www.insideclimatenews.com, E Magazine and On Earth Magazine. Renee was Communications Coordinator for Riverkeeper, the Hudson River environmental organization. She received the Executive Education Certificate in Conservation and Sustainability from the Earth Institute Center for Environmental Sustainability., 6/5/18, "Artificial Intelligence—A Game Changer for Climate Change and the Environment", State of the Planet, https://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2018/06/05/artificial-intelligence-climate-environment/, DOA: 2/9/19]

How AI is used for energy AI is increasingly used to manage the intermittency of renewable energy so that more can be incorporated into the grid; it can handle power fluctuations and improve energy storage as well. The Department of Energy’s SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory operated by Stanford University will use machine learning and artificial intelligence to identify vulnerabilities in the grid, strengthen them in advance of failures, and restore power more quickly when failures occur. The system will first study part of the grid in California, analyzing data from renewable power sources, battery storage, and satellite imagery that can show where trees growing over power lines might cause problems in a storm. The goal is to develop a grid that can automatically manage renewable energy without interruption and recover from system failures with little human involvement. Wind companies are using AI to get each turbine’s propeller to produce more electricity per rotation by incorporating real time weather and operational data. On large wind farms, the front row’s propellers create a wake that decreases the efficiency of those behind them. AI will enable each individual propeller to determine the wind speed and direction coming from other propellers, and adjust accordingly. Researchers at the Department of Energy and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are using AI to better understand atmospheric conditions in order to more accurately project the energy output of wind farms. Artificial intelligence can enhance energy efficiency, too. Google used machine learning to help predict when its data centers’ energy was most in demand. The system analyzed and predicted when users were most likely to watch data-sucking Youtube videos, for example, and could then optimize the cooling needed. As a result, Google reduced its energy use by 40 percent. Making cities more livable and sustainable AI can also improve energy efficiency on the city scale by incorporating data from smart meters and the Internet of Things (the internet of computing devices that are embedded in everyday objects, enabling them to send and receive data) to forecast energy demand. In addition, artificial intelligence systems can simulate potential zoning laws, building ordinances, and flood plains to help with urban planning and disaster preparedness. One vision for a sustainable city is to create an “urban dashboard” consisting of real-time data on energy and water use and availability, traffic and weather to make cities more energy efficient and livable. In China, IBM’s Green Horizon project is using an AI system that can forecast air pollution, track pollution sources and produce potential strategies to deal with it. It can determine if, for example, it would be more effective to restrict the number of drivers or close certain power plants in order to reduce pollution in a particular area. Another IBM system in development could help cities plan for future heat waves. AI would simulate the climate at the urban scale and explore different strategies to test how well they ease heat waves. For example, if a city wanted to plant new trees, machine learning models could determine the best places to plant them to get optimal tree cover and reduce heat from pavement. Smart agriculture Hotter temperatures will have significant impacts on agriculture as well. Data from sensors in the field that monitor crop moisture, soil composition and temperature help AI improve production and know when crops need watering. Incorporating this information with that from drones, which are also used to monitor conditions, can help increasingly automatic AI systems know the best times to plant, spray and harvest crops, and when to head off diseases and other problems. This will result in increased efficiency, enhanced yields, and lower use of water, fertilizer and pesticides. Protecting the oceans The Ocean Data Alliance is working with machine learning to provide data from satellites and ocean exploration so that decision-makers can monitor shipping, ocean mining, fishing, coral bleaching or the outbreak of a marine disease. With almost real time data, decision-makers and authorities will be able to respond to problems more quickly. Artificial intelligence can also help predict the spread of invasive species, follow marine litter, monitor ocean currents, keep track of dead zones and measure pollution levels. The Nature Conservancy is partnering with Microsoft on using AI to map ocean wealth. Evaluating the economic value of ocean ecosystem services—such as seafood harvesting, carbon storage, tourism and more—will make better conservation and planning decisions possible. The data will be used to build models that consider food security, job creation and fishing yields to show the value of ecosystem services under differing conditions. This can help decision-makers determine the most important areas for fish productivity and conservation efforts, as well as the tradeoffs of potential decisions. The project already has maps and models for Micronesia, the Caribbean, Florida, and is expanding to Australia, Haiti, and Jamaica. More sustainable transport on land As vehicles become able to communicate with each other and with the infrastructure, artificial intelligence will help drivers avoid hazards and traffic jams. In Pittsburgh, an artificial intelligence system incorporating sensors and cameras that monitors traffic flow adjusts traffic lights when needed. The systems are functioning at 50 intersections with plans for 150 more and have already reduced travel time by 25 percent and idling by more than 40 percent. Less idling, of course, means fewer greenhouse gas emissions. Eventually, autonomous AI-driven shared transportation systems may replace personal vehicles. Better climate predictions As the climate changes, accurate projections are increasingly important. However, climate models often produce very different predictions, largely because of how data is broken down into discrete parts, how processes and systems are paired, and because of the large variety of spatial and temporal scales. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports are based on many climate models and show the range of predictions, which are then averaged out. Averaging them out, however, means that each climate model is given equal weight. AI is helping to determine which models are more reliable by giving added weight to those whose predictions eventually prove to be more accurate, and less weight to those performing poorly. This will help improve the accuracy of climate change projections. AI and deep learning are also improving weather forecasting and the prediction of extreme events. That’s because they can incorporate much more of the real-world complexity of the climate system, such as atmospheric and ocean dynamics and ocean and atmospheric chemistry, into their calculations. This sharpens the precision of weather and climate modeling, making simulations more useful for decision-makers. AI has many other uses AI can help to monitor ecosystems and wildlife and their interactions. Its fast processing speeds can offer almost real-time satellite data to track illegal logging in forests. AI can monitor drinking water quality, manage residential water use, detect underground leaks in drinking water supply systems, and predict when water plants need maintenance. It can also simulate weather events and natural disasters to find vulnerabilities in disaster planning, determine which strategies for disaster response are most effective, and provide real-time disaster response coordination.

#### Labor impact:

#### Cap is good for global quality of life and reducing structural violence.

Lacono 16 (Corey, A student at the University of Rhode Island studying Pharmaceutical Science and Economics, “How Capitalism and Globalization Have Made the World a Better Place,” Quillette, January 16, 2016, http://quillette.com/2016/01/16/how-capitalism-and-globalization-have-made-the-world-a-better-place)

Just kidding, that’s not what happened at all. In fact, as the world has become more capitalist and more globalized, the quality of life for the average person, and especially for the average poor person, has increased substantially. In 1990, 37% of the global population lived on less than $1.90 per day. By 2012, that number had been reduced to 12.8%, and in 2015 it was under 10%. The source of this progress isn’t a massive wealth redistribution program; it’s massive wealth creation — that is, economic growth. Economists David Dollar and Aart Kraay found that, in a global sample of over 100 countries, changes in the income growth of the bottom 40% of the world’s income earners are highly correlated with economic growth rates. On the other hand, changes in inequality contributed relatively little to changes in social welfare of the poor over the last few decades. There is good reason to believe that the expansion of free trade, facilitated by international organizations like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its predecessor, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), have had a considerable impact in accelerating the economic development of developing countries. In the 1990s GATT facilitated reforms which moved 125 countries towards freer trade by reducing the burden of government imposed trade barriers like tariffs. This was the first serious attempt at trade reform for most developing countries at the time, and arguably presents a unique natural experiment on the economic effects of trade reform. In fact, a paper published by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), specifically examined how trade reforms facilitated by GATT affected the economic development of the reforming countries. In the paper, the authors compared the trends in economic growth before and after trade reform in the reforming countries. Then they compared those results to trends in economic growth of a control group of countries which didn’t undergo trade reform. What they found was very encouraging for proponents of free trade. Prior to reform, the economic development of reformers and non-reformers was practically identical, but after reform, the economic development of reforming countries accelerated while non-reforming countries saw their economies stagnate and decline. The results suggest that the reforms towards freer trade lead to an increase in income per capita of around 20% in the long-run, an effect so large that it almost certainly had a positive and non-trivial impact on poverty reduction. Similarly, other research has shown that more free market trade policies result in lower rates of extreme poverty and child mortality in developing countries. There are other benefits as well. One study on trade reform in Indonesia found that reductions of import tariffs led to an increase in disposable income among poor households, which allowed them to pull their children out of the labor force, leading to “a strong decline” in the incidence of child labor. Unfortunately, many activists have reflexively taken up the cause of opposing the expansion of global capitalism, for a number of reasons. Western anti-sweatshop activists, for example, will often argue in favor of government imposed barriers to trade with poor countries because their working conditions are terrible in comparison to those in developed Western nations. In their view, western consumers should not be promoting a cycle of capitalist exploitation by buying products made in Vietnamese sweat-shops. But satisfactory working conditions aren’t the natural state of mankind; they are a consequence of decades of economic development. Erecting barriers to trade with poor countries is surely a large impediment to their development, in fact, research suggests that existing developed world tariffs depress economic growth rates in the developing world by 0.6 to 1.6 percent per person, a considerably large effect. Moreover, the sweat-shops which produce clothing for Westerners are often much better than alternative forms of domestic employment. In poor countries like Bangladesh, China, and Vietnam, the apparel industry consistently pays more than most other domestic industries. According to research by economist Ben Powell, in poor countries “most sweatshop jobs provide an above average standard of living for their workers.” Notably, a paper published in the Journal of Development Economics found that the expansion of the garments industry in Bangladesh lead to an increase in employment and income among young women, giving them the means to finance their own education. Remarkably the authors found that, “the demand for education generated through manufacturing growth appears to have a much larger effect on female educational attainment compared to a large-scale government conditional cash transfer program to encourage female schooling.” Foreign investment is also more desirable than opponents of capitalism and globalization give it credit for. The conventional wisdom among activists in wealthy countries is that multinational corporations exploit poor workers in third world countries for cheap labor, profiting off people working in sweatshop conditions. It should come as a surprise to the individuals who hold this view to learn that 85% of people in developing countries believe that foreign companies building factories in their countries is a good thing, according to Pew Research. In fact, for all the talk of exploitative multinational corporations, research shows that, in general, these corporations provide higher wages and better working conditions than domestic employers in developing countries. Additionally, when multinational corporations build factories in poor countries, it raises the demand for low-skilled workers, resulting in higher wages for local workers. Consistent with this fact, recent empirical evidence demonstrates that investment by foreign companies in developing countries reduces both poverty and income inequality by raising the incomes of low-skilled workers. Foreign investment can also make people in relatively low-income countries better off by providing better or more inexpensive products. A recent analysis published by the NBER found that foreign retailers like Wal-Mart greatly reduce the cost of living for both the rich and poor in Mexico, making everyone along the income distribution better off. Global capitalism is by no means a perfect phenomenon. Many businesses do have questionable labor practices that are worthy of contempt. And free market policies may in many instances lead to socially undesirable outcomes, sometimes on a large scale. However, the one-dimensional, automatic denunciation of capitalism and the accompanying refusal to give it any credit for its successes — as social media activists have done — reflects an uncompromising, and quite frankly ignorant worldview. It is one in which capitalism is always bad, no matter what the evidence tells us.

#### Entrepreneurial capitalism is good for disabled people – work offers communities and collaboration beyond the logics of neoclassical economics.

Boellstorff ’19 [Tom; Department of Anthropology @ University of California, Irvine; “The opportunity to contribute: Disability and the digital entrepreneur,” *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(4), p. 474-490; AS]

How can someone who identifies as an entrepreneur have a ‘best-selling’ bed only five people have purchased? How can such a person not seek to sell for profit – indeed, lose money? Is this false consciousness, someone duped by neoliberal capitalism? Or might there be a more complicated interplay of selfhood, labor, and ability in a digital context? This is the point of departure for my analysis. Disabled persons in Second Life like Ellie are articulating something through languages and practices of entrepreneurship, something that challenges the ableist paradigms structuring digital socialities and regimes of labor.1

Digital technology, labor, disability

This article is based on 14 years’ research in Second Life, 5 years of which have focused on disability (e.g., Boellstorff, 2015; Davis & Boellstorff, 2016). This virtual world is owned by Linden Lab; during my research it had about 600,000 residents. There is no cost to obtaining an account so long as your computer and internet connection suffice, but one must pay to own virtual land. I gathered data using methods including inworld participant observation, physical-world and inworld individual interviews, and inworld group interviews. I got to know disability communities through my original fieldwork and built on those connections for this research. These disability communities are as diverse as in the physical world, including visual and auditory impairments, limb loss, autism, epilepsy, posttraumatic stress disorder, multiple sclerosis, and the effects of strokes, cancer, Parkinson’s disease, and other illnesses. This diversity thus includes congenital disabilities, disabilities acquired later in life due to disease or accidents, and conditions whose status as ‘disability’ is contested (for instance, Deafness and autism). Most of my interlocutors were between 40 and 60, but some were in the 20–40 range, and a few were in their seventies, eighties, and even nineties.

From its origins in the early 2000s, Second Life was designed as a virtual world where most objects and experiences would be created by residents (Ondrejka, 2004). This model, known by terms like ‘user-generated content’ or ‘prosuming’, is fundamental to platform capitalism in that platforms are underdetermined: Facebook does not produce most of its posts; YouTube does not create most of its videos. In Second Life, user-generated content can be given away freely or sold for Linden Dollars; as noted above, these can be exchanged for US dollars.2 Most commodities sell for the equivalent of 50 cents to two dollars, but there are many items in the $5–20 range and a few for more than $50, $100, or even $1000 (see Au, 2017).

The open-ended design of Second Life means there are ample possibilities for content creation and sales, but some characteristics of the virtual world work against these possibilities, particularly for disabled persons. While Second Life accounts are free, the relatively high cost of renting land is a barrier. A full region (‘sim’) costs $600 to set up, with a monthly fee of $295. Regions can be shared, and it is possible to own smaller parcels (or rent parcels from larger virtual landowners) so that one has a monthly fee of $25 or less, but even this is prohibitive for some disabled persons. Without land, creating and selling objects is harder though not impossible (see the ‘Second Life Marketplace’ discussed below).

Despite these barriers, throughout my fieldwork I have been struck by how often disabled persons in Second Life participate in content creation and sales. The exact number of such persons is not key: ethnographic analysis is not about establishing what is prevalent but exploring what is possible. Demographic data are difficult to obtain because accounts can be obtained anonymously, and not everyone reveals their disability inworld. Morgan, a disabled entrepreneur, noted that:

In our community, this is huge because we can choose how much anonymity we want. And for some of our members, that anonymity is key to their comfort zone of participation. And then, of course there are a lot of people who just, they don’t tell people, period … They’re just choosing to explore this world without the D-word attached to it. They’re not trying to be able-bodied. They’re just trying to kind of see what it’s like to not have the Big D front and center.

With these limitations in mind, it was clear that most of my interlocutors lived in North America or Europe. Most had limited resources – for instance, an annual income under $15,000 in the United States – though some identified as middle class. (One indicator: the research project was to have a virtual reality component involving the purchase of VR headsets for at least 16 participants, but it was only possible to do this for three participants because the rest did not own sufficiently powerful computers.) In line with surveys estimating that around 60% of virtual-world residents identify as female in the physical world (Pearce, Symborski, & Blackburn, 2015, p. 15), the majority of my interlocutors were women. I emphasize female narratives in this analysis and address how gender intersects with disability in the domain of entrepreneurship. While not commonly emphasized by my interlocutors, it bears recalling that through their creative labor they were contributing to the profits of Linden Lab (analogous to the way that content creators are pivotal to the profits of Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and so on; see Ekbia & Nardi, 2017).

My ethnographic material understandably speaks to a range of topics; everyday experience (online or offline) always involves multiple cultural domains. I seek to contribute to literatures on digital technology and labor; literatures on disability and labor; and the emerging body of work addressing all three of these domains (e.g., Friedner, 2015). I turn particularly to entrepreneurship. As a pivotal theme addressed by current research on technology and labor, entrepreneurship opens the analysis to questions of intersubjectivity and belonging – to how ‘contribution’ as affect and social fact shapes intersections of disability and labor. This is important because many disabled persons do not work for wages: indeed, state and national laws often forbid income as a condition for benefits. Appreciating the contributions of disability experience to the question of digital technology and labor requires moving beyond ‘employment’ narrowly construed.

Scholars writing on entrepreneurism have noted its connection to aspects of selfhood in addition to gender:

where work is coded as entrepreneurship, [workers] learn to imagine themselves as risk takers rather than laborers. Their cultural characteristics – such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship status, and religion – make it possible for them to succeed in mobilizing themselves or others like them as labor. (Tsing, 2009, p. 167)

This is a ‘gendered, racialized, and classed distribution of opportunities and vulnerabilities’ (van Doorn, 2017, p. 898), a context in which ‘age, gender, ethnicity, region and family income re-emerge … and add their own weight to the life chances of those who are attempting to make a living’ (McRobbie, 2002, p. 518). While these authors do not list ability, I am certain they would consider it relevant, given that ‘the concept of disability emerged alongside the rise of industrial capitalism … disability came to be understood as a limit to one’s ability to earn a living’ (Ross & Taylor, 2017, p. 85). It is ‘because of the Industrial Revolution … [that] disability emerged as both an analytical concept and lived way of experiencing the world’ (Friedner, 2015, p. 121); at the same time, disabled persons have long been reworking non-medical technologies in unexpected ways (Williamson, 2012). One vital analytical task is to trace how such disability lifeworlds are transforming in the contemporary digital era.

While my argument is informed by recent developments in online socialities, it is important to place these developments in historical context. The connection between technology and labor has been a concern since the ancient Greeks and was central to Marx’s critique of capitalism. For instance, in Chapter 15 of Capital, Vol. 1 Marx discussed how alongside lengthening the working day and compelling workers to labor harder, technology allows capitalists to produce surplus value and thereby profit at the worker’s expense. Here as elsewhere, Marx emphasized labor’s embeddedness in society: ‘Technology … lays bare [man’s] mode of formation of his social relations, and of the mental conceptions that flow from them’ (Marx, 1976, p. 493).

For over a century, anthropologists have taken up these questions of technology and labor. Malinowski’s classic Argonauts of the Western Pacific (1922) was ‘totally devoted to the analysis of economic relations’ (Godelier, 1977, p. 15). Other work showed how ostensibly ‘primitive’ peoples without money actually interweave economics and culture in a complex fashion: ‘they make their economic relationships do social work … [and] in all this primitive economic systems differ only in degree and not in kind from our own’ (Firth, 1954, p. 22; see Bloch, 1983). By showing the cultural embeddedness of labor, anthropological scholarship in dialogue with feminist Marxism challenged the image of a universal proletariat (e.g., Harris & Young, 1981; Meillassoux, 1972; Nash, 1993; Ong, 1987; Taussig, 1980). More recent work has explored how ‘Like workers, capitalists are always constituted as particular kinds of persons through historically specific cultural processes’ (Yanagisako, 2002, p. 5; see Dunn, 2017). Anthropology has thus contributed an analysis that ‘treats capitalist action as culturally produced and, therefore, always infused with cultural meaning and value’ (Yanagisako, 2002, p. 6). How might it be that entrepreneurs are being constituted as particular kinds of persons through historically specific conjunctions of disability and digital technology? Anthropological approaches can explore how these conjunctions might act as forms of ‘dislocation’ in which ‘both places and persons are reconfigured by the movements of capital’ (Harvey & Krohn-Hansen, 2018, p. 10; see also Bear, Ho, Tsing, & Yanagisako, 2015).

Labor as contribution

Although Second Life is designed around the user-generated content model, making content for profit is neither obligatory nor a universal goal. Most residents do not produce items for sale at all: they purchase what others make or obtain items for free. Those who create often do so for the pleasure of creating, perhaps giving copies of favorite items to friends.

For some, however, the work of creating leads to sales. This is usually done either through an inworld store, on the ‘Second Life Marketplace’ website, or both. (An inworld store incurs the cost of paying for the virtual land on which it sits, unless one advertises one’s wares inside someone else’s store, in which case a fee is often paid. If listing on the Second Life Marketplace, Linden Lab charges a 5% commission.) A few residents make thousands of US dollars selling avatar clothing or managing virtual real estate, though job-hunting in Second Life is not necessarily easy (Au, 2018). Most residents, however, earn lesser amounts of money, and this pattern holds for disabled entrepreneurs as well. A few have earned what they consider significant income – for instance, from managing a series of rental estates covering almost 40 Second Life regions, with 6 paid employees. Often, however, the income is more modest. For instance, one disabled fashion designer usually priced clothing items at around 450 lindens, and sold approximately 500 items a month, giving a monthly income of around $1000. And often there is no significant income at all: recall that Ellie had sold five copies of her best-selling bed, earning about five dollars.

How do disabled persons understand these dynamics of virtual labor in the context of entrepreneurial selfhood? How might disability intersect with and transform expectations regarding such forms of selfhood – given that in the United States and elsewhere, ‘entrepreneurship’ is promoted by state and other entities as a way to conceptualize disability ‘self-employment’? 3 How is entrepreneurship being framed as a modality by which one’s inner self is revealed to oneself and the social world?

Morgan, whose thoughts on anonymity and the ‘Big D’ I cited above, had a good number of disabled acquaintances. So many of them were successful entrepreneurs – or sought to become entrepreneurs – that she founded an organization for disabled persons already in Second Life interested in entrepreneurship. Sitting in my Second Life home one day, she explained that her goal was to help ensure that for ‘people who don’t feel like they have any contribution to make, we get them to a place where they can see they have a contribution’:

No longer do we have to sit there and go ‘I have to make a certain amount of money a year’. For most of us, the society we’re in doesn’t support that for us. Right? It looks at us, and it doesn’t even give us the opportunity to contribute in that way. You know, when they see a wheelchair coming through the door, or somebody with a stick to guide them, or they hear that they need an animal on site, ‘no, we can’t accommodate that’, right? And so our opportunities become more limited, but it doesn’t mean that our potential is gone. It’s definitely critical for me to feel that I have something to contribute.

Like my disabled interlocutors more generally, experiences with employment and unemployment in the physical world led Morgan to reflect on the implications of disability for virtual-world entrepreneurship. Particularly relevant for my analysis is her linking of selfhood with a sense of contribution: ‘Contributing something back to society takes us off the focus of our condition and its challenges, to this focus on this other thing that we’re contributing … That’s what gives us that initiative’. Furthermore, Morgan (like others) directly connected this initiative to entrepreneurship: ‘The definition of an entrepreneur is a person who organizes and manages any enterprise, usually with considerable initiative and risk … “I’m putting myself out there; this is what I do”’.

Morgan’s definition of entrepreneurship recalls scholarly definitions discussed below. I have given Morgan the first word to underscore her point that entrepreneurship can be collaborative. Entrepreneurs are of course always part of collectivities that can include funders, peers, and workers, but for Morgan and my disabled interlocutors more generally, the idea of nurturing members of a community was not external to the definition of entrepreneurship. For instance, Morgan was aware of Ellie and her best-selling bed: ‘you know, I listen to Ellie say “hey, I spend more than I make”. But actually I’m guessing, with a few skill sets, Ellie could make more than she spends, because she’s super-talented’. These skill sets could include things like learning programs outside Second Life helpful in content creation, or better marketing. But what already stands out in this data is that disability languages and practices of entrepreneurship are shaping cultural logics beyond the economic.

‘Entrepreneur’ as subject position

There has been sustained interest in the entrepreneur as a culturally and historically specific subject position – a socially extant category of selfhood that can be occupied in various ways (i.e., as individualized ‘subjectivities’; see Boellstorff, 2005). One classic theorization of the entrepreneur subject position comes from Schumpeter’s The theory of economic development. Schumpeter was concerned with the role of ‘new combinations of means of production’ in economic development: ‘The carrying out of new combinations we call “enterprise”, the individuals whose function it is to carry them out we call “entrepreneurs”’ (Schumpeter, 1949, p. 74).

With regard to digital capitalism, Schumpeter’s idea that entrepreneurs are pivotal to economic recombination and thus social change has gained mythic status – as indicated by the mere mention of (nota bene: male) names like Jobs, Gates, Zuckerberg, and Bezos. However, a rich body of scholarship has explored how conceptions of entrepreneurship have expanded beyond this figure of the corporate titan. The metaphor for employee– employer relations has shifted from that of property, where workers own themselves as if ‘they were property that could be rented to an employer for a certain period of time’ (Gershon, 2017, p. 2) to a metaphor where ‘people now think they own themselves as though they are businesses – bundles of skills, assets, qualities, experiences, and relationships, bundles that must be consciously managed and constantly enhanced’ (Gershon, 2017). This newly dominant metaphor represents ‘new imaginaries of labor in which making a living appears as entrepreneurship’ (Stensrud, 2017, p. 161). In this framework ‘contemporary culture’s benchmark of success is the figure of the entrepreneur’ (Duffy, 2017, p. 2): it is assumed that ‘you are no longer a worker, with worker’s rights. Instead, you’re an entrepreneur, and entrepreneurs take risks (and suffer them too)’ (Dewhurst, 2017, p. 21).

Social scientists have explored links between economic formations and selfhood since at least Weber’s The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism (1905). At issue are the ableist forms these links take in digital contexts. I coined the term ‘creationist capitalism’ in my analysis of user-generated regimes emerging online since the 2000s (Boellstorff, 2015, Chapter 8). With this neologism I sought to highlight how creativity was becoming construed as a form of labor, particularly in the context of digital socialities where the cost of producing, say, 10 virtual chairs was not 10 times the cost of producing one chair (as opposed to the cost of producing 10 wooden chairs compared to one wooden chair). I also sought to highlight how the Christian metaphysics Weber identified as central to dominant capitalist formations of the nineteenth century remain, albeit transformed, in the twenty-first century. I identified the pivotal transformation as one in which ‘workers are not just sellers of labor-power, but creators of their own worlds’ (Boellstorff, 2015, p. 209). Rather than worldly success indicating divine favor, in creationist capitalism it is creation that reveals one’s inner self. Increasingly, this inner self is an entrepreneurial self (rather than, say, the self of kinship or wage labor).

We now have a constellation of terms alongside ‘creationist capitalism’ that track these shifts in digital labor, including communicative capitalism (Dean, 2010), aspirational labor (Duffy, 2017), platform capitalism (Srnicek, 2017), platform labor (van Doorn, 2017), and venture labor, ‘the explicit expression of entrepreneurial values by nonentrepreneurs’ (Neff, 2015, p. 16). The actions, experiences, and subjectivities of my disabled interlocutors in Second Life further develop Neff’s insights: in addition to nonentrepreneurs expressing entrepreneurial values, the horizon of what counts as entrepreneurship is expanding across the terrain of the human. The binarism of ‘entrepreneur’ and ‘nonentrepreneur’ is becoming destabilized in favor of multiple inhabitations of the entrepreneur subject position (just as, for instance, one can inhabit the ‘teenager’ subject position as a diligent ‘geek’, athletic ‘jock’, and so on).

My analysis here thus explores how a concept related to self-identity can be transformed in ways never expected at the time the concept was originally formulated. Disability experience in virtual worlds provides new perspectives on how reconfigurations of ‘entrepreneur’ are emerging – notions of entrepreneurial selfhood that do not stand outside the dominant discourse but cannot be reduced to it either. In other words, a working hypothesis I derive from my ethnographic data is that a prototypical Silicon Valley ‘entrepreneur’ and the disabled persons I discuss in this article differentially inhabit a shared subject position. At issue is not conflating different forms of selfhood but recognizing how differing forms of selfhood can be informed by a shared cultural logic. This illuminates emerging contours of an ‘entrepreneurial subjectivity’ that involves reconfigurations of self-presentation and self-understanding (Bröckling, 2016; Marwick, 2017). Such reconfigurations include new forms of ‘entrepreneurial citizenship’ in which ‘entrepreneurialism is not only a project of the self, but a project that posits relations between selves and those they govern, guide, and employ’ (Irani, in press).

These are, in short, forms of ‘entrepreneurial living’ (Lindtner, in press) in which selfhood and citizenship are construed as an intertwined entrepreneurial project. The scholars cited above in this section are among those who explore the benefits and dangers in these new forms of selfhood. At stake in understanding these benefits and dangers is nothing less than what human agency and equality will mean in the digital age. We need analytical tools for comprehending this expansion of the entrepreneur subject position, such that people ‘increasingly define themselves as self-branding entrepreneurs rather than employees’ (Robinson, 2017, p. 2018). Recalling Weber, it is remarkable that this can be at least partially delinked from the desire for wealth (see Weeks, 2011). Neff notes that ‘When people think of their jobs as an investment or as having a future payoff other than regular wages, they embody venture labor’ (Neff, 2017, p. 16). This is a culture of capitalism that ‘shifts content creators’ focus from the present to the future, dangling the prospect of a career where labor and leisure coexist’ (Duffy, 2017, p. 4).

My interlocutors, most of whom did not enter Second Life with entrepreneurship in mind, reframe these conceptions of laboring selfhood. Lila, for instance, got to know Second Life after a friend asked her to spend time there: she had been inworld for four years before being disabled by a significant chronic illness. She then became a creator of roleplaying clothing, avatar body attachments, and furniture. However, she emphasized ‘I actually didn’t want to deal with building when I wasn’t sick … I was crazy bored at home and I wanted to do more, something to make me feel productive even if I didn’t sell many things’. Like Ellie and many other disabled entrepreneurs, a sense of productivity was linked to creating, collaborating, and sharing, not sales. For instance, customers had purchased about 40 copies of one of Lila’s signature pieces of furniture. Some months she would sell enough to pay the rent for her inworld store (about $15), but not consistently. However, Lila’s real motivation was ‘I like the fact that someone else enjoys things I make. I get some sense of satisfaction for work done’.

As I noted earlier, this kind of ethnographic analysis confronts the complex interplay of multiple cultural domains. Lila’s experience and that of many of my interlocutors draws on notions of craftsmanship (Sennett, 2009), but is also gendered, reflecting how historically the work of women has often not been seen as real ‘labor’: reassigned an emotional value and conflated with a ‘domestic’ sphere. Entrepreneurial selfhood is thus not external to a gendered logic in which ‘online technology allows workers to carve out strategies to cope with conditions that are highly intensified because they are taken to be individual rather than structural in nature’ (Gregg, 2011, p. 3; see Hochschild, 2001). Gender and ability are both shaped by this dynamic, which means that ‘people increasingly … have to do the work of the structures [like the welfare state] by themselves … which in turn requires intensive practices of self-monitoring or “reflexivity”’ (McRobbie, 2002, p. 518). It is in this context of intensification through individuation – making work more overwhelming by making it more personal – that my interlocutors’ naming of collaboration as intrinsic to their conception of entrepreneurship is particularly revealing.

Collaboration and capability

In this section I focus on the question of collaboration. While certainly informed by gender, as noted above the ideal of collaborative labor is mobilized by other cultural characteristics, including disability. For my interlocutors the link between disability, digital entrepreneurship, and collaboration was often shaped by upsetting and economically devastating experiences of physical-world employment discrimination. Consider how one morning a group of disabled persons discussed labor in both Second Life (‘SL’) and the physical world (often colloquially termed ‘RL’ or ‘real life’, but with an understanding that Second Life was real as well):

RHONDA: wonder if anyone else is afraid to try to get a job in RL … I fear that if I am unable to do it, keep up with my work, or if I cannot understand or am too slow … then I’ll get fired and I will have lost my benefits.

JASON: I share that.

RUBY: ughhhh

SYLVIA: I will start my teacher training in March, and just like any social work I am afraid I will burn out twice as hard.

RHONDA: Sometimes I’m sick or just unable to do things for a month or so … I don’t think they take that into account when they think we should try to work, but could lose our benefits. So I’ve got lots of fear of that happening.

Sylvia: ♥

DAVID: The last job I had in RL, I lost two days before my trial period was over. It was in a hotel, shift work. And they scheduled me to do the late shift, and then I’d have to do the early shift the next day after, which meant that when I got home and took my meds, it took me at least a couple hours to go to sleep. So I didn’t get enough sleep, and it kept burning me out.

SYLVIA: Gotta love the retail type of jobs … .

DAVID: When I asked my boss if they could accommodate me, because basically they have to by law here in France, he asked why, so I was open with him and said it’s because I have bipolar disorder. And his face just turned, and he talked about how people with manic depression are unreliable and dangerous to have around.

LILA: sighs

Michelle: dang

SYLVIA: GRRRRRR

DAVID: So they let me go. And that was the last time I worked in RL. I’m on disability now, stable, and I find that I can make a little pocket money here in Second Life by making custom mesh [objects] for people, some cars and some little buildings, and I’m working on a big house. So thanks to Michelle and others for teaching me how to do it! But that’s how I use Second Life, a little pocket money here and there.

Another interlocutor, Joseph, noted how:

I was told I would lose medical benefits by working. If anything, I could work and have $1 deducted for every $2 earned, I cannot have more than $2,000 in an account, and it can work out to earn an extra $30 a week … employment means a whole lot more than money. It means having a place to go every single day where I am (hopefully) wanted and needed.

In conversations like these and in everyday practices of digital entrepreneurship, we find (as in David’s statements above) a valuing of creativity, a de-emphasis on sales despite income precarity, and a stressing of collaboration and learning. These responses to conflations of labor and self-worth extend beyond disability:

Work is crucial not only to those whose lives are centered around it, but also, in a society that expects people to work for wages, to those who are expelled or excluded from work and marginalized in relation to it. (Weeks, 2011, p. 2)

Morgan noted that:

It is such a conflicting situation, of constantly facing barriers to what you are capable of doing. And constantly having these outside forces suggest you’re not being honest about your capabilities, and that you could do more … [Disabled persons] are actually forced into the position of entrepreneurship … You’re going to have to have the initiative to prove that you can make that contribution.

Morgan indicates that the ‘opportunity’ to contribute can be a compulsion as well. The intersection of disability and the digital reveals how the entrepreneur subject position is centered on a normatively ableist self. This is a self who ostensibly faces no barriers to work, particularly when ‘vocational rehabilitation’ programs frame entrepreneurship as a paradigm of disability self-employment. Digital technologies are now commonly linked to that paradigm, as if they ensure labor transparently reveals one’s value. This is one way that such technologies have often furthered, not mitigated, exclusions of disabled persons from the workforce (Ross & Taylor, 2017). To recall one of the most enduring insights of technology studies, no technology has an inevitable social valence. Technology does not inherently ‘make things better’.

The ableist self on which the entrepreneur subject position is centered is presumed to be constituted through risk and individual productivity. It is thereby part of a cultural framework that narrowcasts dependency, mutuality, and collaboration in terms of start-up or open-source ‘disruptions’ of corporate capitalism (Lindtner, in press). However, my analysis builds on the growing body of work showing how the dynamics in play involve inclusion as well:

[D]isabled people are being produced as idealized ‘workers with disabilities’ and included in neoliberal workplaces … they provide added value through helping corporations rack up CSR [Corporate Social Responsibility] ‘brownie points’. They are also remaking the workplace as a more affective space for [able-bodied] coworkers who experience novel feelings of responsibility, inspiration, attachment, and love. (Friedner, 2015, p. 121)

Disabled persons in Second Life respond to these shifting dynamics of exclusion and inclusion when framing ‘entrepreneur’ as a selfhood characterized by collaboration and contribution as well as initiative and risk. This construes ability as interpersonal, and entrepreneurship as a capability that cannot be slotted into a classic teleology of wealth accumulation or even full employment. It is an aspirational labor where one key ‘aspiration’ is the opportunity to contribute itself – recalling capabilities approaches to human rights that focus on ‘what people are actually able to do and to be, in a way informed by an intuitive idea of a life that is worthy of the dignity of the human being’ (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 70; see also Burchardt, 2004; Sen, 2005). For my interlocutors, Second Life enabled collaborative entrepreneurship not just because of mobility limitations, but because the affordances of virtual worlds included community and tools for creation. When describing her unemployment, Michelle once noted that ‘job situations don’t accommodate mental unwellness very well. What I find in Second Life though is an opportunity to get some of the very positive rewards of “working”, of being productive, of making a contribution to the wider world’.

That this ‘wider world’ includes a virtual world underscores how the internet is not a monolithic cultural entity. Affordances of various online socialities vary, with oftenunforeseen consequences. Morgan once noted that:

When you compare to Facebook, Facebook is a social media … there’s nothing solid in it, right? There’s no open mikes: any creative expression I post on Facebook can be potentially limited to those that I would allow to see it, and those who see it, they’re not going to pay me a dime for it.

Morgan here emphasizes Facebook’s form as a network. In contrast, Second Life is ‘solid’ – meaning not that it is physical, but that it is a place. It does not mediate between two locations of culture, but is a site of culture itself:

If I try to go out and be an entrepreneur in the real world, I got bankers telling me why they’re not going to fund me, I got office buildings telling me why they’re not going to rent to me, I’ve got all kinds of people telling me what they can’t do. And I find in the virtual world there’s very little of that. You have a whole lot of the opposite. Which is, ‘yeah, you should do that. Yeah. I know someone who knows how to do that. You should talk to this person’ … I didn’t think I’d be able to build. And the people who build were like magicians to me, and I would watch people – Ellie was one of the first people I watched build, and I was pretty sure she was a magician, because she can build anything in a few seconds … and I’m just like ‘that will never be me; I’m not capable or competent’, but I have come to realize I am capable of things I never imagined.

Morgan summarized her experiences and those of her fellow disabled entrepreneurs:

Our lives aren’t over, and here is a virtual world where we can express that, and how we choose to define success. That’s why we don’t define it by somebody who can support themselves off their linden dollars annually. That’s not a valid measurement of success.

Conclusion: toward an anthropology of absences

One possible interpretation of the materials discussed in this article is that disability entrepreneurs in Second Life are duped by neoliberal capitalism. However, more careful ethnographic attention reveals persons who in a sense take rhetorics of entrepreneurialism at their word, yet forge visions of a better self and community. Recentering entrepreneurial selfhood on collaboration and simultaneously reframing what ‘collaboration’ entails, they sideline rhetorics of productivity and challenge dominant logics of ableism. As Michelle noted, ‘Second Life has given me a way to feel once again like I am a contributing member of society. It has helped me reconstruct my sense of identity, in the wake of becoming disabled’.

At a methodological level, my analysis illustrates how ‘ethnographic thick description can surely offer a way forward for rethinking the economy outside of a capitalocentric frame’ (Gibson-Graham, 2014, p. S149). Beliefs and practices around disability entrepreneurship in Second Life do nothing less than rework the notion of value – but in ways that cannot be reduced to either complicity or opposition. The relation to dominant beliefs is not so unilinear. Recalling insights gained from earlier research in Indonesia, I might say that these Second Life residents are not ‘translating’ dominant notions of ability and labor. Rather, they ‘dub’ them like a movie is dubbed into another language, resulting in an ongoing juxtaposition where moving lips never quite match the new, dubbed voice, but meaning-making nonetheless occurs (Boellstorff, 2003).

While some anthropologists are understandably ‘uncomfortable with scholarly insistence that people with disabilities teach us something’ (Kulick & Rydström, 2015, p. 16), ethnographic analysis contributes more than knowledge regarding the specific community studied. For instance, attention to disability entrepreneurs in virtual worlds speaks to emerging dynamics of digital labor and the implications of platform socialities for personhood. Their forms of mutual support challenge individualistic tropes of the self-made genius. Their experiences of value creation challenge the binarism of ‘ability’ versus ‘disability’, suggesting that rubrics attentive to human capability might prove more effective. Such insights also broaden intersections of disability studies and digital studies. To date, disability scholarship addressing virtual worlds has highlighted opportunities for ‘information, socialization, and community membership’ (Stewart, Hansen, & Carey, 2010, p. 254). These are all valuable topics, but foregrounding labor allows us to pose different questions regarding current contexts and future possibilities for disability inclusion.

The point, then, is not that disabled persons be compelled to ‘teach us something’, but that they have a place at the table of recognized ways of living a fully human life. In this sense, I might term my analysis an ‘anthropology of absences’. This builds on Boaventura de Sousa Santos’s notion of a ‘sociology of absences … an inquiry that aims to explain that what does not exist is, in fact, actively produced as non-existent’ (2004, p. 239). He emphasized that one way such ‘non-existence’ is produced is ‘non-productiveness’, which applied to labor takes the form of assumptions regarding. He emphasized that one way such ‘non existence’ is produced is ‘non-productiveness’, which applied to labor takes the form of assumptions regarding ‘discardable populations’ (2004, p. 239), and which can be countered by ‘recuperating and valorising alternative systems of production … hidden or discredited by the capitalist orthodoxy of productivity’ (Santos, 2004, p. 240; see Mitchell & Snyder, 2010). In recuperating and valorising the work of digital disability entrepreneurs, I respond to how disability can be made to appear absent in regimes of labor, and how some disabled persons in Second Life presence their ability through languages and practices of entrepreneurship. This is why income can be partially delinked from entrepreneurship: ‘entrepreneurship’ is being used to make present ability and contribution.

I also respond to the reality that some contemporary digital scholarship actively produces virtual worlds as non-existent, particularly those virtual worlds not oriented toward children (like Minecraft) or predominantly structured as games (like World of Warcraft). I remain amazed by how often colleagues ask me some version of the question ‘is Second Life even around any more’? Yet

[F]or ethnographers today, no task is more important than to make small facts speak to large concerns, to make the ethical acts ethnography describes into a performative ontology of economy and the threads of hope that emerge into stories of everyday revolution. (Gibson-Graham, 2014, p. S147)

This is true despite the danger that the disability entrepreneurs I discuss in this article could be taken as ‘poster children’ for virtual worlds (and capitalist markets to boot). The tendency for disability experience to be reduced either to catastrophe or ‘inspiration’ (Rousso, 2013) does not disappear in the digital domain. The response to this tendency should be neither to marginalize disability experience nor treat it as an instance of ‘technosolutionism’ (Lindtner, Bardzell, & Bardzell, 2016), but engage with that experience as deeply contributing to interdisciplinary conversations regarding the human condition.

Making the lifeworlds of disability entrepreneurs in Second Life present in our conceptual debates can contribute powerfully toward better understanding the emerging digital economies that already transform societies. It reframes disability as a form of social action irreducible to limitation or lack. In a contemporary moment when so much discussion of online socialities foregrounds surveillance, deception, and precarity, the lifeworlds of disability entrepreneurs in Second Life point to the no less real possibilities for connection, possibility, and creativity. And it is in approaches founded neither in utopia or dystopia, however promising or fearful the future might seem, that we find the best hope of comprehending our unfolding present

#### Alternative doesn’t solve:

#### The Pentagon does not care about their care networks. The military cracks down on the alt.

deBoer 16 (Fredrik, Limited-Term Lecturer, Introductory Composition at Purdue Program, 3/15/16, “c’mon, guys,” http://fredrikdeboer.com/2016/03/15/cmon-guys/)

I could be wrong about the short-term dangers, and the stakes are incredibly high. But in the end we’re left with the same old question: what tactics will **actually work to secure a better world?**

In a sharp, sober piece about the meaning of left-wing political violence in the 1970s, Tim Barker writes “If you can’t acknowledge radical violence, radicals are reduced to mere victims of repression, rather than political actors who made definite tactical choices under given political circumstances.” **The problem**, as Barker goes on to imply, is those tactical choices: in today’s America they will essentially **never break on the side of armed opposition against the state**. The government knows everything about you, I’m sorry to say, your movements and your associations and the books you read and the things you buy and what you’re saying to the people you communicate with. That’s simply on the level of information, before we even get to the state’s incredible capacity to inflict violence.

Look, **the world has changed**. The relative military capacity of regular people compared to establishment governments has changed, especially in fully developed, technology-enabled countries like the United States. The Czar had his armies, yes, but the Czar’s armies depended on manpower above and beyond everything else. The fighting was still mostly different groups of people with rifles shooting at each other. If tomorrow you could rally as many people as the Bolsheviks had at their revolutionary peak, you’re still left **in a world of F-15s, drones, and cluster bombs**. And that’s to say nothing of the fact that establishment governments in the developed world can rely on the **numbing agents of capitalist luxuries** and the American dream to damper revolutionary enthusiasm even among the many millions who have been marginalized and impoverished. **This just isn’t 1950s Cuba**, guys. **It’s just not**. In a very real way, modern technology effectively lowers the odds of armed political revolution in a country like the United States **to zero**, and so much the worse for us.

**This isn’t fatalism**. It doesn’t mean there’s no hope. It means that there is **little alternative to organization**, to changing minds through **committed political action** and using the available nonviolent means to create change: a concert of grassroots organizing, labor tactics, and **partisan politics**. Those things aren’t exactly likely to work, either, but they’re a **hell of a lot more plausible than us dweebs taking the Pentagon**. Bernie Sanders isn’t really a socialist, but he’s a social democrat that moves the conversation to the left, and if people are **dedicated and committed to organizing**, the local, state, and national candidates he inspires will **move it further to the left still**. You got any better suggestions?

Listen, commie nerds. My people. I love you guys. I really do. And I want to build a better world. **Not incrementally, either**, but with the kind of **sweeping and transformative change** that is required to fix a world of such deep injustice. But **seriously**: none of us are ever going to take to the barricades. And it’s a good thing, too, because we’d probably find a way to shoot in the wrong direction. I can’t dribble a basketball without falling down. American socialism is largely made up of bookish dreamers. I love those people but they’re not for fighting. And even if you have a particular talent for combat, you’re looking at fighting the combined forces of Google, Goldman Sachs, and the defense industry. Violence is hard. Soldiering is hard. In an era of the NSA and military robots, it’s really, really hard. **“Should we condone revolutionary violence?” is dorm room, pass-the-bong conversation fodder**, of **precisely the moral and intellectual weight** of “should we torture a guy if we know there’s a bomb and we know he knows where it is and we know we can stop it if we do?” It’s built on **absurd hypotheticals**, propped up by the power of anxious machismo, and undertaken to **no practical political end**. It’s understandable. I get it, I really do. But it’s got nothing to do with us. The only way forward is the **grubby, unsexy work of building coalitions** and asking people to climb on board

#### Alt can’t solve without confronting dominant platforms – they’re an obstacle to economic and political reform.

Lande ’20 [Robert; Professor of Law @ University of Baltimore School of Law and Sandeep Vaheesan; Legal Director @ Open Markets Institute, JD @ Duke; “Preventing the Curse of Bigness Through Conglomerate Merger Legislation,” *Ariz. St. LJ* 52; AS]

Corporate size often translates to political power. An extensive body of research has found that firm size is correlated with more political activity.41 Larger firms make larger contributions to political campaigns and devote more resources to lobbying members of Congress and government agencies.42 Judicial reinterpretations of the First Amendment have granted corporate political activity broad constitutional protection. 43 Their power is not confined to these “narrow” political activities. Large businesses also use their wealth power to fund sympathetic media coverage and scholarly research. This corporate political activity benefits executives and shareholders at the expense of the rest of society.

Corporate power in politics and public life is not an academic concern and today attracts critics from across much of the political spectrum.44 A large segment of the public is deeply concerned about corporate clout and influence in American politics. From the progressive left to the nationalist or conservative right, many individuals and organizations have expressed worries about powerful corporations capturing the political system and using it to advance their narrow aims. An ideologically diverse set of figures and groups have raised concerns about the political power of large corporations and started offering remedies.

A. Corporate Size Translates to Political and Economic Power

Corporate size often translates to political and economic power. An extensive body of research has found that firm size is correlated with political activity. 45 Larger firms make larger contributions to political campaigns and other activities and devote more resources to lobbying members of Congress and government agencies. 46 They can also use their power to fund sympathetic media coverage and scholarly research.47 This corporate political activity has tangible benefits for executives and shareholders. An influential 2014 study found that members of Congress in voting on bills are responsive to the views of two groups: large businesses and the wealthy.48 In contrast, they are largely indifferent to the political concerns and preferences of the middle and working classes.49

Large firms exercise political power through campaign contributions. An extensive body of empirical literature has found that large firms make larger campaign contributions to members of Congress and political action committees than small firms do.50 Campaign contributions are an important way to build and maintain political influence. While the findings on the question are mixed, campaign contributions may increase the likelihood that the member’s votes and other actions are aligned with the donor’s interests.51

Political contributions can give corporate donors access to those in power. Lending credence to what research had found,52 Mick Mulvaney, the current director of the Office of Management and Budget and former acting director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, openly admitted this dynamic in a speech before bank lobbyists.53 He stated that, as a member of Congress, he granted preferential access to lobbyists who had donated to his political campaigns.54

Large firms also wield political power through lobbying, an arguably much more important form of political activity than political contributions.55 They often have large staffs of lawyers and lobbyists to present their messages to politicians and regulators.56 Relative to smaller firms, large firms devote more resources to lobbying activity. 57 This lobbying allows corporations to shape the narrative around an issue and influence members of Congress and regulators. Lobbying is often an effective strategy for casting doubt on the public benefits of legislation and regulation. 58 Corporate lobbyists can create counter-narratives that proposed legislation restricting their client’s activities would either not advance or undermine the public interest.59 For instance, despite triggering the worst economic crisis in nearly eighty years, large banks and financial institutions in the United States, through all-encompassing lobbying and public relations blitz, subsequently avoided structural breakups and significant restrictions on their activity.60

Indeed, the present weak enforcement of antitrust may, in part, be a product of corporate power and influence over the federal antitrust agencies.61 “Regulatory capture” occurs when a regulatory agency or enforcer is so greatly influenced by businesses that it fails to act in the public’s interest.62 Instead it acts in ways that benefits the players in the industry that the regulators were charged with policing.63 One possible cause of regulatory capture is that the agency often has limited resources compared to the regulated companies. 64 When the regulated business is a multi-billion-dollar company, the disparity in resources can be especially large and regulatory capture becomes more probable.65

The FTC and DOJ’s reluctance and unwillingness to challenge some huge mergers could, in part, be caused by the considerable influence massive companies have over them and the political environment in which they operate. For instance, FTC Commissioner Rohit Chopra recently voiced concern over the power of big tech in a trade regulation context, stating: “All too often, the government is too captured by those incumbents that use their power to dictate their preferred policies.”66 Consistent with the “capture” theory, mergers can produce large companies with substantial resources to hire the requisite numbers of lawyers, lobbyists, and experts to “capture” a regulatory agency or enforcer.

The power of large corporations extends beyond the political, regulatory, and legal realms. Their power can be characterized as hegemonic. They can shape the parameters of public debate through a variety of means. They use their advertising dollars to boost supportive outlets and voices and marginalize critical ones 67—and even co-opt individual and organizational voices that are conventionally perceived as progressive.68 They also own media outlets (think of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and his ownership of the Washington Post) and fund think tanks that can propagate their preferred narrative on a range of issues.69 Big businesses have also become adept at manipulating academic debates to their own ends, donating to universities, sponsoring new academic centers, and paying ideologically-aligned scholars to produce academic defenses.70 Indeed, present-day antitrust embodies the extraordinary influence of corporations. Over the past several decades, corporate-funded economists and lawyers have played an outsized role in antitrust debates.71

Furthermore, corporate size confers power through the control of economic resources. At a large corporation, a handful of individuals— executives and directors—make decisions that affect entire cities, regions, and even the nation. A decision to open a plant in one city, instead of another, or to relocate a plant from the United States to a foreign country can affect large numbers of people. Senator Sherman recognized how concentration of assets in a few hands amounted to private government. 72 He asked his colleagues to “consider . . . whether, on the whole, it is safe in this country to leave the production of property, the transportation of our whole country, to depend upon the will of a few men sitting at their council board in the city of New York.”73

Corporate size means that every nominally private decision has major public implications.74 They can use their control of key resources to stop unfavorable government action and induce favorable action.75

Consider the recent contest among states and cities to host Amazon’s second headquarters. Amazon invited state and local governments across the country to compete for this second headquarters in exchange for a pledge to create 50,000 local jobs.76 States and cities showered Amazon with a range of carrots amounting to billions of dollars in tax incentives. 77 Exemplifying the lengths to which governments were willing to go to lure Amazon, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo (half-) jokingly even offered to change his first name to Amazon if Amazon chose New York City. 78 This frenzied competition illustrates the power of a large corporation over democratically elected governments. And this episode is not an outlier but representative of how large corporations use their power and the threat of relocation to pressure and twist governments for their own ends.79

#### Non–market societies reproduce violence.

Julie **NELSON** Global Development and Environment @ Tufts **‘6** *Economics for Humans* p. 37-40

Problems with the Market-Critic Prescriptions

At the end of the last chapter, I brought up evidence of poverty and corporate abuses that raise questions about the adequacy of the probusiness, free-market prescription for curing social ills. Do the prescriptions of the market critics for “small is beautiful/’“government to the rescue,” or “separate spheres” solutions give us grounds for more hope?

The “small is beautiful” prescription contains, of course, some truth. It is true that acting ethically is a more complicated process the larger and more complex the level of organization involved. Likewise, the “government to the rescue” advocates make some good points. It is easier for any one company to do the right thing if there is public pressure on all companies to do the right thing, and a government regulation can be a good tool for applying such pressure. On an even larger scale, international public agreements may be the only hope for addressing global climate change issues. These are far too big for any one nation, let alone one company, to take on. And there is some truth in the “separate spheres” view. There are some social welfare problems for which private, market solutions don’t work. Care for people who are poor and ill or otherwise needy cannot be provided on a purely market basis. The funds have to come from somewhere other than the “consumers” of the services. Public or private nonprofit allocations of money are necessary.

But while the values held in high regard by market critics are praiseworthy, and the prescriptions contain partial truths, I find the prescribed solutions lacking when held up to criteria of realism and effectiveness. Sometimes the proposed solutions could cause real damage.

A first problem is that these views tend to assume not only that the market sphere is driven exclusively by self-interest, but that self-interest is exclusive to the market sphere. They often seem to assume that if an organization is small, or nonprofit, or governmental, then non-self-interested motivations can be trusted to take over. We should consider the evidence on this.

Families, for example, are very small nonprofit organizations, presumably governed by interests of love and intimacy (as in the Victorian image).The newspaper reminds us daily, however, that families can also be characterized by domination and abuse, even violence. Sometimes being in a small-scale organization just means being under the thumb of a small-scale oppressor.

Community organizing is a great way to bring a group together to work on issues of social concern and to create opportunities for activism. Community organizing was very effective in South Boston in the 1970s, for instance, when big community demonstrations were organized to fight racial integration of the local public schools. Sometimes community groups carry out agendas of racism. And it is not uncommon for community activists motivated by not-in-my-backyard sentiments to try to push undesirable projects off on some other community. Communities, like individuals, can act in purely self-interested ways.

Nonprofit and religious organizations can bring people together to work for goals other than profit.The Boston diocese of the Catholic Church, for example, is legally not allowed to be motivated by profit. It was the maintenance of its own institutional hierarchies and reputation that motivated it to quietly move priests who sexually abused children from one parish to another, thereby supplying the abusers with fresh victims. Nonprofit institutions—even those ostensibly concerned with maintaining moral and spiritual values—are not immune to evil.

In an era of suspicious elections, campaign finance fiascos, and powerful lobbyists, one has to be naive in the extreme to believe that governments can be trusted to automatically or naturally work for the common good.

Appeals to small communities, nonprofits, or governments to take over economic activities “in the public interest” seem to me to bring in a deus ex machina solution.Yes, it would be nice if it worked. But how do we know that those selfish motivations critics assume drive the market are not also going to show up in families, community organizations, nonprofits, and the state?

A second problem with these views is that they largely pull the rug out from under their own noble drives. Because money and power are associated with greed and oppression, money and power are treated as inherently morally suspect. People who possess these, such as corporate executives who might be willing to engage in ethical discussion (if given the chance), are labeled as the evil “them,” separated by a large gulf from the moral “us.” Thus, potential allies and power bases are eliminated. This aversion to money and power has, I believe, been especially damaging to the sectors of the economy in which hands-on care is provided to children, the sick, and the elderly. Remember this poster: “It will be a great day when the schools have all the money they need and the air force has to hold a bake sale to buy a bomber”? How true. But the antimoney ideology reinforces exactly the bake-sale, nickel-and-dime mentality for human services that that poster decried. The damage this attitude has inflicted on caring work will be taken up further when I look at issues of money and motivations in chapter 4. A third problem is that, even if the prescriptions given by market critics were viable once put in place, there would still remain the problem of getting there. The massive promarket tide now flooding the United States and global institutions presents an intimidating reality check. The “small is beautiful” view tells us that we must have a massive economic restructuring— the thorough destruction of large corporations as a form of economic organization—before we can really be human in our economic lives. This would require a gargantuan change— larger, perhaps, than the Industrial Revolution and the rise and fall of Communism combined. If, on the other hand, we hope to be rescued by the rise of powerful, purely public-spirited interventionist governments, the current political climate makes it look like we may be waiting a very long time. Every step toward wresting control away from those with money and power will, market critics correctly perceive, be resisted by those with money and power.

Some people enjoy tilting at the economic machine—or at windmills, like Don Quixote in his hopeless crusades. In fact, I admire the spirit of people who keep to their praiseworthy, treasured values against all odds. But what if the futures envisioned by market critics, visions that tend to seesaw between the utopian and apocalyptic, are not the only options? What if the proposed solutions are unsatisfactory because the market critics have, unfortunately, combined good values with erroneous “facts” about what an economy is?

#### Anti-statist mutualism cannot cope with large-scale problems like climate and redistribution.

Damian **WHITE** Prf. Rhode Island School of Design **’19** “Ecological Democracy, Just Transitions and a Political Ecology of Design” *Environmental Values* 28 p. 44-46

Debate has ranged in urban design circles for many years now as to how we can reconcile the tension between Jane Jacob’s vision of a bottom-up driven vision of an urban future and the vision of the master builder offered by Robert Moses. Thinking beyond both forms of ‘horizontalism’ that overstate the capacities of grass-roots innovation to change the world and paternalistic ‘verticalist’ imaginaries with their command-and-obedience models of social change would seem long overdue. Transition projects compatible with just, democratic and effective outcomes are going to be multi-scalar and complex in their forms of institutional design. We are going to need effective representative and participatory democratic structures, modes of radical municipalism and strong democratic states, informed and engaged publics and accountable professionals, civic experts and responsible civil servants who serve the public interest to build sustainable and post carbon futures.

What, though, are the limits of contemporary radical design theory? Let me now draw out four concerns here. First, it could be observed that a great deal of radical and transition design recognises the need for multi-level and multi-scalar modes of redirective practices; the levels of everyday life and the local are almost always foregrounded as spaces for intervention for a design politics. In part, this is a product of the fact that these spaces often provide the initial sites where much design is able to make an intervention. There is some variation here between industrial design, service design, landscape design and urban/regional planning, with the scales of engagement progressively chang- ing. If users are persistently attended to in design, and radical designers like Manzini (2015) have thought hard about how micro-publics could be brought into more participatory engagements with the project of redesigns through community planning, public meetings, new interfaces and so on, the broader institutional contexts and representative structures that could guide and direct a design politics functioning at larger scales have not been adequately theorised. The role that local, regional, federal, national and post-national state structures might play in facilitating or supporting design for the just transition is under-theorised.

Second, the overwhelming focus in radical design on civil society as the space of innovation has ensured that most contemporary currents of radical design have had very little to say about the opportunities for democratic redesign of the workplace or the proposition that radical designs might actually emerge out of workplace struggle(see White 2015) as well as broader civic struggles for new forms of collective consumption outside the workplace (Cohen 2017; Goldstein 2018). Traditions of worker-orientated design need to be re- covered here. It was designers working with Scandinavian trade unionists in the 1970s and 1980s and attempts to bring together industry democracy with workers’ self-management at the Lucas Plan in the UK (amongst other places) that played a very significant role in inspiring the rise of the participatory de- sign movement (see Ehn et al. 2014). Equally it could be observed that most contemporary radical design literatures have little to say about redesign of the workplace for more emancipatory ends but even less to say about how public institutions could be made more democratic by design but also act as potential partners with civil society to expand the possibilities of drawing publics into design discussions. The state has a very loose presence in Manzini’s visions of a co-created commons (Manzini 2015). It has even less presence in Tony Fry’s vision of redirective practice (Fry 2009), which maintains, in an apocalyptic vein, that existing state forms are unlikely to survive in a radically warmed future marked by social and ecological breakdown and the mass movement of people. John Barry (2012), Christian Parenti (2012) and most recently, Laurence Delina (2016) have all compellingly argued in contrast to these positions that the democratic state, despite its many failings, must play a critical role in transition. Parenti argues that it is the state that is the only institution large enough and powerful enough with the power to: (a) face down the fossil-fuel industry; (b) redirect the trillions of dollars of finance and in- vestment that will be required to fund climate mitigation and adaptation; (c) enact continental scales of energy, green industrial and green infrastructure retrofitting; (d) redirect national research and development priorities towards ecological innovation; (e) embark on long-range national democratic planning to facilitate optimal strategies for climate adaptation and resilience.

Parenti’s statism has its limits. The state can’t do everything. As Hillary Wainwright (1994) has long argued, unless a transition state is held accountable to a fully mobilised transition-orientated civil society engaged in redirective practice, the transition state may well repeat the problems of the conventional state in being ‘all thumbs and no fingers’ (Lindblom, cited in Dryzek 2000: 24). But it seems evident that post carbon transitions are unlikely to be suc- cessful without reworked relations between a democratic transition state and democratic transition currents in civil society.

Third, radical and critical design literatures are insufficiently alert to the many ways in which neoliberalism can happily feed off, co-opt or co-exist with all manner of bottom-up social design experiments and co-created institutions. Here lies the danger of Manzini’s tendency to take as given neo-liberal stories of the end of the welfare state. We have already seen in the United Kingdom that conservative projects like David Cameron’s Big Society can easily co-opt all manner of mutualist and bottom-up social design enterprises and use them as arguments for unravelling the welfare state and state provision**.** What is generally missing in a good deal of radical design discourse is extended engagement with the ways in which smart policymaking and revised bureaucratic institutions might be able to protect and augment the voices of civil society and its design experiments from below. The co-creation of alter- native institutions has possibilities, but without macro policy and institutional support for such policies (in the form of a robust green welfare state, a uni- versal basic income scheme, maximum and minimum wages, guaranteed paid time off and the provision of childcare and care for the elderly), diverse modes of eco-design led social innovation can merely end up giving voice and agency to the time rich and commitment light (White 2015).

#### Rejecting production entirely in favor of social reproduction can’t be scaled up at a society-wide level

Henwood, MA, and Jäger, PhD Candidate, 18

(Anton Jäger is is a doctoral student at the University of Cambridge, working on the history of populism in the United States. https://jacobinmag.com/2018/12/post-work-labor-ubi-coercion-capitalism)

DH Fundamentally, if we don’t work, we will die. We will have nowhere to live, no roof over our head, no food to eat, no clothes to wear. I had Kathi Weeks on this show a few years ago when her book came out. I recalled that my first wife had a 1974 Fiat that was a real piece of crap. It was a horrible car. But that was built at the height of Italian operaismo, and the anti-work movement had spread pretty far into the labor in Italy. I kept bringing that car up. I said, “Well, who will make the stuff that keeps society moving?” I never really got a satisfactory answer out of her. She kept changing the story. She wanted to talk about how terrible so much work is, how terrible so many jobs are. But I don’t understand how this anti-work philosophy will put food on the table. AJ Yeah, I think that’s the big question I ask myself. Because they have this vision of work as a suppression of spontaneity, they think that a postcapitalist form of activity — because they always prefer the word “activity” rather than “work” — will have to be spontaneous and will be undone of all its coercive aspects. I think this is not only unrealistic, it’s also undesirable. Some feel like full automation is a really attractive slogan, but at the same time you really have to ask yourself the question of how this works out in practice. The example I often give is that there’s loads of activity today which doesn’t count as work, because it doesn’t meet the sort of benchmark of solvency associated with the market. For example, if you really like handing out ice cream in the park, this is obviously a sort of activity which capitalist markets don’t cater to. If we live in a postcapitalist society, people should be able to just roam around the park and hand out ice cream, because that now counts as a sort of worthy, productive activity basically. DH But where’d that ice cream come from though? AJ Exactly. So the question is, “Where does the ice cream come from?” “Well, it comes from a factory.” “What do you do at the factory?” They say, “Oh, you automate the factory.” The thing is, “Well, who builds the machines for the automated factory? Who trains the engineers who build the machines for the automated factory?” At the same time, this gets you into inevitably political questions of, “What do we automate? How do we automate it? Who do we train for the automation?” At the same time, there’s this kind of problematic regress which, in the end, implies an inevitable end to pure, spontaneous activity, because you have to coerce people into doing certain things. In the end, it’s a sort of coercive moment where you say, “Okay, now we’re actually going to force people to do this, because this is the activity we value as a society.” This problematic regress in the end also shows the sort of weakness of the notion of work that these post-workers have. Because work can be coercive but still fulfilling. This is the whole point about what Marx himself said when he came to postcapitalist laborers, that you need to find these kinds of procedures and you need to find these institutional mechanisms that actually allow coercion or the enforcing of a consensus to be procedurally consistent and transparent, so not arbitrary in that sense.

#### Alt cannot create new division of labor.

McCarthy, PhD, 5 (James, Geography @ PSU, “Commons as counterhegemonic projects” *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 16 (1) p. INFORMA)

Donahue's local commons are the most clear-cut in terms of both scale and membership. He advocates commons at the scale of towns, with town residents as the commoners. He considers at length, however, how his commons might intersect with other scales. As noted above, he favors coordinating contiguous commons so that they can provide regional-scale environmental goods. He is attentive to the global-scale flows of commodities, capital, and labor that connect the residents of Weston to the rest of the world, greatly expanding their ecological footprint, and sees local commons as one way to reduce these larger-scale impacts. While Donahue's work is very much in the vein of agrarian writers such as Wendell Berry, he avoids many of the pitfalls of that tradition, recognizing that not everyone is going to become a family farmer, that the modern division of labor is not going to fade away, and that ways must be found to support 9 billion or 10 billion people in more just and sustainable ways.

While his efforts are entirely commendable, their generalizability is questionable. His vision is subtly radical inasmuch as it challenges late capitalism not through direct, structural critique, but through encouraging people to overcome their alienation from nature, decommodify their consumption where possible, and not allow themselves the luxury of commodity fetishism. Yet he never deals head-on with the way Weston's commons are funded by surplus from precisely the economic relations he criticizes. Weston is an extremely wealthy suburb of Boston, one of the wealthiest, most highly educated urban areas in the wealthiest country on earth. Donahue repeatedly acknowledges that the nonprofit that runs the town's conservation lands - its commons - generally breaks even or loses money, even though it is subsidized by residents through direct memberships, tax revenues, bond issues, and the sale of high-priced apple cider to the parents of the children who just helped to make it. In short, working landscapes or not, these commons absorb more economic surplus than they generate. The surplus that supports one-quarter of the town's land as commons comes, one way or another, from metropolitan Boston's position as a leading center in medical services and technology, the computer industry, higher education, and other highly globalized, capital- and technology-intensive industries. While Donahue returns again and again to the question of ecological accounting, rightly asking us to consider how much that California orange really costs when oil, subsidized irrigation, and synthetic agricultural inputs are taken into account, he does not add up the real cost of the produce grown by the children of suburban elites on land removed from the market by town residents eager to preserve a rural enclave a few minutes' drive from their Boston offices, with the help of a full-time nonprofit staff supported by donations and tax revenues.

#### Not scaleable – can’t cause full economic transition or convince everyone to quit their jobs. Even small-scale care-based organizing has been met with overwhelming force.

Ikoro 21

(Chima Ikoro is the community organizing editor at the Weekly. 8-18-21, Mutual Aid Projects May Soon Run up Against Bureaucratic Barriers, Southside Weekly, <https://southsideweekly.com/mutual-aid-projects-may-soon-run-up-against-bureaucratic-barriers/>, JKS)

On its face, mutual aid would seem to have no downside, but as organizers have learned, there are hidden roadblocks that make the work hard. In some cases, groups that have provided free assistance to community members have even been criminalized by the police. In one example, police and City inspectors served the Chicago Freedom School (CFS) with a cease-and-desist order last year for providing food to protestors after they became trapped downtown following the George Floyd protests in the Loop on May 30, 2020. Inspectors claimed that by distributing food, CFS was in violation of their business license. Although the City settled and eventually agreed to rescind the cease-and-desist order, this act was still a violent and egregious effort to stop community members from simply helping each other. In 2019, the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty released an annual report that detailed, among other things, changes in restrictions on food sharing. This report stated that although homelessness is on the rise, more and more cities are creating laws that discourage food sharing. In 2018, twelve people were charged with misdemeanors for distributing food to houseless people in El Cajon, California. A municipal code in El Cajon prohibits food sharing in public places. The year prior, seven people were arrested in Tampa, Florida for similar charges, and a woman was ticketed for feeding houseless persons in Atlanta later that year. If criminalizing the sharing of food didn’t pose a high-enough hurdle for organizers, redistributing funds has its own set of complications as well. If an ad hoc mutual aid group is not registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit through the IRS the individual(s) of record receiving the funds (through Venmo, Paypal, or some other means) are liable to be taxed for money received as donations. The process to complete the paperwork and meet the requirements can be tedious and riddled with caveats. According to the IRS, an organization that is tax-exempt as a 501(c)(3) cannot be an “action organization.” In other words, supporting or influencing policy changes and legislation, as well as supporting or rejecting political candidates, cannot be a part of such an organization’s work. This would seem to pose a potential problem for many politically engaged mutual aid projects. But the process of obtaining 501(c)(3) status can be more laborious than upholding its rules. Femdot, a rapper from north Chicago and the south suburbs, is the founder and director of operations for Delacreme Scholars, a nonprofit organization.

# 1AR

## K

### 2AC – AT: Consequences Bad

#### Ignoring unique consequences is tunnel-vision.

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As a result, the most important political questions are simply not asked. It is assumed that U.S. military intervention is an act of "aggression," but no consideration is given to the aggression to which intervention is a response. The status quo ante in Afghanistan is not, as peace activists would have it, peace, but rather terrorist violence abetted by a regime--the Taliban--that rose to power through brutality and repression. This requires us to ask a question that most "peace" activists would prefer not to ask: What should be done to respond to the violence of a Saddam Hussein, or a Milosevic, or a Taliban regime? What means are likely to stop violence and bring criminals to justice? Calls for diplomacy and international law are well intended and important; they implicate a decent and civilized ethic of global order. But they are also vague and empty, because they are not accompanied by any account of how diplomacy or international law can work effectively to address the problem at hand. The campus left offers no such account. To do so would require it to contemplate tragic choices in which moral goodness is of limited utility. Here what matters is not purity of intention but the intelligent exercise of power. Power is not a dirty word or an unfortunate feature of the world. It is the core of politics. Power is the ability to effect outcomes in the world. Politics, in large part, involves contests over the distribution and use of power. To accomplish anything in the political world, one must attend to the means that are necessary to bring it about. And to develop such means is to develop, and to exercise, power. To say this is not to say that power is beyond morality. It is to say that power is not reducible to morality. As writers such as Niccolo Machiavelli, Max Weber, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Hannah Arendt have taught, an unyielding concern with moral goodness undercuts political responsibility. The concern may be morally laudable, reflecting a kind of personal integrity, but it suffers from three fatal flaws: (1) It fails to see that the purity of one's intention does not ensure the achievement of what one intends. Abjuring violence or refusing to make common cause with morally compromised parties may seem like the right thing; but if such tactics entail impotence, then it is hard to view them as serving any moral good beyond the clean conscience of their supporters; (2) it fails to see that in a world of real violence and injustice, moral purity is not simply a form of powerlessness; it is often a form of complicity in injustice. This is why, from the standpoint of politics--as opposed to religion--pacifism is always a potentially immoral stand. In categorically repudiating violence, it refuses in principle to oppose certain violent injustices with any effect; and (3) it fails to see that politics is as much about unintended consequences as it is about intentions; it is the effects of action, rather than the motives of action, that is most significant. Just as the alignment with "good" may engender impotence, it is often the pursuit of "good" that generates evil. This is the lesson of communism in the twentieth century: it is not enough that one's goals be sincere or idealistic; it is equally important, always, to ask about the effects of pursuing these goals and to judge these effects in pragmatic and historically contextualized ways. Moral absolutism inhibits this judgment. It alienates those who are not true believers. It promotes arrogance. And it undermines political effectiveness.