## 1AC

### Advantage---Growth

#### Antitrust law is failing now---current market consolidation undermines innovation, slows growth, and suppresses productivity---promoting competition solves

Fiona M. Scott Morton 20. Theodore Nierenberg Professor of Economics at the Yale University School of Management. “Reforming U.S. antitrust enforcement and competition policy,” https://equitablegrowth.org/reforming-u-s-antitrust-enforcement-and-competition-policy/.

Evidence that antitrust laws are falling short is plentiful. Many cartels go undiscovered, and tacit collusion is probably even more prevalent because it is harder for antitrust enforcers to prosecute and deter.9 Anticompetitive horizontal mergers (between rivals) appear to be underdeterred.10 A variety of clever strategies used by incumbents to exclude entrants, either by purchasing them when they are nascent or using tactics to confine them to a less threatening niche or forcing them to exit have been successfully deployed in recent years, often when antitrust enforcement is late or absent.11

Each of these sources of concern can be critiqued, but together they make a compelling case. Some of the evidence may have benign explanations in part, such as the growing importance of fixed costs, for example, when creating software or pharmaceuticals that leads naturally to higher markups, or the increasing benefit of being on the same platform with other users (known as “network effects” in the case of a social media site). Firms in industries with high fixed costs or large network externalities may exhibit high profits and productivity and low labor shares, and may earn high profits because they had a good idea early and executed well, thereby getting adoption from many consumers.12 Nonetheless, the overall picture is clear that market power has been growing in the United States for decades. Moreover, even where the explanation for growing market power is benign, we must ensure that companies do not use anticompetitive tactics to protect their position.

Firms with market power need not compete aggressively to sell their products, so they tend to raise prices, reduce quality, and/or innovate less. Market power can also contribute to slowed economic growth by, for example, suppressing productivity increases.13 Theoretical and empirical economic studies convincingly show that innovation is harmed by anticompetitive conduct.14

This is why antitrust enforcement is such a terrific policy tool to strengthen competition—it does not come with an efficiency downside, as do most policies that redistribute income. Policies that enhance competition are unambiguously beneficial for efficiency, as well as inclusive prosperity, with minor qualifications.15 Other policies for addressing inequality, in particular, such as labor market and tax policies, may create disincentives or allocative efficiency losses that must be weighed against their distributional benefits. Policies to enhance competition, by contrast, offer what is close to a free lunch.16

#### The plan solves---an effective competition standard reinvigorates antitrust

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America, as legal and economic scholars are increasingly noting, has a market power problem. The emerging evidence points to less competition, higher markups, greater concentration, and widening wealth and income inequality. The current state of competition law benefits the select few—at the expense of nearly everyone else.

Our antitrust laws are supposed to deal with concentrated economic power. The problem is that the laws have been hijacked in two ways. First, ideologues narrowed the substance of antitrust from addressing a variety of goals to focusing solely on the concept of consumer welfare—namely, that harm to competition within the legal meaning of the antitrust laws consists solely of harm to consumers and their welfare, as measured almost exclusively by price and quantity effects in output markets. Second, some courts and enforcers went even further, declining to find antitrust liability in conduct that harms consumers on the theory that it carries other benefits, like long-run economic growth. Recent US Supreme Court decisions, including Ohio v American Express Co, and the US District Court’s decision to allow the AT&T/Time Warner merger illustrate how antitrust, under the prevailing consumer welfare standard, has been weakened and distorted beyond all recognition. Courts have elevated the burden of proof on the government and other antitrust plaintiffs to such an extent that the Sherman and Clayton Antitrust Acts have become unenforceable for many anticompetitive practices, other than cartels.

If the United States continues with a light-if-any-touch antitrust review of mergers and turns a blind eye to abuses by dominant firms, concentration and crony capitalism will likely increase, competition and our well-being will decrease further, and power and profits will continue to fall into fewer hands. Startups, small and midsize firms, and Americans more broadly—as workers, consumers, and democratic citizens—will be left to the beneficence or spite of a few powerful, but arbitrary, corporations.

This trend is reversible if we restore antitrust as a guarantor of effective competition. To tackle today’s market power problem, we offer an effective competition antitrust standard to replace the prevailing consumer welfare standard, which courts and scholars have interpreted differently (and at times inconsistently). The effective competition standard restores the primary aim of the antitrust laws—namely, the dispersion and deconcentration of significant private power wherever in the economy it is to be found, including throughout supply chains and in the labor market.

#### It's enforceable and sufficient

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The effective competition standard differs from both the consumer welfare standard and the total welfare standard in that it expressly departs from the partial-equilibrium analysis of a single market as the basis for antitrust analysis. The effective competition standard further differs from the consumer welfare standard in four important ways:

• First, a substantial lessening of competition suffices for liability. Enforcers and courts need not demonstrate how the lessening of competition harms consumers, nor balance the harms to one set of stakeholders against the supposed benefits for another. In this respect, the effective competition standard makes antitrust more enforceable.

• Second, it recognizes that competition needs competitors. Thus, it takes a tougher stance on monopolistic, predatory, and exclusionary practices, which often reduce the competitive opportunities for entrants and rivals.

• Third, unlike the consumer welfare standard, which considers the impact only on consumers, the effective competition standard protects market participants throughout the supply chain, including workers and sellers.

• Finally, by eliminating the precarious step of how the lessening of competition will harm consumers’ welfare, the effective competition standard restores the purpose of the Clayton Act to “arrest restraints of trade in their incipiency and before they develop into full-fledged restraints violative of the Sherman Act.” As Congress noted, “A requirement of certainty and actuality of injury to competition is incompatible with any effort to supplement the Sherman Act by reaching incipient restraints.”

To promote competition and innovation in our heavily concentrated markets, the effective competition standard would depart from today’s light-touch antitrust policies in the following areas.

#### State-based market interventions are key to sustainable growth---the alternative to well-measured corrections is an unfettered and regressive free market

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There is a positive correlation between long-term growth and poverty alleviation. More specifically, Lant Pritchett argues, based on cross-country patterns, that “broad-based growth, defined as the process that raises median income, is far and away the most important source of poverty reduction.”9 The sharp decline in poverty rates in China (about 800 million people escaped poverty) amid the two decades of break-neck growth is the starkest illustration. As discussed, innovation-based growth based on Schumpeterian creative destruction is key to productivity gains and sustained growth. The question is how to achieve broad-based, high and sustained growth which means to spur the emergence of good paying jobs. This is perhaps one of the most difficult and debated questions in economics.

The standard view shared by most economists over the last few decades is that “horizontal policies”, that is improvements in education, the quality of institutions, infrastructure, business environment, and regulations are key. Many of these policies tackle what is known as “government failures” as described in Rodrik (2005). In other words, state intervention should limit itself to providing public goods and the provision of a good environment while crucially ensuring an adequate level of competition. In this context, firms would have the incentive to invest and deploy efforts to be competitive through improvements in productivity and innovation to offer new and better-quality goods among others.

However, growth can be harmed by anti-competitive behaviors or distortive policies which can take different and subtle forms and are not always easy to gauge. Among these, imposing barriers to entry or helping non-performing firms remain in business, could have a substantial negative effect. Hsieh and Klenow (2009) emphasize the importance of input reallocation effects. They show that aggregate productivity differentials can be explained by differences in terms of the distribution of firms’ productivity. This means that relatively less productive firms have access to a considerable share of the resources. They argue that it is harder for a more productive firm to grow but also easier for a less productive firm to survive in India than in the U.S. for example. In the same vein, Aghion (2016) suggests that that there is more business dynamism in the U.S. than India, that is more firms enter and exit, which would explain input misallocation and differences in income per capita.

Compared to the U.S., potential constraints in developing economies such as India include more rigid capital markets and labor/product markets, the lower supply of skills, the poorer quality of infrastructure, and the lower quality of institutions to protect property rights and to enforce contracts. However, even if markets are perfectly competitive and an adequate environment is ensured, the economy may still not reach its full potential. This is because of “market failures,” which typically happen in the presence of externalities. They are at play when firms and workers do not fully internalize the effects of their decisions on the broader economy and their dynamic implications. Typically, they are learning externalities, coordination failures, or information asymmetries (Rodrik 2005).

As argued by many, (e.g., Arrow 1962) and Matsuyama 1992) some activities entail higher productivity gains, or more learning potential, for an economy compared to other traditional activities such as non-tradable services or agriculture. Firms may not be fully aware of these productivity gains, leading to lower output in high-productivity sectors and lower relative incomes over time. The coordination failure is based on the idea that a critical size of the modern sector is needed for a firm to enter it. It would be profitable for a firm to invest in a modern sector only if there are enough firms investing simultaneously in other modern sectors. If many firms invest together in modern sectors, described as the “big push,” economy reaches a higher level of productivity and development (Rosenstein-Rodan 1943, Murphy et al. 1989). Lastly, information asymmetries exist if there is imperfect information about new markets and products, and firms underinvest as a result (Hausman and Rodrik 2003). This is clearly seen in firms trying to export and penetrate new geographical markets with their products.

In theory, tackling these externalities would necessitate a state intervention, broadly defined as industrial policy. However, the scope, the tools and whether it could in practice be superior to a more “laissez-faire” approach, leaving the outcome to unfettered competition, is the object of an ongoing debate. At the heart of the debate lies the definition of what constitutes a “modern” sector, which is conducive to productivity gains and spillovers to the rest of the economy. While it is typically associated with manufacturing (Matsuyama 1992 and Krugman 1987) or related to the concept of sophistication (Hausman, Hwang and Rodrik 2007 and Cherif and Hasanov 2019), others argue that service sectors could also play a role (IMF 2018). More important for inclusive growth, if a sector is to be targeted, it should help achieve broad-based growth to contribute to poverty alleviation. In practice it means that it should also generate (directly or indirectly) enough employment, and the level of skills to fill those jobs should be realistically met over the medium term.

The other key question relates to how state intervention to tackle externalities could curtail or distort competition. Indeed, state interventions of the past typically followed the model of import-substitution policies. The main idea was to protect domestic producers from international competition by imposing barriers to trade, such as high tariffs. In many cases, the curtailment of competition went further and encompassed the domestic market as countries relied on one or very few “champions” to achieve import-substitution goals. The many past failed cases in Latin America and the Middle East imply that such policies may be counterproductive in general (Cherif and Hasanov 2019). The comparison of Malaysia’s foray into automotive industry in the 1970s with its champion Proton to the success of Korea’s Hyundai is a case in point (Cherif and Hasanov 2019b). After decades of support and protection from domestic and international competition, Proton depended on imports of critical inputs, including the engine. The high tariffs to protect it also meant that consumers had to pay higher prices for lower quality products. In comparison, although Hyundai benefitted from state support as well, it was also forced early on to compete both on the domestic and international markets. It could be argued that competition provided Hyundai with an incentive to innovate and take advantage of economies of scale.

Moreover, support for firms could be pursued without necessarily implying less competition. Aghion and others (2015) develop a simple model showing that targeted subsidies can be used to induce several firms to operate in the same sector, and that the more competitive the sector is, the more it will induce firms to innovate in order to “escape competition” (Aghion et. al. 2005). Of course, a lot depends upon the design of industrial policy. Such policy should target sectors, not particular firms (Aghion 2016). Using Chinese firm-level panel data, Aghion and others (2015) look at the interaction between state subsidies to a sector and the level of product market competition in that sector. They show that TFP, TFP growth, and product innovation (defined as the ratio between output value generated by new products to total output value) are all positively correlated with the interaction between state aid to the sector and market competition in the sector. In other words, the more competitive the recipient sector is, the more positive the effects of targeted state subsidies to that sector are. Infact, for sectors with low degree of competition the effects are negative, whereas the effects become positive in sectors with sufficiently high degree of competition. Finally, the interaction between state aid and product market competition in the sector is more positive when state aid is less concentrated.

Yet, there are externalities that can be tackled without curtailing competition with the potential to have a sizable contribution to broad-based growth and poverty alleviation. These are typically related to informational asymmetries. Bloom and Van Reenen (2010), f or example, show that interventions to improve management practices in Indian small firms can significantly improve productivity. So did the productivity missions of the Marshall Plan in Europe after the WWII (Giorcelli 2019). In the same vein, Atkin et al. (2017) showed that Egyptian rug producers can be helped to access export markets by tackling informational asymmetries and coordination failures. In other words, they showed that interventions such as export promotion agencies can help SMEs advertise their products in foreign markets and act as a communication channel between them and customers. They also showed that export activities helped small producers improve their quality and value added which confirms the importance of export orientation. This focus on SMEs can help increase productivity and tackle inequality at the same time.

The trade-off between the benefits and costs of state intervention suggests that the way the state intervenes in the economy is crucial. This intervention needs to be cognizant of exacerbating government failures such as rent-seeking and corruption. Moreover, even if these interventions are successful in the sense that they create competitive industries and contribute to growth, they should avoid creating “islands” of relatively advanced sectors. If these sectors are disconnected from the rest of the economy, broad-based growth may not be sustained, and it would exacerbate inequality. For example, thanks to interventions and targeted policies, Costa Rica managed to foster a high-tech sector in electronics and health instruments (Spar 1998). Although it led to higher growth and declining poverty as well as productivity improvements in agricultural sectors, high inequality persisted while growth policies for inclusiveness were missing (Ferreira, Fuentes, and Ferreira 2018).

#### COVID creates an economic brink---recovery is strong now because of effective monetary policy, but we’ve hit the zero-lower bound

Christopher Rugaber 21. Associated Press. “Federal Reserve keeps key interest rate near zero, signals COVID-19 economic risks receding.” https://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-biz-fed-interest-rates-economy-20210428-bumyc3ynpza6ri4ygsntmdsmya-story.html.

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve is keeping its ultra-low interest rate policies in place, a sign that it wants to see more evidence of a strengthening economic recovery before it would consider easing its support.

In a statement Wednesday, the Fed expressed a brighter outlook, saying the economy has improved along with the job market. And while the policymakers noted that inflation has risen, they ascribed the increase to temporary factors.

The Fed also signaled its belief that the pandemic’s threat to the economy has diminished, a significant point given Chair Jerome Powell’s long-stated view that the recovery depends on the virus being brought under control. Last month, the Fed had cautioned that the virus posed “considerable risks to the economic outlook.” On Wednesday, it said only that “risks to the economic outlook remain” because of the pandemic.

The central bank left its benchmark short-term rate near zero, where it’s been since the pandemic erupted nearly a year ago, to help keep loan rates down to encourage borrowing and spending. It also said in a statement after its latest policy meeting that it would keep buying $120 billion in bonds each month to try to keep longer-term borrowing rates low.

The U.S. economy has been posting unexpectedly strong gains in recent weeks, with barometers of hiring, spending and manufacturing all surging. Most economists say they detect the early stages of what could be a robust and sustained recovery, with coronavirus case counts declining, vaccinations rising and Americans spending their stimulus-boosted savings.

#### Eroding financial resilience causes war---that overcomes traditional barriers to conflict

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Economic recovery efforts since the 2008-2009 global financial crisis have mainly depended on unconventional monetary policies. As fears rise of yet another international financial crisis, there are growing concerns about the increased possibility of large-scale military conflict.

More worryingly, in the current political landscape, prolonged economic crisis, combined with rising economic inequality, chauvinistic ethno-populism as well as aggressive jingoist rhetoric, including threats, could easily spin out of control and ‘morph’ into military conflict, and worse, world war.

Crisis responses limited

The 2008-2009 global financial crisis almost ‘bankrupted’ governments and caused systemic collapse. Policymakers managed to pull the world economy from the brink, but soon switched from counter-cyclical fiscal efforts to unconventional monetary measures, primarily ‘quantitative easing’ and very low, if not negative real interest rates.

But while these monetary interventions averted realization of the worst fears at the time by turning the US economy around, they did little to address underlying economic weaknesses, largely due to the ascendance of finance in recent decades at the expense of the real economy. Since then, despite promising to do so, policymakers have not seriously pursued, let alone achieved, such needed reforms.

Instead, ostensible structural reformers have taken advantage of the crisis to pursue largely irrelevant efforts to further ‘casualize’ labour markets. This lack of structural reform has meant that the unprecedented liquidity central banks injected into economies has not been well allocated to stimulate resurgence of the real economy.

From bust to bubble

Instead, easy credit raised asset prices to levels even higher than those prevailing before 2008. US house prices are now 8% more than at the peak of the property bubble in 2006, while its price-to-earnings ratio in late 2018 was even higher than in 2008 and in 1929, when the Wall Street Crash precipitated the Great Depression.

As monetary tightening checks asset price bubbles, another economic crisis — possibly more severe than the last, as the economy has become less responsive to such blunt monetary interventions — is considered likely. A decade of such unconventional monetary policies, with very low interest rates, has greatly depleted their ability to revive the economy.

The implications beyond the economy of such developments and policy responses are already being seen. Prolonged economic distress has worsened public antipathy towards the culturally alien — not only abroad, but also within. Thus, another round of economic stress is deemed likely to foment unrest, conflict, even war as it is blamed on the foreign.

International trade shrank by two-thirds within half a decade after the US passed the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act in 1930, at the start of the Great Depression, ostensibly to protect American workers and farmers from foreign competition!

Liberalization’s discontents

Rising economic insecurity, inequalities and deprivation are expected to strengthen ethno-populist and jingoistic nationalist sentiments, and increase social tensions and turmoil, especially among the growing precariat and others who feel vulnerable or threatened.

Thus, ethno-populist inspired chauvinistic nationalism may exacerbate tensions, leading to conflicts and tensions among countries, as in the 1930s. Opportunistic leaders have been blaming such misfortunes on outsiders and may seek to reverse policies associated with the perceived causes, such as ‘globalist’ economic liberalization.

Policies which successfully check such problems may reduce social tensions, as well as the likelihood of social turmoil and conflict, including among countries. However, these may also inadvertently exacerbate problems. The recent spread of anti-globalization sentiment appears correlated to slow, if not negative per capita income growth and increased economic inequality.

To be sure, globalization and liberalization are statistically associated with growing economic inequality and rising ethno-populism. Declining real incomes and growing economic insecurity have apparently strengthened ethno-populism and nationalistic chauvinism, threatening economic liberalization itself, both within and among countries.

Insecurity, populism, conflict

Thomas Piketty has argued that a sudden increase in income inequality is often followed by a great crisis. Although causality is difficult to prove, with wealth and income inequality now at historical highs, this should give cause for concern.

Of course, other factors also contribute to or exacerbate civil and international tensions, with some due to policies intended for other purposes. Nevertheless, even if unintended, such developments could inadvertently catalyse future crises and conflicts.

Publics often have good reason to be restless, if not angry, but the emotional appeals of ethno-populism and jingoistic nationalism are leading to chauvinistic policy measures which only make things worse.

At the international level, despite the world’s unprecedented and still growing interconnectedness, multilateralism is increasingly being eschewed as the US increasingly resorts to unilateral, sovereigntist policies without bothering to even build coalitions with its usual allies.

Avoiding Thucydides’ iceberg

Thus, protracted economic distress, economic conflicts or another financial crisis could lead to military confrontation by the protagonists, even if unintended. Less than a decade after the Great Depression started, the Second World War had begun as the Axis powers challenged the earlier entrenched colonial powers.

They patently ignored Thucydides’ warning, in chronicling the Peloponnesian wars over two millennia before, when the rise of Athens threatened the established dominance of Sparta!

Anticipating and addressing such possibilities may well serve to help avoid otherwise imminent disasters by undertaking pre-emptive collective action, as difficult as that may be.

#### Those wars draw-in great powers---that outweighs

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The risk from a purely economic point of view is that the traditional strategy for battling recession – a reduction of 500 basis points in the federal funds rate – will be unavailable this year, given the zero lower bound on interest rates. Nor is it clear that the will or the room for fiscal expansion will exist.

This means that the next recession, like the last, may well be protracted and deep, with severe global consequences. And the political capacity for a global response, like that on display at the London G-20 Summit in 2009, appears to be absent as well. Just compare the global visions of US President Barack Obama and UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown back then with those of Trump and Prime Minister Theresa May today.

I shudder to think what a serious recession will mean for politics and policy. It is hard to imagine avoiding a resurgence of protectionism, populism, and scapegoating. In such a scenario, as with another financial crisis, the center will not hold.

But the greatest risk in the next few years, I believe, is neither a market meltdown nor a recession. It is instead a political doom loop in which voters’ conclusion that government does not work effectively for them becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Candidates elected on platforms of resentment delegitimize the governments they lead, fueling further resentment and even more problematic new leaders. Cynicism pervades.

How else can one explain how the candidacy of Roy Moore for a US Senate seat? Moore, who was twice dismissed for cause from his post on the Alabama Supreme Court, and who is credibly charged with sexually assaulting teenage girls when he was in his 30s, could enter the US Senate as many of his colleagues look the other way.

If a country’s citizens lose confidence in their government’s ability to improve their lives, the government has an incentive to rally popular support by focusing attention on threats that only it can address. That is why in societies pervaded by anger and uncertainty about the future, the temptation to stigmatize minority groups increases. And it is why there is a tendency for officials to magnify foreign threats.

We are seeing this phenomenon all over the world. Russian President Vladimir Putin, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Chinese President Xi Jinping have all made nationalism a central part of their governing strategy. So, too, has Trump, who has explicitly rejected the international community in favor of the idea that there is only a ceaseless struggle among nation-states for competitive advantage.

When the world’s preeminent power, having upheld the idea of international community for nearly 75 years, rejects it in favor of ad hoc deal making, others have no choice but to follow suit. Countries that can no longer rely on the US feel pressure to provide for their own security. America’s adversaries inevitably will seek to fill the voids left behind as the US retrenches.

#### Even if growth is imperfect, the transition away fails

Hubert Buch-Hansen 18. Associate Professor, Department of Business and Politics, Copenhagen Business School. “The Prerequisites for a Degrowth Paradigm Shift: Insights from Critical Political Economy.” *Ecological Economics* 146: 157-63. Emory Libraries.

Still, the degrowth project is nowhere near enjoying the degree and type of support it needs if its policies are to be implemented through democratic processes. The number of political parties, labour unions, business associations and international organisations that have so far embraced degrowth is modest to say the least. Economic and political elites, including social democratic parties and most of the trade union movement, are united in the belief that economic growth is necessary and desirable. This consensus finds support in the prevailing type of economic theory and underpins the main contenders in the neoliberal project, such as centre-left and nationalist projects. In spite of the world's multidimensional crisis, a pro-growth discourse in other words continues to be hegemonic: it is widely considered a matter of common sense that continued economic growth is required.

It is also noteworthy that economic and political elites, to a large extent, continue to support the neoliberal project, even in the face of its evident shortcomings. Indeed, the 2008 financial crisis did not result in the weakening of transnational financial capital that could have paved the way for a paradigm shift. Instead of coming to an end, neoliberal capitalism has arguably entered a more authoritarian phase (Bruff, 2014). The main reason the power of the pre-crisis coalition remains intact is that governments stepped in and saved the dominant fraction by means of massive bailouts. It is a foregone conclusion that this fraction and the wider coalition behind the neoliberal paradigm (transnational industrial capital, the middle classes and segments of organized labour) will consider the degrowth paradigm unattractive and that such social forces will vehemently oppose the implementation of degrowth policies (see also Rees, 2014: 97).

While degrowth advocates envision a future in which market forces play a less prominent role than they do today, degrowth is not an antimarket project. As such, it can attract support from certain types of market actors. In particular, it is worth noting that social enterprises, such as cooperatives (Restakis, 2010), play a major role in the degrowth vision. Such enterprises are defined by being ‘organisations involved at least to some extent in the market, with a clear social, cultural and/or environmental purpose, rooted in and serving primarily the local community and ideally having a local and/or democratic ownership structure’ (Johanisova et al., 2013: 11). Social enterprises currently exist at the margins of a system, in which the dominant type of business entity is profit-oriented, shareholder-owned corporations. The further dissemination of social enterprises, which is crucial to the transitions to degrowth societies, is – in many cases – blocked or delayed as a result of the centrifugal forces of global competition (Wigger and Buch-Hansen, 2013). Overall, social enterprises thus (still) constitute a social force with modest power.

Ougaard (2016: 467) notes that one of the major dividing lines in the contemporary transnational capitalist class is between capitalists who have a material interest in the carbon-based economy and capitalists who have a material interest in decarbonisation. The latter group, for instance, includes manufacturers of equipment for the production of renewable energy (ibid.: 467). As mentioned above, degrowth advocates have singled out renewable energy as one of the sectors that needs to grow in the future. As such, it seems likely that the owners of national and transnational companies operating in this sector would be more positively inclined towards the degrowth project than would capitalists with a stake in the carbon-based economy. Still, the prospect of the “green sector” emerging as a driving force behind degrowth currently appears meagre. Being under the control of transnational capital (Harris, 2010), such companies generally embrace the “green growth” discourse, which ‘is deeply embedded in neoliberal capitalism’ and indeed serves to adjust this form of capitalism ‘to crises arising from contradictions within itself’ (Wanner, 2015: 23).

In addition to support from the social forces engendered by the production process, a political project ‘also needs the political ability to mobilize majorities in parliamentary democracies, and a sufficient measure of at least passive consent’ (van Apeldoorn and Overbeek, 2012: 5–6) if it is to become hegemonic. As mentioned, degrowth enjoys little support in parliaments, and certainly the pro-growth discourse is hegemonic among parties in government.5 With capital accumulation being the most important driving force in capitalist societies, political decision-makers are generally eager to create conditions conducive to production and the accumulation of capital (Lindblom, 1977: 172). Capitalist states and international organisations are thus “programmed” to facilitate capital accumulation, and do as such constitute a strategically selective terrain that works to the disadvantage of the degrowth project.

The main advocates of the degrowth project are grassroots, small fractions of left-wing parties and labour unions as well as academics and other citizens who are concerned about social injustice and the environmentally unsustainable nature of societies in the rich parts of the world. The project is thus ideationally driven in the sense that support for it is not so much rooted in the material circumstances or short-term self-interests of specific groups or classes as it is rooted in the conviction that degrowth is necessary if current and future generations across the globe are to be able to lead a good life. While there is no shortage of enthusiasts and creative ideas in the degrowth movement, it has only modest resources compared to other political projects. To put it bluntly, the advocates of degrowth do not possess instruments that enable them to force political decision-makers to listen to – let alone comply with – their views. As such, they are in a weaker position than the labour union movement was in its heyday, and they are in a far weaker position than the owners and managers of large corporations are today (on the structural power of transnational corporations, see Gill and Law, 1989).

6. Consent

It is also safe to say that degrowth enjoys no “passive consent” from the majority of the population. For the time being, degrowth remains unknown to most people. Yet, if it were to become generally known, most people would probably not find the vision of a smaller economic system appealing. This is not just a matter of degrowth being ‘a missile word that backfires’ because it triggers negative feelings in people when they first hear it (Drews and Antal, 2016). It is also a matter of the actual content of the degrowth project.

Two issues in particular should be mentioned in this context. First, for many, the anti-capitalist sentiments embodied in the degrowth project will inevitably be a difficult pill to swallow. Today, the vast majority of people find it almost impossible to conceive of a world without capitalism. There is a ‘widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible to even imagine a coherent alternative to it’ (Fisher, 2009: 2). As Jameson (2003) famously observed, it is, in a sense, easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism. However, not only is degrowth – like other anti-capitalist projects – up against the challenge that most people consider capitalism the only system that can function; it is also up against the additional challenge that it speaks against economic growth in a world where the desirability of growth is considered common sense.

Second, degrowth is incompatible with the lifestyles to which many of us who live in rich countries have become accustomed. Economic growth in the Western world is, to no small extent, premised on the existence of consumer societies and an associated consumer culture most of us find it difficult to completely escape. In this culture, social status, happiness, well-being and identity are linked to consumption (Jackson, 2009). Indeed, it is widely considered a natural right to lead an environmentally unsustainable lifestyle – a lifestyle that includes car ownership, air travel, spacious accommodations, fashionable clothing, an omnivorous diet and all sorts of electronic gadgets. This Western norm of consumption has increasingly been exported to other parts of the world, the result being that never before have so many people taken part in consumption patterns that used to be reserved for elites (Koch, 2012). If degrowth were to be institutionalised, many citizens in the rich countries would have to adapt to a materially lower standard of living. That is, while the basic needs of the global population can be met in a non-growing economy, not all wants and preferences can be fulfilled (Koch et al., 2017). Undoubtedly, many people in the rich countries would experience various limitations on their consumption opportunities as a violent encroachment on their personal freedom. Indeed, whereas many recognize that contemporary consumer societies are environmentally unsustainable, fewer are prepared to actually change their own lifestyles to reverse/address this.

At present, then, the degrowth project is in its “deconstructive phase”, i.e., the phase in which its advocates are able to present a powerful critique of the prevailing neoliberal project and point to alternative solutions to crisis. At this stage, not enough support has been mobilised behind the degrowth project for it to be elevated to the phases of “construction” and “consolidation”. It is conceivable that at some point, enough people will become sufficiently discontent with the existing economic system and push for something radically different. Reasons for doing so could be the failure of the system to satisfy human needs and/or its inability to resolve the multidimensional crisis confronting humanity. Yet, various material and ideational path-dependencies currently stand in the way of such a development, particularly in countries with large middle-classes. Even if it were to happen that the majority wanted a break with the current system, it is far from given that a system based on the ideas of degrowth is what they would demand.

#### Increased competition aligns innovation with profit motive and drives technological breakthroughs in every sector of the economy

Giulio Federico 20. Head of the Unit at the Chief Economist Team (CET) of DG Competition, European Commission, et al., 2020. “Antitrust and Innovation: Welcoming and Protecting Disruption.” https://www.law.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Shapiro-Carl-Antitrust-and-Innovation-Welcoming-and-Protecting-Disruption.pdf.

The goal of antitrust policy is to protect and promote a vigorous competitive process. Effective rivalry spurs firms to introduce new and innovative products, as they seek to capture profitable sales from their competitors and to protect their existing sales from future challengers. In this fundamental way, competition promotes innovation. We apply this basic insight to the antitrust treatment of horizontal mergers and of exclusionary conduct by dominant firms. A merger between rivals internalizes business-stealing effects arising from their parallel innovation efforts and thus tends to depress innovation incentives. Merger-specific synergies, such as the internalization of involuntary spillovers or an increase in the productivity of R&D, may offset the adverse effect of a merger on innovation. We describe the possible effects of a merger on innovation by developing a taxonomy of cases, with reference to recent US and EU examples. A dominant firm may engage in exclusionary conduct to eliminate the threat from disruptive firms. This suppresses innovation by foreclosing disruptive rivals and by reducing the pressure to innovative on the incumbent. We apply this broad principle to possible exclusionary strategies by dominant firms.

I. Introduction

We write in praise of market disrupters—firms that shake up the status quo, threaten incumbent firms, and sometimes transform entire industries. Through this process, which Joseph Schumpeter famously called “creative destruction,” disruptive firms promote economic growth and bring the benefits of new technologies and new business practices and business models to consumers.

We focus on the impact of antitrust policy—known globally as competition policy—on innovation.1 Competition policy seeks to protect and promote a vigorous competitive process by which new ideas are transformed into realized consumer benefits. In this fundamental way, competition spurs innovation. The productivity and growth literature teach us that innovation is the primary driver of rising standards of living over time, so promoting innovation through effective competition policy is likely to be very consequential for economic growth and welfare.

Disruptive firms drive a significant amount of innovation.2 They do not use the same technology or business model as incumbents. They offer consumers a distinct value proposition, not simply lower prices. By making its offer to customers attractive in a new way, a disruptive firm can destroy a great deal of incumbent profit while creating a large amount of consumer surplus. The resulting churn in products and market shares, as new products enter and old ones exit, and as newer business methods and business models supplant older ones, represents a healthy competitive process. If that competitive process is slowed or biased by mergers or by exclusionary conduct, innovation is lessened and consumers are harmed. This same competitive process promotes the development and diffusion of best practices, including what might be termed reductions in X-inefficiency. The trade and productivity literature both convincingly demonstrate that firms vary significantly in their productivity levels and that stiffer competition reallocates sales to more productive firms. The diffusion of best practices also is promoted if sales are contestable, going to the better-performing firms.

Competition policy seeks to protect the competitive process by which disruptive firms challenge the status quo. Competition policy is agnostic regarding the type of firm or the type of innovation involved. Start-ups that grow rapidly can certainly be disruptive. Uber and Airbnb are prominent recent examples. But large established firms can also be disruptive, especially when they attack adjacent markets. Think of Walmart entering local retail markets, Microsoft Bing challenging Google in search, or Netflix producing its own video content.

In contrast, the role played by successful incumbent firms in their own core markets is deeply conflicted. On the one hand, process innovations that lower costs can be most valuable at the largest firms, and market leaders often invest substantial sums to introduce new generations of products. Examples abound: Intel developing a new generation of technology and building new fabs to manufacture microprocessors; Boeing developing a new generation of large commercial aircraft; and Verizon investing to build its 5G wireless network. In many industries experiencing rapid technological change, the biggest firms are also some of the most impressive innovators, as Schumpeter observed 75 years ago.3 This should not be surprising, given the economies of scale associated with R&D, especially in industries where developing the next-generation product or process requires investments of hundreds of millions of dollars and/or extensive experience with the current technology.4 On the other hand, a successful incumbent firm that is profiting greatly from the status quo has a powerful incentive to preserve those profits, and this can mean slowing down or blocking disruptive threats. Successful incumbents also may find it very difficult organizationally to invest in disruptive technologies. 5 Competition valuably increases the diversity of approaches taken to the development of new technology.

We stress in this article that innovation is best promoted when market leaders are allowed to exploit their competitive advantages while also facing pressure to perform coming from both conventional rivals and from disruptive entrants. These labels depend on context: the same firm can be a market leader in one area and a disruptive upstart in another. Market leaders may face competitive pressures to innovate coming from (a) other large firms in the same market, (b) other large firms in adjacent spaces, or (c) smaller, pesky disruptive firms. Casual empiricism indicates that all of these sources of competition are important in different settings. All have historically been protected using competition policy.

The central theme animating our analysis is that a market leader is best motivated to innovate if it fears losing its leadership position to a disruptive rival.6 Even a dominant incumbent will feel pressure to innovate if the bulk of tomorrow’s sales will be won by the firm that is most innovative, be that the incumbent or a disruptive challenger, and if other firms are in a position to leapfrog the current incumbent. Once one properly understands the dynamic nature of the competitive process, it becomes clear that greater rivalry—meaning greater contestability of tomorrow’s sales—leads to more innovation.7 The critical role of competition policy is thus to prevent today’s market leaders from using their market power to disable disruptive threats, either by acquiring would-be rivals or by using anticompetitive tactics to exclude them. Sections II and III discuss the treatment of horizontal mergers that may harm innovation. Section IV discusses the antitrust limits on the business conduct of dominant incumbent firms.

#### Expanding antitrust is necessary to sustain creative destruction---only that preserves innovation leadership

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The goal underpinning U.S. antitrust law is to promote competition that leads to lower prices and enhanced consumer welfare.

For years, antitrust agencies have approached this goal by focusing on short-term, static competition, which emphasizes achieving low prices in the here and now.

This narrow focus, however, has resulted in unnecessary conflict between the static competitive analysis deployed by antitrust regulators and the dynamic issues raised by intellectual property.

Fortunately, over the last few decades, a growing recognition has emerged among economists that antitrust laws must be recalibrated to preserve the incentive to innovate and promote the U.S. innovation economy.

These economists are calling for an antitrust framework that prioritizes dynamic over static competition — placing less weight on market concentration in the assessment of market power and more weight on assessing technological opportunity, innovation-driven competition and appropriate enterprise-level capabilities.

At the heart of this movement is the foundational principle, dating back to Joseph Schumpeter and Nobel Laureate economist Robert Solow, that innovation is the main driver of economic growth.

Indeed, given the strong economic evidence that innovation drives productivity, sharpens competition and creates new products, a serious consumer-oriented antitrust policy, with an intermediate-to-long-term orientation, necessarily must focus primarily on supporting and advancing innovation.

However, although antitrust agencies routinely claim to favor both innovation and competition, this has not always been the case.

For instance, during the previous administration, some agency heads unnecessarily generated tension between static competitive analysis — with its undue emphasis on achieving low prices in the short term — and the dynamic issues implicated by intellectual property and associated royalty payments.

Royalties, in the short run, raise prices of licensed goods relative to the prices that would prevail absent payments.

However, payments to licensors also support innovation by helping innovators achieve the economic returns necessary to draw forth the critical investment dollars needed to support research and development (R&D) and continuing innovation.

This model produces a continuous cycle of innovation in which innovators are properly incentivized to invent and reinvest their royalties into more R&D, which leads to new innovations and restarts the cycle.

A prime example of the dynamic benefits flowing from such an innovation ecosystem is 5G. This revolutionary technology promises the ability to connect to and control cities, automobiles, objects and devices, transforming a broad range of industries in the process.

Thanks to its private-sector top performers, the United States currently leads the world in 5G — a distinction that comes with an extraordinary opportunity for massive economic growth and increased consumer welfare.

However, the rigid application of an antitrust framework focused on short-term pricing, rather than on innovation as a critical driver of competition, could cause the United States to forfeit its 5G leadership position.

This would not only reduce consumer welfare but would pose a clear risk to U.S. national security — a fact recognized by U.S. national defense agencies in prohibiting a foreign company from acquiring Qualcomm, a U.S. technology company, because the proposed transaction imperiled Qualcomm’s 5G leadership position.

Recently, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has indicated that a course correction may be underway. In a series of speeches, Assistant Attorney General Makan Delrahim, head of the DOJ’s Antitrust Division, signaled that the focus of a sound antitrust analysis must be less on short-term pricing and more on the innovation and growth that delivers value to consumers over the longer term.

For example, in his speech before the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, Delrahim invoked “promoting dynamic competition” as a normative goal of competition regulators.

He also declared that “competition law enforcers around the world must give careful consideration to the interests that drive innovation, including by allowing innovators to reap the full rewards of their investment in research and development.” It appears that Delrahim correctly recognizes that innovation is the critical driver of competition.

While Delrahim’s leadership on this issue is admirable, officials at the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) regrettably have yet to follow the DOJ’s lead. The FTC continues to endorse outdated modes of competition regulation and policies that are not properly calibrated to promote dynamic competition and advance innovation.

In order to truly enhance consumer welfare over the long term, I hope the FTC soon will join hands with the DOJ and help move the United States toward a pro-innovation policy founded upon a dynamic competition paradigm.

For over 30 years, a small group of economists has been calling for a pivot in antitrust in favor of dynamic over static competition. With Delrahim at the helm of the DOJ’s Antitrust Division, we may soon witness such a pivot.

U.S. antitrust policy needs to adopt a deeper understanding of innovation processes and competition over the long run, and there needs to be greater policy coherence among antitrust, industrial and technology policies.

The dynamic competition paradigm is both the easiest and the best intellectual paradigm for the competition agencies and the courts to employ to free antitrust from its current outmoded framework. Indeed, prioritizing dynamic competition over its weaker sibling will enhance not just consumer welfare, but economic welfare, too.

#### Regulated capitalism is key---alternative systems fail to innovate sufficiently

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Nonetheless, the abolition of capitalism is not the solution. The last century witnessed a large-scale experiment with an alternative system—a system of central planning in the Soviet Union and other communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This system failed to offer individuals the freedom and economic incentives necessary for frontier innovation, and so these nations were unable to get beyond an intermediate level of development. Henri Weber, a well-known figure of the French movement of May 1968, was a former Trotskyist leader in the 1960s and 1970s but later became a leader of the French Socialist Party and Socialist member of the European Parliament. He explained his personal conversion to the free market economy and social democracy, looking to the Scandinavian experience: “Having witnessed from a front-row seat the disaster of collectivization of agriculture and firms in the Soviet Union, the Scandinavian Socialists were the first to break with the dogma of socializing means of production and managing the economy by a central planning committee. To control and humanize the economy, it is altogether unnecessary to expropriate management, to nationalize firms, or to eradicate the market . . . altogether unnecessary to deprive society of the creativity, knowhow, and dynamism of entrepreneurs. Under certain conditions, entrepreneurial talent can be mobilized to serve the common good.” A market economy, because it induces creative destruction, is inherently disruptive. But historically it has proved to be a formidable engine of prosperity, hoisting our societies to levels of development unimaginable two centuries ago. Must we therefore resign ourselves to the serious pitfalls and defects of capitalism as the necessary price to pay to generate prosperity and overcome poverty?

In this book, we have sought to better understand how growth through creative destruction interacts with competition, inequality, the environment, finance, unemployment, health, happiness, and industrialization, and how poor countries catch up to rich ones. We have analyzed to what degree the state, with appropriate control of the executive, can stimulate the creation of wealth while at the same time tackling the problems mentioned above. We have seen how, by moving from laissez-faire capitalism, with market forces given free rein, to a form of capitalism in which the state and civil society play their full role, it is possible to stimulate social mobility and reduce inequality without discouraging innovation. We have also seen how appropriate competition policies can curb the decline of growth and how we can redirect innovation toward green technologies to combat global warming. We have seen that, without forgoing globalization, a country can improve its competitiveness through innovative investments and put in place effective safety nets to protect individuals who lose their jobs. Lastly, we have seen how, with the indispensable support of civil society, it is possible to prevent yesterday’s innovators, in collusion with public officials, from pulling up the ladder behind themselves to block the path of tomorrow’s innovators.

#### Failure to sustain innovation leadership makes a China war inevitable

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The global economy has become more integrated, with China’s economy growing strongly—poised to soon take over the United States at market exchange rates and having already done so in terms of purchasing power parity. More importantly, China has become the top trading partner and creditor/investor for many countries. The size and penetration of the Chinese economy have rendered a strategy of containing China impractical and costly to all sides, and makes the US-China contention more protracted and difficult.

The West thus faces a dilemma: Efforts to decouple from China in order to limit its influence would hurt not only China but also Western countries and the global economy more broadly, but striking a trade deal with China to reduce tensions will likely help the Chinese economy perform better, making the strategic competition with Beijing more intractable.

The rivalry has slowly led to a bifurcation of the global economy, most discernible in high-tech areas such as the tension between digital authoritarianism and digital liberalism, artificial intelligence and surveillance technologies, satellite-based navigation for civilian and military uses, and 5G/6G telecommunications.

A balanced assessment

It’s important to remember that China has many weaknesses, including an aging population with a shrunken labor force, a secular decline in labor productivity, high levels of debt, environmental degradation, and social and economic inequalities. It is still an open question whether China can graduate from its old and trusted development model of mobilizing massive investment for exports to one driven by innovation—a model that tends not to thrive under political control.

However, it is equally important not to underestimate the domestic challenges facing the United States and several European countries. Confronted by aging populations and declining productivity, many affluent Western countries have been beset by populist backlashes against economic inequalities and social problems. Especially in the United States, the division has deepened to the extent that there is no shared perception of reality, let alone common ground for debate. This makes it difficult for the United States to build political consensus behind any sustained actions needed to deal with its challenges—even though the country has managed to overcome difficulties in the past and could do so again.

With or without the label “cold war,” the United States and China are locked in a protracted conflict over core national values, including economic and geopolitical interests. The fact that the Chinese economy is stronger than the Soviet Union’s decrepit economy, playing a key role in integrated global supply chains, while many Western countries suffer from internal divisions, makes the strategic competition more challenging for the West than the Cold War of the late twentieth century was. Of particular concern is the fact that the United States has suffered a steep fall in its Freedom House “Freedom in the World” score since 2010, denting much of its soft power. Consequently, the contestants in today’s conflict appear to be more evenly matched, making for a difficult struggle ahead—whatever you want to call it.

#### US-China competition isn’t defined by military strength, but relative innovation capacity---outpacing China is the only way to prevent a war

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The United States and China are in a growing competition, perhaps verging on conflict, but it is not a nineteenth century competition between empires for control of territory and resources. Unlike great power competition in previous centuries, the focal point is not military strength or territorial expansion. This conflict is over control of the modern levers of power—global rules and institutions, standards, trade, and technology. The ability to create new technologies, particularly digital technologies (given their importance for politics, security, and economic growth) have become key factors in the U.S.-China relationship, which is marked by close commercial cooperation and deep governmental distrust. This disparity creates unavoidable tensions.

The link between technology, innovation, national security, and international power is now widely recognized. When Vladimir Putin says that the country that leads in artificial intelligence (AI) “will be the ruler of the world,” it is hyperbole, but hyperbole that confirms that political leaders recognize that the ability to innovate is a potent source of national power. In the digital age, national security and national power have different requirements shaped by technological change and cyberspace.

Innovation has become a central element of its international influence. This is not new—the U.S.-Soviet space race was a contest of the ability of different systems to produce new technologies, but those were unique government programs. Technological competition today is as much between companies as states. A country’s ability to innovate and produce advanced technologies provides economic strength, military power, and an intangible benefit of perceived leadership.

Both China and the United States have advantages and disadvantages in this contest, and while it is usual to focus on quantitative aspects—such as the number of engineers or patents and spending on research and development (R&D)—these are not the key determinants of technological competition between states. This competition is a contest of ideas on governance for investment, innovation, and the internet. The internet and global connectivity not only reshape the environment for competition but also create political and market forces that both nations find difficult to control.

#### Chinese technological rise is demonstrably worse---causes global instability and conflict

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If China is indeed the future, if China is primed to “rule the world,” if China remakes the international order in its image, it won’t be pretty. A future dominated by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) will be demonstrably worse than the world we know. Just look at how Xi Jinping’s regime treats its own subjects—and plays its current role on the global stage.

NO RIGHTS

Those predictions aren’t outlandish. China already is the world’s top manufacturing nation, top exporting nation and second-largest economy. The PRC was the only major economy to emerge from 2020 claiming GDP growth (if we are to trust Beijing’s books). In the pandemic’s wake, China dislodged the U.S. as the world’s primary destination for foreign direct investment. PRC-backed firms are leaders in the global 5G and AI race. On the strength of a 517-percent binge in military spending since 2000, China bristles with anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles, deploys a high-tech air force, has a growing and openly hostile presence in space, is doubling its nuclear arsenal, and boasts a 350-ship navy (now the world’s largest). Beijing’s growing cultural reach is evident in everything from its influence over Hollywood, to its puppet-master relationship with the NBA, to its 480 Confucius Institutes (designated by Washington as “part of the Chinese Communist Party’s global influence and propaganda apparatus”).

As President Joe Biden concludes, China is “the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system.”

Xi is doing exactly that. But the China challenge starts inside the PRC.

Xi is pursuing what he calls the “China Dream,” which enfolds goals such as sustained economic development, military power modeled after and matching that of the U.S., ideological conformity, “rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” and “complete unification of our country.” Making Xi’s “China Dream” come true is turning into a nightmare for his subjects.

Before leaving his State Department post, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo described what Xi is doing to Uighur Muslims as “genocide,” noting that Beijing has “forced more than a million people into internment camps in the Xinjiang region” and detailing “torture, sexual abuse…rape, forced labor…and unexplained deaths in custody.” As he took the baton from Pompeo, Secretary of State Antony Blinken agreed, affirming that “The forcing of men, women and children into concentration camps, trying to, in effect, re-educate them to be adherents to the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party—all of that speaks to an effort to commit genocide.”

The U.S. government isn’t alone. The Uighur Muslim region, according to a UN human-rights watchdog, “resembles a massive internment camp…a no-rights zone.” More accurately, all of China is a no-rights zone.

Xi’s China is a place where Christian churches are smashed and followers of Christ are sent to reeducation camps; Buddhist temples are bulldozed; Uighur men are packed into freight trains, Uighur women are forcibly sterilized and Uighur babies are forcibly aborted; and bishops and Nobel Peace Prize laureates die in prison. Under Xi, “Religious persecution has increased…with four communities in particular experiencing a downturn in conditions—Protestant Christians, Tibetan Buddhists, and both Hui and Uighur Muslims,” Freedom House reports. Amnesty International adds that “hundreds of thousands of people” are subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention in China, many of them for “peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of belief.”

There’s a brutal logic to Xi’s brutal response to religious activity. The common denominator of most every religion is that there’s something above, something beyond, something bigger, more enduring and more important than the state. That notion represents a mortal threat to the legitimacy and durability of Xi’s regime, which is founded on the premise that people exist to serve the state—not to use their God-given gifts to serve others and God.

Xi’s capacity to control is growing ever more insidious. The PRC’s new “social credit system” is using mega-databases to monitor and catalogue every aspect of life of China’s 1.3 billion people—financial transactions, civil infractions, social-media postings, online activity—and then reward or sanction Xi’s subjects by feeding all that information to the National Development and Reform Commission, banking system and judicial system. PRC subjects with good social credit scores enjoy waived fees, lower utility bills, promotions and expedited overseas-travel approval, while those with poor social credit scores can be fired from their jobs, expelled from school, blocked from universities, or barred from accessing transportation.

An Orwellian surveillance state, more than a billion people denied religious freedom and other human rights, uncounted numbers tortured in reeducation camps, physicians jailed for following the Hippocratic Oath—that’s the kind of future and the kind of world Xi wants to build. As dissident leader Xu Zhangrun observed in the wake of Beijing’s criminal mishandling of COVID-19, “A polity that is blatantly incapable of treating its own people properly can hardly be expected to treat the rest of the world well.”

NO LIMITS

That idea—the notion that the PRC is incapable of treating the world any better than it treats its own—is not particularly profound. After all, this is a regime that over the decades has erased some 35 million of its subjects and tortured millions more. Regimes like this see no limits on their power. Since they believe nothing is above the state, they rationalize everything they do in the name of the state, the revolution, the Supreme Leader, the Dear Leader, the Core Leader (Xi’s new title). With no moral constraints on what they do, they believe their ends always justify their means.

That backwards worldview informs every aspect of decision-making in the PRC. This doesn’t mean Washington should refuse to talk with Beijing. But we must be ever vigilant when dealing with Xi. A regime that can justify imprisoning, torturing and killing its own people for peacefully practicing their faith can and will justify anything: seizing foreign lands, annexing international waterways, absorbing free peoples, stealing proprietary information, leveraging a pandemic to gain geopolitical advantage, breaking treaties. The godless USSR did those sorts of things, and so has the godless PRC.

“It is difficult to imagine that a government that continues to repress freedom in its own country,” President Ronald Reagan said of the USSR, “can be trusted to keep agreements with others.” And here we are yet again.

Experts in policy analysis, academia and military-security affairs conclude that Xi’s response to COVID-19 “was in breach of international law.” It pays to recall that COVID-19 was a local public-health problem that metastasized into a global pandemic due to Beijing’s incompetence or intention (either cause is reason not to entrust the future to Xi); that Xi’s regime lied about human-to-human transmission; that Xi’s regime willfully allowed millions to leave the epicenter in Wuhan for destinations around the world; that Xi’s regime carried out a premeditated plan to hoard 2.5 billion pieces of protective equipment as the virus swept the globe; that Xi’s regime blocked scientists from sharing findings about genome sequencing for weeks; that Xi’s regime continues to refuse to cooperate with international health agencies.

Xi’s intervention in Hong Kong and assertion of rule by remote-control is a brazen violation of an international treaty.

In and above the East China Sea, Beijing is constantly violating Japanese airspace and illegally loitering PRC coast guard vessels in Japanese waters. All the while, Beijing illegally claims some 90 percent of the South China Sea. Xi has backed up those claims by building 3,200 acres of illegal islands beyond PRC waters. These islands feature SAM batteries and warplanes. Xi promised the PRC wouldn’t militarize these islands. But as America and its allies learned at enormous cost last century, words don’t matter to men like Xi. Strength and the will to wield it are all that matters. Xi has both.

His goal is to control the resource-rich South and East China Seas, assert sovereignty claims in fait accompli fashion, and bring Chinese-speaking lands under his heel. Hong Kong—where only PRC-approved “patriots” are allowed to serve in government—was his first objective. Taiwan is next. Xi has made clear that democratic Taiwan “must and will be” absorbed by the communist Mainland. “We make no promise to abandon the use of force,” he warns. That explains Beijing’s ground-unit exercises, naval drills and bomber sorties around the island democracy.

Nor are Xi’s dreams and designs limited to his immediate neighborhood. Beijing is buying loyalty via development projects (see the Belt and Road Initiative), gaining a toehold in strategically located regions (see PRC control over ports in 18 countries), building an authoritarian bloc (see Russia, Serbia, North Korea, Iran, Venezuela), and fielding a power-projecting military capable of challenging the Free World across every region and every domain—land, sea, air, space and cyberspace. Xi’s relentless cybersiege of the Free World is siphoning away inventions, discoveries, technologies and wealth, penetrating defense firms, and interfering in elections.

For those with eyes to see—who know about the laogai camps and brutalization of Muslims and oppression of Tibet and assault on Christianity—none of this comes as a surprise. What’s surprising is that for 40 years, the trade über alles caucus convinced itself that such a regime could somehow be reformed by access to Buicks and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

TAKING AIM

Xi vows to build what he calls “a more just and reasonable new world order”—one that would supplant the liberal democratic order the United States and its allies began building after World War II. Importantly, the PRC not only has the intent to build a new world order; it has the resources and capabilities to do so—which helps explain why those who designed and uphold the existing world order are answering China’s challenge.

The PRC is a country of 1.3 billion people. Its GDP is already $14.1 trillion. Its economic tendrils—trade, banking, manufacturing, logistics, shipping, technology, super-computing, artificial intelligence—stretch into every part of the globe. All of this is fueling the PRC’s relentless military modernization and buildup. The PRC’s annual military expenditure is at least $261 billion. (Beijing recently announced an increase in military spending of 6.8 percent for 2021). The PRC has a 2-million-man military, the world’s largest navy and an intense focus on its neighborhood.

None of this would be a particularly worrisome if China embraced the values of liberal democracy—the rule of law, individual freedom, religious liberty, free enterprise and free trade, majority rule with minority rights. These are the foundation stones of what Churchill and FDR envisioned when they drafted the Atlantic Charter in 1941. Their vision led to what some call the “rules-based democratic order,” others the “liberal international order,” still others the “free world order.” These terms aim to describe how the peoples of the West have tried to make the world work and indeed manage the world: They embraced and encouraged democratic governance; developed rules and norms of behavior; promoted liberal (freedom-oriented) political and economic institutions; and called upon governments to live up to the responsibilities of nationhood by respecting international borders and promoting good order within those borders. The result has been an unparalleled spread of prosperity, an unprecedented expansion of free government and an unexpected remission of great-power war (which had become an increasingly-destructive feature of the centuries leading up to 1945).

To be sure, many regimes reject the values of liberal democracy. But the PRC, like the USSR before it, not only rejects those values; it possesses the military-technological-industrial-economic assets to challenge those values, erode the liberal international order built upon those values, and forge a new international order or at least bend the existing order toward its own goals. But don’t take my word for it.

“Some seek to challenge the international order—that is, the rules, values and institutions that reduce conflict and make cooperation possible among nations,” Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin warn, pointedly adding that “China in particular is all too willing to use coercion to get its way.”

Former national security advisor Gen H.R. McMaster concludes that PRC “leaders believe they have a narrow window of strategic opportunity to…revise the international order in their favor.”

Before he retired as Indo-Pacific commander ,Adm. Phil Davidson told the Senate Armed Services Committee that Xi and his lieutenants are “accelerating their ambitions to supplant the United States and our leadership role in the rules-based international order.”

A NATO panel noted late last year that Beijing’s “approach to human rights and international law challenges the fundamental premise of a rules-based international order.”

These political, diplomatic and military leaders recognize that the liberal order has promoted the peace and prosperity of the Free World for nearly 75 years. But it doesn’t run on autopilot. If we want the benefits of a liberal order that sustains our way of life, we need to sustain the liberal order. As Robert Kagan of the Brookings Institution observes, “The present order will last only as long as those who favor it and benefit from it retain the will and capacity to defend it.” He adds, “Every international order in history has reflected the beliefs and interests of its strongest powers, and every international order has changed when power shifted to others with different beliefs and interests.”

Indeed, the liberal order and its guarantors have arrived at a turning point or breaking point: Either they will marshal the means and will to update, strengthen and preserve the existing order, or Beijing will dramatically transform it. Xi’s callous treatment of his own subjects and contempt for international norms offer a glimpse of what his “more reasonable new world order” would look like.

#### Extinction outweighs

Seth D. Baum & Anthony M. Barrett 18. Global Catastrophic Risk Institute. 2018. “Global Catastrophes: The Most Extreme Risks.” Risk in Extreme Environments: Preparing, Avoiding, Mitigating, and Managing, edited by Vicki Bier, Routledge, pp. 174–184.

2. What Is GCR And Why Is It Important? Taken literally, a global catastrophe can be any event that is in some way catastrophic across the globe. This suggests a rather low threshold for what counts as a global catastrophe. An event causing just one death on each continent (say, from a jet-setting assassin) could rate as a global catastrophe, because surely these deaths would be catastrophic for the deceased and their loved ones. However, in common usage, a global catastrophe would be catastrophic for a significant portion of the globe. Minimum thresholds have variously been set around ten thousand to ten million deaths or $10 billion to $10 trillion in damages (Bostrom and Ćirković 2008), or death of one quarter of the human population (Atkinson 1999; Hempsell 2004). Others have emphasized catastrophes that cause long-term declines in the trajectory of human civilization (Beckstead 2013), that human civilization does not recover from (Maher and Baum 2013), that drastically reduce humanity’s potential for future achievements (Bostrom 2002, using the term “existential risk”), or that result in human extinction (Matheny 2007; Posner 2004). A common theme across all these treatments of GCR is that some catastrophes are vastly more important than others. Carl Sagan was perhaps the first to recognize this, in his commentary on nuclear winter (Sagan 1983). Without nuclear winter, a global nuclear war might kill several hundred million people. This is obviously a major catastrophe, but humanity would presumably carry on. However, with nuclear winter, per Sagan, humanity could go extinct. The loss would be not just an additional four billion or so deaths, but the loss of all future generations. To paraphrase Sagan, the loss would be billions and billions of lives, or even more. Sagan estimated 500 trillion lives, assuming humanity would continue for ten million more years, which he cited as typical for a successful species. Sagan’s 500 trillion number may even be an underestimate. The analysis here takes an adventurous turn, hinging on the evolution of the human species and the long-term fate of the universe. On these long time scales, the descendants of contemporary humans may no longer be recognizably “human”. The issue then is whether the descendants are still worth caring about, whatever they are. If they are, then it begs the question of how many of them there will be. Barring major global catastrophe, Earth will remain habitable for about one billion more years 2 until the Sun gets too warm and large. The rest of the Solar System, Milky Way galaxy, universe, and (if it exists) the multiverse will remain habitable for a lot longer than that (Adams and Laughlin 1997), should our descendants gain the capacity to migrate there. An open question in astronomy is whether it is possible for the descendants of humanity to continue living for an infinite length of time or instead merely an astronomically large but finite length of time (see e.g. Ćirković 2002; Kaku 2005). Either way, the stakes with global catastrophes could be much larger than the loss of 500 trillion lives. Debates about the infinite vs. the merely astronomical are of theoretical interest (Ng 1991; Bossert et al. 2007), but they have limited practical significance. This can be seen when evaluating GCRs from a standard risk-equals-probability-times-magnitude framework. Using Sagan’s 500 trillion lives estimate, it follows that reducing the probability of global catastrophe by a mere one-in-500-trillion chance is of the same significance as saving one human life. Phrased differently, society should try 500 trillion times harder to prevent a global catastrophe than it should to save a person’s life. Or, preventing one million deaths is equivalent to a one-in500-million reduction in the probability of global catastrophe. This suggests society should make extremely large investment in GCR reduction, at the expense of virtually all other objectives. Judge and legal scholar Richard Posner made a similar point in monetary terms (Posner 2004). Posner used $50,000 as the value of a statistical human life (VSL) and 12 billion humans as the total loss of life (double the 2004 world population); he describes both figures as significant underestimates. Multiplying them gives $600 trillion as an underestimate of the value of preventing global catastrophe. For comparison, the United States government typically uses a VSL of around one to ten million dollars (Robinson 2007). Multiplying a $10 million VSL with 500 trillion lives gives $5x1021 as the value of preventing global catastrophe. But even using “just" $600 trillion, society should be willing to spend at least that much to prevent a global catastrophe, which converts to being willing to spend at least $1 million for a one-in-500-million reduction in the probability of global catastrophe. Thus while reasonable disagreement exists on how large of a VSL to use and how much to count future generations, even low-end positions suggest vast resource allocations should be redirected to reducing GCR. This conclusion is only strengthened when considering the astronomical size of the stakes, but the same point holds either way. The bottom line is that, as long as something along the lines of the standard riskequals-probability-times-magnitude framework is being used, then even tiny GCR reductions merit significant effort. This point holds especially strongly for risks of catastrophes that would cause permanent harm to global human civilization. The discussion thus far has assumed that all human lives are valued equally. This assumption is not universally held. People often value some people more than others, favoring themselves, their family and friends, their compatriots, their generation, or others whom they identify with. Great debates rage on across moral philosophy, economics, and other fields about how much people should value others who are distant in space, time, or social relation, as well as the unborn members of future generations. This debate is crucial for all valuations of risk, including GCR. Indeed, if each of us only cares about our immediate selves, then global catastrophes may not be especially important, and we probably have better things to do with our time than worry about them. While everyone has the right to their own views and feelings, we find that the strongest arguments are for the widely held position that all human lives should be valued equally. This position is succinctly stated in the United States Declaration of Independence, updated in the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and 3 women are created equal”. Philosophers speak of an agent-neutral, objective “view from nowhere” (Nagel 1986) or a “veil of ignorance” (Rawls 1971) in which each person considers what is best for society irrespective of which member of society they happen to be. Such a perspective suggests valuing everyone equally, regardless of who they are or where or when they live. This in turn suggests a very high value for reducing GCR, or a high degree of priority for GCR reduction efforts.

#### Absent US leadership, China will fill-in the innovation vacuum---that causes an expansion of technology that undermines human rights, expands repression of minorities, and cements dangerous bioethics

Christopher Darby & Sarah Sewall 21. President and CEO of In-Q-Tel, Executive Vice President for Policy at IQT, U.S. Undersecretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights. “America’s Eroding Technological Advantage.” <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-02-10/technology-innovation-wars>.

Since the early days of the Cold War, the United States has led the world in technology. Over the course of the so-called American century, the country conquered space, spearheaded the Internet, and brought the world the iPhone. In recent years, however, China has undertaken an impressive effort to claim the mantle of technological leadership, investing hundreds of billions of dollars in robotics, artificial intelligence, microelectronics, green energy, and much more. Washington has tended to view Beijing’s massive technology investments primarily in military terms, but defense capabilities are merely one aspect of great-power competition today—little more than table stakes. Beijing is playing a more sophisticated game, using technological innovation as a way of advancing its goals without having to resort to war. Chinese companies are selling 5G wireless infrastructure around the world, harnessing synthetic biology to bolster food supplies, and racing to build smaller and faster microchips, all in a bid to grow China’s power.

In the face of China’s technological drive, U.S. policymakers have called for greater government action to protect the United States’ lead. Much of the conventional wisdom is sensible: boost R & D spending, ease visa restrictions and develop more domestic talent, and build new partnerships with industry at home and with friends and allies abroad. But the real problem for the United States is much deeper: a flawed understanding of which technologies matter and of how to foster their development. As national security assumes new dimensions and great-power competition moves into different domains, the government’s thinking and policies have not kept pace. Nor is the private sector on its own likely to meet every technological need that bears on the country’s security.

In such an environment, Washington needs to broaden its horizons and support a wider range of technologies. It needs to back not only those technologies that have obvious military applications, such as hypersonic flight, quantum computing, and artificial intelligence, but also those traditionally thought of as civilian in nature, such as microelectronics and biotechnology. Washington also needs to help vital nonmilitary technologies make the transition to commercial success, stepping in with financing where the private sector will not.

AMERICA’S INNOVATION CHALLENGE

In the early decades of the Cold War, the United States spent billions of dollars dramatically expanding its scientific infrastructure. The Atomic Energy Commission, formed in 1946, assumed responsibility for the wartime labs that had pioneered nuclear weapons, such as the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the headquarters of the Manhattan Project, and went on to fund academic research centers, such as the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. The Department of Defense, founded in 1947, was given its own massive research budget, as was the National Science Foundation, established in 1950. After the Soviets launched the Sputnik satellite, in 1957, Washington created the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, or NASA, to win the space race, as well as what would become the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which was tasked with preventing a future technological surprise. By 1964, research and development accounted for 17 percent of all discretionary federal spending.

Partnering closely with academia and companies, the government funded a large variety of basic research—that is, research without a specific end use in mind. The goal was to build a technological foundation, defined primarily as conventional and nuclear defense capabilities, to ensure the country’s security. The research proved astonishingly successful. Government investment spawned cutting-edge capabilities that undergirded the United States’ military superiority, from supersonic jets to nuclear-powered submarines to guided missiles. The private sector, for its part, got to capitalize on the underlying intellectual property, turning capabilities into products and products into companies. GPS-enabled technologies, airbags, lithium batteries, touchscreens, voice recognition—all got their start thanks to government investment.

Yet over time, the government lost its lead in innovation. In 1964, the U.S. government was spending 1.86 percent of GDP on R & D, but by 1994, that share had fallen to 0.83 percent. During that same period, U.S. corporate R & D investment as a percentage of GDP nearly doubled. The numbers tell only half the story. Whereas much of the government’s R & D investment was aimed at finding new, game-changing discoveries, corporate R & D was mostly devoted to incremental innovation. The formula for growing revenue, the private sector realized, was to expand on existing products, adding functionality or making something faster, smaller, or more energy efficient. Companies focused on nearer-term technologies with commercial promise, rather than broad areas of inquiry that might take decades to bear fruit.

Increasingly, the most innovative R & D was taking place not in the labs of large corporations but at nimbler, privately funded startups, where venture capital investors were willing to tolerate more risk. Modern venture capital firms—partnerships that invest in early-stage companies—first arose in the 1970s, leading to early successes such as Apple and Microsoft, but it wasn’t until the dot-com bubble of the 1990s that this style of investment really took off. If the first phase of R & D outsourcing was from government labs to corporate America, this was the second phase: away from big businesses and toward small startups. Large companies began to spend less on internal R & D and more on what they called “corporate development,” or acquiring smaller, venture-backed companies with promising technologies.

The rise of venture capitalism created a great deal of wealth, but it didn’t necessarily further U.S. interests. Venture capital firms were judged by their ability to generate outsize returns within a ten-year window. That made them less interested in things such as microelectronics, a capital-intensive sector where profitability arrives in decades more so than years, and more interested in software companies, which need less capital to get going. The problem is that the companies receiving the most venture capital funding have been less likely to pursue national security priorities. When the American venture capital firm Accel hit the jackpot by investing early in Rovio Entertainment, the Finnish video game company behind the mobile app Angry Birds, it may have been a triumph for the firm, but in no way did it further U.S. interests.

Meanwhile, government funding of research continued its decline relative both to GDP and to R & D spending in the private sector. The Department of Defense retained the single biggest pot of federal research funding, but there was less money overall, and it became more dispersed across various agencies and departments, each pursuing its own priorities in the absence of a national strategy. As the best researchers were lured to the private sector, the government’s in-house scientific expertise atrophied. Once close relationships between private companies and Washington also suffered, as the federal government was no longer a major customer for many of the most innovative firms. U.S. agencies were rarely the first to buy advanced technology, and smaller startups generally lacked the lobbyists and lawyers needed to sell it to them anyway.

Globalization also drove a wedge between corporations and the government. The American market came to look less dominant in an international context, with the huge Chinese consumer market exerting a particularly powerful pull. Corporations now had to think of how their actions might look to customers outside the United States. Apple, for example, famously refused to unlock iPhones for the FBI, a decision that probably enhanced its brand internationally.

Further complicating matters, innovation itself was upending the traditional understanding of national security technology. More and more, technology was becoming “dual use,” meaning that both the civilian and the military sectors relied on it. That created new vulnerabilities, such as concerns about the security of microelectronic supply chains and telecommunications networks. Yet even though civilian technologies were increasingly relevant for national security, the U.S. government wasn’t responsible for them. The private sector was, and it was innovating at a rapid clip with which the government could barely keep pace. Taken together, all these trends have led to a concerning state of affairs: the interests of the private sector and the government are further apart than ever.

THE CHINESE JUGGERNAUT

The changes in American innovation would matter less if the world had remained unipolar. Instead, they occurred alongside the rise of a geopolitical rival. Over the past two decades, China has evolved from a country that largely steals and imitates technology to one that now also improves and even pioneers it. This is no accident; it is the result of the state’s deliberate, long-term focus. China has invested massively in R & D, with its share of global technology spending growing from under five percent in 2000 to over 23 percent in 2020. If current trends continue, China is expected to overtake the United States in such spending by 2025.

Central to China’s drive has been a strategy of “military-civil fusion,” a coordinated effort to ensure cooperation between the private sector and the defense industry. At the national, provincial, and local levels, the state backs the efforts of military organizations, state-owned enterprises, and private companies and entrepreneurs. Support might come in the form of research grants, shared data, government-backed loans, or training programs. It might even be as simple as the provision of land or office space; the government is creating whole new cities dedicated solely to innovation.

China’s investment in 5G technology shows how the process works in practice. Equipment for 5G makes up the backbone of a country’s cellular network infrastructure, and the Chinese company Huawei has emerged as a world leader in engineering and selling it—offering high-quality products at a lower price than its Finnish and South Korean competitors. The company has been buoyed by massive state support—by The Wall Street Journal’s count, some $75 billion in tax breaks, grants, loans, and discounts on land. Huawei has also benefited from China’s Belt and Road Initiative, which provides generous loans to countries and Chinese companies to finance infrastructure construction.

Massive state investments in artificial intelligence have also paid off. Chinese researchers now publish more scientific papers in that field than American ones do. Part of this success is the result of funding, but something else plays a big role: access to enormous amounts of data. Beijing has fueled the rise of powerhouse companies that sweep up endless information about their users. These include Alibaba, an e-commerce giant; Tencent, which developed the all-purpose WeChat app; Baidu, which began as a search engine but now offers a range of online products; DJI, which dominates the consumer drone market; and SenseTime, which provides facial recognition technology for China’s video surveillance network and is said to be the world’s most valuable artificial intelligence company. As a matter of law, these companies are required to cooperate with the state for intelligence purposes, a broad mandate that is almost certainly used to force companies to share data for many other reasons.

That information increasingly involves people living outside China. Chinese companies have woven a global web of data-gathering apps that collect foreigners’ private information about their finances, their search history, their location, and more. Those who make a mobile payment through a Chinese app, for example, could have their personal data routed through Shanghai and added to China’s growing trove of knowledge about foreign nationals. Such information no doubt makes it easier for the Chinese government to track, say, an indebted Western bureaucrat who could be convinced to spy for Beijing or a Tibetan activist who has taken refuge abroad.

China’s hunger for data extends to some of the most personal information imaginable: our own DNA. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, BGI—a Chinese genome-sequencing company that began as a government-funded research group—has broken ground on some 50 new laboratories abroad designed to help governments test for the virus. China has legitimate reasons to build these labs, but it also has an ugly record of forcibly collecting DNA data from Tibetans and Uighurs as part of its efforts to monitor these minorities. Given that BGI runs China’s national library of genomics data, it is conceivable that through BGI testing, foreigners’ biological data might end up in that repository.

Indeed, China has shown great interest in biotechnology, even if it has yet to catch up to the United States. Combined with massive computing power and artificial intelligence, innovations in biotechnology could help solve some of humanity’s most vexing challenges, from disease and famine to energy production and climate change. Researchers have mastered the gene-editing tool CRISPR, allowing them to grow wheat that resists disease, and have managed to encode video in the DNA of bacteria, raising the possibility of a new, cost-effective method of data storage. Specialists in synthetic biology have invented a new way of producing nylon—with genetically engineered microorganisms instead of petrochemicals. The economic implications of the coming biotechnology revolution are staggering: the McKinsey Global Institute has estimated the value of biotechnology’s many potential applications at up to $4 trillion over the next ten to 20 years.

Like all powerful technologies, however, biotechnology has a dark side. It is not inconceivable, for example, that some malicious actor could create a biological weapon that targeted a specific ethnic group. On controversial questions—such as how much manipulation of the human genome is acceptable—countries will accept different degrees of risk in the name of progress and take different ethical positions. The country that leads biotechnology’s development will be the one that most profoundly shapes the norms and standards around its use. And there is reason to worry if that country is China. In 2018, the Chinese scientist He Jiankui genetically engineered the DNA of twin babies, prompting an international uproar. Beijing portrayed him as a rogue researcher and punished him. Yet the Chinese government’s disdain for human rights, coupled with its quest for technological supremacy, suggests that it could embrace a lax, even dangerous approach to bioethics.

THINKING BIGGER

Washington has monitored China’s technological progress through a military lens, worrying about how it contributes to Chinese defense capabilities. But the challenge is much broader. China’s push for technological supremacy is not simply aimed at gaining a battlefield advantage; Beijing is changing the battlefield itself. Although commercial technologies such as 5G, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and biotechnology will undoubtedly have military applications, China envisions a world of great-power competition in which no shots need to be fired. Technological supremacy promises the ability to dominate the civilian infrastructure on which others depend, providing enormous influence. That is a major motivation behind Beijing’s support for high-tech civilian infrastructure exports. The countries buying Chinese systems may think they are merely receiving electric grids, health-care technology, or online payment systems, but in reality, they may also be placing critical national infrastructure and citizens’ data in Beijing’s hands. Such exports are China’s Trojan horse.

Despite the changing nature of geopolitical competition, the United States still tends to equate security with traditional defense capabilities. Consider microelectronics. They are critical components not only for a range of commercial products but also for virtually every major defense system, from aircraft to warships. Because they will power advances in artificial intelligence, they will also shape the United States’ future economic competitiveness. Yet investment in microelectronics has fallen through the cracks. Neither the private sector nor the government is adequately funding innovation—the former due to the large capital requirements and long time horizons involved and the latter because it has focused more on securing current supplies than on innovating. Although China has had a hard time catching up to the United States in this area, it is only a matter of time before it moves up the microelectronics value chain.

Another casualty of the United States’ overly narrow conception of security and innovation is 5G technology. By dominating this market, China has built a global telecommunications network that can serve geopolitical purposes. One fear is that Beijing could help itself to data running on 5G networks. Another is the possibility that China might sabotage or disrupt adversaries’ communications networks in a crisis. Most U.S. policymakers failed to predict the threat posed by Chinese 5G infrastructure. It wasn’t until 2019 that Washington sounded the alarm about Huawei, but by then, there was little it could do. U.S. companies had never offered an end-to-end wireless network, instead focusing on manufacturing individual components, such as handsets and routers. Nor had any developed its own radio access network, a system for sending signals across network devices that is needed to build an end-to-end 5G system like that offered by Huawei and a few other companies. As a result, the United States found itself in an absurd situation: threatening to end intelligence cooperation if close allies adopted Huawei’s 5G technology without having an attractive alternative to offer.

Digital infrastructure may be today’s battle, but biotechnology will likely be the next. Unfortunately, it, too, is not considered a priority within the U.S. government. The Department of Defense has understandably shown little interest in it. Part of the explanation for that lies in the fact that the United States, like many other countries, has signed a treaty renouncing biological weapons. Still, biotechnology has other implications for the Pentagon, from changing manufacturing to improving the health of service personnel. More important, any comprehensive assessment of the national interest must recognize biotechnology’s implications for ethics, the economy, health, and planetary survival.

Because so many of the gaps in U.S. innovation can be traced back to a narrow view of the national interest and which technologies are needed to support it, the Biden administration’s first step should be to expand that understanding. Officials need to appreciate both the threats and the opportunities of the latest technologies: the havoc that could be wreaked by a paralyzed 5G network or unscrupulous genetic engineering, as well as the benefits that could come from sustainable energy sources and better and more efficient health care.

The Biden administration’s second step should be to create a process for aligning government investments with national priorities. Today, federal funding is skewed toward military capabilities. This reflects a political reality: the Pentagon is the rare part of the government that reliably receives bipartisan budgetary support. Fighter jets and missile defense, for example, are well funded, whereas pandemic preparedness and clean energy get short shrift. But setting the right national technological priorities raises questions that can be answered only by making judgments about the full range of national needs. What are the most important problems that technology can help solve? Which technologies have the power to solve only one problem, and which might solve multiple problems? Getting the answers to such questions right requires taking a truly national perspective. The current method doesn’t do so.

A properly run process would begin with what national security professionals call a “net assessment”—in this case, an analysis of the state of global technological progress and market trends to give policymakers the information necessary to work from a shared baseline. To be actionable, the process would establish a handful of near- and long-term priorities. A compelling candidate for long-term investment, for instance, might be microelectronics, which are foundations for both military and civilian innovation but have difficulty attracting private investment dollars. Another long-term priority might be biotechnology, given its importance for the economy and the future of humanity. As for short-term priorities, the U.S. government might consider launching an international effort to combat disinformation operations or to promote 5G innovation. Whatever the specific priorities chosen, the important thing is that they be deliberate and clear, guiding the United States’ decisions and signaling its aspirations.

A MARKET MINDSET

Supporting those priorities is another matter altogether. The current approach—with the government funding only limited research and the private sector taking care of commercializing the results—isn’t working. Too much government-funded research remains locked in the lab, unable to make the leap to commercial viability. Worse, when it manages to leave U.S. government labs, it often ends up in foreign hands, depriving the United States of taxpayer-financed intellectual property.

The U.S. government will need to take a more active role in helping research make it to the market. Many universities have created offices that focus on commercializing academic research, but most federal research institutions have not. That must change. In the same spirit, the U.S. government should develop so-called sandboxes—public-private research facilities where industry, the academy, and the government can work together. In 2014, Congress did just that when it established Manufacturing USA, a network of facilities that conduct research into advanced manufacturing technologies. A similar initiative for microelectronics has been proposed, and there is no reason not to create additional sandboxes in other areas, too.

The U.S. government could also help with commercialization by building national data sets for research purposes, along with improved privacy protections to reassure the people whose information ends up in them. Such data sets would be particularly useful in accelerating progress in the field of artificial intelligence, which feeds off massive quantities of data—something that only the government and a handful of big technology companies currently possess. Success in synthetic biology, along with wider medical research, will also depend on data. Thus, the U.S. government should increase the quantity and diversity of the data in the National Institutes of Health’s genome library and curate and label that information so that it can be used more easily.

All this help with commercialization will be for naught, however, if the startups with the most promising technologies for national security cannot attract enough capital. Some of them run into difficulties at the early and late stages of growth: in the beginning, they have a hard time courting investors willing to make high-risk bets, and later on, when they are ready to expand, they find it difficult to attract investors willing to write large checks. To fill the gaps at both stages, the U.S. government needs its own investment vehicles.

We work at the parent company of In-Q-Tel, which offers a promising model for early-stage investment. Created in 1999 by the CIA, In-Q-Tel is an independent, not-for-profit firm that invests in technology startups that serve the national interest. (One early recipient of In-Q-Tel’s investment was Keyhole, which became the platform for Google Earth.) Now also funded by the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, and other U.S. agencies, In-Q-Tel identifies and adapts innovative technologies for its government customers. Compared with a federal agency, a private, not-for-profit firm can more easily attract the investment and technology talent required to make informed investments. There is every reason to take this model and apply it to broader priorities. Even just $100 million to $500 million of early-stage funding per year—a drop in the bucket of the federal budget—could help fill the gap between what the private sector is providing and what the nation needs.

For the later stage, policymakers could draw inspiration from the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, the federal agency responsible for investing in development projects abroad, which in 2018 was first authorized to make equity investments. A late-stage investment fund could be structured as an arm of that agency or as a fully independent, not-for-profit private entity funded by the government. Either way, it would provide badly needed capital to companies ready to scale up their operations. Compared with early-stage government support, late-stage government support would have to be greater, in the range of $1 billion to $5 billion annually. To expand the impact of this government investment, both the early- and the late-stage funds should encourage “sidecar” investments, which would allow profit-seeking firms and individuals to join the government in making, and potentially profiting from, technology bets.

Government-sponsored investment funds like these would not only fill critical gaps in private-sector investment; they would also allow taxpayers to share in the success of research their money has funded. Currently, most government funding for technology comes in the form of grants, such as the Small Business Innovation Research grants administered by the Small Business Administration; this is true even of some programs that are billed as investment funds. This means that taxpayers foot the bill for failures but cannot share in the success if a company makes it big. As the economist Mariana Mazzucato has pointed out in these pages, “governments have socialized risks but privatized rewards.”

Not-for-profit investment vehicles working on behalf of the government would have another benefit: they would allow the United States to play offense when it comes to technological competition. For too long, it has played defense. For example, it has banned the export of sensitive technology and restricted foreign investment that might pose a national security risk—even though these actions can harm U.S. businesses and do nothing to promote innovation. Supporting commercialization with government-sponsored equity investment will not be cheap, but some of the upfront costs would likely be regained and could be reinvested. There are also nonmonetary returns: investing in national priorities, including infrastructure that could be exported to U.S. allies, would enhance the United States’ soft power.

INNOVATION EVER AFTER

President Joe Biden has pledged to “build back better” and restore the United States’ global leadership. On the campaign trial, he laid out promising proposals to promote American innovation. He called for dramatically boosting federal R & D spending, including some $300 billion to be focused on breakthrough technologies to enhance U.S. competitiveness. That is a good start, but he could make this drive far more effective if he first created a rigorous process for identifying top technological priorities. Biden said he supports “a scaled-up version” of the Small Business Innovation Research grants and has backed “infrastructure for educational institutions and partners to expand research.” Even greater opportunity lies in filling the gaps in private-sector investment and undertaking a long-overdue expansion of government support for commercialization.

On innovation, if the United States opts for just more of the same, its economy, its security, and its citizens’ well-being will all suffer. The United States will thus further the end of its global leadership and the unfettered rise of China. Biden has the right instincts. Yet in order to sustain its technological dominance, the country will have to fundamentally reenvision the why and how of innovation. Biden will no doubt be consumed with addressing domestic challenges, but he has spent much of his career promoting the United States’ global leadership. By revamping American technological innovation, he could do both.

### Plan

#### Plan: The United States federal government should prohibit private sector business practices that violate an effective competition antitrust standard.

## 2AC

### Advantage---Growth

#### Economics is improving with instantaneous information---imperfections are DAs to central planning not rules-based antitrust.

The Economist 10/23/21. "A real-time revolution will up-end the practice of macroeconomics". Economist. https://www.economist.com/leaders/2021/10/23/a-real-time-revolution-will-up-end-the-practice-of-macroeconomics?utm\_campaign=the-economist-this-week&utm\_medium=newsletter&utm\_source=salesforce-marketing-cloud&utm\_term=2021-10-21&utm\_content=ed-picks-article-link-1&etear=nl\_weekly\_1

Yet, as we report this week, the age of bewilderment is starting to give way to greater enlightenment. The world is on the brink of a real-time revolution in economics, as the quality and timeliness of information are transformed. Big firms from Amazon to Netflix already use instant data to monitor grocery deliveries and how many people are glued to “Squid Game”. The pandemic has led governments and central banks to experiment, from monitoring restaurant bookings to tracking card payments. The results are still rudimentary, but as digital devices, sensors and fast payments become ubiquitous, the ability to observe the economy accurately and speedily will improve. That holds open the promise of better public-sector decision-making—as well as the temptation for governments to meddle.

The desire for better economic data is hardly new. America’s gnp estimates date to 1934 and initially came with a 13-month time lag. In the 1950s a young Alan Greenspan monitored freight-car traffic to arrive at early estimates of steel production. Ever since Walmart pioneered supply-chain management in the 1980s private-sector bosses have seen timely data as a source of competitive advantage. But the public sector has been slow to reform how it works. The official figures that economists track—think of gdp or employment—come with lags of weeks or months and are often revised dramatically. Productivity takes years to calculate accurately. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that central banks are flying blind.

Bad and late data can lead to policy errors that cost millions of jobs and trillions of dollars in lost output. The financial crisis would have been a lot less harmful had the Federal Reserve cut interest rates to near zero in December 2007, when America entered recession, rather than in December 2008, when economists at last saw it in the numbers. Patchy data about a vast informal economy and rotten banks have made it harder for India’s policymakers to end their country’s lost decade of low growth. The European Central Bank wrongly raised interest rates in 2011 amid a temporary burst of inflation, sending the euro area back into recession. The Bank of England may be about to make a similar mistake today.

The pandemic has, however, become a catalyst for change. Without the time to wait for official surveys to reveal the effects of the virus or lockdowns, governments and central banks have experimented, tracking mobile phones, contactless payments and the real-time use of aircraft engines. Instead of locking themselves in their studies for years writing the next “General Theory”, today’s star economists, such as Raj Chetty at Harvard University, run well-staffed labs that crunch numbers. Firms such as JPMorgan Chase have opened up treasure chests of data on bank balances and credit-card bills, helping reveal whether people are spending cash or hoarding it.

These trends will intensify as technology permeates the economy. A larger share of spending is shifting online and transactions are being processed faster. Real-time payments grew by 41% in 2020, according to McKinsey, a consultancy (India registered 25.6bn such transactions). More machines and objects are being fitted with sensors, including individual shipping containers that could make sense of supply-chain blockages. Govcoins, or central-bank digital currencies (cbdcs), which China is already piloting and over 50 other countries are considering, might soon provide a goldmine of real-time detail about how the economy works.

Timely data would cut the risk of policy cock-ups—it would be easier to judge, say, if a dip in activity was becoming a slump. And the levers governments can pull will improve, too. Central bankers reckon it takes 18 months or more for a change in interest rates to take full effect. But Hong Kong is trying out cash handouts in digital wallets that expire if they are not spent quickly. cbdcs might allow interest rates to fall deeply negative. Good data during crises could let support be precisely targeted; imagine loans only for firms with robust balance-sheets but a temporary liquidity problem. Instead of wasteful universal welfare payments made through social-security bureaucracies, the poor could enjoy instant income top-ups if they lost their job, paid into digital wallets without any paperwork.

The real-time revolution promises to make economic decisions more accurate, transparent and rules-based. But it also brings dangers. New indicators may be misinterpreted: is a global recession starting or is Uber just losing market share? They are not as representative or free from bias as the painstaking surveys by statistical agencies. Big firms could hoard data, giving them an undue advantage. Private firms such as Facebook, which launched a digital wallet this week, may one day have more insight into consumer spending than the Fed does.

Know thyself

The biggest danger is hubris. With a panopticon of the economy, it will be tempting for politicians and officials to imagine they can see far into the future, or to mould society according to their preferences and favour particular groups. This is the dream of the Chinese Communist Party, which seeks to engage in a form of digital central planning.

In fact no amount of data can reliably predict the future. Unfathomably complex, dynamic economies rely not on Big Brother but on the spontaneous behaviour of millions of independent firms and consumers. Instant economics isn’t about clairvoyance or omniscience. Instead its promise is prosaic but transformative: better, timelier and more rational decision-making. ■

#### Cap is sustainable, transition away collapses global living standards.

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I was going to write a lengthy post explaining why “degrowth” — the idea that we need to halt economic growth in order to save the planet — is a very bad idea. But in the meantime, other people have written that post, or recorded that podcast, and done it well. These include Branko Milanovic, Kelsey Piper, and Ezra Klein. So instead I’ll write a shorter post trying to catalog and boil down the arguments against degrowth.

But first, let’s go over the standard argument, so we can see why these new arguments are necessary.

The standard argument against degrowth

First, note that the typical argument against degrowth, which I laid out in a Bloomberg post a while back, is that we don’t need it; we can raise human living standards without exhausting the planet. This argument was capably put forward by Andy McAfee, in his excellent book More From Less, which you should buy and read. Essentially, the idea that economic growth requires growth in resource use is false; rich countries have started to grow while using less and less of the planet’s most important resources. For example, here is U.S. use of fresh water and various metals, as well as trade-adjusted carbon emissions:

[Chart, bar chart

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So the idea here is that we don’t need degrowth; instead, we can keep raising everyone’s standard of living without exhausting the planet’s resources. Because growth doesn’t just mean using more and more stuff; instead, it can mean finding more efficient ways to use the stuff we have.

Degrowthers have two counters to this. Their first counter, typically, is to show a graph of resource use for the entire world, and show that it’s correlated with global growth. This is a weak response, for two reasons:

1. Degrowthers have no idea how to combine various resources into an overall measure of resource use, so they typically go with gross weight. This is absurd, since some materials are recyclable and others are not — if you “use” a ton of copper you still have the copper, whereas if you “use” a ton of oil, your oil is gone. It’s also absurd because it doesn’t take into account the relative abundance of resources — if you figure out how to substitute 2 tons of sand for 1 ton of oil, you’re getting more efficient, since sand is much more plentiful than oil (and doesn’t pollute as much when you use it). A lot of growth is figuring out how to substitute plentiful resources for rare ones, and simply adding up gross tonnage ignores this.
2. Past trends are no guarantee of future trends. Until the 70s, for instance, U.S. economic growth was closely correlated with both energy use and carbon emissions; after the 70s, this correlation broke down completely and the lines started moving in opposite directions. Degrowthers present historical curves as if these are laws of nature, but we know that they are not. The trend is your friend only til the bend at the end. And the fact that rich countries have hit an inflection point where economic growth no longer depends on growing resource use is a strong indicator that industrializing countries like China will also hit this point as well. (And no, falling use in rich countries is mostly not due to outsourcing, as the emissions graph above illustrates.)

So this degrowther argument is just wrong. But degrowthers have a second, far better counter to McAfee’s notion that we can have our cake and eat it too: Decoupling isn’t happening fast enough. If we wait for China and India and all the countries of Africa to industrialize in a resource-intensive way like today’s developed countries did, and then to dematerialize their growth like today’s developed countries are doing now, it will be far too late and the planet will suffer ecological catastrophe.

This argument isn’t as strong as it sounds — China and India and the rest will be able to take advantage of the efficiency-inducing technologies created by the developed countries, like solar power (indeed, they are already doing so). And they will be able to embrace “dematerialized” goods and services like social networks and video games (sorry, Xi Jinping) very early in their growth path. So these countries’ resource use trajectories won’t look quite like the U.S.’ or Europe’s.

But this degrowther argument does contain a nugget of truth: Global resource use is currently on an unsustainable trajectory. Here, via Zeke Hausfather, are the current projections for global warming by century’s end, even with the advances in techologies like solar:

[CHART OMITTED]

Any one of these scenarios represents utter global catastrophe.

So even if there is a sustainable growth path, we are not currently on it. About this, degrowthers are right; a gentle, natural transition to green growth is possible, but is an unaffordable luxury. But degrowthers’ prescription is the wrong one.

The reason, in a word, is politics. The kind of massive intention reordering of global production and consumption that degrowthers fantasize about is not just pragmatically impossible to implement, it’s the kind of thing that essentially everyone in the world except for a few very shouty people in Northern Europe and the occasional Twitter activist is going to reject. To see why, let us turn to the excellent articles/podcasts by Milanovic, Piper, and Klein.

The political argument against degrowth

Milanovic actually has two excellent posts on the topic of degrowth. In the first one, he lays out why forcing developing countries to stay in poverty would be bad:

Let us suppose, for the sake of the argument, that we interpret “degrowth” as the decision to fix global GDP at its current level…Then, unless we change the distribution of income, we are condemning to permanent abject poverty some 15 percent of world population that currently earn less than $1.90 per day and some quarter of humankind who earn less than $2.50 per day…Keeping so many people in abject poverty so that the rich can continue to enjoy their current standard of living is obviously something that the proponents of degrowth would not condone.

Enforcing global degrowth would require freezing world income at about $17,000/year. That means that most people in the world would never even come close to current rich-world living standards — instead, they would at best only be able to reach the level currently enjoyed in China or Botswana. Perhaps that’s not such a horrible fate, but as Milanovic notes, this would require impoverishing most of the population of developed countries. He elaborates on this point in his new post, pulling no punches:

[In order to avoid keeping most of the world in poverty, degrowthers must] introduce a different [income] distribution (B) where everybody who is above the current mean world income ($PPP 16 per day) is driven down to this mean, and the poor countries and people are, at least for a while, allowed to continue growing until they too achieve the level of $PPP 16 per day. But the problem with that approach is that one would have to engage in a massive reduction of incomes for…practically all of the Western population. Only 14% of the population in Western countries live at the level of income less than the global mean…Degrowers thus need to convince 86% of the population living in rich countries that their incomes are too high and need to be reduced….It is quite obvious that such a proposition is a political suicide.

Milanovic quite rightly waves away degrowthers’ protestations that GDP is not a good measure of human welfare. GDP isn’t perfect, he notes, but it’s close enough where the basic point stands.

Demanding that people in rich countries accept absolutely catastrophic declines in their living standards is a political non-starter. Klein, on his podcast, tries to point this out as gently as possible:

I think that if the political demand of the [degrowth] movement becomes you don’t get to eat beef, you will set climate politics back so far, so fast, it would be disastrous. Same thing with S.U.V.s. I don’t like S.U.V.s. I don’t drive one. But if you are telling people in rich countries that the climate movement is for them not having the cars they want to have, you are just going to lose. You are going to lose fast…This is where the politics of [degrowth] for me fall apart…

I just don’t see the argument for degrowth as being anything but an extraordinarily slower way of approaching the politics, probably counterproductive compared to what we’re doing, which is I think you can make tremendous strides on climate change by deploying renewable energy technologies and giving people the opportunity to have a more materially fulfilling life atop those technologies.

Milanovic is less gentle, calling this “outright magical thinking”. He is correct. When you look at how much people in America are willing to sacrifice in terms of their material well-being in order to fight climate change, it’s far less than what Klein is talking about. And Klein is really softballing it here — it’s not just giving up beef and SUVs, it’s a dramatic reduction in the size of housing and the amount of food and the ease of transportation and the quality of medical care that people in rich countries enjoy. It is, frankly, not happening.

But even this vastly understates the political and practical difficulties of degrowth. Piper adds several key points. First of all, she notes, because developed countries have been decoupling resource use and growth for a while now, curbing resource use will actually cause a lot more restrictions on developing countries than Milanovic’s simple calculations would suggest:

From a climate change perspective, though, there’s a problem [with simply reducing rich-world living standards]. First, it means that degrowth would do nothing about the bulk of emissions, which are occurring in developing countries.

This is an incredibly important point. For example, China now produces more CO2 emissions than the U.S., the EU, and Japan combined:

[Chart, line chart

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(And no, this is not because of outsourcing, as you can see by looking at the trade-adjusted emissions numbers.)

Another way of looking at this is that China’s CO2 emissions per dollar of GDP are more than twice America’s, and about five times that of the EU. Any global degrowth plan that actually reduces resource use is going to entail more pain for China than its GDP numbers would suggest, simply because China is at a more resource-intensive stage of growth.

Do you think China will accept a substantial diminution of its living standards, in order to satisfy the environmental-economic diktats of activists in Northern Europe? If so, you need to rethink a great many things.

Anyway, Piper makes a second crucially important point. So far we’ve been waving our hands and talking about lowering rich-world GDP while raising GDP for poor countries. In fact, economies don’t work like that:

Second, the global economy is more interconnected than Hickel implies. When Covid-19 hit, poor countries were devastated not just by the virus but by the aftershocks of virus-induced slowdowns in consumption in rich countries.

There’s some genuine appeal to the idea of an end to “consumerism,” but the pandemic offered a taste of how a sudden drop in rich-world consumption would actually affect the developing world. Covid-19 dramatically curtailed Western imports and tourism for a time. The consequences in poor countries were devastating. Hunger rose, and child mortality followed.

Degrowth would thus require deep changes in the entire way that the global economy works. Change happens, but not like that; implementing the kind of reallocation schemes that degrowthers throw around with abandon would require global economic planning that would put Gosplan to shame. Klein points this out, again rather gently:

Degrowth is, as its advocates understand it, a act of global economic planning really without equal anywhere in human history. It is an act of extraordinary central planning.

In other words, it is abject fantasy.

Taken together, these criticisms are utterly devastating to the entire degrowth project. In its current form, it will not advance beyond a media fad. No matter how shrilly degrowthers quote apocalyptic projections, the things they call for simply will not happen.

#### Cap is good.

Mark Budolfson 21. PhD in Philosophy. Assistant Professor in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health and Justice at the Rutgers School of Public Health and Center for Population–Level Bioethics "Arguments for Well-Regulated Capitalism, and Implications for Global Ethics, Food, Environment, Climate Change, and Beyond". Cambridge Core. 5-7-2021. https://www-cambridge-org.proxy.library.emory.edu/core/journals/ethics-and-international-affairs/article/arguments-for-wellregulated-capitalism-and-implications-for-global-ethics-food-environment-climate-change-and-beyond/96F422D04E171EECDEF77312266AE9DD

Discourse on food ethics often advocates the anti-capitalist idea that we need less capitalism, less growth, and less globalization if we want to make the world a better and more equitable place, with arguments focused on applications to food, globalization, and a just society. For example, arguments for this anti-capitalist view are at the core of some chapters in nearly every handbook and edited volume in the rapidly expanding subdiscipline of food ethics. None of these volumes (or any article published in this subdiscipline broadly construed) focuses on a defense of globalized capitalism.1

More generally, discourse on global ethics, environment, and political theory in much of academia—and in society—increasingly features this anti-capitalist idea as well.2 The idea is especially prominent in discourse surrounding the environment, climate, and global poverty, where we face a nexus of problems of which capitalism is a key driver, including climate change, air and water pollution, the challenge of feeding the world, ensuring sustainable development for the world's poorest, and other interrelated challenges.

It is therefore important to ask whether this anti-capitalist idea is justified by reason and evidence that is as strong as the degree of confidence placed in it by activists and many commentators on food ethics, global ethics, and political theory, more generally.

In fact, many experts argue that this anti-capitalist idea is not supported by reason and argument and is actually wrong. The main contribution of this essay is to explain the structure of the leading arguments against the anti-capitalist idea, and in favor of the opposite conclusion. I begin by focusing on the general argument in favor of well-regulated globalized capitalism as the key to a just, flourishing, and environmentally healthy world. This is the most important of all of the arguments in terms of its consequences for health, wellbeing, and justice, and it is endorsed by experts in the empirically minded disciplines best placed to analyze the issue, including experts in long-run global development, human health, wellbeing, economics, law, public policy, and other related disciplines. On the basis of the arguments outlined below, well-regulated capitalism has been endorsed by recent Democratic presidents of the United States such as Barack Obama, and by progressive Nobel laureates who have devoted their lives to human development and more equitable societies, as well as by a wide range of experts in government and leading nongovernmental organizations.

The goal of this essay is to make the structure and importance of these arguments clear, and thereby highlight that discourse on global ethics and political theory should engage carefully with them. The goal is not to endorse them as necessarily sound and correct. The essay will begin by examining general arguments for and against capitalism, and then turn to implications for food, the environment, climate change, and beyond.

Arguments for and against Forms of Capitalism

The Argument against Capitalism

Capitalism is often argued to be a key driver of many of society's ills: inequalities, pollution, land use changes, and incentives that cause people to live differently than in their ideal dreams. Capitalism can sometimes deepen injustices. These negative consequences are easy to see—resting, as they do, at the center of many of society's greatest challenges.3

And at the same time, it is often difficult to see the positive consequences of capitalism.4 What are the positive consequences of allowing private interests to clear-cut forests and plant crops, especially if those private interests are rich multinational corporations and the forests are in poor, developing countries whose citizens do not receive the profits from deforestation? Why give private companies the right to exploit resources at all, since exploitation almost always has some negative consequences such as those listed above? These are the right questions to ask, and they highlight genuine challenges to capitalism. And in light of these challenges, it is reasonable to consider the possibility that perhaps a different economic system altogether would be more equitable and beneficial to the global population.

The Argument for Well-Regulated Capitalism

However, things are more complicated than the arguments above would suggest, and the benefits of capitalism, especially for the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, are in fact myriad and significant. In addition, as we will see in this section, many experts argue that capitalism is not the fundamental cause of the previously described problems but rather an essential component of the best solutions to them and of the best methods for promoting our goals of health, well-being, and justice.

To see where the defenders of capitalism are coming from, consider an analogy involving a response to a pandemic: if a country administered a rushed and untested vaccine to its population that ended up killing people, we would not say that vaccines were the problem. Instead, the problem would be the flawed and sloppy policies of vaccine implementation. Vaccines might easily remain absolutely essential to the correct response to such a pandemic and could also be essential to promoting health and flourishing, more generally.

The argument is similar with capitalism according to the leading mainstream arguments in favor of it: Capitalism is an essential part of the best society we could have, just like vaccines are an essential part of the best response to a pandemic such as COVID-19. But of course both capitalism and vaccines can be implemented poorly, and can even do harm, especially when combined with other incorrect policy decisions. But that does not mean that we should turn against them—quite the opposite. Instead, we should embrace them as essential to the best and most just outcomes for society, and educate ourselves and others on their importance and on how they must be properly designed and implemented with other policies in order to best help us all. In fact, the argument in favor of capitalism is even more dramatic because it claims that much more is at stake than even what is at stake in response to a global pandemic—what is at stake with capitalism is nothing less than whether the world's poorest and most vulnerable billion people will remain in conditions of poverty and oppression, or if they will instead finally gain access to what is minimally necessary for basic health and wellbeing and become increasingly affluent and empowered. The argument in favor of capitalism proceeds as follows:

Premise 1. Development and the past. Over the course of recorded human history, the majority of historical increases in health, wellbeing, and justice have occurred in the last two centuries, largely as a result of societies adopting or moving toward capitalism. Capitalism is a relevant cause of these improvements, in the sense that they could not have happened to such a degree if it were not for capitalism and would not have happened to the same degree under any alternative noncapitalist approach to structuring society. The argument in support of this premise relies on observed relationships across societies and centuries between indicators of degree of capitalism, wealth, investments in public goods, and outcomes for health, wellbeing, and justice, together with econometric analysis in support of the conclusion that the best explanation of these correlations and the underlying mechanism is that large increases in health, wellbeing, and justice are largely driven by increasing investments in public goods. The scale of increased wealth necessary to maximize these investments requires capitalism. Thus, as capitalist societies have become dramatically wealthier over the past hundred years (and wealthier than societies with alternative systems), this has allowed larger investments in public goods, which simply has not been possible in a sustained way in societies without the greater wealth that capitalism makes possible. Important investments in public goods include investments in basic medical knowledge, in health and nutrition programs, and in the institutional capacity and know-how to regulate society and capitalism itself. As a result, capitalism is a primary driver of positive outcomes in health and wellbeing (such as increased life expectancy, lowered child and maternal mortality, adequate calories per day, minimized infectious disease rates, a lower percentage and number of people in poverty, and more reported happiness);5 and in justice (such as reduced deaths from war and homicide; higher rankings in human rights indices; the reduced prevalence of racist, sexist, homophobic opinions in surveys; and higher literacy rates).6 These quantifiable positive consequences of global capitalism dramatically outweigh the negative consequences (such as deaths from pollution in the course of development), with the result that the net benefits from capitalism in terms of health, wellbeing, and justice have been greater than they would have been under any known noncapitalist approach to structuring society.7

Premise 2. Economics, ethics, and policy. Although capitalism has often been ill-regulated and therefore failed to maximize net benefits for health, wellbeing, and justice, it can become well-regulated so that it maximizes these societal goals, by including mechanisms identified by economists and other policy experts that do the following:

* optimally8 regulate negative effects such as pollution and monopoly power, and invest in public goods such as education, basic healthcare, and fundamental research including biomedical knowledge (more generally, policies that correct the failures of free markets that economists have long recognized will arise from “externalities” in the absence of regulation);9
* ensure equity and distributive justice (for example, via wealth redistribution);10
* ensure basic rights, justice, and the rule of law independent of the market (for example, by an independent judiciary, bill of rights, property rights, and redistribution and other legislation to correct historical injustices due to colonialism, racism, and correct current and historical distortions that have prevented markets from being fair);11 and
* ensure that there is no alternative way of structuring society that is more efficient or better promotes the equity, justice, and fairness goals outlined above (by allowing free exchange given the regulations mentioned).12

To summarize the implication of the first two premises, well-regulated capitalism is essential to best achieving our ethical goals—which is true even though capitalism has certainly not always been well regulated historically. Society can still do much better and remove the large deficits in terms of health, wellbeing, and justice that exist under the current inferior and imperfect versions of capitalism.

Premise 3. Development and the future. If the global spread of capitalism is allowed to continue, desperate poverty can be essentially eliminated in our lifetimes. Furthermore, this can be accomplished faster and in a more just way via well-regulated global capitalism than by any alternatives. If we instead opt for less capitalism, less growth, and less globalization, then desperate poverty will continue to exist for a significant portion of the world's population into the further future, and the world will be a worse and less equitable place than it would have been with more capitalism. For example, in a world with less capitalism, there would be more overpopulation, food insecurity, air pollution, ill health, injustice, and other problems. In part, this is because of the factors identified by premise 1, which connect a turn away from capitalism with a turn away from continuing improvements in health, wellbeing, and justice, especially for the developing world. In addition, fertility declines are also a consequence of increased wealth, and the size of the population is a primary determinant of food demand and other environmental stressors.13 Finally, as discussed at length in the next section of the essay, capitalism can be naturally combined with optimal environmental regulations.14 Even bracketing anything like optimal regulation, it remains true that sufficiently wealthy nations reduce environmental degradation as they become wealthier, whereas developing nations that are nearing peak degradation will remain stuck at the worst levels of degradation if we stall growth, rather than allowing them to transition to less and less degradation in the future via capitalism and economic growth.15 In contrast, well-regulated capitalism is a key part of the best way of coping with these problems, as well as a key part of dealing with climate change, global food production, and other specific challenges, as argued at length in the next section. Here it is important to stress that we should favor well-regulated capitalism that includes correct investments in public goods over other capitalist systems such as the neoliberalism of the recent past that promoted inadequately regulated capitalism with inadequate concern for externalities, equity, and background distortions and injustices.16

Conclusion. Therefore, we should be in favor of capitalism over noncapitalism, and we should especially favor well-regulated capitalism, which is the ethically optimal economic system and is essential to any just basic structure for society.

This argument is impressive because, as stated earlier in the essay, it is based on evidence that is so striking that it leads a bipartisan range of open-minded thinkers and activists to endorse well-regulated capitalism, including many of those who were not initially attracted to the view because of a reasonable concern for the societal ills with which we began. To better understand why such a range of thinkers could agree that well-regulated capitalism is best, it may help to clarify some things that are not assumed or implied by the argument for it, which could be invoked by other bad arguments for capitalism.

One thing the argument above does not assume is that health, wellbeing, or justice are the same thing as wealth, because, in fact, they are not. Instead, the argument above relies on well-accepted, measurable indicators of health and wellbeing, such as increased lifespan; decreased early childhood mortality; adequate nutrition; and other empirically measurable leading indicators of health, wellbeing, and justice.17 Similarly, the argument that capitalism promotes justice, peace, freedom, human rights, and tolerance relies on empirical metrics for each of these.18

Furthermore, the argument does not assume that because these indicators of health, wellbeing, and justice are highly correlated with high degrees of capitalism, that therefore capitalism is the direct cause of these good outcomes. Rather, the analyses suggest instead that something other than capitalism is the direct cause of societal improvements (such as improvements in knowledge and technology, public infrastructure, and good governance), and that capitalism is simply a necessary condition for these improvements to happen.19 In other words, the richer a society is, the more it is able to invest in all of these and other things that are the direct causes of health, wellbeing, and justice. But, to maximize investment in these things societies need well-regulated capitalism.

As part of these analyses, it is often stressed that current forms of capitalism around the world are highly defective and must be reformed in the direction of well-regulated capitalism because they lack investments in public goods, such as basic knowledge, healthcare, nutrition, other safety nets, and good governance.20 In this way, an argument for a particular kind of progressive reformism is an essential part of the analyses that lead many to endorse the more general argument for well-regulated capitalism.

Although these analyses are nuanced, and appropriately so, it remains the case that the things that directly lead to health, wellbeing, and justice require resources, and the best path toward generating those resources is well-regulated capitalism. And on the flip side, according to the analyses behind premise 1 described above, an anti-capitalist system would not produce the resources that are needed, and would thus be a disaster, especially for the poorest billion people who are most desperately in need of the resources that capitalism can create and direct, to escape from extreme poverty.21

### K

#### IR isn't anti-black---it's a minimalist theory to explain the occurrence of interstate war---their K is at best a link of omission, which is a bad decision frame---omission dilutes the explanatory power of both interstate war and anti-blackness

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**ST – Securitization Theory**

Racism is a powerful, malignant force in world politics, and our discipline, IR, has deeply problematic entanglements with it. It is a serious matter both to come intellectually to grips with this and to find the most effective strategies to act on it. We worry that more serious problems and possibilities are marginalised by an ultimately very inward-looking and scholastic exercise where a particular definition of racism and a specific theoretical perspective makes it possible to deem the vast majority of scholarship in IR ‘racist’, ‘methodologically white’ and ‘antiblack’- every work that does not explicitly follow one exact version of anti-racist scholarship. Especially, the role played in H&RM’s argumentation by our sins of omission does ultimately seem to rest on the premise that only their distinct form of scholarship can be redeemed, because even post-colonial scholarship and critiques of euro-centrism are not enough; you are a racist if you do not follow exactly this particular route. It is not important whether your scholarship actually supports or hinders anti-racist analysis or political engagement; it is all about who you cite and what declarations you make. Here, a theory is not judged by what can be done with it, but by the question whether self-appointed anti-racists can find supposedly problematic sentences somewhere in its key texts. In this section, we will first point out that the H&RM article is a personal attack on us for racism, despite their reassurances about the opposite. Then, we discuss what an analysis of structural racism (systems of power) could amount to, given that they claim to do one but utterly fail to do so, resorting instead to a pretend examination of the foundations of ST. Next, we discuss what could be methodological guidelines for actually proving whether or not a theory like ST is racist.

H&RM’s usage of the term racism for all scholarship that does not foreground race as the primary theme, means that 99% of IR will be ‘racist’. There will be no room for any other scholarship (unless you will live with the moniker of being racist). Not only does this seem very unproductive in terms of disciplinary conversations, not to talk of diversity and pluralism, it also means that it becomes very hard to use the category of ‘racism’ for critical purposes for those cases where it actually is at stake in a sense closer to what the rest of the discipline, and indeed the public discourse, means by it. It has been watered down by the fact that everyone but those in critical whiteness studies have been deemed racist, one by one, where we just happened to get the special honour of being among the first. H&RM might protest that this is not their plan, but we fail to see how this can be avoided when the logic they apply is that the term racist can be based primarily on sins of omission in the sense of a theory being focused around other categories.

As documented above, they claim numerous times that ST ‘occludes’ or ‘refuses’ various dynamics relating to race that they find important, but they never offer any basis for concluding that the theory makes it harder to see these things, only that it does not as such zoom in on them. This does not have to do with a choice particularly regarding race but the structure and nature of the theory as a general analytical apparatus that can be applied to all instances where actors try to securitize or desecuritize something, and the user is free then to include race more or less in this analysis, just as the theory is not deciding how important nationalism is or gender51, but it enables the analysis of the way different categories and distinctions become politically mobilised in security struggles.

H&RM will probably argue that if you do not mention race in these contexts, you ‘hide’ it. Three answers: 1) no, there is a difference between not mentioning and hiding, it takes a step more of the critic to show that the theory prevents something from being articulated or that it uses abstractions that stand in the way of articulating race; that certainly is the case for some theories, so it is a legitimate avenue of critique, but they haven’t shown this, 2) the theory is intentionally (as we have explained numerous times) minimalist in having a clear conceptual core and then not putting all kinds of factors like the role of media or populism into the theory – not because we haven’t noticed these factors but because they belong in applications, and the theory exactly allows you to study these phenomena, 3) we are very explicit that one of the advantages of a minimalist theory is the ability to combine it with other theories especially general theories about the nature and structures of society; one should not build out ST to become a general theory of society or international relations, better in any specific usage of the theory combine it with the theories one finds productive for the particular research project. (Wæver 2011, 2015) The latter point has come up in replies to the ‘sociological’ version of ST (Balzacq), which has more of a tendency to add all relevant factors to the theory, while the classical Copenhagen version is tight and invites combination with theories that complement it, which could exactly be theories of race and racism. Our ultimate concern here is: how do we actually get to study racism in world politics in a practically and politically helpful way?

When developing our own framework, ST, we took care to make sure it could do critical work in concrete analyses, in our view on racism as well, and H&RM fail to show that this is not the case. In addition, we have then on a more mundane, human level engaged ourselves in various ways to foster non-Western scholarship and theories in IR (Tickner & Wæver 2009; Acharya & Buzan 2010, 2019). One has for instance co-founded a book-series with the aim to identify “alternatives for thinking about the ‘international’ that are more in tune with local concerns and traditions outside the West” and “provincializing the West” (quoting from the Routledge homepage of the book series); the other has amongst many other things re-written this history of the IR discipline to show both that it has ignored non-Western contributions and that the Western part of it is indebted to ‘scientific racism’ (Buzan & Lawson 2015; Acharya and Buzan 2019). Closer to ST, the project in Buzan & Wæver 2003 was to a large extent to challenge the euro-centrism enshrined in dominant conceptions of polarity and of the relationship between global and regional, to enable theories to be more attentive to actual security dynamics in ‘most of the world’.

Surely, all of these efforts can be critically assessed as to what has been helpful and what hasn’t. But we find it strange that H&RM choose to ignore completely the possibility of assessing the ability of ST to form the basis for helpful analyses of racism. They neither look at those analyses that have actually been done, nor do they show systematically why it would be impossible to do so. On the contrary, they limit themselves to highly abstract and indirect attributions of racism to the theory as such through various unconvincing routes. From this they deduce (without any discussion) that ST can’t inform studies of racism (and when it has actually done it, they presumably are able to magically make those publications go away) (see section 6 below).

H&RM offer no explanation as to how their type of analysis helps in combating racism. It is unclear if it is a kind of ground clearing operation to be followed up by new and better theories after getting us out of the way. Or whether they believe that we are so much a part of the oppressive structures that attacking us is in itself liberating. Or – as we will consider below in more detail – the whole exercise is more about making universities more inclusive and hospitable to students and scholars of colour. Closely linked to the latter option, their rationale could be that the attack is meant more as a kind of ‘happening’ drawing attention to the question of race. Especially in the latter case, it would be intentional that the article plays ambiguously with making a very personal attack while pretending not to.

#### Rational realism is the best way to understand state behavior---anarchy drives states to compete. Peace is only possible if states account for material factors and information asymmetries---that makes our theory different than historical realist theories that deny a role for cooperation.

Charles Glaser 18. Professor of Political Science and International Affairs, George Washington. “A Realist Perspective on the Constructivist Project” in Mariano E. Bertucci, Jarrod Hayes, and Patrick James eds. *Constructivism Reconsidered*. University Michigan Press. 181-196.

Realism: Partial, Yet Powerful

In light of the partial nature of the rational realist theory, one might wonder whether the rational theory is fully useful on its own and why realist theories continue to have so much influence within IR. In fact, the rational realist theory exists ~~stands~~ well on its own for a variety of reasons.

First, and most important in this context, the inputs to the rational theory are often known sufficiently well that effective analysis is possible without a more complete theory. Values of the independent variables are often knowable, and known, without a theory that fully explains them. For example, we can measure a state’s power without a full theory of the state that explains its productive potential and its ability to extract resources for national purposes. At the very least, basic material traits can be used to estimate power, with a well-established literature on that subject in place. Similarly, we can often be confident of the causal logics a state will employ to evaluate the impact of available strategies without having theories that explain the origins of the ideas and why one set of arguments was adopted instead of others. In other words, a theory of the inputs to the rational theory is not required to for the rational theory to support productive analysis

Second, the rationalist theory is well matched to analyzing many of the key questions that the field of IR is most interested in. These include such questions as: What factors influence the probability of war and, closely related, when is war more or less likely? Are cooperative or competitive strategies best matched to achieving a state’s security, economic, and other goals? When and why do states form alliances, engage in arms races, make territorial concessions, and join international institutions? Are states able to communicate information about their motives and intentions, and under what conditions is this possible? My point here is not that rational realist theories are the only theories capable of shedding light on these questions, as this would clearly undervalue other approaches. But the extensive realist literature that has productively tackled these questions, and many other related questions, should leave little doubt about the analytic value of the theories. This should not be a surprise, because the rationalist approach captures much of what is central to understanding the issues that drive these questions. And, of course, this is not an accident. Quite the opposite; this is why many analysts have chosen this approach to explore these questions.

Third, and closely related to the preceding discussion, the importance of these questions to real-world debates and states’ most important security and foreign policy choices virtually guarantees that realist analyses will continue to have a prominent role within IR. More specifically, theories of foreign and security policy that are built on rational realist foundations focus on the strategies that states can choose from—including investing in economic growth, allying, arming, bargaining, fighting, etc.—and therefore have great potential to contribute to policy debates.

Competition

Origins of the Competition

Given the extensive complementarity between the constructivist and realist theories, why have these approaches been cast as competitors in IR theory? Many factors have contributed. Part of the answer undoubtedly lies in the professional inclination within IR theory to generate new arguments that can replace those that preceded them. Some of the answer may lie in the dominance of realist theory during the Cold War and arguably since then, which has made it a target for all other types of explanations. Part of the answer may lie in an underappreciation of realism, especially structural realism, as a partial theory, which meant that complementarity was not possible.

In addition to these more generic reasons, some of the competition likely reflects the order in which certain key arguments have been established, which in turn left them vulnerable to critiques from alternative approaches. Specifically, Waltz’s seminal statement of structural realism made two arguments that were flawed or overstated, which left structural realism overly vulnerable: first, the theory was formulated and characterized as a purely material theory; and second, Waltz’s central conclusion was that the anarchic nature of the international system generated a strong tendency toward competition, rendering cooperation both rare and limited.14 As my sketch of structural realism explains, neither of these claims was sustainable, and strands of realism have been developed that correct these shortcomings.

Waltz’s formulation therefore left the door open for constructivists (as well as realists and others) to offer as competitors the ideational arguments and the cooperation-under-anarchy arguments that were missing. Wendt’s structural constructivism, which takes Waltz’s structural realism as its central point of departure, develops many of these opposing arguments from a constructivist perspective.15 If the rational realist theory had been more fully developed and appreciated before Wendt tackled these arguments, the debate might have proceeded rather differently. Instead of arguing that structural constructivism could explain and predict interaction and cooperation that were beyond the reach of Waltz’s realism, Wendt would have had to argue that his approach produced similar results from an alternative perspective. Instead, the approaches ended up at least partly talking past each other and appearing to clash even more than they actually do. There is, however, some real competition between the rational realist theory and Wendt’s structural constructivist theory.

Substance of the Competition

To appreciate how both competition and complementarity between realism and constructivism are possible, it is useful to distinguish different types of constructivism. Some constructivist work has focused on states and individuals, exploring the sources of beliefs, identifies, and norms. Other constructivist research has focused on the international system, exploring how structure influences states’ choices; Wendt’s is the defining work in the structural constructivist field.16 The complementary nature of constructivist arguments that focus on states and individuals is clear; as explained above, these theories explain inputs to the rational theory. In contrast, structural constructivism emphasizes the role of the international system on states’ actions and, therefore, runs largely parallel to structural realism, even though it defines the international system differently. This similarity and, closely related, the similarity in the questions the two approaches set out to answer makes them competitors.

Wendt argues that the key to understanding the possibility of multiple “logics” of anarchy is “conceptualizing structure in social rather than material terms.” The sole variable in Waltz’s international structure is the distribution of capabilities. Consequently, Waltz’s theory is characterized as purely material.17 Waltz concludes that international anarchy requires states to pursue competitive policies; in Wendt’s terminology, this means that Waltz finds that anarchy has a single logic. Wendt argues instead that anarchy can take three principal forms, which vary in their tendencies to generate competition and cooperation. He defines the different anarchies in terms of the states’ roles, specifically their orientation toward each other—enemy, rival, and friend—which reflect the rules that states expect others to observe. Working with these structural roles, Wendt explains how cooperation and even deep peace are possible within international anarchy. Enemies generate a Hobbesian anarchy that is highly competitive; although similar in some ways to the anarchy explained by Waltz’s neorealism, the Hobbesian anarchy is more competitive and states are more insecure. Rivals generate a Lockean anarchy that is less competitive and that, Wendt argues, is in certain respects closer to Waltz’s anarchy. Friends are concerned not only about their own security, but also other states’ security, and their interaction generates a Kantian anarchy in which states do not fear that others will use force against them and in which confidence in a long-lasting peace is possible.18

Wendt’s effort to explore the possibility that international anarchy can produce a much wider range of outcomes than is suggested by Waltz is a productive move. Whether extensive security cooperation is possible under anarchy is the central question posed by structural IR theories. Moreover, a variety of historical examples that run counter to Waltz’s claim about the persistent presence of competition—including restraint and cooperation between powerful states, and substantial military capabilities that do not generate substantial insecurity—indicate the need for a more encompassing theory. Wendt’s focus on social variables, however, masks the potential of structural realist and rational theories to explain variation in states’ policies under anarchy and thereby incorrectly suggests that realist theories are incapable of explaining broad and basic variation in states’ strategies in the face of anarchy. In fact, Wendt is explicit on this critical issue:

The real question is whether the fact of anarchy creates a tendency for all such interactions to realize a single logic at the macro-level. In the Neorealist view they do: anarchies are inherently self-help systems that tend to produce military competition, balances of power, and war. Against this I argue that anarchy can have at least three kinds of structure at the macro-level, based on what kind of roles—enemy, rival, and friend—dominate the system.19

To appreciate why structural realism can explain and predict cooperation but that this possibility is overlooked by Waltz, we need to return to his core argument. It turns out that the logic of Waltz’s arguments requires the introduction of another variable: a state’s information about the opposing state’s motives. Waltz holds that although states may have motives beyond security, their international behavior can be understood largely by assuming that they are seeking only security. If, however, all states knew that all the other states were security seekers (and if all states knew that this is what the others knew), then the international system should not generate competition. This uncertainty about the opposing state’s type lies at the core of the security dilemma, and, closely related, the security dilemma lies at the center of structural realism’s ability to explain competition.20 If states did not face a security dilemma, security seekers could always achieve their core objective while adopting policies that avoided generating competition. Once the importance of uncertainty about motives is made explicit, including it as a variable is the natural next step for the rational theory.

A key point for our discussion here is that structural realism, or at the least the more general rational theory that logically flows from it, is no longer a purely material theory. This matters because it means that distinguishing realist and constructivist theories in terms of material versus ideational arguments—a broad category that is typically understood to include information, norms, and causal ideas—no longer creates a sharp divide.

The implications reach beyond mere characterizations and definitions, however. Including information about motives as a key variable in a rational realist theory opens the door to arguments that address much of the terrain also covered by Wendt’s structural constructivism. More specifically, the rational realist theory (1) explores the nature of interactions that can enable states to revise their assessments of the opposing state’s type and thereby generate more cooperative or more competitive policies, providing a more straightforward explanation than Wendt’s changes in interests, (2) explains international cooperation under anarchy as a result of information in combination with material factors instead of Wendt’s focus on identities, and (3) shows that Wendt has both exaggerated and underestimated the potential for international cooperation, the former by underplaying the role of material factors in constraining states’ choices and the latter by relying on states’ collective interests instead of pure security seeking, which is more neutral regarding cooperation. The remainder of this section sketches these points.21

First, the realist theory provides an alternative explanation of how states’ interactions can influence their relationship and, in turn, their behavior. Wendt argues that interaction between states is the key to their understandings of self and other, and that interactions play a central role in determining whether the international system is competitive or cooperative. He holds that interaction cannot play this important role in realist theories, because “realists would probably argue that each should act on the basis of worst-case assumptions about the other’s intentions, justifying such an attitude as prudent in view of the possibility of death from making a mistake.”22 This is a reasonable reading of Waltz; since he barely touches on a possible role for information about the opposing side, assuming the worst can be seen as implicitly running through his formulation. Offensive realism makes fully explicit the requirement for states to assume the worst about opposing states.23 Contrary to this position, however, rational states should not assume the worst when facing uncertainty about their adversary’s motives and intentions. Instead, at least from a standard expected utility perspective, a state should consider the probability that the opposing state is a revisionist/greedy type as opposed to status quo/security type. The state should also consider the danger if the opposing state is a greedy type; many types of cooperation would not put the state at great risk, that is, death is not always, or even usually, the cost of misjudging the adversary’s motives. These arguments lie at the core of the rationalist realist theory that includes information as a key variable defining a state’s international environment, which in turn enables the theory to fully integrate the security dilemma into its arguments.

Given this realist formulation, states’ interactions can influence their understanding (their information) of the opposing state’s motives. When a state takes an action that would be more likely to be taken by a security-seeking state than by a greedy state, the opposing state should positively update its prior estimate of the probability that the state has security motives. Because states have an incentive to mislead adversaries, the opposing state should only find useful information when the state’s action is costly, that is, when the state’s action is a “costly signal.” This occurs when a specific cooperative action would be more costly for a greedy state than for a security-seeking state. Wendt describes a similar process of interaction but emphasizes different changes and relies on different types of arguments— symbolic interactionism—not rational updating made possible by costly signals. His arguments describe how states’ interactions can change their interests and identities, which in turn support cooperation in anarchy. The rationalist explanation has the advantage of greater simplicity—it holds interests constant, does not involve the creation of social structures, and does not require changes in interests—while appearing to explain essentially the same international phenomenon.

Second, the rational realist theory explains that anarchy can generate a variety of outcomes—including various degrees of competition, cooperation, and mixtures of the two—that have much in common with Wendt’s three anarchies. According to the rational theory, whether a securityseeking state should choose cooperation over competition depends on both material variables, which include the state’s power and offensedefense variables, and information variables, which capture what a state knows about its adversary’s motives.24 Material variables largely determine the military capabilities a state can acquire, given the opposing state’s ability to build military forces of its own. They determine the types of military missions that states will be able to perform and their relative prospects for performing them successfully.

Information variables influence a state’s expectations about its adversary’s behavior, including reactions to the state’s own policies. The theory explains that when defense has the advantage—that is, when holding territory or maintaining the capabilities required for deterrence are relatively easy—states can achieve high levels of security without engaging in intense competition. When offense and defense are distinguishable—that is, when the forces that support offensive missions would contribute less (or more) to defensive missions—states may be able to choose forces and strategies that signal benign motives and to use arms control to increase the feasibility of defensive force postures. Information variables also influence the prospects for cooperation. A state that believes the opposing state is likely to be a security seeker should be more willing to run the risks of restraint and cooperation. These strategies have the potential to generate positive political spirals, which can in turn make states willing to choose military strategies that pose smaller risks to others’ security.

In short, the rationalist theory describes the conditions under which anarchy can produce cooperative international security policies and relatively peaceful international politics. It both corrects Waltz’s conclusion about the general tendency for anarchy to generate competition and shows that Wendt’s social structure is unnecessary to produce this result. Again, the rationalist theory has the advantage of being more straightforward, less complex, and more parsimonious than Wendt’s constructivist alternative.

Third, and related, the rationalist theory shows that Wendt is both too pessimistic and too optimistic, in different ways, about the prospects for cooperation under anarchy. On the pessimistic side, the rationalist theory shows that cooperation is possible without introducing “friends,” that is, states that have collective identities in which they value each other’s security as well as their own. According to the rational realist argument, the states’ international situation is doing most of the work; nonfriends—security seekers that do not value others’ security—have fundamental preferences that are relatively neutral between cooperation and competition. In contrast, collective identities and altruistic preferences play a central role in the constructivist argument, and it views them as necessary for deep cooperation. My point here is not that considering the impact of collective identities is analytically flawed, but that relying on collective identities to make extensive cooperation possible is a significantly weaker finding regarding the potential of anarchy to allow and support cooperation. If, as seems likely, pure security seekers are much more common than friends, then Wendt is pessimistic about cooperation under anarchy, in that he finds the possibility of cooperation existing under narrower, less common conditions.

At the same time, however, Wendt is overly optimistic about the prospects for cooperation because he fails to adequately incorporate the constraints that information and material factors can impose on states’ policies. A strength of the rational realist theory is that it explicitly explains how both material variables and information variables influence the prospects for cooperation, and how they interact. In contrast, Wendt’s social theory does not bring in material factors and thereby implicitly ignores the constraints they could impose. Wendt is partially correct in arguing that “History matters. Security dilemmas are not acts of God; they are effects of practice.”25 States, however, do not get to choose their history at the time they are making forward-looking decisions. Of course, in the past they did have partial control over it via the policy choices they made, although these were constrained by information and material factors. At the time of a new choice, however, the past and its related history are fixed and thereby impose severe constraints on states’ practice/choices. Their interactions may start under information conditions that prevent them from overcoming material conditions that make cooperative policies too risky. Moreover, these information conditions could reflect previous material conditions that required the security-seeking state to compete, thereby signaling greedy motives, which contributed to the initial information from which the states begin this round of interaction. Consequently, although certainty or near certainty that the opposing state is a security seeker could be sufficient to eliminate the security dilemma under even very dangerous material conditions, states will not always have this information. Moreover, a state can face material conditions—for example, offense dominance—that make cooperation too risky, even when the state believes that adversary is probably a security-seeking state. In short, states can face constraints that require them to choose competitive policies, which can make the security dilemma still more severe and cooperation a still worse option.

#### We’re anti CCP not anti-asian---No offense.

Tenzin Dorjee 21. Senior researcher at Tibet Action Institute and a PhD candidate in the political science department at Columbia University. "Opinion: Anti-China is not anti-Asian". Washington Post. 4-6-2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/04/06/anti-china-is-not-anti-asian/

However, some commentators are arguing that the U.S. foreign policy establishment’s criticism of the Chinese government is to blame for the domestic problem of anti-Asian violence. This specious claim, which China’s state-run media quickly exploited, has been most prominently advanced in the mainstream Western media by distinguished novelist Viet Thanh Nguyen and political scientist Janelle Wong, who claim that “bipartisan political rhetoric about Asia” and successive administrations’ “critical takes” on China fuel anti-Asian violence. This narrative, which weaponizes Asian American vulnerability to shield Beijing from international criticism, is as dangerous as it is fraudulent.

First of all, let’s be clear that there is no bipartisan political rhetoric targeting Asia, a continent of nearly 50 nations. Conflating Asia with China is the geopolitical equivalent of assuming all Asians are Chinese, precisely the kind of racial lumping that the writers themselves sensibly caution against.

To be sure, criticism of the Chinese government by policymakers in Washington has escalated in recent years. But the overwhelming volume of the rhetoric targeting Beijing has been prompted not by abstract geopolitical competition but by tangible grievances, including China’s genocide in Xinjiang, intensifying repression in Tibet, dismantling of democracy in Hong Kong and sweeping crackdown on Chinese civil society. Some of Beijing’s harshest critics are Asian Americans. Uyghur refugees, Hong Kong democrats, Chinese dissidents and Tibetan exiles such as myself, whose communities back home reel under Beijing’s boot, are urging Congress to censure China for its crimes. Asking lawmakers of conscience to hold their tongue on Beijing’s genocide to supposedly prevent racial violence here is to set up a false trade-off between Asian American safety and Uyghur lives, both of which should be treated as nonnegotiable.

Moreover, there is no research-based evidence that American lawmakers’ legitimate criticism of Beijing has a causal effect on violence against Asians. In fact, Washington’s political rhetoric has been rising steadily over the past half decade, during which Beijing built the Uyghur internment camps, demolished Hong Kong’s democracy and chipped away at the liberal international order. Anti-Asian attacks remained rare during this whole period, soaring only when the pandemic hit. If China had contained covid-19 within its borders, or if the United States had succeeded in keeping it out, no amount of congressional criticism against Beijing would have made us afraid to ride the subway at night.

#### Perm do both---we are anti-CCP not anti-Asian.

Josh Rogin 21. Columnist covering foreign policy and national security. George Washington University, BA in International Affairs 2001; Sophia University, Tokyo "Opinion: The United States must confront the Chinese Communist Party and racism at the same time". Washington Post. 3-25-2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/the-united-states-must-confront-the-chinese-communist-party-and-racism-at-the-same-time/2021/03/25/63fe8308-8d9c-11eb-9423-04079921c915\_story.html

The United States must compete with China and confront the Chinese government on a range of issues while simultaneously combating the rise of anti-Asian racism at home. These two missions are not at odds with each other, as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) would have you believe. In fact, they must go hand in hand.

In Alaska last weekend, Chinese government leaders sought to stoke our country’s racial divisions, accusing the United States of having “slaughtered” African Americans, to deflect criticism over Beijing’s mass atrocities against its Uyghur Muslim population. Meanwhile, CCP propaganda outlets have been using the killing last week in the Atlanta area of eight innocent people (six of them Asian) to cast aspersions on those who are condemning the Chinese government’s atrocities. Beijing’s goal is to conflate and confuse two related but distinct issues: challenging the Chinese government and the need to fight racism in the United States. But their gambit amounts to presenting a false choice between doing one or the other.

“It is part of a broader strategy that the Chinese Communist Party is enacting to undermine our democracy,” Rep. Stephanie Murphy (D-Fla.) told me in an interview. “So when you see them creating that false equivalency . . . it is their way to sow discord in our society, because they understand when we are not united, we are weaker in leading the world in confronting their bad behavior.”

Murphy, a former Pentagon official who came to the United States as a child refugee from Vietnam, said that the use of racist language by former president Donald Trump and other GOP officials plays into the CCP’s hands. Yet at the same she emphasized that U.S. leaders have to be able to speak honestly and critically about the CCP’s negative behaviors, including its mishandling of the covid-19 pandemic.

The rise of racism against Asian Americans not only hurts the United States’ ability to deal with China, but also it harms efforts to make common cause with our regional allies and partners such as Japan, South Korea and Vietnam. Those governments’ ability to join the United States in confronting China is hurt when members of their diaspora communities are mistreated in the United States.

“We have to be able to make a very clear distinction that our adversary and competitor is the Chinese Communist Party, not the Chinese people, and certainly not the Asian Americans who live here and who have contributed so much to this country,” Murphy said. “When we attack Americans of Asian descent, we attack ourselves.”

Some American commentators argue that the effort to confront the Chinese government’s behavior has fueled the staggering rise in hate and violence directed at Asians and Asian Americans in the United States. It’s certainly true that Trump’s racist rhetoric regarding the coronavirus fueled hate and conflated the two issues, tragically. And U.S. government efforts to confront CCP influence operations in our country have at times unfairly targeted people of Chinese origins.

Such targeting of Asians and Asian Americans makes us weaker at home and abroad. We must learn from, not repeat, examples from history when U.S. foreign policy negatively affected American minorities, including the mass internment of U.S. citizens and noncitizens of Japanese descent during World War II and the mistreatment of Arab and Muslim Americans after 9/11.

Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.), the son of Indian immigrants, told me that the United States has to out-compete China without replicating the paradigms of the Cold War. But, he said, we must also stand up to the authoritarian and repressive model the Chinese government is putting forward without ceding our moral authority.

“That has to be the balance, enhance America’s strategic interest but clearly reject provocative rhetoric that’s intended to play to a base,” he said. “There’s a way to frame our moral position as a liberal democracy . . . without coming off as demonizing an entire civilization in a way that hurts Chinese or Chinese Americans.”

Khanna and Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.) have co-sponsored a bill, the Endless Frontier Act, to revamp the National Science Foundation to try to out-compete China through technological innovation. Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Sen. Todd C. Young (R-Ind.) are cooperating on companion legislation in the Senate. These efforts will be a major test of whether bipartisan cooperation on the China challenge is possible.

It’s not the drive to confront China that is fueling hate and racism against Asians in America. Political opportunists are abusing that effort by fueling bigotry to score political points. This makes a unified strategy to confront the Chinese government only more difficult to achieve. In fact, addressing racism at home is crucial to winning the competition with China in the long run.

“We have to be aggressive in our policies and working with our allies to combat the violations the Chinese are making, but at the same time, we can hold the CCP accountable without scapegoating Asian Americans,” Murphy said. “And we have a responsibility to do that.”

#### No offense---assuming rational actors is good---IR is reflexive and effective---its track record of prediction proves

Dan Reiter 15. Professor of Political Science at Emory University. “Scholars Help Policymakers Know Their Tools.” War on the Rocks. 8-27-2015. <https://warontherocks.com/2015/08/scholars-help-policymakers-know-their-tools/>

This critique is both narrowly true and narrow in perspective. Context is of course important, but foreign policy choices are not sui generis, there are patterns across space and time that inform decision-making. Policymakers recognize this and routinely draw lessons from history when making foreign policy decisions. As noted below, policymakers in other areas such as development and public health routinely rely on broader, more general studies to craft policy. And, broader scholarship can improve foreign policy performance, as evidenced by the ability of IR academics to build on their own work to predict outcomes, including for example forecasting the lengths of the conventional and insurgency phases of the U.S.–Iraq conflict in the 2000s.

But, even if one were to accept the limits of general work, there is a growing body of academic work that evaluates foreign policy tools as applied to a specific country or region. These studies ask questions such as whether:

Development projects reduced insurgent violence in Afghanistan; Drone strikes reduced insurgent violence in Pakistan; Development programs increased civic participation and social capital in Sudan; Building cell phone towers in Iraq reduced insurgent violence; Attempts to reintegrate combatants into society in Burundi succeeded; Security sector reform in Liberia increased the legitimacy of the government there; Road projects in India reduced insurgent violence; We can understand peacekeeping’s failure in Congo; Israel’s targeted assassinations reduced violent attacks from militants.

This is not by any means a dismissal of professional intelligence work. Academics are not intelligence analysts: They do not have access to contemporary intelligence data, nor are they generally trained to do things like examine the latest satellite photos of North Korean nuclear activities and make judgments about North Korea’s current plutonium production. And certainly, academic IR work can never replace professional intelligence work. But the best policy decisions marry timely, specific intelligence with academic work that has a more general perspective.

A third critique is that much of this academic work on foreign policy tools is unusable by policymakers because it is too quantitative and technically complex. Here, echoing a point made by Erik Voeten, there is a danger in not appreciating the importance of rigorous research design, including sophisticated quantitative techniques, for crafting effective policy. Sophisticated research design is not the enemy of effective policy, it is critically necessary for it. Certainly, the current academic focus on building research designs that permit causal inference speaks exactly to what policymakers care about the most: if implementing a certain policy will cause the desired outcome.

Or, put differently, bad research designs make for bad public policy. A classic example is school busing. In the 1960s and early 1970s, some cities adopted voluntary integration programs for public schools, in which families could volunteer to bus their children to schools in neighborhoods with different racial majorities. Policymakers used the favorable results for the voluntary programs to make the improper inference that mandatory busing policies would also work. The result was bad public policy and violence in the streets.

Sophisticated technical methods can improve our ability to make causal inferences, and can help solve other empirical problems. Consider that the heart of successful counterinsurgency is, according to U.S. military doctrine, winning the support of the population. Assessing whether certain policies do win public support requires collecting opinion data. A conventional method for measuring popular opinion is the survey, but of course, individuals in insurgency-stricken areas may be unwilling to reveal their true opinions to a survey-taker out of fear for their personal safety. Methodologists have crafted sophisticated techniques for addressing this issue, improving our ability to measure public support for the government in these areas. These techniques have been used to assess better the determinants of public support in insurgency-affected countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India.

Going forward, we will continue to need advanced methodologies to address pressing policy questions. Consider the U.S. military’s commitment to gender integration. The implementation of this commitment will be best informed if it rests on rigorous social science that address outstanding questions. Is there a Sacagawea effect, in which mixed gender units engaged in counterinsurgency are more effective than male-only units? How might mixed gender affect small unit cohesion in combat? How might mixed gender units reduce the incidence of sexual assault, both within the military and of assault committed by troops against civilians?

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Critics will argue that some U.S. policymakers remain alienated from contemporary academic IR work, with the suggestion that if IR academics let go of an obsession with technique, they will then be better able to connect with policymakers and help them craft better policy. I agree that IR academics need to find ways to communicate their results in clear, non-technical language. But the technical components of the work need to be there. Stripping them out directly undermines the ability of the research to give the right kinds of policy recommendations.

Let me conclude by noting that I am sympathetic to the concern that IR academics should think about the big picture as well as smaller questions, the forest of grand strategy as well as the trees of foreign policy tools. IR academics have the potential to make real contributions to big picture debates, to think hard about the essence of grand strategy by assembling a framework that effectively integrates foreign policy means and ends. The nature of the IR subfield and its integration of political economy and security, and its ability to think about structure as well as units, make it especially well positioned to consider these broad questions. The ability of IR academics to contribute to contemporary foreign policy debates is one of many reasons why political science should retain the subfield of IR and resist the temptation to replace the traditional empirical subfields of IR, comparative, and American with new subfields of conflict, political economy, behavior, and institutions.

Like good carpenters, foreign policymakers need to know their tools. Rigorous IR research is the only way to evaluate them effectively.

#### Attempting IR predictions about China is both possible and desirable---even if inaccurate---because giving up on bounding assessment of threats results in security dilemmas

Joseph K. **Clifton 11**, Claremont McKenna College, “Disputed Theory and Security Policy: Responding to the "Rise of China”,” 4-25-2011, http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1164&context=cmc\_theses

First, motives can be known. Mearsheimer is correct in observing that assessing motives can be difficult, but this does not mean that the task is impossible. There clearly are ways of finding out information about the goals of states and the means with which they plan to achieve them. One of the most important roles of intelligence analysts, for example, is to determine state interests and expected behavior based on obtained information. The possibility that information may be flawed should not lead to a rejection of all information. People make decisions based on less than perfect knowledge all of the time. This ability to know motives extends to future motives, because an analyst can use information such as historical trends to observe consistencies or constant evolutions of motives. Prediction of the future is necessarily less certain in its accuracy, but the prediction can still be made.104 Second, even if there is still some uncertainty of motives, the rational response is not to assume absolute aggression. Assuming aggressive motive in a situation of uncertainty ignites the security dilemma, which could actually decrease a state’s security. Mearsheimer calls this tragic, but it is not necessary. An illustrative example is Mearsheimer’s analysis of the German security situation were the United States to withdraw its military protection. Mearsheimer argues that it would be rational for Germany to develop nuclear weapons, since these weapons would provide a deterrent, and it would also be rational for nuclear European powers to wage a preemptive war against Germany to prevent it from developing a nuclear deterrent. 105 This scenario is not rational for either side because it ignores motives. If Germany knows that other states will attack if it were to develop nuclear weapons, then it would not be rational for it to develop nuclear weapons. And if other states know that Germany’s development of nuclear weapons is only as a deterrent, then it would not be rational to prevent German nuclear development. The point is that the security dilemma exists because of a lack of motivational knowledge, so the proper response is to try to enhance understanding of motives, not discard motivational knowledge altogether. Misperception is certainly a problem in international politics, but reducing misperception would allow states to better conform to defensive realist logic, which results in preferable outcomes relative to offensive realism. 106 Assessing motives is vital in the case of the rise of China, because mutually preferable outcomes can be achieved if China is not an aggressive power, as offensive realism would have to assume, but is actually a status quo power with aims that have limited effect on the security of the U.S. and other potentially affected countries. I do not mean here to claim with certainty that China is and will always be a status quo power, and policymakers likely have access to more intentional information than what is publicly known. At the very least, valuing motivational assessments empowers policymakers to act on this knowledge, which is preferable because of the possibility of reducing competition and conflict.

#### Pragmatism DA---the alt doesn’t solve institutions of capital, doesn’t reconcile political reality, and has no alternative explanation for understanding the world.

Lois McNay, 2017. Professor of Theory of Politics and Fellow, Somerville College, University of Oxford. “Critical Exchange: Democracy, critique and the ontological turn.” *Contemporary Political Theory* 16.4 501-531.

It is commonplace to observe that political theorising of all kinds necessarily rests on ontological presuppositions in so far as to say anything of normative significance about the world, the theorist cannot avoid making certain simplifying assumptions about its basic nature and the constitutive features of social being. For the most part, these animating assumptions form the unarticulated backdrop to any given political paradigm but, in moments of theoretical challenge, they may become objects of intense scrutiny. In the hands of radical democrats, for instance, ontological thinking has been an especially effective tool for challenging dominant views of the world in so far as it exposes the partially theorised or latent foundational assumptions that naturalise a given mode of social being. Feminist and critical race theorists for example have repeatedly used an intellectual counter-strategy akin to what Sandra Bartky (1977) calls ‘ontological shock’, to contest the complacencies of liberal thought that flow from its uncritical reliance on a disembodied, disembedded conception of the subject. Likewise, the interest of contemporary radical democrats in ontology pursues a similar counterhegemonic agenda. Here the aim is to reinvigorate the democratic imagination by thinking about the political realm in isolation from other areas of social life in order to identify its quintessential logic. These political ontologies differ from experientially grounded forms of critique in that, rather than expanding accounts of embodied social being, they speculate instead on suppressed, primordial dynamics of indeterminacy (lack or abundance) that form the condition of possibility of social existence itself. The postulation of a foundational ‘undecidability’ exposes the constructed, incomplete character of entrenched social objectivity. Through this subversive denaturalisation – things could be otherwise – a space is cleared for alternative visions of emancipatory political practice (e.g. Mouffe 2013; Glynos and Howarth, 2007). Ontologies of radical contingency are felt, in short, to be an especially effective way of opening up accounts of democracy to the ever-present possibility of progressive social transformation beyond the confines of the neo-liberal imaginary. In this light, then, it is clear that the contemporary preoccupation with political ontology is not an idiosyncratic feature of our current epoch but stands in an established tradition of radical democratic reasoning. This endeavor to define a generative ontological logic has obvious intellectual precedents in the work of thinkers such as Carl Schmitt, Hannah Arendt and Sheldon Wolin, who in different ways sought to rescue political action from what they regarded as a defunct liberalism that had reduced politics to a depoliticized administration of social affairs. The ontological perspective is used by them to reaffirm the status of political action as the paramount site of human freedom and creativity. Today’s ontological thinking picks up many of these concerns but develops them, this time around, in relation to resisting the pathologies of neo-liberal governance. If anything, however, these contemporary formulations are potentially more radical in their entailments for democratic praxis because unlike, say, Arendt, they don’t insist on a rigid separation of properly political concerns from private or social ones. All social relations are, in principle, open to becoming sites of radical contestation and change. But despite its radical inheritance, there is a sense in which the political promise of current thought on ontology has been somewhat thwarted, and, in my view, this is to do with its tendency to lapse into a socially weightless mode of theorising that forecloses a developed account of social power (see McNay, 2014). This social weightlessness manifests itself in a variety of ways – for example, the widespread tendency to model politics on ‘thin’ notions of discourse for example – but is most apparent in the insufficient attention paid by ontological theorists to the patterns and particularities of the lived reality of oppression. In the ‘ontology-first’ approach, the space of experience is invariably interpreted as a symptom of a prior radical contingency and, in being reduced to a secondary phenomenon, is implicitly denied existential depth, complexity and independent significance. The characteristic trope of this ontological reduction upwards is an exaggerated emphasis on the mutable, fluid, agonist elements of embodied social experience and a corresponding underestimation of its entrenched, routinized, negative aspects. This is not to deny that, in some of its dimensions, social being is certainly characterised by a degree of openness but a one-sided emphasis on contingency as a political good in itself is fast becoming what Paipais (2017) terms an ‘ontological orthodoxy’. Put differently, it is important to grasp oppression not simply as a matter of external, material constraint but also as internal psychological constraint; objective structures of inequality are taken into the bodies of individuals and lived as seemingly natural, subjective dispositions. As Bourdieu famously puts it ‘the most personal is the most impersonal… many of the most intimate dramas, the deepest malaises, the most singular suffering that men and women can experience find their roots in the objective contradictions, constraints and double binds inscribed in the structures of the labour and housing markets’. (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 201) What the Bourdieusian formulation makes clear is that attentiveness to the lived reality of oppression does not mean some simple-minded immersion in a supposed phenomenal immediacy, what Norval terms an ‘unmediated’ recourse to ‘experiences of suffering’. Rather, experience is always mediated through power and this requires careful analysis of the generative dynamic between embodied reality and the material and symbolic relations that constitute it: what Bourdieu calls a phenomenology of social space. Moreover, it is precisely the dismissal of thought about the embodied experience of oppression as ‘essentialist’ or ‘miserabilist’ that is problematic in so far as it engenders an unwarranted presumption of agency, that is, that individuals are somehow ready-made, fully willing political actors. What is left out in abstract invocations of agency, qua ontological indeterminacy, is systematic reflection on the social conditions that need to be in place for individuals to become effective political actors in the first place. Unaccompanied by attentiveness to these incarnate, social dynamics, the assertion of radical contingency is ultimately too thin to be politically enlightening. As Ian Shapiro puts it: ‘although everything might in some ultimate sense be contingent … this may be a quite trivial truth. That no building will endure for ever tells us nothing about the relative merits of different kinds of construction…questions about this latter order, in the realm of the relatively enduring, should occupy us’ (Shapiro 1992, p. 14). The bracketing of sociality does not just mean that political ontologies rely on tendentious accounts of agency, but also that they tend to embody a peculiarly self-enclosed and irreflexive mode of theorising. Reflexivity, or the capacity for on-going critical self-scrutiny, is widely held to be an indispensable feature of radical democratic critique if it is to maintain its emancipatory relevance to those oppressed groups who are the principal object of its inquiry. A theory’s ability to scrutinise its own limitations and blind-spots is essential in guarding against the intellectual reification that produces doxastic and potentially exclusionary ways of viewing the world. It necessarily entails therefore building into theory some kind of practical responsiveness to the particularities and changing dynamics of social life. After all, reflexivity involves not merely formal recognition of the ‘other’ but the concerted effort to respond as fully as possible to the destabilising implications that this ‘cross-grained, opaque, unassimilated material’ may have for the inquirer’s previously settled view of the world (Adorno, 1974; see also Bohman, 2008). The problem with ontologically grounded theory is that this important capacity for critical self-reflection is curtailed by its neglect of the dynamics of embodied being. Its suspension of sociality serves to insulate it from precisely the kind of external standpoint that potentially delivers an epistemic ‘shock’ to its frictionless theoretical world-view. Consequently, its arguments are propelled more by the internal, purportedly ‘necessary’ logic of speculative ontology rather than by receptivity to social context. As Prozorov puts it here, political ontology ends up ‘studying its own message’. This epistemological closure blocks crucial questions about the politics of their own mode of inquiry. How do certain theoretical and conceptual schema blunt sensitivity to the lived aspects of oppression? In what ways does a particular scholastic withdrawal from the practical world influence the kind of thinking that is made possible? What kind of methodological self-scrutiny would help to guard against theoretical reification? In short, political ontologies often fail to enact in their own theoretical practice the historicising entailments that flow from their galvanising premise of radical contingency. The premise seems to necessarily imply the adoption of a practical, open-ended and dialogical approach to theoretical reasoning, what might be called praxeological inquiry. Instead, however, ontologically grounded theories too often remain closed, self-perpetuating paradigms or what Wolin (2000) terms ‘theoretic theory’, whose relation to the practical logic and concerns of social life is questionable. For radical democrats then what are the alternatives to political ontology? It seems to me that a power-first rather than ontology-first approach to political theorising continues to be of importance in a world of increasing precariousness, where entrenched structural inequalities are deepening and new vulnerabilities are emerging on a hitherto unthinkable scale. Another way of putting this is that the intellectual agendas of experientially grounded and other types of disclosing critique – feminism, post-colonialism, critical race theory – are still as important as they ever have been. There is no denying, however, that the current political moment appears to be alarmingly bleak and regressive; but it is important for the democratic theorist not to give up hope and succumb to slightly petulant denunciations of the current era as one of anti-politics or post-democracy, as one without progressive political alternatives. Here Foucault’s words are salutary because, confounding a common view of him as a political nihilist, he did not entertain fatalism as a viable theoretical stance. As he put it ‘the task of [political] philosophy is to describe the nature of the present … with the proviso that we do not allow ourselves the facile, rather theatrical declaration that this moment in which we exist is one of total perdition, in the abyss of darkness … it is a time like any other, or rather, a time which is never quite like any other’ (Foucault, 1988, p. 36). It is important not to give up on the present moment as one of political potentiality because, in Foucault’s view, this is one of the enduring lessons of Enlightenment thought for our own era, namely that critique should endeavour to preserve a ‘disposition’ or commitment to uncovering possibilities for progressive change that cannot be forgotten (Foucault, 1988, p. 94). Foucault describes this disposition as ‘practical critique’, one that takes the form of a ‘possible crossing-over’. In places, as we know, he also called it an ontology, a ‘historical ontology’, an ‘ontology of the actual’ that poses the questions ‘What is our present? What is the present field of possible experiences’ (1984, pp. 49–50). But, it is an ontology that seeks to answer such questions, not by identifying the constitutive dynamics of political being, but by scrutinizing settled forms of social existence so as to dislodge their appearance as natural, given and inevitable and reveal their contingency by uncovering the submerged traces of power that accompanied their historical emergence. Put schematically, Foucault ends up in the same place as radical democrats in that he reveals a radical contingency underlying social existence, but he achieves this insight through a directly contrary method, that is, through an interrogation of the logic of sociality rather than its suspension. Foucault’s power-first approach inspires a view of critique as problem – rather than paradigm – driven, attentive to the complex dynamics of social experience and rooted in social theoretical, rather than ontological or philosophical, abstractions. Critique on this view is ‘theorising with practical intent’, praxeological inquiry that operates across different perspectives and has the aim of expanding interpretative and epistemic horizons, thereby opening up new possibilities for thought and action (see Young, 1997, p. 5). This account of critique problematizes the rather grandiose idea that seems to prevail in academia at the moment that the goal of theory should be the formulation of definitive, all-encompassing models of the political, whether they be ontologically, normatively or procedurally framed. It rests instead on an idea of the theorist as participant observer, as engaged social critic whose work, in tandem with activist concerns, chips away at certain problems to produce an account of society that has the practical aim of unmasking domination and contributing to the gradual actualisation of other ways of being. As Foucault puts it,’we must think that what exists is far from filling all possible spaces’ (Foucault, 1989, p. 206).

#### Great power war outweighs intervention---if smaller conflicts are the price to pay to avoid WWIII it’s worth it since only great power war goes nuclear

Hal Brands & Charles N. Edel 19. \*\*Hal Brands, Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies; Resident Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. \*\*Charles Edel, Assistant Professor of strategy and policy at the U.S. Naval War College; CFR International Affairs Fellow. *The Lessons of Tragedy: Statecraft and World Order*. 2019.

Yet the failings and frustrations of U.S. strategy were certainly no greater than those encountered in Vietnam, Korea, or other Cold War episodes, and America’s inevitable post–Cold War travails often **obscured how much U.S. statecraft accomplished.** It was not inevitable that the post–Cold War environment would prove to be as **relatively benign as it was**. Quite the opposite: in the early 1990s, some leading international relations scholars believed that the world was entering a new era of vicious competition and instability. “We will soon miss the Cold War,” John Mearsheimer warned; rampant nuclear proliferation, geopolitical revisionism, and even great-power crises and wars were likely as the end of bipolarity unleashed international demons that had been pent up for forty-five years. Yet for all the ills that afflicted the post-Cold war world—humanitarian crises, regional conflicts, and catastrophic terrorism, among others—**what is highlighted** ~~stands out~~ **is the role of continued American engagement in keeping the more positive trends going and stifling the sources of greater geopolitical upheaval.** As William Wohlforth has noted, **American primacy and activism acted as a** **powerful deterrent to great-power conflict** by creating enormous disincentives for Russia, China, or other actors to incur the “focused enmity” of the United States. The persistence and even extension of the U.S. security blanket **smothered potential instability** in unsettled regions such as Eastern Europe, while removing any possibility of German or Japanese revanchism—a prospect much feared in the early 1990s—by keeping those countries tightly lashed to Washington. American intervention **helped extinguish bloody conflicts in the Balkans before they could spread to neighboring countries**; U.S. diplomatic and military pressure kept aggressive tyrannies such as Iraq, Iran, and North Korea bottled up and **helped slow the spread of nuclear weapons**. U.S. support helped democratic forces **triumph in countries from Haiti to Poland,** as the number of democracies rose from 76 in 1990 to 120 in 2000; America crucially assisted the advance of globalization and the broad prosperity that came with it by promoting pro-market policies and providing the necessary climate of reassurance and stability.

#### IR is reflexive and effective---its track record of prediction proves. AND, sweeping criticisms of a fragmented field of research don’t answer the specificity of our studies.

Dan Reiter 15. Professor of Political Science at Emory University. “Scholars Help Policymakers Know Their Tools.” War on the Rocks. 8-27-2015. <https://warontherocks.com/2015/08/scholars-help-policymakers-know-their-tools/>

This critique is both narrowly true and narrow in perspective. Context is of course important, but foreign policy choices are not sui generis, there are patterns across space and time that inform decision-making. Policymakers recognize this and routinely draw lessons from history when making foreign policy decisions. As noted below, policymakers in other areas such as development and public health routinely rely on broader, more general studies to craft policy. And, broader scholarship can improve foreign policy performance, as evidenced by the ability of IR academics to build on their own work to predict outcomes, including for example forecasting the lengths of the conventional and insurgency phases of the U.S.–Iraq conflict in the 2000s.

But, even if one were to accept the limits of general work, there is a growing body of academic work that evaluates foreign policy tools as applied to a specific country or region. These studies ask questions such as whether:

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Like good carpenters, foreign policymakers need to know their tools. Rigorous IR research is the only way to evaluate them effectively.

## 1AR

### Advantage---Growth

#### No boom & bust

Tobias Adrian 17. Financial Counsellor and Director, Monetary and Capital Markets Department, IMF; previous Senior Vice President, Federal Reserve Bank of New York and Associate Director of the Research and Statistics Group; PhD, Economics, MIT. “Assessing Global Financial Stability.” Presentation at the London School of Economics. October 27. <http://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2017/10/27/sp-102717-assessing-global-financial-stability>.

There are good news: near-term financial stability risks are lower, driven by a decline in macroeconomic and emerging market risks.

As outlined in the IMF’s most recent World Economic Outlook, the upswing in global activity has gained further steam, with global growth projected to rise to 3.6 percent in 2017 and 3.7 percent in 2018—in both cases 0.1 percentage point above our previous forecasts, and well above the global growth rate of 3.2 percent in 2016. This is laying hopes for a sustained recovery and should allow for the eventual normalization of monetary policies.

The core of the global financial system is stronger. Systemically important banks and insurers continue to enhance their resilience by raising capital and liquidity, addressing legacy issues, and adapting their business models to the evolving regulatory and market environment.

In emerging markets, capital flows are rebounding, driven in part by stronger fundamentals. Portfolio inflows to emerging market economies are on track to reach $285 billion in 2017, more than twice the total over the past two years. The cost of financing is low, and their currencies and equity prices have strongly appreciated this year.

Globally, supportive monetary and financial conditions and buoyant financial markets have helped foster growth and repair balance sheets.

### K

#### Alt is worse

Fitzsimmons, 7 – Ph.D. in international security policy from the University of Maryland, Adjunct Professor of Public Policy, analyst in the Strategy, Forces, and Resources Division at the Institute for Defense Analyses (Michael, “The Problem of Uncertainty in Strategic Planning”, Survival, Winter 06/07)

In defence of prediction Uncertainty is not a new phenomenon for strategists. Clausewitz knew that ‘many intelligence reports in war are contradictory; even more are false, and most are uncertain’. In coping with uncertainty, he believed that ‘what one can reasonably ask of an officer is that he should possess a standard of judgment, which he can gain only from knowledge of men and affairs and from common sense. He should be guided by the laws of probability.’34 Granted, one can certainly allow for epistemological debates about the best ways of gaining ‘a standard of judgment’ from ‘knowledge of men and affairs and from common sense’. Scientific inquiry into the ‘laws of probability’ for any given strate- gic question may not always be possible or appropriate. Certainly, analysis cannot and should not be presumed to trump the intuition of decision-makers. Nevertheless, Clausewitz’s implication seems to be that the burden of proof in any debates about planning should belong to the decision-maker who rejects formal analysis, standards of evidence and probabilistic reasoning. Ultimately, though, the value of prediction in strategic planning does not rest primarily in getting the correct answer, or even in the more feasible objective of bounding the range of correct answers. Rather, prediction requires decision-makers to expose, not only to others but to themselves, the beliefs they hold regarding why a given event is likely or unlikely and why it would be important or unimportant. Richard Neustadt and Ernest May highlight this useful property of probabilistic reasoning in their renowned study of the use of history in decision-making, Thinking in Time. In discussing the importance of probing presumptions, they contend: The need is for tests prompting questions, for sharp, straightforward mechanisms the decision makers and their aides might readily recall and use to dig into their own and each others’ presumptions. And they need tests that get at basics somewhat by indirection, not by frontal inquiry: not ‘what is your inferred causation, General?’ Above all, not, ‘what are your values, Mr. Secretary?’ ... If someone says ‘a fair chance’ ... ask, ‘if you were a betting man or woman, what odds would you put on that?’ If others are present, ask the same of each, and of yourself, too. Then probe the differences: why? This is tantamount to seeking and then arguing assumptions underlying different numbers placed on a subjective probability assessment. We know of no better way to force clarification of meanings while exposing hidden differences ... Once differing odds have been quoted, the question ‘why?’ can follow any number of tracks. Argument may pit common sense against common sense or analogy against analogy. What is important is that the expert’s basis for linking ‘if’ with ‘then’ gets exposed to the hearing of other experts before the lay official has to say yes or no.’35 There are at least three critical and related benefits of prediction in strate- gic planning. The first reflects Neustadt and May’s point – prediction enforces a certain level of discipline in making explicit the assumptions, key variables and implied causal relationships that constitute decision-makers’ beliefs and that might otherwise remain implicit. Imagine, for example, if Shinseki and Wolfowitz had been made to assign probabilities to their opposing expectations regarding post-war Iraq. Not only would they have had to work harder to justify their views, they might have seen more clearly the substantial chance that they were wrong and had to make greater efforts in their planning to prepare for that contingency. Secondly, the very process of making the relevant factors of a decision explicit provides a firm, or at least transparent, basis for making choices. Alternative courses of action can be compared and assessed in like terms. Third, the transparency and discipline of the process of arriving at the initial strategy should heighten the decision-maker’s sensitivity toward changes in the environment that would suggest the need for adjustments to that strategy. In this way, prediction enhances rather than under-mines strategic flexibility. This defence of prediction does not imply that great stakes should be gambled on narrow, singular predictions of the future. On the contrary, the central problem of uncertainty in plan- ning remains that any given prediction may simply be wrong. Preparations for those eventualities must be made. Indeed, in many cases, relatively unlikely outcomes could be enormously consequential, and therefore merit extensive preparation and investment. In order to navigate this complexity, strategists must return to the dis- tinction between uncertainty and risk. While the complexity of the international security environment may make it somewhat resistant to the type of probabilistic thinking associated with risk, a risk-oriented approach seems to be the only viable model for national-security strategic planning. The alternative approach, which categorically denies prediction, precludes strategy. As Betts argues, Any assumption that some knowledge, whether intuitive or explicitly formalized, provides guidance about what should be done is a presumption that there is reason to believe the choice will produce a satisfactory outcome – that is, it is a prediction, however rough it may be. If there is no hope of discerning and manipulating causes to produce intended effects, analysts as well as politicians and generals should all quit and go fishing.36 Unless they are willing to quit and go fishing, then, strategists must sharpen their tools of risk assessment. Risk assessment comes in many varieties, but identification of two key parameters is common to all of them: the consequences of a harmful event or condition; and the likelihood of that harmful event or condition occurring. With no perspective on likelihood, a strategist can have no firm perspective on risk. With no firm perspective on risk, strategists cannot purposefully discriminate among alternative choices. Without purposeful choice, there is no strategy. One of the most widely read books in recent years on the complicated relation- ship between strategy and uncertainty is Peter Schwartz’s work on scenario-based planning, The Art of the Long View. Schwartz warns against the hazards faced by leaders who have deterministic habits of mind, or who deny the difficult implications of uncertainty for strategic planning. To overcome such tenden- cies, he advocates the use of alternative future scenarios for the purposes of examining alternative strategies. His view of scenarios is that their goal is not to predict the future, but to sensitise leaders to the highly contingent nature of their decision-making.37 This philosophy has taken root in the strategic-planning processes in the Pentagon and other parts of the US government, and properly so. Examination of alternative futures and the potential effects of surprise on current plans is essential. Appreciation of uncertainty also has a number of organisational impli- cations, many of which the national-security establishment is trying to take to heart, such as encouraging multidisciplinary study and training, enhancing information sharing, rewarding innovation, and placing a premium on speed and versatility. The arguments advanced here seek to take nothing away from these imperatives of planning and operating in an uncertain environment. But appreciation of uncertainty carries hazards of its own. Questioning assumptions is critical, but assumptions must be made in the end. Clausewitz’s ‘standard of judgment’ for discriminating among alternatives must be applied. Creative, unbounded speculation must resolve to choice or else there will be no strategy. Recent history suggests that unchecked scepticism regarding the validity of prediction can marginalise analysis, trade significant cost for ambig- uous benefit, empower parochial interests in decision-making, and undermine flexibility. Accordingly, having fully recognised the need to broaden their strategic-planning aperture, national-security policymakers would do well now to reinvigorate their efforts in the messy but indispensable business of predicting the future.

#### Realism is the only way to understand China’s rise---idealism about world politics leads to failed feel-good fixes that make great power war more likely.

Stephen M. Walt 18. Robert and Renée Belfer professor of international relations at Harvard University. “The World Wants You to Think Like a Realist.” Foreign Policy. https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/30/the-world-wants-you-to-think-like-a-realist/

Realism has a long history and many variants, but its core rests on a straightforward set of ideas. As the name implies, realism tries to explain world politics as they really are, rather than describe how they ought to be. For realists, power is the centerpiece of political life: Although other factors sometimes play a role, the key to understanding politics lies in focusing on who has power and what they are doing with it. The Athenians’ infamous warning to the Melians captures this perfectly: “The strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must.” Quentin Tarantino couldn’t have put it any better.

For realists, states are the key actors in the international system. There is no central authority that can protect states from one another, so each state must rely upon its own resources and strategies to survive. Security is a perennial concern — even for powerful states — and states tend to worry a lot about who is weaker or stronger and what power trends appear to be. Cooperation is far from impossible in such a world — indeed, at times cooperating with others is essential to survival — but it is always somewhat fragile. Realists maintain that states will react to threats first by trying to “pass the buck” (i.e., getting someone else to deal with the emerging danger), and if that fails, they will try to balance against the threat, either by seeking allies or by building up their own capabilities.

Realism isn’t the only way to think about international affairs, of course, and there are a number of alternative perspectives and theories that can help us understand different aspects of the modern world. But if you do think like a realist — at least part of the time — many confusing aspects of world politics become easier to understand.

If you think like a realist, for example, you’ll understand why China’s rise is a critical event and likely to be a source of conflict with the United States (and others). In a world where states have to protect themselves, the two most powerful states will eye each other warily and compete to make sure that they don’t fall behind or become dangerously vulnerable to the other. Even when war is avoided, intense security competition is likely to result.

And by the way, thinking like a realist helps you understand why China is no longer committed to Deng Xiaoping’s policy of “peaceful rise.” That approach made sense when China was weaker, and it fooled plenty of Westerners into thinking China could be inveigled into being a responsible stakeholder that would meekly embrace various institutions and arrangements created by others back when China was weak. But realists understand that a more powerful China would eventually want to modify any features that were not in China’s interest, as Beijing has begun to do in recent years. Bottom line: Thinking like a realist is essential if you want to understand Sino-American relations.

If you think like a realist, you wouldn’t be surprised that the United States has repeatedly used military force in distant lands over the past 25 years and especially after 9/11. Why? For one simple reason: Nobody could prevent it. Americans were also convinced their global role was indispensable and that they had the right, the responsibility, and the wisdom to interfere all over the world. But America’s dominant position was the permissive condition that made this overweening ambition seem feasible, at least for a while. As Kenneth Waltz warned way back in 1993: “One may hope that America’s internal preoccupations will produce not an isolationist policy, which has become impossible, but a forbearance that will give other countries at long last the chance to deal with their own problems and make their own mistakes. But I would not bet on it.” Good realist that he was, Waltz understood that the “vice to which great powers easily succumb in a multipolar world is inattention; in a bipolar world, overreaction; in a unipolar world, overextension.” And that’s precisely what happened.

If you think like a realist, the crisis in Ukraine looks rather different than the typical Western version of events. Western accounts typically blame Putin for most of the trouble, but realists understand that major powers are always sensitive about their borders and are likely to react defensively if other great powers start encroaching on these regions. Ever heard of the Monroe Doctrine? In the case of Ukraine, the United States and its European allies had been expanding NATO steadily eastward (violating pledges made to Soviet leaders when Germany reunified) and ignoring repeated warnings from Moscow. By 2013, the United States and European Union were making a concerted effort to pull Ukraine into closer alignment with the West and openly interfering in Ukraine’s domestic political processes. Because the Obama administration did not think like realists, however, it was blindsided when Putin seized Crimea and derailed the EU/U.S. effort. Putin’s response was neither legal nor legitimate nor admirable, but it wasn’t surprising either. It is equally unsurprising that these events alarmed the Europeans and prompted NATO to shore up its defenses in Eastern Europe, precisely as a realist would expect.

Thinking like a realist can also help you understand why the EU is in trouble. The entire EU project was designed to transcend nationalism and subordinate state interests within broader supranational institutions. Its architects hoped the separate national identities and interests that had torn Europe apart repeatedly would fade over time and a broad pan-European identity would supplant them. European unity was facilitated by the Cold War because the Soviet threat gave Western Europe ample incentive to cooperate, gave the Soviets’ Eastern European satellites an ideal to aspire to, and kept the “American pacifier” on the continent. But once the Cold War was over, nationalism returned with a vengeance and especially after the euro crisis hit. Suddenly, populations wanted their elected officials not to save Europe but to save them. Despite herculean efforts by a number of European leaders and EU officials, these centrifugal tendencies seem to be getting worse, as the Brexit decision, the recent elections in Italy, and the resurgent nationalism in Poland and Hungary all attest. Those who hoped that European integration would prove irreversible have trouble understanding how their noble experiment went awry, but realists don’t.

If you think like a realist, you might not be quite so outraged by the support that Iran and Syria gave the anti-American insurgency in Iraq after 2003. You might not like it, but you wouldn’t find their conduct surprising. Their response was classic balance of power behavior because the United States had just overthrown Saddam Hussein and the Bush administration had made it clear that Syria and Iran were next on its hit list. It made good strategic sense for Damascus and Tehran to do whatever they could to keep the United States bogged down in Iraq so that Washington couldn’t reload the shotgun and come after them. Americans have every reason to be upset by what these states did, but if more U.S. officials thought like realists, they would have expected it from the get-go.

And if you think like a realist, it is obvious why North Korea has gone to enormous lengths to acquire a nuclear deterrent and obvious why a country such as Iran was interested in becoming a latent nuclear weapons state as well. These states were deeply at odds with the world’s most powerful country, and prominent U.S. officials kept saying that the only solution was to topple these regimes and replace them with leaders more to their liking. Never mind that regime change rarely works as intended; the more important point is that any government facing a threat like that is going to try to protect itself. Nuclear weapons aren’t good for blackmail or conquest, but they are a very effective way to deter more powerful states from trying to overthrow you with military force. And you’d think Americans would understand this, given that the U.S. government thinks it needs thousands of nuclear weapons in order to be secure, despite its favorable geographic position and overwhelming conventional superiority. If U.S. leaders think like that, is it any wonder that some weaker and more vulnerable powers conclude that having a few nukes might make them more secure? And is it so surprising that they might be reluctant to give them up in exchange for assurances or promises that might easily be reversed or withdrawn? Someone really should explain this logic to John Bolton.

Thinking like a realist also helps you understand why states with radically different political systems often act in surprisingly similar ways. To take an obvious example, the United States and Soviet Union could not have been more different in terms of their domestic orders, but their international behavior was much the same. Each led vast alliance networks, toppled governments they didn’t like, assassinated a number of foreign leaders, built tens of thousand of nuclear weapons (deployed on missiles, bombers, and submarines), intervened in far-flung lands, tried to convert other societies to their preferred ideology, and did what they could to bring the other down without blowing up the world. Why did they behave in such similar fashion? Because in an anarchic world, each had little choice but to compete with the other, lest it fall behind and become vulnerable to the other’s predations.

Last but not least, if you think like a realist, you’re likely to be skeptical about the ambitious schemes that idealists keep dreaming up to bring an end to conflict, injustice, inequality, and other bad things. Striving to build a safer and more peaceful world is admirable, but realism reminds us that the ambitious efforts to remake world politics always create unintended consequences and rarely deliver the promised results. It also reminds that even allies fear unchecked power and will have misgivings whenever the United States tries to run the world. If you think like a realist, in short, you are more likely to act with a degree of prudence, and you’ll be less likely to see opponents as purely evil (or see one’s own country as wholly virtuous) and less likely to embark on open-ended moral crusades. Ironically, if more people thought like realists, the prospects for peace would go up.