## T – Substantial

### T Subs = %---2AC

#### c. GRAMMAR---generic statements are proven true by subsets.

Andrei Cimpian 10, Amanda C. Brandone, Susan A. Gelman, Generic statements require little evidence for acceptance but have powerful implications, Cogn Sci. 2010 Nov 1; 34(8): 1452–1482

Generic statements (e.g., “Birds lay eggs”) express generalizations about categories. In this paper, we hypothesized that there is a paradoxical asymmetry at the core of generic meaning, such that these sentences have extremely strong implications but require little evidence to be judged true. Four experiments confirmed the hypothesized asymmetry: Participants interpreted novel generics such as “Lorches have purple feathers” as referring to nearly all lorches, but they judged the same novel generics to be true given a wide range of prevalence levels (e.g., even when only 10% or 30% of lorches had purple feathers). A second hypothesis, also confirmed by the results, was that novel generic sentences about dangerous or distinctive properties would be more acceptable than generic sentences that were similar but did not have these connotations. In addition to clarifying important aspects of generics’ meaning, these findings are applicable to a range of real-world processes such as stereotyping and political discourse.

1. Introduction

A statement is generic if it expresses a generalization about the members of a kind, as in “Mosquitoes carry the West Nile virus” or “Birds lay eggs” (e.g., Carlson, 1977; Carlson & Pelletier, 1995; Leslie, 2008). Such generalizations are commonplace in everyday conversation and child-directed speech (Gelman, Coley, Rosengren, Hartman, & Pappas, 1998; Gelman, Taylor, & Nguyen, 2004; Gelman, Goetz, Sarnecka, & Flukes, 2008), and are likely to foster the growth of children’s conceptual knowledge (Cimpian & Markman, 2009; Gelman, 2004, 2009). Here, however, we explore the semantics of generic sentences—and, in particular, the relationship between generic meaning and the statistical prevalence of the relevant properties (e.g., what proportion of birds lay eggs).

Consider, first, generics’ truth conditions: Generic sentences are often judged true despite weak statistical evidence. Few people would dispute the truth of “Mosquitoes carry the West Nile virus”, yet only about 1% of mosquitoes are actually carriers (Cox, 2004). Similarly, only a minority of birds lays eggs (the healthy, mature females), but “Birds lay eggs” is uncontroversial. This loose, almost negligible relationship between the prevalence of a property within a category and the acceptance of the corresponding generic sentence has long puzzled linguists and philosophers, and has led to many attempts to describe the truth conditions of generic statements (for reviews, see Carlson, 1995; Leslie, 2008).

#### 3. Counter-interp: affs may strengthen CBRs for considerable subsets of the workforce.

#### 4. Substantial is considerable.

Shannon Prost 4, Judge at the United States Court of Appeals of the Federal Circuit, "Committee for Fairly Traded Venezuelan Cement, Plaintiff-Appellant, v. United States, Defendant-Appellee, and Cemex Venezuela, S.A.C.A. ('Vencemos'), Defendant-Appellee," 06/18/2004, http://www.ll.georgetown.edu/federal/judicial/fed/opinions/04opinions/04-1016.html

The URAA and the SAA neither amend nor refine the language of § 1677(4)(C). In fact, they merely suggest, without disqualifying other alternatives, a “clearly higher/substantial proportion” approach. Indeed, the SAA specifically mentions that no “precise mathematical formula” or “‘benchmark’ proportion” is to be used for a dumping concentration analysis. SAA at 860 (citations omitted); see also Venez. Cement, 279 F. Supp. 2d at 1329-30. Furthermore, as the Court of International Trade noted, the SAA emphasizes that the Commission retains the discretion to determine concentration of imports on a “case-by-case basis.” SAA at 860. Finally, the definition of the word “substantial” undercuts the CFTVC’s argument. The word “substantial” generally means “considerable in amount, value or worth.” Webster’s Third New International Dictionary 2280 (1993). It does not imply a specific number or cut-off. What may be substantial in one situation may not be in another situation. The very breadth of the term “substantial” undercuts the CFTVC’s argument that Congress spoke clearly in establishing a standard for the Commission’s regional antidumping and countervailing duty analyses. It therefore supports the conclusion that the Commission is owed deference in its interpretation of “substantial proportion.” The Commission clearly embarked on its analysis having been given considerable leeway to interpret a particularly broad term.

## Skep

**AT: Kant – 2AC**

**1. We meet: Consequentialism is an ethical theory that establishes an obligation through the evaluation of consequences.**

**Prevening extinction is an absolute obligation. Anything else shreds humanities**’ **collective ends.**

**Grunewald ’22** [Erich; July 16; first-class second-rate programmer; “A Kantian View on Extinction,” https://www.erichgrunewald.com/posts/a-kantian-view-on-extinction/] brett

Human extinction would involve the death of everyone, which is a bad thing under any moral theory. But the deontologist in me thinks complete extinction would be especially bad for three reasons:

1. We’d be failing in our duty to humanity itself (55% confidence).

2. We’d be failing in our duty to all those who have worked for a better future (70% confidence).

3. We’d be failing in our duty to those wild animals whose only hope for better lives rests on future human technology (35% confidence).

Introduction #

To a utilitarian, whether or not human extinction is bad depends on whether we expect the long-term future to be positive or negative. Whatever it is, there’ll be a lot of it. Maybe we don’t outlive the century. But if we do, we may survive for 1-10 million years, as many other species do (Ord 2020, 218–19). Or we may survive for several hundred million years, as some other species do (Ord 2020, 220). Or with some luck we may survive for ≥1 billion years, or many billions of years if we leave the planet or even the galaxy (Ord 2020, 221–23). If we think the future is good, we should think it’s very good; if bad, we should dread it like we dread our own deaths.

I think utilitarianism is fairly plausible and give it some weight. I think Kantianism is more plausible and give it more weight. What does Kantianism say about human extinction?

I know some people who’d say: Isn’t human extinction just obviously bad? It’d probably be brought about by the worst catastrophe that’s ever befallen humankind. The Black Plague was horrifying, but it didn’t even get close to driving us to extinction; it’d take something far worse to do that.

I know some other people who’d say: Isn’t human extinction just obviously good? Humans cause so much suffering. We murder, deceive, abuse and bully one another all the time. Every year we kill ~70 billion chicken, sheep, goats and cattle;[1] if we die, at least it means factory farming is a thing of the past.

But this post is not about people dying. It’s about the death of humanity. Sure, each person’s death is bad, and perhaps also good (to the extent that they would’ve caused harm). I’m asking you to ignore those things and ask yourself: How much worse than the death of everyone except a minimally sustainable population is the death of literally everyone? How much worse (or better) is the death of all 8 billion people[2] than the death of, say, 7,999,900,000 people? Is it only 0.001% worse? It probably would take a terrible catastrophe to bring human extinction about, but that no more means extinction is bad than the tragedy of the Shoah means there’s no value in Paul Celan’s poetry.

Letting Down Humanity #

Korsgaard (2018) makes roughly the following argument. We humans (unlike the other animals) think of ourselves as a collective agent, a “species-being”. (It makes sense to ask, for example, “Will we colonise the galaxy?” and thereby refer to a multi-generational project in which all humans have a stake.) Claims about rights (says Kant) only make sense in a political community (which is kind of like a collective agent); the ultimate political community comprises the entire human species, so if we make claims of rights, we’re committed to considering humanity as a collective agent. We humans (again unlike the other animals) are also aware of the grounds for our (potential) beliefs and actions; this allows us to reason normatively. Because we can reason normatively, we evaluate ourselves based on our actions, based on whether we act in a way that anyone can rationally endorse. That makes the ends that everyone share (the species-being’s ends) especially important. Therefore, human extinction is especially bad (because all those important species-being-y actions would be thwarted).

My crude interpretation of the argument is something like, “It’s important for us to think that we’re good people. Doing good (in deontology) means taking good actions. Good actions are (roughly speaking) those that follow a maxim that any human can rationally endorse. Therefore, acting according to a maxim that benefits (and not acting according to one that harms) the whole of humanity is good. But if humans go extinct, all those good humanity-promoting actions – at least those that were oriented towards the future – are thwarted.”

[Condensed, None Omitted]

Daniel Kokotajlo recently wrote a deep and lucid post illustrating Kant’s ethics with a “decision theory app store”. Allow me to quote at length: Imagine an ideal competitive market for advice-giving AI assistants. Tech companies code them up and then you download them for free from the app store. There is AlphaBot, MetaBot, OpenBot, DeepBot … When installed, the apps give advice. Specifically they scan your brain to extract your credences and values/utility function, and then they tell you what to do. You can follow the advice or not. […] Now, what’s it like to be one of these hyper-sophisticated advice bots? You are sitting there in your supercomputer getting all these incoming requests for advice, and you are dispensing advice like the amazing superhuman oracle you are, and you are also reflecting a bit about how to improve your overall advice-giving strategy … You are facing a massive optimization problem. You shouldn’t just consider each case in isolation; […] you can sometimes do better by coordinating your advice across cases. But it’s also not quite right to say you want to maximize total utility across all your users; if your advice predictably screwed over some users to benefit others, those users wouldn’t take your advice, and then the benefits to the other users wouldn’t happen, and then you’d lose market share to a rival bot that was just like you except that it didn’t do that and thus appealed to those users. Kant says: “Look, it’s complicated, and despite me being the greatest philosopher ever I don’t know all the intricacies of how it’ll work out. But I can say, at a high level of abstraction: The hyper-sophisticated advice bots are basically legislating laws for all their users to follow. They are the exalted Central Planners of a society consisting of their users. And so in particular, the best bot, the optimal policy, the one we call Instrumental Rationality, does this. And so in particular if you are trying to think about how to be rational, if you are trying to think about what the rational thing to do is, you should be thinking like this too – you should be thinking like a central planner optimizing the behavior of all rational beings, legislating laws for them all to follow.”

[Paragraph Breaks Resume]

Thinking about it this way, I think it’s clear that such a central planner would try really hard not to legislate laws that increase the risk of human extinction. Because not only could this predictably screw over everyone, but by causing our extinction it would completely undermine itself; should we die, it’ll have lost its reason to exist.

Letting Down Those Who Came Before #

In making her argument, Korsgaard references Scheffler (2013), which points out that many of our long-term goals would become meaningless if we were the last generation of humans. In a review of The Precipice, Jim Holt writes:

[The prospect of imminent human extinction] would be ‘profoundly depressing’ [according to Scheffler]. And the reason is that the meaning and value of our own lives depend on their being situated in an ongoing flow of generations. Humanity’s extinction soon after we ourselves are gone would render our lives today in great measure pointless. Whether you are searching for a cure for cancer, or pursuing a scholarly or artistic project, or engaged in establishing more just institutions, a threat to the future of humanity is also a threat to the significance of what you do. True, there are some aspects of our lives – friendship, sensual pleasures, games – that would retain their value even in an imminent doomsday scenario. But our long-term, goal-oriented projects would be robbed of their point.

**2. Should expresses desirability.**

**Cambridge ND**. Cambridge Dictionary. “Should.” https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/should

used to express that it is necessary, desirable, or important to perform the action of the following verb:

**3. Their reading is just one use of “should.”**

Gilbert **Harman 75**, Professor, "Moral Relativism Defended," The Philosophical Review, vol. 84, no. 1, 01/01/1975, pp. 3-22, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2184078

The sentence "They ought not to go around killing people" is therefore multiply ambiguous. It can mean that one would not expect them to do so (the "ought" of expectation), that it is not in their interest to do so (the "ought" of rationality), that it is a bad thing that they do so (the normative "ought to be"), or that they are wrong to do so (the moral "ought to do"). For the most part I am here concerned only with the last of these interpre- tations.

The word "should" behaves very much like "ought to." There is a "should" of expectation ("They should be here soon"), a "should" of rationality ("He should go in by the back door"), a normative "should be" ("They shouldn't go around killing people like that"), and the moral "should do" ("You should keep that promise"). I am of course concerned mainly with the last sense of "should."

**4. Prefer consequentialism.**

Danny **Hirschel-Burns 16**, Ph.D. in comparative politics and international relations from Yale University, and current Postdoctoral Research Associate in Princeton's Program in Latin American Studies, "In Defense of Consequentialism: A Response to Shadi Hamil," The Widening Lens, 04/19/2016, https://thewideninglens.wordpress.com/2016/04/19/in-defense-of-consequentialism-a-response-to-shadi-hamid/

My difference of opinion is fundamental: I believe most US foreign policy to be short-sighted, and consequentialism, or the weighing of long-term ramifications against the initial intended effect of a particularly intervention to represent the ideal method of policymaking. Policies cannot solely be judged on intention, due to the frequency with which good intentions produce negative outcomes, nor can they be judged solely on initial effects due to the long-running causal chains produced by order-altering things like military interventions. However, Hamid is right that it is impossible to foresee some ramifications (even if we can see general correlations) of foreign policy, but he doesn’t apply that standard of doubt consistently across his analysis.

Early in the essay, Hamid makes the point that to evaluate the Libyan intervention, it is necessary to compare the current situation with the counterfactual: what would Libya look like if the US hadn’t intervened. In general, the assertion is correct, but the practice of counterfactuals is tricky. Hamid’s analysis of where the Libyan conflict was at when the US intervened is enlightening, but his conclusion that Libya would likely look like Syria today had the US not intervened is highly questionable. Political prediction, especially on rare events like mass atrocities or civil wars, is really, really hard. And when you consider all the differences between Libya and Syria (total population, population density, salience of sectarian divides, regime configuration, military capability of opposition, etc.) along with all contingencies that could have occurred in the past four years, it is impossible to say with any certainty that Libya would bear a resemblance to Syria. Syria is merely a convenient standard of comparison because it’s an ongoing civil war in the Middle East, but saying Libya would be Syria doesn’t actually tell us that much about Libya or the effects of intervention. It’s not that the intervention can’t be justified with counterfactuals, but they need to be more carefully constructed.

The central thrust of Hamid’s essay is to deride what he calls consequentialism, or evaluating the efficacy of foreign policy based on events years after the initial intervention in the target location. For Hamid, such an approach is particularly problematic because it a policy cannot be retroactively deemed a mistake if the limited goal of the intervention is achieved initially. Therefore consequentialism creates an impossibly high bar for foreign policy decisions: unless a foreign policy results in a peaceful, liberal democracy, than it’s a failure. This is, however, a major straw man. Certainly there are some critics that would deem the Libyan intervention a failure based on this standard, but Hamid lumps in those with reasonable concerns that a civil war (likely to continue for many years based on what we know about civil wars and foreign intervention) at least partially produced by the NATO intervention will have more negative long-term effects on Libyans than Gaddafi’s intended repression. Worrying about consequences does not preclude making foreign policy decisions. Recognizing that every decision has potential positive and negative effects is no more than an accurate framework for analyzing policy.

There are an additional two problems with Hamid’s argument here. First, the dismissal of consequentialism is one of the central dynamics that leads Western policymakers to struggle with conflict prevention. Short-term thinking produces short-term solutions. Policymakers become trapped in a vicious circle of continual crises that overwhelm them and prevent longer-term thinking that could go a long way in preventing violence. Second, Hamid’s insistence that the initial moral righteousness of an intervention negates any negative effects, is deeply problematic. As many before me have argued, focusing only on moral imperatives disincentives careful planning and allows policymakers to wash their hands of responsibility if the situation starts to go south. Evaluating military interventions isn’t personal morality, because very rarely can doing the right thing in your personal life lead to deaths of thousands of people. Afghanistan is a valid example. The United States was going after the Taliban in response to 9/11 initially, but the war has had disastrous long-term effects for the country. It would take quite a bit of chutzpah to declare it a success.

Moral arguments without strategic and humanitarian (writ large) considerations are also prone to abuse, because liberal interventionists and neoconservatives aren’t actually that far apart: both believe in the wisdom of Western democracies to improve the world through military force. Without more consequentialist standards, there’s not a clear line the prevents Iraq-like decisions. So Hamid’s own argument that Obama being right about Iraq decreases his likelihood he’ll be right about other situations is undermined by a lack of a standard that allows leaders to tell the difference between the two.

**5. Aff ground. Moral obligation is an impossible threshold. Every aff loses to “Do bad thing if and only if aff.”**

**6. Predicability outweighs. It guides prep. Arbitrariness causes substance crowdout.**

**7. Reasonability. Use epistemic modesty. That’s the probability of the framework being true times its impact magnitude. That maximizes moral value and means you shouldn’t jettison the aff if they are 1% more right.**

**8. We don’t have to answer their skep true arguments because this is a T argument and all of that only matters if they win their interp.**

**9. But their offense about moral facts being unprovable proves the internal link to aff ground.**

**10. Yes causal explanation. We have hyper-specific internal links about how oligospony is causing food insecurity now and bargaining solves.**

## Cap K

### Alt – Central Planning – 2AC

#### No transition to participatory socialism – no political support.

Bernard HARCOURT Corliss Lamont Professor of Law and Civil Liberties ’23 *Cooperation: A Political, Economic, and Social Theory* p. 100-101

On the basis of this notion of ideology, Piketty argues that social inequality is constructed by public policy and justified by autonomous ideational formations. Ideologies have real effects. “Evolving ideas are nothing unless they lead to institutional experiments and practical demonstrations,” Piketty writes.102 The point is that inequality is essentially chosen, by public policies and ideologies, and that we could choose a different economic path forward. In this sense, Piketty is a constructivist. He believes that we choose our inequality deliberately, and that we could just as easily choose more equitable distributions. He argues for more equitable rules, such as progressive taxes, inheritance taxes, and power sharing within firms, to “make ownership of capital temporary” and promote “permanent circulation of property.”103 Piketty espouses, ultimately, what he calls a participatory socialist framework, and a spirit of cooperation.104

A theory of coöperism must embrace Piketty’s constructivism, even if not his exact solutions. The greatest contribution of his work is that it documents and proves the deliberate mechanisms of inequality. It rebuts the idea, held by so many, that there is something baked into capital, or that there are laws of capital accumulation. There is nothing mysterious, no godly forces; it is all chosen. As Piketty writes:

Inequality is neither economic nor technological; it is ideological and political. . . . In other words, the market and competition, profits and wages, capital and debt, skilled and unskilled workers, natives and aliens, tax havens and competitiveness—none of these things exist as such. All are social and historical constructs, which depend entirely on the legal, fiscal, educational, and political systems that people choose to adopt and the conceptual definitions they choose to work with. These choices are shaped by each society’s conception of social justice and economic fairness and by the relative political and ideological power of contending groups and discourses. Importantly, this relative power is not exclusively material; it is also intellectual and ideological. In other words, ideas and ideologies count in history. They enable us to imagine new worlds and different types of society. Many paths are possible.”105

This is arguably a simplification. There are some stubborn political realities to deal with, including the extreme polarization today that makes it practically impossible to imagine convincing a supermajority of voters. It is important to acknowledge that Piketty is an economist, a modeler, and the whole point of modeling is to simplify. I might put more emphasis on entrenched relations of power in society. Piketty does note “the relative political and ideological power of contending groups and discourses” and that “this relative power is not exclusively material; it is also intellectual and ideological.” He is cognizant of power dynamics. I would emphasize those more, incorporating the Frankfurt School theories of ideology and Foucaultian theories of regimes of truth to show how thick, pervasive, and long lasting these illusions are, and how hard they are to change.106 They are constitutive of our way of seeing and knowing the world, which is why the snowball effect of coöperism is so much more promising in a country like the United States than the collective action required to either dismantle or strengthen the state. It is precisely for this reason that coöperism is a better path forward than rugged individualism or the type of participatory socialism that Piketty advocates for.107

#### Cooperativism solves political and economic deadlock. Widespread popular support and empirical success create a feasible transition from shareholder inequality or top-down rent-seeking.

Bernard HARCOURT Corliss Lamont Professor of Law and Civil Liberties ’23 *Cooperation: A Political, Economic, and Social Theory* p. 9-18

The real problem is that neither paradigm of economic organization in the United States—neither the deregulatory model nor the administrative-state model—is able to achieve a supermajority and, as a result, neither is able to address our impending crises. Instead, both models merely serve the financial interests of the wealthy and are augmenting inequality in American society, fueling another crisis of inequity that is compounding the others.

The fact is, neither model benefits the vast majority of the American people. The first is more open about it. Republicans are not shy about speaking of the “trickle-down” economic effects of their proposed economic policies or of federal deregulation. In large part, their model functions explicitly and primarily through the increased wealth of American business and wealthy Americans. They often advocate explicitly for lifting taxes on the wealthy, lowering corporate taxes, and eliminating the estate tax. The second model favors the wealthy more indirectly, by consistently defaulting to business and corporate interests. Democrats see themselves as more redistributive but almost always fall back on large corporations to make their policies work. So, for instance, Obamacare ends up relying on large private health insurance companies to create health-care options for Americans. It defaults to huge American corporations like Aetna, Cigna, Humana, and UnitedHealthcare, whose values have skyrocketed in the process.20 The Biden climate legislation, as we just saw, operates through tax credits that end up extending billions of dollars in tax breaks to energy companies. The real beneficiaries are oil and gas multinationals, alternative energy companies, automobile corporations—and all their shareholders. The result is that corporate wealth and interests get center stage in the Democratic model as well. Plus, in today’s world of campaign finance, the Democratic Party has no good alternative but to court big business and the extremely wealthy to bankroll their election campaigns and to support their lobbying efforts.

Both paradigms benefit primarily people who already have accumulated wealth and investments, at the expense of the vast majority of people living in the United States, because both models privilege the interests of wealthy investors in big business and multinational corporations, which prioritize shareholder return over the welfare of consumers, workers, suppliers, and other stakeholders. Both models rest on the logic of the corporate investor, namely, that economic activity should maximize the return on investment. This logic of profit maximization to boost investor returns may seem intuitive and obvious, but it has deeply detrimental consequences for consumers, workers, and other stakeholders in the enterprise. It means that workers are often not paid a living wage or afforded proper health care in order to minimize business expenses. It means that consumer welfare takes second seat to profits. It means that treating suppliers more equitably reduces the bottom line.

The logic of the shareholder investor is, simply, to maximize return on investment. The well-being of others is not of primary concern. The shareholder has one main interest: to draw a larger dividend or sell their investment at a higher value. As a result, they have every interest in extracting more from the enterprise, squeezing out more from the other stakeholders, eking out more from the workers and suppliers, and augmenting the value of their holdings through share-price strategies. These logics of profit detach the shareholder from any real investment in the lives of all those who are associated with the enterprise. They operate at a distance. Most individuals who own investments today, whether directly as stock or indirectly through retirement accounts, hold them as a form of speculation to increase the overall return on their savings and to increase their wealth—if possible, to increase their wealth more than others and more than the market, since that is the only effective way to get richer. But this ends up being an effort to extract wealth from an enterprise, from its consumers or workers, from all the people whose livelihoods depend on the business. It ends up, in many cases, being a form of gambling on the livelihoods of others. These logics elevate investor profit over human welfare.

As an economic matter, the shareholder logics thrive on the old maxim that “private vice creates public benefits.” This is the idea that when people pursue their own selfish financial interests, they put into place practices, mechanisms, and institutions that end up benefiting others even more. This logic undergirds both paradigms—the deregulatory paradigm very explicitly, the administrative state paradigm because it almost always falls back on corporate incentives and tax breaks. But what the reality of our economic condition demonstrates today is not public benefits but growing inequality within American society—and abroad as well. Today, the three wealthiest American individuals (all men) have more aggregated wealth than the bottom 50 percent of the American population, or about 160 million people.21 The eight wealthiest individuals in the world (again, all men) own more than the poorest half of humanity.22 And the gap is getting bigger.

Thomas Piketty, my colleague at the École des hautes études en sciences socia- les (EHESS), details the rise in inequality in the United States and other coun- tries. Piketty and his colleagues, Facundo Alvaredo, Lucas Chancel, Emmanuel Saez, Gabriel Zucman, and others, meticulously demonstrate that trickle-down economic theories have only worsened the uneven distribution of wealth. Not just in the United States but in country after country—France, UK, Canada, Australia, Germany, Sweden, India, Japan, and more—Piketty and his colleagues show an increasing curve of inequality since the mid-twentieth century and the height of the welfare state, what is now referred to as the U-curve of inequality.23 Piketty and his colleagues’ descriptive claims have undergone close scrutiny by the social science community and have withstood peer reviews and critiques from the left and the right.24 Their conclusions are unimpeachable: wealth inequality has been on a steep rise since the mid-twentieth century. The top-down growth models mostly benefit the top.

The problem, in the end, is that both dominant paradigms today—the deregulatory and the administrative-state models—place corporate shareholder interests above those of the other stakeholders, the first explicitly, the second by default. They benefit only the wealthy. The rest of the people are feeling increasingly vulnerable and becoming further polarized in the face of mounting global crises. Pushed further and further apart, without the possibility of compromise—without the possibility of reaching across the aisle or of achieving a supermajority—the two opposite poles are veering into conflict at the same time that they have become two dead ends.

ANOTHER PATH: COOPERATION

There is, however, another path forward, far less loud, far less confrontational, far less aggressive, in fact far less known in large part because it does not need to convince a majority of other people. It can thrive simply in small groups—a few friends who come together to create a consumer cooperative, a few farmers who start sharing equipment and producing together, a few engineers who found a worker cooperative, some community friends who start making ice cream for justice, neighbors who provide mutual aid and support to one another, home health-care aides who get together to form a worker-owned enterprise. These forms of cooperation have a long history and tradition, and they are a growing force around the world. They rest, very simply, on people cooperating with one another across different aspects of their lives—consumption, production, work, housing, finance, insurance, mutual support—in order to improve the well-being of all the stakeholders and the environment. Cooperation works within existing governmental structures, so it does not need to dismantle the state. Cooperation also embraces self-determination and is the product of a lot of individual initiative, so it is not fundamentally at odds with the idea of individual freedom either. And it requires no more than a handful of dedicated people to ignite a project.

Cooperation has taken many forms, from early purchasing societies like the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers started in 1844 outside Manchester, England, to large consortiums of industrial cooperatives like the Mondragón Group in the Basque region, to employee-managed stock ownership companies (ESOPs) like King Arthur Flour in Vermont today. What they all have in common is the ambition to be, in the words of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), “an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.”25 Much of the thinking around cooperation has taken place in the context of cooperatives—but cooperation applies as well to insurance mutuals, credit unions, mutual aid projects, and more broadly to certain nonprofits and community organizations. The values and principles originally formulated for cooperatives—for instance, by the Rochdale Society in 1844 or more recently by the ICA in 1937—apply generally to all forms of cooperation.

Democratic participation, self-determination, equity in distributions and obligations, inclusiveness, solidarity, and caring for the welfare of all the stakeholders and for the environment: those are the guiding stars of cooperation. Often formulated in the context of cooperatives—for instance, by the ICA in its “Statement on the Cooperative Identity: the Values and Principles”—these are the central values shared by all the varied forms of cooperation. They are articulated in terms of seven core principles: first, that cooperation must be open to all without discrimination and based on voluntary membership; second, that the cooperative organization should be run democratically by the members themselves and that members should have equal say and an equal vote in the decision-making process; third, that the members should contribute and benefit equitably from the running of the enterprise; fourth, that the cooperation should remain autonomous and self-determining, under the control of the members only; fifth, that it must strive to provide training and education for the members; sixth, that there be cooperation among cooperative enterprises; and finally, that the cooperative enterprises strive toward the sustainable development of their environment and communities. As the ICA statement also emphasizes, “members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.”26 These values and principles have been distilled from the myriad experiments and charters of cooperative enterprises over centuries. They are reflected as well in the legal codification of cooperatives around the world, including in the United States. The Tax Court of the United States, for instance, defines cooperatives, for purposes of the federal tax code, as enterprises that are democratically controlled by the members themselves and equitably allocate among the members the “fruits and increases arising from their cooperative endeavor” in relation to the members’ participation in the cooperative endeavor.27

Today, there are cooperative efforts across the political spectrum. Some cooperatives aim to maintain a traditional way of life; others are more utopian or seek to achieve a solidarity economy. The Kingston Cheese Cooperative, for instance, is an Amish community dairy cooperative set up to support and sustain the traditional Amish community in Wisconsin. According to the Wisconsin State Farmer, the Amish community settled in Green Lake County, Wisconsin, in 1978 when families moved there from northern Indiana. When they arrived, there were four creameries that serviced dairy farmers, but those creameries closed. So the Amish community got together and decided to allow its members to work with electricity so that a few of them could take over one of the creameries and start an Amish dairy cooperative. They did so in 1984. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, their sales plummeted, but the Amish community exercised its cooperative rights to buy the dairy plant, which employed at the time about thirty-five Amish men and women, to prevent mass layoffs and further disruption of life during the pandemic. They chose to further their collective mission: “protecting their way of life, keeping younger farmers in business and providing employment for all the men and women who work at the plant.” This proved successful. “When the co-op began in 1984 there were 20 patrons with an average of 10 cows in their herds; back then 10,000 pounds of milk per day came into their cheese factory in cans to make blue cheese,” the Wisconsin State Farmer reports. “Today there are about 87 patrons with an average of 15 cows; 40,000 pounds of milk comes into their plant each day.”28 The Kingston Cheese Cooperative emerged from the pandemic with new vibrancy.

At the other end of the country—and of the political spectrum—Cooperation Jackson is an ambitious effort to create a self-sustaining, self-determining, solidarity economy within the African American community of Jackson, Mississippi. Founded by Kali Akuno and others in 2014, Cooperation Jackson was established in a poor African American neighborhood with high rates of unemployment and poverty. The neighborhood had been abandoned by the municipality and private enterprise, leading to many abandoned buildings and lots. Cooperation Jackson raised funds and bought land to set up an agricultural cooperative, a food cooperative, and other cooperative enterprises. It expanded to create a shop with equipment, such as a 3-D printer, to create a makers’ space. Today, Cooperation Jackson includes Freedom Farms Cooperative, a worker-owned urban-farming cooperative that grows and sells organic vegetables; Nubia’s Place Café and Catering Cooperative, a worker-owned health-oriented catering business and café that coordinates with Freedom Farms; the Green Team, a worker-owned yard-care and composting cooperative that sells composted organic yard waste to farmers, hardware stores, and home-supply outlets; the Center for Community Pro- duction, a cooperative print manufacturing shop and fabrication lab with a 3-D printer; land held in common through the Fannie Lou Hamer Community Land Trust to serve the community; and educational and organizing spaces including the Kuwasi Balagoon Center for Economic Democracy and Development. In addition, Cooperation Jackson has set up the Jackson Human Rights Institute, which engages in human-rights training and organizing, with the ambition of turning Jackson into a “Human Rights City.”29

Cooperation Jackson is part of a growing movement toward “solidarity economies.” The U.S. Solidary Economy Network, organized in 2009, an outgrowth of a forum held at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, defines a solidarity economy as an “alternative development framework” grounded in the values of cooperation, equity, mutualism, and solidarity, and in the following principles: “the primacy of social welfare over profits and the unfettered rule of the mar- ket; sustainability; social and economic democracy; [and] pluralism and organic approach, allowing for different forms in different contexts, and open to con- tinual change driven from the bottom up.”30 As Ethan Miller explains, a solidar- ity economy seeks to get us beyond the simplicity of binary contradictions—for instance, jobs versus the environment—by rethinking the terms of the debate.31 Networks of solidarity economy initiatives are growing across the globe, as evi- denced by the Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social Solidar- ity Economy, known as RIPESS, for “Réseau Intercontinental de Promotion de l’Économie Social Solidaire,” organized in Lima, Peru, in 1997.

Popular support for cooperation is widespread. Polling data show broad support for worker cooperatives across the political spectrum. A survey conducted by Data for Progress in 2021 found that nearly 79 percent of Democrats and 66 percent of Republicans support “transition where small businesses become worker cooperatives.” There is as well broad bipartisan support for programs that assist states in establishing or expanding worker cooperatives. Of all likely voters, 66 percent supported such programs, and only 20 percent opposed them. By the same token, voters across the political spectrum support the idea of creating a U.S. Employee Ownership Bank under the Department of the Treasury that would promote either employee stock-ownership plans or worker cooperatives.32 There are even articles in conservative media, such as the American Conservative magazine, that speak favorably about cooperative businesses and how they can save communities—including, for instance, how the Democracy Brewing cooperative in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston helped revive a depressed neighborhood or how the Democracy Collaborative, an organization dedicated to democratic initiatives, helped expand the Market Driven Community Cooperatives Initiative in Rochester, New York. “The number of worker co-operatives in the United States has been growing for two decades,” the American Conservative reports; “the higher wages and shared ownership of co-ops have also helped them and their members stabilize and rebuild their communities.”33 This should not be entirely surprising. You may recall that even President Ronald Reagan supported employee ownership and said “I can’t help but believe that in the future we will see in the United States . . . an increasing trend toward the next logical step, employee ownership. It is a path that befits a free people.”34

Not only does the sentiment extend across the political spectrum, but cooperative efforts can be found throughout American commerce. There are forms of cooperation hidden in plain sight. They exist even in mainstream sectors and permeate the American economy: Land O’Lakes, Sunkist, and Ocean Spray are producer cooperatives; State Farm and Liberty Mutual are mutual insurance com- panies; REI is a consumer cooperative, and Ace Hardware a retailer cooperative. Isthmus Engineering and Manufacturing in Madison, Wisconsin, Cooperative Home Care in the Bronx, King Arthur Flour in Vermont, and AK Press in Cali- fornia are worker cooperatives. The Navy Federal Credit Union, with more than $125 billion in assets and eight million members, is a member credit union. And nonprofit educational, cultural, and social institutions, as well as community organizations, surround us.35

The insurance industry has been home to large and resilient mutual societies for a long time. Benjamin Franklin founded the oldest property insurance company in the country, a mutual that is considered the first recognized cooperative business in the United States.36 Half of the largest ten property and casualty insurance companies today are mutuals; together, those five mutual insurance companies serve 25 percent of the entire market (by contrast, the five largest nonmutual insurance companies serve only 21 percent of the market). Most of the household-name insurance companies—State Farm, Liberty Mutual, New York Life, Nationwide, Northwestern Mutual, Mutual of Omaha, etc.—are mutuals and are extremely resilient. The median age of a U.S. mutual insurance company is about 120 years.37

Farmer and producer cooperatives, consumer cooperatives, worker cooperatives, and retailer cooperatives thrive across economic sectors today—despite everything being stacked against them. In fact, and quite surprisingly, cooperatives in the United States “survive through their first six to 10 years at a rate 7 percent higher than traditional small businesses.”38 Cooperatives can even thrive in the financial sector, where credit unions developed starting in 1920 with the Massachusetts Association of Credit Unions and in 1934 with federal laws enabling their formation. Credit unions gained lasting status by surviving the Great Depression and the financial crises in the 1980s, and today have more than 100 million members in the United States.39 In a country like France, the Crédit Agricole Group, which was formed by thirty-nine regional banks that are full-fledged cooperative entities, serves more than 21 million customers and has more than 9.3 million member- clients at the local level.40 As of September 2018, Crédit Agricole had 23.3 percent of French household deposits and total assets of 1.7 trillion euros.41

Existing cooperative enterprises can be as large as multinationals. The Mondragón cooperative consortium, headquartered in the Basque region of Spain— a diversified enterprise manufacturing heavy equipment—employs more than 74,000 workers and brings in annual revenues in the billions of euros, 12.5 billion euros in 2016.42 Mondragón is the seventh largest corporate group in Spain. Cooperative enterprises can dominate the competition and be technological leaders in their field. Swann-Morton, a worker cooperative in Sheffield, England, is a world leader in manufacturing and selling surgical blades and scalpels; it exports to more than one hundred countries around the globe. Founded in 1932 on the principle that “claims of individuals producing in an industry come first,” Swann-Morton has estimated annual revenues today in the range of $50 million.43 Cooperatives can also be small and local. Justice Cream is a community-owned, women-of-color-led, nonprofit, nondairy ice cream cooperative in Chicago that makes flavors like “snactivist,” “flower to the people,” “berry the colonizer,” and “whole latte justice.” Incorporated in Illinois in 2017, their mission, they write, is “to develop a solidarity economy through nondairy ice cream, while cultivating a collective consciousness through liberatory education.” They donate 100 percent of their profits to grassroots community organizations that work toward collec- tive liberation. (It’s pronounced “justice cream,” not “just ice cream.”)44

Mutual-aid projects have also arisen organically throughout the United States, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Local mutual-aid efforts, some of which have grown to be nationwide, offer free home delivery of groceries by mutual-aid volunteers to the elderly and infirm confined at home and at great risk of contagion. One of the associations, Invisible Hands—note the ironic ref- erence to Adam Smith—was set in motion by a college junior, Liam Elkind, and attracted more than 1,200 volunteers in its first ninety-six hours in early March 2020. It spawned chapters around the country, delivering groceries to those in need. By mid-April 2020, Invisible Hands had more than 12,000 volunteers and had served about 4,000 requests for aid.45 Many people have been deeply involved in the mutual-aid movement during the pandemic, including Mariame Kaba, who is a devoted advocate of mutual aid, and Dean Spade, who has spearheaded mutual-aid efforts and written about them in a book titled Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next). It represents, Spade writes, an ideal of “Solidarity, Not Charity.”46

**Central planning causes more pollution.**

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1.7 Socialism Is Not the Answer

Could a socialist state lead the way in repairing humankind’s fractured relationship with the environment? As one should suspect, “socialism” has taken on a wide variety of meanings in a variety of contexts over the centuries. For purposes of comparison, what I mean by “socialism” has a core policy implication: a decisive movement away from private property ownership of capital assets, governing an entire country. Smaller forms of socialism, such as for individual business enterprises, may be feasible, even in a capitalist economy. But that kind of “small socialism” would be incapable of the kind of transformation required to pull humankind back from the precipice. Reorienting an economy away from unnecessarily polluting industries is complicated; prices are necessary to move factors of production to different industries. Socialism governed by central planning, lacking prices, cannot do that.

Not all critics of modern capitalism would turn to socialism. While Schumpeter believed capitalism to be unsustainable in the long run, he was at least as critical of socialism. James Gustave “Gus” Speth, a longtime prominent environmental advocate and the author of a trilogy of books on environmentalism, was dismissive, citing examples of environmental catastrophe under socialist regimes. Bruce Scott laments the power that capitalist entities have seized, but advocates for better rules to constrain capitalist excess. Thomas Piketty would impose a wealth tax to alleviate inequality.

For others, however, the story is attractively simple: there is a flawed system (capitalism), identifiable villains (capitalists), and a solution (something like socialism, though they are often fuzzy on the details). Their answer is to blow up capitalism to save the environment. But the evidence tying capitalism to environmental destruction is too thin, the counterexamples too vexing, and the changeover plan too vague. Naomi Klein, in her book This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate, proposes to abolish capitalism, but in favor of what? Magdoff and Foster, in their book What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism, write that “[i]t is precisely because ecological destruction is built into the inner nature and logic of our present system of production and distribution that it is so difficult to end.”

The “abolish capitalism” critics make two major mistakes: (1) that environmental destruction has occurred in capitalist systems means that it must be caused by capitalism; and (2) countries with socialist economies are somehow different from capitalist ones, in that there is no growth imperative for them.

With respect to the first mistake, there simply has not been very much socialism in history for it to have caused as much trouble as capitalist countries. Just about all of the economic growth occurring in the history of humankind has occurred under capitalist systems, so of course those have caused most of the environmental destruction. The little bit of socialism that human history has seen thus far has plenty to answer for in terms of environmental destruction. The former Soviet Union is a fertile source of shame. The Chernobyl nuclear power plant was a poor investment, badly carried out, with a predictably catastrophic environmental outcome. The Soviet Union also heavily polluted the largest and deepest freshwater lake in the world, Lake Baikal, by erecting pulp and paper mills on its shores, and inefficient ones at that. It also caused the dramatic shrinking of the Aral Sea, to about one-fifth its original size, into a patchwork of smaller lakes and deserts, by diverting the rivers feeding the Aral Sea, in the name of self-sufficiency in cotton production. Sure enough, the wasting of the Aral Sea and cotton production has outlasted glasnost.

Soviet-era Poland is one of the few Eastern bloc countries to have made significant attempts to legislate environmental protection, and even tolerated a fair amount of environmental protest and dissent within its authoritarian regime.49 But by the time that the Solidarity government took over in 1989, sweeping away Soviet-era socialism, Poland had become one of the most polluted countries in the world. Soil tests in Poland’s industrial region near Krakow showed levels of lead and cadmium that were higher than that ever recorded, anywhere, 200 times that considered safe by the Polish government. Sixty percent of the vegetables grown in the region were rendered unfit for human consumption. Katowice, a city forty miles west of Krakow, managed to belch out five times the amount of sulfur dioxide pollution than West Germany’s Ruhr Valley, while producing far less. The result? A shocking two-thirds of all ten-year-old children suffered from a mental or physical disability caused by that pollution. Half of all river water in the entire country was unfit for industrial use, let alone human consumption.50

How and why? It turns out, even in a socialist country that placed at least some formal emphasis on environmental protection, party politics, and a bureaucratic hierarchy that placed a higher emphasis on industrial production led to nonenforcement of well-intentioned environmental laws.51 The problem with socialist economies is that they must necessarily be governed by authoritarian regimes. How else is “central” planning to be carried out, except by a central government? Under authoritarianism, government is both the environmental regulator and the regulated party, so it is difficult for government to separate its regulatory functions from its ownership interests. Capital abolitionists misunderstand: removing a capitalist profit motive does not transform production entities into socially enlightened firms. The production of goods in socialist regimes are subjected to other pressures that also ignore or discount environmental harms. Nobody was particularly surprised in 2013 when 6,000 dead pigs were pulled out of the Huangpu River just upriver from Shanghai, the most populous city in the world.52

### Populism – 2AC

**Forced transition causes populism.**

Milena **Büchs and** Max **Koch 19**, Dr Milena Buchs is an environmental social scientist and specialises on sustainable welfare and wellbeing, Max Koch is Professor in the School of Social Work at Lund University, “Challenges for the degrowth transition: The debate about wellbeing,” Futures, Volume 105, January 2019, Pages 155-165, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328718300715

3.2. Implications of rapidly transforming social systems

The social practices lens is also useful for thinking about possible wellbeing implications of rapid social change more generally, and a transition away from a growth-based economy specifically. While the concept of social practices inherently implies the possibility of change (with its focus on agency and creativity), it equally strongly highlights the structural aspects of practices which provide stability and orientation. During times of rapid social transitions, social norms and ‘mental infrastructures’ often lag behind, creating disorientation, social conflict, and negative impacts on wellbeing (Büchs & Koch, 2017: ch. 6).

Stability of structural dimensions of social practices offers orientation and some extent of predictability of how oneself and other people are likely to act in the future, providing a framework within which flexibility and change are possible. This orienting function of structural dimensions of practices is likely to be an important condition for people to form reasonably stable identities and relationships – key ingredients for wellbeing. Examples from classical and contemporary sociological and psychological research suggest that different speeds of changing social structures can establish misalignments and disruptions of social practices which can, in turn, negatively influence health and other wellbeing outcomes. For instance, in his classical study, Durkheim presents suicide at least partly as an outcome of a failure of cultural resources to provide meaning and orientation in the context of other, more rapid social changes (Durkheim, 2006; Vega & Rumbaut, 1991: 375). This idea also links to Bourdieu’s concept of the “hysteresis effect”. Here, Bourdieu emphasises that, especially during phases of social transition, people’s habitus and “objective” social circumstances can become disjointed: as a result of hysteresis, dispositions can be “out of line with the field and with the ‘collective expectations’ which are constitutive of its normality. This is the case, in particular, when a field undergoes a major crisis and its regularities (even its rules) are profoundly changed” (Bourdieu, 2000: 160). This can contribute to a deterioration of people’s wellbeing as it makes them feel “out of place” or let them be perceived that way, “plung[ing] them deeper into failure” (Bourdieu, 2000: 161) because they cannot make use of new opportunities or are mistreated or socially excluded by others.

Empirical research which partly builds on the idea of hysteresis has shown that wide-ranging organisational change can have a range of negative effects on people’s health and mortality (Ferrie et al., 1998; McDonough & Polzer, 2012). One study found that across 174 countries, several measures of wellbeing and social performance, including life satisfaction, health, safety and trust, voice and accountability, were highest in periods of economic stability, but lower in times of GDP growth or contraction (O’Neill, 2015); and other studies concluded that life expectancy can be negatively affected by both rapid economic growth and contraction (Notzon et al., 1998; Szreter, 1999).

Several scholars have recently highlighted the potential for social conflict inherent in (rapid) social change. For instance, Maja Göpel (2016: 49) remarks: “Unsurprisingly, the navigation or transition phase in shifting paradigms as well as governance solutions is marked by chaos, politicization, unease and power-ridden struggles”. Wolfgang Streeck has issued similar warnings (Streeck et al., 2016: 169). It is not difficult to see how such scenarios bear the potential of undermining some of the fundamental conditions that are necessary for the satisfaction of basic needs as discussed above, and hence the danger of generating substantial wellbeing losses for current and near-future generations.

In the current context, it is very difficult to imagine that we might be able to observe a rapid and radical cultural change in which people adopt identities and related lifestyles that value intrinsically motivated activities over pursuing satisfaction and status through careers and consumption. Even more worryingly, political events in Europe, the United States and elsewhere since the ‘Great Crash’ of 2008 indicate that times of negative or stagnant growth can provide a breeding ground for populist, nationalistic and anti-democratic movements. Economic insecurity, a perceived threat of established identities through migrants, and deep mistrust against ‘elite’ politicians are amongst the main explanations for previously unimaginable events such as the Brexit vote, Trump presidency, and recent electoral successes for far right-wing parties in a range of European countries.

#### Populism causes nuclear war.

Jacques Hymans 22. Associate Professor of International Relations at University of Southern California. The Nonproliferation Review. “Comment on Meier and Vieluf's ‘Upsetting the Nuclear Order: How the Rise of Nationalist Populism Increases Nuclear Dangers.’” vol. 28.

Oliver Meier and Maren Vieluf’s “Upsetting the nuclear order: how the rise of nationalist populism increases nuclear dangers” is an important, agenda-setting article that will shape the future course of nuclear scholarship. Meier and Vieluf define nationalist populists as people whose identity rests on a stark black–white contrast not only with perceived external enemies,1 but also with perceived internal enemies and, above all, with the country’s political-administrative “establishment” (p. 6). In Meier and Vieluf’s view, this populist-versus-establishment battle is relevant to deterrence because the prudence and professionalism shown by the nuclear-weapon states have allowed the world to go on living with nuclear weapons for three-quarters of a century. However, if populists in one or more of those states grab the nuclear portfolio for themselves, deterrence instability is sure to follow. Meier and Vieluf put it this way: “In the nuclear world, this destabilization of institutions is particularly significant. The nationalist-populist assault weakens the influence of those who are supposed to act as ‘guardians of the arsenals.’ The influence of nationalist-populist leaders on nuclear-weapon policies also has grown” (p. 10).

In this essay, I offer a constructive critique of Meier and Vieluf’s key claim that nationalist populists are dangerous because they push aside traditional nuclear and defense establishments. I agree with Meier and Vieluf that the rise of nuclear-armed populists is profoundly dangerous for the future of human civilization. But we need to avoid the trap of zero-sum thinking, according to which any point against the populists becomes a point in favor of the establishments (or vice versa).

Questioning Meier and Vieluf’s faith in the establishment

Meier and Vieluf suggest that the traditional nuclear and defense establishments have so far contained the ever-present potential for nuclear war by institutionalizing a “nuclear order built on the principled acceptance of a logic of restraint by the nuclear-weapon states” (p. 2). But such an interpretation of nuclear history is hard to square with the findings of a large scholarly literature that the superpowers’ establishments were actually significant drivers of the strategic competition and arms racing that caused many tense moments during the Cold War. Far from demonstrating a “principled acceptance of a logic of restraint,” the establishments made the Cold War more dangerous, more costly, and more long-lasting than it needed to be.2

The so-called “guardians of the arsenals” were also less than reliable during Cold War nuclear crises. The Cuban Missile Crisis would almost certainly have gone nuclear if either John F. Kennedy or Nikita Khrushchev had let the generals take the lead.3 A variety of technical and organizational mishaps almost caused it to go nuclear anyway.4 Meanwhile, the establishments unfairly tarred their critics in the peace and disarmament movements as “populists,” as Meier and Vieluf also point out (p. 9). Actually, those 45activists ended up greatly contributing to the peaceful end of the Cold War, an outcome that the establishments had considered unrealistic.5

Fast-forward now to the 2001–2009 George W. Bush administration in the United States. The Bush team was Republican foreign-policy establishment through and through. President Bush’s own father had been president and, before that, head of the Central Intelligence Agency; his vice president, Dick Cheney, was a former secretary of defense; his secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld, had already served as secretary of defense under President Gerald Ford; and so on. But these rock-solid establishment figures did most of the things that Meier and Vieluf list as being consequences of nationalist populism.

The Bush administration withdrew from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and deployed technologically immature missile-defense systems despite clear warnings from Russia and China that they would not take such provocations lying down. It refused to continue the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty negotiations with Russia, thereby undercutting the possibility that the administration’s unilateral nuclear-stockpile reductions would generate mutual trust.6 It casually tossed aside nonproliferation norms for a strategic marriage of convenience with India, resulting in a further acceleration of New Delhi’s already rapid pace of nuclear-weapons construction.7 And, most egregiously, it used flimsy intelligence findings of illicit Iraqi nuclear and other weaponsof-mass-destruction programs to justify a full-scale invasion of that country against the better judgment of the International Atomic Energy Agency, three nuclear-armed permanent members of the UN Security Council, and most of the rest of the world, including staunch American allies such as Germany.8 The combination of US unilateralism and bungling in Iraq ended up exacerbating the very problems of Islamist terrorism and nuclear proliferation that the war had been intended to solve. As former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright put it in 2007, “The lesson out of Iraq has been if you don’t have nuclear weapons you get invaded and if you do have nuclear weapons you don’t get invaded.”9

Worse still, even after the high costs of Bush’s policies for US and global security had become glaringly obvious,10 most establishment Republicans still ardently embraced Bush’s foreign-policy approach. The only major Republican presidential candidates who denounced Bush’s Iraq War misadventure were fringe populist figures: Ron Paul in 2008 and 2012, and Donald Trump in 2016.11 Meier and Vieluf portray the establishment’s consistency of thought and action as a blessing, but it can also be a curse.

In Meier and Vieluf’s depiction, nationalist populists are like the 16-year-old who asks for the keys to the family car to take friends out on a Saturday night. I agree that it is dangerous to let them do so. But in this case, the parents—or, to borrow Meier and Vieluf’s term, “guardians”—have also compiled a very long record of driving infractions. For their own and others’ safety, they need to get rid of the car.

Building on Meier and Vieluf’s accounting of the dangers of populism

I have argued that nuclear-armed establishments are more dangerous than Meier and Vieluf suggest. Now I will also argue that nuclear-armed populists are dangerous for even more reasons than Meier and Vieluf enumerate.

Meier and Vieluf’s article does not do enough with its basic definition of nationalist populism as a black–white oppositional stance toward internal as well as external enemies. If we take that definition seriously, it becomes apparent that the biggest problem stemming from the rise of populists is not that they might ignore the advice of traditional nuclear and defense establishments and behave carelessly toward foreign powers. The biggest problem is that populism is a gateway drug to internal political violence, revolution, and civil war.12 And, perhaps needless to say, serious domestic upheaval in a nuclear power also increases the likelihood of a nuclear incident of some kind.

Perhaps the first-ever populist government in history was led by the Jacobin faction that drove the French Revolution forward from 1792 to 1794.13 The Jacobins expressed a radical populist faith in the power of “redemptive violence” by “the people.” 14 They made war both inside and outside France. To quote historian Brian Singer, the Jacobins’ violence was directed neither “at a well-defined enemy” nor “at some limited, short-term end, but to the creation of a new regime, a new humanity.” 15 In short, they wanted to raze the old world to the ground—or die trying. The Jacobins’ favorite metaphor for their violence was lightning, which materializes from out of nowhere to simultaneously destroy and enlighten the dark world it strikes. Their interest in lightning was not only metaphorical; Jacobin ideologues such as Jean-Paul Marat were serious students of the new science of electricity.16 France and the world are lucky that nuclear physics was not very far advanced in the Jacobins’ day.

None of the contemporary nuclear-armed populist leaders listed by Meier and Vieluf is a modern-day Jacobin. Most populists are merely unprincipled con artists who prey on atomized and insecure sections of the public, manipulating them to gain personal wealth and power. Even so, the language of populism is the language of revolution and civil war, and pretend revolutionaries can easily be carried along by the tide of social resentments that they have irresponsibly stirred up. Take, for instance, Trump and his followers’ dismal trajectory to January 6, 2021. We need to consider worst-case scenarios.

Trump did not actually want a civil war in the United States, but his rhetoric emboldened the not-so-small number of Americans who do. A rigorous time-series analysis found that Trump’s presidential run in 2016 was associated with an abrupt, statistically significant, and durable increase in violent attacks by domestic far-right extremists.17 For instance, the leading ideologist of the neo-Nazi group Atomwaffen Division, James Mason, wrote in July 2017, “I am not ashamed to say that I shed a tear of joy at [Trump’s] win.” 18 Far from standing back and standing by, Mason preached direct action to “accelerate” the onset of a society-purifying race war that he believed would push the Trump administration into embracing full-blown fascism. In May 2017, an Atomwaffen member, National Guard veteran, and onetime physics major named Brandon Russell was arrested for plotting to attack the Turkey Point nuclear power plant, among other targets. Police later also found traces of thorium and americium in Russell’s bedroom.19

The domestic divisions fomented by populists do not have to arrive at their logical end point of revolution and civil war to increase deterrence instability and the chances of a nuclear incident. Below I elaborate three more specific hypotheses on the deterrence consequences of internally divisive populist governments. The hypotheses are speculative, but they logically follow from the definition of populism and should therefore serve as useful points for further discussion of Meier and Vieluf’s core idea.

Hypothesis 1. Populists are likely to be insensitive to nuclear threats to the political strongholds of their domestic opponents. Meier and Vieluf observe that the credibility of US extended-deterrence promises to America’s allies suffered massively under the Trump administration. That is certainly true, but the question of whether the United States would be willing to trade “Pittsburgh for Paris” (p. 19) has been around for decades. The new problem that populism creates is that even homeland deterrence starts to suffer from the same credibility dilemmas as extended deterrence. In addition to the “Pittsburgh for Paris” question, we now also have to ask whether a populist administration in Washington would be willing to trade Pittsburgh for Portland.

In a country where populist leaders revel in dividing society against itself, deterrence theory’s standard assumption that a nuclear threat to any part of the homeland will be treated as a threat to the whole homeland can no longer be taken for granted.20 Whatever the president’s true intentions, foreign powers could potentially calculate that they will not be punished for striking at certain targets within the country’s borders.21 For instance, the longest-range North Korean missile that is currently operational, the Hwasong-14, has enough range for a nuclear attack against Seattle but not Mar-a-Lago. 22 Would the same president who formally designated Seattle as an “anarchist jurisdiction” in an attempt to starve it of federal dollars be greatly concerned by a credible threat of a North Korean strike against it? 23 Probably—but is “probably” a good enough answer for homeland deterrence credibility?

Another dimension of this same hypothesis has to do with the precise locations where populists choose to install military installations that are likely to become nuclear targets. During the Nixon administration, the objections of congressional Democrats to the planned construction of Sentinel anti-ballistic-missile facilities near their political strongholds such as Boston and Seattle led Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird to move the projects to less populated areas.24 President Nixon believed that he needed to work constructively with the Democrats on core national security issues. By contrast, a populist president would love to see his political opponents sweating the targets he put on their backs.25

Populists in power may even be slow to help their political opponents’ regions recover from an actual nuclear attack. There is a lesson for nuclear analysts in the Trump administration’s intentional slow-walking of congressionally mandated emergency aid to the US territory of Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria in 2017, one of the deadliest natural disasters in US history.26 Having long held a low opinion of Puerto Ricans, Trump reportedly told his chief of staff and budget director that he “did not want a single dollar going to Puerto Rico.” 27 Would Trump have been any more helpful if the island had been hit by a man-made bomb instead of a natural one? Maybe if Puerto Rico could do something for him in return, which leads to the second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. Populists are likely to exploit their control over homeland deterrence to demand political concessions from their domestic political opponents. At the heart of populism is a disrespect for the principle of equal application of the laws. Instead, governance becomes a pure power game, and populist rulers notably exploit crises as opportunities to bring domestic political opponents to their knees. There is every reason to assume that a populist in full command of the nuclear and defense establishment would similarly take advantage of a nuclear crisis to conduct such a shakedown. In other words, populists in power will charge a high price for adequately responding to nuclear threats against their domestic opponents’ political strongholds.

Let us continue with the example of the Trump administration. The mass-destructive COVID-19 pandemic offers a highly relevant analogy for thinking about the internal political dynamics of a potential nuclear crisis under populist rule. Public-administration scholars have labeled Trump’s governing approach as “chaotic transactional federalism,” a cynical power system that “removes any vestige of certainty as decisions are shaped based on a desire to reward or punish other political actors, or left to subnational actors entirely. Expertise matters very little in these political, partisan transactions.” 28 In line with this, Trump responded to the COVID-19 crisis by pitting the 50 states against each other in bidding wars for vital medical supplies and for his political favor.29 The president publicly criticized Vice President Mike Pence for reaching out to all the state governors in his role as the coordinator of the national pandemic response, telling the press that he wanted Pence to deal only with those governors who were sufficiently “appreciative.” 30 Trump administration officials were even blunter in private. Trump’s son-in-law and closest adviser Jared Kushner reportedly said that New York Governor Andrew Cuomo “didn’t pound the phones hard enough to get PPE [personal protective equipment] for his state … . His people are going to suffer and that’s their problem.” 31 Trump’s response to the Democratic governors’ pleas for PPE to defend against the virus was essentially the same as his response to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s pleas for weapons to defend against Russia: “I would like you to do us a favor though.” 32

The hypothesis that populists will demand concessions from their domestic political opponents in exchange for issuing nuclear-deterrent threats on their behalf may at first glance appear to be only a matter of internal politics, but the distractions caused by internal political wrangling could greatly affect the denouement of a time-sensitive nuclear crisis. Foreign powers could also be tempted to initiate a nuclear crisis precisely in order to intensify their adversary’s domestic divisions. In addition, when facing the double burden of a nuclear threat and simultaneous shakedown by the president, politicians from disfavored regions would likely appeal to friendly elements of the military for assistance. That possibility tees up the third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. The establishment’s reaction to populism is likely to increase deterrence instability at least as much as the actions of the populists themselves. Meier and Vieluf’s article implies that the fate of the world hangs on the establishment’s ability to keep populist fingers off the nuclear button. But the establishment’s effort to fend off the populists could itself dramatically increase deterrence instability, for instance by sowing confusion about the chain of command. This hypothesis is not mere speculation. Reacting to widespread fears that Trump might be tempted to launch a nuclear attack against China or another country after his 2020 election loss to Joe Biden, in January 2021, General Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, quietly worked the phone lines to reassure key people at home and abroad that he personally would not allow the president to do anything of the sort. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs is legally outside the chain of command for the execution of the president’s military strategy. Indeed, neither he nor anyone else has the legal authority to prevent a determined president from launching a nuclear strike.33 Yet Milley told Pelosi, “The president alone can order the use of nuclear weapons. But he doesn’t make the decision alone. One person can order it, several people have to launch it.” 34 Essentially, Milley was saying that if push came to shove, the military would mutiny. Meier and Vieluf seem to think that Milley did the right thing (pp. 15–16). Maybe so, but he also set an ominous precedent.

As I mentioned at the outset, these comments are simply intended to spark further discussion about the important issues raised by Meier and Vieluf’s stimulating article. I would be relieved to discover that I am being overly pessimistic about humanity’s chances of survival with either the establishments or the populists in charge of nuclear arsenals. But the more I study the issue, the more pessimistic I become.

### Roubini – 2AC

**Collapse causes global populism, nuclear war, and subverts responses to every other risk.**

**Roubini ’22** [Nouriel; Professor of Economics @ New York University’s Stem School of Business; Little, Brown and Company, “Dark Destiny” in MegaThreats: Ten Dangerous Trends That Imperil Our Future, And How to Survive Them, Ch. 11]

For years, political division and polarization, lack of bipartisanship, partisan radicalization, the rise of extreme right-wing groups, and conspiracy theories have been growing and severely dividing the United States. These trends reached one peak after the 2020 election spawned the fiction that the election was stolen from Donald Trump. Lack of evidence notwithstanding, most of his base went along with him. The January 6, 2021, attempted coup revealed a vast base of radicalized white supremacists and other extreme right-wing militia willing to use force to prevent the electoral vote count in Congress and the rightful installation of Joe Biden as president.

Unfolding megathreats and the rising tide of populism will partly decide the 2022 midterm elections in the United States. Debt, inflation, globalization, immigration, climate change, and the rise of China alarm swing voters. Observers predict angry contests and even violence that may threaten to overturn outcomes in the 2024 presidential election.- Conspiracy theories, massive misinformation campaigns, large-scale violence, coup, insurrection, civil war, secession, and insurgency are now terms used in a large number of op-eds, essays, and books. Collectively, we are thinking the once unthinkable.

The 2024 presidential campaign is drawing close. The New York Tinies calls “the prospect of American political conflagration—including insurrection, secession, insurgency and civil war”—a serious threat.- Numerous authors have raised the possibility of a “slow-moving coup,” the pundit Bill Maher told his HBO audience. Writing in The Nation, a left-of-center publication, Robert Crawford predicts a “worst case scenario” for the United States. Chauncey DeVega, in Salon, and British journalist Sir Max Hastings, have voiced concern about secession or large-scale political violence instigated by the loser’s cadres. Titles like How Civil Wars Start, by political scientist Barbara F. Walter, and The Next Civil War, by journalist Stephen Marche, mince no words. In January 2021, after the assault on the Capitol, a poll showed that 46 percent of Americans had the view that their country was headed toward another civil war.- A CIA task force reached the conclusion that “the United States during the Trump presidency regressed, for the first time since 1800, into “anocracy.” That’s how scholars label a system of government that hovers uneasily between democracy and autocracy.—

Like nuclear meltdowns, megathreats turn all matter in their path into fuel. The economic malaise and rising inequality that leads to populism will spur a backlash against free trade and globalization. The fundamental aspect of populist economic policy is economic nationalism and autarkic tendencies. The rise of political and economic populism exacerbates the risk of deglobalization, protectionism, fragmentation of the global economy, balkanization of global supply chains, restrictions to migration, controls of movement of capital, technology, and data, and severe friction between the United States and China.

Dystopian upheaval will turn science inside out. Technology’s dark side threatens Western values. Social media produces echo chambers as news and postings keep a specious rumor mill in high gear, often to advance interests of foreign adversaries. Conspiracy theories—even demonstrably lunatic ones—travel with alarming speed. Initially seen as a tool to launch and organize dissent against autocratic regimes that traffic in lies and hypocrisy (do you remember the Arab Spring, and the Facebook-generated protests against the Egyptian government?), social media today increasingly foments assaults on democratic institutions and orchestrates ethnic violence. Look no further than the January 6 Capitol mob in the United States or the Rohingya massacre in Myanmar. These trends will accelerate as artificial intelligence and machine learning refine ways—via “transformers” technologies—to manipulate minds.

Technology will become autocracy’s handmaiden. Social media and big tech help current autocrats and dictators hold power. The idea that technology would expose authoritarians to justice and defend democracy now sounds naive.— China uses a Great Firewall and other social media tools to control its population in Orwellian ways. A “social credit rating system” restricts access to financial services and punishes socially and politically “deviant” behavior. Now China is exporting these technologies to client regimes, reinforcing autocracy elsewhere.

Unfettered computerization will make jobs vanish, and not just routine, repetitive jobs. Artificial intelligence advancing at warp speed will make cognitive workers obsolete, from Uber drivers, paralegals, and auditors, to eventually brain surgeons. Robots will also populate creative jobs once we reach a point where machines outthink people. Even computer developers will find their seats occupied by robots. Permanent blue- and white-collar technological displacement will extend unemployment lines, adding pressure to a fraying social safety net. Adding irony to injury, robots are already running most HR decisions and will run unemployment offices.

Who controls AI will command enormous economic, financial, and geopolitical power. That is why the United States and China are vying to dominate the industries of the future. And if the United States and China ever enter into open warfare, their respective AI technologies could make the difference between victory and defeat.

To assert control in a world unsettled by megathreats, major powers will reinforce or reshuffle alliances. China's informal geopolitical partnerships with revisionist powers such as Russia, Iran, and North Korea are challenging the United States and the West. The United States is reinforcing and building new alliances in Asia: the Quad, the AUKUS (a security agreement between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), the Indo Pacific Economic Framework, and now NATO flexing its military muscle in Asia. Revisionist powers challenging the United States and the West cannot yet match Western military strength. The United States alone spends more on military resources than its four revisionist adversaries combined. Those adversaries will increasingly counter American strength with asymmetric warfare that deploys cyber espionage, cyberattacks, and misinformation campaigns to weaken and polarize the United States and the West. But traditional hard power conflict on controlling land masses will not disappear, as the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the looming conflict over Taiwan show.

Indeed, their logistical disadvantage won’t prevent America’s adversaries from aiming conventional weapons at the United States and the West. Putin’s Russia seeks to partially restore the former Soviet empire by projecting a sphere of influence over former Soviet and Iron Curtain nations; the bloody invasion of Ukraine is a starting salvo of Russia’s attempt to re-create the Soviet Union or its sphere of influence on its “near abroad.” Similar tensions will mount in the Baltics, Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and parts of Central Asia, such as Kazakhstan.

Then there’s North Korea, where sanctions only embolden a mercurial dear leader who demands adoration from a starving people while he embraces long-range missiles and cyberwarfare. In the Middle East, Iran may soon aim nuclear warheads at Israel and Arab states that challenge its dominance; but Israel may try to strike Iran’s nuclear facilities before the country reaches the nuclear point of no return. War in the Gulf would trigger a stagflationary shock from rising oil prices more calamitous than twin spikes produced in the seventies. So many flash points and rivals jockeying for leadership amid geopolitical instability make skirmishes inevitable. They make conventional wars likely, and the horrifying specter of nuclear war possible. In 2022, the war in Ukraine led to risk of its escalation to the Baltics and Central Europe and even a military and nuclear confrontation between Russia and NATO. The specter of nuclear wars—that seemed faded once the Soviet Union collapsed—returned as the war in Ukraine escalated.

Geopolitical discord impedes united action against the world’s most sweeping peril: global climate change, which threatens life on earth for billions of people in regions too hot or too flooded to inhabit. Earth’s rising temperature will unleash storms and heat waves more frequent and more severe than humans can endure. These conditions will precipitate biological catastrophe. When ecosystems deteriorate, living spaces press animals and humans closer together. Zoonotic diseases will spawn pandemics and tax health care networks more than ever. As skies warm, melting permafrost will release even more pathogens frozen for millennia. When COVID-19 is in the rearview mirror, it won’t mean the end of severe global pandemics. It’s just a question of when the next virulent one will strike, and how fast we can respond—if we can respond.

Squabbling will intensify as coastlines, farmland, and rain forests disappear and global climate change worsens. Resolving climate change is either too expensive or reliant on untested technologies or too costly in terms of lost growth. Global rivalries will cripple responses to challenges in every dimension: economic, financial, technological, biological, geopolitical, and military. Narrow national interests will prevail. The world will split into nations that insist everyone share the tab for ecological damage, and free riders that ignore the calls because they did not cause the problem, they cannot afford to pay for the solution, or they elect leaders who dismiss climate change as fake news. And at some point a violent land grab for the regions of the world that benefit from climate change will ensue: Siberia’s defrosting may lead China and other powers in Asia to an effective grab of this fertile land; already today thousands of Chinese buy and farm land in the steppes of Siberia. And a country like Russia, with a declining population of 145 million in 2021, barely 17 million of them in Siberia—a land mass larger than most continents—will soon find out that its tactical alliance with China is a major geostrategic error as 1.4 billion Chinese want to move north toward Siberia over the next few decades to deal with the consequences of climate change.

### Perm – Central Planning – 2AC

#### Worker control over autonomous firms retains efficient production and innovation. Planning that bans markets, price system, and firm autonomy destroys productivity, quality, and democratic worker voice.

Seth **ACKERMAN** Executive Editor Jacobin **’12** https://jacobinmag.com/2012/12/the-red-and-the-black

Radicals responded to the end of “really existing socialism” mainly in two ways. Most stopped talking about a world after capitalism at all, retreating to a modest politics of piecemeal reform, or localism, or personal growth.

The other response was exactly the opposite — an escape forward into the purest and most uncompromising visions of social reconstruction. In certain radical circles, this impulse has lately heightened the appeal of a leap toward a world with no states or markets, and thus no money, wages, or prices: a system in which goods would be freely produced and freely taken, where the economy would be governed entirely by the maxim “from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.”

Whenever such ideas are considered, debate seems to focus immediately on big philosophical questions about human nature. Skeptics scoff that people are too selfish for such a system to work. Optimists argue that humans are a naturally cooperative species. Evidence is adduced for both sides of the argument. But it’s best to leave that debate to the side. It’s safe to assume that humans display a mixture of cooperation and selfishness, in proportions that change according to circumstances.

The lofty vision of a stateless, marketless world faces obstacles that are not moral but technical, and it’s important to grasp exactly what they are.

We have to assume that we would not want to regress to some sharply lower stage of economic development in the future; we would want to experience at least the same material comforts that we have under capitalism. On a qualitative level, of course, all sorts of things ought to change so that production better satisfies real human and ecological needs. But we would not want to see an overall decline in our productive powers.

But the kind of production of which we are now capable requires a vast and complex division of labor. This presents a tricky problem. To get a concrete sense of what it means, think of the way Americans lived at the time of the American Revolution, when the typical citizen worked on a small, relatively isolated family farm. Such households largely produced what they consumed and consumed what they produced. If they found themselves with a modest surplus of farm produce, they might sell it to others nearby, and with the money they earned they could buy a few luxuries. For the most part, though, they did not rely on other people to provide them with the things they needed to live.

Compare that situation with our own. Not only do we rely on others for our goods, but the sheer number of people we rely on has increased to staggering proportions.

Look around the room you’re sitting in and think of your possessions. Now try to think of how many people were directly involved in their production. The laptop I’m typing on, for example, has a monitor, a case, a DVD player, and a microprocessor. Each was likely made in a separate factory, possibly in different countries, by various companies employing hundreds or thousands of workers. Then think of the raw plastic, metal, and rubber that went into those component parts, and all the people involved in producing them. Add the makers of the fuel that fired the factories and the ship crews and trucking fleets that got the computer to its destination.  It’s not hard to imagine millions of people participating in the production of just those items now sitting on my desk. And out of the millions of tasks involved, each individual performed only a tiny set of discrete steps.

How did they each know what to do? Of course, most of these people were employees, and their bosses told them what to do. But how did their bosses know how much plastic to produce? And how did they know to send the weaker, softer kind of plastic to the computer company, even though it would have been happy to take the sturdier, high-quality plastic reserved for the hospital equipment makers? And how did these manufacturers judge whether it was worth the extra resources to make laptops with nice LCD monitors, rather than being frugal and making  old, simpler cathode ray models?

The total number of such dilemmas is practically infinite for a modern economy with millions of different products and billions of workers and consumers. And they must all be resolved in a way that is globally consistent, because at any given moment there are only so many workers and machines to go around, so making more of one thing means making less of another. Resources can be combined in an almost infinite number of possible permutations; some might satisfy society’s material needs and desires fairly well, while others would be disastrous, involving huge quantities of unwanted production and lots of desirable things going unmade. In theory, any degree of success is possible.

This is the problem of economic calculation. In a market economy, prices perform this function. And the reason prices can work is that they convey systematic information concerning how much of one thing people are willing to give up to get another thing, under a given set of circumstances. Only by requiring people to give up one thing to get another, in some ratio, can quantitative information be generated about how much, in relative terms, people value those things. And only by knowing how much relative value people place on millions of different things can producers embedded in this vast network make rational decisions about what their minute contribution to the overall system ought to be.

None of this means that calculation can be accomplished through prices alone, or that the prices generated in a market are somehow ideal or optimal. But there is no way a decentralized system could continually generate and broadcast so much quantitative information without the use of prices in some form. Of course, we don’t have to have a decentralized system. We could have a centrally planned economy, in which all or most of society’s production decisions are delegated to professional planners with computers. Their task would be extremely complex and their performance uncertain. But at least such a system would provide some method for economic calculation: the planners would try to gather all the necessary information into their central department and then figure out what everyone needs to do.

So something needs to perform the economic calculation function that prices do for a market system and planners do for a centrally planned system. As it happens, an attempt has been made to spell out exactly what would be required for economic calculation in a world with no states or markets. The anarchist activist Michael Albert and the economist Robin Hahnel have devised a system they call Participatory Economics in which every individual’s freely made decisions about production and consumption would be coordinated by means of a vast society-wide plan formulated through a “participatory” process with no central bureaucracy.

Parecon, as it’s called, is an interesting exercise for our purposes, because it rigorously works out exactly what would be needed to run such an “anarchist” economy. And the answer is roughly as follows: At the beginning of each year, everyone must write out a list of every item he or she plans to consume over the course of the year, along with the quantity of each item. In writing these lists, everyone consults a tentative list of prices for every product in the economy (keep in mind there are more than two million products in Amazon.com’s “kitchen and dining” category alone), and the total value of a person’s requests may not exceed his or her personal “budget,” which is determined by how much he or she promises to work that year.

Since the initial prices are only tentative estimates, a network of direct-democratic councils must feed everyone’s consumption lists and work pledges into computers, in order to generate an improved set of prices that will bring planned levels of production and consumption (supply and demand) closer to balance. This improved price list is then published, which kicks off a second “iteration” of the process: now everyone has to rewrite their consumption requests and work pledges all over again, according to the new prices. The whole procedure is repeated several times until supply and demand are finally balanced. Eventually, everyone votes to choose between several possible plans.

In their speaking and writing, Albert and Hahnel narrate this remarkable process to show how attractive and feasible their system would be. But for many people — I would include myself in this group — the effect is exactly the opposite. It comes off instead as a precise demonstration of why economic calculation in the absence of markets or state planning would be, if perhaps not impossible in theory, at least impossible to imagine working in a way that most people could live with in practice. And Parecon is itself a compromise from the purist’s point of view, since it violates the principle “from each according to ability, to each according to need” — individuals’ consumption requests are not allowed to exceed their work pledges. But of course without that stipulation, the plans wouldn’t add up at all.

The point is not that a large-scale stateless, marketless economy “wouldn’t work.” It’s that, in the absence of some coordinating mechanism like Albert and Hahnel’s, it simply wouldn’t exist in the first place. The problem of economic calculation, therefore, is something we have to take seriously if we want to contemplate something better than the status quo.

But what about the other alternative? Why not a centrally planned economy where the job of economic calculation is handed over to information-gathering experts — democratically accountable ones, hopefully. We actually have historical examples of this kind of system, though of course they **were far from democratic**. Centrally planned economies registered some accomplishments: when Communism came to poor, rural countries like Bulgaria or Romania they were able to industrialize quickly, wipe out illiteracy, raise education levels, modernize gender roles, and eventually ensure that most people had basic housing and health care. The system could also raise per capita production pretty quickly from, say, the level of today’s Laos to that of today’s Bosnia; or from the level of Yemen to that of Egypt.

But beyond that, the system ran into trouble. Here a prefatory note is in order: Because the neoliberal Right has habit of measuring a society’s success by the abundance of its consumer goods, the radical left is prone to slip into a posture of denying this sort of thing is politically relevant at all. This is a mistake. The problem with full supermarket shelves is that they’re not enough — not that they’re unwelcome or trivial. The citizens of Communist countries experienced the paucity, shoddiness and uniformity of their goods not merely as inconveniences; they experienced them as violations of their basic rights. As an anthropologist of Communist Hungary writes, “goods of state-socialist production . . . came to be seen as evidence of the failure of a state-socialist-generated modernity, but more importantly, of the regime’s negligent and even ‘**inhumane’ treatment of its subjects**.”

In fact, the shabbiness of consumer supply was popularly felt as a betrayal of the humanistic mission of socialism itself. A historian of East Germany quotes the petitions that ordinary consumers addressed to the state: “It really is not in the spirit of the human being as the center of socialist society when I have to save up for years for a Trabant and then cannot use my car for more than a year because of a shortage of spare parts!” said one. Another wrote: “When you read in the socialist press ‘maximal satisfaction of the needs of the people and so on’ and … ‘everything for the benefit of the people,’ it makes me feel sick.” In different countries and languages across Eastern Europe, citizens used almost identical expressions to evoke the image of substandard goods being “thrown at” them.

Items that became unavailable in Hungary at various times due to planning failures included “the kitchen tool used to make Hungarian noodles,” “bath plugs that ﬁt tubs in stock; cosmetics shelves; and the metal box necessary for electrical wiring in new apartment buildings.” As a local newspaper editorial complained in the 1960s, these things “don’t seem important until the moment one needs them, and suddenly they are very important!”

And at an aggregate level, the best estimates show the Communist countries steadily falling behind Western Europe: East German per capita income, which had been slightly higher than that of West German regions before World War II, never recovered in relative terms from the postwar occupation years and continually lost ground from 1960 onwards. By the late 1980s it stood at less than 40% of the West German level.

Unlike an imaginary economy with no states or markets, the Communist economies did have an economic calculation mechanism. It just didn’t work as advertised. What was the problem?

According to many Western economists, the answer was simple: the mechanism was too clumsy. In this telling, the problem had to do with the “invisible hand,” the phrase Adam Smith had used only in passing, but which later writers commandeered to reinterpret his insights about the role of prices, supply, and demand in allocating goods. Smith had originally invoked the price system to explain why market economies display a semblance of order at all, rather than chaos — why, for example, any desired commodity can usually be found conveniently for sale, even though there is no central authority seeing to it that it be produced.

But in the late nineteenth century, Smith’s ideas were formalized by the founders of neoclassical economics, a tradition whose explanatory ambitions were far grander. They wrote equations representing buyers and sellers as vectors of supply and demand: when supply exceeded demand in a particular market, the price dropped; when demand exceeded supply, it rose. And when supply and demand were equal, the market in question was said to be in “equilibrium” and the price was said to be the “equilibrium price.”

As for the economy as a whole, with its numberless, interlocking markets, it was not until 1954 that the future Nobel laureates Kenneth Arrow and Gérard Debreu made what was hailed as a momentous discovery in the theory of “general equilibrium” — a finding that, in the words of James Tobin, “lies at the very core of the scientific basis of economic theory.” They proved mathematically that under specified assumptions, free markets were guaranteed to generate a set of potential equilibrium prices that could balance supply and demand in all markets simultaneously — and the resulting allocation of goods would be, in one important sense, “optimal”: no one could be made better off without making someone else worse off.

The moral that could be extracted from this finding was that prices were not just a tool market economies used to create a degree of order and rationality. Rather, the prices that markets generated — if those markets were free and untrammeled — were optimal, and resulted in a maximally efficient allocation of resources. If the Communist system wasn’t working, then, it was because the clumsy and fallible mechanism of planning couldn’t arrive at this optimal solution.

This narrative resonated with the deepest instincts of the economics profession. The little just-so stories of economics textbooks explaining why minimum wages or rent controls ultimately make everyone worse off are meant to show that supply and demand dictate prices by a higher logic that mortals defy at their peril. These stories are “partial equilibrium” analyses — they only show what happens in an individual market artificially cut off from all the markets surrounding it. What Arrow and Debreu had supplied, the profession believed, was proof that this logic extends to the economy as a whole, with all its interlocking markets: a general equilibrium theory. In other words, it was proof that in the end, free-market prices will guide the economy as a whole to its optimum.

Thus, when Western economists descended on the former Soviet bloc after 1989 to help direct the transition out of socialism, their central mantra, endlessly repeated, was “Get Prices Right.”

But a great deal of contrary evidence had accumulated in the meantime. Around the time of the Soviet collapse, the economist Peter Murrell published an article in the Journal of Economic Perspectives reviewing empirical studies of efficiency in the socialist planned economies. These studies consistently failed to support the neoclassical analysis: virtually all of them found that by standard neoclassical measures of efficiency, the planned economies performed as well or better than market economies.

Murrell pleaded with readers to suspend their prejudices:

The consistency and tenor of the results will surprise many readers. I was, and am, surprised at the nature of these results. And given their inconsistency with received doctrines, there is a tendency to dismiss them on methodological grounds. However, such dismissal becomes increasingly hard when faced with a cumulation of consistent results from a variety of sources.

First he reviewed eighteen studies of technical efficiency: the degree to which a firm produces at its own maximum technological level. Matching studies of centrally planned firms with studies that examined capitalist firms using the same methodologies, he compared the results. One paper, for example, found a 90% level of technical efficiency in capitalist firms; another using the same method found a 93% level in Soviet firms. The results continued in the same way: 84% versus 86%, 87% versus 95%, and so on.

Then Murrell examined studies of allocative efficiency: the degree to which inputs are allocated among firms in a way that maximizes total output. One paper found that a fully optimal reallocation of inputs would increase total Soviet output by only 3%-4%. Another found that raising Soviet efficiency to US standards would increase its GNP by all of 2%. A third produced a range of estimates as low as 1.5%. The highest number found in any of the Soviet studies was 10%. As Murrell notes, these were hardly amounts “likely to encourage the overthrow of a whole socio-economic system.” (Murell wasn’t the only economist to notice this anomaly: an article titled “Why Is the Soviet Economy Allocatively Efficient?” appeared in Soviet Studies around the same time.)

Two German microeconomists tested the “widely accepted” hypothesis that “prices in a planned economy are arbitrarily set exchange ratios without any relation to relative scarcities or economic valuations [whereas] capitalist market prices are close to equilibrium levels.” They employed a technique that analyzes the distribution of an economy’s inputs among industries to measure how far the pattern diverges from that which would be expected to prevail under perfectly optimal neoclassical prices. Examining East German and West German data from 1987, they arrived at an “astonishing result”: the divergence was 16.1% in the West and 16.5% in the East, a trivial difference. The gap in the West’s favor, they wrote, was greatest in the manufacturing sectors, where something like competitive conditions may have existed. But in the bulk of the West German economy — which was then being hailed globally as Modell Deutschland — monopolies, taxes, subsidies, and so on actually left its price structure further from the “efficient” optimum than in the moribund Communist system behind the Berlin Wall.

The neoclassical model also seemed belied by the largely failed experiments with more marketized versions of socialism in Eastern Europe. Beginning in the mid-1950s, reformist economists and intellectuals in the region had been pushing for the introduction of market mechanisms to rationalize production. Reforms were attempted in a number of countries with varying degrees of seriousness, including in the abortive Prague Spring. But the country that went furthest in this direction was Hungary, which inaugurated its “new economic mechanism” in 1968. Firms were still owned by the state, but now they were expected to buy and sell on the open market and maximize profits. The results were a disappointment. Although in the 1970s Hungary’s looser consumer economy earned it the foreign correspondent’s cliché “the happiest barracks in the Soviet bloc,” its dismal productivity growth did not improve and shortages were still common.

If all these facts and findings represented one reason to doubt the neoclassical narrative, there was a more fundamental reason: economists had discovered gaping holes in the theory itself. In the years since Arrow and Debreu had drafted their famous proof that free markets under the right conditions could generate optimal prices, theorists (including Debreu himself) had uncovered some disturbing features of the model. It turned out that such hypothetical economies generated multiple sets of possible equilibrium prices, and there was no mechanism to ensure that the economy would settle on any one of them without long or possibly endless cycles of chaotic trial-and-error. Even worse, the model’s results couldn’t withstand much relaxation of its patently unrealistic initial assumptions; for example, without perfectly competitive markets — which are virtually nonexistent in the real world — there was no reason to expect any equilibrium at all.

Even the liberal trope that government interventions are justified by “market failures” — specific anomalies that depart from the Arrow-Debreu model’s perfect-market assumptions — was undermined by another finding of the 1950s: the “general theory of the second best.” Introduced by Richard Lipsey and Kelvin Lancaster, the theorem proves that even if the idealized assumptions of the standard model are accepted, attempts to correct “market failures” and “distortions” (like tariffs, price controls, monopolies or externalities) are as likely to make things worse as to make them better, as long as any other market failures remain uncorrected — which will always be the case in a world of endemic imperfect competition and limited information.

In a wide-ranging review of “the failure of general equilibrium theory,” the economist Frank Ackerman1 concluded:

A story about Adam Smith, the invisible hand, and the merits of markets pervades introductory textbooks, classroom teaching, and contemporary political discourse. The intellectual foundation of this story rests on general equilibrium. . . .  If the foundation of everyone’s favorite economics story is now known to be unsound . . . then the profession owes the world a bit of an explanation.

The point is this: If a deterministic story about free markets generating optimal prices, leading to maximum output was no longer viable, then the failure of planned economies could hardly be attributed to the absence of those features. As Communist systems were collapsing in Eastern Europe, economists who had lost faith in the neoclassical narrative began to argue that an alternative explanation was needed. The most prominent theorist in this group was Joseph Stiglitz, who had become famous for his work on the economics of information. His arguments dovetailed with those of other dissenters from the neoclassical approach, like the eminent Hungarian scholar of planned economies, János Kornai, and evolutionary economists like Peter Murrell.

They all pointed to a number of characteristics, largely ignored by the neoclassical school, that better accounted for the ability of market economies to avoid the problems plaguing centrally planned systems. The aspects they emphasized were disparate, but they all tended to arise from a single, rather simple fact: in market systems **firms are autonomous.**

That means that within the limits of the law, a firm may enter a market; choose its products and production methods; interact with other firms and individuals; and must close down if it cannot get by on its own resources. As a textbook on central planning put it, in market systems the presumption is “that an activity may be undertaken unless it is expressly prohibited,” whereas in planned systems “the prevailing presumption in most areas of economic life is that an activity may not be undertaken unless permission has been obtained from the appropriate authority.” The neoclassical fixation with ensuring that firms exercised this autonomy in a laissez-faire environment — that restrictions on voluntary exchange be minimized or eliminated — was essentially beside the point.

Thus, free entry and multiple autonomous sources of capital mean that anyone with novel production ideas can seek resources to implement their ideas and don’t face a single veto point within a planning apparatus. As a result, they stand a much greater chance of obtaining the resources to test out their ideas. This probably leads to more of the waste inherent in failed experiments — but also far greater scope for **improved products and processes**, and a constantly **higher rate of technological improvement** and **productivity growth**.

Firms’ autonomy to choose their products and production methods means they can communicate directly with customers and tailor their output to their needs — and with free entry customers can choose between the output of different producers: no agency needs to spell out what needs to be produced. To illustrate the relative informational efficiency of this kind of system, Stiglitz cited a Defense Department contract for the production of plain white t-shirts: in the tender for bidding, the physical description of the t-shirt desired ran to thirty small-print pages. In other words, a centralized agency could never learn and then specify every desired characteristic of every product.

Meanwhile, East European economists realized that an essential precondition for firms to be truly autonomous was the existence of a capital market — and this helped explain the failure of Hungary’s market-oriented reforms. In seeking an explanation for the persistence of shortages under the new market system, the Hungarian economist János Kornai had identified a phenomenon that he called the “soft budget constraint” — a situation where the state continually transfers resources to loss-making firms to prevent them from failing. This phenomenon, he argued, was what lay behind the shortage problem in Hungary: expecting that they would always be prevented from going bankrupt, firms operated in practice without a budget constraint, and thus exerted limitless demand for materials and capital goods, causing chronic production bottlenecks.

But why did the state keep bailing out the troubled firms? It’s not as if the Hungarian authorities were opposed to firm failures on principle. In fact, when bankruptcies did happen, the Communist leadership treated them as public relations events, to demonstrate their commitment to a rational economic system.

The ultimate answer was the absence of a capital market. In a market economy, a troubled firm can sell part or all of its operations to another firm. Or it can seek capital from lenders or investors, if it can convince them it has the potential to improve its performance. But in the absence of a capital market, the only practical options are bankruptcy or bailouts. Constant bailouts were the price the Hungarian leadership was forced to pay to avoid extremely high and wasteful rates of firm failures. In other words, capital markets provide a rational way to deal with the turbulence caused by the hard budget constraints of market systems: when a firm needs to spend more than its income, it can turn to lenders and investors. Without a capital market, that option is foreclosed.

As resistance against Communism rose, those in Eastern Europe who wished to avoid a turn to capitalism drew the appropriate lessons. In 1989, the dissident Polish reform economists Włodzimierz Brus and Kazimierz  Łaski — both convinced socialists and disciples of the distinguished Marxist-Keynesian Michał Kalecki — published a book examining the prospects for East European reform. Both had been influential proponents of democratic reforms and socialist market mechanisms since the 1950s.

Their conclusion now was that in order to have a rational market socialism, publicly-owned firms would have to be made autonomous — and this would require a socialized capital market. The authors made it clear that this would entail a fundamental reordering of the political economy of East European systems — and indeed of traditional notions of socialism. Writing on the eve of the upheavals that would bring down Communism, they set out their vision: “the role of the owner-state should be separated from the state as an authority in charge of administration. . . .[E]nterprises . . . have to become separated not only from the state in its wider role but also from each other.”

The vision Brus and Łaski sketched was novel: a constellation of autonomous firms, financed by a multiplicity of autonomous banks or investment funds, all competing and interacting in a market — yet all nevertheless socially owned.

All of this lays the groundwork for raising the critical question of profit. There are two ways to think about the function of profits under capitalism. In the Marxist conception, capitalists’ restless search for profit drives the pace and shape of economic growth, making it the ultimate “motor of the system”— but it’s judged to be an erratic and arbitrary motor that ought to be replaced by something more rational and humane. In mainstream economics, on the other hand, profits are understood simply as a benign coordinating signal, broadcasting information to firms and entrepreneurs about how to satisfy society’s needs most efficiently.

Each of these versions contains some truth. Look at the mainstream account. Its logic is straightforward: a firm’s profit is the market value of the output it sells minus the market value of the inputs it buys. So the pursuit of profit leads firms to maximize their production of socially desired outputs while economizing on their use of scarce inputs. On this logic, profits are an ideal coordinating device.

But the logic only holds to the extent that that an item’s market value is actually a good measure of its social value. Does that assumption hold? Leftists know enough to scoff at that idea. The history of capitalism is a compendium of mis-valued goods. Not only do capitalists draw from a treasury of  tricks and maneuvers to inflate the market value of the outputs they sell (e.g., through advertising) and drive down the value of the inputs they have to buy (e.g., by deskilling labor). But capitalism itself systematically produces prices for crucial goods that bear little rational relation to their marginal social value: just think of health insurance, natural resources, interest rates, wages.

So if profit is a signal, it invariably comes mixed with a lot of noise. Still, there’s an important signal there. Most of the millions of goods in the economy aren’t like health insurance or natural resources; they’re more banal — like rubber bands, sheet metal, or flat-screen TVs. The relative prices of these goods do seem to function as decent guides to their relative marginal social values. When it comes to this portion of firms’ inputs and outputs — say, a steel company that buys iron and sells it manufactured as steel — profit-seeking really does make capitalists want to produce things people desire in the most efficient way possible. It’s those crucial mis-valued goods — labor, nature, information, finance, risk, and so on — that produce the irrationality of profit.

In other words, under capitalism firms can increase their profits by efficiently producing things people want. But they can also increase them by immiserating their workers, despoiling the environment, defrauding consumers, or indebting the populace. How do you obtain one without getting the other?

The standard answer to this dilemma is what you might call the social democratic solution: let firms pursue their private profits, but have the state intervene case by case to forbid them from doing so in socially harmful ways. Ban pollution, give rights to workers, forbid consumer fraud, repress speculation. This agenda is nothing to sneeze at. The social theorist Karl Polanyi saw it as part of what he called the long “double movement” that had been underway ever since the industrial revolution. Polanyi argued that liberal capitalism had always been pushed forward by a drive to turn everything into a commodity. Because it required that production be “organized through a self-regulating mechanism of barter and exchange,” it demanded that “man and nature must be brought into its orbit; they must be subject to supply and demand, that is, be dealt with as commodities, as goods produced for sale.”

But that commodifying drive had always produced its dialectical opposite, a countermovement from society below, seeking decommodification. Thus, Polanyi’s double movement was “the action of two organizing principles in society, each of them setting itself specific institutional aims, having the support of definite social forces and using its own distinctive methods”:

The one was the principle of economic liberalism, aiming at the establishment of a self-regulating market, relying on the support of the trading classes, and using largely laissez-faire and free trade as its methods; the other was the principle of social protection aiming at the conservation of man and nature as well as productive organization, relying on the varying support of those most immediately affected by the deleterious action of the market — primarily, but not exclusively, the working and the landed classes — and using protective legislation, restrictive associations, and other instruments of intervention as its methods.

After the Second World War, the pressure of the countermovement made decommodification the unacknowledged motor of domestic politics throughout the industrialized world. Parties of the working class, acutely vulnerable to pressure from below, were in government more than 40% of the time in the postwar decades — compared to about 10% in the interwar years, and almost never before that — and “contagion from the Left”  forced parties of the right into defensive acquiescence. Schooling, medical treatment, housing, retirement, leisure, child care, subsistence itself, but most importantly, wage-labor: these were to be gradually removed from the sphere of market pressure, transformed from goods requiring money, or articles bought and sold on the basis of supply and demand, into social rights and objects of democratic decision.

This, at least, was the maximal social-democratic program — and in certain times and places in the postwar era its achievements were dramatic.

But the social democratic solution is unstable — and this is where the Marxist conception comes in, with its stress on pursuit of profit as the motor of the capitalist system. There’s a fundamental contradiction between accepting that capitalists’ pursuit of profit will be the motor of the system,  and believing you can systematically tame and repress it through policies and regulations. In the classical Marxist account, the contradiction is straightforwardly economic: policies that reduce profit rates too much will lead to underinvestment and economic crisis. But the contradiction can also be political: profit-hungry capitalists will use their social power to obstruct the necessary policies. How can you have a system driven by individuals maximizing their profit cash-flows and still expect to maintain the profit-repressing norms, rules, laws, and regulations necessary to uphold the common welfare?

What is needed is a structure that allows autonomous firms to produce and trade goods for the market, aiming to generate a surplus of output over input — while keeping those firms public and preventing their surplus from being appropriated by a narrow class of capitalists. Under this type of system, workers can assume any degree of control they like over the management of their firms, and any “profits” can be socialized— that is, they can **truly function as a signal,** **rather than as a motive force**. But the precondition of such a system is the socialization of the means of production — structured in a way that preserves the existence of a capital market. How can all this be done?

Start with the basics. Private control over society’s productive infrastructure is ultimately a financial phenomenon. It is by financing the means of production that capitalists exercise control, as a class or as individuals. What’s needed, then, is a socialization of finance — that is, a system of common, collective financing of the means of production and credit. But what does that mean in practice?

It might be said that people own two kinds of assets. “Personal” assets include houses, cars, or computers. But financial assets — claims on money flows, like stocks, bonds, and mutual funds — are what finance the productive infrastructure. Suppose a public common fund were established, to undertake what might be euphemistically called the “compulsory purchase” of all privately-owned financial assets. It would, for example, “buy” a person’s mutual fund shares at their market price, depositing payment in the person’s bank account. By the end of this process, the common fund would own all formerly privately-owned financial assets, while all the financial wealth of individuals would be converted into bank deposits (but with the banks in question now owned in common, since the common fund now owns all the shares).

No one has lost any wealth; they’ve simply cashed out their stocks and bonds. But there are far-reaching consequences. Society’s means of production and credit now constitute the assets of a public fund, while individuals’ financial wealth balances are now its liabilities. In other words, the job of intermediating between individuals’ money savings and society’s productive physical assets that used to be performed by capitalist banks, mutual funds, and so on, has been  socialized. The common fund can now reestablish a “tamed” capital market on a socialized basis, with a multiplicity of socialized banks and investment funds owning and allocating capital among the means of production.

The lesson here is that the transformation to a different system does not have to be catastrophic. Of course, the situation I’m describing would be a revolutionary one — but it wouldn’t have to involve the total collapse of the old society and the Promethean conjuring of something entirely unrecognizable in its place.

At the end of the process, firms no longer have individual owners who seek to maximize profits. Instead, they are owned by society as a whole, along with any surplus (“profits”) they might generate. Since firms still buy and sell in the market, they can still generate a surplus (or deficit) that can be used to judge their efficacy. But no individual owner actually pockets these surpluses, meaning that no one has any particular interest in perpetuating or exploiting the profit-driven mis-valuation of goods that is endemic under capitalism. The “social democratic solution” that was once a contradiction — selectively frustrating the profit motive to uphold the common good, while systematically relying on it as the engine of the system — can now be reconciled.

To the same end, the accrual of interest to individuals’ bank deposits can be capped at a certain threshold of wealth, and beyond that level it could be limited to simply compensate for inflation. (Or the social surplus could be divided up equally among everyone and just paid out as a social dividend.) This would yield not exactly the euthanasia of the rentier, but of the rentier “interest” in society. And while individuals could still be free to start businesses, once their firms reached a certain size, age and importance, they would have to “go public”: to be sold by their owners into the socialized capital market.

What I’m describing is, in one sense, the culmination of a trend that has been proceeding under capitalism for centuries: the growing separation of ownership from control. Already in the mid-nineteenth century, Marx marveled at the proliferation of what we now call corporations: “Stock companies in general — developed with the credit system — have an increasing tendency to separate this work of management as a function from the ownership of capital, be it self-owned or borrowed. Just as the development of bourgeois society witnessed a separation of the functions of judges and administrators from land-ownership, whose attributes they were in feudal times.” Marx thought this development highly significant: “It is the abolition of capital as private property within the framework of capitalist production itself.”

By the 1930s this “socialized private property” had become the dominant productive form in American capitalism, as Adolf Berle and Gardiner Means signaled in The Modern Corporation and Private Property. The managerial-corporate model seemed to face a challenge in the 1980s when capitalist owners, dissatisfied with languishing profit rates, launched an offensive against what they saw as lax and complacent corporate managers. This set off a titanic intra-class brawl for control of the corporation that lasted more than a decade. But by the late 1990s, the result was a self-serving compromise on both sides: CEOs retained their autonomy from the capital markets, but embraced the ideology of “shareholder value”; their stock packages were made more sensitive to the firm’s profit and stock-market performance, but also massively inflated. In reality, none of this technically resolved the problem of the separation of ownership and control, since the new pay schemes never came close to really aligning the pecuniary interests of the managers with the owners’. A comprehensive study of executive pay from 1936 to 2005 by MIT and Federal Reserve economists found that the correlation between firms’ performance and their executives’ total pay was negligible — not only in the era of mid-century managerialism, but throughout the whole period.

In other words, the laboratory of capitalism has been pursuing a centuries-long experiment to test whether an economic system can function when it severs the one-to-one link between the profits of an enterprise and the rewards that accrue to its controllers. The experiment has been a success. Contemporary capitalism, with its quite radical separation of ownership and control, has no shortage of defects and pathologies, but an inattention to profit has not been one of them.

How should these socialized firms actually be governed? A complete answer to that question lies far beyond the scope of an essay like this; minutely describing the charters and bylaws of imaginary enterprises is exactly the kind of Comtist cookshop recipe that Marx rightly ridiculed. But the basic point is clear enough: since these firms buy and sell in the market, their performance can be rationally judged. A firm could be controlled entirely by its workers, in which case they could simply collect its entire net income, after paying for the use of the capital.2 Or it could be “owned” by an entity in the socialized capital market, with a management selected by that entity and a strong system of worker co-determination to counterbalance it within the firm. Those managers and “owners” could be evaluated on the **relative returns the firm generates**, but they would have **no private property rights** over the **absolute mass of profits**.3If expectations of future performance needed to be “objectively” judged in some way, that is something the socialized capital markets could do.

Suchw a program does not amount a utopia; it does not proclaim Year Zero or treat society as a blank slate. What it tries to do is sketch a rational economic mechanism that denies the pursuit of profit priority over the fulfillment of human needs. Nor does it rule out further, more basic changes in the way humans interact with each other and their environment — on the contrary, it lowers the barriers to further change.

In a tribute to Isaac Deutscher, the historian Ellen Meiksins-Wood praised his “measured vision of socialism, which recognized its promise for human emancipation without harboring romantic illusions that it would cure all human ills, miraculously making people ‘free’, in Shelley’s words, ‘from guilt or pain.’” Socialism, Deutscher had written, was not “evolution’s last and perfect product or the end of history, but in a sense only the beginning of history.” As long as the Left can retain this elemental basis of hope, it will keep a horizon beyond capitalism in its sights

### AT: CBR = Employer

#### CBRs protect rights to form or join labor organizations without reprisal.

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The VA points to no statute, dictionary, case, or other source of meaning that defines collective bargaining as encompassing all labor rights. Even if § 7422(a) had no explicit reference to the FSLMRS, including its definition of collective bargaining, we consider it highly unlikely that Congress intended to create ambiguity in light of the clear definition of collective bargaining elsewhere in labor law. For example, the National Labor Relations Act defines collective bargaining in a manner similar to the FSLMRS, calling collective bargaining

the performance of the mutual obligation of the employer and the representative of the employees to meet at reasonable times and confer in good faith with respect to wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment, or the negotiation of an agreement, or any question arising thereunder, and the execution of a written contract incorporating any agreement reached if requested by either party.

29 U.S.C. § 158(d); see 5 U.S.C. § 7103(a)(12). This definition accords with the semantic meaning of "collective bargaining": "negotiation for the settlement of the terms of a collective agreement between an employer ... and a union," or "any union-management negotiation." WEBSTER'S THIRD NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY 445 (1981).

We have consistently distinguished between the limited collective bargaining right provided by § 7422 and labor rights more broadly. In Local 589, we stated that "Congress has gradually extended some of the protections in chapter 71 of title 5 to VA medical personnel, for example... by granting all VA medical personnel limited collective bargaining rights in 1991." 73 F.3d at 395 (emphases added). 35\*35 Similarly, in United States Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington, D.C. v. FLRA, we differentiated the "right to negotiate collective bargaining agreements, or to administer such agreements through grievance arbitration procedures" from "other rights protected by the FSLMRS, including `the right to form, join, or assist a labor organization without fear of penalty or reprisal.'" 1 F.3d 19, 21 & n. 1 (D.C.Cir.1993) (quoting United States Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Administration Medical Center, San Francisco, Cal., 40 F.L.R.A. 290, 301 (April 19, 1991)); cf. FLRA v. United States Department of the Treasury, Financial Management Service, 884 F.2d 1446, 1449 (D.C.Cir.1989) (referring to "collective bargaining" as a "process" of "contract negotiation"); id. at 1461 (Sentelle, J., concurring) (distinguishing between "collective bargaining" and "other representational activities"). Finally, the VA's interpretation does violence to the statutory text. It would be nonsensical to read the phrase "engage in collective bargaining with respect to conditions of employment," 38 U.S.C. § 7422(a), as "engage in labor rights with respect to conditions of employment."

Given the clear definition of collective bargaining, we hold that the district court correctly held that the VA Under Secretary lacked authority under § 7422(d) to exclude these ULPs from the FLRA's jurisdiction. The VA acknowledges — indeed, argues — that the phrase "collective bargaining" should be read the same in § 7422(a) and § 7422(b). As we have shown, "collective bargaining" in § 7422(a) has a narrow definition focused on negotiating a labor agreement, so "collective bargaining" in § 7422(b) has the same narrow meaning. The VA also relies on legislative history, but that reliance is fundamentally flawed. Legislative history cannot create ambiguity in a clear statutory text. See Milner, 131 S.Ct. at 1267.

Congress's intent is clear. "If the intent of Congress is clear, that is the end of the matter." Chevron, 467 U.S. at 842, 104 S.Ct. 2778. A necessary predicate to holding that a § 7422(b) exception to collective bargaining applies is that collective bargaining is at issue. Filing ULPs based on an alleged violation of the right to assist a labor organization does not inherently implicate the right to bargain collectively. Therefore, the Under Secretary's decision excluding the ULPs exceeded his statutory authority. See 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(C).

### AT: Unsustainability – 2AC

#### Growth’s sustainable.

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In truth, what the degrowth movement actually stands for is not clear. Its lit erature is large, fast-growing, and fascinating. But it is also contra- dictory and hard to follow, written in the clashing terminology of different disciplines, obscured by academese, inflated with political rhe toric, and full of distracting disagreements between partisan thinkers with diverging personal motivations. Depending on what the vague demand for degrowth really means in practice, it could be catastrophically self-destructive or entirely sensible.

And yet, in spite of both the complaints and the ambiguities, it is still impor tant to engage with degrowth. To begin with, the idea is influential. Interest in it might have begun among a small group of ecologically minded academics, but it has now spread far beyond the boundaries of their se- cluded conversations. Mainstream publications write about it: “Can we have prosperity without growth?” asked the New Yorker shortly after Thunberg’s speech.4 Leading scientific journals entertain it: “Are there limits to economic growth?” wondered a recent Nature editorial.5 Reli- gious leaders have weighed in on it: Pope Francis has said that “the time has come to accept decreased growth in some parts of the world.” Sober- minded policymakers appeal to it: Steven Chu, a onetime energy secretary under President Obama and a Nobel Prize winner for Physics, proclaimed that “you have to design an economy based on no growth or even shrinking growth.”6 And leading institutions are shaped by it: the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the most important organization for sharing scientific knowledge on the environment, did not mention degrowth in its signature report back in 2014, but in preparing for the next edition it has already made more than twenty references to the idea.7

Even the confusions involved in the degrowth discussion often turn out to be useful. Many of them, for instance, reflect fundamental misconceptions about the economics of growth, and resolving them can help us side-step similar conceptual mistakes in deciding how we should think about the future more generally. This is true no matter whether you sign up to any specific demands the degrowth movement happens to make or simply sympathize with the notion that less growth in some form is a good idea. And it is also true whether or not your interest is in the challenge of cli- mate change— the main focus of the degrowth movement—or one of the other prob lems that were set out in Chapter 5.

At the same time, it is also important to remember that degrowth is not all muddle. The movement, in spite of its eccentricities, still captures sev- eral important ideas. I will explore some of these insights in the pages to come. But above all, the movement forces us to confront an uncomfort- able truth: taking the growth dilemma seriously must come at some cost. This is a fact that many critics of degrowth struggle to accept, and which explains why we are currently falling so far short in addressing the costs of growth. Indeed, all too often it seems that degrowthers are being de- rided for being brave enough to reach an unpleasant but inevitable conclusion— that something now has to give.8

A Brief History of Going Backward

The story of degrowth begins in the final third of the twentieth century. Though some point to earlier inspirations—the Victorian anti-industrialism of John Ruskin and William Morris, the ancient material modesty of the Cynics and the Stoics— the late 1960s and early 1970s was when the idea took serious root. And the starting point is often taken to be the work of a Romanian economist, Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen. He was a fascinating figure, starting his career as intellectual apprentice to the celebrated econ- omist Joseph Schumpeter at Harvard but leaving academia—despite his mentor’s protestations—to help his homeland as a statistician and admin- istrator before the Second World War.9 Eventually, once that conflict came to an end, Georgescu-Roegen played a central role in peace nego- tiations the Soviets. (He was supposedly the only Romanian that the Russians were happy to deal with.)10 But when the communists consoli- dated their power and the future looked increasingly bleak, he and his wife fled back to Ameri ca, escaping in barrels on a freight ship destined for Istanbul.11

In 1971, Georgescu-Roegen published his great work, The Entropy Law and the Economic Process. The book is “probably more often praised than read,” as one biographer put it, no doubt in part because of that less- than- alluring title.12 But the text still became canonical for the degrowth movement, and for good reason. To begin with, it was uncompromisingly interdisciplinary, a provocatively unusual fusion of economics and ther- modynamics that would inspire many others to move across academic bound aries in exciting ways in the future. The book was also one of the first articulations of an insight that would recur in the degrowth move- ment: the idea that there are planetary limits to economic activity, that there are real-world constraints on growth which traditional theoretical economic models tend to leave out. And though Georgescu-Roegen’s ideas were fairly unconventional, he still managed to draw admirers from among the most straitlaced economists: his work “will interest minds when today’s skyscrapers have crumbled back to sand,” wrote the econ- omist’s economist, Paul Samuelson.13

The other seminal moment in the history of degrowth is connected with a small gathering of intellectuals, businessmen, political figures, and policymakers at a grandly decorated villa in the center of Rome in 1968. This was a group that seemed to feel the hand of history on their collec- tive shoulders. As one partner in the project described it, they “met at the instigation of Dr Aurelio Peccei . . . [a] man of vision, to discuss a subject of staggering scope—the predicament of mankind.”14 That first meeting, in the words of its organizers, was a “monumental flop”: the ideas were too abstract, the discussions too inconclusive.15 Yet the Club of Rome, as the group became known on account of that meeting place, kept going. And their inaugural report, The Limits to Growth, published in 1972, more than made up for the initial disappointment: it was an unexpected commercial blockbuster, selling over 30 million copies, getting translated into thirty languages, and prompting waves of updates, revisions, and re- statements in decades to come.16

Like Georgescu-Roegen’s work, the Club of Rome report was also in- terdisciplinary, this time drawing not on physics and thermodynamics but on computer science and supposed advances in so-called “system dynamics.” Sitting at the center of the report was a new theoretical model, the World3. This, it was claimed, captured the interactions and conse- quences of “five major trends of global concern”: population growth, industrialization, malnutrition, environmental destruction, and natural resource depletion. The apocalyptic conclusion generated by the model was one that the degrowth movement would embrace: “either civilization or growth must end, and soon,” as a review summed it up in the New York Times.17 The report drew a great deal of positive attention. But it also drew heat, including in that same New York Times review, which called it “an empty and misleading work . . . less than pseudoscience and little more than polemical fiction.” To this day, in some quarters this sense of analytical suspicion about The Limits to Growth and its conclusions has not diminished.

These two publications—Georgescu-Roegen’s tome and the Club of Rome’s bestseller—were accompanied by other important intellectual mo- ments, each of them drawing attention to the price of growth. J. K. Gal- braith’s The Affluent Society, published in 1958, was an early attack on material prosperity as “the relentless enemy of understanding.”18 Ezra Mishan’s The Cost of Economic Growth, in 1967, was an influential ex- pression of “dissatisfaction with the fash ion able view of economic growth as an obvious and desirable end.”19 Paul Ehrlich’s 1968 book Pop- ulation Bomb, with its sensational prediction that “hundreds of millions of people will starve to death” because “the stork had passed the plough,” regurgitated and repopularized old Malthusian ideas.20 And Herman Daly’s Toward a Steady State Economy, in 1973, brought together the views of many of the most influential early figures in degrowth. The French term décroissance (degrowth) first showed up in 1972, and more appearances followed in the wake of the Club of Rome report.21

Yet despite this flurry of activity, early excitement about degrowth soon died out. In the 1980s and the subsequent decades, there were few mean- ingful developments in the field. It was only at the start of the twenty- first century that its fortunes changed. A group of protestors and activists animated by a spread of seemingly unrelated grievances—a desire for car- free cities, a dislike of contemporary advertising, a discontent with pre- vailing approaches to economic development, and much else— gathered together under the degrowth banner.22 What they found there was a rich and neglected tradition to build upon. The first official conference on de- growth took place in Paris in 2008—according to the field’s folklore, this was the moment when the English word degrowth was born—and the movement has not looked back since. Today, there is a steady stream of research, informal commentary, and in-person events for supporters to expand on the idea.

But what actually is degrowth? As noted, in spite of all this intellectual activity, it is extremely difficult to find a good answer. Leading figures in the field—Jason Hickel, Giorgos Kallis, Timothée Parrique, and Matthias Schmelzer, among others—have at times been up front about this short- coming. And when not blaming their readers for misinterpreting their work—a common response to this confusion—some have tried to clarify what the idea means in practice. Unfortunately, as we shall see, these at- tempts have tended to more harm than good, muddying the conceptual waters even further. Others have abandoned the task of boiling the ideas down to something manageable altogether, opting to spin this ambiguity as a strength. Degrowth is a “remarkably diverse network” full of “healthy debates,” as one supporter puts it; a “meeting space” and an “umbrella term,” in the words of another; it should be used as a “missile word” some say, an idea that is so unpleasantly ambiguous it starts an explosively useful conversation.23 This footwork does not convince either. Instead, it simply draws attention to the fact that the hard work of clarifying the concept has not been done.

The ambiguity of the term degrowth has to be cleared up if we are to make any headway in understanding how the idea might help in resolving the growth dilemma. A useful starting point is to look at how it is used in practice by its supporters. And when you do this, what you see are two related schools of thought. There are those who turn to the degrowth movement for a diagnosis of what has gone wrong in the world. And then there are those who believe that degrowth provides a good solution to that prob lem as well. Breaking the idea down into two parts in this way helps to isolate the various difficulties with it—difficulties that are helpful to address whether or not you instinctively think that degrowth is a par- ticularly good idea.

The Distraction of a Finite Planet

To start with, take the degrowth movement’s diagnosis. At the core of it is the belief that continued economic growth is undesirable. For most degrowthers, the concern is environmental: that our current growth path is destroying the planet. When Thunberg, for example, accused her listeners of having “stolen my dreams and my childhood,” it was this ecological catastrophe that she had in mind. And the spirit of this part of the diagnosis is relatively unimpeachable. Indeed, if anything, as we saw in Chapter 5, degrowthers probably understate their case in terms of the total damage done to our lives: the undesirable dimension of growth is not simply that it is climate-destroying, as they emphasize, but also that it is inequality-creating, work-threatening, politics-undermining, and community-disrupting. So far, so obvious.

But there is another part to the degrowth diagnosis: the more provocative claim that continued growth is infeasible as well.24 Our current economic ascent is not only unpalatable, they say, but also impossible to maintain for much longer. When Thunberg ridiculed “fairytales of eternal economic growth” in her speech, she was also appealing to this part of the diagnosis. This belief has appeared in various forms over time, but it has gradually been sanded down and standardized into a popular slogan: that “infinite growth is not possible on a finite planet.”25 And very often, it is economists who find themselves on the defensive in response—figures like Larry Summers who once argued “there are no . . . limits to the carrying capacity of the earth that are likely to bind any time in the foreseeable future,” and Paul Romer, who claimed “there is absolutely no reason why we can’t have persistent growth as far into the future as you can imagine.”26

Defensive or not, though, these economists are spot on. The second part of the degrowthers’ diagnosis, unlike the first, is mistaken: it is possible to have infinite growth on a finite planet. A big part of the problem is that the idea of a finite planet is rooted in an old-fashioned view of economic activity. It pictures the economy as a material world, a place where tangible stuff is combined to produce more tangible stuff, where the things that matter for economists are those that can be seen and touched: the equipment on a farm, the machines in a factory, and so on. Those who think about economic life in this way are in good historical company: as we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, this outlook was also held by the classical economists and played an important role in shaping early economic ideas like GDP. And it’s true that in a solely material world, there are obvious physical limits on economic activity: only so many acres of land that can be farmed, only so much raw material for production. But contemporary service-based economic life is far more weightless than the old world of farms and factories.

Even more importantly, focusing just on the material world distracts us from how growth works in the first place. As we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, one of the most important insights in modern economic thought is the realization that growth cannot be achieved simply by using more and more tangible resources. Such an approach would always lead to an economic dead end, as diminishing returns erode the contribution made by each additional worker or machine and growth fizzles out—that’s what created the Malthusian trap and resulted in the Long Stagnation. If sustained growth is to happen, it can only come through a process of technological progress that is able to overpower those diminishing returns. This was the argument behind the Nobel Prize–winning work of Robert Solow and Trevor Swan. A few decades later, Paul Romer completed the story by explaining where that technological progress must come from: not from the tangible world of physical things, but from the intangible world of ideas.

Taken together, these economic insights explain why the idea of a finite planet is a misdirection. The planet of tangible resources might be finite, and if these resources were all that counted for growth, then we would indeed be heading toward deep economic trouble. But they are not all that matters. In fact, what really matters for growth are the intangible ideas for combining these resources in new and valuable ways. Economic growth is not driven by using more and more finite resources, as many tend to assume, but “by discovering better and better ways to use the fi- nite resources available to us.”27 And the universe of those intangible ideas is unimaginably vast—for all practical purposes, as good as infinite.

At times, Romer has used a culinary metaphor to make this point. The ingredients in a kitchen might be finite, he notes, but the number of pos- si ble recipes for combining them is nearly limitless: a well-stocked larder of three hundred ingredients, for instance, allows for more possible recipes than there are atoms in the universe. (And that doesn’t even take into ac- count the additional possibilities created by varying the quantities of in- gredients, changing the method of cooking them, and so on.) Elsewhere, Romer has imagined a children’s chemistry set: again, while the number of tubs of chemicals in it might be finite, the various ways of mixing them would pose an interminable headache for a neurotic safety inspector. A set of only one hundred substances would generate so many possible combinations that if everyone alive today had been testing one of them every second since the moment the universe began, still less than one percent would have been tried out by now (again, ignoring the additional possibilities introduced by varying chemical volumes, methods of preparation, and so on).28

The exact same argument applies when thinking about economic growth, where we’re dealing not with ingredients in a larder or the sub- stances in a chemistry set but quite literally all the materials in the world. “Economic growth can be sustained even in the presence of a finite collection of raw materials,” writes the economist Charles Jones, “as we discover better ways to arrange atoms and better ways to use the arrangements.”29 The infinite universe of ideas allows us to sidestep the constraints imposed by a finite planet.

But even if there are many possible arrangements of atoms in the world, are they all useful? It is said that one time when Romer presented the culi- nary metaphor, the Nobel Prize–winning economist George Akerlof piped up, “Yes, the number of possible combinations is huge, but aren’t most of them like chicken ice cream?” Novel, in other words, but useless.30 Leaving aside the fact that in 2022, an American company in Portland introduced a fried-chicken-flavored ice cream to modest acclaim—a cautionary tale about setting firm limits to the future of human taste—the thrust of Aker- lof’s quip is sensible: many possible ideas for organizing atoms in the world are likely to be of little value in practice.31 That said, what Akerlof’s percep- tive skepticism does not quite capture is how huge “huge” really is when you move beyond the confines of a kitchen or a chemistry set into the real world. Our planet is incomprehensibly rich in combinatorial possibility, and only a tiny fraction of these ideas need to be valuable for the number of useful arrangements of atoms to be extraordinarily vast.

In many areas of life, such combinatorial explosions are a pain. In mathe matics, for example, they haunt researchers, creating the so-called curse of dimensionality: as the number of variables (or “dimensions”) in a problem starts to increase, the number of possible solutions soars, making many problems impossibly hard to solve. It is a “malediction,” wrote the mathematician Richard Bellman, who named the curse, “that has plagued the scientist from the earliest days.”32 But when thinking about economic growth, the opposite is the case: the curse of dimensionality becomes a “remarkable blessing,” Romer notes, the origin of an abundance that allows us to escape the finite limits of our material world.33 With that in mind, one of the most serious limits to growth may be an imaginative one: a failure to adequately search through this enormous space of economic possibility and an inability to imagine how life in the future could be very different from today. I will return to this failure of imagination later in this chapter. In any event, recognizing that there are no meaningful limits to growth on time scales that matter to humankind is immensely important—whatever your views on the idea of degrowth.

### FW – 2AC

## Contempt

### CP – Contempt – 2AC

#### 8. Indian courts can’t spearhead economic reform.

--SCI = Supreme Court of India

Prabhash Ranjan 22, Professor and Vice Dean (Continuing Education), Jindal Global Law School, O P Jindal Global University, "The Supreme Court of India and International Law: A Topsy Turvy Journey from Dualism to Monism," Liverpool Law Review, vol. 43, 2022, pp. 571–595, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10991-022-09314-6

Based on the discussion in this paper, the following conclusions can be arrived at on the SCI’s dealing with international law. First, while the normative framework given in the Indian Constitution on the relationship between international law and domestic law is that of dualism or doctrine of transformation, the SCI, broadly speaking, has departed from the principle of dualism. The SCI over the years has moved towards the tradition of monist incorporation where international law (both treaty law and CIL) is considered part of the domestic law, without a legislative sanction, provided it does not contradict domestic law. This trend is clearly discernible in the case of international law norms pertaining to human rights and the environment, though the same cannot be said about international economic law norms. In case of a conflict, it is the domestic law that would prevail though the court would do its best to harmonise the international legal norm with the domestic norm.

This overall approach of SCI to deal with international law is consistent with the practice of domestic courts in several common law jurisdictions such as the UK and Canada. Moreover, the SCI, like the domestic courts in several jurisdictions, has blurred the strict monist-dualist divide. Despite, this judicial incorporation of international law, the SCI has not yet held that international law can give rise to an independent cause of action (Chandra 2017: 42). However, this might change in the future because incorporating international law into the domestic legal regime would logically trigger an independent cause of action.

Second, notwithstanding this broad movement towards monist incorporation, the SCI’s jurisprudence is riddled with inconsistencies. As the paper has shown, the SCI in certain cases involving economic matters (like Union of India vs. Agricas) continues to reassert the principle of dualism which flies in the face of the same SCI in several other cases (like PUCL, Vishakha, and Puttuswamy) involving human rights norms approving the doctrine of incorporation. Another inconsistency is seen in the context of incorporating treaties not signed by India. In some instances, the SCI has incorporated treaties that do not bind India internationally (like M V Elizabeth and Sundarrajan cases) whereas in some other cases (like Dhanwanti Joshi and Mohamad Salimullah cases) the SCI has departed from this trend without suitable reasoning. Likewise, when it comes to CIL, the SCI has followed the doctrine of incorporation but strayed from this line of reasoning in the recent case of Mohamad Salimullah v. Union of India. There could be several reasons that may explain these inconsistencies such as the understanding of international law-making by the SCI judges, the personal inclination of the judges, the manner in which lawyers arguing before the SCI present these issues to the judges, the relationship between the judiciary and the executive, etc. Further research of empirical nature would be useful in exploring these issues.

Third, the SCI, though conflictingly, has also incorporated international treaties that India has not signed. Incorporating treaties India has not signed creates a bizarre situation. Although India is not bound by a treaty internationally, such a treaty would be considered part of the domestic legal system.

Fourth, in the process of incorporating customary norms under international law, a flaw in the court’s methodology has been the rarity in examining whether indeed something has become part of CIL before judicially incorporating it within the domestic legal framework. While this may be true for other domestic courts in several jurisdictions, there are also examples of domestic courts undertaking a rigorous analysis. The SCI needs to follow these examples. The failure to do so might result in those norms that are not binding under international law becoming part of the Indian legal regime.

Finally, whether this SCI-led transition from dualist transformation to monist incorporation good or bad? It depends on what perspective one adopts. International law-making is often critiqued for the democratic deficit. In India, the executive has the power to ratify international treaties without much parliamentary scrutiny. Arguably, judicially incorporating international law without parliamentary scrutiny legitimizes such a democratic deficit. Accordingly, judicial incorporation of international law is questioned because it amounts to the judiciary riding roughshod over the parliament.

#### Say no. Politically impossible. Zero chance of action without fiat.

Peter C. Carstensen 13, Professor of Law, University of Wisconsin Law School, "Agricultural Cooperatives And The Law: Obsolete Statutes In A Dynamic Economy," South Dakota Law Review, vol. 58, no. 3, 2013, pp. 462-498

While the forgoing agenda of statutory reform is theoretically plausible and would advance the public interest in facilitating markets to the benefit of both producers and consumers, it is politically implausible at this time. Powerful, vested interests in large cooperatives support the status quo. More politically relevant, the farm community has a deep, almost religious, commitment to the continuation of the Capper-Volstead Act as it stands. This was evident in 2009 when the then-Assistant Attorney General for Antitrust, Christine Varney raised a few questions about the continued necessity for the Capper-Volstead Act in its current form. The "tsunami" of pushback from farmers and legislators lead to a very quick retreat. AAG Varney capitulated with an acknowledgement that no one was going to touch the Capper-Volstead Act 191 So, absent some crisis which might arise if increased and deeper corruption emerges in several large cooperatives, it is unlikely that any of the legislators who would have to take a serious interest in reform would want to touch this rural, political ''third rail."

#### Big ag blocks the CP.

John Ikerd 20, BS, MS and PhD in Agricultural Economics from the University of Missouri, former Head of Extension Agricultural Economics at the University of Georgia, Professor Emeritus from the University of Missouri, "Reclaiming the Future of Farming," Prepared for presentation at the MOSES Organic Farming Conference, February 2020, http://web.missouri.edu/~ikerdj/papers/WIMOSESFutureFoodFarming.pdf

What happened to stop, or at least delay, the great agricultural transformation that seemed so promising at the turn of the century? I think the futurists, myself included, failed to appreciate the growing economic and political power of the multinational agribusiness corporations and their determination to dominate the agricultural economy. When the federal government essentially quit enforcing corporate antitrust policy in the 1980s, it essentially freed the large corporations to take control of government. Economic colonization3 is a term that seems appropriate to describe the corporate domination of rural areas around the world, including rural America. The term is typically used in reference to the so-called developed nations using their economic power to continue dominating less-developed nations that were previously colonized politically. Instead of colonization by national governments, the colonization today is being carried out by large, multinational corporations. Much like colonial empires of the past, the economically valuable ecological and societal resources of rural areas, including rural people and cultures, are being exploited not to benefit rural people but instead to increase the wealth of corporate investors. These large, publicly traded corporations are purely economic entities with no capacity for concern or commitment to the future of rural communities. Their only interest is in extracting economic wealth from rural areas.

Whether intentional or coincidental, industrial agriculture has been the primary means of colonizing rural America. Agribusiness corporations gain political legitimacy and elicit economic concessions from local government officials through false promises of rural economic development. The largely unregulated industrial agriculture erodes the fertility of the soil and poisons the air and water with chemical and biological wastes. Comprehensive corporate contracts replace thinking, caring farmers with tractor drivers and corporate hired-hands. Once the productivity of an area has been depleted, the corporations will simply move their operations to other areas of the nation or world where land is still productive and labor costs are cheaper— as we have seen in with pineapple and sugar cane production moving out of Hawaii. Rural communities are left with depleted soils and aquifers, streams and groundwater polluted with agricultural chemical and biological wastes, and farmers who no longer know how to farm.

Obviously, farming communities did not become places where the knowledge workers of the 21st Century have chosen to work and live. Wendell Berry—farmer, philosopher, and author—in a 2017 letter to the New York Times described it this way: “The business of America has been largely and without apology the plundering of rural America, from which everything of value—minerals, timber, farm animals, farm crops, and “labor”—has been taken at the lowest possible price. As apparently none of the enlightened ones has seen in flying over or bypassing on the interstate highways, its too-large fields are toxic and eroding, its streams and rivers poisoned, its forests mangled, its towns dying or dead along with their locally owned small businesses, its children leaving after high school and not coming back. Too many of the children are not working at anything, too many are transfixed by the various screens, too many are on drugs, too many are dying.”4

The promise of a social and economic renaissance became social and economic desecration. A 2017 Wall Street Journal article labeled rural America as the “New Inner City.” In terms of poverty, education, teenage births, divorce, premature death, disability, and unemployment, rural counties now rank below inner cities.” 5 Drug abuse and crime, once urban problems, now plague rural communities. The rural communities that thrived socially and economically during the 1940s and 1950s, when I was a member of Future Farmers of America, are but a distant memory.

What did we gain from all of this economic desecration of rural America? Very little! Admittedly, American consumers on average spent less of their disposable income on food in the late 1990s than in the 1970s. Over the past 20 years, however, food prices have risen faster than the overall rate of inflation.6 Furthermore, industrial agriculture didn’t feed the hungry. In fact, more people are now classified as “food insecure” than back in the 1960s.7 In 2018, one-in-nine Americans were classified as food insecure and one-in-seven American children lived in foodinsecure homes.8 Whatever has been gained by lower food costs has been more than offset by rising costs of health care. An epidemic of diet related illnesses; obesity, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and cancers, now threatens the physical and financial future of the nation. Costs of health care are projected to account for one-fifth of the GDP by 2016.9

Why did we Americans let this happen? Or was it inevitable? The industrialization of American agriculture was made possible by post-World War II agrochemical and mechanical technologies, however, it was “made inevitable” by supportive government policies. The specialized, mechanized, large-scale nature of industrial farming that makes it economically efficient also makes it inherently economically risky. Farmers are forced to make large investments in land, buildings, and equipment in operations that are inherently vulnerable to unpredictable weather that can devastate crops, diseases that can wipe out livestock and poultry operations, and to unprofitable prices in markets characterized by periodic overproduction. So, American taxpayers were asked to absorb much of these risks through U.S. farm policies— including various kinds of price supports, deficiency payments, subsidized crop insurance, disaster payments, subsidized interest rates, loan guarantees, and investment tax credits. All of these programs, in one way or another, incentivize or subsidize industrial agriculture.

The industrialization of agriculture was a bold experiment, and it was well-intended—at least by many of its earlier advocates. I was one of those advocates during the first half of my 30 year academic career. I thought by improving the economic efficiency of farming, we would bring down the cost of food and make good food affordable for everybody. I thought the focus on economic efficiency would create profit opportunity for progressive farmers and support economically viable rural communities. However, during the farm financial crisis of the 1980s, I was forced to face the hard, cold reality that it had done none of these things. The industrialization of agriculture was well intended, but it simply didn’t work.

Regardless, many farmers continue to support it because they feel trapped by large investments in land, buildings, and equipment. They are trapped by government policies that encourage and enable them to keep doing what they are doing. They are also trapped by a “commercial farming culture” that has been skillfully crafted and protected by corporate agribusiness. So, what will it take to reclaim the future of farming? One of my professors at the University of Missouri, and later a mentor, was Harold Breimyer—a distinguished agricultural economist. Harold frequently reminded his students and others that “Americans can have any kind of agriculture we want.” He said we simply need to implement the right farm policies to get it. He was right. If we are to fundamentally change American agriculture, we must fundamentally change U.S. farm policy.

So what will it take to bring about another transformation in American farm policy? I personally believe it will take nothing less than a major consumer/taxpayer revolt. The corporate agri-food establishment has used its economic power to gain political power and now has firm control of the farm and food policy making in Washington DC and in statehouses across the country. No substantive change in farm policy can survive the political process without the endorsement or acquiescence of the corporate agricultural establishment.

#### The plan requires horse-trading to build support---it'll get traded for SNAP benefits, which is key to state budgets.

Christopher Neubert & Kathleen Merrigan 26, Neubert is Deputy Director, Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems, Arizona State University; Merrigan is Executive Director, Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems, Arizona State University, "Why 2026 could see the end of the Farm Bill era of American agriculture policy," The Conversation, 1/7/26, https://theconversation.com/why-2026-could-see-the-end-of-the-farm-bill-era-of-american-agriculture-policy-270722

With Congress back in session, legislators will take up a set of issues they haven’t comprehensively addressed since 2018 – the year the last farm bill passed.

Farm bills are massive pieces of legislation that address a diverse constellation of topics, including agricultural commodities, conservation, trade, nutrition, rural development, energy, forestry and more. Because of their complexity, farm bills are difficult to negotiate in any political environment. And as the topics have expanded since the first iteration in 1933, Congress has generally agreed to take the whole thing up once every five years or so.

However, the most recent farm bill’s provisions expired in 2023. They have been renewed one year at a time ever since, but without the comprehensive overhaul that used to accompany farm bills.

As former federal employees handling agriculture policy who now study that topic, it’s unclear to us whether a comprehensive, five-year farm bill can be passed in 2026, or ever again.

The July 2025 enactment of the so-called “One Big Beautiful Bill Act,” the Trump administration’s budget priorities in the tax and spending bill, revised funding levels for many programs that were historically handled in the farm bill. For instance, that law included a 20% cut in funding to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP, which helps low-income families buy food. And it doubled support for the largest farm subsidy programs.

Those changes and current divisions in Congress mean the nation’s food and agriculture policy may remain stuck in limbo for yet another year.

Cuts to SNAP used for farm subsidies

For decades, political conventional wisdom has held that sweeping federal farm bills are able to pass only because farmers seeking subsidies and anti-hunger advocates wanting increased SNAP dollars recognize the mutual advantage in working together. That’s how to build a broad, bipartisan consensus strong enough to garner the 60 votes in the U.S. Senate to avoid a filibuster and actually pass a bill.

But the One Big Beautiful Bill Act tax and spending law did not create a compromise between those competing interests. It slashed SNAP spending by US$186 billion over the next decade. At the same time, it boosted price support for farmers who grow key crops like corn, soybeans and wheat by $60 billion, in addition to a $10 billion economic relief package passed at the end of 2024 to address high costs of seeds, fertilizer and other farming supplies.

Supporters of anti-hunger programs are furious that these funds for farmers are being paid for by cutting SNAP benefits to families.

In addition, about one-third of the SNAP cuts came by shifting the program’s cost to state budgets. States have always carried some of the costs to administer SNAP, but they have never before been required to fund billions of dollars in benefits. Many states will be unable to cover these increased costs and will be forced to either reduce benefits or opt out of SNAP altogether, dramatically cutting the help available to hungry Americans.

Groups that support SNAP are unlikely to help pass any bill relating to food or farm policy that does not substantially reverse the cuts to SNAP.

And farmers who receive money under the two largest farm subsidy programs are not even required to grow the specific crops those programs are meant to support. Rather, they must simply own farmland that was designated in 1996 as having grown that crop in the early 1980s.

Farmers have repeatedly said they would prefer federal farm policies that support markets and create conditions for stable, fair commodity prices. And evidence shows that spending more money on farm subsidies does little to actually improve underlying economic conditions affecting the costs of farming or the prices of what is grown.

And yet, in early December 2025, the Department of Agriculture released an additional $12 billion to help offset losses farmers experienced when Trump’s tariffs reduced agricultural exports. In mid-December, the National Farmers Union said that money still wasn’t enough to cover losses from consistently low commodity prices and high seed and fertilizer costs.

A regular five-year farm bill may be out of reach

The success of any bill depends on political will in Congress and outside pressure coming together to deliver the required number of votes.

Some leaders in Congress remain optimistic about the prospects of a farm bill passing in 2026, but major legislation is rare with midterm elections looming, so meaningful progress appears unlikely. It seems to us more likely that the ongoing stalemate will continue indefinitely.

In September 2025, Politico reported that instead of a complete five-year farm bill, the House and Senate committees on agriculture might take up a series of smaller bills to extend existing programs whose authorizations are expiring. Doing so would be an effective declaration that a permanent five-year farm bill is on indefinite hold.

Prospects for sustainable farm policy

By using financial incentives cleverly, Congress has shifted farming practices over time in ways that lawmakers determined were in the public’s interest.

The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, for instance, allocated $20 billion over four years to encourage farmers to reduce or offset carbon emissions, which the Agriculture Department calls “climate-smart agriculture.” Those funds, along with a separate Department of Agriculture initiative with similar aims, were well received by American farmers. Farmers applied for far more money than was actually available.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act tax and spending law cut those funds and repurposed them for traditional Agriculture Department programs for farmers who want to implement conservation practices on their land.

But unexpectedly, the Trump administration’s “Make America Healthy Again,” or MAHA, agenda contains some ideas that climate-smart advocates have previously advanced. These include scathing indictments of the effects of conventional agriculture on Americans’ health, including concerns over pesticide use and the so-far-undefined category of “ultra-processed foods.”

The MAHA agenda could be an opportunity for organic farmers to secure a boost in federal funding. In December, the Agriculture Department committed $700 million toward “regenerative” practices, but that’s a trifling amount compared with the billions commodity farmers received in 2025.

And the administration’s allies who support conventional agriculture have already expressed concerns that MAHA efforts might reduce the nation’s agricultural productivity. The administration may end up caught between the MAHA movement and Big Ag.

Overall, in this new political environment, we believe advocates for changes in agriculture and food aid will likely need to rethink how to advance their agendas without the promise of a farm bill coming anytime soon.

#### Key to green infrastructure---extinction.

Candace C. Partridge 19, University College London, “Green Municipal Bonds and the Financing of Green Infrastructure in the United States,” Doctoral Thesis, UCL (University College London)., UCL (University College London), 04/28/2019, https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10071463/

However, in 2017, the then-new Trump administration withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement, stating that it would render the US noncompetitive in economic terms (Rucker and Johnson, 2017). The withdrawal caused much consternation both in the US and internationally due to the fact that the US has one of the largest carbon footprints of any nation in the world and is responsible for nearly 15% of global CO2 emissions (The World Bank, 2018). In reaction to the statement to withdraw, several American cities and institutions banded together and announced that they would still independently meet their Paris Agreement commitments, under organizations such as We Are Still In and The United States Conference of Mayors (We Are Still In, 2017; United States Conference of Mayors, 2017; Bloomberg and Pope, 2017).

Localized commitment by cities to climate action could conceivably enable the US to honor the spirit of the Paris Agreement by cutting emissions on a local, rather than national, level. This movement demonstrates the power that federalism still has in the US, where frequently legislation is driven by bottom-up rather than top-down political will (Rabe, 2018). Even more importantly, this form of climate federalism in the US further demonstrates the rise of power of cities in an increasingly urbanised world. Rather than being dictated to by what they perceive to be an increasingly out-of-step national regime, individual American cities and states are instead creating their own mandates for sustainable development.

Accordingly, the Fourth National Climate Assessment recently issued by the US Global Change Research Program (2018) states that “cities across the United States are leading efforts to respond to climate change.” This report warned that if climate change is allowed to happen unchecked, then the resulting damage will cost the US as much as 10% of the national GDP by 2100, which is more than double the losses incurred in the Great Recession of 2008, with damages including “$141 billion from heat-related deaths, $118 billion from sea level rise and $32 billion from infrastructure damage by the end of the century, among others.” Overall, almost two million labor hours are forecast to be lost every year by 2090 due to temperature extremes, which will cost $160 billion in lost wages by 2050. In agreement with the Stern Report, this report concludes that without a significant effort to cut emissions and improve climate mitigation and adaptation, “substantial losses to infrastructure and property would impede the rate of economic growth over this century.”

The Climate Assessment (2018) dedicated an entire chapter to the vulnerabilities of and effects of climate change to cities in the US. It states that climate change can “exacerbate existing challenges to urban quality of life, including social inequality, aging and deteriorating infrastructure, and stressed ecosystems,” and that “damages from extreme weather events demonstrate current urban infrastructure vulnerabilities.”

At present, over half of the world’s population lives in urban areas with this proportion expected to increase to 66% by 2050 (United Nations, 2014). The US is already one of the most urbanised regions with 82% of North Americans living in urban areas (United Nations, 2014). At the same time, cities are the source of around 75% of carbon emissions from energy use (Seto et al., 2014). Due to the energy intensive nature of cities, reports have stated that we can cut global carbon emissions by 30% if we invest in energy efficiency, demand reduction, and sources of renewable energy for urban areas (Gouldson et al., 2015). Cities are very frequently situated on coastlines or other bodies of water, which leaves them most vulnerable to the primary effects of climate change, notably rising sea levels and increasingly severe impacts from major storms. Furthermore, the interconnected nature of urban infrastructure means that there is a need for “reliable infrastructure that can withstand ongoing and future climate risks,” because damage to these systems will “adversely affect urban life” (US Global Change Research Program, 2018). Therefore, while it is in the world’s interest for cities to cut their emissions, it is particularly in the interest of the cities themselves to try and stave off climate change, because they will be among the first and most severely impacted.

More sustainable infrastructure (also known as “green infrastructure” in this work) for cities that addresses the issues of energy and water consumption, along with cutting emissions and improving resilience against natural disasters, is key to mitigating climate change. In 2016 in the United States, transportation was the source of over 28% of greenhouse gas emissions, and electricity generation was responsible for another 28.4%, so decarbonizing these two sectors alone would make a considerable impact on the carbon budget (US Environmental Protection Agency, 2018). The IEA estimates that “an additional $36 trillion in clean energy investment is needed through 2050 or an average of $1 trillion more per year compared to a ‘business as usual’ scenario over the next 36 years” (OECD, 2017b; IEA, 2016). A New Climate Economy report (2016) states that it will take $93 trillion to decarbonize global infrastructure, with $8 trillion needed in the U.S. alone (Heal, 2016). In 2017, the OECD stated that “recent estimates suggest that approximately USD 93 trillion in infrastructure investment will be needed in the next 15 years in a ‘lowcarbon’ scenario” (OECD, 2017a,b).

Currently the majority of infrastructure in the United States is outdated and was not built with sustainability or resilience in mind. Every four years, the American Society of Civil Engineers publishes a report card that gives a quality rating for each sector of existing infrastructure. Overall, in 2017, they rated the infrastructure in the US as a D+, one grade above failing, meaning it is generally “poor and at risk” with a “strong risk of failure” (American Society of Civil Engineers, 2017). As stated in their latest report, “most electric transmission and distribution lines were constructed in the 1950s and 1960s with a 50-year life expectancy, and the more than 640,000 miles of high-voltage transmission lines in the lower 48 states’ power grids are at full capacity,” and this is all while facing “increasing demand, as well as increasing storm and climate impacts.” Transit, a sector that particularly has an impact on both emissions and livability of the urban environment, was rated as D-, because “the nation’s transit systems have been chronically underfunded resulting in aging infrastructure and a $90 billion rehabilitation backlog.”

Globally, infrastructure has been underfunded, resulting in a situation known as the infrastructure gap (Inderst, 2013; Subacchi et al., 2014). In the United States specifically, there is a $5 trillion USD shortfall in infrastructure investment through 2040 (American Society of Civil Engineers, 2016), and failing to address the problems arising from increasingly dilapidated infrastructure will cost the US economy nearly $4 trillion in GDP by 2025. In addition to mitigation of climate change and emissions reduction, investment in more sustainable infrastructure will also help to improve work force efficiency and living standards (McNichol, 2017). However, most cities barely have the resources to maintain their infrastructure, much less invest in new. The 2018 budget that was approved by the Trump administration consisted of “tax credits to private-sector investors, which would boost investment in projects that will generate revenue like tolls or user fees (such as new roads and bridges) but leaves out maintenance of existing roads, bridges, and water lines, and [FIGURE 1.1 OMITTED] construction of public schools and many public transit projects” (McNichol, 2017).

The infrastructure investment amounts cited above do not even include energy efficiency measures in building stock, whether in encouraging the construction of more efficient new construction, or the retrofitting older buildings. Yet building emissions are a significant part of the problem, since in some cities, over half of carbon emissions result from the construction and use of buildings and transportation systems (BPIE, 2011; Merk et al., 2012). Overall, heating and cooling buildings accounts for about 40% of total energy consumed, with 70% of this energy coming from fossil fuel sources. As a result, building climate control is estimated to have been responsible for 30% of CO2 emissions in 2012 (International Energy Agency, 2015).

This is why investment in infrastructure for cities must include a multi-faceted approach, which involves improved water management, expansion of public transport, decentralised energy generation, significant deployment of renewable sources of energy with intelligent distribution and demand response, and energy efficiency measures for new and existing building stock. By investing in clean energy for cities in particular, the world benefits not only from lowered carbon emissions and improved climate change mitigation, but also from a more resilient and ultimately more affordable energy supply.

Additionally, financing green infrastructure would help to build a green economy (United Nations Environment Programme, 2008), and localized investment could trigger economic growth on a national level. In particular, there has been extensive discussion about linking green infrastructure development with “green collar” jobs (Yi, 2013; United States Dept. of Energy, 2017; Gessesse et al., 2017). The stimulus of a new skilled employment sector could be a positive externality from investing in green infrastructure, along with improvement in sustainability and resilience for American cities. Otherwise, retaining a “business as usual” approach rather than investing in a greener future, cities could face consequences later, both physically in terms of climate disaster mitigation, and fiscally in terms of damages and depressed economic prospects that arise from a lack of resilient and robust infrastructure.

Green bonds can help to unlock financing for green and sustainable infrastructure. Green bonds are a subset of bonds which are “intended to encourage sustainability and to support climate-related or other types of special environmental projects. More specifically, green bonds finance projects aimed at energy efficiency, pollution prevention, sustainable agriculture, fishery and forestry, the protection of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, clean transportation, sustainable water management and the cultivation of environmentally friendly technologies” (Investopedia, 2018). Despite their beginnings in the private sector in the form of corporate bonds, green bonds are now also increasingly being issued by public governmental bodies, both in the form of sovereign and sub-sovereign debt. This intersects with the fact that one of the largest sub-sovereign debt markets in the world is the municipal bond market in the US, currently with over $4 trillion in debt outstanding for a million different projects, and $445.8 billion issued in 2016 alone (SIFMA, 2018; Lambert, 2014). As stated by Saha and D’Almeida (2017), “Green municipal bonds are an important area for future growth as cities and other sub-national entities look to lowcost and long-term sources of capital to finance climate mitigation and adaptation infrastructure requirements.” The New Climate Economy sustainable infrastructure report (2016) also says that “with the right approach, green bonds can be powerful instruments and play a tremendous role in facilitating sustainable infrastructure investment and growth.”

Green bonds are important for closing the infrastructure gap because they help to “broaden the universe of highly-rated fixed-income products (bonds) attached to clean energy, thereby making it easier for investors to increase allocations to clean energy within existing liquidity/creditworthiness constraints” (Fulton and Capalino, 2014). However, against the background of increasing ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) investment, the question is whether such these green bonds are competitive with respect to the overall market, which is necessary in order to prove appealing to investors who are subject to fiduciary duty, in that they are mandated to put profits before all other investment criteria. If, however, it can be shown that green assets can give returns as good as, or better than, their conventional counterparts, then investors can comply with their fiduciary duty and help invest in sustainability at the same time (Sandberg, 2011)

## Psychoanalysis

### AT: Psychoanalysis – T/L

### AT: Death Priming/Carpenter

#### Fiat is good. Presenting the positive case for what should be done to decarbonize is a vital tool to respond to Trumpian moves to dismantle government expertise and management. Refusing to imagine otherwise cedes power to the right.

JW Mason 25 Economics @ John Jay College & Fellow @ Roosevelt Institute, “Writing about Policy in the Trump Era,” https://jwmason.org/slackwire/writing-about-policy-in-the-trump-era/

Policy writing is a particular kind of writing. It’s defined not just by its topic but by its orientation: What should government do, to address some agreed-on problem, or achieve some agreed-on goal? It is premised on a public debate, in which ideas are adopted based on their merits. It is addressed to no one in particular; it assumes we all have a say in the decision, and a stake in the outcome. It posits some shared values or ends, so that particular actions can be compared on a rational basis. It implies a vision of politics as conversation.

Is that sort of thing worth doing? Is it worth doing now?

Some people might not think this kind of writing is ever worthwhile. (One can imagine various reasons.) Obviously I am not one of them. I have written many policy pieces of this sort, mostly for the Roosevelt Institute. (For example here, here, here, and here.) I would like to keep doing it. The premise of shared problems and a political authority that is both attempting to solve them and responsive to the public, has always been false in some important ways, and effaced important dimensions of politics that are about organized conflict rather than rational debate. But it nonetheless seemed to me that, within its limits, "policy" was a useful framework for asking some important questions. (For example, the links above.)

But one might say: The US government is now in the hands of a clique whose defining purpose seems to be precisely the rejection of collective solutions to common problems and a public of equal citizens. Their immediate project is dismantling the systems through which any kind of rational policymaking operates. So hasn't, now, the gap between the imagined world of policy writing and the real political world gotten unbridgeably wide? When the people in authority are actively ripping up all the efforts to, say, expand renewable energy, does it still make sense to propose helpful ideas about how to decarbonize? Or is that simply an exercise in denial? Or worse, does it legitimate a project that’s fundamentally hostile to that goal, and should be approached instead as an enemy to be defeated?

One doesn't have to write about policy. There are plenty of other kinds of politically oriented writing. You can write poems, or fiction. You can write about books. You can write about history — perhaps especially valuable right now, as long as one approaches the past on its own terms and not simply as a negative space for whatever one wants to say about the present. You can do journalism. You can do practical work — write speeches, press releases, technical reports — provided you are part of an organization.

Most obviously, for someone who might otherwise be doing policy writing, there’s descriptive work, trying to understand and explain what’s going on in a clear and precise way. In this moment, simply documenting what is happening is extremely valuable. As time goes on, we will also want to understand the consequences of what's happening. If a big increase in tariffs happens, say, we’ll want to be able to describe what happens to prices and trade flows and production in the US. This kind of work doesn’t require one to be proposing anything, in the way that policy writing does.

But let’s say we do want to do policy writing. How should we approach it?

That’s what I started writing this post to try to clarify for myself. The post got quite long as I was writing it. I wrote down 10 points in an outline, and I’ve only gotten through four of them. So this should be the first of a couple posts. In this one I’m writing about general principles; hopefully in the next I’ll move toward more specific questions.

These thoughts, I should emphasize, are not intended as directives for anyone to follow. They’re preliminary notes rather than developed arguments. They're an effort to put down on paper some things that I have been thinking about, as I think about how to be useful.

1. There’s only a very loose connection between policy substance and electoral outcomes. It’s tempting to argue that a better program will help the Dems or whoever win elections, but I think we need to accept that this isn’t something one can say with any confidence. I don’t think people voted for Trump because of his platform, whatever that is. I’m not sure that a better or stronger position on climate or immigration or labor would reliably help win elections. The problem isn’t that voters don’t want that; the problem, from my point of view, is the implicit model in which voters have well-established presences on the whole range of issues, and pick the candidate who best matches them. You can win an election as strong opponent of immigration (obviously); I think you can also win an election as a strong supporter of immigration. What matters is having some substantive position, and connecting it to a larger vision and persona and program. It’s not a question of checking the right item off on a list.

Conversely, I am not sure that better substantive outcomes are mainly a function of better electoral outcomes. (There’s some connection, of course.) To take the immigration example again, Trump’s biggest impact so far has not been anything he’s done (so far!), but the extent to which leading Democrats have adopted his position. It’s not so many years ago that some of the most prominent Republicans were supporting legislation to legalize millions of undocumented people. Here in New York, we have a lot of horrible people in charge - I’m not sure if, considering them strictly as individuals, there is much to prefer about Andrew Cuomo or Eric Adams over Donald Trump. Nonetheless we do get some nice things here from time to time, because the environment they operate in is so different from the national one.

Admittedly, this doesn’t make a big difference right at this moment. I put it first mainly to make a negative point, that “how will this help win the next election” is not a very helpful question as a guide to writing about policy right now (or ever, perhaps, unless you are actually working for a campaign.)

2. Good ideas are worth arguing for on the merits. This is the converse of the previous point. The reason to argue for good ideas is because good ideas do not get adopted, or even come into being, without people arguing for them.

The reason to talk about welcoming migrants rather than driving them away, is because welcoming migrants is better than driving them away, not only for them but for the rest of us as well. Arguments for better regulation of food safety or power plant emissions will, over time, result in safer food and cleaner air. Defending the rights of trans people expands everyone’s freedom to exist in our bodies in different ways regardless of what sex we’re assigned. Again, I don’t think that one should count on any immediate electoral payoff from preferring good ideas to bad ones. The reason to argue for good ideas is that arguing for good ideas makes good ideas more likely to be adopted. But I do think that, over the long run, organizations and politicians that consistently hold positions on the merits will be more successful than ones that tack to the prevailing winds.

I feel like arguing for good ideas on the merits has gotten a bit undervalued lately. When, let’s say, Ezra Klein says that we should pay less attention to “the groups,” what he’s rejecting is the exact thing he himself used to do — assessing policy ideas on the merits. He’s saying that politicians should listen less to people who have devoted themselves to studying some problem and to coming up with ideas to deal with it.

There’s another reason to focus more on arguing for good ideas because they are good. It’s a useful form of self-discipline. It’s easy to get too clever, and think that something that is bad on the merits will lead to something better down the road, when those further steps are tenuous or uncertain or just assumed. It’s easy to get too angry, and base all your arguments on being against people who are wrong. Wrong they may be! But there are many ways to be wrong, and the opposite of a bad idea is often another bad idea. Focusing on making positive arguments for things you believe in is a way of avoiding these errors. Politics is always a mix of moving toward a distant destination and starting from where you are. But when your immediate surroundings are especially treacherous or confusing, it becomes more important to keep yourself oriented toward that ultimate goal.

3. Professionalism is worth defending. The disinterested desire to do one’s job well, and the norms and institutions that go with that, are, it seems to me, both essential to the routine functioning of society (more so than, for instance, markets) and an important base for socialist politics.

This is something I’ve thought for a while, and written about occasionally, but it seems especially relevant now. It’s not just that this administration is beginning with an all-out attack on professionals and professional standards in the federal government. (Although that is a central fact about this moment.) It’s also clear that for many of the billionaires who the administration answers to, the labor problem that concerns them most is the relative autonomy of their professional employees. Listen to this from Marc Andreesen:

Companies are basically being hijacked to engines of social change, social revolution. The employee base is going feral. There were cases in the Trump era where multiple companies I know felt like they were hours away from full-blown violent riots on their own campuses by their own employees. … you’d get berated at an all-hands meeting as a C.E.O., where you’d have these extremely angry employees show up and they were just completely furious about how there’s way too many white men on the management team. … What people say from the outside is, “Well, you should just fire those people.” But as a C.E.O., I can’t fire 80 percent of my team.

He is not talking about the cleaning staff here. He is talking about technicians, engineers, low-level managers who are using their relative independence and lack of replaceability to assert their own values and priorities, against those of their bosses.

It’s very clear, when you read stuff like this, that some large part of complaints about DEI, wokeness, and so on are employers’ complaints about workers who are “feral” and disobedient, who reverse the natural order of things by berating the boss, who can’t be replaced and who’ve been spoiled by a college education.

A purely negative, reactive criticism of these attacks on professional employees is not enough. What’s needed is a positive argument for the values of professionalism — of technical expertise, credentials, the autonomy of the professional to do their work according to their own standards. The post-Luigi controversy about insurance companies limiting anesthesia services was a nice teaching moment for these values. The backlash reflected people’s concerns about being denied care, but it also reflected a broader sense that certain decisions — like how long a patient needs anesthesia for — should be made by the domain expert who is doing the work.

Or think about strikes by teachers or journalists, which are motivated not only by demands for better pay — which god knows they deserve — but also by demands to be able to do their job properly. Something that’s very needed in this moment, I think, is a positive defense of why professional civil-service jobs (and their private sector equivalents) are important. Air traffic controllers, say, need job security not just for fairness, the way all workers do, but even more so because that’s what frees them to focus on doing on their work according to their own professional norms.

There are endless examples around us, which we normally don’t even think about. I watched a video with the kids the other night about postal codes, which talked about Ireland redesigned theirs from the ground up so a single 9-digit code specifies any mailbox in the country. (As a parent of two school-age kids, I can say that we are living in a golden age of educational videos.) That didn’t happen because people voted for it, let alone because there were market incentives. It happened because the people with the responsibility for organizing the postal system, who had the relevant expertise, took their jobs seriously and were given the freedom to do them right.

Attacks on professional norms, it seems to me, are a central part of the Trump project, and defense of those norms are one of the central grounds on which that project is being resisted. When the California Department of Education announces its refusal to comply with Trump’s orders banning LGBTQ materials in the classroom, they are not doing so (just) out of self interest, or even out of concern for the kids it would harm. They are doing it because government is not a monarchy, there are rules that assign certain specific authorities to certain roles, and domain-specific decisions — say, what textbooks to use in the classroom — are assigned to the specialists in that domain. It’s these specifically professional norms that are the organizing principle for collective action here.

And of course there’s another reason why an affirmative defense of professionalism is important now. It’s what allows government to do all the other policies we might want it to. Bhaskar Sunkara has been urging socialists to reject “professional-class” politics and focus on working-class issues like Medicare for All. I also am a big supporter of universal public health insurance. But I am not sure how it is going operate without professionals or managers. I certainly see the appeal of “anti-PMC” politics, and there may be contexts where it is called for. But what we need right now is exactly the opposite. We need a program that moves from the defense of specific groups of professionals (like teachers or air traffic controllers) to a broader argument in favor of professional norms and civil service protections in general.

4. Our program needs to be argued for in a principled, positive way. Many of the actions this administration is taking will make the lives of many people much worse. But is that the best grounds to oppose them on? I am not sure it is. I think that in most cases, in both the short and long term, we are better off arguing for what we think is right, rather than that what they are doing is wrong.

Take the case of deportations. A negative critique can just as well be that he is deporting too few people as that he is deporting too many. The only solid footing from which one can oppose the administration’s actions on immigration is a clear principled position on what immigration policy should look like. The same goes for trade policy: 25% tariffs on Canada seems very crazy! But is the counterargument that free trade is the only correct policy, or is it that deglobalization should be a more cautious and gradual process, or is it that steep tariffs should be imposed on enemies but not on allies?

The answers to these questions are not easy, and not everyone on our side (for any reasonable value of “our”) is going to agree on them. But one way or another, opposition to this set of policies is going to require an affirmative case for a different set of policies. And that is going to require articulating some general principles about how society should be organized. If the Trump administration was wrong to put people on planes to Brazil and Colombia, does that mean that those people should have been allowed to stay in the USA? Does it mean they should be allowed to return? Does it mean that other people in those countries should also be allowed to travel to the US, and live and work here? I personally think the answers to these questions are Yes. You don’t have to agree with me. But you are not going to be able to oppose Trump’s actions towards migrants unless you have a substantively different immigration policy to offer in their place.

The problem — or perhaps the opportunity, depending on how you look at it — is that the state of things pre-Trump was not the application of any particular set of principles. It was just the way things had worked out. So any kind of principled argument against what’s happening now, is necessarily going to be an argument for something quite different from what we are used to. Take the very basic principle of one person, one vote. If you are going to oppose current efforts to roll back the franchise on the grounds that every person has an equal right to choose their government, then you are going to have to oppose other long-standing features of American politics, like the malapportioned Senate or felon disfranchisement or Democratic primaries that let some states vote before others, or limiting the franchise to US citizens. And this goes even more when we are talking about mobilizing people and not just making arguments. If you expect people to fight and bear costs and take risks, it is going to have to be for a positive program.

(A related problem, with immigration particularly, is that almost no one has any idea what the existing policy is. Under what conditions can someone from Mexico legally immigrate to the United States? Unless you are a specialist in immigration law, or you or someone close to you has been in that position, I would bet you don’t have any idea.)

This point is stronger now than it was before Trump was elected. “Trump will be a disaster, better to stick with the safe status quo” obviously was not a winning argument, but at least it was an argument. Now there is no status quo to stick with.

#### 4. The plan argues here’s what the state can do about agricultural worker cooperatives. It does not cede agency to the state.

Lauren Berlant 13, Professor of English, University of Chicago, interviewed by David Seitz, writer, Ph.D. candidate, human geography and women’s and gender studies, University of Toronto, “Interview with Lauren Berlant,” Society & Space, 3-22-2013, http://societyandspace.com/material/interviews/interview-with-lauren-berlant/

DS: We have this commonsense understanding of citizenship as legally, juridically endowed. You’re also interested in the murky, the intimate and the banal dimensions of citizenship. And they’re obviously not unrelated. What first oriented you in that direction? What got you so curious about intimate life as a scene of citizenship drama? LB: I was always interested in the relationship between law and subjectivity. As I was coming out, nobody was working on citizenship as a vehicle for world-building that had anything to do with sexuality, except allegorically. What really interested me was the relationship between conventional form and erotic attachment — people’s relation to the world, people’s need for the world to look a certain way. So I got interested in the history of the law’s orchestration of bodies, and I got interested in thinking about the ways that certain kinds of institutional forms held up the world, with respect to which people in everyday life were extremely incoherent. The same people can be authoritarian, libertarian, aggressive, passive, romantic, and unsentimental about citizenship: and then I realized that the same sentence could be written about love and attachment. I realized that the juridical object and the intimate object were more similar than they were different, because people want their objects to protect them, but they don’t want them too over-present. They want them to be transparent, but they want also to have them to be flexible and improvisatory. People make contradictory demands of the objects that hold up their world. That interests me. That’s the first thing. The second thing is I really do want to understand how to work with political incoherence, and I am irritated by the kinds of arguments that people use about certain kinds of voting blocs voting against their interests, since everyone has conflicting interests. For example, I could love the state because it delivers resources to a whole set of people not really caring about the specificities of who those people are, and I could hate the state because it tries to produce universal citizenship. Those two conflicting thoughts don’t make me psychotic: contradiction enables people to proceed wanting a whole set of things from their institution or from their object. Also, if you work on political emotions, one of the things you have to deal with all the time is the pedagogy of emotion. Aesthetics is one of the few places we learn to recognize our emotions as trained and not natural. Fear is natural, but the objects that make you afraid emerge historically. You get entrained by the world. When you’re born, all you want is food, and by the time you’re eight, or by the time you’ve been in primary school for awhile, or whatever, you have feelings about citizenship, you have feelings about race, you have feelings about gender and sexuality. You’ve been trained to take on those objects as world-sustaining perspectives. That interests me. So for you, what looked like a conflict between institutional attachment to the world and intimate models of attachment are not to me in conflict at all but are a part of the problem of imagining and living attachments to lifeworlds. When it comes to LGBTQ politics, the first thing after my first book that I wrote on citizenship was “Queer Nationality,” (with Elizabeth Freeman), an essay about the incredibly contradictory attachments queers have had to the nation form. The nation form is a saviour and the nation form is a threat. That doesn’t seem to me to be the sign that people haven’t figured out their politics yet, it’s that the state is a resource as well as a site of domination. Being able to think about the banality of contradiction is a really important scene for thinking LGBTQ politics. DS: You’ve had some hilarious and trenchant takes on the state of U.S. electoral politics. During the 2012 presidential campaign, you summed up a vote for Obama as “he sucks less bad” — on issues ranging from economic justice to U.S. imperialism. What do you make of Obama’s inaugural remarks on same-sex marriage, and of the second Obama term more broadly? LB: It has always seemed to me that Obama’s refusal to support LGBTQ politics was a concession to what he felt were the more conservative sides of his support. I didn’t think he believed it. I thought it was cowardly, and so when he finally decided that it was time for him to placate his disappointed his liberal supporters by admitting an opinion I’m sure he’d always had, I didn’t jump up and down with glee. Inclusion really matters. Him saying Stonewall was a part of American liberation history matters. His support for “our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters” matters. But I also feel very strongly that he allowed himself to say what he already felt as a way of distracting attention from progressive attention to many other vicious economic and military practices his administration promotes. I have a lot of anger about the neoliberal/progressive politics management that gives social issues lots of privilege but really doesn’t care about economic justice, or the brutality of War on Terror. All the LGBTQ inclusion in the world speaks nothing to the incredibly devastating military policy that he has pursued on behalf of “peace and democracy.” Eve Sedgwick, in Epistemology of the Closet, talked about the “pincers movement” of progress: one step forward, one step back, that’s how a crab walks. Obama is a very good example of this. It’s a cowardly politics, and yet in the context of American conservatism, standing for reproductive rights and the right of LGBTQ people to live the normative life protected by the law is not that cowardly. In that regard, the relationship between democracy and antidemocracy remains extremely stressful. DS: Your devastating, powerful book Cruel Optimism explores scenes in which subjects desire (and seem unable to countenance not desiring) conditions, political and intimate futures that undermine the possibility of their flourishing. Are there political movements or experiments in dependency and non-sovereignty, in your words, that you look to optimistically — on terms that feel or look less “cruel”? A relation of cruel optimism is a double-bind, as we were saying in our discussion of the nation form. LB: A relation of cruel optimism is a double-bind in which your attachment to an object sustains you in life at the same time as that object is actually a threat to your flourishing. So you can’t say that there are objects that have the quality of cruelty or not cruelty, it’s how you have the relationship to them. Like it might be that being in a couple is not a relation of cruel optimism for you, because being in a couple actually makes you feel like you have a grounding in the world, whereas for other people, being in a couple might be, on the one hand, a relief from loneliness, and on the other hand, the overpresence of one person who has to bear the burden of satisfying all your needs. So it’s not the object that’s the problem, but how we learn to be in relation. All political movements in this regard are complicated spaces where the courageous insistence on interrupting the reproduction of toxic normativity is a relief from resignation to life. But every movement that we’ve ever been in reproduces issues of inequality around race, gender, sexuality and education, along with the inevitable personality glitches. That also can be devastating. So that’s why I’m interested in thinking about politics as comic, because if we understand that everything we do is going to be flawed and awkward and slapstick, we have a better chance at surviving our disappointments on behalf of a longer political goal. So I’m interested in all the neo-anarchisms. I’m still interested in queer and feminist politics, too, because I think everything that’s disappointing is accompanied by forms of refusal to be resigned to normative fantasy. And I do think it’s the job of writers and critics and artists and everyone to create better objects for better fantasies — which is to say objects that offer the possibility of less cruel-optimistic relations. One great development in LGBTQ politics over the last decade has been the claim that social policy should rely on relations of care rather than institutional relations, like of marriage and family, to help to distribute resources for the flourishing of life. So one of my students said, in response, “I could marry my grandmother.” What he meant was not that he wanted to marry his grandmother as opposed to other intimate relations, but that for him, her care of him gave him an obligation to care for her, and he now saw that as a part of a queer politics. Thinking about what it means to see relations of care as the source for new social relations that would have policy implications is a really great development in LGBTQ politics from all sorts of perspectives. But I think that has to be accompanied by different kinds of cultural activity and different forms of fantasy about what it means to understand collective life as a problem of survival. DS: Your work has some challenging implications and questions for LGBT movements — but not always or only the predictable ones. Queer critics in the U.S. and Canada are often abuzz about the violence and exclusivity of a focus on marriage, property rights, bourgeois domesticity, etc. In Cruel Optimism, you’re curious about normativity — certainly not because you’re unwilling to challenge or interrupt it, but because you want to understand aspirations to and desires for the forms of belonging, reciprocity and kinship that normative citizenship is imagined to entail. Where does this leave queer critiques of normativity? What are the political implications of the kind of careful analysis of normativity you stage? LB: This goes to your question about citizenship, too. When I first started working on citizenship, older people would say to me, “How can you even take the state seriously? The state is a monster of imperialism.” And I said, “I’m on the side of people’s survival, and if people’s optimism is attached to things like the state, I want to know what the state stands in for.” If we start seeing our objects of ambition and desire as stand-ins, as things that organize our attachment to life, we have a totally different understanding and a kind of generosity toward those objects. That’s why I started working on citizenship in the first place, not because I loved it, but because I saw that people saw it as a state where they could imagine being collective, and being willing to be collective in ways that were also inconvenient for them. So when LGBTQ people want what lots of people want — which is a relief from their loneliness and a social world that would be welcoming and not shaming — I can’t disrespect their objects, I just have to say, “is that all there is?” For me, it’s never about shaming people’s objects, it’s always about creating better and better objects. It’s always about creating better worlds, making it possible for us to think in more and different kinds of ways about how we relationally can move through life. Do you agree? DS: I do agree! To actually pluralize our objects… LB: More and more and more. I never want someone to talk less in class, I want everyone to talk more. I never want less fantasy, I always want more. I never want less citizenship, I always want more. More different ways of being in relation. And then we struggle it out, because we struggle with the ways in which they’re incommensurate. But there’s no reason to have more shame around what people want. One of the ways that I am so fundamentally motivated as a queer scholar is my absolute commitment to eradicating erotophobia — thinking of sex as a threat to happiness, thinking of the appetites as a threat to sociality, when there is no sociality without them. People learn to think of their appetites as threats. I’m interested always in just better objects, because I think if there’s less erotophobia, there would be less sexual violence, there would be more of a sense that bodies and pleasures really can be the source of a genuinely flourishing sociality. But it will take much reeducation to think about other people as vehicles to happiness rather than a threat. DS: You’ve spent a fair bit of time outside the U.S., and Cruel Optimism’s framing is explicitly transnational. Do you have any insights on the Canadian queer political scene — as opposed or in relation to that in the U.S.? LB: I still don’t, no. I feel like I have to study a place for a really, really long time before I can say anything about it. You are undergoing neoliberal austerity politics here, and the defunding of education, and the dismantling of welfare state here, as are many of the places that I study in Cruel Optimism. I have an interview in Variant magazine where I ask, “If the question of the 19th century in the U.S. and in many places is the problem of the colour line, as DuBois writes, “what does it mean to be a problem?”– the problem of contemporary austerity politics comes from the state saying that the public is itself a problem, too expensive to be borne by the state that represents it. I think there’s a lot of wealth in world, and the privatization of wealth has been a desperate bad, ploy to redistribute income from ordinary people to the wealthy, and austerity politics maintains that. I think it’s immoral, and people have to struggle against it. But it also means that they have to retool their fantasies of the good life. If your fantasy of the good life was to have infinitely more things, then austerity politics uses you of an example of an undisciplined appetite. If we recognize that wealth needs to be distributed, that everyone should have a shot at a good life, that also means that people’s fantasy of having an infinite cushion, especially an infinite credit cushion, has to be rethought. That’s part of what social theory and art has to do, is to say, what is a good life? And how do we go about making institutions and imaginaries that support it? So these questions are really central to transformations in Canadian politics right now, in a way that resonates with things that have been going on in Europe since the 90s. DS: What would you say makes your work queer now? LB: That there have been venues that really understood how this book could not have existed without queer theory feels really important, gratifying, and moving to me. Only two of the chapters of Cruel Optimism — three if you count the introduction — are manifestly about LGBTQ material. Cruel Optimism was one of the two award winners for the Alan Bray prize in LGBTQ literature at the Modern Language Association this year. I was very moved by that. The reason I think that that happened is because queer theory is fundamentally about not presuming your object but understanding that what sexuality is, is a set of patterns that align you to the world in a particular way. What your object is, is a patterning, a set of patternings. If a gay man likes other men, he doesn’t like all other men, he likes some patternings among men. If in straight life one’s sexual objects are not all the other people who are not one’s gender but a subset of those people who represent a kind of patterning to you that your body and mind attach to as a condition of possibility. In Cruel Optimism, the idea itself that your object is a relation, that your object is a cluster of promises to you, that you produce kinds of patterns in relation to it that are fundamentally ambivalent and improvisatory– all of those kinds of observations come from my training in Marxist and psychoanalytic theory, but above all in queer theory’s insistence that all objects are relations, projections, forms of interestedness that complicate what it means to be attached to the world. That’s the way in which Cruel Optimism is a very queer book. Thinking about the object as a patterning that’s loosely organized, so that it would be possible to change the object without having to lose everything, is a really important part of this. So rather than saying “I hate the state,” or “I love the state,” saying “here’s what the state can do.” Rather than hate the couple form or love the couple form, say “here’s what being in a couple can do, and here’s the other things I need in order to flourish.” Then you start to think of yourself as having a capacity to produce many kinds of patterning and attachment to the world. The problem is always that queer life is exhausting because you kind of have to make it up all the time. There are so few conventions to rest in or cruise in. At the same time, it’s also really exciting to think you could be inventing something that will work better than the forms of efficiency that we call normative. DS: I find that helpful, because I think it resonates with things that Robyn Wiegman and the later writings of Eve Sedgwick are up to. They don’t displace any of the political stakes, but they also ask other questions about what else is going on, and remain fundamentally curious. LB: I’m all for training my students in curiosity. One thing we might talk about is what is an LGBTQ teacher’s job these days? How much is project of a queer pedagogy not just the project of distributing more fabulousness, or historical knowledge, but also of having curiosity about the object? For me, not taking the object for granted, assuming that it’s powerful because it’s ambivalent, because it’s tapping into a lot of different kinds of things, is a fundamental observation of queer work.

### Reductionism – 2AC

#### The psyche can’t explain everything about industrial ag and cooperatives. Reject their reductionist framework.

Hook, PhD, 18

(Derek, Psych@Duquesne, Racism and jouissance: Evaluating the “racism as (the theft of) enjoyment” hypothesis,” Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society, September 2018, Volume 23, Issue 3, pp 244–266)

While this seems, in many ways, a gripping account, the degree of reductionism here from a sociologist or historian’s perspective must appear staggering. The multiple complex sociological, economic, and socio-historical variables underlying distinctive historical forms of racism are brushed aside in favour of a generalizing psychoanalytic formula.1 Racism = reaction to perception that the (perversely enjoying) other has stolen our enjoyment. This reduction of racism to an affective equation is evident also in Žižek’s precursor in this conceptual domain, Jacques-Alain Miller: Why does the Other remain Other? What is the cause for our hatred of him, for our hatred of him in his very being? It is hatred of the enjoyment in the Other. This would be the most general formula for the modern racism we are witnessing today: a hatred of a particular way the Other enjoys […] The question of tolerance or intolerance is […] located on the level of tolerance or intolerance toward the enjoyment of the Other, the Other who essentially steals my own enjoyment (Miller, cited in Žižek, 1993, p. 203). Not only does the above formula generalize across different socio-historical sites of racism, but it also bundles together a variety of different forms of prejudice. Anti-Semitism, racism, (hetero)sexism, xenophobia, etc. come very close to being reduced to problems of (libidinal/political) jealousy. The depoliticization (indeed, the implicit psychologization) inherent in such a conceptual move is surprising inasmuch it is something that Žižek has proved critical of elsewhere.2 In his contribution to Christopher Lane’s The Psychoanalysis of Race (1998), for example, Žižek outlines the charge of psychological reductionism against standard psychoanalytic explanations of racism, which offer “a way of explaining racism that ignores […] not only racism’s socioeconomic conditions but the sociosymbolic context of cultural values and identifications that generate reactions to the experience of ethnic otherness. (p. 154)” This is well said, but surely it applies also to the racism as theft of enjoyment formula outlined above? Explanations of racism as jouissancei are surely prone to psychological reductionism inasmuch as they often appear to privilege a series of psychoanalytic assumptions (drive, fantasy, libido, projection, etc.) as existing prior to—or independently of—considerations of economic, historical, political, and socio-symbolic context. Does this explanatory over-reliance on the psychological not amount to a retreat from the political, to precisely an attempt to explain social phenomena on the basis of psychological accounts? Moreover, one often has the impression, in looking at passages such as those cited above, of a given conceptual template (indeed, a formula) imposed on one after another historical context by way of an “explanation” of racism, despite the huge variation in socio-historical and cultural factors. This one-size-fits-all type of explanation seems particularly ill-suited to Lacanian psychoanalysis which claims, after all, to be a science of the particular (Verhaege, 2002).

#### Lacanian model is tautological – it presumes a unitary model of psychology that can be translated into *every* social dynamic. Their psychic theory of populist lashout can’t account for the detailed 1AC internal links explaining corporate control and vertical integration.

Lois **McNAY** Reader Politics @ Oxford **‘8** *Against Recognition* p. 28-32

HISTORY, LACK AND THE FORECLOSURE OF PRACTICE Zi2ek' s reworking of the theory of ideology in terms of a perpetual gap between the Real and the symbolic is intended to demonstrate, inter alia, the force of psychoanalysis in grasping the contingent, unfinished and potentially transformable nature of social reality. In his view, psychoanalysis is a powerful tool for the analysis of history, rather than, as is often claimed, the means through which history is reified as an effect of primal psychic dynamics. Indeed, far from freezing history, psychoanalysis provides the basis for a revolutionary reconfiguration of identity and politics. Zii.ek concedes that his theory of ideological interpellation is undoubtedly monolithic but this represents the nature of globalized capital that has become so pervasive and flexible that it is increasingly difficult to imagine a truly radical alternative to it. In Lacanian terms, capital has become today's Real in that it forms the unacknowledged parameters for contemporary political imagination. Indeed, in failing to recognize the pervasive nature of capital, many theories of radical democracy are profoundly complicit, rather than disruptive of the dominant socioeconomic order. These theories 'never question the fundamentals of the capitalist market economy and the liberal-democratic political regime; they never envisage the possibility of a completely different economico-political regime' (Zi.Zek 2000: 223). In this respect, Ziz.ek claims that, despite not providing a blueprint for political intervention, his theory is far more radical in that it draws attention to the limits of thought and action and the possibility of moving beyond them. The precise lineaments of this new political subject are necessarily vague; however, it involves a yoking together of particular claims with universal aims in order to rupture established norms. The political demands made by excluded groups do not just represent specific injustices but stand in for universal injustices.

Against liberal beliefs in neutrality, Zi2ek argues that universal justice can only be discerned from the perspective of those excluded from it. In a pluralist society, a universal left wing politics is therefore inescapably agonistic, but, for Zi2ek, politics is the art of the impossible (1998: 63-78). By unearthing the ahistoricallimit of particular modes of thought and being, every historical figuration is revealed as being contingent and therefore susceptible to radical overhaul. It is the 'ahistorical bar' as the internal limit of all symbolization that, in a sense, forms the condition of possibility of historicity. It is in this manner that Zi2ek regards his thought as revivifying the radical promise of Marxism, that is, by jettisoning its economic essentialism and retaining 'the empty messianic emancipatory promise- the new social order should not be "ontologized", but should remain an elusive democracy a venir' (Zii.ek 1999b: ix).

Despite these claims, there are troubling implications in Ziz.ek's argument that the condition of possibility of history resides in an abstract linguistic structure. There is no denying that Zi2ek proffers a powerful account of the atavistic effects of fantasy and non-rational forces upon action, for example, in his work on the function of enjoyment in the rise of regressive nationalisms (Ziz.ek 1991). Nonetheless, the profoundly ahistorical and formulaic nature of his theory has insurmountably dismissive implications for an understanding of social action. As a radically negative entity, the unconscious has no intrinsic connection to the social realm apart from random and fugitive disruptions; it is, as Nancy Chodorow puts it, a 'sui generis autochtonous entity that is apart from culture and the symbolic' (Chodorow 1995: 93). This conception of the unconscious as a radically discrete entity leads to an aporetic conception of language as simultaneously monolithic and illusory. On the one hand, it is only through the symbolic order and not through any other systemic type of power or any other source of agency that the social realm receives its shape. All social identity receives its form from the imposition of symbolic order upon an originary lack and thus language becomes a pervasive and self-sustaining system. On the other hand, language is an illusory medium in that all symbolic identities are based on an imaginary unity, resulting in the devaluation of concrete political struggles and the fetishization of the unconscious as a source of a supposedly radical instability. In the absence of any notion of social or political mediation, Zii.ek's idea of change remains caught in a 'bad infinity', oscillating between the moments of 'structure and antistructure' (Fraser 1997: 163).

Such an insurmountable ahistoricism is certainly the charge that Judith Butler, amongst others, levels at Zi.Zek when she discerns an abstract universalism or denial of the contingent operating in his thought which has problematic implications for an understanding of counter-hegemonic struggle. By locating the 'traumatic kernel' that prevents identity closure in the unconscious, Zizek effectively undermines the social and historical specificity of resistance, rendering it an effect of an unchanging psychic lack. The theory of radical insufficiency operates according to a self-same dynamic that explains any and every social disruption, and, as such, it is a 'theoretical fetish that disavows the conditions of its own emergence' (Butler 2000a: 27). It is the denial or domestication of difference effected by this abstract logic that has the most problematic implications for an understanding of politics. A closed negative dialectic operates where an apparent opposition between an identity and its other is deconstructed to reveal not only the disavowed connection but also that identity eventually becomes its other. This has particularly worrying implications for Zii.ek's analysis of fascism, for instance, which effectively collapses historically specific distinctions between progressive and regressive political forces (Butler 2000b: 173). As she puts it: 'power which seems to be opposed to the obscene is itself fundamentally reliant on that obscene, and finally is the obscene' (Butler 2000c: 276). In sum, Ziz.ek's collapse of domination into resistance blocks an analysis of the specific power relations underlying political struggle.

In order to distinguish her position from that of ZiZek, Butler claims that resistance should be understood not as the structural operations of the symbolic order but as a process of cultural ritual: 'as the reiteration of cultural norms, as the habitus, of the body in which structural and social dimensions of meaning are not finally separable' (Butler 2000a: 25). This amounts to conceptualizing the radically unfinished nature of identity not, pace Ziz.ek, as the point at which self-representation always founders (the Real) but as the inability of social categories to fully capture the 'mobility and flexibility' of persons (e.g. Riley 2000). No subject or politics of identity emerges without foreclosures, but these must be understood primarily as socially variable rather than as psychically universal. By pointing to the reiterative structure of cultural norms, Butler invokes a notion of embodied social practice to counter Ziz.ek' s subjectless model of symbolic reproduction. While she is right to do this, her model of performativity is ultimately unable to sustain this notion of practice because it is based on an equally as abstract or 'negative' paradigm of subject formation as Zii.ek's (McNay 2000). I make this argument about Butler in more detail in Chapter 5, but suffice to note here that, on this negative paradigm, the subject is understood, in essentially passive terms, as an exogenously imposed effect of language or discourse. This one-dimensional conception of language as a constitutive structure, which forecloses an understanding of language as a type of social action, results in its generalization as a model for all forms of social power. The diversity of social relations is replaced by the overextended metaphor of position within the symbolic or linguistic order. This prioritization of langue over parole easily slides into a conception of language as a self-enclosed symbolic system detached from any kind of social context and, in particular, from attendant problems of struggles over meaning, power relations and practice. As Nancy Fraser puts it: 'the structuralist abstraction langue is troped into a quasi divinity, a normative "symbolic order" whose power to shape identities dwarfs to the point of extinction that of mere historical institutions and practices' (Fraser 1997: 157).

Despite her inability to sustain the idea of practice in her theory of the performative, Butler is right nonetheless to draw attention to the way in which Zi.Zek's disregard of the social context of action is the consequence of his abstract and formulaic paradigm. By construing the Real as a self-identical and invariant principle of non-closure, the specific power dynamics. of social formations are occluded; in particular, a series of issues pertaining to the historicity of social structures, of language and of agency are foreclosed. For Lacanians, of course, the criticism that they privilege an abstract and ahistorical model of subject formation over embodied social practices both misses the point and invokes an uncritical phenomenalism. Indeed, in Zii.ek' s view, it is Butler herself who is not 'historicist enough' because her idea of the inability of symbolic categories to capture the complexity of social reality relies on a form of simplistic empiricism that contrasts the 'infinite wealth of reality' to the 'abstract poverty' of thought (Zii.ek 2000: 216). In the Lacanian triad of the Real, the unconscious and the Symbolic, a perspective on social practices and experience is explicitly redundant. Since all experience is formulated within the symbolic realm, any experience that does not conform to its logic is necessarily deemed anomalous or irrelevant. The most well-known expression of this discounting of the specificity of embodied experience is the Lacanian response to questions about whether the presence or absence of the father makes a difference to subject formation. For Lacanians, the presence of the actual father is superfluous because the phallocentric logic of the symbolic order operates independently of biological or social presence. There are many problems that stem from such an assertion, not least the difficulty that the reproduction of the phallocentric order becomes a monolithic given. It is, however, only from the perspective of a selfperpetuating linguistic system that the variations in social practices do not have any theoretical significance. As Nancy Chodorow puts it: 'evidence cannot oppose this logic, since it is a logic, and Lacanians even have a language for dismissing evidence. Anything given, natural, or "real" is repudiated by definition on the symbolic level' (Chodorow 1989: 124-5). The tacit assumption underlying this repudiation of reality is that the phenomenal realm lacks significance or complexity, indeed, that these qualities are only imputed to it by the workings of the unconscious. By adhering to such an unproblematized view of social experience, Zii.ek arguably makes himself vulnerable to the same charge that he levels at Butler, namely, a reliance on an uncritical empiricism. By construing practice and experience in such a flattened-out manner, he loses any way of explaining the historicity of social being and also its complex, multidimensional nature that is the effect of its constitution through different types of power. He also loses any way of understanding agency except as a secondary effect of the disjunction between the Real and the symbolic order rather than as a potential capacity of social subjects. This disjunction may certainly constitute a necessary pre-condition of the emergence of agency, but it is not an account of agency as an act of engagement on the part of individuals in response to a historically specific situation. Indeed, the displacement of agency onto a theory of symbolic indeterminacy forecloses the development of a subject-centred theory of action altogether. For, as Cornelius Castoriadis puts it: 'If "truth" is altogether on the side of the unconscious, and if all"knowledge" is mere deception, what importance can the subject's words have .. . If the person is in fact nothing but persona, a mask, and if behind this persona he is nobody ... then surely the best way of leading the subject to the "truth" is in fact to leave him to stew in his own juice?' (Castoriadis 1984: 57).

### FW – 2AC