# 1ac

## 1AC – Plan

#### The United States federal government should substantially increase its prohibitions on anticompetitive business practices by the private sector by at least expanding the scope of its core antitrust laws to prohibit private defense contracting

## 1AC – Empire

#### The Advantage is empire.

#### Public oversight of American empire is an endangered species. The expanding influence of the military-industrial complex gives empire free reign to militarize every aspect of society.

Hartung and Smithberger, 21—director of the Arms and Security Project at the Center for International Policy AND director of the Center for Defense Information at the Project On Government Oversight (Billy and Mandy, “How the National Security State Has Come to Dominate a “Civilian” Government,” <https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/01/29/how-the-national-security-state-has-come-to-dominate-a-civilian-government/>, dml)

At a time of acute concern about the health of our democracy, any such rethinking must, among other things, focus on strengthening the authority of civilians and civilian institutions over the military in an American world where almost the only subject the two parties in Congress can agree on is putting up ever more money for the Pentagon. This means so many in our political system need to wean themselves from the counterproductive habit of reflexively seeking out military or retired military voices to validate them on issues ranging from public health to border security that should be quite outside the military’s purview.

It’s certainly one of the stranger phenomena of our era: after 20 years of endless war in which trillions of dollars were spent and hundreds of thousands died on all sides without the U.S. military achieving anything approaching victory, the Pentagon continues to be funded at staggering levels, while funding to deal with the greatest threats to our safety and “national security” — from the pandemic to climate change to white supremacy — proves woefully inadequate. In good times and bad, the U.S. military and the “industrial complex” that surrounds it, which President Dwight D. Eisenhower first warned us about in 1961, continue to maintain a central role in Washington, even though they’re remarkably irrelevant to the biggest challenges facing our democracy.

These days, it’s completely normal for military and defense officials to weigh in endlessly on what once would have been civilian matters. As the Biden years begin, it’s time to give some serious thought to how to demilitarize our democracy.

Unfortunately, in the America of 2021, the short-term benefit of relying on the widely accepted credibility of military figures to promote policies of every sort is obvious indeed. Who in the political class in the nation’s capital wouldn’t want a stamp of approval from dozens of generals, active or retired, endorsing their favorite initiative or candidate? (It’s something in years past the authors of this piece have been guilty of as well.) As it happens, though, such approval comes at a high price, undermining as it does the authority of civilian officials and agencies, while skewing resources toward the Pentagon that should be invested elsewhere to keep us truly safe.

It’s an essential attribute of the American system that the military remains under civilian authority. These days, however, given the number of current or retired military officers who have become key arbiters of what we should do on a dizzying array of critical issues, civilian control is the policy equivalent of an endangered species.

In the last election season, long before the attack on the Capitol, there was already an intense national discussion about how to prevent violence at the polls, a conversation that all too quickly (and disturbingly) focused on what role the military should play in the process. General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was repeatedly asked to provide assurances that it would have no role in determining the outcome of the election, something that in another America would have been a given.

Meanwhile, some actually sought more military involvement. For example, in a widely debated “open letter” to Milley, retired Army officers John Nagl and Paul Yingling stated that “if Donald Trump refuses to leave office at the expiration of his constitutional term, the United States military must remove him by force, and you must give that order.” Proposals of this sort undermine the integrity of the many lawsCongress and the states have put in place to prevent the military or armed vigilantes from playing any role in the electoral process.

Similarly, both former President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden have identified the military as a key future player in distributing the Covid-19 vaccine, something that could and should be handled by public-health institutions, if only they, like the Pentagon, had adequate resources.

The Military Knows Best?

During and after the attack on the Capitol, officials from the military and national security worlds were given pride of place in discussions about the future of our democracy. Their opinions were sought out by the media and others on a wide range of issues that fell well outside their primary areas of expertise. A letter from 10 former secretaries of defense calling on the Republican caucus to respect the results of the election was given headline attention, while political figures pressed to have retired military officers involved in the January 6th assault tried in military, not civilian, courts.

Before pursuing the second impeachment of Donald Trump, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi typically turned to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs (who isn’t even in the civilian chain of command) to seek assurance that he could stop the president from starting a last-minute nuclear war. And none of this was faintly unusual, given that retired military officers have regularly been asked to weigh in on subjects as varied as abortion rights, climate change, and childhood obesity. It’s not, of course, that such figures shouldn’t be able, like anyone else, to offer their opinions or support on matters of public health and safety, but that their voices shouldn’t matter more than those of public-health experts, scientists, medical professionals, or other civilians.

Despite its failure to win a war in decades, the military remains one of America’s most respected institutions, getting the kind of appreciation that generally doesn’t extend to other more successful public servants. After almost 20 years of forever wars, it’s hard, at this point, to accept that the military’s reputation for wisdom is deserved. In fact, continually relying on retired generals and other present or former national security officials as validators effectively erodes the credibility of, and the public’s trust in, other institutions that are meant to keep us healthy and safe.

In the Covid-19 moment, it should be clear that relying on narrowly defined notions of national security harms our democracy, a subject that none of those military or former military figures are likely to deal with. In addition, in all too many cases, current and retired military officials have abused the public trust in ways that call into question their right to serve as judges of what’s important, or even to imagine that they could provide objective advice. For one thing, a striking number of high-ranking officers on leaving the military pass through the infamous revolving door of the military-industrial complex into positions as executives, lobbyists, board members, or consultants for the defense industry. They work on behalf of firms like Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and General Dynamics that receive a combined $100 billion annually in Pentagon contracts with little accountability, even as they remain key go-to media figures.

They then use their former rank and the prestige attached to it to lobby Congress and influence the media on the need for endless wars and an ever-increasing military budget to support major weapons programs like Lockheed Martin’s troubled F-35 Joint Strike Fighter — all without bothering to disclose that they stand to gain financially from the positions they’re taking. And the prospect of a big, fat salary in the weapons sector upon retirement also exerts an unhealthy influence on officers still serving in the military who are often loath to anger, or in any way alienate, their potential future employers.

This revolving-door phenomenon is widespread. A study by the Project on Government Oversight found that, in 2018 alone, there were 645 cases in which the top 20 defense contractors hired former government officials, military officers, members of Congress, and senior congressional legislative staff as lobbyists, board members, or executives. This should hardly inspire public trust in their opinions.

#### The absence of military accountability has generated a culture of liberal militarism, where the public uncritically accepts the legitimacy of imperial intervention as a method of spreading democratic values—the impact is constant everywhere war. Making the public politically and financially responsible for the military can disentangle imperialism from American culture.

Blachford, 20—Lecturer of International Relations, Baltic Defence College (Kevin, “Liberal militarism and republican restraints on power: the problems of unaccountable interventions for American democracy,” Critical Military Studies, October 26, 2020, dml)

The War on Terror and its associated conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya are intertwined with a belief in American primacy and that the best defence of US values and interests is the use of force in power projection. As critics have noted, American foreign policy discourse is ‘entrenched’ with the idea that overseas power projection is necessary for US security (Porter 2018a) to guard against the threats arising from ‘ungoverned space’ (McCormack 2018). As the following explores, this has developed into a form of liberal militarism whereby war is used on the basis of moral principle and belief in universal values (Wood 2007, 422). An ideology of an American liberal order has therefore reinforced the use of imperial violence as the US has consistently sought to use military force ‘outside’ the zone of a democratic peace.

The liberal-democratic peace narrative celebrates a vision of interdependence and integration among advanced Western capitalist democracies. This zone of peace is then contrasted to a zone of anarchy, that features anti-liberal chaos or tyranny (Debrix 2012, 395). Or what Thomas Friedman (2003) described as a zone of order and a ‘zone of disorder’. Contemporary security debates have therefore become dominated by a discourse of failed states, rogue regimes, new wars, criminality and disorder (Stavrianakis and Selby 2013, 7–8). This discourse has created a shift in the focus of elites away from traditional security concerns to areas considered problematic or lacking in liberal order. The result has been an ‘everywhere war’ (Gregory 2011) as the US follows a global civilizing mission (Mabee 2016). This creates an unrealistic view of the world as a ‘global village’ in which distance is no longer a barrier and the US must respond to every threat with military force (Porter 2015). The need to instal liberal order as a means to secure the global village can therefore be seen as leading to the rise of a form of liberal militarism within American foreign policy (Bacevich 2005, 2008a; Stavrianakis and Selby 2013).

Installing liberal order and the securitization of the global village rests on constant small deployments and the use of military force. The US has become increasingly reliant on small scale military interventions in conducting defence diplomacy, such as training and assistance missions, the transfer of arms and missions for capacity building with allies (Barkawi 2011b; Stavrianakis 2016). In response to this, the American military has created ‘an ever-shifting mosaic’ of bases and overseas outposts that are then used to project force anywhere around the globe (Davis 2011, 216). These military bases are no longer seen as defending key areas but are considered as ‘jumping off points’ for military operations (Davis 2011, 217). According to David Chandler (2015), the post 9/11 era has seen Western militaries used to regulate, govern and secure ‘borderlands’ or fragile states. This form of liberal warfare is often justified within political discourse as a precondition to the creation of political order (Meyer 2008, 555). War therefore becomes a tool to impose a vision of political control over areas deemed to be part of a zone of disorder (Barkawi and Laffey 1999). Appeals to a liberal world community or cosmopolitan values are further used as a justification for these forms of military intervention (Bartleson 2018, 193–196).

The significance of this drive to secure a global village is that American citizens are largely removed from the nature of modern war. James Der Derian (2009) has argued that modern warfare has evolved in an intertwined manner with 24 hour news, Hollywood, the internet and video games, to merge into a military-industrial-media-entertainment network. Watching live aerial bombing or US marines storming a house in Iraq has become a normalized feature of modern American life. Turning war into a form of entertainment has also increased the portrayal of military service as segregated from the ‘decadence’ of the average citizen (Kier and Krebs 2010, 270). The changing nature of warfare has therefore received little attention and military interventions are seen as being conducted in far off theatres, removed from everyday life. This is evidenced by the way in which we conceive of modern war. Realist critics have often noted America’s ‘liberal illiberalism’ (Desch 2007) in which force and illiberal policies are used to spread liberal order. But what is significant about this liberal illiberalism, is the dissociation of American actions from the concept of war. America’s interventions are not framed in terms of war but are seen as policing missions. In 2017 Russia deployed 4,000 personnel and 28 aircraft to Syria and this action was widely considered as part of the Syrian ‘war’. But in the same year America had 10,000 personnel in Afghanistan despite the war in Afghanistan being officially over. America’s involvement in the Afghan conflict was also not classed as a war, but as a Nato support mission (Caverley 2018).

The contemporary emphasis on human security within IR has seen the relative dissociation of war from security. This has led to the neglect of the concept of militarism outside of the work of feminist scholars (Enloe 2007; Sjoberg and Snadra 2010) and critical theorists (Stavrianakis and Selby 2013; Mabee 2016). Militarism is a concept which focuses on the balance between civil-military relations. It is a discourse which emphasizes the struggle to ensure military power is insulated from politics and that the political system is concurrently protected from military power (Travis 2017). A democratic society is traditionally understood as incompatible with the martial values of a militarist society (Feaver and Kohn 2001, 1). As the historian Alfred Vagts (1959, 17) noted, the true opposite of militarism was not pacifism, but ‘civilianism’. The challenge of militarism can therefore be understood as the nature of the political regime and the degree to which there is civilian supervision of the armed forces. Although there is a typology of different forms of militarism (Mabee and Vucetic 2018) it can be understood as a phenomenon that reflects the specific dynamics and institutional characteristics of a particular polity. ‘Liberal militarism’ is built upon institutionalizing military power and views the preparation for war as a normal and desirable activity (Mann 1987; Shaw 1991). It is this form of liberal militarism that normalizes war in the pursuit of universal values (Wood 2007, 422; Rossdale 2019, 55). As this section has shown, the underlying militarism within the US arose from the national security state of the Cold War, but it has become a more expansive problem with the War on Terror (Crawford 2019). The following section will therefore examine the republican critique of war and its impact as a constitutive force within society.

War and republican restraints

When President Bush called in 2002 for military forces beyond any competitor the US embraced a normalization of the everyday emergency and constant warfare (Kohn 2009). The 2003 Iraq War led to a resurgence of interest in the concept of empire within IR and these debates focused on to what extent America could be considered as an imperial power (Nexon 2007). Realists critiqued American foreign policy for its imperial adventures abroad (Mearsheimer 2014), while liberal internationalists defended the benign role of the US as a ‘liberal leviathan’ (Ikenberry 2011). Much of this discourse revolved around the idea of America as a unipolar power and its potential for decline or continued dominance. These debates raised the prospect of America falling into a trap of imperial overstretch. Imperial overstretch is normally understood through fiscal challenges (Ferguson and Kotlikoff 2003) or provoking a balancing response in the international system (Snyder 2003; Wohlforth 2011). Republican thinkers have instead focused on the threat posed by imperial overstretch to the security of political liberty within the polis. As the following argues, a co-constitutive view of the domestic and the international can be used to explore the dangers of liberal militarism.

Republicanism is a theory of political liberty centred on the role of active citizens within a free public sphere (Skinner 1998). It is a tradition of thought that emphasizes the role of mixed constitutions as a check on power (Ramgotra 2014), and the importance of political liberty (Skinner 2010). Republican thinkers have traditionally seen power relations within the state as constantly in flux (Bouwsma 1984, 18). Within early modern republican theory, war could be a corrupting influence that threatened the liberties of republican citizens (Skinner 1998, 74). War in the name of imperial adventures abroad was understood as a potential tool for elites to accumulate and usurp power. The constant preparation for war was also seen by early modern republicans as a threat to political liberty. A recurring republican fear has been expressed in warning of the dangers of centralized military power leading to a repeat of ‘the rise of Caesars in Rome’ (Shalev 2006, 127). James Madison observed how ‘the liberties of Rome proved the final victim to her military triumphs’ (Publius [1788] 2000, 258). It is the threat of international expansion, militarization and facing external threats which are seen as a direct threat to the liberties of the polis.

Early modern republics, such as the Dutch, English and United States, were expanding powers which interpreted their own experiences through the lessons of republican Rome (Andrew 2011). They were keenly aware of the nature of martial imperial expansion to deform the balance of power within the polis. Republican thinkers, such as Machiavelli, also argued in favour of the use of a militia because popular participation in both military and civil affairs was crucial to maintaining republican liberty (Lukes 2004, 1103). Unaccountable control of military power is regarded by republicanism as an ‘abuse’ of power (Serna 2013, 2). The Dutch republic had long feared standing armies because of its experiences in seeking independence from Habsburg rule. Dutch republican thought was therefore based on the insistence that soldiers would be subordinate to the civilian priorities of political liberty and the security of property (Israel 1998, 267). The historian Lois G Schwoerer (1974, 5) argues that these republican debates over standing armies and absolutism ‘helped to preserve free institutions’ and the prevalence of Parliamentary power against central hierarchy. Active citizens within a militia are understood by republicans as part of a communal right and check against corruption (Cress 1979). This is evidenced by Kant’s (2010, 10) argument for the importance of receiving the ‘consent’ of the citizens when making declarations of war.

Much of the democratic peace literature conflates modern liberal-market democracies with the republican polities of Kant’s era (Czempiel 1996; Jahn 2005). In doing so, the domestic power restraints of a republican constitution are left relatively unexamined and underexplored. Liberal internationalism takes democratic states as spaces where political struggles within the state are resolved. This leaves power relations within and across the polis as neglected (Paris 2006, 426). According to Geis and Wagner (2011, 1564), liberal peace theorists treat the use of armed force ‘as a pre-democratic relic or un-democratic contaminant’. The liberal internationalist agenda is therefore relatively ‘silent’ on the relationship between military power and the public sphere. In disavowing this relationship, contemporary liberals neglect the historical context of Kant’s republican argument that citizen participation in both the militia and the body politic was a ‘theoretical necessity for Kant’ (Kubik 2001, 95–100). Kant also expressed a concern with warfare through debt becoming a way of leaders being able to declare war without being held accountable to their citizens. He argued ‘a credit system under which debts go on indefinitely increasing’ constitutes a ‘dangerous money power’ (Kant 2010, 5). Contemporary scholars emphasize the pacifying nature of liberal-capitalism (McDonald 2007, 579; Mousseau 2019), and therefore overlook this concern for fiscal restraints.

Liberal IR theory ‘accepts as axiomatic’ that the domestic nature of a state is the primary determinant of its behaviour towards other states (Buchan 2002, 407). Despite this, civil-military relations have been relatively neglected by the democratic peace thesis (Choi and James 2004, 228). Although some scholars highlight the ‘dark side’ of democratic wars (Geis, Brock and Muller 2006), Stavrianakis and Selby (2013, 6) have noted that there is a widespread assumption that ‘processes of liberalization and democratization would inexorably challenge and undermine militarist ideologies’. Modern warfare however, increasingly relies on the use of secrecy, drone strikes and special forces. Once seen as exceptional, they have now become part of the norm (Brooks 2014). The reliance on these forms of warfare are highlighted by what President Obama referred to as the ‘Washington Playbook’, the instinctive impulse within Washington to turn to military solutions (Goldberg 2016). As the following section argues, modern American citizens are largely removed from war fighting because the financial costs of war are delayed and the rise of privatization has left citizens detached from national service.

When citizens have no ‘skin in the game’

In contemporary American politics, the military has established itself as the primary actor in US foreign relations while troops are celebrated as ‘heroes’ and recognized as fighting for ‘freedom’. Even with President Trump’s proclaimed ‘America first’ instincts, the US remains militarily entrenched around the world, but the effect of this action on the average American voter is negligible. The following examines how liberal militarism has grown within the US, therefore allowing political elites to turn to military force more readily while the average citizen becomes further detached from this process.

American political commentators have long been cautious over the role corruption and hubris can play in deforming constitutional checks and balances on power. The rise of a national security state was seen as a defining feature of how the US fought the Cold War (Stuart 2012). It was during the Cold War that leading analysts, such as Arthur Schlesinger Jr (1973), warned against the rise of an ‘imperial presidency’ going past Constitutional limits. Today, American Presidents routinely deploy forces around the world for missions ranging from embassy evacuations to full scale wars and the power of Congress to provide any meaningful oversight continues to inspire debate (Howell and Pevehouse 2007). The professionalization of the military and the rise of privatization has also weakened democratic oversight. Congress has relied on manpower ceilings as a check on Presidential power since the Vietnam war. To overcome this, the American military has used private contractors to circumvent the cap (Cusumano 2016, 97). The shift to a volunteer army during the Vietnam war was politically expedient at the time, but according to republican thinking, it also acted as a removal of a crucial check on the ability to use military force. An informed citizenry that has to partake in duties and roles of sacrifice are more able to argue for restraint against follies of military adventurism (Kreps 2010, 193).

The contemporary rise of privatization within the military does not necessarily imply an ‘erosion’ of state power, but is part of a ‘broader social, political, and economic transformations in governance’ (Abrahamsen and Williams 2008, 133). This private-public fusion means that the modern US military would no longer be able to field an effective force without contractors (Mahoney 2020). But the use of contractors creates two forms of distancing between the use of force and the American public. Firstly, the state now takes a managerial approach to deploying private contractors. This depoliticizes their use through framing the use of force in the language of the ‘market’ (Krahmann 2008, 2017, 555). Secondly, private military contractors are also often based in the US or the UK, but they rely largely on a foreign workforce. This diminishes ‘political obstacles’ to their deployment as American citizens are not called upon to serve (McCoy 2010, 676–688). Those citizens who do serve in the military often come from an ‘ever-decreasing circle’ of the population, which has resulted in the retired General David Barno claiming the military service is now a ‘family business’ (Thompson 2016).

The shift away from a large citizen army to the use of professionals and private contractors has been coupled with an increasing reliance on drones, special forces’ raids (Inbar and Shamir 2016), and the role of training and assistance missions (Holmqvist 2013; Mabee 2016; Abrahamsen 2018; Warren 2019). From the beginning of the war on terror, the US reserved the right to act anywhere that presented a threat. This has created a reliance on drones and special forces that enact targeted strikes and raids on high profile targets that are ‘largely unaccountable to the public and draped in secrecy rules’ (Niva 2013, 199). The secrecy of unconventional warfare has meant that American interventions have been largely consistent and similar between Presidents Trump, Obama and Bush (Kolenda 2017, 38; Porter 2018a). Secrecy now permeates throughout American counter terrorist activities, while there may be operational reasons for this, the level of secrecy means covert actions are understood as a necessary exception and therefore do not tarnish the American self-perception as a democratic and civilized society (Kearns 2016, 281). In fighting a global war on terror, the military presence of American forces within a particular country is not always clear because of the extensive use of private military contractors, covert special forces and the existence of secret facilities. This leaves the question of an American military presence as ‘murky’ at best (Moore and Walker 2016, 686). The rise of such secrecy also challenges a crucial tenet of democratic peace theory, that citizens should be able to have an informed debate on the use of military force.

America’s recent military interventions have all suffered major setbacks with questionable success. Yet crucially, support for the military remains high (Burbach 2017). This disconnect is because the average American citizen is not exposed or called to serve in these conflicts. Showing support for the military is a way of partaking in active citizenship without substantial personal cost. The American public is often seen as more realist than elite decision makers (Kertzer and McGraw 2012), and as Dan Drezner (2008, 64) argues, ‘America now has a realist mass public governed by a liberal internationalist elite’. Although the American public may be more realist and less willing to intervene abroad, the average American does not need to consider serving in the military. Within democratic peace theory, public opinion is understood to act in a restraining role (Tomz and Weeks 2013). The active participation of citizens and a free and informed media are seen as crucial parts of a liberal democracy. A free and open media play a vital role in providing a ‘forum for competing ideas so that the public can make informed, intelligent decisions’ and that through debate and discussion the media can promote a vision of truth (Mcleod 2009). Realist authors argue however, that debates over foreign policy within the media are not as diverse and robust as they could be. Stephen Walt (2016, 2018, 120–1) argues that mainstream op-ed columnists at the New York Times, the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal are all dominated by either neoconservatives or liberal hawks. Instead of creating meaningful debate, critiques of military action are challenged as opponents of all liberal values (Ryan 2011).

Neoconservatives and liberal hawks have often been ‘two sides of the same coin’ that both support American military dominance (Parmar 2009). The Syrian Civil War has seen numerous calls for American military involvement and as Doucet (2018) argues, the mainstream media has become ubiquitous in creating a ‘constant-pressure on policy makers’ to ‘do something’. President Trump has made his distaste for traditional mainstream media sources very clear and despite being elected on a platform against military interventions, he has embraced the use of force while in office. Press coverage of President Trump often decries his personal character and his manner of Presidential leadership. But in expanding military operations in Afghanistan in 2017 this attitude changed. Trump became ‘lauded’ for making a ‘very Presidential decision’ (Kolenda 2017, 38). Traditional media sources can create meaningful public debate, but when it comes to military interventions there are a small number of authors and high profile figures who routinely call for action (Porter 2018b). Nassim Taleb (2018) has criticized the calls for military intervention by arguing that leading public commentators have suffered no consequences for their arguments if they are wrong, and for supporting consistent political failures including Iraq, Libya, and Syria. This has created a culture where high profile public commentators and political elites are able to use military force without consequences or what Taleb refers to as ‘skin in the game’.

The US foreign policy of the post Cold War era has followed ‘habitual ideas’ of grand strategy based on an ideological orthodoxy of US Primacy (Coates 2016; Porter 2018a). Despite a war weary electorate, American grand strategy has largely not changed even with the election of President Trump, as a relative Washington outsider (Porter 2018a). This reflects the dominance of what Ben Rhodes, a former Deputy National Security Advisor under Barack Obama, referred to as ‘the blob’ within Washington (Walt 2018, 95). The ‘blob’ can be understood as the body of professionals representing a cast of ‘privileged insiders’ who shape and form American foreign policy, both within the administration and through think tanks, policy groups and mainstream media (Walt 2018, 91–136). The blob represents how the electorate has become disconnected with elites (Page and Bouton 2006). Instead of an animated public sphere of foreign policy debates, the ‘marketplace of ideas’ can often be distorted by the ideas of a select few who have a voice (Bessner 2019). Critiques of the ills facing American liberal democracy have therefore focused on creating solutions such as weighted voting to allow elites to make better decisions (Moyo 2018). But this entrenches elite power rather than finding ways to make elites more accountable. The key democratic constraint against war with the vitality of citizen participation in the public sphere would therefore seem to be missing in modern America.

A further key argument for democratic peace theory is that citizens would be reluctant to engage in wars that would create high levels of taxation and extra costs on ordinary citizens (Russet 2009, 21). This key democratic restraint on military interventions is missing however in modern warfare. Citizens are further disengaged from the use of military force because of the way modern wars are financed. Taxpayers did not feel any dramatic impact during the early 2000’s from the costs of Iraq and Afghanistan (DiGiuseppe 2015). Instead, the costs of war are shrouded through the reliance on credit. Shrouding the costs of war can prolong a conflict (Flores-Macias and Kreps, 2013), as the role of central banks can enhance a government’s ability to fund war through borrowing (Poast 2015). States that are considered creditworthy can ‘minimize or delay the political costs’ which would result from higher taxation. The ability to borrow money therefore gives states greater autonomy to increase military spending (DiGiuseppe 2015, 680). As the world’s leading financial power the US has relied on borrowing to fund wars, which suggests a lack of a good credit reputation may mean states actually avoid war (Shea and Poast 2018, 1898). The ability to borrow shields the costs of wars on a population and allows leaders greater latitude in how they deploy forces abroad (Shea 2014; Flores-Macias and Kreps 2017). Much of this debate on war financing has focused on whether debt spending is affordable or not over the long term (Wohlforth and Norrlof 2019). The effects of debt spending on political accountability are rarely considered. But the use of debt financing shields politicians from being held immediately to account. In contrast, the ‘visibility and intrusiveness’ of taxes invites scrutiny giving American citizens ‘skin in the game’ (Kreps 2018b).

Democratic peace theory holds that capitalism can pacify a country’s foreign policy (Mcdonald 2007, 579), but modern finance has allowed for war to be fought abroad while citizens remain detached. The Bush era’s global war on terror particularly highlighted this disconnect. Under President Bush, America sought to fight a global war on terror, but with ‘an oddly business as usual approach’ that left economic priorities unchanged and encouraged American consumers to go shopping on a ‘credit-fueled consumer binge’ (Bacevich 2008b). The result of this has become a normalization of war with an active military while America is ‘at the mall’ (Kohn 2009, 198). The traditional republican restraint on war that arises from citizens having to pay for war has therefore become bypassed by the role of modern capitalism. The result of this is that American military conflict has now become an ‘exercise in fiscal, rather than social mobilization’ (Caverly 2014, 1).

This section has sought to show how the average American citizen is removed and detached from the use of force. American citizens do not pay for war directly, are largely unaccountable for military service and are largely uninformed of America’s military actions which are surrounded by ambiguity. In contrast to the optimism of democratic peace theory, America now routinely goes to war because democratic checks on power no longer seem to be working. The final section of this paper will therefore argue for a return to consider Kant’s reasoning for republican restraints on power.

Conclusion

The theory of the democratic peace rests on the ability of citizens to hold leaders accountable. But as this paper has shown, the average American citizen has become removed from America’s modern wars and conflicts. Immanuel Kant argued that war could be curtailed if citizens had free debates in the public sphere and if citizens were expected to pay and serve in war. This republican reasoning has been neglected by modern democratic peace theorists who focus on the benign ‘liberal peace’ with no account of America’s unconventional wars and light footprint warfare. The traditional republican restraints on war have been overlooked as outdated. But as this paper has shown, the ease with which American elites can resort to the use of force raises pertinent questions on the level of restraint within the modern American republic. The rise of debt fuelled war, privatization and social polarization has impacted traditional democratic restraints on war leading to the normalization of military force.

To return to the republican concern on unrestrained power would be to focus on the power of the state. Today, dissent against war is deflected through the ubiquitous attitude of both pro and anti-war movements in the need to ‘support the troops’. The ‘troops’ are therefore reified as the central concern which diffuses dissent by turning away the focus from state violence (Millar 2019). The preceding republican critique of America’s wars has focused on the decline of citizens to act as a check on elite power and state violence. As a liberal-republic, the United States demonstrates the clearest example of this phenomena. But future research could look to how elites are held to account within the United Kingdom and France, as these two major European powers, like the US, have also been active in the War on Terror. Early modern theorists were concerned with the corrupting nature of war and the co-constitutive relationship between the internal balance of power and the external. While professional militaries and bureaucratic governance are not going to disappear, we should consider ways of making governance more accountable.

#### Unaccountable defense monopolies independently make nuclear war inevitable.

King and Krushnic, 21—professor of biology emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology AND serves on Massachusetts Peace Action working groups (Jonathan and Richard, “Military-Industrial Complex Exerts Powerful Influence on Biden’s Foreign Policy,” <https://truthout.org/articles/military-industrial-complex-exerts-powerful-influence-on-bidens-foreign-policy/>, dml)

The MIC, fueled by federal defense contacts, operates under quite different economic conditions than general civilian manufacturing, whether automobiles, appliances, electronics or pharmaceuticals. These latter have to compete in national and international markets. They need effective products, and prefer to keep labor costs low. They don’t need foreign enemies or foreign wars, but rather foreign manufacturers to keep costs down, and foreign markets to expand sales.

The markets for defense contractors are very different: Sales to foreign governments require State Department approval, and the primary buyer for most major weapons systems is the U.S. government. For most of the increasingly expensive modernized nuclear weapons, such as the new intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), the U.S. government is the only buyer. To justify spending the enormous amount of taxpayer dollars on weapons contracts, the MIC contractors require major foreign “enemies.” It’s quite irrelevant who they are — Russia, China, Iran, North Korea can all be claimed as imminent dangers, and work equally well to argue that more weapons are needed, and more tax dollars must be invested in the Pentagon to maintain “national security.”

The “war on terror” was adequate to maintain Pentagon spending after 9/11. However, to justify enormously expensive new nuclear weapons, such as the $100 billion new ICBMS, “terrorists” aren’t a strong enough card to play. So, the MIC now pivots back to old Cold War propaganda, claiming that the U.S. is endangered on all sides.

For nuclear weapons manufacturers, profitability simply requires that the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources continue to vote for hundreds of billions of dollars for weapons contracts. According to the Congressional Budget Office, one-third of the Department of Defense’s budget ($244 billion) is used to procure new systems, upgrade existing systems and perform research, development, testing and evaluation of new systems. Adding $20 billion a year spent on nuclear weapons by Department of Energy contractors, we estimate $264 billion of the $760 billion National Defense Authorization Act and Department of Energy budgets is going toward weapons development and manufacture.

According to the Federal Election Commission, as reported by the Center for Responsive Politics, defense firms spent an average of $127 million a year over the past 12 years on congressional lobbyists, and in the past two election cycles, $25 million per cycle on donations to federal political candidates. The role of major defense contractors, such as Raytheon, United Technologies and Lockheed-Martin, in lobbying Congress has been described in detail by William Hartung. We surveyed available information on the web about the six principal national peace groups and their state affiliates, discovering that U.S. peace and justice organizations spend around $250,000 a year on lobbying to reduce military expenditures and support peace treaties, and essentially nothing at all on political contributions. Nearly all lobbying is done by volunteers, and a minority of these organizations mobilize volunteers to support a few political candidates. Essentially, military corporations have spent 760 times more than peace groups on lobbying and political contributions during the past two election cycles.

The Protected Profits of Weapons Contractors

Defense contracts — for example, for nuclear weapons — are a monopoly since Congress does not allow them to be outsourced to foreign bidders. In addition, the profitability is guaranteed, regardless of whether or not the products work. Thus, the repeated failures of the F-35 jet — the most expensive weapon system in world history — have hardly any effect on the continuance of the contracts. If Chevrolets failed to start, experienced frequent brake failures and rolled over often, Chevy sales would plummet.

Even though military literature and Air Force documents are full of the F-35’s failures, year after year, the Air Force pushes for more planes and more money to fix F-35 failed systems, the lobbyists hit the congresspersons from the 45 states where the F-35 is manufactured and donate to their campaigns, and Congress keeps pumping out more money.

Congresspersons and senators know that lucrative defense industry positions will be available to them when they retire as legislators. The Project on Government Oversight estimates that, in 2018, 645 senior government officials — mostly from the Pentagon, the uniformed military and Capitol Hill — took jobs to work at one of the top 20 defense contractors. The defense contractors cannot match these protected profits in the open civilian market.

Among the most dangerous and expensive of these weapons programs is the push for a $2 trillion upgrade over the next 25 years of all three components of the nuclear triad. With thousands of active warheads on submarines, bombers and in silos, the last thing the nation needs is more and more dangerous nuclear weapons.

In April 2020, the Massachusetts-based Raytheon Company was awarded the contract to engineer and manufacture the nuclear long-range standoff missile (LRSO), which will be the air-launched leg of the new nuclear triad, even before the amount of the initial contract was determined. (It must also be noted that Biden’s secretary of defense just came from Raytheon’s board of directors.) The air-launched nuclear LRSO will replace the 375 existing Boeing nuclear AGM-86Bs. The Air Force is planning to spend $2.7 billion on the LRSO through 2022, and the Congressional Budget Office estimates that it will cost $10 billion to produce 1,000 missiles at $10 million apiece.

Next Generation of Nuclear Weapons Will Decrease National Security

The LRSO makes nuclear war more likely because it will be launched from B-52 bombers, and within a few years, from the new-gen B-21 stealth bomber. The B-52s are based in Louisiana and North Dakota, and the B-21s are slated to be based in Texas, South Dakota and Missouri. When slated for repeated missions in the Middle East or Central Asia, both planes would be temporarily based in Diego Garcia in the north-central Indian Ocean. They would patrol as close to probable targets as deemed safe, thus reducing the flight times of the nuclear missiles once launched, thereby leaving “the enemy” only 5 or 10 minutes to decide on a response. The target will not know if the missiles are nuclear or conventional, and will therefore be likely to respond assuming they are nuclear.

The recent Air Force award to Northrop Grumman of a $13.3 billion contract in September to develop a replacement silo-based ICBM, the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD), is another example. This missile, threatening a devastating first strike to our supposed adversaries, will only increase the chance of a nuclear war, and decrease national security. Its true role is to ensure the profits of Northrop-Grumman and its subcontractors for decades to come. The 600 GBSDs will cost nearly $100 billion, and an additional $168 billion to keep them operational over their lifetimes.

The fact that this weapon exists primarily for industry profits is demonstrated by its uselessness in warfighting, and the fact that its use would destroy much life on Earth. Silo-based ICBMs are the most vulnerable nuclear weapons, since their locations are known and they can’t move. They take longer to get to their targets (at least a half an hour) than other nuclear weapons, and can easily be detected from the moment of launch. This guarantees that the intended targets will launch their targeted missiles before the U.S. ICBMs reach their targeted empty silos. If they were used against Russia, all 400 would be fired at once, and they (and the warheads sent in retaliation) would destroy much life on Earth. Whichever side launched first would target the other’s missiles, and whichever launches second would target other military and civilian targets, since the other’s missiles had already been launched.

We are told by the nuclear weapons companies and the nuclear weapons generals (and congresspersons where the weapons are based) that the U.S. needs this new generation of nuclear weapons because it is in danger of being attacked by Russian or Chinese or Korean guided missiles. In March 2020, the Raytheon Company received a $2.1 billion contract to produce and deliver SM-3 Block IB missiles to intercept medium-range ballistic missiles attacking Japan from China or North Korea, and Europe from Russia or Iran. The contract covers continuing production through 2023. Four-hundred SM Block 1B missiles are already deployed on U.S. and Japanese ships, and on a U.S. base in Romania, soon to be joined by a U.S. base in Poland.

The Raytheon SM-3 Block IIA is under development, and in late 2020, shot down an ICBM (intercontinental-range) warhead for the first time. Both these interceptors for intermediate-range and intercontinental-range nuclear missiles make nuclear war more likely because, along with other aspects of the new generation of nuclear weapons, they make adversaries think the U.S. is developing a first-strike capability. These interceptor missiles do not count as part of the nuclear weapons budget, even though they are for nuclear war fighting.

#### Militarized foreign policy also boomerangs home, making all forms of domestic repression orders of magnitude worse.

Coyne and Hall, 18—F.A. Harper Professor of Economics at George Mason University AND Associate Professor in Economics at Bellarmine University (Christopher and Abigail, “The Boomerang Effect: How Social Control Comes Home,” *Tyranny Comes Home: The Domestic Fate of U.S. Militarism*, Chapter 2, pg 25-41, dml)

A militaristic foreign policy can change the composition of domestic government by centralizing decision making and power. The national government increases its power and control at the expense of state and local governments. This consolidation makes sense when one appreciates that national governments and their agencies are responsible for planning, implementing, and overseeing foreign policy. Foreign intervention requires resources and the ability to make decisions about how to use them. So, naturally, a proactive, militarist foreign policy would be linked with the greater centralization of control. As political scientist Bruce Porter noted, “a government at war is a juggernaut of centralization determined to crush any internal opposition that impedes the mobilization of militarily vital resources. This centralizing tendency of war has made the rise of the state throughout much of history a disaster for human liberty and rights.”27 These dynamics are likely to be especially relevant during larger-scale government interventions, such as the two world wars, which required significant coordination and mobilization, and open-ended global wars, such as the War on Terror or the War on Drugs, in which the entire world, including America, constitutes the battlefield and there is no clear definition of victory.

There are two main mechanisms through which the consolidation of control and power at the national level takes place. The first is bureaucratization, whereby government agencies gain more power and resources while new ones may be created, staffed, and resourced. To achieve the goals of foreign intervention, specific forms of bureaucratic organization and regimentation are required. The result is that resources and the routines of citizens are increasingly brought under state control, sometimes willingly and sometimes not, in a regimented, rigid, and centralized manner as “the nation” seeks to achieve a unification against an external enemy. Historically, Porter notes, the “organizational challenge of modern war compels the rationalization of state administrations—the replacement of personal, traditional, and arbitrary methods of rule by impersonal, hierarchical, and bureaucratic methods.”28

In some cases this bureaucratization is directly observable—take, for example, the socialization of investment and production during World War II. In other cases it is less observable and transparent—such as today’s covert expansion in the state’s surveillance apparatus. But in any case, these types of moves in the name of defense lead to a political alignment within the government—as opposed to pluralism—and the extension of the government’s reach into our lives.

Second, foreign intervention provides a focal point to rally citizens around a common external cause.29 This diverts their attention from the fundamental tension between state power and individual liberty, drawing their attention to external matters. Just as the government becomes more unified, citizens and the government become unified in the common effort against an external threat, real or imagined. The result is that government activities that previously would have been intolerable become acceptable sacrifices necessary to achieve “the country’s” foreign policy goals.

Playwrights, philosophers, and social scientists have long recognized this dynamic. In William Shakespeare’s Henry IV, Part 2, the dying king offers the following wisdom to his son: “[b]e it thy course to busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels, that action, hence borne out, may waste the memory of the former days.”30 The sixteenth-century political philosopher Jean Bodin wrote that “the best way of preserving a state, and guaranteeing it against sedition, rebellion, and civil war is to keep the subjects in amity one with another, and to this end, to find an enemy against whom they can make common cause.”31 More recently, political scientist Nelson Polsby argued that “[i]nvariably, the popular response to a [U.S.] President during international crises is favorable, regardless of the wisdom of policies he pursues.”32 As these writers highlight, international affairs are often a means of unifying domestic citizens in support of the activities of the state. Unquestioning support due to distraction from an external threat allows government to consolidate its power relatively unchecked. And such is the case in today’s world, where we are told that threats are but a heartbeat away.

At some point, the preparation for conflict and use of force abroad become so normalized that citizens expect and often endorse foreign intervention as a solution to a widening array of real and perceived problems.33 This culture of militarization has existed in the United States for decades.34 Colonel James Donovan noted that “[t]he American people had come to accept, with no little pride prior to Vietnam, the idea of being responsible for the ‘freedom’ of all nations requesting aid and have created the military power needed to help to provide the benefits of the American system to the less privileged—and to provide an American solution to every world problem.”35

Similarly, historian Andrew Bacevich has traced the growing propensity of the U.S. government to use military force abroad with endorsement from citizens. He argues that the “American public’s ready acceptance of the prospect of war without foreseeable end and of a policy that abandons even the pretense of the United States fighting defensively or viewing war as a last resort show clearly how far the process of militarization has advanced.”36 This environment is especially conducive to the consolidation of power in the national government, since permanent war serves as a stable and consistent rallying point, allowing bureaucratization to churn ahead vigorously.

Coercive foreign intervention can thus erode federalist checks on power. Federalism divides power between a central political unit and subunits. Specifically, federal governments are characterized by the existence of “at least two levels of government that have independent constitutional existence.”37 In the United States federalism refers to the relationship between the national and state governments. A main benefit of federalism is the dispersion of power. In principle, it serves as a constraint on the power of the political center. The underlying idea is that by distributing some decision-making power to the political periphery, the national government is limited in what it can do. Federalism thus offers one potential solution to the paradox of government, according to which, if all power ostensibly to protect citizens is given to the central government, the citizens’ liberty could be undermined.

The pro-liberty benefits of federalism are not, however, guaranteed. As economist Richard Wagner argues, “[w]hether federalism is favorable or hostile to liberty depends on whether the governments within the system must compete with one another for citizen support or whether those governments are able to collude with one another, and thus expand political power relative to citizen liberty.”38 As the central government assumes additional power, lower levels of government are less able to provide the intended checks on the national government.

Two present-day examples will illustrate this logic. The first is the militarization of domestic policing, as discussed at the opening of this book. Section 1208 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 1990 authorized the Department of Defense to transfer military equipment to federal, state, and local agencies. This linked lower-level governments to the central government through resource flows, increasing their connection to and dependence on the political center. Further weaponized, these lower-level authorities are poised to exert more control over citizens at the local level, as we have now seen numerous times.

A second example involves the “fusion centers” that emerged after the 9/11 attacks. Fusion centers are partnerships between various national and local government agencies intended to facilitate coordination and information sharing. As of 2012, over seventy state and local fusion centers had been created or expanded using funding from the federal government. This direct partnership led to an integration of the activities across state and national governments, eroding their separation while creating real threats to the freedoms of U.S. citizens. For example, a report on federal government involvement in the fusion centers by the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations found that in numerous instances “reviewers raised concerns the documents [produced by fusion centers] potentially endangered the civil liberties or legal privacy protections of the U.S. persons they mentioned.”39

These two programs are part of two broader open-ended “wars”— the War on Drugs and the War on Terror—which are carried out by the federal government both domestically and internationally. In each case, political subunits have become subservient to top-down control by the political center, which oversees the provision of resources and benefits associated with these war efforts.

While often neglected in today’s discussion of foreign intervention, concern for the loss of freedom through the consolidation of power was once common. Writing in 1816, Thomas Jefferson asked, “[w]hat has destroyed liberty and the rights of man in every government which has ever existed under the sun?” His answer was that it was “[t]he generalizing and concentrating all cares and powers into one body, no matter whether of the autocrats of Russia or France, or of the aristocrats of a Venetian Senate.”40 Five years later Jefferson returned to this theme when he wrote, “[w]hen all government, domestic and foreign, in little as in great things, shall be drawn to Washington as the center of all power, it will render powerless the checks provided of one government on another and will become as venal and oppressive as the government from which we separated.”41 Together, these warnings suggest that centralizing power is dangerous because of the real possibility that this power will be abused at the expense of citizens. A militaristic foreign policy is especially dangerous in this regard since it efficiently facilitates the consolidation of power.

This results in a fundamental tension regarding coercive foreign intervention. Preparing for and engaging in it typically is justified on the grounds that it is necessary to protect the freedoms of domestic citizens. As a result, however, power is consolidated, and the checks and balances on the use of domestic government power change drastically, and often for the worse.

How Social Control Boomerangs

With the door open for the expansion of government power, the methods of social control originally developed for use abroad are able to be imported for domestic use. This takes place through three related channels.

The Human-Capital Channel

Human capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and characteristics that contribute to individual productivity. All organizations have goals, the achievement of which requires managers and employees with certain types of human capital. The numerous government agencies involved in designing and carrying out coercive foreign intervention are no different. While the objectives of intervention vary, the important point is that, to succeed, every intervention requires social control to ensure that people’s actions align with the goals of the interveners. This requires that those involved in the operation either possess or develop certain types of human capital.

For example, among other activities, those executing an intervention must be ready to implement directives against an often unwilling foreign populace. Success also requires a willingness to use various techniques— monitoring, curfews, segregation, bribery, censorship, suppression, imprisonment, torture, violence, and so on—to control those who resist foreign governments or their goals. More broadly, successful coercive foreign intervention requires a certain mind-set consisting of some mix of the following five characteristics.

1. Extreme confidence regarding the interventionist’s ability to solve complex problems in other societies through a massive, bureaucratic publicprivate apparatus. Foreign intervention requires the belief that an elite can redesign societies according to a grand blueprint. Moreover, intervention requires the belief that this blueprint can be followed in the desired manner. According to this logic, all issues are to be treated as technical engineering problems that can be resolved with appropriate resources in the hands of the intelligentsia. The unquestioning confidence in the intelligence of elites neglects the severely limited knowledge possessed by even the most gifted analysts and bureaucrats.42 The very idea of externally driven “nation building” perfectly captures this extreme confidence, since it assumes that entire nations, including all of the complex institutions necessary for a well-functioning society, can be designed and built by outsiders.

In addition to implicit assumptions about the capabilities of elite planners, there are also embedded assumptions about the operations of government bureaucracy. Foreign intervention is implemented by numerous overlapping government bureaucracies. This massive bureaucratic network partners with the private sector to produce goods and deliver services abroad.43 The unwavering confidence in this far-reaching public-private complex to carry out foreign intervention neglects the perverse incentives that contribute to waste, fraud, and corruption.44 These include spending on easily observable and measurable outputs to demonstrate progress, the spending down of budgets to demonstrate activity even if these expenditures are not value-added, and mission creep to justify expansions in budget and staff requests.45

2. A sense of superiority regarding scientific knowledge, preferences, and righteousness. Interventionists believe that their vision is superior to the status quo or else they would not have the urge to intervene in the first place.46 This sense of supremacy is multifaceted and entails the interventionists’ belief that they possess technological knowledge superior to that of foreigners, preferences that are better than those of the targeted population, and the moral right and duty to spread their superior knowledge and preferences. Together, this overarching sense of superiority reflects a condemnation of the preferences, choices, and ways of life of others, which are necessarily viewed as inferior if not outright savage.

3. Comfort with the use of a wide range of often repugnant means to impose ends on others. Interventionists are so confident in their vision for other societies that they are comfortable using a variety of means to realize them. In some cases, this entails extreme forms of hard power, such as torture, long-term incarceration without due process, and the killing of innocent civilians, which is dismissed as “collateral damage.”47 When such extreme tactics are employed, the interventionists fail to appreciate that they have adopted the most vicious methods and characteristics of those they condemn and combat.

In addition to directly adopting ruthless techniques of social control, intervening governments often partner with brutal authoritarian regimes to achieve short-term foreign policy goals.48 In doing so the intervening government seems indifferent, if not oblivious, to the significant costs imposed on innocent people through human-rights violations. In general, to succeed, the interventionist must be willing to consider employing any and all means available in the belief that the ends justify the means.

4. Limited compassion and sympathy toward the target populace. Intervention typically is complex and motivated by a variety of goals. These may include humanitarian goals to the extent they align with the interventionists’ broader aims. Even where humanitarian motives and outcomes exist, however, the interventionists’ compassion and sympathy toward the target populace are limited.

Consider the U.S. interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Part of the justification was to improve the well-being of the citizens in each country. And on some margins intervention has indeed improved life for certain groups. This is not surprising given the significant sums of money spent by the U.S. government on the occupations, which included an array of humanitarian programs. Despite these benefits, however, concern for the well-being of Afghans and Iraqis is limited. As U.S. General Tommy Franks once remarked when discussing the number of people killed by U.S. forces in Afghanistan, “[w]e don’t do body counts.”49 This indifference toward deaths caused by intervention suggests a neglect of the fact that while enemies can be killed during foreign intervention, so too can innocent civilians.50 In addition to fatalities, foreign intervention can also impose other, nonlethal costs on innocent civilians, including displacement, disease, and psychological harm. These costs run counter to any humanitarian benefits generated by interveners.

Limited compassion is also evident when those in the intervening coun- try, when discussing the costs of war, narrowly focus on the lives lost and monetary costs incurred by their own country. Excluded are these same costs for the intervention’s target population.51 This approach not only severely underestimates the total costs of intervention but also reinforces a moral apathy toward harms imposed on human beings in the target country.

5. The association of order with state control. Absent government control and planning, the interventionist sees disorder and chaos in the world. Moreover, it is not just control by any government that is required for order, but control by the “right” government as determined by the preferences of the interventionist. This mentality has a long history in the United States and can be traced back to at least 1904, when President Theodore Roosevelt declared that “[c]hronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.”52 Over time, the U.S. government has extended its reach well beyond the Western Hemisphere in the name of promoting global order and stability.

The entrenched belief that order is contingent on government design and control neglects the importance of spontaneous order—order that emerges through people pursuing their diverse ends rather than through conscious central planning. Instead of viewing societies as complex, constantly evolving entities consisting of numerous emergent phenomena, the interventionist treats society as a grand science project that can be rationalized and improved on by enlightened and well-intentioned engineers. This disposition neglects the long tradition of spontaneous-order thinkers who emphasized that crucial parts of the world—that is, economic, legal, and social arrangements—are not the result of human design, but rather emerge from the actions of dispersed individuals. These organic orders cannot be designed because they do not fit a single general form regardless of time and context.53

These five characteristics are fundamental to the mental schema associated with a proactive, interventionist foreign policy that seeks to re- shape other societies. It is a general mind-set, and not all of the constituent characteristics will necessarily be possessed by each and every individual involved in the numerous aspects of foreign interventions.

The interventionist mind-set is reinforced through five mechanisms which ensure that those involved in coercive foreign interventions will either already possess elements of this mentality or will acquire them.54 First, those in government bureaus are often actively indoctrinated with an unquestioning attitude toward the orders provided from above. For example, Colonel James Donovan noted that U.S. military training “stresses the fundamental obligation to serve the nation loyally and without question to carry out the policies and orders of the President, who is Commander in Chief, and the orders of his appointed officers.”55 Historian Jack Conrad Willers emphasized that those entering bureaus quickly realize that “[s]uccess within bureaucracy requires not only skill and expertise and knowledge but also above all, an apparent devotion to the bureaucracy and unquestioning loyalty to its goals.”56 In other words, success requires adopting and perpetuating the mind-set necessary to succeed. Under the U.S. government’s militaristic foreign policy strategy this mind-set aligns with the characteristics described above.

The second mechanism is the desire for personal advancement within government bureaucracy. As in any organization, those employed in government agencies advance their careers by developing the appropriate skills and reputation, and signaling these abilities to key decision makers. General David Shoup, who was awarded the Medal of Honor in World War II, noted that in the U.S. military establishment, “[p]romotions and the choice job opportunities are attained by constantly performing well, conforming to the expected patterns, and pleasing the senior officers.”57 Similarly, Colonel Donovan emphasized that in order to advance, the bureaucrat “must become known as a faithful disciple of his service. In order to promote the organization and its success, he has to compete for goals other than dollar profits, within the fields of operational doctrines, service doctrines, roles and missions, defense appropriations, new weapons programs, and service prestige.”58 This incentive generates peculiar, and often undesirable, outcomes in the context of foreign interventions.

In for-profit markets, professional competition is desirable precisely because it yields beneficial outcomes from the perspective of consumers. That is, competition tends to generate new and better products at lower prices as entrepreneurs and producers compete to develop skills that are conducive to earning profits by satisfying customer wants. But in coercive foreign intervention the nature of professional competition is dramatically different. In this setting, the “customers” are those in positions of power in the intervening government. The people tasked with carrying out the intervention will strive to satisfy their customers by going above and beyond minimum requirements to achieve the goals of the operation. This entails embracing the interventionist mind-set and efficiently controlling foreign populations to secure cooperation and dampen, suppress, or eradicate any resistance. Facing these incentives, interveners have reason to act entrepreneurially to develop, implement, and refine a range of socialcontrol techniques.59

These dynamics were evident in the Abu Ghraib torture scandal in Iraq, when members of the CIA and U.S. Army committed human rights abuses against prisoners. Loose bureaucratic guidelines and mandates combined with unclear rules about what constitutes torture led to the abuse of detainees to secure “actionable intelligence”—which itself is a general and undefined goal set by those higher up the hierarchy.60 More broadly, the incentives surrounding coercive foreign intervention result in a “narrow professionalism,” whereby a fierce competition to efficiently and effectively regulate the target population leads to a willingness to engage in otherwise unthinkable acts of social control to achieve the ends of those in the intervening government.61

Finally, there are three sorting mechanisms, beyond the aforementioned indoctrination techniques, to ensure widespread conformity. First, part of what initially attracts people to an organization is its goals and values, meaning there will tend to be self-selection aligning individual mindsets and the broader organizational culture. Second, there are selection mechanisms—such as applications and interviews—to filter out people who do not align with the organization’s goals and ethos. Third, people will tend to exit organizations where they do not fit because of either poor performance or a lack of personal satisfaction. In the context of the U.S. government’s proactive foreign policy, these mechanisms lead to the se- lection of people who conform to the mentality necessary for successful interventionism.

The human capital associated with state-produced social control can also be imported from outside the country preparing for and engaging in foreign intervention. For example, in the aftermath of World War II the U.S. government implemented Operation Paperclip, which recruited Nazi scientists to work for the U.S. government.62 Among other things, these scientists assisted the U.S. government with experiments related to psychological control, interrogation, and behavior modification. Operation Paperclip was the precursor to Project MKUltra, which continued similar experiments on unknowing human subjects, some of whom were citizens of the United States and Canada. The findings from these various operations served as the basis for the torture techniques employed at Abu Ghraib decades later, which demonstrates how past efforts to develop tools of social control create knowledge and methods that can lay dormant, only to be employed decades later.63

In other instances U.S. government officials traveled abroad to study how other governments engage in social control. For example, in early 1941, when establishing the foundations of what would later become the Office of Censorship during World War II, the U.S. Army sent a captain to Bermuda to study the British government’s censorship methods with the intention of incorporating these insights into censorship operations at home.64

No matter the specifics, the unique human capital gained through preparations for and the execution of coercive foreign intervention does not simply disappear at the conclusion of the intervention, assuming there is a clear end. Instead, it becomes a permanent part of the skills of the people involved. From those who prepare for potential future interventions, to those who design and manage the various aspects of the intervention, to those who have their boots on the ground, intervening abroad provides a learning environment in which participants obtain a unique set of skills for coercively controlling fellow human beings. Those possessing these skills and experiences eventually shift their focus from abroad to home and influence the fabric of domestic institutions through their participation in private and public life.

The Organizational Dynamics Channel

The innovators and implementers of intervention—both civilian and military—participate in the various private and public organizations that constitute domestic life. Some of the participants return to normal civilian life and, although their mentality and worldview regarding the appropriate role of the state are shaped by their experiences abroad, they no longer actively participate in the domestic security sector. Still others involved in foreign interventions reallocate their unique human capital and experiences to the public or private organizations constituting the domestic defense sector.

In some cases the careers of specialists in state-produced social control span both the public and private aspects of this sector. To illustrate this overlap, consider the finding of one recent report that, of the 108 threeand four-star generals and admirals who retired between 2009 and 2011, 70 percent accepted jobs with private defense contractors or consultants.65 This is one illustration of the “revolving door,” the back-and-forth movement of personnel between the government and private sectors based on an intricate network of overlapping relationships and influence.66

Those who develop a comparative advantage in innovating and implementing state-produced social control via foreign intervention will benefit, through better career prospects and higher wages, by employing their unique human capital domestically. They can act entrepreneurially by suggesting and implementing new organizational forms and techniques for controlling the domestic populace on the basis of their experience at doing the same to distant populations. Because of their skills and reputations for success in foreign intervention, some of these specialists can rise to positions of leadership from which they can influence an organization’s objectives.

In the public sector, positions of management and leadership allow these individuals to influence domestic and foreign policy. Those in leadership positions in the private sector are also able to influence public agencies, since the U.S. security and defense industry is a unique blend of public funding and private provision by civilian contractors and consultants.67 The result is that domestic activities, whether in the public or private sector, are influenced by the experiences and skills gained during coercive foreign intervention. As this process unfolds, the distinction between state-produced social control conducted abroad and domestically begins to blur.

In some cases a person’s skills in state-produced social control are explicit, that is, he or she becomes known as an expert in a certain type of control—for example, monitoring and surveillance, military strategy and tactics, or psychological techniques—and the person is rewarded for effectively implementing and administering those techniques at home. Specialists with explicit human capital in state-produced social control may be employed within an existing government agency, or they may be involved in the creation of an entirely new state agency or group within one.

Alternatively, the specialist may be hired by or might found a private firm that receives government contracts associated with the production of domestic social control. For example, L-3 Communications is an Americanbased company that produces equipment and technology for the military as well as for domestic police. The company’s website boasts that “L-3 is proud to employ more than 15,000 veterans of the U.S. military, helping them use their unique training and skills to meet our customers’ needs.” According to the firm, “Many of L-3’s top business leaders are former military personnel who provide critical insight and support for using L-3’s advanced technology and services to protect our country’s freedoms.”68

In other cases the human capital acquired through coercive foreign intervention is implicit; that is, past experiences unconsciously shape the person’s view of the appropriate role of the state and the methods employed. That an organization’s culture and goals influence employee personalities was recognized by Nobel laureate Herbert Simon, who noted that “[o]ne does not live for months or years in a particular position in an organization, exposed to some streams of communication, shielded from others, without the most profound effects upon what one knows, believes, attends to, hopes, wishes, emphasizes, fears, and proposes.”69 Simon’s point is that one cannot help but be shaped by the context within which he or she is embedded. Similarly, Colonel Donovan noted that “[i]t takes only a matter of months for each of the services to remold the average young American and turn him into a skilled, indoctrinated and motivated member of the armed forces.”70

As discussed earlier, this indoctrination might be effective in ensuring that those involved in coercive foreign intervention are oriented to the necessary interventionist mind-set. However, we must acknowledge that these experiences become part of the people involved, irrespective of how they reintegrate into domestic life. Activities that would have previously been thought of as unacceptable, extreme, or outright repugnant can become normalized and natural to those carrying them out. Instead of state-produced social control being seen as a threat to domestic liberty, it is seen as standard government procedure. And this view is diffused into our culture as participants in foreign intervention reassimilate into the array of diverse organizations in American life.

Historian and journalist Godfrey Hodgson captured these dynamics in his discussion of the effects of foreign intervention on U.S. society:

Government service in World War II—in the War Department or other civilian departments for the slightly older men, in the Office of Strategic Services or elite military units for the younger ones—gave a whole generation of ambitious and educated Americans a taste for power, as opposed to business success, and an orientation toward government service which they never lost. When they went back to their law offices or their classrooms, they took with them contacts, attitudes and beliefs they had learned in war services.71

Similarly, General Shoup noted that in the postwar period

[D]istinguished military leaders from the war years filled many top positions in government.  .  .  . [M]ilitary minds offered the benefits of firm views and problem-solving experience to the management of the nation’s affairs. Military procedures—including the general staff system, briefings, estimates of the situation, and the organizational and operational techniques of the highly schooled, confident military professionals—spread throughout American culture.72

Colonel Donovan also emphasized that World War II military experience shaped the character of the homeland. He wrote that “[t]he indoctrination with military codes and creeds experienced by millions of men and women who move in and out of the services has a continuing and prolonged and even regenerative effect upon the ideas, attitudes, and martial fiber of the nation as whole.”73 He went on to note that “[t]he lives, the attitudes, and the beliefs of America’s war veterans have been influenced by their military service; and because they represent such a large share of the adult male population their degree of militarism creates a strong imprint on the national character.”74

As these passages make clear, foreign policy and foreign intervention have real effects on domestic political and social life by affecting the attitudes, beliefs, and skills of those staffing and shaping those organizations. The cumulative effect is that domestic life can begin to reflect the characteristics of coercive interventions abroad. These effects are further enhanced by the domestic use of physical capital initially designed and developed to carry out foreign interventions abroad.

The Physical-Capital Channel

Coercive foreign intervention leads to innovations in physical tools associated with social control. This lowers the cost of projecting government power over people both abroad and at home. The logic behind the physicalcapital channel is an extension of the argument advanced by economist Tyler Cowen, who suggests that the growth, or scale, of government is linked to technological advances that lower the cost of operating a larger government.75

Similar reasoning can be applied to the scope of government activities. Technological innovations allow governments to use lower-cost methods of social control with a greater reach, not only over foreign populations but also over domestic citizens. Examples of such methods include but are not limited to surveillance and monitoring technologies, equipment for maintaining control of citizens, and weapons for efficiently controlling and killing potential and actual resistors.

The U.S. government invests a significant amount of money annually in defense-related R&D and procurement. In FY 2016, for example, the Department of Defense spent $64.8 billion on R&D and $102.7 billion on procurement.76 This combined expenditure buys a variety of military capabilities that, among other things, serve as inputs into the preparation and execution of control over distant populations. Even if advances in this physical capital are initially undertaken solely for interventions abroad, they can end up being used domestically. For example, it was recently reported that an aerial surveillance system initially developed for use in the Iraq War has been adapted by the Baltimore Police Department for domestic use in its routine operations.77

Further, there is a synergy between human capital and physical capital. Those involved in coercive foreign intervention develop unique skills at using certain types of physical capital to produce effective social control. At the same time advances in physical capital allow these specialists to be even more productive in carrying out activities related to social control over both foreign and domestic populations.

Once physical capital is available domestically, it reduces the cost of behavior conducive to aggressive social control. A literature in psychology identifies a “weapons effect” whereby tools of force can prime bellicose behavior on the part of those controlling them.78 This suggests that when tools of social control are made available to domestic government agents, they will be more likely to use them. Aggressive behavior can manifest itself through violence or through the willingness of state personnel to proactively use technologies of social control to increase regulation of citizens. For example, in the post-9/11 world the U.S. government has proactively used surveillance technologies to monitor U.S. citizens en masse.

#### The defense industry isn’t inevitable – its growth was fueled by a steady stream of profits and a concerted effort to embed militarism in the societal fabric, both of which were only made possible by years of corporate consolidation. The only solution is nationalization.

Marshall, 20—associate director of the Institute for Middle East Studies and assistant research professor at The George Washington University (Shana, “The Defense Industry’s Role in Militarizing US Foreign Policy,” Middle East Report 294 (Spring 2020), dml)

As the welfare state shrinks, one of the last sure bets for big government spending is the maintenance of the warfare state. As the global coronavirus pandemic has made incredibly clear, the US government is disinclined to pump federal resources into health programs, social insurance or food security infrastructure. But even this unprecedented pandemic and a string of the largest single-day job losses in US history have not tempered the appetite of the political and economic ruling class for ruinous levels of war expenditure.

Appended to the Congressional HEROES legislation to fund payroll for shuttered businesses was a provision designed by a defense and intelligence contractors’ association to expand coverage beyond payroll to include nearly any of those firms’ expenses. The legislation amounts to a bailout by taxpayers of the entire private sector defense and intelligence industry—one large contractor estimated that their request for funds would be around $1 billion. It is precisely such features of the military industrial complex in the United States—the bailouts, the subsidies, the profit guarantees, the federally-backed export insurance, the research and development funds—that have made the sector so lucrative.

Defense industry profits do not simply disappear into the pockets of executives and shareholders. They are deployed strategically to build support for a highly militarized form of US foreign policy. Their methods are diverse, and formal lobbying through registered agents is just the tip of the iceberg.

Defense firms finance think tanks and research agendas to provide policy papers for legislators and their staffers who are arguing for military intervention; they place their executives and allies on the National Security Council and other agencies via formal industry exchange programs; and they use their privileged regulatory position to steer the priorities of finance capital in the direction of investing more money in weapons technologies. The frequency of US wars and the fortunes of the weapons industry move in tandem; as the industry has become unassailable and immune to demands for belt-tightening or rationalization, so the United States finds itself in a state of forever war. Severing this deadly linkage, which has brutalized those abroad while immiserating Americans at home, is key to winding down the US imperial project.

The only way to cut that cord is to nationalize the military industrial sector, which would disconnect industry profits from processes of policy making, redirect private investment away from military technologies, turn research and development towards civilian applications, enhance transparency and allow for greater public accountability around questions of war and peace.

The False Promise of Leverage Through Arms Sales

Status quo commitments to the defense industry hinge on policy justifications linking arms sales and US interests. In the 1970s and 1980s, as American weapons sales to the Middle East began their stratospheric ascent, Congress expressed fears that Arab recipients would use them against Israel. The Carter Doctrine’s promise of a Rapid Deployment Force that could move to the Gulf in times of threat, however, allowed massive weapons sales—to Saudi Arabia in particular—to be characterized as prepositioned equipment that would ultimately be used by US, not Arab, soldiers.

As the Rapid Deployment Force concept gave way to permanent US basing and direct interventions in the Gulf, the policy argument for massive arms exports shifted. The new claim was that these sales gave the United States leverage over regional outcomes, both political and military. Such narratives are demonstrably false. Not only have decades of American arms sales, training and service now birthed Gulf military forces capable of (and increasingly eager to) wield their high-tech weapons, but the imagined leverage these sales were to have generated is glaringly absent. Despite the dependence of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on US and British weapons (and spare parts) neither has demonstrated any restraint in their assault on Yemen, despite public protestations from both exporters. The two largest regional recipients of free weapons (Egypt and Israel), presumably the most dependent on US weapons and therefore most likely to cave to US demands, have flagrantly violated the most basic desires of the US foreign policy establishment: maintaining lines of contact with the United States during the uprisings in 2011 and the coup in 2013 in Egypt, and putting a halt to new illegal Israeli settlements.

The reality is, after decades of flooding the globe with weapons, their export is thoroughly routinized. Threats to withhold weapons are pretense at best: The networks formed between the executives of private firms and the officials and intermediaries in major purchasing countries are so dense and well-developed they can easily mobilize the necessary political and financial resources to overcome potential opposition to specific arms transfers. In the rare case of a ban, either the language is conceived so narrowly as to have little or no impact, another supplier quickly steps in to resume supply (as Australia recently did when Britain instituted a ban on granting new weapons licenses to the Gulf countries bombing Yemen) or the physical and legal structures meant to block transfers are easily circumvented. Major exporting countries are so desperate to subsidize their own domestic industries that they often compete to offer better financing terms to even the most abusive governments.

The argument that weapons exports are a strategic military choice that allows the exporter to influence outcomes without deploying their own troops is farcical. First, the United States has [troops](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/where-us-troops-are-in-the-middle-east-and-could-now-be-a-target-visualized/2020/01/04/1a6233ee-2f3c-11ea-9b60-817cc18cf173_story.html) in 150 countries, including 70,000 in the Middle East and Afghanistan, so weapons sales are not replacing boots on the ground. Second, the smuggling and proliferation of US weapons in conflict zones where they end up being a force equalizer in the enemy’s favor suggests that flooding a place with weapons is (if anything) a basic tactical error that somehow gets repeated ad nauseum. Even in the hands of trusted regional allies like Jordan, US weapons (supplied by the CIA) have been used directly in [attacks](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/27/world/middleeast/cia-arms-for-syrian-rebels-supplied-black-market-officials-say.html) on American personnel.

If arms sales are not a policy tool designed to provide leverage or influence, what are they for? The short answer is that they are for profit. The linkage between war and profit is direct and clear. For example, in the 24-hour period after the US assassination of Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the stock holdings of just five individual weapons industry executives [increased](https://inequality.org/great-divide/war-profiteering-iran/) by $7 million. Multiply this number by tens of thousands of executives and shareholders spread throughout the industry and it is clear why there are an enormous number of white collar professionals committed to a militant US posture that serves their own professional and personal livelihood.

Defense Industry Financing of Pro-War Policy Research

The defense industry’s enormous appetite for consultants and marketing services has spawned a collection of complementary industries such as business intelligence analysts, industry journalists, niche financial advisors, and organizers of arms fairs and industry conferences. These businesses exist to service defense firms: to market them, to promote their products, to facilitate their growth and expansion.

The industry’s greatest asset, however, is the vast troves of seemingly independent research that supports interventionist foreign policies and loose weapons export regimes. Foreign policy and military policy intellectuals, and the think tanks they staff, form an extensive infrastructure interwoven with the global military-industrial complex, which has a dramatic impact on US foreign policy. Twelve of the 25 most-cited US think tanks receive big money from weapons manufacturers.[1] The security justifications produced by these researchers and the weapons industry’s drive for profit are mutually reinforcing.[2] Most Washington, DC-based think tanks like the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the Brookings Institution, the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Arab Gulf States Institute, produce material that promotes an aggressive foreign policy. Consider the Center for Security and International Studies (CSIS), one of the leading foreign policy think tanks in the United States: Among its 17 largest donors are six of the largest weapons makers (Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, SAAB AB and Huntington Ingalls, the largest military shipbuilder in the United States).

Even donors that do not initially look like defense firms are often financial firms with major interests in the defense industry: Starr Insurance is one of the largest insurers of US military contractors and other US government personnel operating overseas and Duquesne Family Capital LLC (run by infamous hedge fund manager Stanley Druckenmiller) has at various points held significant stakes in major defense firms. A scroll down the list of smaller tier donors reveals most of the rest of the military industrial complex, including General Dynamics, BAE, Bell Helicopter, Airbus and Thales.

The major think tanks draw their research fellows overwhelmingly from the national security establishment, where they have spent years cultivating ties with industry. These ties directly impact the research they produce, which directly impacts the policies that are implemented. Take a recent example: the above-mentioned CSIS authored a report sponsored (paid for) by the Aerospace Industries Association, the defense industry’s largest lobby group, on the status of the US defense industrial base. The CSIS report states, “the number of prime vendors declined from an average of approximately 78,500 to 61,700” between 2011 and 2015, driven (they assert) by sequestration and slower growth in defense spending.[3] This finding percolates through specialized defense industry media until it reaches the mainstream (in this case The Wall Street Journal) where it becomes, “Cuts to US military spending…contributed to an estimated 17,000 US firms leaving the industry between 2011 and 2015.”[4] The report itself, however, states that, “due to the limitations in the subcontract database, CSIS cannot say whether these companies have exited the industrial base,” meaning they could have changed their name, merged with a competitor, incorporated in a different country, been assigned a different industrial code (so they would no longer show up in the relevant database), been acquired by a larger firm or dropped their civilian production lines and become smaller to focus only on defense items.

For an industry lobbying association, the cost of financing a think tank report is peanuts compared to the payoff of getting your biased narrative into the major dailies and in front of the eyeballs of policymakers and their staff members. The fact that a large organization like CSIS with substantial resources and personnel that specializes in researching the defense industry cannot even disentangle corporate filings and government statistics to make a more declarative statement about the fate of these firms also hints at decades of industry efforts to deceive, inveigle and obfuscate, making it impossible for critics of militarism to muster truly comprehensive figures.

Major customers of the US defense industry also finance think tanks to help promote looser export regimes. In 2016 the UAE paid $250,000 for a policy paper at the Center for a New American Security (a major liberal think tank) that argued for loosening the Missile Technology Control Regime that prohibited the export of sophisticated drones to the UAE. Two months after the paper was released, a bipartisan group of House members wrote to President Trump pressing him to approve the UAE drone sale, using the same arguments cited in the paper. Language is often cribbed directly from literature produced by lobbying groups and reproduced in the statements made by elected representatives and the content of the legislation they pass, yet another marker of the blurred lines between the fortunes of private business and the careers of public officials in the United States. It also begs the question, if industry groups (directly or indirectly) are dictating the terms of policy, why bother electing representatives in the first place? In order to devise a democratic and accountable foreign policy it is necessary to divorce questions of war from questions of executive compensation and shareholder dividends, through processes of nationalization as outlined by Pete Moore elsewhere in this issue.

Like defense firms, the Gulf states spend large sums to influence political campaigns and are major donors to US think tanks, providing over $85 million to nine such organizations between 2010 and 2017. Most of these funds were disbursed to deflect criticism of the Saudi-UAE bombing campaign in Yemen and to undermine the Iran nuclear deal. This financial support partly explains the limited opposition to the war on Yemen from establishment US foreign policy circles and Congress (until the Saudi government murdered journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018), as well as the promotion of new weapons exports and defense programs. Other states, including Libya, Syria, Tunisia and Egypt, retain highly-paid lobbying firms to plant op-eds in American newspapers, secure private meetings with influential government officials and fund friendly policy memos, often in anticipation of opposition to big defense export deals—another way that government policy and spending patterns are shaped by the arms trade and military prerogatives.

Well-funded think tanks—such as the Foundation for the Defense of Democracy (FDD), a hard-right neoconservative think tank—can even bankroll their experts directly into the executive foreign policy apparatus. As reported by the Institute for Responsible Statecraft, Richard Goldberg, one of the National Security Council’s most outspoken Iran hawks, sat on the council while his salary and partial expenses were paid by FDD. Nor is this an isolated incident, as researchers from similar organizations, such as the pro-Israel Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), also make rotations onto the council. Overlap of this kind is not surprising, given the formal institutionalization of the revolving door between the private sector and government through legislation like the Intergovernmental Personnel Act, meant to loan industry and academic experts to the government on a temporary basis. Nonetheless, the bias of the program is clear, since the Department of Defense has four such exchange programs directly funneling personnel into its units, while other major agencies with equally complex scientific and technical mandates (such as the Department of Energy and the Treasury) have only one such dedicated program.

Financialization and Globalization Enhance the Defense Industry’s Reach

In addition to its enormous political clout, the ability of the industry to dictate US foreign policy and steer it in a militant direction has grown dramatically as a result of structural changes in the global economy, notably the globalization and outsourcing of production and larger patterns of financialization. The formation of a global arms market has driven competition and salesmanship to new heights, generating the proliferation of weapons and technologies through sales strategies like offsets, licensing, arms fairs, leasing arrangements and other forms of promotional financing, military assistance programs, technology transfers and even programs to establish new defense engineering departments in overseas universities. At the same time, the explosion of the homeland security industry and intelligence gathering has militarized much of the global data industry: Civilian data firms have become key actors in intelligence gathering operations (going back to ChoicePoint in Operation Condor) and defense firms regularly acquire civilian data firms to integrate into their own operations.

Despite the industrial nature of weapons production, financialization has greatly enhanced the reach and influence of the industry. As global inequality has grown, the share of capital controlled by the ruling class has exploded, and with it have appeared new forms of securitization and avenues for investment. The number of private equity and venture capital firms specializing in the defense sector is expanding. Firms like Veritas Capital, Civitas Group, Arlington Capital Partners, Behrman Capital and Paladin Capital specialize in investing in defense startups (or steering civilian tech startups to apply themselves to more militant pursuits), providing investment capital to fuel growth in weapons development and steer even more private dollars into the military sector.[5]

Venture capital firms have been particularly active in areas like financing state surveillance projects in the Gulf and developing machine learning (or AI) for weapons systems. The largest weapons firms also have their own corporate venture capital arms, like Boeing’s HorizonX. Most private equity firms combine the marquee names and government contacts of high-ranking military and national security retirees with veteran investment bankers who use their rolodexes of rich clients to raise capital for new funds designed to invest in security enterprises. The structural phenomenon of financialization has thus combined the enormous wealth of the ruling elite with the enormous contracting budgets of the Pentagon and the Department of Homeland Security to drive the further militarization and securitization of US economic activity.

Despite the contraction of the welfare state and other global harbingers of increasing poverty, there is an enormous amount of fictitious capital circulating in the global economy desperately seeking to transform into something concrete. The expansion of the militarized economy in the United States makes the defense industry an ideal destination for this footloose capital and a sure bet for profits because of the merging of public and private interests around continued military interventions abroad. The near constant refrains about primordial conflicts, biblical animosities and inexplicably enduring violence that surround most mainstream commentary on the Middle East feed into this vortex, drawing ever more capital into the sector. Consider the case of the CIA-funded venture capital firm In-Q-Tel, which was co-founded by a former Lockheed CEO and which works to identify technologies that give the agency an edge in global intelligence gathering. For every $1 that In-Q-Tel commits to a startup, it attracts much more in additional private investment from firms and wealthy investors; the ratio was $1:$8 as early as 2006 and has no doubt increased since then. Such ability to leverage investment not only steers firms in a more securitized direction (in terms of their products and services) but also siphons money away from sectors that do not have security applications, like civilian infrastructure.

The intersecting of the financial class with the military establishment ensures a steady delivery of investment in militarized technologies and high returns for finance capital from continued US commitment to a highly militaristic foreign policy—with terrible results for populations targeted by the US war machine. This symbiosis produces a narrow foreign policy agenda dominated by military solutions. The militarization of finance capital (and the increasing importance of finance to the military industrial sector) is facilitated by weapons producers’ political influence, itself made possible by the profitability of their industry. Consolidation driven by mergers and acquisitions has led to enormous firms with substantial capital assets and extensive political networks. Their high profits come from a range of sources, including the simple act of price inflation. Many weapons export contracts include so-called offsets, as well as consultancy fees that together exceed 50 percent of the overall contract cost. There is no way a company can pay out 50 percent of its revenue on a sale unless the asking price is orders of magnitude higher than the production cost. Contract mechanisms like cost-plus arrangements that guarantee a minimum level of profit (regardless of cost overruns or mismanagement) likewise contribute to high profits, as do the enormous public subsidies enjoyed by these firms. Nationalizing the defense industry would mean the revenue would be re-invested (in technological development, for example) or added to general government revenues to be spent on non-defense priorities, instead of being used to promote war.

The reliability of the US war machine since the attacks of September 11, 2001 has meant high levels of investor optimism about growth of the military industrial sector, ensuring companies are able to access easy financing and other forms of support to initiate new projects, start consortiums, form new partnerships, establish new subsidiaries, open overseas sales offices and form corporate venture capital units. Global investment funds and wealth managers are not ignorant of the benefits their clients receive from investing in weapons firms. Public funding that continually expands the defense sector perversely guarantees these private returns. How else could defense stocks realize extraordinary rates of return—the S&P Aerospace and Defense index delivered 16.4 percent annualized returns between 2008 and 2018, compared to 11.2 percent for the S&P overall—with never a whisper of a weapons industry bubble? The answer is simple: because bubbles must have the potential to burst and the military industrial complex does not.

When times are tough, as they are now during the COVID-19 pandemic, public bailouts of military industrial giants are deemed axiomatic. In fact, they operate even in the breach: the US federal reserve spent so much on buying up corporate debt during the pandemic that firms like Boeing were able to raise extraordinary amounts in the private bond market. Investors clearly sensed that the firm was a safe bet, despite software glitches on its new 737 Max jet that killed 346 passengers in two separate crashes and a liquidity crisis caused by spending all its reserves on stock buybacks to increase shareholder returns. As larger sums of public dollars flow to defense budgets, the sector attracts even more private capital, which contributes to the industry’s growth, which makes it “too big to fail,” which attracts more capital, and on and on.

Many factors contribute to both the industry’s growth and the continuation of a militaristic foreign policy. The flip side of driving investment into the industry is starving its opponents and the overseers of resources. The revolving door (and significant salary differentials between the public and private sector) complicates the government’s ability to maintain skilled contract managers in the Pentagon, which is reflected in all the logistical and managerial failures that have plagued large weapons programs. Weapons firms should not be left to self-regulate, monitor the destinations and end-users of their products and perform other basic oversight functions. Firms and their allies have lobbied hard for the reduction of what they deem government red tape, which has led to government contract managers who are not well compensated or well trained and are at a severe disadvantage vis-à-vis the industry they are meant to oversee. The industry’s high profits enable firms to siphon off top talent that is put to work helping them sidestep regulations, secure preferential treatment and gain access to top elected officials. Individuals in government positions frequently soft-pedal, delay or reject any policy that would be detrimental to these firms because they often hope to leave their modest public sector job for a future corporate one. The result is the shifting of more and more oversight of programs and policies to the firms themselves.

Budgeting for War, Indefinitely

Beyond hawkish think tanks and structural changes in the economy, there are many spending and budgetary practices that promote the continuation of existing wars by further embedding private profit in the decision-making process. Being in a constant state of war necessarily uses up stockpiles of existing weapons, and defense profits come disproportionately from adding additional production runs of existing weapons. The process of designing and building new weapons systems (not just minor modifications) that will not be fed directly into existing stockpiles, by contrast, is riskier and less profitable. Firms thus spend money on research and lobbying to promote looser export regimes and hawkish policy on existing conflicts because both ensure continued demand for weapons already designed and in production. And it is not only the declared wars whose battlefields are stocked with weapons. The large numbers of US overseas bases and forward deployment sites often have their own stockpiles, which can (unsurprisingly) influence officials who are deciding whether or not to launch a new US military intervention nearby.

An additional mundane practice that promotes and perpetuates war is the design of budgeting under conditions of war—mainly how Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) interact with the normal defense budgeting process. Actual defense priorities can be moved into the OCO budget, which funds the global war on terror, making more room in the normal defense authorization process to pay for things that are not necessary, like additional production runs of weapons systems that will keep firms’ assembly lines humming but have not been requested by any of the uniformed military service branches.

Current conflicts also act as laboratories to facilitate the use of emerging weapons technologies that exacerbate tensions and produce new rounds of fighting. Such test runs are often less about performance and more about publicity, as they garner significant media attention but often lack a tactical purpose. Two examples are the use of the Massive Ordnance Air Blast Bomb (MOAB) in Afghanistan to target a small number of ISIS fighters and when Israel became the first air force to fly Lockheed Martin’s F-35 in combat. When allies like Israel, which carries out regular military operations in Palestine, Lebanon and elsewhere in the region, publicly use new weapons systems, their actions can drum up additional commercial interest and further solidify the relationships between major firms and their biggest clients. In this case, the jet was used in Gaza against Hamas, which does not even possess radar or air defense systems (much less its own air force) so it was tactically pointless. But it did terrorize Palestinians and increase tensions on the ground—and its maiden voyage was widely reported in defense industry dailies.

Where to Go from Here?

By recognizing that industry profits help drive the war machine, the question then becomes how to remove those profits from the foreign policy equation. If driving profits into shareholder dividends and executive pay were less of a priority because defense companies were publicly owned, many of the perverse incentives for continued war would be short circuited. A policy of nationalizing the defense industry would remove the linkage between profit and policy, but it would also have additional upsides, like encouraging more research that has civilian applications. So-called cost plus contracting, for example, which is dominant in defense procurement and incentivizes keeping costs high, prevents spillover of technologies into commercial industry where the impetus is to develop low-cost technologies that are affordable to average consumers.

Nationalization would also mean greater transparency since the industry could no longer use claims of proprietary information to obscure much of its inner workings (including details that have absolutely nothing to do with sensitive technology, like what percentage of a specific weapons system is produced in overseas factories). Currently, the information needed to track the industry’s global supply chain or allow for independent oversight of procurement spending is either classified or so opaque as to defy systematic examination. Public control and greater oversight would inaugurate political processes and pressures that can help put non-military solutions on an equal footing.

In this environment, military spending can be properly framed as an opportunity cost: for example, how many hospital beds and ventilators are worth one F-35 sitting in a hanger in Germany? Highlighting the disparities in funding for war versus funding to protect human life, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, could become a routine budgetary conversation with decidedly unroutine effects on the continuation of the US imperial project.

#### The plan substantially demilitarizes foreign policy by severing the link between profit and warmaking and opening the defense industry up to public scrutiny. Debating the consequences of the plan independently generates momentum.

Moore, 20—associate professor of political science at Case Western Reserve University (Pete, “A Not-So-Modest Proposal to Nationalize the Defense Industry,” Middle East Report 294 (Spring 2020), dml)

Shifting the course of catastrophic American policy in the Middle East requires bolder steps than changes in doctrine and grand strategy. A substantially less militarized foreign policy necessitates altering the structural political economies that have justified, nurtured and rewarded the carnage. Ending taxpayers’ support for defense industry profits would threaten little of the dynamism and technological achievement of the past. A transition to public control and oversight, however, could prove a powerful tool to democratize foreign policy making.

Subordinating the industry’s profit drive to the messiness of democratic consensus building can dismantle the current collusive networks that have kept the United States engaged in constant war for most of our lifetimes. The insular world of industry executives and their professional foreign policy advocates could be opened to wider agendas for what constitutes national defense—like redirecting funds to buttress agricultural supply chains and rural hospitals. A nationally decentralized public defense sector could incentivize the growth of a more civilian-oriented cadre of defense experts.

Calls to nationalize America’s defense industries are not new—they typically come when high defense spending is punctuated by domestic economic crisis or when the US military is engaged in an unpopular war. At the height of the Vietnam War, the liberal economist John Kenneth Galbraith argued for making the defense industry de jure what it already was: a public corporation that relied heavily on public support and subsidy. He was motivated to make this argument because of the role that a profit-driven industry plays in militarizing US foreign policy, and in part because he knew that increasing spending on defense would decrease investment in President Kennedy’s New Frontier package of economic and social programs.

Since that time, formal US military spending has gone from $45 billion to nearly $700 billion annually. As social programs have atrophied, the major defense industry corporations have diversified their sectors to take on essential government functions, including data management and healthcare administration, further expanding their share of government contracting. And thanks to axiomatic public subsidies, defense firms have little to fear from any market discipline that might endanger their high annual profits and essentially recession-proof stock valuations. Governments, of course, keep secrets, but the spread of hidden bureaucracies and obscured financial networks around defense contracting push more and more decision making into the shadows. Deeper forms of public regulation or outright takeover of the defense sector is not only reasonable but necessary.

The current crisis prompted by the coronavirus pandemic has laid bare—more than ever before—the costs of under-investment in non-defense sectors like health and welfare programs within the United States. The swiftness of calls for nationalizing parts of the American economy during the coronavirus crisis has been breathtaking. Nevertheless, American neoliberalism dies hard. Worker assistance is temporary, means-tested and tightly regulated, corporate bailouts are programmatic, broad and opaque. Advocacy for a nationalized defense sector has to tackle some of this conventional wisdom at the same time that it advances a realistic form of public sequestration. In other words, sequestration advocacy must acknowledge and build upon the past technical successes of defense industries and their public funders at the same time it advances a radical reorganization of that relationship. Nationalization done in this way can be less blunt and more contoured.

Dispelling Industry Myths

The sociologist Fred Block critiques the enduring idea of a perfectly functioning market where external political intrusions only end in failure as “market fundamentalism.”[1] Just as the mythology around protecting the supply of oil has served to justify American militarization of the Gulf, market fundamentalism has justified ignoring or avoiding greater public engagement with the process of crafting economic policy. The rationale is that nationalization would threaten the dynamism of private defense industries, spelling the end of the country’s qualitative lead in technologies and development. Another conventional argument about impediments to nationalization evokes the way the US political economy is structured around a federal system with co-equal branches of government operating through a myriad of boards, associations and organizations. The rationale here is that top-down and centralized forms of industrial policy making, as practiced in the East Asian or European contexts, are simply not attainable.

Both objections, however, are rebutted by the actual history of the American defense industry. Since the 1970s, three industry developments have moved in tandem. First has been the emergence of “a particular cluster of federal agencies that collaborate closely with private actors in pursuit of security-related objectives.”[2] In other words, the defense industrial complex counts as America’s most successful form of industrial policy. Hardly the laissez-faire of neoliberal economics, these public-private institutional relationships have allowed for long-term planning, experimentation and commercialization of defense technologies.

A second development, following from these public-private relationships, is the widely acknowledged contributions of defense firms to transformative techno-innovations. Every step of these technological evolutions was guided not by competition or the price mechanism but by close coordination between firms and government planners.

The third important industry development is that while the development of the American defense sector has been distinct in some ways from the neoliberal order, it has nevertheless replicated some of its anti-politics. Since the 1970s, Congressional abandonment of defense and intelligence oversight has allowed rubber stamp approval of budgets. To further flatten political disputes around defense budgeting, the nation’s largest defense manufacturers have dispersed research, development and production facilities across state and congressional districts. While their corporate headquarters are clustered in wealthy zip codes on the East and West coasts, a network of subsidiary production and research facilities is intentionally dispersed much more broadly. Ironically, these developments advocate for, not against, the unique possibilities of American defense nationalization.

Decentralized Nationalization

The pursuit of defense sector nationalization would not need to clash with the country’s administrative and institutional decentralization as much as conform to it. The dispersal strategy of private contractors can be repurposed to fit the politics of decentralized nationalization. For example, the network of Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDC) that undergirds defense research and development offers a compelling template. In New Mexico, one of the poorest states, the location of Sandia National Laboratories among a cluster of other military research organizations has resulted in a state with “more PhD-holding scientists and engineers per worker than any other state in the union.”[3] As a result, that state’s congressional delegation and political leadership have been champions of federal research and technology development. Without the impetus to war, the spread of this kind of research and technology can instead address the very real and urgent need to rebuild and expand much of our country’s industrial and technological infrastructure.

A publicly operated defense sector organized along regional lines and specializing in different aspects of research, development and production appeals to both political and structural realities. Decentralized nationalization builds upon the experimentation and nimbleness of the FFRDC. At the same time, a national web of regional defense centers brings larger parts of the country into these networks. Opportunities for civilianizing and broadening participation in the defense sector can therefore expand.

The predominance of military basing in the American South and West recycles those regions’ conservative politics back into national defense policies. Not surprisingly, southerners and the children of service personnel dominate active duty rosters, and retired personnel tend to live near their former bases or go to work for defense contractors in the same area. The Midwest and the Northeast, by contrast, have historically not participated to the same extent. Structural changes that disperse participation in the defense sector could prove a powerful tool to open political economies and public investments to wider social interests and agendas. It could also prevent firms from shipping their operations overseas. Just as commercial conglomerates and big agribusiness have exploited trade and investment regulations in order to drive down wages and increase profits, so too have defense firms. Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Textron, General Dynamics, General Electric, Honeywell and Raytheon Technologies all operate low-wage subsidiaries in Mexico that manufacture parts that are shipped back to the United States. Ironically, current factory closures in Mexico and India due to the COVID-19 pandemic are causing issues up the supply chain, resulting in delays for weapons deliveries to industry customers in the United States and elsewhere.

There is no guarantee that nationalization alone will lower budgets, end waste or quickly lessen the political attractiveness of a militarized foreign policy. What is known, however, is that the usual methods of opposing America’s militarized approach to global engagement has made little impact.

The pandemic has opened up the space for radical dialogue on government priorities—but budgetary space must also be made if we are to implement many of the most urgent changes. Advocacy for such a shift requires contending with arguments in favor of the status quo and responding to claims that the industry cannot be transformed, or the tired canard that the defense industry is the last bastion of decent-paying manufacturing jobs in the United States. Understanding how the industry manages to take its largesse and spin that into broad structural support for foreign wars is a critical step in that direction.

#### Nationalization is a crucial first step in dismantling empire and holding the military accountable. Changing institutions is both possible and essential.

Aigner and Brenes, 19—deputy director of the Gotham Center at the City University of New York AND teaches history at Yale University (Peter-Christian and Michael, “Shrinking the Military-Industrial Complex by Putting It to Work at Home,” <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/military-industrial-complex-green-new-deal/>, dml) [language modifications denoted by brackets]

If you needed further proof of Bernie Sanders’s argument that most Americans stand with him on the issues, consider the reaction to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s Green New Deal. Despite attacks from the leadership in, or around, both parties, over 80 percent of voters support the litany of proposals advocated by the House resolution: job and income guarantees, universal health care, a cleaner environment, and lower socioeconomic inequality. Americans turn out, yet again, to be far less conservative than elites have maintained over the last half-century.

Nowhere has the gap between majority will and elite consensus been more conspicuous or longstanding than on US foreign policy. Trump’s election is perhaps the best demonstration of that fact. But there is strong evidence that most Americans were never “liberal internationalists” either. While it is notable that support for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has waned in recent years, in polls Americans have consistently preferred diplomacy to military “solutions” before (and not long after) 9/11. Nonetheless, US soldiers and mercenaries are now prosecuting the latter in 80 countries, nearly half the planet.

This situation has prompted the left to call for a comprehensive alternative in US foreign policy. But the question remains, how, exactly, the left can make inroads against the “American empire,” as it is now casually described even on the right. Any talk of dramatically changing foreign policy must give serious attention to reforming the institutions shaping it. In part, that means creating organizations to compete with the “foreign-policy establishment”—“the blob,” to use its apt nickname. But the left might also do well to consider another idea that has fallen into obscurity: converting the military-industrial complex to peacetime work.

Since the end of the Cold War, the military has seemingly become “everything”—gas-station operators in Afghanistan, concert promoters in Africa, and now, potential contractors to build Trump’s wall. Yet the defense industry has gone unchecked, even as the evidence is clear that it has corrupted the democratic process. Just as the popularity of the Green New Deal—and its focus on the job guarantee—can help us fight global warming, so too might it go a long way toward humanizing our foreign policy and creating a better economy.

Defense conversion is most closely associated with South Dakota Democrat and 1972 presidential candidate George McGovern, who made it his signature issue in Congress. A recession in the mid-1950s and the military cuts following the Cuban missile crisis gave him the opportunity to push the idea through the Senate, and in 1964 he called for a National Economic Conversion Commission (NECC) that would oversee the work. McGovern wanted to get the defense industry out of job creation, recognizing, as many liberal and conservative elites did privately, that the military-industrial complex was essentially a “gigantic WPA.” McGovern also wanted to free up hundreds of millions of federal monies for domestic welfare, to shore up the welfare state. But the Vietnam War killed the project, as his fellow Democrats denounced him as a “radical” in the middle of a war.

McGovern drew his ideas from the Columbia economist Seymour Melman, who made defense conversion his lifelong project. In his most famous book, The Permanent War Economy (1974), Melman argued that the military economy was a form of “state capitalism” whose “relentlessly predatory effects” had caused America’s economic decline. Melman brought an economists’ predilection for statistics and an activist’s zeal to what he called “Pentagon capitalism.” Americans, he insisted, had to eliminate unnecessary military spending if they wanted to prevent any future “Vietnam-type interventions.”

Melman had a comprehensive vision for defense conversion. He thought a combination of community-based groups, alternative-use committees, and federal mandates (such as a revitalized NECC) to enforce conversion could lead the country out of the war economy. The military-industrial complex, he argued, had robbed Americans of a manufacturing-based economy, with stable wages for the working class. The result was a “post-industrial economy” where wealth was stratified, jobs were scarce, and a few wealthy elites controlled the labor of most workers. It was the inequality produced by the military-industrial complex, he felt, that was the true tragedy of the Cold War, not just military adventurism and bloated defense budgets.

How Melman’s conversion plans would have solved the issue of donor pressure—of Pentagon lobbying—remained a question, however, even without Vietnam. Melman’s answer to this problem was to “send representatives to Congress who would reflect a nonmilitarist organization,” but even the most liberal Democrats were consistently opposed to military cuts in their districts, as they would be in later decades. The problem of the profit motive for military contractors, and how military profits insidiously influenced electoral politics and politicians (ones who aimed to squash conversion efforts), plagued reformers of the military-industrial complex.

The solution was left to Harvard’s John Kenneth Galbraith, who had a grander vision for defense conversion: nationalizing the military-industrial complex. His argument was straightforward. Arms manufacturers depended on Washington: Congress funded the research and development. Privately made weapons also routinely underperformed, and cost far more than estimated. By converting these already highly concentrated, essentially public firms into governmental nonprofits, Galbraith believed voters could “substantially civilize the incentive structure.”

Obviously, nationalizing arms production would not (immediately) eliminate the military-industrial complex. Like Eisenhower, Galbraith understood that private “merchants of war” were no more puppet masters than were generals, shadowy CIA directors, or presidents. All pushed for greater internationalism; all saw their powers, and budgets, grow enormously. But the only real way to shrink the military-industrial complex, to eliminate the private incentives for increased military spending, lay in severing the connections of for-profit business to national security. Nationalization was thus a necessary first step, before any systematic plan for conversion might be implemented.

Galbraith expected the proposal to get attention. (Liberals, he said, were finally beginning to show “a certain minimum of courage” about the Pentagon.) Instead… nothing. Conservatives, unironically, cried socialism. Moderates dismissed it as “fantastic.” Paul Nitze, the main author of NSC-68, said voters and politicians would never stand for it: The Pentagon was too important to America’s economy. Former secretary of state Dean Acheson crowed that Galbraith must have fallen under the spell of anti-war radicals. But letters poured in reporting enormous waste and support—from defense-industry workers.

Galbraith’s (and Melman’s) biggest supporters in the 1970s were labor unions. Indeed, despite the AFL-CIO’s deep involvement with Cold War foreign policy and support for the Vietnam War, union leaders such as the UAW’s Walter Reuther and the Machinists’ William Winpisinger backed the idea of conversion to a civilian economy. Over 1,000 labor figures even sponsored a “labor for peace” forum in 1972, demanding an end to American involvement in Vietnam and “to turn our country from the path of killing and destruction to the path of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness through peace, dignity, and full employment.”

But little changed. Even as Democrats became the more dovish party, few championed conversion. Meanwhile, the defense industry mirrored larger economic trends: declines in manufacturing, wage cuts, and a shift to white-collar labor. Austerity reinforced militarism at home, as defense jobs, with their good pay and benefits, disappeared—to much local anger. Nationally, however, support for more Vietnams remained low, despite a very loud chorus of bipartisan elites advocating incursions in Africa and Latin America in the name of anti-communism.

Reagan’s election in 1980 and his subsequent military buildup postponed defense conversion indefinitely. New York Democratic Representative Ted Weiss—who, like McGovern, was a discipline of Melman—consistently proposed conversion legislation once in office after 1977. House majority leader (and later speaker) Jim Wright remained committed to Weiss’s legislation for much of his tenure; but Reagan, congressional Republicans, and the Department of Defense killed Weiss’s (and Wright’s) bills by the mid-1980s.

The unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union forced conversion back onto the table. A series of grassroots campaigns with names such as the Arizona Council for Economic Conversion and the Coalition to Stop the Trident (many of them led by volunteers) waged across the country in the late 1980s and early 1990s pushed for alternative sources of revenue to the Pentagon. Faced with these pressures, 1992 presidential candidate Bill Clinton, who started his political career with McGovern, expressed interest in cutting defense to invest in transportation infrastructure, including “a high-speed rail network.” Yet again, however, liberals and conservatives proved no different in government, voting to keep the military-industrial complex going, even though the United States had become the world’s first truly uncontested superpower.

It remains such. And yet the complex has grown exponentially.

Nonetheless, potential countervailing forces remain. Considering the overwhelming support for the Green New Deal, which cleverly seeks to reduce global warming through full employment, the left might do well to ground its foreign-policy visions in reform of the military-industrial complex itself. Direct job-creation programs have always been popular, despite opposition from Republican and (more often) Democratic elites. The idea of establishing a public option, as it were, for unprofitable but economically productive and socially valuable work has also consistently won remarkable majorities. Herein lies an opportunity for proponents of the Green New Deal to regulate military contractors and finance job growth by converting the military-industrial complex to peaceful ends.

Galbraith’s idea of nationalizing the industry, likewise, offers a practical means for curbing the enormous pressure that military spending bears on elections. In so doing, it also holds out the promise of changing the huge gap between the public and the elite on US foreign policy. Because it is a private industry, free to lobby, Pentagon contractors reinforce the bipartisan echo chamber, from hiring ex-military brass and pundits without diplomatic or scholarly backgrounds to dominate the media conversation, to funding the “think tanks” on which Democratic and Republican presidents rely. The military-industrial complex is not just a product of the “foreign-policy establishment.” It protects and strengthens that establishment. It has served as too great a barrel of pork for elected officials, well-heeled donors, and (more understandably) US workers—so much that private contractors, now, reap almost 50 percent of the military budget. Any effort to reform this “industry,” to figure out how it can be a slave [subject to], not a master, of the public interest, is crucial. And conversion (via nationalization) might be one.

#### Anti-imperialism requires a focus on the material dimensions of power, an emphasis on collective networks of macro-political struggle, and an account of the potential consequences of our methods. Broad-brush critiques based on particularized subjectivities flatten revolutionary histories and reproduce imperial imaginaries.

Murray, 20—PhD candidate at the London School of Economics (Charles, “Imperial dialectics and epistemic mapping: From decolonisation to anti-Eurocentric IR,” European Journal of International Relations, Vol 26, Issue 2, 2020, dml)

A durable tendency of International Relations (IR) scholarship in the last 15 years has been to promote the addition of ‘non-Western’ ideas, practices and histories to correct disciplinary Eurocentrism.1 This article argues that this is not a solution, but a significant part of the problem. Rather than producing a global discipline, or a discipline more attuned to power in the production of knowledge, the addition of the non-Western as a distinct category of thought and practice contributes to an ethnification of world political inquiry. This reproduces a hierarchical imperial imaginary: a divided image of the world based on essentialised constructions of ethnic and cultural difference.

The problem often begins with essentialised conceptions of empire and ‘the Western’. Reviving the critiques of some mid-20th century anticolonial nationalists, anti-Eurocentric critics tend to reduce empire to its oppressive, exclusionist or assimilationist practices. While empires could be all of these things, critics tend to ignore or diminish the productive role of empires in enabling the politics of identitarian difference (Cooper, 2005: 23). Rather than merely excluding, these politics formed the basis for elite post-colonial expertise and representation (Kelly and Kaplan, 2001; Muppidi, 2012; Said, 1979; Shaw, 2002). The conflation of empire with the West therefore obfuscates the designs and coexistence of non-Western empires and would-be empires.

Critics also tend to accept an ahistorical and essentialist vision of the Western as representing secular rationalism. An image is, thus, produced of Western IR as lacking its cultural, spiritual or relational other half: a lack which the non-Western must be brought in to correct (e.g. Shahi and Ascione, 2016). While pointing out the limitations of the Western/non-Western binary is not new (e.g. Bilgin, 2008; Doty, 1996; Grovogui, 2006; Hutchings, 2011; Shilliam, 2010), many scholars still seem resigned to it as a necessary tool, which will eventually produce a more inclusive discipline somewhere down the line.2 The fundamental claim of this article is that adding ethnicised or culturalist representations of non-Western traits will never deliver a global or post-imperial IR. Adding ethnic and cultural variations on IR concepts such as sovereignty, agency or cosmopolitanism contributes to a world divided by imperial categories, and props up the subordinate power claims of local universalisms. A fuller and more complex picture of humanity is denied in favour of stereotypes. Transversal processes of co-constitution and strategic alliance-making are obscured by representations of autogenous difference.

This article argues that projects to add the non-Western should be understood as a dimension of difference assertion internal to dialectical relations with hegemonic knowledge formations. By this I do not mean to redeploy the well-established and over-simplistic critique that any counter-hegemonic assertion of cultural difference is orientalist or an instance of self-imposed alienation (e.g. Chibber, 2013). Rather, that epistemic difference should be understood as part of a non-linear process of representation, which is not autonomous from the uneven political terrain on which global North and South, or ‘white’ and ‘non-white’ race relations take place.

While many IR scholars now recognise the need to situate approaches to world politics in more historical and relational analysis, this article seeks to make a contribution to how more historical and relational analysis should be approached when it comes to legacies of imperial hierarchy. Developing an interpretive analysis of anti-imperial intellectual history and recent anti-Eurocentric IR scholarship, this article offers a critique of how the Western and non-Western are represented by our current scholarly discourse. Building out from this critique, I draw on the writing and political biographies of William Edward Burghardt (WEB) Du Bois and Frantz Fanon to advance two concepts: epistemic mapping and imperial dialectics. I approach Du Bois and Fanon comparatively, as two generations of theorists attempting to address the problems of an imperial world order. Like contemporary critics of Eurocentric IR, Du Bois and Fanon wrote from the global South against dominant Western knowledge formations. Their anti-imperial struggles sometimes elicited, what I call, epistemic mapping: a claimed ownership or close association between particular ways of thinking, seeing or knowing the world with particular places, imagined communities, or social identities and subjectivities. However, Du Bois and Fanon deployed these constructions of the non-Western as part of reflexive and changing tactics embedded in their evolving anti-imperial strategies. They each shifted from the politics of ethno-cultural particularism, precisely because of the inability of these politics to sustain anti-imperial momentum after the Second World War and African decolonisation. For Fanon, more explicitly, representations of difference were inextricable from imperial dialectics: historical social formations that result from imperial encounters and changing political conjunctures, and that should not be taken for universal, timeless or generic relations between coloniser and colonised. The significance of this for inquiry is that representations of the Western and non-Western are co-constituted, subject to social and political relations, which are multiaxial, and are strongly determined by historical developments.

By contrast with Fanon and the later Du Bois, many contemporary scholars construct the non-Western as a concrete corrective to Eurocentrism. This is because knowledge institutions such as the modern university tend to incentivise the reification of different definable and coexisting knowledge genres (Mamdani, 2012; Said, 1979; see Berrey, 2015; Reus-Smit, 2017). Such a practice would have been recognisable to Fanon as either belonging to a particular moment of subaltern self-assertion, or the conservative cultural nationalist politics of the anti-colonial right. In arguing for the addition of the non-Western to the Western, in order to get the global or the post-imperial, contemporary scholars reproduce the ethnicised definitions and arguments for coexistence of cultural nationalists. Against the stated intentions of some anti-Eurocentric IR scholars,3 this results in conceptions of non-Western difference, which have historically serviced the interests of experts and national elites within an imperial world order. Thus, the practice of epistemic mapping in contemporary inquiry evinces a form of imperial dialectics, which exists in our own disciplinary ontologies and frames of analysis.

The remainder of this article is composed of three sections and a conclusion. The first section situates Du Bois and Fanon within the context of the imperial ‘Black Atlantic’, and draws on their anti-imperial politics to reveal the production of a hierarchical and divided political imaginary. The second section shows how this imperial imaginary is reproduced in contemporary academic discourse. The third section draws on Du Bois’s and Fanon’s anti-imperial world politics: their concerns about identitarian politics and their advocacy of internationalism and cultural revolution. The article concludes by briefly suggesting alternative ways forward.

The imperial division of the world

The past decade and a half has seen major corrections to the ‘wilful forgetting’ of empire by what has traditionally been a Eurocentric or predominantly ‘American social science’.4 The ‘re-turn to empire in IR’ is now well underway, with a rich, growing literature on the various forms of connection between empire, world politics, international order and the discipline of IR itself (Bayly, 2014; e.g. Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004; Keene, 2002; Shilliam, 2010; Thakur et al., 2017; Vitalis, 2015). Yet, there remain limits to the extent to which the imperial frame of analysis can so far be construed as ‘reconstructive’ rather than simply ‘additive’ (see Pasha, 2010: 218). This is particularly the case when it comes to the question of how to conceptualise notions of identity, subjectivity and difference, which are historically rooted in imperial relations. While several scholars now call for inclusion of the non-Western to address Eurocentric erasures and violence, far fewer seem fully ready to acknowledge that such addition requires equal attention to the problem of representation in our scholarly practice. Representations of the non-Western in contradistinction to the Western are inherent to anti-Eurocentric IR scholarship, yet these representations also have origins in the imperial division of the world.

The anti-imperial archive serves as a crucial yet still under-utilised resource in addressing these issues. While some critical IR scholars draw on specific works and concepts by certain anti-imperial thinkers, few studies read these through a longer historical trajectory of critical thought on empire and situate it in relation to its social world. As a consequence it becomes too easy to associate certain works, concepts or thinkers with a transhistorical, non-Western perspective. To be fair, it is only relatively recently that political theorists have begun to situate the writings of canonical Western thinkers in relation to their social world (see Valdez, 2017). What such an approach can reveal is that claims to epistemic difference are not entirely new, but have resonances with past political efforts to integrate ethno-culturally different societies into a connected and unequal world order. Thus, epistemic difference should not be seen simply as a reflection of an externally existing reality, but as a process of representation, which is power laden and dialectical.

The categories that would eventually evolve into a rhetorical commonplace of West/East or West/non-West were born bound up in contestation over the meaning of ethno-cultural difference within a world order divided by empires (Aydin, 2007; Barkawi, 2010; Biswas, 2007; Doty, 1996; Go and Lawson, 2017; Said, 1979, 1993; Salter, 2002).5 The imperial division of the world was both discursive and material. Writing for a UNESCO conference in 1972, Amílcar Cabral argued that colonial social genesis and fragmentation were the result of ‘imperialist capital’, which

imposed new kind of relations on the indigenous society, imparting to it a more complex structure, and engendered, fostered, sharpened, or resolved contradictions and social conflicts. . . it gave birth to new nations based on human groupings or peoples at different stages of development (2016 (1972): 160–161).

The territories in Africa and the ‘new world’, which would become associated with pan-African and black radical politics, were differentiated by imperial capital and forced labour flows in various ways (e.g. Gilroy, 1993; Hopkins, 1973; Jones, 2005; Rodney, 1982; Shilliam, 2009; Williams, 1994). African territories were differentiated between coastal societies, which had centuries of engagement with outsiders, and inland societies, which were sometimes understood to have remained more traditionally African (Shumway, 2014). Within coastal and inland societies, there was further differentiation between tribal elites, the Western-educated middle classes and different segments of the masses. There were also differentiations between colonies, which reflected not only their respective European rulers, but their various uses and importance for imperial extraction, security and administration. Thus, the experiences of colonial subjects in Senegal and the Gold Coast differed from those of Jamaica, Martinique or St. Kitts. Though not colonial subjects nominally, the societies and politics of African Americans, linked as they were to the Atlantic slave trade, were also shaped by imperial-colonial structures of relation.

The imperial politics of division were not either assimilationist or exclusionist. Rather, they worked to include different classes of ‘native’ populations in different ways (Anghie, 2007; Cooper, 2014; Getachew, 2019). For example, at the height of imperial confidence during the mid-19th century, Britain advanced policies to assimilate West Africans through ‘commerce and Christianity’, and train them in bureaucratic, military and legal professions as future leaders of a ‘civilised’ Africa to come (Zachernuk, 2000: 44). Later and in different contexts, empires implemented policies of non-intervention or indirect rule. These policies could provide alibis for the perceived futility of trying to convert and incorporate natives, or were designed to maintain control within a rationale of preserving indigenous culture (Crowder, 1964; Mamdani, 2012; Mantena, 2010). By the early 20th century, there existed a transnational class of colonial elites, lobbying for greater access to positions of authority and influence within the imperial network. When policies of indirect rule were established after the First World War, many of these elites were denied leadership roles on the grounds that they failed to authentically represent the cultures of their people. Meanwhile, representatives of ‘traditional’ culture, religion and politics could rule with relative autonomy over local communities. Colonial officials who believed themselves experts on native culture were often open to manipulation by these representatives (Parsons, 2014: 8, 20).

These strategies of imperial division elicited different types of difference claim. The two categories of difference claim that frame the remainder of the discussion can be termed the particular as universal and the particular as particular. While the particular as universal asserts difference to both resist assimilation and emphasise shared humanity, the logic of the particular as particular is to emphasise essential difference to establish autonomy (cf. Paipais, 2011). Rather than necessarily sequential, or abstractly opposed or harmonious, these two types of claims are subject to processes of dialectical engagement between actors within connected and unequal social orders. This tension can be seen in the scholarship and activism of Du Bois and Fanon, and is reproduced in contemporary anti-Eurocentric scholarship.

Epistemic mapping – self-definition against and for empire

The image of Europe as a realm of material success, scientific discovery, democracy and secular rationalism could sustain a vision of non-Westerners as benefactors of white guidance, at best, or perennial children in need of intervention at worst. Obversely, European thinkers since the Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment – such as Herder, Las Casas and Voltaire – had argued that Europe should respect, or even learn from, the spiritual and cultural essences of Eastern cultures or indigenous Amerindians (Bailey, 1992; Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004: ch. 2; Todorov, 1996). A typical tendency of anti-colonial nationalist discourse in the late 19th and 20th centuries was to appropriate and reverse the tropes of spiritual richness, artistic sensibility or rootedness in communal values. These traits were used as a basis for arguments that non-Westerners – because of their distinct histories, practices, cultures and intellectual traditions – had the potential to become even better liberals, socialists, soldiers or moderns than Westerners (Chatterjee, 1986: 55, 138–139). Used to defeat the legitimation scripts of exclusion and imperial encroachment, these arguments further associated specific qualities with Western and non-Western ethnicity, culture and history.6

I call this practice epistemic mapping. Epistemic mapping is a representational practice based on the notion that different ideas, practices or thought systems have a single geographical provenance, or can be coded according to a set of particular social relations or embodied social subjectivities. Whereas epistemic difference was sometimes invoked in the late imperial context to reject the politics of assimilation and exclusion, epistemic mapping institutionalises particular representations of difference for purposes of comparison or critique.

Comparing the arguments of Amitav Acharya – the leading proponent of ‘Global IR’ – with the early racial nationalist arguments of WEB Du Bois reveals continuity in the imperial structure of this practice. Acharya argues that the goal of Global IR is to ‘subsume, rather than supplant, existing IR theories and methods’ (Acharya, 2014b: 649, 2016: 6). Mainstream IR should not be reconstructed, but augmented in various ways by the insights of the non-West (Acharya, 2014b: 650). This means deeper incorporation of Area Studies to add empirical breadth and depth (Acharya, 2014b: 655), and drawing on ‘non-Western traditions’ such as ‘Hindu epic literature and Buddhist philosophy’ to augment methodological practice (Acharya, 2016: 8). Presenting himself as a representative of the ‘non-Western World’, Acharya claims that the desire for ‘relative autonomy and recognition’ within the existing international order is more representative of the global South than those politics that sought or seek to transform it (Acharya, 2014a: 16).

Du Bois’s scholarship before 1940 was also marked by the assertion of non-Western cultural traits, and the promotion of non-Western contributions to the global democratic project. His arguments emerged in opposition to both white nativist rhetoric in the United States (Foley, 2010: 170), and the project of global white supremacy, which continued to legitimate imperial rivalry and Euro-American ‘stewardship’ of the colonies after the First World War (Getachew, 2019; Lake and Reynolds, 2008; Pedersen, 2015; Vitalis, 2015; Younis, 2017). Du Bois’s representations of blackness were consistent with Lamarckian evolutionism and the Boasian turn in American anthropology. These academic paradigms attributed difference to environment and history rather than biology, and were referenced by both racists and anti-racists to essentialise cultural traits as a basis for policy (Reed, 1997: 120; Vitalis, 2015: ch. 2).

While more sophisticated than biological explanations, sociohistorical development still attempted to code whole groups of people according to generic traits. In 1924’s the Gift of Black Folk, Du Bois devotes each chapter to a different contribution made by the black race to the United States and to the democratic forces of the world. He explains black contributions with reference to the cultural development of the race in relation to its African setting. Du Bois writes that ‘[t]he Negro is primarily an artist. . .. [th]e only race which had held at bay the life destroying forces of the tropics, has gained therefrom in some slight compensation a sense of beauty, particularly for sound and color, which characterises the race’ (Du Bois, 2014 [1924]: 104). Du Bois’s criticism of European empire during this period presupposed that the fates of Europe and ‘darker peoples’ were linked through longstanding imperial relations (Du Bois, 2016 [1920]: 23–25). Writing in 1920, Du Bois attributed the greatness of Europe to its ability to capitalise on non-European knowledge: ‘Why, then is Europe great? Because of the foundations which the mighty past have furnished her to build upon: the iron trade of ancient black Africa, the religion and empire-building of yellow Asia, the art and science of the “dago” Mediterranean shore’ (Du Bois, 2016 [1920]: 23, italics added).

Although Du Bois argued that these different civilisations should follow their own particular historical and cultural lines of development, he also held that different civilisations should aspire to a world standard of civilisation. Consistent with one logic of imperial race development, ethnic and cultural categories such as black or non-Western must be preserved until the people they represent can make important civilisational contributions. In his pre-war and inter-war work, Du Bois appropriated the imperial challenge for races to prove themselves as races by re-establishing their own empires. Referring to pre-colonial African empires such as Songhai, Benin and Mali, Du Bois argued that the black race should avoid miscegenation until it has built ‘a great black race tradition of which the Negro and the world will be as proud in the future as it has been in the ancient world’ (cited in Wolters, 2003: 158). While Du Bois opposed the violence and exploitation of European empire, he also envisaged an integrated Pan-Africa, which would be built on modern standards of civilisation and guided by a black elite who could speak for an authentic black culture.

Du Bois’s practice of both defending the potential of black populations to become civilised, as well as defending traditional African folkways and particularities, stemmed from the contradictions in engaging multiple audiences within a multiaxial social and political order. For Du Bois, civilisation was to take place with respect to inherent group traits – a sentiment that appealed to dominant ideas about authentic African difference within the American university (see Posnock, 1997: 336) – but ‘postulation of an exotic black particularity’ also demonstrated the need for a cultured, educated black elite as ‘spokespersons’, ‘keepers and translators of the culture’ with respect to a dominant white constituency (Reed Jr. 1997: 58). Representations of African exoticism would have also appealed to some audiences during a moment when concern with ‘overcivilisation’ was in vogue with affluent metropolitan whites.

As we will see later, Du Bois eventually shifted away from epistemic mapping towards international class consciousness and strategic anti-imperial alliances. However, Du Bois’s pre-1940 cultural nationalism is illustrative of the imperial structure of the discourse. The continued prominence of cultural nationalist arguments in the period after the Second World War provides important context for Frantz Fanon’s aversion to the politics of imperial coexistence.

Imperial dialectics and the lure of coexistence

Empire maintained dehumanising hierarchies of race and culture, but also created overtures to multicultural coexistence, which could maintain imperial order by extending authority to colonial clients. Subverting and building on Hegel’s dialectics of reciprocal recognition, Fanon observed that late empire could extend formal equality and rights without dismantling the fundamental hierarchy of a master/slave relationship. ‘The White man is a master who allowed slaves to eat at his table’, Fanon wrote (Fanon, 2008 [1952]: 194). Recognition in the imperial context did not necessarily mean emancipation, but could imply the extension of imperial power in the form of ethnic and cultural inclusion (see Coulthard, 2014).

Fanon’s imperial dialectics problematise the idea that a variety of different representations of difference can be sustained simultaneously and harnessed at will for different strategies (cf. Sabaratnam, 2011). This is because the deployment of ‘self and other’ representations helps construct the social and political reality of that ‘self and other’, while simultaneously negating other potentialities (Mamdani, 2012). Such representations are politically consequential and highly ambiguous, and so their reification as scholarly knowledge has to be avoided.

Colonialism, in the sense that Fanon confronted it, was a specific kind of war, where the arrestment – not necessarily the death – of native culture is a tool of domination. Cultural and racial chauvinism are not the primary concern of empire. Rather, it is the ‘gigantic business’ of ‘colonial war’ that makes ‘the enslavement. . . of the native population’ the ‘prime necessity’. Colonial enslavement required that native populations’ cultural ‘systems of reference’ had to be ‘broken’. This is not initially chauvinism for its own sake, but a ‘condition’ that accompanies and legitimates ‘[e]xpropriation, spoliation, raids, objective murder’ (Fanon, 1980 [1956]: 33). Colonialism did not necessarily lead to the death of native culture. ‘On the contrary’, Fanon wrote, it takes a culture ‘once living and open to the future’ and renders it ‘closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression’. Subverting Hegelian recognition, empire made it impossible ‘for a man to evolve otherwise than within the framework of a culture that recognizes him and that he decides to assume’ (Fanon, 1980: 34).

Crucially, Fanon never advocated the reification of ethno-cultural difference as the best anti-imperial strategy amongst others, and he certainly did not advocate ontologising specific representations of difference as part of academic knowledge production. Because of the subjugation of non-Western cultures within the material and social hierarchy of empire, the mobilisation of groups that had been diminished by Europeans was a potent tool to reclaim power in colonised countries. However, in turning culture outward, the danger was that it becomes an inert celebration of itself and not drives towards its own transformation. The mobilisation of identity was not purely for the sake of national independence, but necessary for the Third World to seize power on the world stage and to chart a political and economic course between the West and the Soviet Union (Hudis, 2015: 80–81). Failing to overcome the particular as particular would mean that newly independent nations would likely fail to integrate into larger, unified federations, and, therefore, remain susceptible to new forms of colonialism and division. In a reply to his admirer, the Iranian political thinker, Ali Shariati, Fanon wrote, ‘I respect your view that in the Third World. . . Islam, more than any other social and ideological force, has had an anti-colonialist capacity and an anti-Western nature’. However, he concluded, ‘I, for one, fear that the fact of revitalizing the spirit of sectarianism and religion may result in a setback for a nation that is engaged in the process of becoming, of distancing itself from its future and immobilizing it in its past’ (cited in Hudis, 2015: 134).

Race is also (ultimately) too thin to serve as the basis for a sustainable revolutionary political formation. In his final work before his death, Les Damnés de la Terre [the Wretched of the Earth], Fanon wrote that the ‘historical necessity in which the men of African culture find themselves to racialize their claims and to speak more of African culture than of national culture will tend to lead them up a blind alley’ (Fanon, 1963: 172, italics added). Race reaches a limit of its ability to unify, and becomes subordinated to the particularities of a new international political context (Fanon, 1963: 173–174). It is at this stage that class politics become especially important, because without continued revolutionary momentum, the ruling class of the newly independent nation will simply reproduce the chauvinism and oppressive relations of the colonial administration (Fanon, 1963: 125–128).

None of this was purely hypothetical. When Fanon was engaged with the revolutionary Front de Libération Nationale during the Franco-Algerian war, he was surrounded by native leaders who wished to make amends with the French Empire on culturalist terms. For example, the first president of Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor, wished for France to fully include its African territories as part of a multiracial, multicultural confederation (Cooper, 2014; Wilder, 2015). Like Du Bois, Senghor argued for African inclusion on the grounds that Africans had distinct cultural virtues and intellectual traits, which were complementary rather than antagonistic with those of Europeans (Howe, 1999: 26). This kind of argument was typical, though not exhaustive, of the mid-20th century literary and political movement, Négritude. During the Franco-Algerian war, Fanon took aim at Senghor and the ‘bards of Négritude’, who constructed an ‘inventory of particularisms’ out of ‘reified’, ‘custom’ and ‘tradition’ (cited in Wilder, 2015: 134).

Demarcating the non-Western as a zone of difference to be devalued or mined for particularisms ultimately steals the right of the global South to its share of human history. Fanon’s answer to this is to assert the particular as universal by rejecting the notion that ideas, innovations and histories rightfully or exclusively belong to particular groups: ‘I am a man, and in this sense the Peloponnesian War is as much mine as the invention of the compass’ (Fanon, 2008: 175). Part of this means recognising that, although ethno-cultural identity is crucial to the struggle against empire, it is secondary to the political struggle that creates other forms of identity and solidarity. ‘My black skin is not the wrapping of specific values’, Fanon writes (Fanon, 2008 [1952]: 177). ‘Every time a man has contributed to the victory of the dignity of the spirit, every time a man has said no to an attempt to subjugate his fellows, I have felt solidarity with his act’ (Fanon, 2008 [1952]: 176).

One of the key takeaways from this analysis of Du Bois’s and Fanon’s representations of difference is the overlap, but fundamental difference, between representation for academic praxis and representation for political/activist praxis. In the process of political/activist praxis, representation might take different forms depending on the strategic content of the dialectical response to hegemony. Essentialism might be condoned in these circumstances, or simply emerge as a reaction. However, it is not the role of academic praxis to condone essentialism, but to offer accounts for why or how it is possible for essentialism to take place. Yet, it is essentialism in academic praxis, which is sometimes produced by anti-Eurocentric IR.

Redividing the world

Epistemic mapping and anti-Eurocentric IR

Like Senghor and the early Du Bois, anti-Eurocentric scholars often reproduce the imperial division of the world when invoking the non-Western. In emphasising difference, anti-Eurocentric scholars occlude access to the values, practices or political projects – good or bad – that cut across or have been shared by people in the global North and South. While essentialism of this kind might sometimes seem politically necessary – at least in the short term – its reliability as knowledge needs to be more closely interrogated.

To an extent, the incentive structure to add alternatives in the form of non-Western alternatives is passed down by mainstream IR theorists. For example, mainstream realists who have essentialised the ‘character’ of non-Western nations as a limit on the expansion of Western universalism (e.g. Huntington, 1997; Kissinger, 2014; see Reus-Smit, 2017) can provoke responses valorising non-Western universalisms. Or mainstream realists who argue that non-Western IR can offer nothing that Western IR does not already (e.g. Mearsheimer, 2016) can provoke a proliferation of exceptions in the form of ethnic and cultural particularisms.

Though not all anti-Eurocentric IR scholars are equally incautious about epistemic mapping, it is broadly practised and seemingly difficult to avoid. Epistemic mapping is brought in to offer ‘global’ or ‘post-Western’ alternatives to IR’s ‘analytical bifurcations’ – such as West/East, theoretical/atheoretical, subjective/objective – but actually elaborates on these bifurcations.7 When Acharya points to constructivism’s role in ‘opening space for scholarship on the non-Western world’ because of its emphasis on ‘culture and Identity’ he is drawing on an older bifurcation based on the notion that while the West has ‘knowledge’, the non-West has ‘culture’ (Acharya, 2014b: 650). Similarly, Yaqing Qin (2018) reproduces a familiar stereotype about the West operating from a knowledge culture of ‘rationality’, whereas China operates from an epistemology of ‘relation’. Robbie Shilliam has been a foremost scholar in pointing out the different uses of the Western, and the inherent problems of representing an authentic non-Western removed from colonial history (2010). However, in his recent work, the Black Pacific, he claims the ability (though not unproblematic) to speak for the lived experiences and ‘living knowledge traditions’ of Maori and Pasifika peoples. These living knowledge traditions, Shilliam argues, provide access to an epistemic alternative to ‘Western modernity’, supposedly free of ‘Western’ hierarchy or violence (Shilliam, 2015: 7–12). These claims sometimes come with troubling assertions of a hegemonic national philosophy or religion as the basis for epistemic difference. For example, Confucianism is equated with Chinese in a manner that celebrates a particular representation of national identity and buries internal contestation and the myriad historical forces that shaped contemporary China. Note, for example, that Qin’s book on Chinese IR contains no reference to international communism or Mao Zedong as intellectual or cultural influences on modern China.

Other varieties of epistemic mapping allow for ‘hybrid’ forms of social, political and economic organisation, but retain the essential origin of the individual components. For example, Agathangelou and Ling’s invocation of ‘Asian capitalism’, which they conceptualise as the result of ‘mater liberalism’s consummation with the Confucian world-order’ creates a hybrid category out of two essentialisms (2004: 27). Contrast this with Fanon, who refused to concede rightful ownership of human knowledge to particular peoples, regions or civilisations.

The way that the debate is structured around these divisions leaves it poorly guarded against the double-edged valence of difference. Reduction of difference to ethnic and cultural categories (including European) can lead to reduction of groups to their worst practices, to virtuous caricatures, or disable the critiques of anyone seen to be outside these groups. That different societies have produced different cultural particularities is not in doubt; however, the meanings that intellectual origin claims carry are ambiguous and can be put to many different uses. Ancient Greece, for example, provides some of the major foundations of dominant Western thought, but in its historical context it had more cultural, intellectual and political links with the civilisations of Asia Minor and Egypt. Both of these statements can be true, yet both can be emphasised in different ways for different effects (for example, see Duara, 1996: 40; Young, 2016; 33).

Take the claim, sometimes obliquely made, that non-Western perspectives are distinct sources of cultural cohesion, spirituality or moral insight. For example, Arlene Tickner’s assertion that

modern Western belief systems are based upon an instrumental relationship between human beings (subject) and nature (object) that translates into the instrumentalisation of knowledge or the view of knowledge as a commodity. Instead, many non-Western cosmogonies view the self, community and nature as interdependent parts of a single whole, with which their understanding of the relationship between knowledge and the natural world, and of the social function of knowledge in general, is markedly different (Tickner, 2003: 305).

Such a claim is not only essentialist, but politically ambiguous. Imperial authorities made similar claims about non-Western worldviews in order to justify exclusion on the grounds that ‘natives’ were ill-adept for modernity, but also to cast doubt on the authenticity of ‘Westernised’ native critics. It is unlikely that Tickner means to essentialise; however, the characterisation of the non-Western as more attuned to communal values and the natural world emerges from the dialectical impetus to define the particular non-Western against the particular Western. The definition of the Western as rational and universalist is also constructed, and is complicated by any close inspection of the variety of communitarian religious beliefs, anti-modern sentiment and counter-Enlightenment philosophy within modern Europe and the West. On the other hand, many non-Westerners also see knowledge as a commodity. Commodification of knowledge is, therefore, not explicable purely in terms of ethno-cultural thought systems.

This raises the related point that the non-Western alternatives being defined need not be insular or ‘communitarian’ in order to be essentialisms. The claim is not that the ‘non-Western’ circumscribes too narrow a section of humanity, but that it carves up the world into separate realms, which are coded according to some ingredient that defines them in contradistinction to the Western. Arguments that non-Westerners have their own universalisms (Acharya, 2014b: 649–650), alternative sources of cosmopolitanism (Munro and Shilliam, 2010) or local humanisms (Nakano, 2010) demonstrate that political globalism is universal, regardless of whether or not its universality can be evaluated as serving progressive or conservative, emancipatory or oppressive political aims. However, attributing specific global visions to a particular social or historical experience supposedly shared by people with the same race and culture only makes sense within a politicised discourse where the value of the non-Western has been somehow challenged.8

Then there are definitions of epistemic difference based on ‘lived experience’. Although an improvement on territorial or raciological accounts, the ascription of cultural difference to a generic lived experience or social subjectivity can also reduce groups of people to stereotypes and monolithic value sets. This is evident in the work of some scholars who take Fanon primarily as a source of ‘epistemic blackness’, without fully addressing his concerns about racialisation and the geopolitical dimensions of decolonisation. For example, the philosopher Lewis R. Gordon writes that ‘Fanon’s body. . . is a subtext of all his writings. … Anxiety over embodiment is a dimension of Western civilization against which Fanon was in constant battle. The body, he laments, is a denied presence, and black people are a denied people’ (Gordon, 2015: 8). Even in as sophisticated an analysis of Fanon as Gordon’s, there is a danger of essentialism through the association of black identity with a particular way of thinking. For Fanon, black people were not so much universally ‘denied’ as relegated to certain roles within a social hierarchy – the French empire most specifically. Blacks could be of higher or lower status, but race was the basis for social relegation, which alienated the subject from a full, dynamic humanity. For Fanon, every particular experience is an instantiation of the universal, and his analysis of his own experience is a demand to be recognised as a fellow human with an equal stake in humanity. Blackness is not a generalisable perspective from which we can derive a non-Western knowledge, but a reminder to pay attention to the social and historical specificity of relation.9

Embodiment arguments are usually the vehicle for Fanon’s presence in IR, and are often accompanied with the claim that non-Westerners have profoundly different ways of practising politics or being modern. For example, Vivienne Jabri (2014) invokes Fanon to theorise the ‘embodied presence’ of non-Western agency within international order. Anna Agathangelou (2016) links different aspects of Fanon’s revolutionary dialectics to his conception of the subjugated black body. She is particularly interested in how Fanon’s conception of racial experience might present alternatives or ‘different’ ways of doing politics (Agathangelou, 2016: 111; cf. Sekyi-Otu, 2009). In a similar argument, John M. Hobson contrasts the ‘different critique’ of ‘African-American Marxists’, including Du Bois, with ‘white Eurocentric institutional thinkers’ like Leonard Woolf (Hobson, 2012: 17, n. 20). However, the difference is not as stark as Hobson might hope. It is true that Woolf’s anti-racism was qualified by a belief in elite institutional development, but so was Du Bois’s anti-imperialism.10 Areas of overlap are, thus, obscured by the assumption that there are ‘black’ and ‘white’ ideas, which can be mapped onto generic ‘black’ and ‘white’ social realities.

Aside from its dubious reliability, the problem with epistemic mapping is essentially the same as the problem with the ethnicised counter claims of Du Bois or Senghor: it is too amenable to the purposes of imperial ordering and elite representation. It creates and services the two worlds of Said’s orientalist divide, rather than building an agenda based on analytical approaches that constructively problematise the divide.

Logics of epistemic coexistence

Fanon’s concerns about imperial coexistence continue to have relevance in the way that anti-Eurocentric scholars represent the relationship between Western and non-Western epistemes. Associations of Western and non-Western with specific traits are reinforced by scholarly prescriptions of how the two ought to interact. Anti-Eurocentrism is, therefore, an ethos as well as an analytical approach. Anti-Eurocentric scholars tend to make arguments both in favour and against peaceful integration of the non-Western and the Western. Claims that the non-Western must make itself autonomous from the Western (e.g. Mignolo, 2009), or that non-Western IR must be added as a complement to Western IR to produce a more ‘inclusive and diverse’ discipline (e.g. Acharya, 2014, 2016) both tend to presuppose that the Western and non-Western exist ‘out there’ as de-contested and fixed (or, at least, de-contestable and fixable) realms of social and political inquiry.11 Each in its own way can reproduce imperial coexistence and recognition, Fanon’s ‘seat at the master’s table’ and Said’s orientalist division of the world.

Anti-Eurocentric coexistence reproduces an imperial image of the world based on a non-West, which is spiritually rich, radically pluralist and organically socialist, and a West, which is hierarchical, absolutist and secular. Anti-Eurocentric scholars sometimes essentialise the Western as a political and philosophical force that is chauvinistic at its root (e.g. Hobson, 2012; Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Mignolo, 2011). These approaches suggest a fundamental antagonism between Western and non-Western, but, in doing so, produce flattened images of each. It then follows that steps must be taken to rid or purify the non-Western of embedded Western traits. Calling this a promotion of coexistence may seem counter-intuitive. Mignolo, for example, is certainly very critical of the Western, and extrapolates from this a professed desire for a different world. However, his critique comes with the assumption that the Western cannot or should not be transformed in any fundamental way. Rather, the Western is fixed and essentialised as an object of binary opposition. New universalisms of pluralism and horizontality must be derived from non-Western thought systems, putting the Western in its place and leaving it alone (although, see Rojas, 2016).

Alternatively, scholars who favour non-Western diversification of social and political inquiry sometimes argue that purportedly ‘non-Western’ traits, such as ‘relationality’, can be added to ‘the Western’ in order to act as a mediating force on ‘its’ violence. Coexistence here is not only the prescribed mode of interaction, but it is the contribution that non-Western culture is making to the discipline. These scholars recognise conflict between West and non-West, but often downplay or ignore the power dynamics and structural inequalities within representations of Western and non-Western. Take Ling’s Daoist dialectics, which, though it makes the valuable offer of liminal identities between East and West, nevertheless reinscribes the divide by assigning ownership of relational conceptions to non-Western thought systems. Ling writes that Western political ‘common sense’ offers only intellectual resources for violence towards difference, not for recognition and negotiation (Ling, 2013: 12, 15). Strategies for negotiation – perhaps for any constructive, mutually affirming political relations – must, therefore, be taken from non-Western thought systems, such as Daoism and the yin/yang. She does not convey ‘hegemony, hierarchy, and violence’ as endemic to many societies across space and time, but ‘enactments’ of the dominant Western picture of the world. But for its many evils, the Western should not be subsumed, but balanced by the ‘parity, fluidity, and ethics’ offered by ‘other worlds’ (Ling, 2013: 14). Here, war and peace become fundamentally questions of attitude towards cultural or racial difference, not structurally determined results of historical inequality within and between societies.

Another potential pitfall of the ethos of coexistence is that it elicits an open-ended demand for a proliferation of ‘different’ perspectives, removed from the sociohistorical contexts wherein these perspectives gain meaning. The non-Western can, thus, become a kind of global ‘pick and mix’ for epistemic diversification or institutional strategy, and the specific, dialectical relations that elicit representations of the non-Western are broadly passed over. Unearthing different perspectives either becomes a virtue in itself – in the name of diversification – or as a means of retrieving perspectives, which will grant greater ‘openness’ (Bilgin, 2016: 137–138; e.g. Grovogui, 2009: 138). This is, of course, not to say that greater openness and diversity would necessarily be undesirable. However, without a complementary impetus to assess these perspectives for their ability to produce or impede a more just society, let alone whether they are that ‘different’ to begin with, the politics of pluralisation are obscured (see Eun, 2019; Paipais, 2016).

There is, thus, a danger in depoliticising difference when making absolute virtues out of diversity and openness. While calls for diversity might be politically constructive, scholars should not advocate a plurality of representations of difference without rigorous critical analysis of those representations. Edward Said, in the same vein as Fanon, wrote from an analytical perspective, which was highly conscious of geopolitical imperialism, and thus critical of certain ‘non-Western’ perspectives – e.g. ‘nativism’ – which he saw as detrimental to the political project of decolonisation (1993: 275–278). While he acknowledged that the non-West could not be reduced to an inferior or ‘backwards’ reflection of the West, he also did not support the coexistence of analytical approaches, which reify non-Western difference (orientalism) and those that treat it as a discursive and material construct. This is because he knew that, while not the same as political praxis, academic knowledge has the power to shape the social world it studies, and can thus reproduce the imperial division of the world and attendant political agendas.

Dynamic difference and strategic knowledge

Not without reason, critics of Eurocentrism frequently call on Du Bois and Fanon as defenders of non-Western difference. However, as I have suggested, they tend to read them first as ‘non-Western’ thinkers, rather than as anti-imperial thinkers. In other words, they read them first as representatives of an ethnic or cultural perspective, rather than a political perspective. While culture and politics are not mutually exclusive, reduction of politics to culture can lead to flattened conceptions of the multiaxial and dynamic social worlds in which theory is produced. A correction to this can be made by emphasising the turn away from racialisation that both Du Bois and Fanon made in their later lives. Rather than an awakening to perspectives, which were abstractly ‘more correct’, shifts in Du Bois’s and Fanon’s thought were embedded in the changing dynamics of relation, which were part and parcel of the increasingly globalised confrontation with European empire. The takeaway here is not to abandon essentialised categories of ethno-cultural difference only to replace them with other political or identity categories, but to shift our analysis to the processes in which difference claims become viable and significant.

Du Bois and Fanon engaged with empire and colonialism as a transnational field of political action. The early to mid-20th century saw what Branwen Gruffyd Jones calls an ‘emergence of connected struggles and shared consciousness’ (2010). Anti-imperial leaders learned from and contributed to a ‘global canon of anti-colonial and revolutionary thought and experience’, which included diaspora activists, nationalists, anarchists, Marxists, and many others from around the world (2010: 55, italics in original). After the Second World War, Du Bois and Fanon promoted internationalism and cultural revolution – not valorisation of the non-Western – as means to end imperialism.

After 1940, Du Bois came to advocate an alliance of shared political aims over ethnic and cultural nationalism. Although Du Bois was never entirely blind to class, and he recognised the political potential of proletarian revolution earlier (Henderson, 2015; Horne, 1986), the global ‘colour line’ was his predominant focus throughout the pre-war and inter-war periods. However, from 1940 on, Du Bois gradually shifted the ethno-cultural focus of his anti-imperialism towards a focus on international class consciousness and political unity. Rather than representative of a mainstream trend, the shift helped to marginalise Du Bois within the American Civil Rights movement and get him into trouble with the United States government (Gao, 2013: 64; Horne, 1986). Du Bois expanded his conception of ethno-cultural development to draw several different cultures and races together. He wrote that ‘physical’ kinship is ‘least’ significant, and ‘the badge of color relatively unimportant save as a badge’. ‘The real essence’ of racial kinship, he wrote, ‘is its social heritage of slavery; the discrimination and insult; and this heritage binds together not simply the children of Africa, but extends through yellow Asia and into the South Seas’ (Du Bois, 2007: 59).

However, ‘the social heritage of slavery’ was not an invitation to flatten and codify the non-Western and promote its alternative universalisms. Following Japan’s defeat in the Second World War, Du Bois pointed to Japan’s imperialism in Asia as the cause of its downfall. He stressed the ‘structural limitations of racialist and nationalist opinion’ as giving oxygen to non-Western imperialism (Gao, 2013: 63).12 His advocacy of transnational and interracial solidarity based on anti-imperial democracy deepened following a visit to communist China in 1959. In his preface to the Chinese translation of the Souls of Black Folk in 1959, Du Bois intimated that ‘the color line was now less important than class consciousness’ (Gao, 2013: 75). This was not exclusively a clarion call to non-white multitudes, but promotion of a strategic alliance of anti-imperial forces. During his visit, Du Bois also called on China to align itself with the United States and Russia: states he saw as being forces for anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism in world politics (Gao, 2013: 63). That a closer or more detached assessment might have proved the United States and Russia unworthy of Du Bois’s endorsement is beside the point: political goals, at least in the current conjuncture, mattered more than ethno-cultural identity.

Fanon, in some ways subsuming Du Bois, was even less ambiguous: ethnic and cultural foundations for politics are stumbling blocks to the revolutionary momentum needed to confront imperialism. Take a portion of a speech delivered by Fanon in 1958 at the All-African Peoples’ Conference in the newly independent Ghana:

An African’s anticolonialism, even when already independent, cannot be reduced to staking out a moral position. Each African is an anticolonialist soldier and we well know that, in certain circumstances, we do not have the choice of arms. The African’s anticolonialism is a combatant anticolonialism and not a realm of ethnic awareness – the Belgian, English or French colonialists must get used to seeing each African as an unremitting enemy of their domination in Africa (Fanon, 2018: 636).

National consciousness, which Fanon insists ‘is not nationalism’, is the vehicle for entry into a decolonised international (see also Jabri, 2013). National consciousness is not an expression of the ‘reified’, ‘traditional’ culture of indirect rule, but a new intercultural, inter-class identity formed out of empire’s collapse and anti-imperial resistance (Fanon, 1963: 190–199). It is through the process of organised resistance against dominant culture – both imperial and ‘native’ – that new emancipatory identities emerge. Fanon imagines that these processes will or should lead to the ‘break-up of the old strata of culture’ (1963: 197). They must also be driven by the popular will of the masses, and not by elite fiat (1963: 198).

The anti-imperial struggle necessitated an image of the colonised sharing ‘the stage of history’ with the rest of the world, and not sanctifying a local perspective of history (1963: 199). Fanon argued that individual colonies in Africa and the Caribbean should retain their individual sovereignty until they can form ‘a confederation of mature states, determined to help each other and to defend each other’s freedom’ (2018: 589). Thus, the basis of ‘African-Negro’ national consciousness is not race politics, but the result of a geopolitical condition: ‘every independent nation in an Africa where colonialism is still entrenched is an encircled nation, a nation which is fragile and in permanent danger’ (1963: 199). The shared national consciousness of Kenya, Ghana, Senegal or Angola is not the unity symbolised by race, but the unity created by imperialist threat and anti-imperial resistance (1963: 170–174). This is fundamentally a multiracial project: ‘the concept of Africa for the Africans does not mean that other races are excluded. … We struggle for the future of humanity and it is a most important struggle’ (Fanon, 2018: 656, italics added).

Thus, Fanon’s anti-imperialism was not a valorisation of a particular universalism, but an assertion of the particular as universal. Fanon called the anticolonial struggle a ‘messy original idea propounded as an absolute’ (Fanon, 1961: 44). The original idea is the ideological current, which emerges from within the movement for the movement, but the movement takes place within a network of other movements all driven by the absolute demand for freedom from imperial rule (Gibson, 2011: xii). Of course, as in the case of a Senghor, freedom from empire was not a universally felt demand. Rather, Fanon’s appeal to the absolute is a political rallying cry, meant to mobilise a transnational cohort of freedom fighters. It is a theory meant to inspire political action across the globe, and not an academic elaboration of a particular episteme.

Anti-imperial internationalism and cultural revolution continued to form the basis for political projects in Africa and beyond after the deaths of Fanon and Du Bois (e.g. Gibson, 2011).13 Amílcar Cabral’s revolt against the Portuguese colonial state was characterised by a call for African cultural renewal and an appeal to the international community to enshrine and enforce anti-imperial values (Cabral, 2016: 115–120; see Jones, 2010). Addressing the United Nations in 1962 as an ‘anonymous soldier for the United Nations’, Cabral urged ‘the United Nations and the anti-colonialist states and organisations – all forces of peace in the world’ to ‘take concrete action against the Portuguese state’ (cited in Shepard, 2014: 151). The Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, an admirer of Fanon and Cabral, made a similar speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2009. In it, he argued in favour of limited international intervention as long as it was not a front for imperialism (Ngũgĩ, 2009: 1–6). Ngũgĩ was previously incarcerated for his criticism of Jomo Kenyatta’s government in the late 1970s (see Ngũgĩ, 1981). Although Ngũgĩ remains a proponent of African language and culture to this day, his Marxist internationalism was at loggerheads with the post-colonial cultural nationalism, which still serves as a camouflage to ongoing imperial relations and designs.

This reading runs contrary to readings, which characterise Fanon as ‘strategically ambivalent’ on questions of identity or nationalism (e.g. Bell, 2013b; Rao, 2017). Fanon’s strategy was not ambivalent, but dialectical. Certain conjunctures in the relationship between coloniser/colonised, white/non-white and West/non-West elicited certain representations, which appeared strategically necessary. To reiterate a point made earlier, Fanon never advocated strategic essentialism of non-Western culture as the best of a range of options. Essentialised self-representation emerges as a dialectical response to colonial domination, which must be surpassed. The role of the scholar should be to understand and explain these processes of representation, and not reproduce particular representations as flattened, transhistorical realities.

Conclusion

While not suggesting one path forward, these histories attest to the need to move beyond the Western/non-Western division of the world in our scholarly ontologies. If IR intends to become a ‘global’ discipline – whatever this might mean – it cannot do so at the risk of continuing to reproduce imperial stereotypes about human difference. Of course, the specific disciplinary, institutional and departmental contexts wherein ontologies are authorised and negotiated are unlikely to submit to an absolute, universal rejection of Western/non-Western. Incentives to diversify curricula and the persistence of imperial hierarchies in contemporary societies are likely to keep these categories around for a long time. This does not mean that scholars cannot run parallel programmes to disrupt essentialist representations of Western and non-Western. Instead of promoting ethnification, globalising the discipline could suggest a move towards different categories, which emphasise the different ways human groups intersect; for example, internationally connected processes, strategic or affective alliances, or the inter-societal co-constitution of ideologies, practices and social transformations (e.g. Barkawi and Lawson, 2017; Go and Lawson, 2017; Rosenberg, 2006). Such a shift would recognise the porousness of the institutions/society divide in order to keep in frame the political consequences of our categories. At the same time it would maintain the difference between academic praxis and political/activist praxis in order to keep analytical distance from the forms of representation elicited by social and political struggle.

# 2ac

## Case

### OV

### AT: Rodriguez

### Extinction reps good

#### Anticipating nuclear extinction breeds empathy and entangled care. Distancing ourselves from considering extinction reifies detached elitism.

Offord, 17—Faculty of Humanities, School of Humanities Research and Graduate Studies, Bentley Campus (Baden, “BEYOND OUR NUCLEAR ENTANGLEMENT,” Angelaki, 22:3, 17-25, dml) [ableist language modifications denoted by brackets]

You are steered towards overwhelming and inexplicable pain when you consider the nuclear entanglement that the species Homo sapiens finds itself in. This is because the fact of living in the nuclear age presents an existential, aesthetic, ethical and psychological challenge that defines human consciousness. Although an immanent threat and ever-present danger to the very existence of the human species, living with the possibility of nuclear war has infiltrated the matrix of modernity so profoundly as to paralyse [shut down] our mind-set to respond adequately. We have chosen to ignore the facts at the heart of the nuclear program with its dangerous algorithm; we have chosen to live with the capacity and possibility of a collective, pervasive and even planetary-scale suicide; and the techno-industrial-national powers that claim there is “no immediate danger” ad infinitum.8

This has led to one of the key logics of modernity's insanity. As Harari writes: “Nuclear weapons have turned war between superpowers into a mad act of collective suicide, and therefore forced the most powerful nations on earth to find alternative and peaceful ways to resolve conflicts.”9 This is the nuclear algorithm at work, a methodology of madness. In revisiting Jacques Derrida in “No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives),”10 who described nuclear war as a “non-event,” it is clear that the pathology of the “non-event” remains as active as ever even in the time of Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un with their stichomythic nuclear posturing.

The question of our times is whether we have an equal or more compelling capacity and willingness to end this impoverished but ever-present logic of pain and uncertainty. How not simply to bring about disarmament, but to go beyond this politically charged, as well as mythological and psychological nuclear algorithm? How to find love amidst the nuclear entanglement; the antidote to this entanglement? Is it possible to end the pathology of power that exists with nuclear capacity? Sadly, the last lines of Nitin Sawhney's “Broken Skin” underscore this entanglement:

Just 5 miles from India's nuclear test site

Children play in the shade of the village water tank

Here in the Rajasthan desert people say

They're proud their country showed their nuclear capability.11

As an activist scholar working in the fields of human rights and cultural studies, responding to the nuclear algorithm is an imperative. Your politics, ethics and scholarship are indivisible in this cause. An acute sense of care for the world, informed by pacifist and non-violent, de-colonialist approaches to knowledge and practice, pervades your concern. You are aware that there are other ways of knowing than those you are familiar and credentialed with. You are aware that you are complicit in the prisons that you choose to live inside,12 and that there is no such thing as an innocent bystander. You use your scholarship to shake up the world from its paralysis, abjection and amnesia; to unsettle the epistemic and structural violence that is ubiquitous to neoliberalism and its machinery; to create dialogic and learning spaces for the work of critical human rights and critical justice to take place. All this, and to enable an ethics of intervention through understanding what is at the very heart of the critical human rights impulse, creating a “dialogue for being, because I am not without the other.”13

Furthermore, as a critical human rights advocate living in a nuclear armed world, your challenge is to reconceptualise the human community as Ashis Nandy has argued, to see how we can learn to co-exist with others in conviviality and also learn to co-survive with the non-human, even to flourish. A dialogue for being requires a leap into a human rights frame that includes a deep ecological dimension, where the planet itself is inherently involved as a participant in its future. This requires scholarship that “thinks like a mountain.”14 A critical human rights approach understands that it cannot be simply human-centric. It requires a nuanced and arresting clarity to present perspectives on co-existence and co-survival that are from human and non-human viewpoints.15

Ultimately, you realise that your struggle is not confined to declarations, treaties, legislation, and law, though they have their role. It must go further to produce “creative intellectual exchange that might release new ethical energies for mutually assured survival.”16 Taking an anti-nuclear stance and enabling a post-nuclear activism demands a revolution within the field of human rights work. Recognising the entanglement of nuclearism with the Anthropocene, for one thing, requires a profound shift in focus from the human-centric to a more-than-human co-survival. It also requires a fundamental shift in understanding our human culture, in which the very epistemic and rational acts of sundering from co-survival with the planet and environment takes place. In the end, you realise, as Raimon Panikkar has articulated, “it is not realistic to toil for peace if we do not proceed to a disarmament of the bellicose culture in which we live.”17 Or, as Geshe Lhakdor suggests, there must be “inner disarmament for external disarmament.”18 In this sense, it is within the cultural arena, our human society, where the entanglement of subjective meaning making, nature and politics occurs, that we need to disarm.

It is 1982, and you are reading Jonathan Schell's The Fate of the Earth on a Sydney bus. Sleeping has not been easy over the past few nights as you reluctantly but compulsively read about the consequences of nuclear war. For some critics, Schell's account is high polemic, but for you it is more like Rabindranath Tagore: it expresses the suffering we make for ourselves. What you find noteworthy is that although Schell's scenario of widespread destruction of the planet through nuclear weaponry, of immeasurable harm to the bio-sphere through radiation, is powerfully laid out, the horror and scale of nuclear obliteration also seems surreal and far away as the bus makes its way through the suburban streets.

A few years later, you read a statement from an interview with Paul Tibbets, the pilot of “Enola Gay,” the plane that bombed Hiroshima. He says, “The morality of dropping that bomb was not my business.”19 This abstraction from moral responsibility – the denial of the implications on human life and the consequences of engagement through the machinery of war – together with the sweeping amnesia that came afterwards from thinking about the bombing of Hiroshima, are what make you become an environmental and human rights activist. You realise that what makes the nuclear algorithm work involves a politically engineered and deeply embedded insecurity-based recipe to elide the nuclear threat from everyday life. The spectre of nuclear obliteration, like the idea of human rights, can appear abstract and distant, not our everyday business. You realise that within this recipe is the creation of a moral tyranny of distance, an abnegation of myself with the other. One of modernity's greatest and earliest achievements was the mediation of the self with the world. How this became a project assisted and shaped through the military-industrial-technological-capitalist complex is fraught and hard to untangle. But as a critical human rights scholar you have come to see through that complex, and you put energies into challenging that tyranny of distance, to activate a politics, ethics and scholarship that recognises the other as integral to yourself. Ultimately, even, to see that the other is also within.20

#### Disregarding the destruction of the planet is antithetical to the purpose of radical Black scholarship.

Moten and Kelley, 17—professor of Performance Studies at New York University AND Gary B. Nash Professor of American History at UCLA (Fred and Robin D.G., “Robin D.G. Kelley & Fred Moten In Conversation,” transcribed from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fP-2F9MXjRE>, 31:49-55:57, dml)

MOTEN: Well, first of all, I just want to say how much I appreciate having a chance to be here with all of you tonight, and thank you, Rinaldo, and, uh, Alicia, and Afua, of course. Robin, as always, uh, an honor to be, have a chance to hang out with you, and uh, and to learn from you, and um, let me see. Um, well, I tend to think of Black studies not so much as an academic discipline or confluence of disciplines but as the atmosphere in which I grew up, and so, and I love that, that atmosphere. I love the way that it felt, and I love the way that it smelled, and I love the flavors, and I love the sounds, and I love the movements. Um, and so, it is, again, something that I think has a certain place, maybe, in the university, and what it meant, what it has meant for Black studies to take that place in the university has had both, has been both good and bad. I think it’s probably done much more for the university than it has for Black studies, and, and that’s something worth thinking about. And I don’t say that because I’m trying to advocate some withdrawal from the university of Black studies, but I’m thinking that, you know, that at this stage of the game in having done the work of attempting to actually bring, um, the university into some sense of its own, of what ought to be its own intellectual mission, Black studies has the right to look out for itself now, for a little bit, um, and I think it’s worth it to do that. And insofar as Black studies has earned a right to look out for itself, what that really means, I think, is that Black studies has earned the right to try again to take its fundamental responsibility, which is to be, uh, a place where we can look out for the Earth. Um, I think that Black studies has a fundamental and specific, though not necessarily exclusive mission, and that mission is to try to save the Earth, or at least to try to save, not, well, on the most fundamental level to save the Earth, and on a secondary level, to try to save the possibility of human existence on the Earth. Um, and I know that’s a big statement, and I don’t wanna take up all the time, but I’m happy to try to say more about what I think I mean by that later on, but, um, but I think maybe it’s important just to leave that big statement out there for a minute, and just to make sure that you know that I knew that I said it when I said it.

KELLEY: Okay, well, actually I wanna echo, uh, Fred’s sentiments, that it’s really an honor to be here, in this space. Um, this is the second time that we’ve had kind of a public conversation, and it’s always packed, you know, and it’s always a lot of people, and expectations are always high, and one of my favorite things on the planet, besides just talking to my daughters, talking to Fred Moten, um, you know, and it’s just really, you know, I learn so much from it, and in fact, let me just begin by saying that one of the pieces that Rinaldo was referring to was an essay I wrote called, uh, “Black Study, Black Struggle,” which was entirely inspired by, uh, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney’s, uh, book, “The Undercommons.” It was a way of the application of the notion of the undercommons to understanding what was happening at that moment, which in, in the fall of 2015, there was like an explosion of, um, Black protests on, on campus, and, you know, I won’t repeat what’s in the article, uh, but it, it’s not an accident that some of those struggles, uh, were products of what was happening in the streets. In other words, what happened in Ferguson, and what happened in Baltimore, what happened all over the country, and what happened in places like here in Toronto, were the catalyst for, um, a kind of explosion on campuses, where, uh, students were trying to figure out their place in the university. They’re dealing with racism, and microaggressions on university campuses, uh, they’re dealing with a, a kind of deracinated, you know, curriculum where ethnic studies wasn’t what it was, in its inception. Um, and, I was also dealing with, or many of us were also dealing with, uh, a culture of, and I hate to put it this way, but a culture of anti-intellectualism in, in a different sort of way. I mean, universities are often anti-intellectual, in that they actually disavow certain forms of knowledge and put other knowledge above that, which is an anti-intellectual position by the way. Um, but then when you’re assaulted by that all the time, uh, sometimes you end up mirroring that culture. And you’re saying “well I’m not gonna read this, I’m not gonna read that, because so-and-so wrote it,” as opposed to saying that there’s nothing off the table, uh, that Black studies, and Fred knows this ‘cause he repeats it more than I do, that our mutual, uh, teacher, Cedric Robinson, who paraphrased C. L. R. James, said you know, Black studies is a critique of Western civilization, and if that is the case, then we both have to dismantle it, recognize the weak edifice upon which it’s built, but also know everything that’s happening within it. But anyway, let me just back up, um, so, I just, so the three points I wanna make in reference to the question, one is that, uh, social movements have always been the catalyst for Black studies. When Fred was talking about, you know, Black studies as, as, uh, kinda, kinda like a way of life, as an atmosphere in which he grew up and which I grew up and many of us grew up, that’s so true. I never thought about it that way, but, you know, that’s so true. And in fact, um, if anything, Black Studies is not a multidiscipline but a project, a project for liberation, whatever that means, and liberation is an ongoing project. Um, Ruthie Gilmore, uh, who was at USC, uh, with me and Fred, had come up with this idea of renaming ethnic studies “liberation studies.” And, you know, we were actually serious about that, we were like, trying to figure out how to do that, and never filled it, but it reminds us that, you know, it’s not about, um, it’s not about a body. It’s not about bodies. It’s about ideas, and about the future, you know. It’s about recognizing the past and the construction of a new future. And so I think, in that respect, in order to understand the future of Black studies, we gotta understand the movements that produced it—that, that the Movement for Black Lives, that, um, uh, We Charge Genocide, that Black Youth Projects 100—all these struggles that erupted have, in fact, uh, pointed the way for Black Studies. The problem is, is that what gets constituted as the institutional space of Black studies, in many cases, isn’t really that. And I hate to bring people down, because we’re supposed to be up, right? But there are a lot of departments that I wouldn't call Black studies departments that have that name, you know, there are a lot of, there's a lot of scholarship that goes on that has no relationship at all to the project of transformation, or to people, to actual people in community. And one of the important things to always remember is that, um, we wouldn't have Black studies if it wasn't—in the United States, that is, I'm talking about the US—if it wasn't for Watts, if it wasn't for Detroit in 67, and if it wasn't for those kinds of urban rebellions, if it wasn't for the struggles in the South, that's where Black studies comes from. Uh, and so it moves into the university as a, as a transformative project. Um, it's not—and that's why I think there was a disconnect between some of the, the protests and what was happening in the academy. Finally, there’s this question of, of ethnic studies versus, or against, or for, or within or bedded in Black studies. And one of the things that, that I think a lot of us are trying to figure out is to deepen the relationship between indigenous studies and Black studies. Um, to understand that this was what I call second wave ethnic studies in the 1990s was itself a project that was, believe it or not, in a, a response to neoliberalism. And I think we don't always see that because we, we tend to read backwards in the 1990s and 1980s as, like, ethnic studies as identity politics in the narrowest sense of the word, that somehow this was about producing a sense of, of pride and a sense of identity devoid of the question of power. But if you actually look at the struggles for ethnic studies in the 80s and 90s, it was all about power. That, that what we think of as comparative or critical ethnic studies was, wasn't about the celebration of difference. It wasn't liberal multiculturalism. It was an assault on a neoliberal turn. And we, we sometimes forget that and, and, and then we write the history. And so I think I want to at some point talk more about that, but I think that's something to remember, because, right now, if we don't have Black studies as a critique in response to the neoliberal neofascist turn, then it's sort of worthless. You know, it's going to continue to exist. Maybe not in the academy though. So I'll just stop there.

WALCOTT: So, um, Robin, where you ended, and, and where Fred began, it’s a, is a good segue into getting you, both of you, to talk about the work that you've been doing around questions of Palestinian struggle and freedom. Fred, the work that, the tremendous work that you did in the ASA, um, American Studies Association, for which the Association is still living true, and, and Robin the work that you continue to do with um, um, with faculty for Palestine. But I'm thinking about Fred's provocation here that Black studies about saving the Earth and if Black studies is indeed about saving the Earth, which I'm very willing to fall right into right now, you know, first to kind of maybe think about this relationship between the struggle and, and freedom of Palestine and the relationship between ongoing settler colonialisms globally, because it seems to me that one of the most powerful things that, um, the kind of Black studies that has taken to the streets recently has done is to make those kinds of concerns present, right? BLM visits to Palestine, BLM in Toronto, always making sure that the invocation of the politics of settler colonialism is a part of a political organizing, and, um, their intimate relations with indigenous communities. So maybe this is a way for us to begin to talk about what's really at stake in this contemporary political moment where, um, or, or a radical politics, a politics that wants to think a different kind of future formation, is grappling with, um, settler colonialism in various kinds of ways. But Palestine being central to that, given that we know as we sit in this university is that often, um, what we call our senior administrators have an entirely different relationship with the question of freedom for Palestine.

MOTEN: Well, um, first, I mean, the work I did around, um, you know, the ASA’s, um, you know, decision to endorse the academic and cultural boycott of Israel was really minimal and minor compared to a lot of other people who were really out front, um, and, and have been working tirelessly for that for many, many years. Um, and I think, you know, the, my contribution was more, you know, rhetorical in many ways in, in, in, and, and maybe, maybe theoretical only in the most minimal sense, in the sense that what I wanted to do was a couple of things. First, to recognize that, um, you know, let's say that the conditions of what people call modernity, um, in, in, in, in, or global modernity, that the fundamental conditions that make that up are, you know, settler colonialism. And I think we can talk about settler colonialism in ways that are broader than the normal way that we usually think of them as a set of violent and brutal relations between Europe and the rest of the world. Because I think it's really important. And, and, and again, our, our mutual friend and mentor Cedric Robinson, pointed this out emphatically, and in brilliant ways early on, that settler colonialism is also an intra-European affair. Um, and it's important to understand that. It's important to understand this historic relationship between settler colonialism in the enclosure of the commons, um, which is part and, part of the origins of, of what we now know or understand as capitalism. But if we understand that settler colonialism, that the transatlantic slave trade, um, and that, you know, the emergence of a set of philosophical formulations that essentially provide for us some modern conception of self that has as its basis a kind of possessive, heteronormative, patriarchal individuation, right? That's what it is to be yourself on the most fundamental level. You know, and if you ask anybody in the philosophy department, they'll tell you that that's true, you know, and they won’t be joking, right, that, um, that, these, that these constitute the basis of, of our modernity. But for most of the people who live in the world, actually for everybody who lives in the world, although most of the people in live in the world are actually able to both recognize this and say this, that modernity is a social and ecological disaster that we live, that we now attempt to survive. Okay? And if we take that up, then part of what's at stake is that we recognize that feminist and queer interventions against heteronormative patriarchy, that Black interventions against the theory and practice of slavery, which is ongoing, that indigenous interventions against settler colonialism constitute the general both practical and intellectual basis for not only our attempts to survive, but also our attempts to, as I said before, save the Earth. And, and I put it in terms that the great poet Ed Roberson puts it; not just to save the Earth, but to see the Earth before the end of the world. And this is an emergency that we're in now and it's urgent. Um, and I believe that there’s a specific convergence of black thought and indigenous thought that situates itself precisely in relation to, and is articulated through, the interventions of queer thought and feminist thought that we want to take up. And, and it, and it strikes me as, for me at least, it's, it's a way of taking up a kind an—it's, it’s a way of imagining how one might be able to, how we might be able to walk more lightly on the Earth. To honor the Earth as we walk on it, as we stand on it. To not stomp on it, to not stomp all over it, where every step you take is a claim of ownership. And, and this is one way to put it, would be to not so presumptuously imagine that the Earth can be reduced to something so paltry and so viciously understood as what we usually call home. This is part of the reason why the queer and the feminist critique is so important. It's a critique of a general problematic notion of domesticity. It's like another way of being on the Earth that doesn't allow you in some vicious and brutal way to claim that it is yours, right? Um, this is important and this is so, you know, often the methods that we use to claim the Earth as ours involved fences, borders. This manifests itself on a private level from household to household, but it also manifests itself on a national level, and at the level of the nation state, and it's not an accident that settler colonial states take it upon themselves to imagine themselves to be the living embodiment of the legitimacy of the nation state as a political and social form. For me, there's two reasons to be in solidarity with the people of Palestine. One is because they're human beings and they're being treated with absolute brutality, but the other is that there's a specific resistance to Israel as a nation state. And for my money, to be perfectly clear about this, I believe that this nation state of Israel is itself an artifact of antisemitism. If we thought about Israel and Zionism, not just as a form of racism that results in the displacement of Palestinians, but if we also think about them as artifacts of the historic displacement of Jews from Europe, right, in the same way that we might think of, let's say Sierra Leone or Liberia as artifacts of racist displacement, okay. If we think about it that way, okay, and another, and the reason I'm saying this is just to make sure that you know that there's a possible argument against the formulation that criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic when we know that Donald Trump is a staunch supporter, that people like Pat Robertson in the United States are staunch supporters that help us to the fact that you can be deeply anti-Semitic and support the state of Israel. These things go together. They're not antithetical to one another. So that it becomes important for us to be able to suggest that resistance to the state of Israel is also resistance to the idea of the legitimacy of the nation state. It's not an accident that Israel has taken upon itself, that when Israel takes upon itself, when the defense of Israel manifests itself as a defense of its right to exist, this is important. It's a defense, not just of Israel's right to exist, but of the nation state as a political form’s right to exist. And nation states don't have rights. What they're supposed to be are mechanisms to protect the rights of the people who live in them, and that has almost never been the case, and to the extent that they do protect the rights of the people who live in them, it's in the expense, it's at the expense of the people who don't, okay. So part of what's at stake, one of the reasons why it's at, it's important to pay particular attention to this issue, why we ought to resist the ridiculous formulation that singling out Israel at this moment is itself anti-Semitic is because it's important to recognize that Israel is the state. [KELLEY: Right.] MOTEN: For reasons that I think are totally bound up with antisemitism, right? Israel is the state that, insofar as it makes the claim about its right to exist, is also making the claim about the nation state’s right to exist as such. It's this, it's that same kind of argument that, I remembered the—and I'm sorry to keep going on so long, but there's—there's those formulations that people often make about Black people in it or indigenous people as if they were the essence of the human, right, so that every time Black people or indigenous people do something that supposedly we're not supposed to do, it constitutes a violation to the very idea of the human. Right, because somehow as a function of the nobility of our suffering, we constitute the very idea of humanity, right? And there's nothing more brutal, right? Nothing more vicious than having been being consigned to that position. Similarly, Israel as a function of anti-Semitism has now been placed in the position of protecting the very idea of the nation state. So for me, first and foremost, it's important to have solidarity with the Palestinian people, but second of all, it's important to actually have some solidarity with the Jewish people insofar as they can and must be separated from the Israeli state because ultimately the fate of the Jewish people, if it is tied to this, to the nation state of Israel, will be more brutal than anything that has yet been done or can be imagined, and I mean everything that you think I mean when I say that.

#### Extinction reps good - organizing around preventing extinction creates openings for marginalized communities to flourish

Kuttner, 17—Education Partnership Manager & Director for Community Engaged Scholarship, University Neighborhood Partners, University of Utah (Paul, “Futurism, Futurity, and the Importance of the Existential Imagination,” <http://culturalorganizing.org/futurism-futurity/>, dml)

Organizers and activists also seem to be taking an increased interest in the future. In 2015, the Movement for Black Lives and Huffington Post launched an annual celebration of Black Futures Month, a remixing of Black History Month that calls on people to “seize the opportunity to change the course of history by shaping our future.” That same year, AK press put out Octavia’s Brood, an engrossing collection of SF short stories written by activists and organizers. Of course, social justice organizing is often driven by a vision of a future better than the one we live in. But something deeper is going on here: a recognition that the future, despite its intangibility, is directly impacting us today. Take US politics. The election campaign that lifted 45 to the presidency was premised largely on fear of the future. In his speeches and tweets, 45 conjured an imagined future in which the US is overrun by “terrorists,” “rapists,” and “criminals” from across our borders. In this racist, dystopian future, white people sacrifice power and safety amid hostile aliens. This future is not real in any concrete sense. And yet, it affects the present in multiple ways — increasing support for racist policies, emboldening white supremacist organizations, and igniting hate crimes, just to name a few. In this sense, the future is what Andrew Baldwin calls a “permanent virtuality,” unreal and yet ever-present.6 Scholars have taken to using the term futurity to explore these interactions between past, present, and future. From my reading, futurity refers to three main dynamics: The ways that the future is defined (or “rendered knowable”) through practices such as prediction, projection, imagination, prefiguration, and prophecy;7 The ways that the future impacts the present, for example through fear, hope, preparation, and preemption;8and The ways that our thoughts and actions in reference to the future make some futures more likely, and others less likely, to come about.9 In his book Cruising Utopia, José Esteban Muñoz proposes that queerness is a kind of futurity. “Queerness,” he writes in the book’s introduction, “is not yet here…Put another way, we are not yet queer.”10 Instead, he explains, queerness is an ideal. It is a utopian vision that can help us to see beyond our everyday restrictions toward new possibilities. We cannot touch queerness with our hands, or claim to fully know what it is. We can, however, get glimpses of it, particularly in the realm of cultural production. Through poems, plays, visual art, dance, and other types of performance, artists can step away from what Munoz calls “straight time” — that sense that the present is natural and enduring — to suggest alternative futurities. The concept of futurity seems to have been most fully developed by Indigenous scholars and activists. As Native scholars have shown, settler colonialism (the kind of colonialism we have in the US, where the colonizer comes to stay) involves an ongoing project of erasure and replacement.11 After all, settler claims to the land in the Americas, the Pacific Islands, and elsewhere only make sense if the original inhabitants are gone. And, despite centuries of genocide, they are not. Part of the modern settler project, then, is to erase Indigenous peoples — if not physically (through policies that deny land, health care, etc.) or culturally (through blood quantum tests or the forced removal of children), then at least from popular consciousness. Movies, television shows, school curricula, political speeches, news reports, and other media relegate “the Indian” to our past — a sad chapter in history, perhaps, but nothing to concern ourselves with as we dream of the future. By erasing Indigenous people from the present and the future, these discourses advance the cause of what scholars like Eve Tuck call settler futurity. In other words, these discourses are premised on, and help to bring about, a future of endless settler dominance over the land and all that is on/of it.12 Indigenous communities, though, are (re)claiming the future — opening up space for indigenous futurities to flourish.13 To advance indigenous futurity is to assert, and takes steps to make possible, futures outside of settler colonialism. We can get glimpses of indigenous futurities in the social movement organizing of Idle No More, among the water protectors at Standing Rock, in the Indigenous media production of Indian and Cowboy, and in everyday assertions of Native culture and sovereignty. Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua writes that, although they are often framed as relics of the past, Indigenous communities are actually at the front lines of the struggle to protect the future. Writing about Native Hawaiian efforts to defend cultural and natural resources, she notes that “When colonial discourses frame blockades at Newcastle or on Mauna a Wākea as obstructions on a march to “the future,” they miss the ways this kind of activism is actually protecting the possibilities of multiple futures.”14 This work is rooted deeply in Indigenous cultural practices and epistemologies, which, according to Hawaiian activist and blogger Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada, have always attended to both the past and the future. “The future is a realm we have inhabited for thousands of years. You cannot do otherwise when you rely on the land and sea to survive. All of our gathering practices and agricultural techniques, the patterned mat of loʻi kalo, the breath passing in and out of the loko iʻa, the Kū and Hina of picking plants are predicated on looking ahead. This ensures that the land is productive into the future, that the sea will still be abundant into the future, and that our people will still thrive into the future.”15 A Final Note When I was coming up in the world of social justice arts and organizing, much of the focus was on history. We studied how injustices like racism and colonialism were historically constructed. We learned how histories of activism and rebellion had been hidden, rewritten, and co-opted to reinforce the right of those in power to rule. We supported youth as they came to see themselves as part of long social movement traditions. This focus on the past was, and is, terribly important. At the same time, I am energized by what I see as a growing emphasis on the future as an arena of active struggle. Because that’s certainly how those in power see it. Wall street traders are gambling on our futures. Tech companies are redesigning our futures. Hollywood is whitewashing our futures. And all the while, unfettered capitalism is foreclosing so many healthy futures for this planet. Imagining alternative futures is, quite literally, a matter of life and death. The struggle for futurity is on, and as artists and cultural workers we are right in the middle of it, whether we know it or not. It’s time to accept the invitation of Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada: “We live in the future,” he writes. “Come join us.”16

### AT: Circumvention

## Kritik

### Framework

### theory of power

#### 2] Not ontological:

#### Anti-Blackness isn’t historically calcified and their reading runs counter to the Black radical tradition.

Kelley, 17—Gary B. Nash Professor of American History at UCLA (Robin D.G., “Robin D.G. Kelley & Fred Moten In Conversation,” transcribed from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fP-2F9MXjRE>, 1:57:36-2:02:56, dml)

KELLEY: Um, Fred—Fred will take most of these questions. So that's why I'm going to begin first because he's gonna, he's gonna—he's gonna end it because he, he, he has the answer to all these questions ‘cause I turn to him for these questions. On the specific, on the first question, I just want to make sure I understand it because I'm, you know, I don't always recognize, uh, it may be because I'm just old, but I don't always recognize, uh, that black politics, black [unclear—maybe “guys”] work politics have been structured or defined by white supremacy. I mean, white supremacy is there. And I guess maybe because I'm such a student of Cedric Robinson, you know, not everything is about, or in response to, white supremacy. And in fact, one of the critiques coming out of doing Southern history was this idea that race relations framework, that race relations defines, uh, African-American history or Black history. And it's simply not true because much of what people do in terms of, of social formation, community building, um, is, is, is what Raymond Williams might call alternative cultures. In other words, it may be structured in dominance in some ways, but not defined by it. And Cedric's Black Marxism, you know, really made this point. He talks about the ontological totality, you know, the, this sense of being and making ourselves whole, in that we come out of an experience, again, structured by white supremacy, structured by violence, structured by enslavement and dispossession, but, but one in which western hegemony didn't work, you know, that modes of thinking wasn't defined by Enlightenment modes of thinking. In other words, that, that part of the Black radical tradition is a refusal to be property, to even admit that human beings could be property. You know, so we sometimes give white supremacy way too much credit, and maybe I misunderstood the question. And so I think that there's lots of things that happen outside of joy and survival, and survival is important, but survival is not the end all, you know. So I think, and I'll give you one very, very specific example, and now I'm not gonna say anything else after this. The way we have tended to more recently treat slavery, Jim Crow and mass incarceration as a piece, as the reinstantiation of the same thing, the continuation, that denies the fact that these systems are actually distinct, that they are historically specific, and in fact they’re responses to, in many ways, to the weakness of this as a racial regime. So if you think of like the whole idea of the new Jim Crow to me is very, very problematic. Um, although that book by Michelle Alexander is very, very powerful and very useful in terms of educating people about prisons. Jim Crow was not the continuation of slavery. It was not. Jim Crow was a response to the Black Democratic, uh, upsurge after slavery. It was a revolution of Reconstruction. It was a way to try to suppress that. The fact that, that, you know, there was this incredible response. That's why there's a, there's a huge gap between 1877 at the official end of Reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow, which is the 1890s, disfranchisement, lynching. That's because you've had 13, 14, 15, 20, 25 years of a democratic possibility and struggle. The same thing with mass incarceration—yes, we've had incarceration, but it's, but that, that, that, that upward swing has a lot to do with, again, responses to the struggles in the 1960s, the assault on the Keynesian welfare-warfare state, the fact that you know the, the war on political, the formation of political prisoners, those struggles in fact was the state's response to opposition. And so if we don't acknowledge that, then what we end up doing is thinking that somehow there's a structure of white supremacy that's unchanging, fixed, and so powerful we can't do anything about it when in fact it's the opposite. White supremacy is fragile. White supremacy is weak. Racial regimes actually are always having to shore themselves up precisely because they're unstable. We can see that. We can't see it because the whole system of hegemony is to give us the impression that it is so powerful, there's no space out. And yet it’s working overtime to, to respond to our opposition. Right. That may not answer your question, but that's sort of a way I think about it. Maybe it’s not satisfactory, but yeah.

#### Err aff—ontology is descriptive, not prescriptive. Presuming anti-Blackness is ontological prevents change, but assuming it isn’t has liberatory force.

More, 19—former professor of philosophy at the University of the North, University of Durban-Westville, and University of KwaZulu-Natal (Mabogo, “The Transformative Power of Lewis R. Gordon’s Africana Philosophy in Mandela’s House,” *Black Existentialism: Essays on the Transformative Thought of Lewis R. Gordon*, Chapter 6, pg 75-76, kindle, dml)

What these critics ignore in Gordon’s work is, first, the role “liberation” plays in the tripartite constitution of his Africana philosophy. This is of course a basic failure to grasp a philosophy that is based upon an approach to struggle, an approach that is fundamentally about consciousness raising and, I may add, the massification of the philosophy of resistance so that those who are in the struggle can provide rational answers for themselves. This kind of philosophizing is precisely what Biko and those in the Black Consciousness movement referred to as “conscientization.” In all the articulations of conscientization, “action” or “praxis” is the key. This kind of philosophical tradition, from Sartre to Fanon to Gordon, is not simply a meditative or abstract self-reflective and aloof contemplation process outside real existence, but a complete involvement in the drama of that very existence. As a philosopher of existence, Gordon subscribes to Sartre’s description of philosophy as “concerned with man—who is at once an agent and an actor, who . . . lives the contradictions of his situation, until either his individuality is shattered or his conflicts are resolved” (1975, 11–12).

Second, Headley and Curry seem to ignore the existentialist concept of “radical conversion” or what Simone de Beauvoir calls “existential conversion.” Salvation from the terror of racism, Gordon argues, requires a radical conversion; that is, the acceptance of our contingent unjustifiable existence. This conversion means a move through a process of self-recovery from a consciousness that was previously corrupted to one in which freedom is the absolute value, one in which we recognize that our situation does not have to be as it is, that this racist situation can and ought to be changed. For liberation to occur, Gordon explains: “We need to admit, at bottom, that our situation doesn’t have to be as it is. We need to embrace the negative aspect of existence in the form of existential or radical conversion” (1995a, 134).

Clevis Headley, for example, faults Gordon for not paying attention to the question of agency in an antiblack world. Flowing from this charge, Headley, as mentioned above, asks: “How can a black person living in an antiblack world express human agency? Should blacks simply resign themselves to the fact the world is antiblack?” (1997, 341). The latter question is reminiscent of the charge of “quietism” leveled against existentialism. The problem with this critique is that it does not, in the first place, take into account the methodological constraints imposed on Gordon by phenomenological ontology. Within this framework, and in line with philosophical (logical) requirements, one cannot simply move from description to prescription. Since phenomenology is fundamentally descriptive, prescription gets thrown out of the window. In his own defense, Gordon claims that criticism from a Sartrean perspective is misguided precisely because “the concern for a form of prescriptive ethics on the basis of a Sartrean ontology reflects a mistaken view of the Sartrean project, . . . since the role of the philosopher . . . is not to be our shepherd” (1995a, 164).

At the ontological level, Gordon’s position, just like Fanon’s, becomes radical ontology that emanates from the recognition of the importance of contingency in existence. The danger of committing ourselves to an ontology that focuses exclusively on what must be the case resides in our forgetfulness of the contingency of being and thus the failure to appreciate that what is the case need not always be the case. Liberation from distorted ontology, therefore, requires the rejection of the kind of ontology that is predicated on the idea of necessity. Instead, it requires the admission of the fact that fundamentally, the situation doesn’t have to be as it is. As mentioned above, when existentialists ask, “What is the meaning of Being?,” a black consciousness raises the question: “What is the meaning of the Being of a black person in an antiblack political, social, cultural, religious and moral world?” Such an ontology has liberatory potential precisely because humans do indeed judge that the way things are in their lived political, social, and moral world is certainly not the way they ought to be; that what is need not be as it is. From this judgment human beings do set about to change the way things are to what they must and ought to be. It is this realization that their situation need not be as it is, as the epigraph above indicates, that made the Black Consciousness youth activists question the continuing racism and hegemonic white supremacy in the “New” South Africa of Nelson Mandela.

### Imperialism R/C—2AC

#### 3] Their explanation of blackness is ahistorical. Imperial expansion produces antiblackness, not the other way around.

Bates, 18—Ph.D. candidate, Boston College, Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences (Julia, “The Occlusion of Empire in the Reification of Race: A Postcolonial Critique of the American Sociology of Race,” <https://dlib.bc.edu/islandora/object/bc-ir%3A108103>, dml)

Here, Patterson did not conceptualize race as a static category, or some kind of “original sin” that was passed on from U.S. slavery. Rather, he theorized racial categories particularly the category of blackness within the United States was continually produced and reproduced by U.S. Empire abroad. He argued the subordination of black Americans within the United States was dependent on the United States ability to produce the category of “race” abroad. With the production of race on a global level, the United States maintained racial hierarchy within the United States. He noted that as U.S. imperialism gained in power within global capitalism, African Americans’ internal subjugation within the United States increased. He stated, As American monopoly grows in strength, reaching out for control of the world, the exploitation of the Negro people in the United States grows in scope and severity. Thus, in 1947 the median wage or salary income of white wage earners was $1, 980 of non-white wage earners $863, or 43.6 per cent as much, according to the United States Department of Commerce. In 1949, according to the United States Bureau reports, while 16,800,000 Americans in 4,700,000 families had an income of less than $1,000 a year, the income of white families was two times greater than that of Negroes (136) Therefore, the global growth of capitalism in the 21 st century, did not decrease the significance of racial inequality relative to class inequality, but actually exponentially increased it. He argued race was not subsumed to class as capitalism progressed. Rather as capitalism progressed, racial and class inequality grew in strength in relation to one another. Thus, he saw the global growth in capitalism as a global growth in imperialism, or capitalist-imperialism. Imperialism was not seen as a past stage of capitalism, or something that was subsumed to a more pure form of capitalism in the future. Rather imperialism and capitalism were conceived of as integral to one another. Throughout the petition, Patterson highlighted how the expansion of U.S. Empire abroad was integral to the maintenance of racial inequality at home. He noted the maintenance of the slave system within the United States was maintained through U.S. imperial expansion in Mexico: The genocide that was American slavery, the killing of part of the group so that the remainder could be more readily exploited for profit, resulted in two wars. The first was the aggression against Mexico in 1846 seeking more territory for the expansion of slavery (24). Like corporations within the capitalist system that expand their markets globally to maintain profit, the United States government expanded slavery abroad to maintain slavery within. More specifically, to maintain the profits of the slave system, the United States government had to engage in acts of imperial conquest to increase land and resource extraction. This integrally linked the dynamics of racial structures within the United States to U.S. imperial expansion. Likewise, he noted that following the Civil War, the U.S. continued to repress anti-imperial insurgency within the United States through imperial expansion. He argued the U.S.’s imperial expansion into Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines helped to repress the threat posed to U.S. power by the Populist Party. The Populist Party brought together both black and white American workers against global corporate interests. By expanding into new territories, the U.S. government gained cheap labor and markets that offset the ability of the Populist Party to leverage the U.S. government for higher wages etc.: The Negro [black] people fought back chiefly through the Populist parties that opposed the Wall Street trusts through the eighties, nineties of the last century. But their fight became more hopeless against the increased power of American monopoly. Terror was unleashed against them at home…Side by side went terror unleashed abroad, as American imperialism entered the international arena by subjugating the Filipino, Puerto Rican, and Cuban peoples and reduced many Latin-American countries to economic and political vassalage (25). To put down a threat to U.S. Empire within the U.S. citizenry, the United States government expanded outwards. In doing so, they gained more land and cheap labor to use against the political threat to U.S. Empire within. Patterson argued this pattern persisted into the twenty first century. Discussing the Korean War, they note again that the U.S.’s expansion outward was integral to maintaining the United States’ Empire within: Jellied gasoline in Korea and the lynchers’ faggot at home are connected in more ways than that both result in death by fire. The lyncher and the atom bomber are related. The first cannot murder unpunished and unrebuked without so encouraging the latter that the peace of the world and the lives of millions are endangered. Nor is this metaphysics. The tie binding both is economic profit and political control. He observed the Korean War was coupled with an increased repression of black Americans within the United States. Thus, when the United States waged imperial wars abroad they increased the repression of African Americans within. Patterson did not view racism as a “baseless ideology”, nor did he view it as a psychological, or irrational phenomena. He asserted racism was based in global capitalist-imperialism. As a consequence, racism was not only rational, but also necessary to maintain the structure. It was not only used to produce and reproduce a class structure, but also as a means to prevent political counter-insurgency against U.S. Empire within the United States and other nations. Patterson viewed race, not just as a set of beliefs or a type of identity, but also as a structural category integral to the maintenance of capitalistimperialism. William Patterson argued U.S. racism has a base, and its base is imperialcapitalism; however, he also argued imperial-capitalism cannot be reduced on to the relationship between an unraced bourgeoisie and proletariat. In this definition, race is taken out and class is deemed just a material, non-cultural relationship between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. In this definition of capitalism, imperialism and racism are not conceptualized as integral, ongoing parts of capitalism (Chibber 2014). However, black Marxists, like William Patterson did see imperialism and racism as integral and ongoing parts of global capitalism. He stated, “It is because we Negro petitioners have no true and real recourse in these courts, because we receive no protection from the state, because police and courts are themselves involved in the genocide directed against us…” (41). He argued, the U.S. government was able to economically exploit African Americans more thoroughly than other Americans because they had politically dispossessed and geographically displaced them within the U.S. polity. More specifically, like colonial subjects they were contained in specific areas and unable to represent themselves in the polity. Likewise, he noted because the U.S. engaged in imperialism with African Americans it could easily use these same policies to promote U.S. imperialism abroad. Regarding the relationship between domestic genocide and global imperial genocide, they stated, This domestic genocide…was the foundation of predatory war and the prelude to the larger genocide that followed against the nationals of other countries, a genocide seeking the political and economic control of Europe, if not the world… (31) Thus, William Patterson bridged race and class, national and global. He stated the increasing subordination of black Americans increased the United States ability to dominate the world economy through a racial political order. Patterson also drew parallels between the U.S. Empire and the German Empire. He stated, “We cannot forget Hitler’s demonstration that genocide at home can become wider massacre abroad, that domestic genocide develops into a larger genocide that is predatory war…” Patterson noted the internal imperial order, within Germany gave way to an outward colonial expansion that dispossessed and murdered people based on race. Thus he predicted the United States would unleash more war abroad as racial inequality developed within. Likewise, he noted as American empire expanded outwards it would make the world’s peoples dependent on consuming commodities that were produced within a racist-imperial regime. He stated, “We speak of a progressive mankind because a policy of discrimination at home must inevitably create racist commodities for export abroad…” (xi). The American imperial regime first developed by the internalization of the global European imperial would now expand back outward making the world’s people dependent on cheap black American labor. Furthermore, he highlighted how the black labor regime within the United States was produced in relation to colonial labor regimes of European empires. He asserted, “The South’s plantation system, concealed by the United States census…produced for the world market in successful competition with the ‘coolie’ labor of Egypt and India, brought in one and a half billion dollars” (23). He noted the United States had to establish a system of colonial labor within the United States in order to be able to compete against European Empires. The United States solution to this predicament was slavery, and later, other forms of localized imperial structures to maintain colonial labor. He observed this structure within the United States can’t be reduced to a simple class relationship between an unraced proletariat and bourgeoisie. Rather with black Americans it was not just about economic alienation from the goods, but political alienation from the state and geographic dispossession from the territory. He stated, Most sharecroppers work from dawn- to dark for a living, which verges on starvation. Often these black Americans are not even able to quit or move not only because of lack of money but because of ancient debtors' laws which make it a crime to move while owing money…Much of the law of those states in the Black Belt, moreover, is directed towards guaranteeing an American peasantry without political or human rights available to work the land without pay sufficient for proper livelihood (23)

### Perm do both

#### Perm—do the aff as an example of blaqillegalism. The aff targets the institutions and businesses. The alt fails without the aff—defense contractors are too big for movements to break down without the power of the state

#### Even if pessimism is a good academic stance, it can’t be used to justify accepting the harms of the status quo—life is a prerequisite to struggle

Syedullah, 18—Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology at Vassar College (Jasmine, “Afro-pessimism: Critical Exchange,” Contemporary Political Theory Vol. 17, 1, 105–137, dml)

Given that the endgame of Afro-pessimism as an academic enterprise is limited by its location within the neoliberal university (see Fred Moten and Stephano Harney’s ‘‘The University and the UnderCommons,’’), the most generative aspects of its analysis of anti-blackness and Western civilization are indebted to knowledge about black life and liberation produced outside the academy and on the ground of struggles for freedom. The pessimism of conventional philosophical concern presses on the ontological foundations of a person’s individual sense of agency and purpose, throwing one’s will to live into question.

Prophetic despair, such as that which Baldwin expresses in an often quoted interview between James Baldwin Dr. Kenneth Clark in May of 1963, presses on the material cohesion of our moral infrastructure. In the interview Baldwin professes to remaining pessimistic with regard to his own life when he says, ‘‘It doesn’t matter any longer what you do to me; you can put me in jail, you can kill me. By the time I was 17, you’d done everything that you could do to me. The problem now is, how are you going to save yourselves?’’ He goes on a bit later to refuse, in no uncertain term, pessimism as a politics of the future.

When Clark asks, ‘‘Jim, what do you see deep in the recesses of your own mind as the future of our nation, … I think that the future of the Negro and the future of the nation are linked … What do you see?,’’ Baldwin replies, ‘‘I can’t be a pessimist because I’m alive. To be a pessimist means that you have agreed that human life is an academic matter, so I’m forced to be an optimist. I’m forced to believe that we can survive whatever we must survive. But the future of the Negro in this country is precisely as bright or as dark as the future of the country (Clark et al., 1963).

I want to savor the tensions of Baldwin’s response. I want to hold them, not resolve them, and observe how they situate pedestrian personal pessimism outside the movement for black life, while calling out the limits of a political process propelled and legitimated by white supremacy. Even insofar as pessimism is a social expression of the affective limits of social death, a feeling that brings us back to life, out of isolation, and into conversation with each other the promise of pessimism is clearly far more than an academic matter.

The antithesis of pessimism in this instance is not optimism but apathy, willful passive acceptance of the untenable conditions of a people systemically and forcibly made to understand that there are some whose existence is at best immaterial and at worst a clear and present danger, and then there are those lives that do matter. What we have been witnessing in the activist and academic movements for black life is the implosion of identity politics and the failure of its possessive claims to liberal demands for rights and protection. The abolition of whiteness demands a kind of justice the state may not yet know how to sanction. As Patrisse Cullors (2015), one of three original founders of #BLM, argues, ‘‘I believe we can’t wait on the State to take care of our Black lives. We have to show up now to build the world we want to see.’’

Thinking the purchase of the pessimistic prophetically then, as a residual, inevitable, yet generative practice of the black prophetic tradition with reparative properties that precede and exceed Afro-pessimism’s formal incorporation into scholarly journals and conferences, I find myself constantly reminding my students that while we can take the analysis of power Afro-pessimism offers and run with it, academic enunciations of pessimism run the risk of remaining loyal to the limits of legibility and respectability of politics as usual. As Nick Mitchell (forthcoming, p. 10) writes: ‘‘When the intellectual becomes interchangeable with the slave, it is perhaps too easy … to smooth over the fact that black intellectuals have interests as intellectuals that can and do diverge from those of the people for whom they might want justice. Without an acknowledgement (not a confession) of this divergence … the project of race theorization risks deploying the generalizing force of theory and the moralizing tendency of critique to generalize a class perspective.’’

What we are dealing with here is more than occidental anxiety of ontological uncertainty. It is an ethical imperative to engage in a struggle to change the meaning of rights and protection from the ground up (or suffer senselessly at the altar of the state’s right to defend itself by any means necessary). As Baldwin (in Clark et al., 1963) suggested in the interview with Kenneth Clark, the pessimism of antiblack racism is not just a black problem, it presses on the condition of whites and upon the country as a whole: ‘‘These people have deluded themselves for so long, that they really don’t think I’m human. I base this on their conduct, not on what they say, and this means that they have become, in themselves, moral monsters.’’

The predicament of the pessimist is not a personal problem that is easily selfcontained. It presses upon the body, moving it to unrest, unleashing a rage that cannot stand to be at home in moral monstrosity. It just wants to burn it all down. ‘‘Now, we are talking about human beings, there’s not such a thing as a monolithic wall or some abstraction called the Negro problem, these are Negro boys and girls, who at 16 and 17 don’t believe the country means anything that it says and don’t feel they have any place here, on the basis of the performance of the entire country.’’ The question Afro-pessimism poses as a practice of prophetic desire then, turns away from a politics of recognition and respectability toward an abolitionist praxis of fugitive reparation to ask, ‘‘Will you run with me?’’ Does my pessimism press on your sense of superiority, exception, perfection enough for you to forfeit your status and help us move the country, force the nation to believe there is freedom beyond this world, a more prophetic imagination of difference, identity, and inclusion? ‘‘What white people have to do,’’ Baldwin (in Clark et al., 1963) reminds us, ‘‘is try and find out in their own hearts why it was necessary to have a nigger in the first place, because I’m not a nigger, I’m a man, but if you think I’m a nigger, it means you need it.’’

In the present moment Black Lives Matter (BLM) is advancing the cause for the abolition of white supremacy in local ways in chapters throughout the world. They call us to account for the material consequences of the unfinished work of antislavery abolition and reconstruction. They are part of an underground lineage of fugitive communities that emerged from the marshes, swamps, and hiding spaces of the plantation South. Their message is decentralized. It is not uniform. It does not reproduce old antagonisms. It does not pit moral suasion against direct confrontation. It does not ask that we choose to remain either optimistic or pessimistic. It exercises a practice of the political that harnesses both. In this last section then I turn to a speech against apathy by Patrisse Cullors, a beacon in a leader-full movement who has been animating pessimism as a protocol of self-care and prophetic political organizing powerful enough to propel activist and intellectual movements from isolated places of loss into collective liberation, out of abstractions into objections, subjecting the logics of antiblack racism to the collective force of intersecting fugitive communities of abolitionist movement against nihilism and toward an affirmation of life.

We Can Survive? At age 25 on 19 April 2015 Freddie Gray died from injuries sustained while shackled by his feet in a Baltimore Police Department van where he was being held in custody following his arrest. Baltimore stood up, rose up, died in, and rolled out. We all bore witness. His death was deemed a murder by the medical examiner a few weeks later. That Sunday morning, May 3, 2015, I, a Buddhist, found my way to church, to All Saints in Pasadena, CA, into the strikingly upper-class congregation of post-service attendees who piled in along with an unlikely mix of young greater Los Angeles activists-of-color and their white hipster allies. It would be my first time hearing our speaker in person. The whole room stood and cheered as she entered – the woman who helped coin the hashtag, the longtime activist organizer, Patrisse Cullors greeted us like family, all knowing eyes, bright smiles, and then began a talk she called ‘‘Abolition Theology.’’ Her voice was clear and certain, free of the cross-bearing affect of black suffering that often accompanies talk of state-sponsored antiblack violence in predominately white spaces. Cullors gave us a speech that touched us, that moved us – mourning, rage and all – into a mood for collective action. She impressed upon us the fact that the movement for black lives was a call to action for all black life, not just the names we could recite, not just cisgendered young men, not just ‘‘innocent’’ ‘‘children,’’ not just Americans. She let us know there had been recent formations of #Black Lives Matter chapters beyond U.S. borders. There were Afro-Latino chapters, chapters forming in Haiti, and in Ghana. She reminded us that the concept of blackness that resonates across the globe called on us to broaden the scope of our movements and to build alliances, to build with Latino communities in particular. It was a call for #BLM without borders. We were being enlisted in a movement that began, she reminded us, with the movement to abolish the institution of slavery. We were being reeducated as she drew connection between the hard-won efforts of formerly fugitive abolitionists to build resilient communities out of the so-called contraband during and following the Civil War through to the present-day ‘‘leader-full’’ movement of #BLM. ‘‘Isn’t this a great time to be alive?’’ Cullors asked in closing. Is she joking I wondered? I found not one drop of cynicism in her question. Without missing a beat, she proceeded to relay the names, the facts, the numbers, the bodies felled by police, by gun, by force. As she listed the lives taken a wave of loss flooded the room and we were still, breathless. ‘‘Protest is about disrupting apathy,’’ she continued.

She left us eager to join her in this twenty-first century revival of reconstruction, in a fight for food, for access to housing, for access to education, and for a kind of justice for black lives that will not come without our willingness to show up, stand up, and throw down. In the streets, in solidarity, we will find the power to change people, she said, to change policy. She echoed the words of civil rights organizer Ella Baker, ‘‘the system under which we now exist has to be radically changed… It means facing a system that does not lend itself to your needs and devising means by which you change that system.’’

For Cullors that ‘‘means’’ came by way of waves grief, rage, despair, the loss of family, the loss of hope, bearing witness, heartbreak, and the will to return to face it all again. She closed us out with the rallying chant of the movement for black lives, the recitation of a prayer by Twentieth century fugitive slave Assata Shakur, ‘‘It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love each other and protect each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains.’’ The congregation’s joy burst through the siren of her words and bound us toward another way of sitting with the litany of loss.

We Must Survive

What Baldwin and Cullors make clear is that pessimism is most powerful as an unrelenting political process of coming back to life, beginning to feel one another’s humanity. What my students who are taking up the work of Afro-pessimism are in most need of are new ways to put their pessimism to work, to come together and collectively counteract the mind-numbing soul-crushing isolation centuries of antiblack racism have waged on our humanity. We need not fear falling short. The more we ‘‘fail,’’ the stronger we rise to try again armed with the alchemy of despair. What we need are stories and speeches, and spaces that moves us from abjection toward that fertile ground of self-transformation one can only find in the witness of another. What might we give up in a move from critique to healing and reparation, generative of the choice to be fearless in the face of the impossibilities of freedom? What might the audacity to ‘‘lean on each other,’’ as Jasmine Abdullah Richards says in the epigraph, and imagine a future for black life otherwise, add to the pursuits of the pessimist?

### Perm—Networks—2AC

#### Anti-imperialism as a method operates within larger networks of emancipatory tactics, that’s Murray—that means the perm is the most effective option.

Hardt 2 – Prof. of Literature @ Duke & The European Graduate School

New Left Review, New Left Review 14, March-April 2002,

http://newleftreview.org/II/14/michael-hardt-porto-alegre-today-s-bandung

Anti-capitalism and national sovereignty The Porto Alegre Forum was in this sense perhaps to happy, to celebratory and not conflictual enough. The most important political difference cutting across the entire Forum concerned the role of national sovereignty. There are indeed two primary positons in the response to today’s dominant forces of globalization: either one can work to reinforce the sovereignty of nation-states as a defensive barrier against the control of foreign and global capital, or one can strive towards a non-national alternative to the present form of globalization that is equally global. The first poses neoliberalism as the primary analytical category, viewing the enemy as unrestricted global capitalist activity with weak state controls; the second is more clearly posed against capital itself, whether state-regulated or not. The first might rightly be called an antiglobalization posit on, in so far as national sovereignties, even if linked by international solidarity, serve to limit and regulate the forces of capitalist globalization. National liberation thus remains for this posit on the ultimate goal, as it was for the old anticolonial and anti-imperialist struggles. The second, in contrast, opposes any national solutions and seeks instead a democratic globalization. The first position occupied the most visible and dominant spaces of the Porto Alegre Forum; it was represented in the large plenary sessions, repeated by the official spokespeople, and reported in the press. A key proponent of this position was the leadership of the Brazilian PT (Workers' Party)—in effect the host of the Forum, since it runs the city and regional government. It was obvious and inevitable that the PT would occupy a central space in the Forum and use the international prestige of the event as part of its campaign strategy for the upcoming elections. The second dominant voice of national sovereignty was the French leadership of ATTAC, which laid the groundwork for the Forum in the pages of Le Monde Diplomatique. The leadership of ATTAC is, in this regard, very close to many of the French politicians— most notably Jean-Pierre Chevenement—who advocate strengthening national sovereignty as a solution to the ills of contemporary globalization. These, in any case, are the figures who dominated the representation of the Forum both internally and in the press. The non-sovereign, alternative globalization position, in contrast, was minoritarian at the Forum—not in quantitative terms but in terms of representation; in fact, the majority of the participants in the Forum may well have occupied this minoritarian position. First, the various movements that have conducted the protests from Seattle to Genoa are generally oriented towards non-national solutions. Indeed, the centralized structure of state sovereignty itself runs counter to the horizontal network-form that the movements have developed. Second, the Argentinian movements that have sprung up in response to the present financial crisis, organized in neighbourhood and city-wide delegate assemblies, are similarly antagonistic to proposals of national sovereignty. Their slogans call for getting rid, not just of one politician, but all of them—*que se vayan todos*: the entire political class. And finally, at the base of the various parties and organizations present at the Forum the sentiment is much more hostile to proposals of national sovereignty than at the top. This may be particularly true of ATTAC, a hybrid organization whose head, especially in France, mingles with traditional politicians, whereas its feet are firmly grounded in the movements. The division between the sovereignty, anti-globalization position and the non-sovereign, alternative globalization position is therefore not best understood in geographical terms. It does not map the divisions between North and South or First World and Third. The conflict corresponds rather to two different forms of political organization. The traditional parties and centralized campaigns generally occupy the national sovereignty pole, whereas the new movements organized in horizontal networks tend to cluster at the non-sovereign pole. And furthermore, within traditional, centralized organizations, the top tends toward sovereignty and the base away. It is no surprise, perhaps, that those in positions of power would be most interested in state sovereignty and those excluded least. This may help to explain, in any case, how the national sovereignty, antiglobalization position could dominate the representations of the Forum even though the majority of the participants tend rather toward the perspective of a non-national alternative globalization. As a concrete illustration of this political and ideological difference, one can imagine the responses to the current economic crisis in Argentina that logically follow from each of these positions. Indeed that crisis loomed over the entire Forum, like a threatening premonition of a chain of economic disasters to come. The first position would point to the fact that the Argentinian debacle was caused by the forces of global capital and the policies of the IMF, along with the other supranational institutions that undermine national sovereignty. The logical oppositional response should thus be to reinforce the national sovereignty of Argentina (and other nation-states) against these destabilizing external forces. The second position would identify the same causes of the crisis, but insist that a national solution is neither possible nor desirable. The alternative to the rule of global capital and its institutions will only be found at an equally global level, by a global democratic movement. The practical experiments in democracy taking place today at neighbourhood and city levels in Argentina, for example, pose a necessary continuity between the democratization of Argentina and the democratization of the global system. Of course, neither of these perspectives provides an adequate recipe for an immediate solution to the crisis that would circumvent IMF prescriptions—and I am not convinced that such a solution exists. They rather present different political strategies for action today which seek, in the course of time, to develop real alternatives to the current form of global rule. Parties vs networks In a previous period we could have staged an old-style ideological confrontation between the two positions. The first could accuse the second of playing into the hands of neoliberalism, undermining state sovereignty and paving the way for further globalization. Politics, the one could continue, can only be effectively conducted on the national terrain and within the nation-state. And the second could reply that national regimes and other forms of sovereignty, corrupt and oppressive as they are, are merely obstacles to the global democracy that we seek. This kind of confrontation, however, could not take place at Porto Alegre—in part because of the dispersive nature of the event, which tended to displace conflicts, and in part because the sovereignty position so successfully occupied the central representations that no contest was possible. But the more important reason for a lack of confrontation may have had to do with the organizational forms that correspond to the two positions. The traditional parties and centralized organizations have spokespeople who represent them and conduct their battles, but no one speaks for a network. How do you argue with a network? The movements organized within them do exert their power, but they do not proceed through oppositions. One of the basic characteristics of the network form is that no two nodes face each other in contradiction; rather, they are always triangulated by a third, and then a fourth, and then by an indefinite number of others in the web. This is one of the characteristics of the Seattle events that we have had the most trouble understanding: groups which we thought in objective contradiction to one another—environmentalists and trade unions, church groups and anarchists—were suddenly able to work together, in the context of the network of the multitude. The movements, to take a slightly different perspective, function something like a public sphere, in the sense that they can allow full expression of differences within the common context of open exchange. But that does not mean that networks are passive. They displace contradictions and operate instead a kind of alchemy, or rather a sea change, the flow of the movements transforming the traditional fixed positions; networks imposing their force through a kind of irresistible undertow. Like the Forum itself, the multitude in the movements is always overflowing, excessive and unknowable. It is certainly important then, on the one hand, to recognize the differences that divide the activists and politicians gathered at Porto Alegre. It would be a mistake, on the other hand, to try to read the division according to the traditional model of ideological conflict between opposing sides. Political struggle in the age of network movements no longer works that way. Despite the apparent strength of those who occupied centre stage and dominated the representations of the Forum, they may ultimately prove to have lost the struggle. Perhaps the representatives of the traditional parties and centralized organizations at Porto Alegre are too much like the old national leaders gathered at Bandung—imagine Lula of the PT in the position of Ahmed Sukarno as host, and Bernard Cassen of ATTAC France as Jawaharlal Nehru, the most honoured guest. The leaders can certainly craft resolutions affirming national sovereignty around a conference table, but they can never grasp the democratic power of the movements. Eventually they too will be swept up in the multitude, which is capable of transforming all fixed and centralized elements into so many more nodes in its indefinitely expansive network.

### Logistics Good—2AC

#### The alt is a naïve fantasy. Logistical preparation is key to revolutionary activities and sustainable alternative social arrangements.

Shantz, 14—anarchist community organizer in Surrey, British Columbia and author of Active Anarchy, editor of Protest and Punishment, active with the Critical Criminology Working Group (Jeff, “Logistical Anarchism: Organizing against the Idiocene,” Fifth Estate, 392, Fall/Winter 2014, dml)

Social resistance has reached a certain impasse, a conundrum as nation states impose austerity as an extended regime of governance throughout social life.

In North America, movements still race from crisis (response) to crisis (response), while organizing often occurs around rather narrow issues.

The alternative globalization politics of the last two decades, Occupy and the street protests against the IMF, World Bank, and G20, are posed as having emerged spontaneously as resistance to the state and capital.

This implies that society holds the seeds of its own downfall which simply need to sprout, and will when presented with a hopeful or inspirational example. But, certainly there will be a struggle as power holders will do anything to retain their rule.

Two perspectives have framed this understanding: an insurrectionist one that seeks a spark (a riot, perhaps) to jump start an uprising, tapping into pre-existing anger, or, a prefigurative one that seeks to inspire people by showing them, modeling, a “better way,” in small scale alternatives.

Both of these are matched with movement-based activities, routines of protest and dissent. Both are, and have been, ill suited to the challenges posed by the aggressively active and well resourced rulers.

Movement-based approaches, activism, are not sufficient. There is a real difference between social movements and social mobilizations which are spread more broadly throughout communities. There is a connection, yet current movements in North America are struggling to get past oppositional activism (movementism) toward resistance–social mobilization.

There is a need to move from the public squares to the neighborhoods. In the current context where official social institutions have collapsed, as in Greece and Spain, they have been replaced in part by larger scale, but localized projects of mutual aid. The ground had been prepared by the building of infrastructures of resistance before recent mass uprisings occurred and acted as a basis for them.

Preparation is Key

The broad appeal and support of movements comes through meeting needs and securing victories, not through a proper perspective, recognizable activism, or insurrectionary sparks. Many who join movements do so out of the desire to find community or security, and to win tangible gains, rather than primarily adherence to the general principles or goals, i.e., to end capitalism or abolish the state.

Organized alternatives must, in part, be able to offer a sense of belonging and community and meet immediate community needs while also advocating the idea of getting beyond statist and capitalist social relations. They need to develop strategies and tactics that move that aim (of getting beyond state and capital) closer.

As the anarchist writer Paul Goodman insisted in the context of 1960s movements, there must be clear functional solutions developed. Health clinics, schools, clothing and food provision, and community facilities and youth recreation are some of the essential resources movements have effectively secured (from the Black Panther projects of the 1960s, through workers centers and anarchist created post-Katrina and Sandy hurricane initiatives more recently).

But these have to come from within the community. Infrastructures of resistance provide a logistical base for building broad support. Many of these infrastructures were destroyed and/or demobilized following the state repression against the upsurge of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The “war on crime/ war on drugs” played a part in this as targeted police repression struck precisely at those infrastructures and the people involved, and as communities lost and/or had to care for members harmed by the state.

As neighborhood infrastructures crumble across North America today, there is no shortage of places for us to start meeting our own needs, collectively in our own neighborhoods and workplaces; remember, this is not activism. Actions are taken because they address specific needs, not to spark people.

As Goodman suggests: “It is inauthentic to do community development in order to ‘politicize’ people, or to use a good do-it-yourself project as a means of ‘Bringing people into the Movement.’ Everything should be done for its own sake.”

The emphasis on elites, experts and professionals in advanced capitalist societies, and the dominance of administrative bureaucracies discourage people from asserting their own capacities for decision making. People are conditioned to seek expert advice and opinions. This is illustrated by the popularity of daytime talk shows like Oprah, Dr. Phil, and in the profusion of self help literature in which experts tell people how to pursue basic life tasks.

Critics such as sociologist Heidi Rimke note that this is also a form of governance or self-regulation in neo-liberal political regimes. As Goodman noted, this leaves people unprepared to taste freedom when opportunities arise.

Once people see that establishment structures are unwilling or unable to meet basic needs–and alternatives become available–they will struggle to break from those structures.

Battles are won or lost before they are even fought. Preparation is key. There must be a material capacity (resources, skills, experiences, etc.) to achieve tangible victories; we need to be realistic in assessing our capacities. People must see results and have reason to believe that their own organizing and active participation within social struggles will improve their lives in meaningful ways. Ritualized movement activity cannot do this; if we organize for protests we’ll only get protests.

Anarchists must be able to help people and our communities develop capacities to provide now for material needs that the state or market cannot or will not provide (and we don’t want them to provide), while also offering spaces in which new ways of relating to one another can be practiced, and in which perspectives on getting beyond statist, capitalist, or authoritarian religious structures can be developed/debated/ discussed.

Indeed, it is partly in supporting people in their communities and providing needed social resources that the religious Right and churches have out-organized the Left in parts of North America, as much as we might deplore their activities.

Striving to meet substantial needs, and more, on an everyday basis, in a context in which these are denied or confined within capitalist market or statist service frameworks can certainly be radical (getting to the roots); curiously we have reached a point where atypical, discontinuous moments (such as a street protest or clash with cops) are viewed as radical, at least by activists. The latter have come to dominate movement strategy and action.

Anarchist ideas and practices are important in moving beyond survival within current conditions, particularly as the gap between our needs and meeting them continues to be felt. Anarchist spaces could provide both needed resources and perspectives for more thoroughgoing change but must broaden their base.

Members of non-elite groups, the working classes and the oppressed, need opportunities to change our interpersonal economic interactions. Thus, we require spaces to practice being cooperative with one another, rather than being compelled by economic circumstances or our socialization to act in ways that are competitive or manipulative.

These practices, and establishing spaces and venues to pursue and extend them, are part of processes of revolutionizing how we relate to each other (on smaller and larger scales). These on-the-ground efforts which function in contrast to official capitalist relations are what Hakim Bey calls Permanent Autonomous Zones or what the socialists of Europe in the 1920s and 30s referred to as dual power. To survive and be effective they must expand from marginal or subcultural terrain, reaching a broader base and offering real alternatives, rather than serving as getaways or escapes.

Small groups cannot, despite the best wishes of insurrectionists, provoke mass uprisings or manufacture revolution, or construct the conditions that will lead to mass rebellion. Insurrection implies armed struggle and this would, in reality, prove fatal for our movements right now. There is a pressing need to develop and organize bases of logistical support that can mobilize, support, and sustain what might become revolutionary struggle rather than seeing discontent dissipate in ineffectual, but cathartic, insurrections or riots. Uprisings and rebellions could then be extended and given lengthier duration with more positive impacts beyond personal transformation.

Logistical Anarchy

It has been said that logistics determine strategy. We require necessary resources to make strategies meaningful. For radical movements there is much logistical work to be done. Building infrastructures of resistance is about preparing a logistical capacity to expand struggles against state and capital which can sustain the effects of individual and disconnected acts of dissent or protest.

Significant examples come from indigenous land reclamations and blockades, such as Six Nations at Caledonia and Mohawks in Tyendinaga in Ontario I observed while doing solidarity work. In the face of armed police assaults, people of Six Nations mobilized large numbers of community members to retake their land and houses and feed an ongoing reclamation over the course of several years, building onsite infrastructures to hold and build a communal space.

They rely on the skills and resources of people rooted in the community who have shared these as part of the struggle there. At Tyendinaga, community gardens and teaching and practice in food provision have helped fuel efforts to blockade resource extraction projects.

The need for preparation and reliable infrastructures is pressing. So, too, are coordinated work and venues to bring together often isolated organizers. As Paul Goodman has argued, programs–economic, political, cultural, logistical, are needed that can displace the state and capital rather than merely oppose. In his view, the shift from program to protest among “activism” is doomed to lose. Many broader infrastructures are needed within the oppressed sections of the working class especially. It is not enough to engage in agitational work, as it might appear in periods of low struggle or demobilization.

Insurrection without preparation, a solid base, is mere fantasy.