# 1NC---DRR---Round 3

## OFF

### 1NC---T

#### “Substantial” must be at least 2%

Words & Phrases 60

'Substantial" means "of real worth and importance; of considerable value; valuable." Bequest to charitable institution, making 1/48 of expenditures in state, held exempt from taxation; such expenditures constituting "substantial" part of its activities. Tax Commission of Ohio v. American Humane Education Soc., 181 N.E. 557, 42 Ohio App. 4.

#### Violation: the plan affects 2.2 million workers which is only 1.3% of the total workforce

Egan & Wallace 25 [Matt Egan, award-winning senior reporter at CNN, covering business, the economy and financial markets across CNN’s television and digital platforms, Alicia Wallace, senior writer for CNN Business covering the economy and former Knight-Bagehot Fellow at Columbia University in New York, "Mass layoffs of federal workers could damage families and local economies — but may not dent the overall economy", CNN, 2-25-2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/25/business/federal-jobs-mass-layoffs-economy>] \*[language modifications]

That’s in part because the federal layoffs are expected to affect a small fraction of the much larger US labor force. The federal civilian workforce, which excludes military personnel and employees of the CIA and other military agencies, represents less than 2% of the total civilian labor force of 170.7 million.

#### It’s a voter for limits and ground---anything smaller than 2% of the workforce could be any single person and skirts generics

### 1NC---K

#### Unions are agents of capital---it doesn’t matter if they are facially ‘leftist’

Eidlin 20 [Barry Eidlin, associate professor of sociology at McGill University and the author of Labor and the Class Idea in the United States and Canada, “Why Unions Are Good — But Not Good Enough,” 1/6/20, Jacobin, <https://jacobin.com/2020/01/marxism-trade-unions-socialism-revolutionary-organizing>, accessed 9/4/25] hm

Labor unions have long occupied a paradoxical position within Marxist theory. They are an essential expression of the working class taking shape as a collective actor and an essential vehicle for working-class action. When we speak of “the working class” or “working-class activity,” we are often analyzing the actions of workers either organized into unions or trying to organize themselves into unions.

At the same time, unions are an imperfect and incomplete vehicle for the working class to achieve one of Marxist theory’s central goals: overthrowing capitalism. Unions by their very existence affirm and reinforce capitalist class society. As organizations which primarily negotiate wages, benefits, and working conditions with employers, unions only exist in relation to capitalists. This makes them almost by definition reformist institutions, designed to mitigate and manage the employment relationship, not transform it.

#### Capitalism is unsustainableand ensures extinction. The alternative is a class-based movement towards socialism – only rejecting capitalist ideology allows for sustainable development.

Trainer 25 [Ted Trainer, Conjoint Lecturer in the School of Social Sciences, University of New South Wales, Ph.D. in Moral Philosophy, “Capitalism: Why We Should Scrap It,” 3/29/25, <https://thesimplerway.info/CAPITALISMBOOK.pdf>] \*\*\*ha expanded to [hectares]\*\*\*

There are far more important considerations than our personal life experience. The economic system we have is damaging the planet and leading all of us towards a catastrophic biological and social breakdown that is likely to impact within decades. The fundamental cause is the fact that the levels of production and consumption and thus resource use in rich countries are far beyond those that can be sustained for much longer or extended to all the world’s people. Yet we have an economic system that cannot take us in any other direction. Capitalism is about maximising the amount of production for sale and constantly increasing it.

We cannot solve the alarming global problems confronting us if we continue to be committed to affluent-consumer lifestyles in economies driven by market forces and economic growth. For decades the argument for this “limits to growth” analysis of our situation has been overwhelmingly convincing, but it has been almost impossible to get people or governments to attend to it.

The way of life we have in rich countries involves average per capita rates of resource consumption that are probably more than seven times too high. (See below.) There is no possibility of the “living standards” of all people on earth ever rising to rich-world per capita levels of consumption of energy, minerals, timber, water, food, phosphorous etc. These rates of consumption are generating most of the alarming global problems now threatening our survival, including resource depletion, environmental destruction, the deprivation of billions in the low-income countries, resource wars and deteriorating social cohesion and quality of life.

Most people have no idea of the magnitude of the overshoot, of how far we are beyond a sustainable levels of resource use and environmental impact. Here is an indication of the reasoning. (For the detailed derivation see Trainer 2021a.)

The abundant literature on the “limits to growth” (Meadows, et al. 1972) and “planetary boundaries” (Richardson 2023) has established that global and especially rich world rates of production and consumption are now far beyond levels that are sustainable. Rich world per capita levels are many times those that can be kept up indefinitely or could be generalized to all the world’s people. (Trainer 2021.) Here is a brief outline of the supporting reasons.

1. The World Wildlife Fund’s “Footprint” measure (2022) indicates that the amount of productive land required to meet the demand of the average Australian is over 6 ha. This means that if the 10 billion people likely by 2050 rose to Australian “living standards” we would need around 60 billion ha[hectares]. But the planet has only about 12 billion ha of productive land. Thus if one-third of it is left for nature the per capita amount available would average only 0.8 ha. In other words Australians today are using over 7 times the per capita amounts that would be available to all in 2050.

2. The Footprint measure takes into account only a limited number of factors. A full accounting of the sustainability overshoot would reveal a much higher multiple than is indicated above. The Planetary Boundaries approach identifies limits in 9 realms and states that sustainable limits have already been exceeded in 6 of them.

3. Almost all global resource sources are depleting. Mineral oil grades are falling, water resources are increasingly scarce, most fisheries are over fished, forests are diminishing, agricultural soils are being lost or damaged causing concerns about global food supply. It is likely that petroleum supply will peak within a decade.

4. Massive and accelerating damage is being inflicted on the ecosystems of the planet. A major consequence is the huge loss of species. This is mainly due to loss of habitats, and that is a consequent of economic growth. The damage is generating cost increases of many sorts especially due to storms, fire and floods. This is producing rapid rises in construction, production and insurance costs.

5. The major environmental impact is the climate crisis. Some scientists say there is now no possibility of limiting temperature rise by 2050 to 2 degrees, let alone 1.5. We are heading for over 3 degrees by 2050, and possibly 4.5 ...which would probably mean the end of civilisation.. There is a strong case that renewables cannot sustain energy-intensive societies. (See below.) Carbon emissions continue to rise.

6. Around the world there is increasing discontent with government, fuelled by deteriorating living conditions and cost of living rises. Faith in democracy is declining and many are turning to authoritarian leaders. This will not solve their problems and is likely to lead to fascist regimes.

7. Rich world affluence is built on exploitative resource extraction from poor countries, estimated by Hickle to be worth a net annual flow of $2.5 trillion (2021), not including the environmental damage, low wages and social disruption left in poor countries. The global capitalist economy inevitably generates this outcome.

8. But there is one factor which trumps all of the above. It is the imminent inevitable collapse of the global financial system. The only way the global economy can be kept healthy has been by pumping in vast amounts of money created by the banking system and issued as debt. Global debt has tripled in three decades, is much Higher than before the GFC, and is now totally unrepayable. It is not possible for the borrowed money to be invested in ventures that will repay it plus interest. It cannot be invested in productive activity basically because people suffering cost of living increases do not have the surplus purchasing power to buy more products. This cannot continue for much longer. At some point borrowers will realise that the debts are not going to be repaid. Catastrophic effects will quickly cascade, including widespread bank failures and loss of savings, bankruptcies, inability to finance trade, etc.

### 1NC---DA

#### Dems win — Prediction markets.

Lott and Stossel 25 [Maxim Lott; John Stossel,“Election Betting Odds,” *Election Betting Odds*, December 2025, Available Online at https://electionbettingodds.com/House-Control-2026.html, Accessed 12-28-2025]

A graph of the fall of the house

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

#### Plan means dems can’t campaign on the slashing of fed workers.

Schneider 25 [Elena Schneider, national political reporter at POLITICO, former assistant, holds a B.A. from Northwestern University, “‘Furious and looking for action’: DOGE is turning into a Democratic candidate recruitment tool,” *Politico*, February 25th 2025, Available Online at https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/25/recruit-federal-workers-run-for-office-022064]

Democrats say sweeping government cuts led by Elon Musk have started to awaken a latent opposition to President Donald Trump — and they’re hoping it will motivate a slew of new down-ballot candidates to run in the years ahead.

Early interest in running for office is already beginning to rise — at least one major candidate recruitment organization saw a sharp spike of more than 2,000 new applications pouring in as Musk issued major actions pushing federal workers out. A lot of that web traffic came from Reddit threads of former federal employees considering runs for political office that sprang up last week.

Capitalizing off the influx, Run For Something will host an “Ask Me Anything” event to answer questions about running for political office on a Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez-focused sub-Reddit thread on Friday.

While it’s still early, Democratic strategists said they hope fired federal workers could be potent recruits for next year’s midterms — and serve as powerful communicators on what the cuts from Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency means for voters.

“I expect we will see some candidates this year and next year who will talk about how Donald Trump and Elon Musk fired them while they were working for the American people,” said Amanda Litman, co-founder of Run For Something, a progressive group that recruits Democrats to run for office.

“It’s a pretty compelling campaign message,” she added.

About 20,000 people have joined Run For Something since Trump won reelection in November, Litman said, with 10 percent of that coming just in the last week. Democrats, still adrift after their 2024 losses, hope the fury over DOGE’s gutting of the federal government and House Republicans efforts to cut funding to Medicaid represent a turning point for the party, giving them tangible grassroots energy to tap into that so far hasn’t manifested at the same intensity as Trump’s first term.

Backlash to the first Trump presidency fueled a wave of candidates with unconventional — and primarily non-political — backgrounds to run for office in 2018. That flood of first-time candidates included women like former Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-Va.), people of color like New York Lt. Gov. Antonio Delgado and former members of the military like Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-N.J.) and Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-Pa.). They rode the wave of anti-Trump sentiment to retake control of the House. They’ve also deepened the party’s bench of talent, many of whom are now running for or already won statewide offices.

Now, Democratic groups hope that former federal workers will be among a coalition of non-traditional candidates who they plan to recruit for the midterms. Federal workers, who are “already inclined toward public service” but previously barred from politics, are now “liberated from that constraint, furious and looking for action, [running for office] is a really concrete step that people want to take,” Litman said.

House Republicans in several red districts have already begun to face angry constituents at town halls in recent days over the DOGE’s cuts to the federal workforce. Clips of Republican House members being booed by constituents at town halls went viral on social media. Anti-Musk protesters gathered outside of congressional offices in swing districts in Arizona, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

“The town halls, the tele-town halls, the activism from protests over the holiday weekend, it speaks for itself,” said Ben Ray, vice president for federal and gubernatorial campaigns at EMILY’s List, a liberal group that recruits abortion rights supporting women to run for office. “It’s early days, still, and it’s not going to be a 2017-level reaction, but I think folks are getting fired up for the fight.”

The fresh grassroots energy came after a wave of layoffs hit government workers in recent weeks, and a barrage of news coverage showed how DOGE cuts had upended scientific research funding and pushed veterans out of jobs. The agency’s officials also potentially gained access to private taxpayer data, triggering private panic for congressional Republicans. Even Democrats, who had initially expressed interest in working with Musk and DOGE, are now backing away from the effort. Several polls released last week found a majority of Americans disapprove of Elon Musk and DOGE’s actions.

Democrats are moving to harness the backlash, which is already “changing who we are talking to” to run for office and “what we’re talking about,” Ray added. He predicted that DOGE “is probably going to be a major feature in this election, and potentially a definitive one.”

Musk and Trump, for their part, aren’t backing down. Appearing alongside Trump in a Fox News interview last week, Musk called the criticism of DOGE an “antibody reaction from those who are receiving the wasteful and fraudulent money.”

The White House did not respond to an emailed request for comment. But when asked by reporters about constituent reaction to the “chainsaw approach” to federal job cuts, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said there was “overwhelming support” for it. “There should be no secret about the fact that this administration is committed to cutting waste, fraud and abuse,” she said. “The president campaigned on that promise, Americans elected him on that promise and he’s actually delivering on it.”

The anger from voters may be a gift to Democrats, who have struggled to form a coherent message against Trump in his second administration.

“When it’s organic, when it’s grassroots anger, then it doesn’t need to be bottled and sold by a political party,” said Tim Hogan, a Democratic consultant.

“Democrats just need to point to that zeitgeist and show disenchanted voters that people refuse to be steamrolled by this administration,” Hogan said.

Internal Democratic polling, conducted by the leadership-aligned House Majority Forward, found a majority of voters in battleground districts view Musk negatively. An accompanying memo urged Democrats to not “chide Musk, Trump, and others for being rich,” but rather emphasize that Musk could undermine key safety net programs while enriching himself.

That’s why some Democrats see the “real-life stories” of federal workers and what the DOGE cuts mean as another way to connect these actions to voters: “When you’re able to put a face to a story, then people have much stronger feelings on it when they realize it’s their friends and neighbors being fired,” said C.J. Warnke, communications director for House Majority PAC, the Democratic super PAC closely aligned with House leadership. “We need to amplify these stories and make these cuts real for people.”

#### A democratic win prevents nuke testing.

Park et al. 25 [Sulgiye Park, senior scientist with the Global Security Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists, holds a PhD in Geological Sciences from Stanford University; Jennifer Knox; Dylan Spaulding, “Why it would be a bad idea for the Trump administration to conduct a “rapid” nuclear test,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, February 18th 2025, Available Online at https://thebulletin.org/2025/02/why-it-would-be-a-bad-idea-for-the-trump-administration-to-conduct-a-rapid-nuclear-test/]

If Trump initiated this two-to-three-year process at the beginning of his term, he would be lucky to see that process concluded without Congress intervening to stop it. Right now, Republicans hold a majority in the House and the Senate, but the margins are razor-thin. While most Republicans are likely to support the president’s agenda, others may be wary of public backlash. Nuclear testing is especially unpopular in Nevada, a swing state that Trump narrowly won in 2024. Recent polling in Nevada shows that a majority of Democrat, Republican, and unaffiliated voters oppose a resumption of testing.[1]

Even if Trump manages to keep his party in line, he has two years before the midterm elections, in which the president’s party historically loses seats. This would give Democrats the opportunity to disrupt testing preparations, such as when they introduced an amendment to the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act to block funding for any explosive nuclear testing.

#### Otherwise, extinction.

Smith 25 [David Kenneth Smith, senior scientist with the Global Security Directorate at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory USA, former budget senior nuclear security officer, “The Chapter on US Nuclear Testing Must be Closed,” *Stimson*, January 15th 2025, Available Online at https://www.stimson.org/2025/the-chapter-on-us-nuclear-testing-must-be-closed/]

The United States faces escalating global nuclear threats, with multiple nuclear-armed states modernizing arsenals, testing cutting-edged delivery systems, including ballistic and hypersonic missiles, and signaling readiness to cross historic red lines relative to the use of nuclear weapons. Amidst this volatility, proposals for the incoming Trump administration to resume US underground nuclear testing risk undermining decades of international restraint that rendered such tests a global anathema. Resuming nuclear testing by the United States is unnecessary and destabilizing. A return to nuclear testing will weaken established international norms, to include a test ban, and set an uncertain course that brings the world closer to the catastrophic use of these weapons. Proliferators will take their cues from any decision by the United States. Further testing would only incrementally provide new information not already available from comprehensive laboratory studies and simulations. The current moratorium on nuclear testing by the United States is a critical pillar of global nuclear restraint.

### 1NC---CP

#### The United States federal government should:

#### - adequately resource and direct federal agencies in accordance with recommendations from nonpartisan agencies

#### - ensure adequate resources for the GAO and the Office of Personnel’s budget and broaden GAO investigative authority

#### - appoint and install the senior agency leaders that served in the Biden administration

#### -not fire federal career employees in relevant agencies.

**Nonpartisan review solves** expertise, accountability, and deregulation.

**Freeman 21**, \*Archibald Cox Professor of Law, Harvard Law School; \*\*Associate Professor of Law, University of Colorado Law School. (\*Jody, \*\*Sharon Jacobs, December 10, “STRUCTURAL DEREGULATION,” Harvard Law Review, https://harvardlawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/135-Harv.-L.-Rev.-585.pdf)

After a period of structural deregulation, a new President cannot restore agency capacity with the stroke of a pen; he must do it brick by brick.386 The immediate task is to rebuild and strengthen agencies to ensure they are adequately staffed, sufficiently resourced, and appropriately empowered to fulfill their statutory tasks. In some instances, it will be obvious which agencies require bolstering. To the extent their condition may not be clear, independent assessments by nonpartisan agencies like the GAO, or the National Academy of Public Administration, can suggest areas of greatest need.387

During the presidential transition period, an incoming administration is authorized to consult with agency officials, and it normally works with senior civil service at each agency to identify priorities for restoring budget, staffing, and the like.388 In instances where agencies have been badly weakened, the incoming team can draw up plans to move swiftly to shore up staff. The White House would take steps to rebuild both internal and external expertise by, for example, staffing key expert positions that had been eliminated or left unfilled by the prior administration; restoring reassigned or relocated officials to their prior jobs if doing so would advance the agency’s mission; and reestablishing or strengthening statutorily mandated advisory committees.389 To support this work, it would be necessary to properly staff and equip the key personnel agencies, such as the Office of Personnel Management and Office of Federal Procurement Policy, something Presidents from both parties have failed to do in the past.390 An incoming administration might also prioritize appointing internal agency watchdogs such as IGs,391 who, while not critical to an agency’s regulatory capacity per se, help to promote transparency and accountability.392

### 1NC---P

#### Not specifying your agent is a voting issue---key to competition, links to core mechanism-based DAs, and education.

### 1NC---CP

#### The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations ought to condition an escalating series of strikes and disruptions of logistical activities on the United States federal government strengthening collective bargaining rights for civil servants in the United States.

#### Militant union activity is effective at pressuring federal adoption---solves the case and revitalizes militant labor activity

Kagan 25 [Marc Kagan, author of the book manuscript The Fall and Rise and Fall of NYC’s TWU Local 100, 1975–2009, currently being prepared for publication, “Unions Need to Mount a Militant Response to Trump’s Assault,” Jacobin, 4-6-2025, https://jacobin.com/2025/04/unions-trump-federal-workers-militancy]

Too many unions have responded to Donald Trump’s historic attacks on federal workers with little more than words. To beat back his anti-union assault, organized labor needs to break with decades of timidity.

In its statement responding to Donald Trump’s deunionization of most federal workers — voiding existing collective bargaining agreements, canceling their right to negotiate new ones, and eliminating automatic deduction of dues from workers’ paychecks — the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades at first seems to pull no punches. “This may be the biggest attack on the Labor Movement in American history,” it declares. Looking back, it faults the labor movement’s inadequate response in 1981 to Ronald Reagan’s firing of striking air traffic controllers. Then it lamely urges workers to “fight back.”

Regrettably, that inadequate reply to Trump’s authoritarian assault is far from uncommon. While objecting to federal deunionization, the statement of the National Nurses Union, which represents members at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals, doesn’t even mention Trump. Nor does the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) or the Plumbers and Pipefitters. You would search in vain for a statement from my old union, the Transport Workers Union (TWU). Meanwhile, TWU warned its large New York local not to use Trump’s name in any statement concerning federal policy, such as on cuts in transit funding.

With this cowardice, these unions are apparently leaving themselves room to kiss the ring later on. After all, there were unions in Benito Mussolini’s Italy — they just had to toe the line when the Fascist representative in the workplace or the government ministry snapped their fingers. Or perhaps unions are concerned about upsetting Trump supporters in their ranks. Certainly, unions need to be educating their pro-Trump members, but they can’t do that if they are too afraid to even mention the president’s name.

Other unions’ responses have been only marginally better. The AFL-CIO’s home page blames Trump for attacking federal workers’ bargaining rights but then only proposes that people call Congress to complain. Elsewhere, it writes, “now is the time to be even louder” — but suggests no other action. In a similar vein, AFSCME president Lee Saunders declares that his members “are prepared to fight.” RWDSU will “stand with federal workers . . . and we will not remain silent.” LIUNA members “will rise up together to defend our rights.” The IAM “will fight this attack on our nation’s heroes and continue to uplift our dedicated public servants”; it also boasts of filing two lawsuits. OPEIU “call[s] on Congress to take the action necessary to stymie this unilateral undermining of workers’ rights.” The Steelworkers don’t even offer rhetorical solidarity but merely point out that “this executive order undermines our federal institutions and invites true waste.”

So where is this “fight,” beyond lawsuits? After listening to my complaints about unions’ general lack of mobilization for a mid-March anti-cuts, anti-layoffs demonstration in New York City, one leader of a midsize international union told me most unions will remain firmly on the sidelines until the AFL itself issues a call to participate.

Fight . . . or Capitulate?

As other institutions of liberal democracy continue to shy from a real fight, unions — still the largest organized component of the US working class — are desperately needed. Yet in truth, rallying their members in the streets won’t be enough; for the labor “movement” to actually help stop Trumpism, it needs to be preparing now for political strikes in support of democratic as well as union rights, laws, and norms. Because Trump, Elon Musk, and their corporate and Christian nationalist supporters likely won’t be thwarted by lawsuits. And their first response to hundreds of thousands or even millions in the streets may very well be an even quicker tempo and more repression, not less.

What’s necessary, though, is unfortunately anathema to most American unions. For decades — at least since PATCO, if not before — they have practiced and refined policies of risk aversion. My New York City home is sometimes called a “union town,” but this spring marks the fiftieth anniversary of its municipal unions’ decision to capitulate, rather than fight, the advent of American neoliberalism alongside what David Harvey called “the construction of consent.”

In 1975, Gerald Ford, William Simon, and Alan Greenspan saw the city’s plea for federal loan guarantees as an opportunity to call down the curtain on the New Deal/Great Society era. Faced with austerity, wage freezes, and the layoffs of 20 percent of their members, union leaders meekly complied, setting the stage for similar concessions in auto and steel just a few years later. Then they ran to the state capitol begging for help from their own angry members canceling their union memberships. As one observer put it, forcing disgusted workers to pay dues “will help unions be more objective in dealing with employers and better able to pursue a more responsible course of action. . . . [It] will result in more statesmanship on the part of union leaders who are free from the fear of economic blackmail by their members.”

Undoubtedly those leaders rationalized their risk aversion: the fiscal crisis or the threat of Chrysler bankruptcy was surely just a temporary blip from which their unions would soon recover. Or the danger of a head-on challenge to the state and finance capital was too great. Those arguments prevailed over more militant ones urging a fight when unions were still relatively strong.

Today we know unions made a tragic miscalculation. Then, having chosen this path, they continued to acquiesce to neoliberalism year after year. A conciliatory mode of unionism became habitual, reinforced by structural incentives meant to temper their tone and actions and the power of the law. Unions embraced a culture of safety, passivity, and defensiveness. Even worse, leaders promoted successors with similar views; such was the process of Darwinian natural selection at union halls — in New York and across the country. That has allowed the steady drip, drip, drip of declining union numbers and power. Only a relative handful of unions and union locals have resisted this trend.

Today, with potentially far greater consequences, unions are practicing the policies they know all too well. The rationalizations are easy to make: It’s too bad what is happening to federal workers, but we are too weak to fight Trump. Better to keep our heads down, mitigate risk, minimize our losses, and hope to staunch the pain by electing Democrats in 2026 and 2028.

Or, as some have already, by filing lawsuits. There’s nothing wrong with demanding that Trump obey the law, but this dam is already leaking, and we should expect that soon it will be breached in many places as the Justice Department maneuvers to find friendlier courts. Then what?

A Program for Labor

Given the urgency of the moment, vital organizational tasks need to be pressed forward at the same time as escalating actions. Even well-intentioned top-down edicts will not muster the forces we need to oppose state power. Basic union-building work must proceed at triple time, such as intensive outreach to, education of, and support for, stewards or equivalent shop-floor union reps. That’s critical to spur the kind of discussions in the workplaces that can engage and activate members while neutralizing and then winning over 2024 Trump voters in the unions’ ranks.

This is just Organizing 101. Some unions already know how to do this, while others will hopefully learn, and learn quickly. The real question is volition: whether unions have the will to take the step from bread-and-butter economic issues to anti-Trump political ones, and from indecisiveness to militancy.

Unions need to provide multiple points of entry to political action, which include a way for every worker to step up: some very broad, others more militant, enabling the activist core to provide a spark that can draw others forward. Similarly, more militant or organized unions need to forge ahead, modeling the strategies and tactics that their less organized counterparts will also need to embrace. And more militant branches, locals, and workplaces will need to move faster than moribund national leaders may like, pulling them along and pressuring them to move from lip service to action.

In the present climate, mobilizing members, getting them in the streets in great numbers, and especially preparing for politically oriented walkouts and strikes that the government will deem illegal is very risky. As our activity intensifies, so will state repression. Union assets may be seized, and union leaders may be arrested.

Yet opposition today — immediately, with the resources we can muster, even while seeking to rally our forces to greater efforts — is the least risky course if we hope to preserve real unions and what’s left of American democracy. It’s already clear that to wait for leadership from other major institutional forces is wishful thinking. Unions must provide that leadership; and the more militant and progressive unions must provide leadership to the rest of the labor “movement” — not through press releases, but through deeds that provide an example that others can follow.

#### Union militancy rebuilds labor power to tackle corporate threats including climate change and mass surveillance

Vgontzas 23 [Nantina Vgontzas, PhD in sociology from New York University, City University of New York, “Toward Realignment: Big Tech, Organized Labor, and the Politics of the Future of Work,” Labor Studies Journal, Vol. 48, Issue 3, 08/25/2023, Sage Journals, p. 265–275]

A future that revalues workers will require not only revitalizing the U.S. labor movement but realigning its political alliances and, specifically, eschewing compromises that further entrench big tech as a center of neoliberal power. During the twentieth century, the Democratic Party incorporated organized labor by linking the micropolitics of capitalist shopfloor control to a macropolitics of industrial growth and full employment. This framework of political incorporation foreclosed the wider class solidarity needed for expanding the reach of the labor movement and, eventually, for maintaining its relevance altogether. As the Democratic Party turned to cultivating a new base in finance, tech, and their elite workforces, the unions of the new economy, based largely in the service sector, made limited gains amid an ongoing bipartisan retrenchment of the industrial welfare state. In recent years, neoliberal hegemony has begun to be challenged, and nascent organizing among Amazon warehouse workers, Uber and Lyft drivers, and other frontline tech workers holds the potential for restoring the fortunes of labor. For parts of the labor officialdom, this moment is an opportunity to revive the old incorporation model – in exchange for ceding the right to contest algorithmic control and employment status. I see this strategy as not only reinforcing insecure work but preempting the formation of coalitions that can tackle the vast societal issues exacerbated by algorithmic control, from police surveillance and military expansion to housing insecurity and climate change. In this piece, I call for a political realignment that centers the agency of the working class in contesting the influence of big tech on and off the shopfloor, rather than serving as its junior partner. My case has four parts. I begin by sketching the limits of contemporary labor experimentation in the United States. Second, I review how Revaluing Work(ers) clarifies normative questions in debates about the future of work, while third, I discuss the political stakes of these questions through a critique of contemporary labor incorporation. Last, I lay out how breaking with big tech would provide opportunities to transcend the deteriorating status quo and reconnect issues of shopfloor control to a transformative vision of political governance.

The Limits of Contemporary Labor Experimentation

When today's elites discuss the future of work, they typically mean the end of work as such. From their perspective, technology is a means for intensifying labor on the path to automating it (Frey and Osborne 2017; Acemoglu and Restrepo 2017; Ford 2016). Yet the past reveals a more nuanced reality, one in which workers have leveraged their position within capitalist production to contest their exploitation and displacement. Through trade unions and mass parties, workers in the twentieth century changed the terms of technical innovation from being singularly dictated by the profit motive to accommodating concerns over their welfare and the common good. At its best, workers incorporated technology within a vision of transforming the very power relations under which work is organized, challenging the terms of property ownership itself. Under their control, technology could be used to abolish not work, but alienated work. As I will elaborate below, it is this radical vision of wrangling technology away from capitalist control that labor needs to embrace again.

Of course, the idea of workers exerting control over an industrial society receded with the global neoliberal turn. In 1973, the effort that got closest to using computerization to distribute decision power in factory management, Project Cybersyn in Chile, was abandoned with the overthrow of the socialist Allende administration (Medina 2011). With the assault on worker institutions and welfare states that spread during a global economic downturn, elites eroded popular forms of sovereignty that they deemed interfered with market efficiency. The repression of labor and concomitant restructuring of production formed the backdrop against which mainstream economists, consulting firms, and ideologues of capital muted the role of collective agency in nascent discussions of the future of work, focusing instead on the technological innovations that facilitated an ongoing dispersal of supply chains (Singh et al. 2021). Despite producing some of the earliest writings on the future of work (AFL-CIO 1983, 1985), organized labor was steadily excised as a stakeholder in corporate governance, a maneuver that was made explicit in the 1997 annual statement of the Business Roundtable (Kochan 2020). Ensuing discourse insidiously enshrined market fundamentalism, at once abstracting modern computing from its social context of capitalist control while deputizing it as the main agent of social change (Schulze-Cleven 2021). This shift naturalized technological disruptions of work while putting the burden of adjustment on workers through individualistic solutions like workforce development. Minimal purchase was put on the prospect of state regulation, let alone worker contestation.

Since the 2008 financial crisis, neoliberal orthodoxy has come under question as waves of mass mobilization have challenged economic, political, and social inequality. Amid this revival in movement activity, labor organizations with the support of philanthropic partners have sought a seat back at the table with capital. In 2015, executives from Lyft, Instacart, Etsy, Handy, and other corporations signed a joint letter with leaders from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), New America, and other civil society organizations that called for the creation of a digital portable benefits platform, which would enable workers misclassified as independent contractors and thus disqualified from national labor protections to transfer benefits like paid time off from one employer to the next (Portable Benefits 2015). In 2017, Google named the NDWA among its Future of Work grant recipients, seeding a digital portable benefits platform named Alia, while the AFL-CIO revived its earlier work by establishing the Commission on the Future of Work and Unions. The next year, a Future of Work(ers) agenda was proposed by then Jobs With Justice director Sarita Gupta, Justice for Janitors campaign architect Stephen Lerner, and Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor director Joseph McCartin. The Ford Foundation went on to establish a program under the same name, while similar efforts have been introduced by the Russell Sage Foundation, Aspen Institute, and labor studies and employment relations programs at universities. Most recently, these efforts have materialized as legislation: In spring 2022, the Portable Benefits for Independent Workers Pilot Program Act was introduced to the U.S. Senate with significant bipartisan support. Yet these steps fail to recast the terms on which the U.S. labor movement is politically incorporated by the state. A future in which the working class controls its labor and destiny will require a realignment of political alliances such that it can transcend a decaying framework of incorporation and reclaim its protagonist role as an agent of social transformation.

Transcending Technological Determinism Through Normative Commitments

Revaluing Work(ers) provides a strong foundation for this endeavor. The volume's analysis of the future of work through a historical and interdisciplinary lens transcends technological determinism by making explicit the normative stakes of the future of work debates. By drawing out the implicit values of mainstream future of work discourses, the book demonstrates the uncritical assumption of a forward march of technology as highly ideological in its valorization of capitalist control. As Michael Merrill and Dorothy Sue Cobble (2021) argue in the book, the notion that artificial intelligence and machine learning are qualitative advances in technology is not only temporally myopic; it overlooks the social context in which property owners have long used technology to dominate and immiserate workers. This context can be traced to the coterminous development of plantation slavery and capitalist industrialization, which saw the transfer and extension of data gathering practices across these systems of labor commodification (Rosenthal 2018). Entangled market and racial logics of computation persist to this day and indeed have been exacerbated within the deregulatory context of neoliberalism, as can be starkly observed in Amazon warehouses, UPS trucks, Ubers, and other algorithmically surveilled workplaces. In recentering workers, the volume demonstrates that technological innovation is not some neutral force but a means for subordinating them.

The volume also envisions alternative futures of work beyond domination and displacement. Drawing on examples from energy workers, domestic workers, and education workers, the authors show how workers are fighting for a future where regenerative care work and its workers are valued. It does not call for a simple return to the past; the compromises that labor made with capital in the twentieth century were ecologically unsustainable and insufficiently democratic. Earlier periods of unionism and policymaking in the United States entailed accommodating to white capitalist minority rule. To avoid these pitfalls, the volume suggests concrete tactics in the form of unions combining sectoral bargaining with bargaining for the common good, state policies promoting universal health care and green stimulus, and technological innovations in care work that would strengthen benefits for workers historically excluded from the welfare state.

How can these various efforts to revalue work be cohered through the vision of unalienating it? The social question begs the political: Whereas the social position of the working class gives it the potential to reshape the contemporary political economy around principles of care and sustainability, that potential must be activated by “articulating different sectors and demands into blocs, which, in turn, provide the mass impetus for the reformation of states and other institutions” (de Leon, Desai and Tuğal 2015, 27). History is instructive here. In the last century, except during revolutionary periods when the working class sought to smash the capitalist state, labor generally was incorporated by the state through a redistribution of the social surplus and legal recognition of collective bargaining rights (Collier and Collier 1991). Across countries, labor morphed from “being a problem for the state to police, to being a constituency for the state to address and administer” (Eidlin 2016, 496). But it did so in quite different ways. In the social democratic and developmental states of Europe and the postcolonial world, this incorporation was mediated by labor parties that passed social reforms upon coming into power (Eley 2002). The United States, meanwhile, was unique in lacking a labor party; at best, organized labor served as a junior partner in political coalitions dominated by capital (Davis 1980). This legacy imposes heavy burdens on a nascent U.S. socialist movement today, including the political marginalization of the working class (Moody 2022), the depoliticization and bureaucratization of its organizations (Zeitlin and Stepan-Norris 2002), and a limited welfare state that since its inception has narrowed the scope of mass solidarity through racialized and gendered exclusions (Dubal Forthcoming). My analysis makes the case for a radical break with existing patterns of labor's political incorporation in the United States.

The Future of Work as a Political Project

All three pillars of labor's political incorporation during the twentieth century deserve reevaluation. The first pillar is the disconnect between how the working class is organized economically and how it becomes organized politically (Wood 1981; Luxemburg 2008 [1900]). Economically, the working class is organized as a mass whose location in the capitalist production process gives it the potential to disrupt the source of capitalist power. Politically, the masses are disorganized as individuals who then become activated through parties, unions, cooperatives, neighborhood associations, and other organizations (Poulantzas 1969; Przeworski 1980). This individualization has constrained the coordination of the masses across workplaces and neighborhoods, and therefore the development of organizational, educational, and militant capacities needed to overthrow capitalist rule.

The second pillar consists of the constraints put on the two major forms of representative democratic participation available to the working class, political parties, and trade unions. Not only have parties that are programmatically committed to worker interests had to appeal to the middle class to secure a majority electoral base, but upon taking power, the imperative to maintain stability as managers of a capitalist state has attenuated their commitment to backing labor strikes and other activities disrupting capitalist hegemony, particularly once capital escalates conflicts with its own strikes (de Leon, Desai and Tuğal 2015; Block 1987). Meanwhile, unions have also served as contradictory vehicles of change (Vgontzas 2020). The first century of the labor movement saw the section of the workforce with the greatest structural power in the production process, skilled workers, frame the struggle for control over production and technical innovation as a defense of their craft, divorced from broader questions of social and political power. Even when radical shop stewards participated in revolutionary processes, they did not connect their struggle for worker control to a political strategy of abolishing capitalism (Hoffrogge 2015). Following the revolutionary defeats of the interwar and postwar periods, a tendency toward “economism” was institutionalized through regulated industrial relations. In many countries, political strikes were outlawed, and unions accepted capitalist control over the production process in exchange for the legal right to bargain over wages and benefits, otherwise known as the “effort bargain” (Hammond 1957; Murray and Schwartz 2019). Political demands were effectively relegated to the parliamentary arena.

As a third pillar, economism was legitimated by a hegemonic framework that linked the shopfloor effort bargain to macroeconomic goals of national growth, full employment, and welfare benefits (Brenner 2006; Burawoy 1979). The “social partnership” template was first forged in Western Europe, where the state used welfare as a mechanism of political consent and control (Tuğal 2009; Panitch 1981). In the United States, a postwar structure of enterprise bargaining circumscribed support for universal welfare, which union bureaucracies perceived as a threat to the competitive advantage they offered as agents bargaining benefits at the company level (Lichtenstein 1995). Moreover, in a settler colonial state that in its constitution entrenched white elite rule, this muted impulse to fight on behalf of the general interests of the working class was compounded by the racialized exclusion of agricultural and domestic workers from labor protections (Roediger 1991). Social partnership, narrow in both form and scope, limited the potential for class solidarity. In the postwar period, this limitation was expressed through the liberal alliance of white workers and farmers with a ruling faction of multinational manufacturers, banks, insurance, and the military complex (Patel and Goodman 2020).

This alliance did not endure. As a profitability crisis in the global manufacturing sector spread throughout the wider economy in the 1970s, state managers accelerated the ongoing process of financialization in the U.S., and in turn, the Democratic Party deprioritized industry and in its place nurtured the growth of finance and tech as a foundation for recomposing its elite base (Van Deventer 2020; Ferguson and Rogers 1986; Vgontzas and Whittaker 2021). As capital intensified its assault on industrial unions, forcing them into concessionary bargaining in their strongholds while outsourcing production to nonunion sites in the U.S. and Global South, the U.S. labor movement saw itself renewed largely through organizing efforts in the “new economy” (Fantasia and Voss 2004). Through campaigns like Justice for Janitors, SEIU and other unions grew by mobilizing immigrant workers in the service sector while lobbying for immigrant rights amid an increasingly harsher deportation regime (Lopez 2004; Milkman 2006). But for the most part, this renewal effort continued to rely on the social partnership framework, in which union leaders and staffers liaised with politicians and nonprofit officials while restricting worker engagement to tightly controlled pressure campaigns. The goal was to inflict enough brand damage that pressures employers to negotiate with union officials, who then agreed to give management unilateral rights over the conditions and terms of employment in exchange for minimal wage increases (Voss and Sherman 2000; McAlevey 2016; Fine 2005). Absent from this approach was the activation of militant workplace leadership that could obstruct operations and reshape power relations on the shopfloor.

At the policy level, neoliberalized social partnership has translated into technocratic coalitions where leading private sector unions and allied nonprofits pursue reforms that are compatible with the main priorities of the Chamber of Commerce, such as minimum wage ordinances rather than more ambitious demands like corporate taxes. This Democratic partnership machine operates alongside the more longstanding and conservative partnership machine of building trades unions, construction employer associations, and related interests in private equity and fossil fuels. Meanwhile, in the public sector, union reform efforts and strike waves have led to more militant bargaining that challenges the austerity policies of local governments, but these have not yet coalesced into any kind of political realignment. In its current configuration, the labor movement remains unable to challenge the structural power of finance, tech, real estate, insurance, oil, and other core sectors of the new economy. It is incorporated within an accumulation regime that is hollowing out its own social and political relevance.

Contesting Tech and Transcending Incorporation

The future of the U.S. labor movement depends on transcending its current patterns of political incorporation. Some terms are more fixed than others. The first two pillars of incorporation discussed above are constitutive of capitalism. The disconnect between how the working class is economically and politically organized, and the pressures that its organizations face as a consequence ultimately of capitalist control over investment, are structural constraints on how workers build power. It is the third pillar – a mode of labor incorporation that involves economism and partnership between capital, labor, and the state – that is historically conjunctural, and that has already become undone to a large extent. Labor has considerable latitude to rearticulate its relationship to capital and the state through a decisive break with ingrained dynamics.

For now, the technocratic wing of the U.S. labor movement is attempting to shore up the partnership framework with industrialists in big tech. The momentum around portable benefits has coincided with various state legislatures considering sectoral bargaining reforms that would make it easier for unions to represent gig workers – in exchange for conceding their right to bargain over digital piece payment and algorithmic management. These initiatives, scaffolded by the Clean Slate for Worker Power project at Harvard Law School, have been promoted by Uber and Lyft in alliance with various union locals in California, New York, Connecticut, Illinois, and Washington, which in April 2022 became the first state to pass the proposal into law. This has not come without critique. As Veena Dubal (2021, 13) has argued, historically, sectoral bargaining emerged where organized labor had institutional protections that it could leverage to raise the employment floor, whereas “current schemes – presented as a compromise between a few hyper-valued companies with significant capital and a large vulnerable workforce – were drafted as a mechanism to limit rights and near universal standards.” Indeed, conservatives ranging from former Mitt Romney advisor Oren Cass and American Enterprise Institute fellow J.D. Vance to former U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions and U.S. Senator Marco Rubio have gone so far as to support this version of sectoral bargaining as a means for substituting labor protections (American Compass 2020). In this sense, portable benefits should be cause for concern. In a context where a weak labor movement would be premising its renewal not on concerted activity but mere representation, privatized benefits could contribute a material basis toward further foreclosing the horizon of universal protections.

Rather than brokering a neoliberal bargain that would enshrine the precarious work on which barely profitable platform companies depend, the U.S. labor movement has an opportunity to nurture growing concerted activity in the tech sector as a basis for establishing a mass politics whereby the working class is not incorporated by the capitalist state but rather, over time, challenging capitalist rule. In San Diego, taxi workers are collaborating with tech workers and researchers to become integrated as the first and last leg of public transit in place of privatized options that have contributed to increased congestion and pollution, while throughout California and other states, the independent union Rideshare Drivers United has created a hybrid organizing framework in which workers are recruited through social media and app-based technologies and over time integrated into organizing committees (Irani et al. 2021; Dolber 2020). Meanwhile, at Amazon, groups like Amazonians United, Awood Center, Amazon Labor Union, and Amazon Workers United have organized walkouts and other direct actions to challenge a racialized and gendered regime of surveillance that harms the health of workers and their communities (Vgontzas 2022a). This focus on the algorithmic shopfloor has spurred workers to connect with others across the supply chain. For instance, at the height of militant action during the pandemic, warehouse workers coordinated with office tech workers organized through Amazon Employees for Climate Justice to challenge unsafe protocols, situating the struggle to gain control over their work within the struggle to reimagine care infrastructures (Vgontzas 2022b). Such efforts, which do not predicate their power on the profitability of firms and in some cases are open to dismantling their technologies, constitute a refusal of a partnership model that in the past traded wider community concerns for narrow economistic interests. As care and climate crises intensify, the labor movement can work to facilitate regional alliances of warehouse workers and drivers capable of disrupting the chokepoints of regional markets, community alliances with environmental justice groups fighting to restrict warehouse emissions and racial justice groups fighting to curtail tech surveillance, as well as multiscalar alliances between logistics and tech workers who can build collective capacities and visions around reconfiguring infrastructures in service of the green internationalist good. It is along these multiple axes that labor may overcome the division between the economic and the political to reach a future of social transformation.

#### Global warming ensures multiple pathways to extinction through non-linear feedback loops

Spangenberg 25 [Joachim H. Spangenberg Professor at University of Versailles St. Quentin, Research Coordinator at the Sustainable Europe Research Institute, member of the Executive Committee of the International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Responsibility, PhD in Economics. Citing, among others: Chi Xu, Professor of Ecology at Nanjing University; Timothy A. Kohler, Professor of Anthropology at Washington State University, Fellow at the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature; Tim Lenton, Professor of Earth Science at University of Exeter, PhD, University of East Anglia; Jens-Christian Svenning, Professor in the Department of Bioscience at Aarhus University; Marten Scheffer, Professor at Wageningen University; Nicole D. Miranda, Professor of Engineering Science at the University of Oxford; Jesus Lizana, Associate Professor in Engineering Science at the University of Oxford; Sarah Sparrow, Associate Professor in Environmental Impact, University of Oxford; Miriam Zachau-Walker, PhD Candidate in Engineering Science; Peter A.G. Watson, PhD, Senior Lecturer at School of Geographical Sciences at Bristol University; David C.H. Wallom, Professor in Informatics at Oxford; Radhika Khosla, PhD, Associate Professor at the School of Geography and the Environment at Oxford; Malcolm McCulloch, PhD, Professor of Engineering at Oxford, “The roadmap to collapse: whatever the last summers have been like for you, one thing is clear: you are currently experiencing the coolest period of your lives,” Consumption and Society Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 141-55, 2025]

Science

The effects of such a strong warming are still insufficiently researched – some scientists speak of the ‘climate endgame’ (Kemp et al, 2022). Climate researchers have constantly underestimated both the extent and the speed of change, and economists, who have long played down climate change, still massively misperceive science (economics is a scholastic system, not a science: Diesendorf et al, 2024), underestimate the social costs of the climate crisis, and thus misadvise policy (Rennert et al, 2022).

2030

Economy and Politics

The war in Ukraine has ended with a compromise, Russia keeping Crimea, but the Near East conflict is close to a nuclear confrontation. The United States has withdrawn support from Ukraine, leaving the multi-billion job to rebuild the country to Europe; no comparable efforts are undertaken in Palestine. The significant weaponry production facilities built up during the war in Ukraine continue producing, flooding the world with exports from Europe, Russia and the United States, and fuelling military conflicts around the world. The international order, international regulations and norms are eroding. Throughout the world economy, resource constraints are felt – this is a major challenge to the EU refining economy model (importing cheap resources at low cost, exporting sophisticated products at high ones). With these effects on top of the decades-old trend of secular stagnation, economic growth has come to a standstill. To secure resource access and trade, the major powers (United States, China, Russia and their satellites) increasingly use military means.

The electrification of all spheres of life continues, following US standards for the West, and Chinese ones for the rest of the world. Artificial intelligence and Large Language Models made the share of global greenhouse gas emissions double from about 4 per cent of the global total – an unbroken trend driven by demand and supply. Governments invest heavily in subsidising technical solutions to still not declining CO2 emissions like carbon capture and storage (CCS – capturing CO2 from production processes, purifying and compressing it, transporting it to on-shore and off-shore underground dumping sites and storing it there). However, the volumes stored remain marginal, and the process is expensive and increases overall energy consumption. The new ‘hydrogen ready’ natural gas fired power stations built in the first half of the decade continue running on fossil fuels as the limited amount of ‘green hydrogen’ available is used for production processes. Hence, even if some of them are converted to hydrogen, the hydrogen they use is generated from natural gas. So while gasoline use is decreasing, natural gas consumption increases steeply.

Consumers are still unwilling to change habits – solar energy production in households has been growing significantly as it saves costs, but overall energy consumption is still increasing. Reduction of heat demand falls short of what is needed to limit the climate crisis, sustainable mobility including less car use, and even the market share of electric vehicles, is only growing slowly – bans on fossil fuel cars have been abandoned under the pressure of public opinion and conservative parties. Sufficiency is still anathema, even more so as expectations of rising incomes are being disappointed. After a short phase of war Keynesianism (growth through military investment), economic growth is further slowing down due to higher resource and energy costs, insecure supply chains, re-shoring (relocating industries back into the national economy – a kind of insurance against supply risks, associated with less division of tasks and higher cost).

Society

Social inequality is increasing, as the richer strata of society are better able to protect themselves from climate impacts than the poorer, but this is accepted after decades of neoliberal education – social consideration is dwindling, self-fulfilment at the expense of others is on the rise (Benz, 2022), the brutalisation of elites has taken hold of the middle classes (Heitmeyer, 2012). The crisis of care, remunerated and voluntary, is accelerating (Spangenberg and Lorek, 2022). As in the past after floods, droughts, cyclones and heat waves, violence against women and members of gender minorities is on the rise – mental stress, drug abuse, economic problems, food insecurity and poor social infrastructure after climate disasters are the immediate triggers (Rodrigues, 2022).

The readiness to employ violence in all kinds of conflicts, or just for the fun of it, continues to increase – police, fire brigades and ambulances are attacked, as are local politicians. As frightened people withdraw from such engagement, public security and democracy are suffering, and extremism is on the rise. Together with the increasing income polarisation, this leads to emerging unrest, intensifying social tensions exploited by the far right/neo-fascists; and populist parties win majorities.

Climate

The global temperature rise has surpassed 1.5°C and is on its way to 2° to 3°C (Carrington, 2022). The causes are manifold – besides the lack of political will and sufficient funding, and institutional feasibility constraints, the conversion of many economic sectors is failing due to a lack of skilled workers, especially in handicraft professions. Second, physical resources are lacking, not only because of unreliable supply chains, but also because minerals and metals are not available in sufficient quantities – past expansion plans have systematically ignored the finite nature of resources. Given the lack of resources, competition of decarbonisation strategies with digital applications and armament is leading to a price explosion that is slowing down the expansion of renewable energies. NATO members have increased their military spending to 2 per cent of their GDP, causing annual additional emissions larger than those of Russia, the world’s largest natural gas producer. Accelerated clean energy production reduces the energy cost, but contributes little to reducing the overall emissions.

Due to insufficient decarbonisation, lack of conservation of materials and energy, and the influence of the fossil fuel industry, greenhouse gas emissions remain too high. For example, since 2022, the 12 largest oil and gas companies alone have spent €103 million per day on the development and exploitation of new oil and gas fields (Carrington, 2021). Correspondingly, emissions have increased by 14 per cent since 2020 instead of falling by 50 per cent as required (McKie, 2022). Governments did nothing to prevent oil and gas multinationals from embarking on these projects, which clearly made compliance with the 1.5° limit impossible (Carrington and Taylor, 2022).

As a result of higher evaporation, summer drought is the new normal in Europe, including heat waves and large-scale forest fires (up 40 per cent in the Mediterranean). The number of heat days has doubled compared to 1971–81 and the number of frost days has dropped significantly. At the same time, there are extreme cold spells (persistent low temperatures of up to minus 20°C in Central Europe and massive snowfalls in the Mediterranean) due to polar air intrusions, caused by the weakening of the circumpolar jet stream. The ongoing Amazon dieback has turned wider parts of the basin from carbon sinks into carbon emission sources, further accelerating climate change.

Although heavy rainfall on land has increased by 16 per cent in Europe, and massive investments in flood protection are required, more than 270 million people suffer from water shortages, and in some regions water has to be rationed regularly. Water-intensive agricultural crops are being cut back, ploughing is becoming problematic. Harvests are at risk due to the mix of heat, drought, heavy rain and frost periods, while varieties genetically optimised for one environmental condition fail under the other conditions. In particular, winter cereals, depending on a prolonged period of low temperatures before they can shoot and flower (vernalisation), produce significantly reduced yields.

The collapse of the Greenland ice sheet is accelerating, but it is not yet clear by when it will have melted completely, raising global sea levels by seven metres. Decision-makers are hoping for the long term and postponing protective measures for coastal regions that go beyond incremental dike increases. The tipping points of the climate, first exceeded in the early 2020s, are becoming a cascade (Armstrong McKay et al, 2022). Migration and immigration of species result in communities that have never existed in the past 10,000 years, altering the spectrum of ecosystem services provided. The restoration of ecosystems and their services proves to be impossible.

Health

In particular in ageing societies, health costs are spiralling out of control (in European public health systems less than in the United States). The problem is aggravated by the additional challenges caused by environmental degradation, like more frequent pandemics, new infectious diseases and the curbs on medical research introduced to minimise the risk of terrorists using bio-medical know-how to produce and disseminate bioweapons (Brent et al, 2024).

The areas suitable for malaria transmission have grown by 10 per cent and more where re-wetting of wetlands was implemented. Disease vectors such as the tiger mosquito are forming stable local populations in formerly temperate climate zones, ticks continue to spread, and known tropical pathogens are spreading at an increasing rate (Mora et al, 2022). It is not possible to prevent the new waves of infection through precautionary measures due to the multitude of mechanisms of action.

2040

Economy

The obstacles to growth already manifest in 2030 have been growing, and new ones have emerged, for individual countries (mostly the heavily export-dependent ones like China and Germany), and for the world economy as a whole. Already 15 years ago, economic research estimated that an increase in global temperature of 1°C would lead to a 12 per cent decline in global GDP (Bilal and Känzig, 2024), and the ‘locked in’ global economic damage caused by global warming up to the year 2050 was estimated to be almost US$60,000 billion, corresponding to 30 per cent of the global economy (Kotz et al, 2024) – now the bill has to be paid. Add to this the expenditure on coastal protection, relocation of dykes and partial abandonment of cities and settlements due to the faster than expected rise in sea levels now and in the next decades (Taberna, 2022), what we have been facing since 2030 is just the beginning of a long-term, climate change-induced recession of the entire global economy (Kotz et al, 2024).

Hence, after years of stagnation, economic growth has turned negative. The economic reason is that to generate growth, the annual investment must be higher than what is needed to compensate for loss to wear and tear, and the requirements of technological development – otherwise the production potential does not increase. Investments are financed from the surplus of the previous year, plus by credit. The latter is limited in the private sector by the risk of over-indebtedness, and in the public sector by the necessity to keep redemption below a level impinging on key policy priorities, and to limit the regressive effects of taxpayers financing the interest for rich lenders. Hence the necessary massive defensive investments in climate adaptation, the repair of environmental damages, protection of biodiversity (not least for food security) and cleaning the environment from health-threatening pollution with particulate matter, microplastics and the like – economically necessary to avoid future losses – begin crowding out investments in expanding the production potential. The increased spending on CCS and hydrogen processes and infrastructures, armaments, and business subsidies for climate neutral production (state subsidies cover a significant share of the European chemical industry’s 2021–50 decarbonisation funding gap of US$550 billion [Scott, 2024]), and so on, exacerbates the situation. Furthermore, the health systems are at the brink of collapse due to heat-induced treatment needs, and with them the stability of an ageing society (Romanello et al, 2021). Such investments are classified as ‘defensive’, as they prevent damages accumulating, but are not (or only to a certain part) enhancing the production potential. Subsidies are claimed as for the business sector, defensive investment needs are mostly the result of mandatory legal obligations. Innovation, dematerialization and digitalization suffer, in particular as decarbonization, digitalization and weapons production are competing for the same or similar physical resources. As defensive investments are crowding out business production capacity enhancing investments, the production potential is shrinking, and GDP declines. For some time, public authorities have tried to compensate such investment capital scarcity with public funding, but the required level is surpassing all estimates of public fund availability. The necessary level of government spending begins to lead to a higher tax burden on corporate profits and to declining real incomes, public disapproval and social unrest.

Consumption

Consumption, which has been the main driver of ecological burdens since the turn of the millennium, is declining – the consumer society is running out of consumers (Spangenberg and Kurz, 2023). However, this externally enforced reduction in consumption leads an ever fiercer defence of privileges, less willingness to voluntarily reduce consumption, or to share the remaining wealth with others, in particular with the Global South. Hence, public pressure results in an end to development cooperation and (the always insufficient) financial support for climate adaptation to poor countries. The result is more climate refugees, clashing with a decreasing willingness to welcome any kind of migrants as they are – wrongly – perceived as competitors for the diminishing consumption space. Consumer dissatisfaction spills over into increasing scepticism regarding the liberal democratic system – an institutional crisis is emerging (Kalke et al, 2024).

Politics

The global political situation has become volatile, with a group of major powers struggling for dominance, while the majority of countries tries to navigate the stormy waters in changing collaborations and confrontations. Trade wars and patent conflicts prevail; international regimes of intellectual property rights have collapsed and free trade in resources has come to a virtual standstill. Armed conflicts are fueled by geopolitics and upscaled by weapons export since 2025, resource wars increase, but in order to avoid nuclear escalation, the major powers impose an allocation system for raw materials, with quotas for all countries (which many consider a neocolonial means to deny access to non-affiliate countries). There are political and armed conflicts about access to increasingly short freshwater supplies. The global water crisis takes its toll, hunger is getting normalized in many parts of the world, due to declining harvests due to heat stress and lack of irrigation water.

Public pressure demands a ‘Fortress’ policy, denying climate refugees access to the still relatively affluent countries – a demand the strong extreme right is more than happy to fulfil (nativism, economic fears, and so on). Permanent involvement in resource wars and repulsion fights against refugees at all borders leads to a militarizing of societies, but also to a more favorable view on elements of a war economy. This, together with the shortage of physical resources, has drastic political consequences.

Domestically, in most European countries and beyond, politicians have pulled the emergency brake and declared both a ‘climate war’ (mostly neglecting other environmental problems) and ‘identity defense’ (rejection not only of refugees, but all ‘foreign’ inhabitants – at the expense of lacking skills and workers in the labor force). As the permanent resource constraints and the high cost of enforcing access make it impossible to any longer ignore the problem of overconsumption, decisionmakers try to find ways to accommodate the internationally set resource quota. The limited materials are auctioned off nationally, with special purchase rights for non-commercial users. This mechanism, borrowed from war economics, leads to a massive restructuring of industry, as high resource efficiency becomes a prerequisite for a secured further existence. In order to limit overconsumption, those consumer goods that have become scarce are given away on non-tradable ration coupons. This ensures that scarce goods are available to all and are not consumed or hoarded by a privileged few at the expense of the general public.

2050

Rising temperature, rising sea levels, rising migration

The emergency measures introduced in 2040 have managed to prevent or at least postpone the collapse otherwise due. Nevertheless, global warming surpasses 2.5°C (that is, 5°C over land), triggered by tipping cascades such as the melting of permafrost regions since 2040, when the conditions for their permanent existence were no longer given, transforming large parts of Siberia, Alaska and northern Canada into barely usable, greenhouse gas emitting swamps (IPCC, 2021; Fewster et al, 2022) plagued by wildfires. Wetlands and moors are drying out – and thus releasing additional CO2. Deadly heat waves and temperatures of over 50°C are no longer uncommon in the tropics, and temperate latitudes exceed 40°C in summer, causing tens of thousands of heat deaths annually in Europe. In many regions in the South, but also in European regions such as the Spanish highlands, human life is no longer possible.

Anthropogenic warming is casting billions of people outside of the boundaries of normal human habitation, with abundant negative consequences for human wellbeing, mortality and levels of international migration (Scheffer et al, 2024). A billion people are facing coastal flooding risk from rising seas, and more people are forced out of their homes by weather disasters, in particular flooding, sea level rise and tropical cyclones (Selby et al, 2024). Once warming exceeds a few more tenths of a degree, it will lead to large areas becoming uninhabitable (IPCC, 2022).

While most refugees stay in neighbouring countries until their capacities are exhausted, many move to the North, only temporarily stopped at the crumbling military border defence of the EU (less so, and later, the United States). Migration is enhanced by the neocolonial economic policy of the dominant powers, with militarily supported land-grabbing where fertile ground and water are available (for example, Ukraine) to overcome domestic food supply volatility problems.

Freshwater scarcity

Heavy rainfall on land has increased by more than a third; summer precipitation comes in the form of flash floods, which only partly seep into the ground and replenish the groundwater available for dry periods. Freshwater has become scarce and is part of the rationing system. Private swimming pools, watering lawns or washing private cars have been banned. Not least because of the melting of the last glaciers in the Alps and the Andes/Rocky Mountains, river levels fluctuate extremely, affecting both shipping and summer water supplies. More than 390 million people are suffering from water scarcity, and their number is bound to rise. The thawing of the Himalayan glaciers accelerates (they had lost 40 per cent of their area by 2020 [Lee et al, 2021]), putting the regular water supply of two billion people at risk, who depend on the waters of Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra, Irrawaddy, Mekong and Yangtzekiang (Wester et al, 2019).

Sea levels are rising faster than expected and are approaching one metre. Salt water penetrates the groundwater reservoirs in coastal regions and all major river deltas, putting some of the ‘bread baskets’ of the world at risk (for example, in Egypt, Vietnam, India, Bangladesh, Argentina, the United States). The tidal flats and salt marshes along the North Sea and similar coastal regions are under pressure – where dikes are not moved back, sacrificing land to the sea and allowing salt marshes to move inland, they are flooded and some of the most biologically diverse habitats on earth are thus lost (Saintilan et al, 2022). The oceans are not only becoming warmer and hence low-oxygen, but also more acidic, affecting countless species along the entire food chain. Shell-forming animal species are dying out, fish stocks – until 2040 a major protein source of humankind – have more or less collapsed due to past overfishing, persistent ocean pollution, acidification and the loss of breeding grounds (temperate salt marshes decline, coral reefs are gone). Habitat for nearly 20 per cent of all insect species has at least halved.

Food (in)security

The cultivation of wheat, barley, rye, oats and maize is hardly possible anymore (wheat becomes sterile at 30°C, maize pollen at 35°C); agriculture has switched to millet/sorghum and chickpeas instead of wheat, yams instead of potatoes, as well as cassava/ manioc and sweet potatoes. Small farmers have not survived the crisis economically. In addition, higher CO2 concentrations reduce the quality of proteins in cereals and fruits, and cows have to digest more grass for the same milk yield.

The number of frost days has decreased sharply, in many years they no longer occur – a problem for food production from fruit trees, vegetables and wheat. To these plants, prolonged cold exposure is required to provide competency to flower (vernalisation). In other years, non-moving polar air masses lead to weeks of deep low temperatures, which do not suit many of the new, drought-resistant agricultural plants. These are hot–cold times. Vegetation also feels the effects: native tree species are not adapted to heat and drought, but Mediterranean species are not adapted to the cold spells. As a result, more than half of Europe’s tree species are threatened with extinction. Forest fires accelerate that – burning areas in the Mediterranean region have grown by more than 60 per cent.

Health

Areas suitable for malaria transmission have grown by 15 per cent. Tropical disease vectors are well established, but tropical and emerging pathogens are spreading mainly through transmission by indigenous species; dengue, chika and West Nile fever are regular occurrences. New pathogens have emerged from zoonoses, pandemics with previously unknown pathogens regularly claim numerous victims worldwide – the ‘age of pandemics’, of which IPBES had warned urgently, has dawned (IPBES, 2020).

Alternative scenario for Europe (other regions unaffected)

Following the calculations of Ditlevsen and Ditlevsen (2023), the AMOC/Gulf Stream warm water circulation would collapse between 2025 and 2095 with a central estimate of 2050 (assuming emissions are not reduced, in line with our earlier assumptions). Such a collapse would result in Western Europe suffering far more extreme winters, rapidly rising sea levels on the east coast of the United States and a lack of vital tropical rainfall. During the last ice age, some major changes in AMOC flow caused winter temperatures to change by 5–10°C in just one to three years. The chilling effect would be moderated by the heating that has already occurred in the northern hemisphere (Spangenberg et al, 2012).

2070

A dystopian situation has emerged: planetary boundaries continue to be crossed, tipping cascades cause irreversible damage and have escaped human control, ecosystem cycles are collapsing. The loss of pollinators reduces food availability; fermented substitutes are consumed instead. Desperate attempts at geoengineering have not solved any problem, but created new damages and conflicts. The global heating has surpassed +2.5°C and is heading for 3°C – which implies 5–6°C heating over land (IPCC, 2021). All coral reefs and almost all large tropical forests have disappeared. The melting of the Greenland ice sheet, the increasing loss of South Polar ice and of almost all glaciers is driving up sea levels. Coastal cities around the world are being abandoned, partly because of direct flooding and ever stronger typhoons, partly because infrastructures cannot withstand rising sea levels despite high dikes. Life expectancy is decreasing, and water and food supply has become unreliable, even in the richest parts of the world.

For two billion people, survival in their homeland is no longer possible – flight or death is the alternative as a result of heat, drought, lost soil fertility or as a result of flooding and salinisation. As neighbouring countries and regions can no longer absorb the refugees – they are already overburdened and suffer just as much from climate and environmental destruction – a global migration of more than one billion of people has set in, upsetting all previous geopolitical power constellations. Countries are at permanent war to uphold the neocolonial status quo, but the threat of nuclear escalation is growing by the day. The mood of migrants is not only desperate, but also aggressive: those affected are well aware that they are innocent victims of the North’s overconsumption. Already in 2020, the richest 10 per cent of humanity (that is, all those with an annual income of over US$90,000) emitted almost half of all CO2 emissions, while the poorer half of the world’s population was only responsible for 12 per cent (Herrmann, 2022). Such facts have been sinking into the collective consciousness and attitudes. The Global North has been stealing the future as well as the present, not only from its own children but, above all, from those who live in the most affected parts of the world. The EU and the United States are losing their defensive wars against migrants, and their militarised societies fail to adapt to the inflow of refugees. The result of the conflict is unpredictable, but will certainly be paid for with high human sacrifices.

In temperate latitudes, landscapes are dotted with wind turbines and solar panels; there are also a few trees, but only a few species that have adapted to climate change and water scarcity. Lush greenery, buzzing insects, singing birds – absent. The planet has become silent – 90 years after Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring.

### 1NC---CP

#### The 50 states and all relevant territories should:

---enact a cause of action for constitutional violations committed by state, local and federal government officials and persons of the United States

---impose vicarious liability on governments, government officials, and persons of the United States for wrongs committed

---impose injunctive and compensatory remedies for constitutional violations by state, local, and federal government officials and persons of the United States

---clarify that qualified immunity is not a defense to liability.

#### The counterplan creates a right of action for violation of constitutional rights. That solves and avoids preemption.

Reinert et al. 21 [Benjamin N., Max Freund Professor of Litigation & Advocacy at Cardozo School of Law, Joanna C. **Schwartz**, Professor of Law at UCLA Law School, James E. **Pfander**, Owen L. Coon Professor of Law at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law, “NEW FEDERALISM AND CIVIL RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT”, 2021, <https://escholarship.org/content/qt0pn7b2s9/qt0pn7b2s9.pdf>]

[PLANKS IN GREY, DON’T REREAD]

Whatever steps are taken at the federal level to reform or eliminate the doctrines of qualified immunity and the limitations on municipal liability, any state can enact a state law analogue to Section 1983 that allows people to bring an action under state law for the violation of their state or federal constitutional rights, forgoes the limitations on relief created by the Supreme Court, and additionally ensures that people whose rights were violated in fact recover for their losses.142 Such a statute would have several components. In addition to a state law cause of action, the statute should make clear that qualified immunity is not a defense to liability.143 The statute should also impose vicarious liability on local governments for wrongs committed by their officers, instead of requiring plaintiffs to meet the challenging Monell standard. In our view, a model state statute would additionally include an analogue to Section 1988, allowing fee-shifting for prevailing plaintiffs, to encourage attorneys to bring these cases.

Finally, a model statute would mandate that officers are indemnified, so that plaintiffs can be assured compensation for their losses. California’s statute—along with statutes in several other states—has this type of broad indemnification provision and could be emulated by states with farther reaching limitations on indemnification. 144 By adopting the California model, states would foreclose the argument that individual officers have acted so egregiously as to fall within an exception in indemnification coverage.145 Mandating indemnification would also prevent government attorneys from using the threat that they will deny indemnification strategically, to reduce plaintiffs’ awards. State statutes should also prohibit indemnification caps if they wish to ensure plaintiffs are fully compensated.

In the months after George Floyd’s killing, several state legislatures considered draft statutes that included some or all of these components.146 While most have not adopted legislation, Colorado enacted a law in 2020 that achieves almost all of these goals. It provides a private right of action for violations of state constitutional law by Colorado law enforcement officers and specifically prohibits the use of qualified immunity and state statutory immunities as defenses to claims brought under the section.147 The statute provides attorneys’ fees for prevailing plaintiffs. 148 The statute requires that local governments indemnify their officers unless they are convicted of a crime and also requires that local governments require their officers to contribute the lesser of 5% of the settlement or judgment or $25,000 if they are found by their employer to have acted in bad faith.149 No other state legislatures seem to have considered this type of indemnification clause with a contribution requirement for bad faith actors. But other states— including California, Kansas, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New York, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, and Washington—have considered creating a state law cause of action for constitutional violations that require the employer to indemnify.150

Overall, we endorse Colorado’s approach but offer a few design choices for state legislatures to consider. The first choice is a question of which officials any such law would cover. Colorado’s statute is limited to unconstitutional conduct by law enforcement officials. But Section 1983 has no such limitation, and states could decide to expand liability to other types of government officials as well. Most states that have created a statutory cause of action have provided broader coverage, encompassing all persons acting under color of state law.151 Limiting the reach of such a statute to law enforcement might be considered responsive to the social movements that have focused attention on policing.152 But in our view, broader coverage is more consistent with the overall goals of civil rights enforcement and eliminates difficult interpretive questions regarding who is a law enforcement officer.153

A second choice relates to which rights to enforce. The Colorado statute is limited to violations of state constitutional law. Some other statutes are limited to vindicating constitutional rights in specific contexts.154 But we see no reason why state lawmakers cannot create a cause of action for the violation of state and federal constitutional rights. As a matter of federalism, states and state courts have long been responsible for enforcing federal norms.155 State legislative power is presumptively broad, so long as they do not transgress constitutional boundaries, and states already adopt laws that facilitate the effectuation of federal law.156 And while only a few states have enacted statutes akin to the one we propose here, most provide for enforcement of both federal and state constitutional rights.157 There is no sound federalism-based reason that would bar states from enforcing federal constitutional guarantees more stringently than Congress has.

We also believe there are several overlapping reasons for supporting a state-created affirmative right to sue for violations of both the state and federal constitutions. First, doing so would likely give litigants the option of litigating such claims in state or federal court because such claims could “arise under” federal law within the meaning of 28 U.S.C. § 1331.158 Second, a state law cause of action for violations of the federal Constitution—and no qualified immunity defense—would increase the opportunities for federal and state courts to announce clear interpretations of federal constitutional rights.159 This would help solve the constitutional stagnation problem caused by the Supreme Court’s current Section 1983 jurisprudence. And finally, because as a historical matter there has been very little elaboration of state constitutional law in the context of affirmative civil rights claims,160 state courts interpreting the new statute could benefit from having a body of familiar federal law to apply in tandem with less developed state constitutional law.

A third design choice relates to how to allocate financial liability for constitutional violations—should the statute institute both vicarious liability and certain indemnification, or just one of the two? Colorado’s statute takes a novel approach, described above. It requires indemnification in all cases unless the defendants are convicted of a crime.161 Certain indemnification ensures that injured parties are fully compensated and that the threat of indemnification denials cannot be used strategically. Another way to ensure compensation, either as an alternative or in tandem with certain indemnification, is to provide for vicarious entity liability for states and municipalities whose employees violate the state or federal constitution. To do this, state legislatures would do well to make respondeat superior liability explicit in any statute, thereby precluding courts from importing Section 1983’s Monell construct into state law. In so doing, state legislatures also would have to make clear any intent to waive sovereign immunity of state entities for this liability.162 As a functional matter this will have the same effect as certain indemnification. But making clear the entity’s responsibility for the tortious conduct of its employees might simplify litigation and also help shift discourse away from a “bad apples” narrative toward an appreciation of the systemic nature of unconstitutional conduct.

#### It creates deterrence against misconduct, provides leverage for plaintiffs, and independently revitalizes government accountability.

Leong 23 [Nancy, Associate Dean for Faculty Scholarship & William M. Beaney Memorial Research Chair, University of Denver Sturm College of Law, “CONSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH STATE TORT LAW”, 2023, <https://repository.law.wisc.edu/s/uwlaw/ark:/86871/w11656633>]

In a world where the Supreme Court has severely curtailed remedial avenues for constitutional violations, state tort presents an appealing avenue for constitutional enforcement. Certain behavior by government officials—unreasonable use of force by police, abusive practices by corrections officers—violates the Constitution. Yet such behavior is difficult, perhaps nearly impossible, to remedy under Section 1983 for reasons unrelated to the merits of the claims: daunting justiciability hurdles, the plausibility pleading requirement, qualified immunity, the municipal policy or custom requirement, and strict limitations on attorneys’ fees that make securing counsel difficult.58

In the face of these obstacles, state tort law offers an alternative avenue for furthering the twin aims of Section 1983 with respect to behavior that violates the Constitution. It can compensate injured plaintiffs for the harms they have suffered and can deter such behavior in the future.59 From the plaintiff’s perspective, it may not matter very much whether they prevail on a Section 1983 claim or a tort claim. A jury verdict or a settlement on either one is money in the plaintiff’s pocket—indeed, the state tort claim may offer more money in some circumstances.60 Further, for a plaintiff who hopes to motivate structural reform, victory on either a Section 1983 claim or a tort claim can do so. A plaintiff who wants to create incentives for a police department to discontinue use of tasers or chokeholds can do so regardless of whether the mechanism is a Fourth Amendment claim or a state tort claim for battery.61 A plaintiff’s victory can thus further either or both of the rationales of compensation and deterrence. And for public interest lawyers trying to motivate change on the ground, for some purposes it may not matter whether they win on a Section 1983 claim or a state tort claim.62

At a time when success is rare for civil rights plaintiffs,63 state tort law also offers some strategic benefits. Given that few Section 1983 claims actually reach a jury trial, settlement position is a concern of great importance to plaintiffs.64 The addition of a plausible state tort claim to a complaint can provide additional leverage to settle and to increase the settlement amount.65 Further, procedural differences between federal constitutional claims and state tort claims can also place the plaintiff in a better position. For example, a state court may offer notice pleading rather than Iqbal’s plausibility standard.

Parallel pleading of constitutional claims under Section 1983 and tort claims under state law also has potential jurisprudential benefits. A court’s simultaneous consideration of such claims can help the court to differentiate such claims, clarifying the elements that are congruous and those that diverge. Case law includes many examples of federal and state courts carefully considering both federal constitutional and state court claims arising out of the same facts.66 The distinct articulation of the elements of each claim in a complaint furthers this endeavor by highlighting the distinctions between the two claims.67 Likewise, other commentators and I have previously argued that litigating constitutional rights in multiple remedial contexts can enrich our understanding of the rights.68 Litigating both tort and constitutional claims in response to a single instance of problematic official conduct provides an opportunity to examine the implications of the behavior through two distinct lenses.

#### The counterplan solves agency function and CBRs better than the aff. Finding a constitutional right of action is quicker and more functional than the appeals agencies. Only private litigation can solve.

Handler 26 [Nicholas Handler, Texas A&M University School of Law, “The Administrative Law of McCarthyism” 78 Stan. L. Rev. Forthcoming 2026]

On the other hand, as the administration’s campaign against the civil service has made clear, when pushed to their limits, personnel actions implicate more fundamental questions of administrative and constitutional law. Yes, the President has broad discretion to decide when to conduct reductions in force in the name of making agencies more efficient. 309 But when does the elimination of a large number of civil service positions so limit an agency’s capacity that it becomes unable to carry out its statutory mission? Asked another way, when does a personnel action (where the executive branch operates with considerable deference) so impact agency operations that it implicates broader questions under the Administrative Procedure Act, the Impoundment Control Act, or the Supreme Court’s precedent on the separation of powers? 310

[Footnote 310] See, e.g., N.Y. v. McMahon, supra note 307, Dkt. No. 1 at 41-49 (Complaint) (challenging RIFs as violating the APA, Article I of the U.S. Constitution, and the Take Care Clause, and as ultra vires); AFGE v. Trump, supra note 307, Dkt. No. 1 at 96-105 (Complaint) (challenging RIFs as violating the APA and separation-of-powers principles).

When does personnel management exit the world of “internal administrative law”—lawlike and important, but not subject to the same standards of judicial review311—and enter the world of administrative law proper?

Likewise, hiring and firing civil servants based on political loyalty is prohibited under the CSRA and the Hatch Act,312 but claims are difficult to prove and channeled through the Merit Systems Protection Board and Office of Special Counsel, which pose additional hurdles.313

[Footnote 313] See, e.g., Nick Bednar, “Trump’s Dismantling of the Government Hurts Due Process,” Lawfare (Mar. 4, 2025) (describing how vacancies at the MSPB and FLRA have made it difficult for civil servants to vindicate hearing rights), https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/trump-s-dismantling-of-the-government-hurtsdue-process

Yet, when the President makes clear that employment in a particular federal office requires civil servants to prioritize the President’s own political agenda over statutory criteria or professional norms when making important decisions,314 those personnel management techniques again implicate more fundamental questions about whether a program is operating in the manner required by Congress. Can the President staff an agency in such a biased manner, with the aim of achieving specific policy outcomes, that the personnel policy becomes inextricable from questions of statutory implementation? Now, as then, it becomes difficult to cleanly separate the world of personnel administration from the world of administrative law.

Increasingly, in the cases challenging the administration’s personnel initiatives, courts have begun to analyze the President’s orders for their legality not only under the CSRA, but under the APA, the Constitution, and other laws.315 This doctrinal move has a number of implications—if personnel actions are reviewable under the APA or the Constitution, they will not only be subject to closer to judicial scrutiny, but may also have a quicker pathway into court, as they will not need to take the lengthy and sometimes dysfunctional route through the MSPB, FLRA, or OSC. 316

### 1NC---DA

#### The United States federal government should not impose tariffs based on the intended purchase of Greenland.

#### The court will narrowly repeal Trump’s tariffs now, but it’s not guaranteed. Upholding tariff authority causes major economic decline across all markets.

Khardori 25 [Ankush Khardori; attorney and former federal prosecutor. Senior writer at POLITICO Magazine and the author of [Rules of Law, a reported column](https://www.politico.com/tag/column-rules-of-law) that examines the intersection of politics and the law., 5-29-2025, "The Supreme Court May Not Step in and Save Trump’s Tariffs", POLITICO, https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2025/05/29/trump-tariffs-court-defeat-00374194]

The U.S. Court of International Trade’s unanimous ruling against Trump’s signature tariffs is not the first judicial rebuke of Trump’s second term administration — and it will not be the last — but it may be the most serious and consequential to date. For the time being, the decision provides a major source of relief to the large majority of Americans who opposed Trump’s tariffs; to the U.S. businesses, both large and small, whose operations were existentially threatened by a policy that changed by the day; to the country’s foreign trading partners, whose economies were thrown into disarray; and to international financial markets, which quickly rose after the decision came down.

It was also not particularly surprising. The administration’s legal position was precarious from the start, and as the inevitable litigation unfolded, it did not get better over time.

The ruling on Wednesday came down in two cases — one filed by a group of small businesses and the other by 12 Democratic state attorneys general. There are at least five other cases challenging the tariffs pending at the Court of International Trade and other courts throughout the country (including one that dealt Trump another defeat Thursday), but Wednesday’s decision was importantly the first ruling on the merits that Trump had exceeded his authority in imposing such sweeping tariffs. It will also likely pave the way for a more definitive resolution — the administration quickly filed notices of appeal and moved to stay the ruling — perhaps going all the way up the Supreme Court.

There were recent signs of desperation on the part of the administration as the court’s skepticism became increasingly evident over the course of lengthy oral arguments in the two cases.

Late last week, Justice Department lawyers told the court that a ruling against the government would undermine the administration’s “leverage” and “unravel the complex and delicate foreign-affairs negotiations unfolding around the globe.” “Interfering with the negotiations in their present state,” DOJ added, “would create a foreign-policy disaster.”

The argument was backed by declarations from three Cabinet secretaries — Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick — along with U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer. The gambit — arguably a not-so-subtle form of political blackmail — evidently flopped with the three judges, who are appointees of Trump, Barack Obama and Ronald Reagan.

The litigation is not over, but the legal terrain is probably not going to get any better for Trump. In some respects, it may actually get worse as the case moves up on appeal.

And although Trump has a Supreme Court that is heavily skewed in his favor — a 6-3 super-majority of Republican appointees that includes three named by Trump — it is far from clear that they will bail him out when all is said and done.

To fully understand the legal headwinds that continue to face the administration, it is helpful to zero in on a 50-year-old decision that quickly emerged as a central point of contention among the parties — and that the Court of International Trade relied upon heavily in ruling against Trump.

The case in question is known as United States v. Yoshida International, which affirmed President Richard Nixon’s power to impose a 10 percent tariff on imports that he announced in August 1971, under a statute known as the Trading with the Enemy Act (TWEA). The TWEA was the predecessor statute to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), which Trump invoked to support his tariffs.

Nixon justified the tariff by claiming that an overvaluation of the U.S. dollar at the time had contributed to a trade imbalance and a deficit in America’s “balance of payments” (a broader economic measure that includes both trade and capital flows). The tariff was short-lived — Nixon terminated it in December 1971 after negotiating a realignment of exchange rates with a group of developed countries — but in the meantime, U.S. importers that paid the additional tax challenged Nixon’s legal authority.

One of those companies was Yoshida — now known as YKK — which challenged the tariff on zippers imported from Japan. The company filed a lawsuit and won in the lower court, but the decision was overturned on appeal several years later. (The lower court was then known as the Customs Court, and the appellate court was known at the time as the Court of Customs and Patent Appeals. Those courts have since been renamed the Court of International Trade and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, respectively. As a result, the decision binds the current Court of International Trade.)

Yoshida at first glance appeared to be quite helpful to the Trump administration.

The court concluded that the tariff was legally justified under the TWEA to address the trade imbalance and pointed to language in the statute that authorized the president to “regulate” the “importation” of foreign goods in the event of an emergency. That language was carried over into IEEPA as part of a much longer list of actions permitted by the president, though that list does not explicitly mention either tariffs or taxes (a point to which we will return).

In light of the parallel statutory language in TWEA and IEEPA, the Justice Department argued that Yoshida “continues to control today” and requires the Court of International Trade to rule in favor of the Trump administration.

As Wednesday’s decision makes clear, it was not so simple.

In several crucial respects, the Yoshida decision cut sharply against the administration’s position. That put the Justice Department in the awkward — and generally unenviable — position of having to pick and choose which parts of the decision that it likes, and which parts of the decision the courts should ignore.

For starters, the Yoshida decision rejected a key proposition that is at the heart of the government’s defense of Trump’s tariffs — the notion that courts have no power to review a president’s actions under IEEPA.

The court ruled in Yoshida that each presidential action under the statute “must be evaluated on its own facts and circumstances.” The court went on to emphasize that its ruling, while favorable to the Nixon administration, was not a blanket approval of “any future surcharge of a different nature, or any surcharge differently applied or any surcharge not reasonably related to the emergency declared;” that the president’s actions under the statute “must also bear a reasonable relation to the particular emergency confronted;” and that “emergencies are expected to be shortlived.”

In other words, the facts matter. But the facts then under Nixon — and the facts now under Trump — are markedly different.

Nixon’s tariff was fixed at 10 percent and in place for less than five months. Trump’s tariff framework is far more ambitious, open-ended and has been all over the place since his inauguration — with the effective dates and applicable countries, rates, exceptions and concessions under seemingly constant revision.

And if Trump and some of his advisors are to be believed, there would be no end in sight. “If President Trump succeeds like he wants to succeed,” Trump’s trade adviser Peter Navarro said earlier this year, “we are going to structurally shift the American economy from one over-reliant on income taxes and the Internal Revenue Service, to one which is also reliant on tariff revenue and the External Revenue Service.” That is a far cry from a five-month, supplemental 10 percent tariff like what Nixon imposed.

Two other, subtler points in the Yoshida decision made things worse for the administration.

First, Nixon’s tariff did not apply to all imports — only those that had been the subject of prior concessions under the government’s tariff schedule — and Nixon made clear in announcing the policy that the rates would nevertheless be capped at levels that Congress had previously set for the relevant goods. As a result, the court concluded in Yoshida that “the congressionally established rates remained untouched” and that Nixon was not claiming the power to simply impose “whatever tariff rates he deems desirable.”

Trump made no such concessions, which made it a relatively straightforward matter for the court on Wednesday to contrast Nixon’s “limited” tariffs with those imposed by Trump. Indeed, given the administration’s position that the courts cannot review Trump’s emergency declarations in support of the tariffs or circumscribe his authority to issue tariffs under IEEPA, he has effectively claimed the power not just to issue “whatever tariff rates he deems desirable” but to impose those tariffs whenever he wants, for any reason that he wants and for however long he wants.

Second, as a footnote in the Yoshida decision notes, Congress later enacted a specific statutory provision to address the problem that attracted the Nixon administration’s attention. That provision authorizes the president to impose tariffs in response to “large and serious … balance-of-payments deficits,” but it caps those tariffs at 15 percent and limits them to a duration of just 150 days unless Congress authorizes an extension.

Needless to say, the Trump administration did not invoke that statute, and Justice Department lawyers sought to downplay its significance given the fact that Congress kept the statutory language at issue in Yoshida on the books in IEEPA.

This argument also did not move the three judges on the Court of International Trade. They concluded that the existence of the statute demonstrated that “even ‘large and serious United States balance-of-payments deficits’ do not necessitate the use of emergency powers” and that they “justify only the President’s imposition of limited remedies subject to enumerated procedural constraints.”

The argument was rooted in the conclusion in Yoshida that if a president wanted to impose a similar tariff in the future, he must “comply with the statute now governing such action.”

Trump, of course, had no interest in doing that.

There is no way to definitively predict how the appellate court — and eventually the Supreme Court — will approach the matter. But there is good reason to question whether Yoshida will spur them to come to Trump’s rescue.

To start, the country’s federal courts — led by the Supreme Court — have become more committed to textualism as a mode of statutory interpretation. That has generally led to more fine-grained and narrower readings of statutes passed by Congress.

It is far from clear, for instance, whether the current Supreme Court would agree with the conclusion in Yoshida that the power to “regulate” the “importation” of foreign property under the relevant U.S. law includes even a limited power to impose tariffs or otherwise tax those goods. The textual analysis of that position was debatable even at the time and, if anything, is even shakier now.

To take just one example: In 2015, the Supreme Court threw out a conviction under the Sarbanes-Oxley Act in a case involving the captain of a commercial fishing boat who had attempted to obstruct a federal wildlife investigation by tossing out fish he was not legally permitted to capture.

In the plurality decision in Yates v. United States, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg concluded that the relevant statutory provision — which prohibits the destruction of “tangible object[s]” — did not cover fish. She pointed to the rest of the statutory text and the relevant historical context (the Sarbanes-Oxley Act was passed in the wake of corporate accounting scandals) in concluding that the provision covers “only objects one can use to record or preserve information, not all objects in the physical world.”

It is not hard to see how a similar interpretive approach could yield the conclusion that the language in IEEPA authorizing the president to “regulate” foreign imports does not include the unilateral and unfettered power to impose taxes or tariffs on them. That is particularly true given the fact that IEEPA was passed in the 1970s as part of an effort to limit the president’s emergency economic powers, not expand them.

As it happens, Chief Justice John Roberts joined the Yates decision, as did Justice Sonia Sotomayor; Justice Samuel Alito supported the result in a concurring opinion that focused heavily on textual analysis. Four of the justices currently on the court were not seated at the time — Justices Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, Amy Coney Barrett and Ketanji Brown Jackson — but in a book published last year, Gorsuch strongly implied that he agreed with the result in Yates.

#### The plan is politically contentious. That forces the court to rule against their own interests.

Howe 7/8 [Amy Howe; co-founder of SCOTUSblog and its primary reporter. 7-8-2025, "Supreme Court allows Trump administration to implement plans to significantly reduce the federal workforce", SCOTUSblog, https://www.scotusblog.com/2025/07/supreme-court-allows-trump-administration-to-implement-plans-to-significantly-reduce-the-federal-workforce/]

The Supreme Court on Tuesday cleared the way for the Trump administration to implement an executive order calling for mass reductions in the federal workforce. In a brief unsigned opinion, the justices temporarily paused an order by a federal judge in San Francisco that prohibited the government from carrying out the executive order while its appeals continue.

The majority explained that, in its view, the Trump administration is likely to prevail on its argument that the executive order and a memorandum from the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Personnel Management intended to implement the executive order are legal – a key criterion in determining whether to grant temporary relief.

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson was the lone dissenter. In a 15-page opinion, she contended that Thursday’s ruling would “allow an apparently unprecedented and congressionally unsanctioned dismantling of the Federal Government to continue apace, causing irreparable harm before courts can determine whether the President has the authority to engage in the actions he proposes.”

President Donald Trump issued the executive order at the center of the case in February. He instructed federal agencies to “promptly undertake preparations to initiate large-scale reductions in force (RIFs), consistent with applicable law.”

A group of labor unions, local governments, and advocacy groups went to federal court, asking Senior U.S. District Judge Susan Illston to prohibit the government from implementing the order. Illston granted that request, first with a temporary restraining order and then with a preliminary injunction that barred the government from planning or proceeding with any RIFs and required it to provide the plaintiffs with documents related to the RIFs.

When the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit turned down the Trump administration’s request to temporarily pause Illston’s order, U.S. Solicitor General D. John Sauer came to the Supreme Court on June 2, asking the justices to intervene. Sauer contended that the order “inflicts ongoing and severe harm on the government” because it “interferes with the Executive Branch’s internal operations and unquestioned legal authority to plan and carry out RIFs, and does so on a government-wide scale.”

The plaintiffs urged the justices to leave Illston’s order in place. They countered that regardless of “one’s view on the proper size and scale of government, that vision may not be imposed by unilateral executive order, without engaging in the dialogue and cooperation with Congress that the Constitution requires and that Presidents have historically pursued.” If Illston’s order were put on hold, they added, it would “permit the total implementation of this vision before the courts can give the careful consideration that these important constitutional issues merit, rendering irrelevant not just one branch of government, but two.”

Nearly a month after briefing in the case was complete, the court granted – in a two-paragraph opinion – the government’s request. Illston’s ruling rested on the premise that the executive order and the OMB/OPM memorandum were illegal, the majority explained. But because the government is in fact likely correct that the executive order and memorandum are legal, the majority continued, and the other criteria that courts consider in determining whether to grant temporarily relief are also satisfied, Illston’s order should be put on hold while the government’s appeal moves forward in the 9th Circuit and, if necessary, the Supreme Court.

#### That drains the court capital necessary to disagree with Trump. They’ll swing to seem balanced.

Lithwick & Stern 23 [Dahlia Lithwick; Canadian-American lawyer, writer, and journalist. JD from Stanford, clerked for the Ninth Circuit, Mark Joseph Stern; senior writer covering courts and the law, especially the Supreme Court, for Slate, July 03, 2023, "John Roberts Is Winning. The Rest of Us Are Losing.", Slate Magazine, https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2023/07/supreme-court-john-roberts-winning-americans-losing.html]

As the Supreme Court term crashed to a close last week, in a string of stinging defeats to progressives, a familiar narrative began shaping up in the public discourse: The court had, on balance, remained largely loyal to the conservative legal project while delivering just enough compromises to quell any meaningful challenge to its power and legitimacy. That story is the one Chief Justice John Roberts would probably like to have you tell; it is both descriptively accurate and superficial to the point of distortion. The court did, indeed, refuse an invitation to clobber several liberal precedents and policies, which had the effect of leaving the law in place, a set of status quo decisions dressed up as liberal “wins.” It then used the resulting good press as cover to pulverize laws that directly improved the lives of tens of millions of Americans, including the most vulnerable and underprivileged among us. And it achieved these goals largely through the invisible hand of docket manipulation, a trick that’s unique to the modern Supreme Court.

What does that all mean? Nothing too lofty. Justices Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett have finally embraced the chief justice’s tried-and-true formula of years past, joining a series of decisions rebuffing some of the most radical Republicans’ most cynical efforts to yank the law far rightward. The sloppiest, least defensible big swings—pushed by Alabama, Texas, and North Carolina—were rebuffed. Slightly less sloppy big swings were embraced joyfully and written into law, including a case that had no facts and a case that ignored the record below. In swinging at only some of the worst pitches served up, Barrett, Kavanaugh, and the chief justice got a chance to tick off a bunch of policy agenda items that are too unpopular and misery-inducing to pass via the democratic process. After last term’s eruption of molten, cruel conservatism, the 6–3 majority has sought safer political ground without sacrificing any of its most cherished goals.

#### Economic decline escalates global tinderboxes and undermines societal adaptation.

Cavaciuti-Wishart et al. 24 [Ellissa Cavaciuti-Wishart, MPhil, Head, Global Risks, World Economic Forum; Sophie Heading, MA, Lead, Global Risks, World Economic Forum; Kevin Kohler, MA, Specialist, Global Risks, World Economic Forum; and Saadia Zahidi, MPhil, Managing Director, World Economic Forum, "Global Risks 2024: At a Turning Point," & "Global Risks 2034: Over the Limit," in The Global Risks Report 2024, Chapters 1-2, January 2024, pg. 14-39]

Weakened systems only require the smallest shock to edge past the tipping point of resilience. In the second time frame covered by the survey, respondents were asked to rank the likely impact of risks in the next two years. The results suggest that corrosive socioeconomic vulnerabilities will be amplified in the near term, with looming concerns about an Economic downturn (Chapter 1.5), resurgent risks such as Interstate armed conflict (Chapter 1.4), and rapidly evolving risks like Misinformation and disinformation (Chapter 1.3).

As discussed in last year’s Global Risks Report, less predictable and harder-to-handle inflation heightens the risk of miscalibration of efforts to balance price stability and economic growth (Chapter 1.5: Economic uncertainty). Economic risks are notable new entrants to the top 10 rankings this year, with both Inflation (#7) and Economic downturn (#9) featuring in the two-year time frame (Figure 1.3). Economic risks are prioritized in particular by public- and private-sector respondents (Figure 1.5). Geoeconomic confrontation (#14) is a marked absence from the top 10 rankings this year (Figure 1.4) and has decreased in perceived severity compared to last year’s scores. However, like related economic risks, it features among the top concerns for both public- and private-sector respondents (at #10 and #11, respectively) as a continuing source of economic volatility.

[Figures omitted]

Misinformation and disinformation has risen rapidly in rankings to first place for the two-year time frame, and the risk is likely to become more acute as elections in several economies take place this year (Chapter 1.3: False information). Societal polarization is the third-most severe risk over the short term, and a consistent concern across nearly all stakeholder groupings (Figures 1.5 and 1.6). Divisive factors such as political polarization and economic hardship are diminishing trust and a sense of shared values. The erosion of social cohesion is leaving ample room for new and evolving risks to propagate in turn. Societal polarization, alongside Economic downturn, is seen as one of the most central risks in the interconnected “risks network”, with the greatest potential to trigger and be influenced by other risks (Figure 1.7).

[Figures omitted]

Interstate armed conflict (#5) rises in the rankings for the two-year horizon, across nearly all stakeholder groups, except for government respondents. This divergence may simply reflect different views around defining conflict: interstate armed conflict in the strict definition has remained relatively rare thus far, but international interventions in intrastate conflict are on the rise (Chapter 1.4: Rise in conflict).

Extreme weather events, a persistent concern between last year and this year, is at #2, Cyber insecurity at #4, Involuntary migration at #8 and Pollution at #10, rounding out the top 10 concerns in respondents’ risk perceptions through to 2026. Overall, global risks have lower severity scores compared to last year’s results.7 Further down in the two-year time frame rankings, Critical change to Earth systems comes in at #11, Debt in 16th place, and Adverse outcomes of AI technologies and other frontier technologies in 29th and last place, respectively.

The following sections explore some of the most severe risks that many expect to play out over the next two years, focusing on three entrants to the top 10 risks list over the short term: Misinformation and disinformation (#1), Interstate armed conflict (#5) and Economic downturn (#9). We briefly describe the latest developments and key drivers for false information, a rise in conflict and economic uncertainty, and consider their emerging implications and knock-on effects.

False information

[Figure omitted]

* Misinformation and disinformation may radically disrupt electoral processes in several economies over the next two years.
* A growing distrust of information, as well as media and governments as sources, will deepen polarized views – a vicious cycle that could trigger civil unrest and possibly confrontation.
* There is a risk of repression and erosion of rights as authorities seek to crack down on the proliferation of false information – as well as risks arising from inaction.

The disruptive capabilities of manipulated information are rapidly accelerating, as open access to increasingly sophisticated technologies proliferates and trust in information and institutions deteriorates. In the next two years, a wide set of actors will capitalize on the boom in synthetic content,8 amplifying societal divisions, ideological violence and political repression – ramifications that will persist far beyond the short term.

Misinformation and disinformation (#1) is a new leader of the top 10 rankings this year. No longer requiring a niche skill set, easy-to-use interfaces to large-scale artificial intelligence (AI) models have already enabled an explosion in falsified information and so-called ‘synthetic’ content, from sophisticated voice cloning to counterfeit websites. To combat growing risks, governments are beginning to roll out new and evolving regulations to target both hosts and creators of online disinformation and illegal content.9 Nascent regulation of generative AI will likely complement these efforts. For example, requirements in China to watermark AI-generated content may help identify false information, including unintentional misinformation through AI hallucinated content.10 Generally however, the speed and effectiveness of regulation is unlikely to match the pace of development.

Synthetic content will manipulate individuals, damage economies and fracture societies in numerous ways over the next two years. Falsified information could be deployed in pursuit of diverse goals, from climate activism to conflict escalation.

New classes of crimes will also proliferate, such as non-consensual deepfake pornography or stock market manipulation.11 However, even as the insidious spread of misinformation and disinformation threatens the cohesion of societies, there is a risk that some governments will act too slowly, facing a trade-off between preventing misinformation and protecting free speech, while repressive governments could use enhanced regulatory control to erode human rights.

Mistrust in elections

Over the next two years, close to three billion people will head to the electoral polls across several economies, including the United States, India, the United Kingdom, Mexico and Indonesia (Figure 1.9).12 The presence of misinformation and disinformation in these electoral processes could seriously destabilize the real and perceived legitimacy of newly elected governments, risking political unrest, violence and terrorism, and a longer-term erosion of democratic processes.

Recent technological advances have enhanced the volume, reach and efficacy of falsified information, with flows more difficult to track, attribute and control. The capacity of social media companies to ensure platform integrity will likely be overwhelmed in the face of multiple overlapping campaigns.13 Disinformation will also be increasingly personalized to its recipients and targeted to specific groups, such as minority communities, as well as disseminated through more opaque messaging platforms such as WhatsApp or WeChat.14

The identification of AI-generated mis- and disinformation in these campaigns will not be clear-cut. The difference between AI- and humangenerated content is becoming more difficult to discern, not only for digitally literate individuals, but also for detection mechanisms.15 Research and development continues at pace, but this area of innovation is radically underfunded in comparison to the underlying technology.16 Moreover, even if synthetic content is labelled as such,17 these labels are often digital and not visible to consumers of content or appear as warnings that still allow the information to spread. Such information can thus still be emotively powerful, blurring the line between malign and benign use. For example, an AI-generated campaign video could influence voters and fuel protests, or in more extreme scenarios, lead to violence or radicalization, even if it carries a warning by the platform on which it is shared that it is fabricated content.18

The implications of these manipulative campaigns could be profound, threatening democratic processes. If the legitimacy of elections is questioned, civil confrontation is possible – and could even expand to internal conflicts and terrorism, and state collapse in more extreme cases. Depending on the systemic importance of an economy, there is also a risk to global trade and financial markets. State-backed campaigns could deteriorate interstate relations, by way of strengthened sanctions regimes, cyber offense operations with related spillover risks, and detention of individuals (including targeting primarily based on nationality, ethnicity and religion).19

[Figure omitted]

Societies divided

Misinformation and disinformation and Societal polarization are seen by GRPS respondents to be the most strongly connected risks in the network, with the largest potential to amplify each other. Indeed, polarized societies are more likely to trust information (true or false) that confirms their beliefs. Given distrust in the government and media as sources of false information,20 manipulated content may not be needed – merely raising a question as to whether it has been fabricated may be sufficient to achieve relevant objectives. This then sows the seeds for further polarization.

As identified in last year’s Global Risks Report (Chapter 1.2: Societal polarization), the consequences could be vast. Societies may become polarized not only in their political affiliations, but also in their perceptions of reality, posing a serious challenge to social cohesion and even mental health. When emotions and ideologies overshadow facts, manipulative narratives can infiltrate the public discourse on issues ranging from public health to social justice and education to the environment. Falsified information can also fuel animosity, from bias and discrimination in the workplace to violent protests, hate crimes and terrorism.

Some governments and platforms, aiming to protect free speech and civil liberties, may fail to act to effectively curb falsified information and harmful content, making the definition of “truth” increasingly contentious across societies. State and non-state actors alike may leverage false information to widen fractures in societal views, erode public confidence in political institutions, and threaten national cohesion and coherence. Trust in specific leaders will confer trust in information, and the authority of these actors – from conspiracy theorists, including politicians, and extremist groups to influencers and business leaders – could be amplified as they become arbiters of truth.

Defining truth

False information could not only be used as a source of societal disruption, but also of control, by domestic actors in pursuit of political agendas.21 Although misinformation and disinformation have long histories, the erosion of political checks and balances, and growth in tools that spread and control information, could amplify the efficacy of domestic disinformation over the next two years.22 Global internet freedom is already in decline and access to wider sets of information has dropped in numerous countries.23 Falls in press freedoms in recent years and a related lack of strong investigative media, are also significant vulnerabilities that are set to grow.24

Indeed, the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation may be leveraged to strengthen digital authoritarianism and the use of technology to control citizens. Governments themselves will be increasingly in a position to determine what is true, potentially allowing political parties to monopolize the public discourse and suppress dissenting voices, including journalists and opponents.25 Individuals have already been imprisoned in Belarus and Nicaragua, and killed in Myanmar and Iran, for online speech.26

[Figure omitted]

The export of authoritarian digital norms to a wider set of countries could create a vicious cycle: the risk of misinformation quickly descends into the widespread control of information which, in turn, leaves citizens vulnerable to political repression and domestic disinformation.27 GRPS respondents highlight strong bilateral relationships between Misinformation and disinformation, Censorship and surveillance (#21) and the Erosion of human rights (#15), indicating a higher perceived likelihood of all three risks occurring together (Figure 1.10).

This is a particular concern in those countries facing upcoming elections, where a crackdown on real or perceived foreign interference could be used to consolidate existing control, particularly in flawed democracies or hybrid regimes. Yet more mature democracies could also be at risk, both from extensive exercises of government control or due to trade-offs between managing mis- and disinformation and protecting free speech. In January last year, Twitter and YouTube agreed to remove links to a BBC documentary in India.28 In Mexico, civil society has been concerned about the government's approach to fake news and its implications for press freedom and safety.29

Rise in conflict

[Figure omitted]

* Escalation in three key hotspots – Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan – is possible, with high-stakes ramifications for the geopolitical order, global economy, and safety and security.
* Geographic, ideological, socioeconomic and environmental trends could converge to spark new and resurgent hostilities, amplifying state fragility.
* As the world becomes more multipolar, a widening array of pivotal powers will step into the vacuum, potentially eroding guardrails to conflict containment.

The world has become significantly less peaceful over the past decade, with conflict erupting in multiple regions last year.30 Active conflicts are at the highest levels in decades, while related deaths have witnessed a steep increase, nearly quadrupling over the two-year period from 2020 to 2022 (Figure 1.12), largely attributable to developments in Ethiopia and Ukraine. While difficult to attribute to a single cause, longer-term shifts in geopolitical power, economic fragility and limits to the efficacy and capacity of international security mechanisms have all contributed to this surge.

Interstate armed conflict (#5) is a new entrant to the top 10 risk rankings this year. Specific flashpoints could absorb focus and split the resources of major powers over the next two years, degrading global security and destabilizing the global financial system and supply chains. Although war between two states in the strict definition remains relatively rare (Figure 1.12), this could contribute to conflict contagion, leading to rapidly expanding humanitarian crises that overwhelm the capacity to respond.

[Figure omitted]

High-stakes hotspots

Over the next two years, the attention and resources of global powers are likely to be focused on three hotspots in particular: the war in Ukraine, the Israel-Gaza conflict and tensions over Taiwan. Escalation in any one of these hotspots would radically disrupt global supply chains, financial markets, security dynamics and political stability, viscerally threatening the sense of security and safety of individuals worldwide.

All three areas stand at a geopolitical crossroads, where major powers have vested interests: oil and trade routes in the Middle East, stability and the balance of power in Eastern Europe, and advanced technological supply chains in East Asia. Each could lead to broader regional destabilization, directly drawing in major power(s) and escalating the scale of conflict. All three also directly involve power(s) reckoned to possess nuclear capabilities.

Over the next two years, the war in Ukraine could sporadically alternate between intensifying and refreezing. Despite sanctions, Russia has continued to benefit from energy profits and commodity exports – and this could increase further if the conflict in the Middle East widens.31 Pro-Russian or neutral sentiment in Eastern and Central Europe could soften support from Ukraine’s European allies,32 while support in the United States could wane under domestic pressures, other international priorities, or under a new government. Global divisions with respect to the Middle East conflict may also complicate efforts by Ukraine to maintain unity with Western allies, while also garnering support from the Global South.33 If the conflict intensifies, it is still more likely to do so through conventional rather than nuclear means, but it could also expand to neighbouring countries. While post-conflict scenarios for both Ukraine and Russia are difficult to predict, the war could ‘refreeze’ into a prolonged, sporadic conflict that could last years or even decades.34

Proximate developments in the Middle East are a source of considerable uncertainty, risking further indirect or direct confrontation between global powers. If the Israel-Gaza conflict destabilizes into wider regional warfare, more extensive intervention by major powers is possible, including Iran and the West.35 Beyond potentially seismic shocks to global energy prices and supply chains, escalation could split the attention and resources of the EU and the United States between Ukraine and Israel.36 The scale of Gulf countries’ or Western intervention is uncertain; it’s likely to continue to be deeply polarizing domestically and hold significant political sway.

Numerous GRPS respondents also cited Taiwan and disputed territories in East and South-East Asia as areas of concern. In contrast to Russia, which doubled its defense spending target to more than $100 billion in 2023, and the United States, which allocated over $113 billion in assistance relating to the war in Ukraine alone,37 China has largely acted as a non-interventionist power in both the Ukraine and Middle East conflicts, avoiding the risk of overstretch.38 While there is no evidence to suggest that escalation is imminent, there remains a material possibility of accidental or intentional outbreak of hostilities, given heightened activity in the region.39

Conflict contagion

As high-stakes hotspots undermine global security, a wider set of trends may fuel a combustible environment in which new and existing hostilities are more likely to ignite. As conflicts spread, guardrails to their containment are eroding and resolve for long-term solutions have stalled.40 In parallel, the internationalization of conflicts by a wider set of alternate powers will accelerate ‘multipolarity’ and the risk of inadvertent escalation.

First, simmering tensions and frozen conflicts that are proximate to existing hotspots could heat up. For example, spillover impacts from a high concentration of conflicts, such as in Asia and Africa (Figure 1.13), could range from more readily available arms trafficking to conflict-driven migration. Other states could also deliberately stoke tensions in neighbouring countries to divert attention and resources, through disinformation campaigns or the deployment of state-backed militia groups, for example. Frozen conflicts at risk could include the Balkans, Libya, Syria, Kashmir, Guyana, the Kurdish region and Korean peninsula.41 These risks are well-recognized by business leaders: Interstate armed conflict features as a top-five risk in 20 countries (18%) surveyed in the Forum’s Executive Opinion Survey (EOS, see Appendix C: Executive Opinion Survey: National Risk Perceptions), including Egypt, Iraq, Kazakhstan and Serbia, and is the top risk in Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Japan.

Second, resource stress, economic hardship and weakened state capacity will likely grow and, in turn, fuel conflict.42 There may also be a rise of ‘ungoverned countries’, where non-state actors fight for control over large swathes of territory, or where parties not recognized by the international system gain full control. For example, resource-rich countries could become caught in a battleground of proxy warfare between multiple powers, including neighbouring economies, organized crime networks and paramilitary groups (Chapter 2.6: Crime wave).43

[Figure omitted]

Third, with instant information networks and reinforcing algorithms, the symbolism of high-stakes hotspots could trigger contagion beyond conflict geographies. Deeply ingrained ideological grievances are in some cases driving hostilities, and these divisions are resonating with communities and political parties elsewhere. This expands beyond religious and ethnic divisions to broader challenges to systems of governance. National identities, international law and democratic values are coming into question, contributing to civil unrest, threatening human rights, and reigniting violence, including in advanced democracies and between the Global North and South.

North-South rift

Dissatisfaction with the continued political, military and economic dominance of the Global North is growing, particularly as states in the Global South bear the brunt of a changing climate, the aftereffects of pandemic-era crises and geoeconomic rifts between major powers. Historical grievances of colonialism, combined with more recent ones regarding the costs of food and fuel, geopolitical alliances, the United Nations and Bretton Woods systems, and the loss and damage agenda, could accelerate anti-Western sentiment over the next two years. In conjunction with more thinly spread resources and tighter economic conditions, military power projection by the West could fade further, potentially creating power vacuums in parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia. France, for example, has withdrawn troops on request from Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger over the past two years.44

As the dominance of long-held power centres wanes, alternate powers will compete for influence in interstate and intrastate conflicts, potentially leading to deadlier, prolonged proxy warfare and overwhelming humanitarian crises.45 There are a number of incentives to this involvement, from access to raw resources, such as minerals and oil, to the protection and promotion of trade, investment and security interests. Pivotal powers will also increasingly lend support and resources to garner political allies, taking advantage of this widening rift between the Global North and the Global South.

As a new set of influences in global affairs takes shape, political alliances and alignment within the Global South will also shape the longer-term trajectory of internationalized conflicts. A deep divide on the international stage could mean that coordinated efforts to isolate ‘rogue’ states may be increasingly futile, while international governance and peacekeeping mechanisms shown to be ineffective at ‘policing’ conflict could be sidelined.

Economic uncertainty

[Figure omitted]

* The near-term outlook remains highly uncertain due to domestic factors in some of the world's largest markets as well as geopolitical developments.
* Continued supply-side pressures and demand uncertainty could contribute to persistent inflation and high interest rates.
* Small- and medium-sized companies and heavily indebted countries will be particularly exposed to slowing growth amid elevated interest rates.

According to one narrative, the global economy has shown surprising resilience in the face of the most aggressive global tightening of monetary policy in decades. Despite widespread predictions of a recession in 2023 (Figure 1.15),46 the perception of a ‘softer landing’ appears to be prevailing. Inflation is falling amid tight labour markets and stronger-than-anticipated consumer spending and growth, particularly in the United States.47

In another version, persistently elevated inflation in many countries and high interest rates are weighing heavily on economic growth, particularly in export- and manufacturing-led markets. An already visible economic downturn is likely to spread, with a risk that new economic shocks would be unmanageable in such fragility and debt passes the tipping point of sustainability.

[Figure omitted]

These contrasting narratives encapsulate the highly uncertain economic outlook. Fears of an Economic downturn are widespread among private-sector respondents, featuring as a top-five risk in 102 countries (90%) surveyed in the EOS, a significant uptick from 2022 (Figure 1.16). A slowdown in global growth is already occurring, but it is taking place under a different set of economic parameters than previous cycles, heightening uncertainty. Over the next two years, there may be a lack of coherence in forward projections within and between economies, particularly with respect to inflation, interest rates and growth rates. With contrasting views about the future, the risk of miscalibration by central banks, governments and companies will rise accordingly, potentially deepening and prolonging economic risks. Additionally, continued trade conflicts and geoeconomic rifts between the United States, European Union and China add to the significant economic uncertainty ahead.

Supply-driven price pressures

Markets are already anticipating interest rate cuts in key economies in the first half of this year.48 However, there are several inflationary pressures that may stymie expectations and present a less-smooth path to inflation targets. If price pressures continue, central banks could be hesitant to cut rates in response to signals of weaker growth, resulting in higher-for-longer inflation and interest rates.

Reflecting tighter financial conditions, both headline and core inflation have dropped in the United States and the Eurozone (Figure 1.17).49 In parallel, there has been a slowdown in economic growth in key industries and markets. The global economy had been propped up by continued strength in services throughout 2023, which is now flagging, while manufacturing has already been in contraction for over a year (Figure 1.18).50 Economic growth is stagnant in the European Union, at 0.6% last year, with estimates suggesting that the economic powerhouse of Germany contracted by 0.3% in 2023.51 Profits of the S&P 500, excluding the ‘Magnificent 7’ tech stocks, were estimated to contract by 8.6% last year.52

[Figures omitted]

Yet even as inflation has been partially tamed through higher interest rates, it has not reached central bank targets of two percent and there remains a material risk of largely supply-side price pressures over the next two years. For example, El Niño-impacts to food production and logistics could drive inflation and costly disruptions to supply chains. Any amplification of the Middle East conflict could trigger price spikes in energy and further disrupt shipping routes, compounding continued impacts from the war in Ukraine.53 The cost-of-living impact of persistent inflation, perceived to be declining in 2024, could resurge as the continued impact of elevated prices persists. A wage-price spiral is still possible, with EOS respondents anticipating labour shortages in key sectors and economies over the next two years (Chapter 2.5: End of development?). Stronger industrial policies and trade controls emanating from advanced economies, targeting the green transition and advanced technology, could also remain a persistent inflationary trend over this period.

Uncertainty within global powerhouses

The outlooks for the two largest economies – China and the United States – are highly complex, and these two key sources of uncertainty could lead to unanticipated, and possibly divergent, implications for the trajectory of the global economy.

China’s economy is widely expected to slow this year, with the weakening of the property market and local and external demand generally cited as primary causes.54 Despite retaining its ‘A1’ long-term credit rating, the outlook for China’s government debt was recently downgraded from ‘neutral’ to ‘negative’, reflecting risks relating to ‘structurally and persistently lower medium-term economic growth’.55 Yet investment in both manufacturing and energy infrastructure have been key drivers of growth in recent years, replacing lost construction demand to a degree.56 Although challenges remain, in the absence of further shocks, there is room for an upside surprise – local consumption may revive, growth may be less sluggish and the slowdown shallower than pervasive market expectations. In addition, in the absence of further geoeconomic backlash, excess capacity in advanced manufacturing, particularly in green technologies, could help counteract global price pressures, lending momentum to the green transition and global demand.57

There is similar uncertainty in the United States. Some forecasts are already pricing in up to 2.4% economic growth for 2024, and others predict rate cuts in the early half of the year.58 Fiscal policy has remained loose even as monetary policy tightened, with the United States running a $1.7 trillion deficit in 2023, effectively doubling the deficit in the past year alone.59 This could continue to keep demand-driven price pressures high. The correlation between consumer sentiment and spending is also adding to uncertainty: economic pessimism may be widespread, but it is not necessarily dampening demand – yet.60 On the other hand, debt servicing hit over $981 billion in Q3 2023 – an increase of over $753 billion compared to the same period in 2022, a sum similar to the budgetary spend on defense.61 Any fiscal consolidation in the United States – or a political stand-off relating to debt loads – could have a profound effect on global markets and trade, while any overestimation of the slowdown could lead to earlier or sharper intervention on interest rates and re-spark demand-side price pressures. The outcome of the US presidential elections in November creates additional uncertainty for the country’s economic outlook, depending on the policy choices of the next government.62

Debt distress

Higher interest rates amid slowing growth will strain debt loads for the public and private sector alike. The corporate debt default rate remains far lower than peaks hit during the 2008-09 Global Financial Crisis (Figure 1.19).63 The majority of corporate debt is also years from maturity. Less than 14% of S&P 500 debt is set to mature in the next two years, with nearly half to mature after 2030.64 In essence, the world’s largest companies will be effectively insulated from higher interest rates for more than half a decade.

However, small and medium-sized companies, that form the backbone of many domestic markets, will be particularly sensitive to slowing economic growth and persistently high interest rates. As struggling companies cut costs, unemployment may rise, reducing consumer spending and creating a negative feedback loop that can contribute to a deeper economic downturn. This could also contribute to heightened market concentration, as start-ups struggle and larger, more financially robust corporations consolidate their position, including in the tech sector (Chapter 2.4: AI in charge).

Heavily indebted countries are also exposed to these economic conditions. The risk of sovereign debt defaults is rising but notably, even with a strong US dollar, larger emerging economies such as Mexico and Brazil have largely avoided debt distress to date.65 This has been attributed to structurally different conditions in these markets than in the past, including central bank independence and the accumulation of large foreign-exchange reserves.66 In other parts of the world, like in Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Tunisia, the risks are much higher. The impacts of tighter financial conditions will build over time, and pressures on fiscal balances will rise. Given historically high debt loads, many governments might be unable or unwilling to help cushion economic impacts to the same degree as they have in recent years, sharpening the slowdown for companies and individuals.

[Figure omitted]

Looking ahead

These results point to a global risks landscape where economic, geopolitical and societal vulnerabilities will continue to build. Worrying developments emerging today have the potential to become chronic global risks over the next decade.

As constant upheaval becomes the norm, decades of investment in human development – and human resilience – are slowly being chipped away, potentially leaving even comparatively strong states and individuals vulnerable to rapid shocks from novel and resurgent sources. The impacts of extreme weather may deplete available economic resources to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Increasing vulnerabilities, brought about by resource stress, conflict and increasing polarization, could expose societies and whole economies to crime and corruption. Exponential technology growth may leave the next generation without a clear path to improve human potential, security and wellbeing.

How these global risks evolve will reflect the global conditions that are slowly taking shape across multiple spheres: geostrategic, environmental, demographic and technological. Chapter 2 discusses a world that is being stretched beyond its limit, highlighting a series of emergent risks that are arising in the context of these structural regime shifts. A multiplicity of futures are conceivable over the next decade. While the next chapter explores the most concerning potential outcomes, Chapter 3 explores how a more positive path can be shaped through acting today.

[Endnotes omitted]

Global Risks 2034: Over the limit

This chapter focuses on the longer-term horizon, highlighting risks that may become the most severe over the next decade. While the short-term risks landscape described in Chapter 1 may, if not addressed, contribute to these negative, longer-term outcomes, attention, planning and action today can still set us on a markedly more positive trajectory.

The world in 2034

The next decade will usher in a period of significant change, stretching our adaptive capacity to the limit. GRPS respondents are far less optimistic about the outlook for the world over the longer term than the short term. As noted in Chapter 1, nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents to the GRPS predict a turbulent or stormy outlook, with upheavals and an elevated risk of global catastrophes at best (Chapter 1, Figure 1.1).

A diagram with colorful dots and text

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Comparing the two- and 10-year time frames reveals a deteriorating global risks landscape. Thirty-three of the 34 global risks increase in severity score over the longer-term, reflecting respondents’ concerns about the heightened frequency or intensity of these risks over the course of the 10-year horizon (Figure 2.1).

Environmental and technological risks are among those expected to deteriorate the most in severity over this period and dominate the longer-term global risks landscape. Nearly all environmental risks are included in the top 10 rankings for the decade ahead (Figure 2.2). Extreme weather events are anticipated to become even more severe, as the top ranked risk over the next decade.

Mirroring last year’s results, the perceived severity of Biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse worsens the most of all risks, increasing by a full two Likert points, rising from #20 in the short-term to 3rd place. Critical change to Earth systems (#2) and Natural resource shortages (#4) are also among those perceived to materially deteriorate, contributing to their entrance into the top 10 ranking of risks over the next 10 years, while the related risk of Involuntary migration rises one place to #7 over the next decade. Pollution remains in 10th place. In contrast, Non-weather related natural disasters (#33) falls close to the bottom of rankings over both time horizons, likely reflecting the nature of such a tail risk and the often geographically isolated nature of these events.

[Figure omitted]

These results highlight divergent perceptions around the comparative urgency of environmental risks. Biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse (#20 in the two-year time frame) and Critical change to Earth systems (#11 in the two-year time frame) feature in the longer-term rankings for all stakeholder groups (Figure 2.3). However, it appears that younger respondents prioritize these risks as a more urgent concern, ranking them higher in the two-year period compared to other age groups (Chapter 1, Figure 1.6). Private-sector respondents, unlike those from civil society or government, feel that most environmental risks will materialize over a longer time frame (Figures 1.5 and 2.3). This dissonance in perceptions among key decision-makers could mean the time to act may soon pass, without sufficient progress made (Chapter 2.3: A 3°C world).

Concerns around the possible implications of recent technological developments are also clearly evident. Adverse outcomes of AI technologies is anticipated to experience one of the largest deteriorations in severity. It rapidly rises from #29 over the two-year period to #6 over the 10-year period, likely reflecting the possible systemic or even existential nature of related risks as AI penetrates economic, social and political systems (Chapter 2.4: AI in charge). Despite worsening severity scores over this time frame, the most prominent technological risks in the short term, Misinformation and disinformation and Cyber insecurity, drop in ranking but remain in the top 10 over the longer-term, at 5th and 8th place, respectively. The related risk of Societal polarization also drops from 3rd place in the short term to 9th place over the longer-term horizon.

Despite a small increase in perceived severity, the societal risk of Lack of economic opportunity falls from #6 over two years to #11 in the global rankings; however, it makes the top 10 rankings for both civil society and academia respondents over the longer-term horizon (Figure 2.3). The divergence from perceptions of the public sector – which do not rank this risk in the top 10 – coupled with the long-term, cumulative effects of a low-opportunity world on the next generation make this a risk to watch over the coming years (Chapter 2.5: End of development?). The related economic risk of Illicit economic activity is perceived to be of lower severity over both time periods. However, it is seen to be driven by several risks ranked in both the short- and longer-term top 10, suggesting it may be an underappreciated risk over the coming decade (Chapter 2.6: Crime wave).

[Figure omitted]

Inflation is the only risk with a severity score predicted to improve over the next decade, and it moves from #7 to #32. In fact, most economic risks fall rapidly in comparative rankings of risk perception over the next decade, with, for example, Economic downturn dropping from #9 to #28 over the longer-term horizon. This may reflect that Geoeconomic confrontation (#16), a key driver of many of economic risks, has decreased significantly in perceived severity over both time horizons when compared to last year’s scores.1

Indeed, geopolitical risks are noticeably absent from the top 10 rankings over the next decade. Interstate armed conflict exhibits the same longterm severity score as last year but falls from 5th to 15th place over the 10-year period. Similar to last year, Terrorist attacks sits in the bottom left quadrant of Figure 2.1, indicating lower perceived severity over both the short and long term. While the latest available data indicates that overall lethality remains contained compared to other risks, at 6,701 global fatalities in 2022, terrorism has the potential to spark broader conflict and unrest, such as the current conflict in the Middle East.2

## Solvency

### 1NC---Trumper

#### Trump wrecks the aff – even if they get “good faith fiat,” Trump will find external ways to undercut the effects of the aff – there are endless possibilities for functional circumvention

McFerran 25 [Lauren McFerran is a senior fellow at The Century Foundation, having previously served as chairman of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), previously associate at Bredhoff & Kaiser, PLLC and served as a law clerk for Chief Judge Carolyn Dineen King on the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. McFerran received a BA from Rice University and a JD from Yale Law School. 2-21-2025 https://tcf.org/content/commentary/trump-executive-order-could-prevent-independent-agencies-from-protecting-workers-rights/]

On February 18, President Trump issued an executive order purporting to assume control over independent administrative agencies, including those that hear and decide individual cases involving workers’ rights and protections, such as the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Independent agencies were carefully designed by Congress—decades ago—to ensure that they can act in accordance with the law, unaffected by political influence or presidential favoritism. Giving the White House such direct and unprecedented control over independent agency leaders’ decisionmaking—including the ability to override their legal judgments and defund their work on specific matters—destroys these agencies’ neutrality.

In terms of the workplace, this radical assertion of White House influence strongly suggests that critical worker rights and protections could go unenforced—or even that particular White House allies could effectively be treated as exempt from accountability for the laws that protect American workers.

The Executive Order Functionally Eliminates These Agencies’ Independence

The order, entitled “Ensuring Accountability for All Agencies,” purports to “improve the administration of the executive branch” and “increase regulatory officials’ accountability to the American people” by asserting unprecedented new presidential powers to control the operations and decisionmaking of agencies designed by Congress to be insulated from political influence. These new powers include:

giving the president and the U.S. attorney general the ability to override the agency’s own interpretation of the law it administers;

giving the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) the authority to control expenditure of the agency’s funds, including defunding “particular activities, functions, projects or objects”;

requiring independent agencies to submit any new regulations to OMB for substantive review;

requiring all “agency heads” (including, it would seem, each individual member of bipartisan boards such as the NLRB, whether Republican or Democrat) to employ a “White House Liaison” as a senior staffer in their offices;

requiring independent agency chairmen to “regularly consult with and coordinate policies and priorities with the directors of OMB, the White House Domestic Policy Council and the White House National Economic Council”; and

giving the director of the OMB the authority to establish and evaluate the “performance standards and management objectives” for independent agency heads.

The scope of the order’s impact on the ability of independent agencies to make policies or regulations is clear on its face: instead of exercising independent, expert judgment (as Congress intended), these agencies would now make policy on behalf of the White House and serve their statutory missions only when expressly given White House permission. While the order purports to restore “sufficient accountability to the President,” it is more accurately viewed as a clear intrusion on the authority of Congress to determine that insulating such agencies from political control over their day-to-day decisionmaking serves the public welfare. Indeed, the full scope of the White House’s efforts to intrude on independent agencies’ autonomy is made clear by a second order, issued the next day, requiring all federal agencies—including independent agencies—to work with their “DOGE team leads” and OMB and identify for possible elimination all existing agency regulations that are not, in the view of these external actors, based on the “best reading” of the underlying law. Independent agencies have not historically been subject to such a highly politicized regulatory review process, because they have, up until now, been treated as actually independent.

The Executive Order Will Especially Compromise Adjudicative Independent Agencies

The implications of such a radical takeover of independent agency autonomy are especially critical for the small group of independent agencies that do business primarily by adjudication—in other words, agencies that make law through the consideration of individual cases affecting specific parties, rather than through generally applicable rules or policies. The NLRB is one such agency, along with others such as the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission or the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission. Presidential control of the day-to-day decisionmaking of these agencies compromises the entire adjudicative process, denying the people involved in these cases the ability to get a fair and impartial consideration of their claims. For workers who rely on the NLRB and other independent worker protection agencies to protect critical workplace rights, this directly impacts the ability of individual workers to get justice without bias from outside political influences; hypothetically, the president could affect the outcome of a charge filed against a company owned by political ally to the president, or prevent a union from being certified or a worker being reinstated to their job at a company owned by a donor to the president. The possibilities for abuse are alarming to contemplate.

In simplest terms, the NLRB is an agency with two separate functions: prosecuting (through the general counsel) and adjudicating (through the five-member board) complaints alleging unfair labor practices, such as when an employer disciplines or fires workers who speak up about their working conditions, or when an employer refuses to bargain with the workers’ union. The general counsel also oversees elections where workers determine whether they want union representation, and the board decides disputes that arise out of the election process.

While members appointed to the NLRB are all politically accountable—they are nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate—the NLRB (and other independent agencies) was clearly intended by Congress to serve as an impartial, expert administrator of the law, free from political influence. The NLRB and other independent agencies were never envisioned to be supervised by the White House, much less function as a tool of the president.

To be sure, the new executive order does not expressly give the White House authority to dictate, decide, or override the outcome of individual cases before independent agencies like the NLRB. However, the unprecedented level of control that the White House is now asserting over these agencies could certainly be used that way. It is not hard to imagine how dangerous abuses could arise. To use the NLRB as an example, such abuses could include:

denying the NLRB general counsel the ability to use agency funds to prosecute particular types of complaints filed by workers, or even complaints against particular industries or parties;

instructing the NLRB chairman to “coordinate policies and priorities” with the White House by prioritizing consideration of cases brought by employers against unions over cases that would give backpay to discharged workers or affirm the results of union elections;

refusing to allow the agency to defend itself and its decisions in federal court if challenged by outside parties or industries that are friendly with the White House, or if the White House disagrees with the agency’s resolution of the case; and

working through the newly appointed “White House Liaisons” in each board member’s office to influence which cases are prioritized or compromise the confidentiality of the deliberative process, especially for minority board members from the political party opposing the president’s.

This level of control is fundamentally inconsistent with the way multi-member boards and commissions like these are supposed to operate in our legal system. These agencies were designed by Congress to be independent for good reason. Their decisions are supposed to be dictated by expert judgment and neutrality, not the whims of political alliances or favoritism. The integrity of these bodies is essential to serve the vital goals that laws such as the National Labor Relations Act were trying to protect.

When workers don’t have any place to turn that will fairly and effectively protect their right to organize and improve working conditions, the resulting labor unrest hurts workers and their families, and our economy as a whole. Preserving true independence for agencies such as the NLRB should be of paramount concern to anyone who cares about the well-being of America’s workers.

### 1NC---No Solvency---Experts

#### No solvency.

#### Layers of protections that exist now allow civil servants to disobey illegal orders which are sufficient to solve the impact.

Gotbaum 25 [Joshua, Scholar in Residence – Economic Studies, Retirement Security Project at Brookings, “The third option for federal employees faced with illegal orders—just say ‘no’”, 3-11-2025, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-third-option-for-federal-employees-faced-with-illegal-orders-just-say-no/>]

Complying or resigning are not the only options. Federal employees sometimes have another: In the words of Mrs. Reagan, sometimes they can “just say ‘no.’” In fact, sometimes that’s their duty.

The Trump administration has begun a broad attack on many activities of the federal government it now controls. It has acted aggressively to implement its agendas, to stop programs it disagrees with, and to fire members of the civil service on allegations of “poor performance” without evidence. Some of these actions are lawful implementation of the president’s agenda. However, as various court decisions show, many are not.

Under federal law, employees who call out violations of law, fraud, waste, or abuse receive whistleblower protections. Agencies cannot legally fire them, demote them, or remove them. Those same statutes provide a “right to disobey.” They protect employees who refuse an order because doing so would violate the Constitution, laws, agency rules, or federal regulations. Federal employees need not resign or comply. They can just say “No.”

The law doesn’t permit civil servants to disobey solely because they disagree with a policy. However, when federal employees join the federal service, they sign an oath to “… well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office … So help me God.” That oath doesn’t change from administration to administration. It clearly includes complying with the nation’s laws. If directed to do something that violates the Administrative Procedures Act, federal personnel statutes, published federal procurement rules and regulations, or an appropriation enacted by Congress and signed into law, federal personnel may legally refuse to obey and, under their oath of office, arguably must.

“[an agency] shall not take … or threaten … any … action against any employee … because of refusing to obey an order that would require the individual to violate a law, rule, or regulation.”

That right to disobey was what Congress sought to protect when it unanimously passed the Follow the Rules Act during the first Trump administration. During the first Trump administration, Congress strengthened these protections—unanimously. The original statute covered only orders that would “violate a law.” In 2017, Congress expanded that protection to include refusal to obey “an order that would require the individual to violate a law, rule, or regulation.” President Donald J. Trump signed the Follow the Rules Act into law.

Some federal officials have taken the third option and just said “No.” Before Kash Patel was confirmed as FBI Director, then-acting Director Brian Driscoll refused to fire agents guilty of no offense, other than obeying an instruction to investigate Jan. 6 rioters.

What should federal employees do when faced with an order that would violate their oath and that they reasonably believe to be unlawful? Many advise consulting a lawyer. However, faced with an immediate order, most federal employees don’t have the time or money to consult legal counsel. They must rely on their own knowledge, experience, and reasoned judgment to decide for themselves.

This administration has proven that it will fire federal employees who disobey an instruction that would have them violate the law—even though that firing would be illegal. So, many will comply even when they know they should not. However, as Mr. Driscoll shows, some will stay true to their oaths. If their legal protection—the right to disobey—were better known, more might do so. Each person who did so would slow or stop implementation of unlawful orders.

Furthermore, law-abiding-but-fired federal employees have remedies. Career civil servants who were fired, demoted, or reassigned because they have refused an order can appeal to the Office of Special Counsel (OSC), created by Congress to investigate violations of personnel law and rules. In cases where OSC believes there has been an unlawful “prohibited personnel action,” it will advise the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). Congress chartered the MSPB to police the federal personnel system. It can require reinstatement into the job, retroactive back pay, and payment of legal fees.

These protections are more than just theory: Only a few days ago, the MSPB, acting on a recommendation from OSC, temporarily reinstated six provisional employees who had been fired in an apparent violation of federal rules. It’s worth noting that the Trump administration has attempted to undermine both the OSC and MSPB by removing their leaders. However, Congress by law required good cause before either can be removed, and thus far courts have overturned most of these dismissals.

### 1NC---No Solvency---Agencies

#### No impact to agency loss – don’t utilize expert knowledge and plagued by groupthink – empirics prove

Jordan K. Lofthouse & Alexander Schaefer 24. \*\*Senior Fellow with the FA Hayek Program for Advanced Study in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. \*\*Assistant professor of Philosophy at the University of Buffalo. “Expert Knowledge and the Administrative State.” 10/17/24. *Public Choice* 202, 433-454.

In our view, most arguments for expanded administrative power have not adequately considered the epistemic properties of the administrative state. In several ways, the modern administrative state delivers a deficient epistemic ecosystem, one which fails to generate and utilize expert knowledge effectively. Our analysis in this section highlights three cru- cial features of successful epistemic environments: contestation, competition, and diversity. Many of today’s administrative agencies lack one or more of those features, undermining the reliability of expert guidance within them.

Of course, not all policies emanating from administrative agencies are failures, and experts sometimes craft successful and socially productive policies.11 Nevertheless, the list of failures in administrative agencies is long and varied. Even with rigorous academic training, experts often offer poor advice and fail to reason well. The (un)reliability of expert judgment, however, is not exogenous to the debate about political institutions and, therefore, not something we must accept passively. Instead, the (un)reliability of experts is, in part, determined endogenously by the institutional framework itself. Steps can be taken to reform the institutional framework, a topic we explore in section 4. This line of think- ing builds on recent work regarding the limitations of expert knowledge and the dangers of misidentifying market failures (see Leeson, 2022; Leeson et al., 2020).

The remainder of this section explains why current institutional arrangements provide poor conditions for assembling reliable expert judgments and putting them into effect. The modern administrative state tends to centralize, monopolize, and homogenize the provision of expert knowledge, thereby reducing the ability of public policymakers to address social problems effectively or learn from past mistakes.

## Bureaucracy

### 1NC---AT: Agency Capacity

#### Empirically denied---the administrative state has been eroded for decades.

Rahman 18 [K. Sabeel Rahman, Visiting Professor @ Harvard Law School, Associate Professor of Law @ Brooklyn Law School, Senior Counselor at the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, co-chair of the Law and Political Economy Project; “Reconstructing the Administrative State in an Era of Economic and Democratic Crisis,” 04-10-18, Harvard Law Review, <https://harvardlawreview.org/2018/04/reconstructing-the-administrative-state-in-an-era-of-economic-and-democratic-crisis/>]

Today, we are in the midst of another moment challenging the legitimacy and viability of the modern administrative state, what Professor Gillian Metzger recently termed in these pages as “anti-administrativism,” encompassing political and rhetorical attacks on the legitimacy of administrative agencies, proposed legislation to restrict agency rulemaking authorities, and growing constitutional skepticism among some jurists about the scope of agency authority.

Footnote 6. Gillian E. Metzger, The Supreme Court, 2016 Term — Foreword: 1930s Redux: The Administrative State Under Siege, 131 HARV. L. REV. 1 (2017); id. at 4.

This administrative skepticism, though, is not just a matter of deregulation; rather, it manifests in two seemingly opposing but related trends. First, it manifests in the efforts to privatize and dismantle the administrative state. Several of the Trump Administration’s most vocal supporters have vociferously called for the “deconstruction” of the administrative state. The new Administration has in its first year made good on attempts to gut the budget and staff of key agencies and implement regulations that would privatize and undo many regulatory initiatives.

Footnote 7. See, e.g., Max Bergmann, Present at the Destruction: How Rex Tillerson Is Wrecking the State Department, POLITICO MAG. (June 29, 2017), https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/06/29/how-rex-tillerson-destroying-state-department-215319 [https://perma.cc/54H8-ANC3] (pro-viding an account of Secretary Rex Tillerson’s dismantling of the State Department and career civil service); Talia Buford, What It’s Like Inside the Trump Administration’s Regulatory Rollback at the EPA, PROPUBLICA (Dec. 18, 2017, 12:17 PM), https://www.propublica.org/article/inside-trump-regulatory-rollback-epa [https://perma.cc/A9XX-ETAL] (describing Administrator Scott Pruitt’s overturning of several major EPA programs and divisions); Gregory Krieg, What the “Deconstruction of the Administrative” State Really Looks Like, CNN (Mar. 30, 2017, 9:47 AM), http://www.cnn.com/2017/03/30/politics/trump-bannon-administrative-state/index.html [https://perma.cc/DVR3-BBEZ]; Alec MacGillis, Is Anybody Home at HUD?, PROPUBLICA (Aug. 22, 2017, 8:00 AM), https://www.propublica.org/article/is-anybody-home-at-hud-secretary-ben-carson [https://perma.cc/KQD5-BCQ9] (describing budget cuts and reductions to major Department of Housing and Urban Development programs).

Nor is this work limited to the Trump Administration, or even to conservative policymakers. Rather, waves of privatization and deregulation have gradually dismantled Landis’s administrative state over the past several decades, spanning not only the more brazen efforts of the current Administration, but running through the attempts of Democratic and Republican administrations in recent decades to make bureaucracy leaner, smarter, and more market-friendly.

Second, this regulatory skepticism has also animated a parallel, and inverse, effort to centralize greater governmental control in the hands of the President. This too is largely a bipartisan trend. Executives from both parties — from Presidents Clinton to Bush to Obama to Trump — have centralized presidential oversight of regulatory agencies. And legal scholars and Justices from across the political spectrum have appealed to presidential control as a key mode of legitimizing and holding accountable agency action.

Footnote 9. See, e.g., Elena Kagan, Presidential Administration, 114 HARV. L. REV. 2245 (2001); see also Free Enter. Fund v. Pub. Co. Accounting Oversight Bd., 561 U.S. 477, 495–96 (2010) (writing for the court, Chief Justice Roberts described the importance of presidential oversight of administrative agencies).

This concentration of control has similarly sparked opposition. In the latter years of the Obama Administration, critics challenged the expansive use of regulatory powers to advance economic, environmental, and social policy goals, from workers’ rights to climate change to immigration reform.

Footnote 10. See, e.g., Binyamin Appelbaum & Michael D. Shear, Once Skeptical of Executive Power, Obama Has Come to Embrace It, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 13, 2016), https://nyti.ms/2jAytGL [https://perma.cc/YVY6-9BNP] (describing the Obama Administration’s use of regulatory authority to enact major social policies).

The young Trump Administration has provoked even more extreme forms of these concerns about expansive use of executive regulatory discretion. Its irregular assertions of executive power in areas like immigration and national security seem to override informal conventions of internal processes of expert consultation, civil service independence, and internal checks and balances. The result has been the generation of significant concern about the violation of internal norms and practices of reasoned executive judgment,

Footnote 11. For an excellent discussion of the informal norms shaping executive judgment, see Daphna Renan, Presidential Norms and Article II, 131 HARV. L. REV. (forthcoming 2018).

and which in turn has generated bureaucratic “resistance from below.”

Footnote 12 For a recent exploration of this concept in context of the controversies of the Trump Administration, see, for example, Jennifer Nou, Bureaucratic Resistance from Below, YALE J. ON REG.: NOTICE & COMMENT (Nov. 16, 2016), http://yalejreg.com/nc/bureaucratic-resistance-from-below-by-jennifer-nou/ [https://perma.cc/Q49Q-5YR2] (describing tactics that bureaucrats can employ in resisting presidential directives).

#### The admin state’s fine. Workers are “sticking it out,” and other measures solve.

Erin Schumaker 9/14, health care reporter at Politico, covering the National Institutes of Health, 9/14/2025, “The ‘deep state’ is proving to Trump it’s a worthy foe,” Politico, https://www.politico.com/news/2025/09/14/trump-federal-workers-deep-state-civil-service-00558940

But if Trump’s goal was to dismantle the workforce he calls the “deep state” — and blames for the failings of his first term — he’s got a long way to go. Although he’s disrupted swaths of the government, the vast majority of career federal employees who avoided the firings of the past seven months are sticking it out, according to Labor Department statistics and the White House’s own admission.

Many of those who’ve chosen to remain are keeping their heads down. Some aren’t — and their open defiance of Trump administration policies may make it harder for the administration to achieve Trump’s goals — much like Trump complained they did in his first term.

At the end of the day, career staffers still believe that politicians come and go and it’s them who will persevere, the survivors told POLITICO.

“They are staying in their jobs — the vast majority of people, even though they could get a job somewhere else or look for a job somewhere else,” said Rushab Sanghvi, general counsel for the American Federation of Government Employees, whose bargaining agreements at at least six agencies Trump has sought to scuttle. “There will be a new administration, with new priorities.”

For many, that’s true, but for others, such as those in highly specialized fields like foreign aid, the job market for former government workers is limited. The Bureau of Labor Statistics said Sept. 9 it likely overestimated past job growth by hundreds of thousands, painting a grimmer picture of the employment market than previously thought. That too could be a factor in federal workers’ apparent resolve to stay.

While 200,000 federal workers have left the government this year, the most in a single year since World War II, Trump still employs about 2.2 million civil servants.

By year’s end, the administration expects to cut loose 100,000 more federal workers, according to the White House Office of Personnel Management. That’s a lot, but it amounts to a cut of about 12 percent.

Some agencies have taken bigger hits. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., for one, says he expects the staff of the Department of Health and Human Services will shrink by a quarter. Others, such as the Department of Education and the EPA, have taken deep blows.

In terms of sheer numbers, the biggest hits have come at the Department of Defense, which has shed 56,000 workers out of about 900,000 civilians; the Department of Agriculture, down 22,000 from about 98,000, and HHS, which has 13,000 fewer people on the payroll compared to a year ago, when there were 93,000, according to a tally as of the end of August compiled by the Partnership for Public Service, a nonprofit group that opposes Trump’s downsizing.

But for all of Trump’s broadsides — he’s called civil servants “crooked” and “dishonest” people who are “destroying this country” — the percentage of federal workers quitting each month hasn’t budged, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data. The quit rate is holding steady at 0.5 percent as of July, the same percentage as last year before Trump took office and down from 0.7 percent at the height of the pandemic.

A minority of federal workers back Trump and support what he’s doing. Thirty-eight percent of them voted for him last November, according to a Washington Post-Ipsos poll conducted in early March, and 83 percent of those who voted for Trump approved of his job performance, despite the turmoil in their workplaces that was well underway at the time.

The quit rate among federal workers is still far below the 2.2 percent rate of the private sector.

That’s despite the White House’s estimate that 80 percent of the departures were voluntary.

It’s not clear how many of those workers were planning to quit, or retire, anyway — and enjoyed a few extra months’ pay thanks to the “deferred resignation” deal Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency offered. The White House doesn’t have the data yet on the retirement eligibility of workers who took Musk’s “fork in the road” — or even hard numbers on how many did — but expects at least a third and as many as half had enough service to start collecting their pensions.

Rather than go quietly, workers who resent Trump’s attacks, as well as the damage they say the president has done to the programs they work on, intend to fight it out.

In response to Kennedy and Trump’s firing of the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Aug. 27, more than 1,000 civil servants, some current, some former, published an open letter demanding Kennedy’s resignation. CDC workers at agency headquarters in Atlanta held a “clap out” to thank three departing colleagues who’d quit in protest.

At the National Institutes of Health, workers have publicly accused Director Jay Bhattacharya of prioritizing politics over human safety, prompting him to meet with them. Bhattacharya promised to permit open debate and said he wouldn’t retaliate against them for speaking out.

In an interview with POLITICO, Trump’s personnel chief, former venture capitalist Scott Kupor said: “I don’t fault anybody for having views that are different from what the administration is doing.” Kupor added: “This is a completely different motion than anybody’s ever seen. So it’s not surprising to me at all that people are reacting to it.”

Agency leaders have, in other cases, punished workers who’ve resisted Trump’s moves. The Environmental Protection Agency fired employees who wrote a letter criticizing agency leadership and the Federal Emergency Management Agency suspended workers who warned in a letter that the Trump administration’s actions were preventing the agency from fully responding to extreme weather events like hurricanes and floods.

Those in the crosshairs say they’re leaning on the extensive system of protections Congress created to shield the civil service from political interference. “I’m grounded in what the rules are,” said a career senior executive at the Department of Health and Human Services, who was placed on administrative leave and offered a transfer to the Indian Health Service.

“It’s not perfect, but it’s set up to give people due process. Employees are entitled to their due process, and by you just walking away and saying, ‘I’m just going to retire,’ you’re letting them not follow due process,” said the HHS staffer, who was granted anonymity to avoid retribution.

AFGE and its allies have filed at least a dozen lawsuits still working their way through the courts, Sanghvi said, and union members are making the case to the public and to Congress about why the jobs they do and the services their agencies provide matter. Some have filed whistleblower complaints or gone public with their concerns about political interference at their agencies.

### 1NC---Polycrisis !

**No polycrisis. It’s a buzzword that describes trends observed across all of human history.**

**James 24** [Harold, Professor of History and International Affairs at Princeton University, “Is the Polycrisis so bad?”, 7-31-24, https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/polycrisis-climate-pandemic-geopolitical-tensions-could-generate-new-innovations-by-harold-james-2024-07]

But crisis and polycrisis are not new, of course. Both concepts are embedded in human history, and thus also in the human psyche. The profound shock generated by episodes of famine, disease, and war – the premodern horsemen of the apocalypse – tends to leave the impression that all challenges are linked. As Claudius says in Shakespeare’s Hamlet, “When sorrows come, they come not single spies but in battalions.”

The end of the Roman empire – with its over-expansion, failure to provision large cities, escalating inequality, famines, and external attacks – was surely beset by a polycrisis. Similarly, in the 1340s, after defaults by states (the English monarchy, above all) and the bankruptcies of the major financial houses in Florence, there was more war, which helped spread the Black Death across Europe. Thus, the late-medieval version of globalization was savagely interrupted.

The oddity of the current moment is that in the face of so much doom and gloom, solutions seem to be both closer at hand and more far-ranging than at any point in the past. The pace of technical innovation – often in response to crises – is accelerating, and there is warranted optimism about the capacity of artificial intelligence to deliver major improvements in medicine (new drugs, new techniques) and education (new methods of learning), as well as generating alternatives to carbon energy or the widespread use of pesticides.

Perhaps we should be optimistic, then, focusing more on the “poly” than on the “crisis.” Poly itself has become a guiding meme of the 2020s with the new interest in another old phenomenon: polyamory. The polyamorous psychotherapist Jessica Fern has pioneered terms such as Polysecure and Polywise, echoing Morin’s parallel between individual small-scale crises and world events. Indeed, terms used for personal life are becoming applicable to broader political trends. China and the United States, for example, have embarked on a “conscious uncoupling,” which is also how Gwyneth Paltrow described her breakup with Chris Martin.

The world might be more secure than we think. Though we are facing polynegative supply shocks, these will generate new innovations that could lead to greater, not less, prosperity and security.

### 1NC---AT: Terror IL [Snyder]

#### Their internal link is premised on regulatory changes, NOT personnel. No shot the aff can solve Trump killing the EPA, USDA, and CDC.

1AC Snyder 11-1, Richard C. Levin Professor Emeritus of History. Inaugural Chair in Modern European History at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto. Fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna. BA in History and Political Science at Brown University. (Timothy Snyder, 11-01-2025, “The Next Terrorist Attack and What Comes After (Updated),” Thinking About…, https://snyder.substack.com/p/the-next-terrorist-attack-26b)

Terrorism is a real risk in the real world. The constant use of the word to denote unreal threats creates unreality. And unreality inside key institutions degrades capability. Security agencies that have been trained to follow political instructions about imaginary threats do not investigate actual threats. Fiction is dangerous. Treating the administration’s abduction of a legal permanent resident as a heroic defense against terror is not only mendacious and unconstitutional but also dangerous.

This administration makes the United States look vulnerable. Americans under the spell of Trump’s charisma might imagine that strength is being projected. Not so. To prospective terrorists we look erratic and weak. Even apparently unrelated policies — such as enabling foreign disinformation, gutting environmental protection, undoing weather forecasting, ending food inspections, and undermining disease control — make life easier for terrorists and open avenues of attack. By taking apart the government, crashing the economy, and dividing the population, Musk and Trump invite attention of the worst sort, from people who wish to hurt Americans.

### 1NC---AT: Terrorism

#### No nuclear terrorism---logistical and technological hurdles overwhelm

Mueller 23 [John Mueller, Professor of Political Science at The Ohio State University, PhD and Master’s from UCLA, AB from University of Chicago, “The Risk of Nuclear Terrorism,” 06-20-23, Chapter in The Oxford Handbook of Nuclear Security, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780192847935.013.5] \*OCR errors manually fixed

The risk of nuclear terrorism is low—perhaps vanishingly so. It is unlikely that 'loose nukes' —nuclear weapons missing from their proper storage locations and available for purchase in some way—exist, and it is equally unlikely a true black market in nuclear materials exists. And, because terrorists face a host of organizational and technical hurdles, fears that they will be able to build or acquire an atomic bomb or device are unjustified. In addition, the evidence of any desire of terrorists to go atomic and of any progress in accomplishing this exceedingly difficult task is remarkably skimpy, if not completely negligible.

### 1NC---AT: Terror Conflict

#### Conflict escalation empirically denied by past attacks

#### Any x-risk from terror is very low

Kallenborn & Ackerman 23 – Research Fellow, CSIS, and Policy Fellow in the Schar School of Policy & Govt., GMU; Associate Professor of Homeland Security, SUNY Albany, and former Director of the WMD Terrorism Program, the Center for Nonproliferation Studies Zachary Kallenborn, Center for Strategic and International Studies, also a Research Affiliate with the Unconventional Weapons and Technology Division of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), and Gary Ackerman, PhD in war studies from King’s College, also former Special Projects Director at START and the Director of the Center for Terrorism and Intelligence Studies, "Existential Terrorism: Can Terrorists Destroy Humanity?," *European Journal of Risk Regulation*, Vol. 14 (2023), https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-risk-regulation/article/existential-terrorism-can-terrorists-destroy-humanity/5A3724049B1985D8762AACC4DDBB8C0C

IV. Conclusion

Existential terrorism represents the most extreme form of terrorism imaginable: terrorists who seek to destroy humanity. Devoting serious thought to the possibility of terrorists destroying the world may at first seem to be a somewhat frivolous and wasteful exercise. Yet the immeasurable consequences of any existential risk justify at least a preliminary exploration of threat feasibility, even if we ultimately conclude that the threat is negligible. Furthermore, as we have seen, there are often facets and complexities associated with the topic that only reveal themselves after one attempts an honest examination.

However, assessing the risk of existential terrorism is a challenging task. Like other forms of existential risk, direct empirical evidence for existential terrorism is impossible, by definition. If a terrorist actor succeeds in killing off humanity, then no human will be alive to study it. Existential terrorism thus presents an extreme form of the Irish Republican Army’s maxim that “You have to be lucky all the time. We only have to be lucky once.”Footnote 62 At best, risk assessment must rely on crude proxies, such as understanding potential vulnerabilities that could be exploited and cases of failed existential terrorism attempts. Even though the failed attempts may be inherently biased (since a successful attempt may not possess the attributes of the failures), past cases can at least illustrate the pitfalls that a would-be existential terrorist must avoid.

While a detailed assessment of the risk of existential terrorism remains a task for future research, a preliminary examination of the relative risk of each of the above pathways can be made using a modified form of the classic risk formulation that combines measures of likelihood (modelled as the combination of motivation and capability) with vulnerability .Footnote 63 We can thus look at:

Existential motivation required: The degree to which the terrorist organisation is specifically motivated to cause existential harm;

Capability requirements: The resources, technical knowledge and other organisational capabilities needed to enable the terrorist to carry out the attack; and

Contingency dependence: The degree to which an existential terrorist attack is dependent on specific temporal, environmental, political, spatial or other contingencies.

Table 2 provides an initial assessment of the approximate levels of each of these risk dimensions that is likely to be required for each existential terrorism pathway. These values are informed by the above discussions of each pathway, although more rigorous future analysis is needed to confirm these. Moreover, these assessments, in particular the capability requirements, may change over time, especially if states adopt protective measures to reduce the risk.

Note: The broad ranges for capability requirements and contingency dependence are because the two factors are likely to be inversely linked. That is, a terrorist might create systemic harm with low capabilities, such as a crude assassination that ignites a great power war, but generating systemic harm is likely to be very contingent. Conversely, attacks that are less contingency dependent are likely to require much higher capabilities (eg detonating a nuclear weapon).

Overall, we conclude that several plausible pathways exist for terrorists to destroy human civilisation, although the likelihood at present of any of them is very low. Within the bounds of feasibility (sometimes barely so), terrorists could conceivably develop genetically engineered microbes, catalyse nuclear war or, in the future, utilise novel technologies like ASIs and nanorobotics to carry out existential attacks. However, in the near to medium term, this is likely to require significant amounts of technical and scientific expertise and resources, far beyond a typical (or even state-sponsored) terrorist organisation. Of course, future technological advances – artificial intelligence and rapid prototyping are noteworthy examples – and other factors may lower the barriers considerably. Alternatively, and far more concerning, is the potential for terrorists to spoil existential risk-mitigation measures, such as disrupting planetary defence missions. However, the effectiveness of such attempts would be dependent on an impending existential harm manifesting through other means and is thus highly contingent on extraneous conditions. The contingency dependence is again high for causing systemic harm that undermines the ability to deal with other existential risks. Like high capability thresholds, high contingency thresholds also imply lower likelihood overall.

### 1NC---AT: Diplomacy

#### The plan is woefully insufficient to solve diplomacy.

#### Plan says “civil servants”---but the “foreign service” does diplomatic engagement---solves 0

#### Trump is too chaotic

Weinstein 25 – Deputy director of the Middle East Program at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft Adam, “Trump Is Blowing Up Soft Power,” The Nation, June 11, 2025, https://www.thenation.com/article/world/trump-diplomacy-power-aid-development/#

As the Trump administration tightens its grip on government, it is branding diplomacy as personal theater and sidelining the institutions that once sustained it—trading soft power and lasting influence for fleeting spectacle. What’s being lost isn’t just influence but also understanding.

For this reason, “soft power,” a term coined by the late Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye to describe influence through attraction rather than coercion, may be better understood today as “soft diplomacy”: Washington’s ability to understand other societies—and for those societies to understand America.

Understanding, on its own, doesn’t guarantee sound foreign policy—especially when it’s routinely used to justify a reflexive commitment to American primacy, military intervention, or zero-sum competition. But dismantling global engagement, educational exchange, and soft diplomacy all but ensures worse outcomes—and makes it harder to carry out good policies when they do emerge. By tying diplomacy to the president’s personal brand—as if it belongs to one person or administration—the US erodes its long-term credibility and undermines the very diplomats charged with carrying it out.

#### And he gets influential political appointees that make the impact inevitable

Walt ’25 [Stephen M.; September 10; PhD, professor of international relations at Harvard University; Foreign Policy, "The Top 10 Trump Administration Foreign-Policy Mistakes," https://archive.ph/daS0X]

9. Institutionalizing incompetence. These foreign-policy blunders aren’t surprising, because the administration has made a point of appointing officials who are not qualified for the positions they hold, have little or no experience running large organizations, and were chosen not for their professional knowledge but for their personal their loyalty to the president.

I’m talking about you, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth; and you, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard; and especially you, special envoy Steve Witkoff. For crying out loud: Who would give a real estate mogul with zero diplomatic experience the difficult task of resolving the war in Ukraine and ending the genocide in Gaza? Answer: a president who didn’t really care about achieving either one. These are the kind of unserious people who think that calling a body of water the “Gulf of America” or trying to rename the Defense Department will magically make the United States safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

I know what you’re thinking. Given some of my other writings, you might think I’d be in favor of taking a machete to the foreign-policy blob, and that I would therefore applaud Trump’s efforts to purge the State Department, fire a lot of senior military officers and top intelligence officials, and pressure plenty of other civil servants to resign.

But as I’ve noted before, the main problems with recent U.S. foreign policy have arisen not from the nonpartisan professionals in the civil or foreign service, but either from the flawed ambitions of every post-Cold War president or the political appointees whom they relied upon to advise them and implement their vision.

#### Trump’s ambassador recall makes Trump fopo inevitable

## Consolidation

### 1NC---AT: Miscalc

#### Trump ignores expert opinion, even if he can’t fire them. Makes miscalc inevitable.

Shapiro ’20 [Stuart; October 29; professor and director of the Public Policy Program at the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers; The Hill, "Listening to experts isn’t perfect, but ignoring them is far worse," https://thehill.com/opinion/white-house/523279-listening-to-experts-isnt-perfect-but-ignoring-them-is-far-worse/]

Last week, President Trump said of his opponent, Vice President Biden, “he’ll listen to the scientists.” In case you’re confused, this was meant to be an insult.

Indeed, the president seems to take pride in the extent to which he has ignored the advice of experts of all different stripes. From economists on trade, to scientists on handling the pandemic and climate change, to intelligence officials on foreign threats, Trump has preferred to “go with his gut.”

### 1NC---AT: Democracy

#### Democracy is resilient

Willick 23 --- Jason Willick writes a regular Washington Post column on legal issues, political ideas and foreign affairs, “What if the crisis of democracy is (mostly) in our heads?”, Washington Post, January 30, 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/01/30/democratic-more-resilient-than-expected/

In “Subjective and Objective Measures of Democratic Backsliding,” the political scientists Andrew Little of the University of California at Berkeley and Anne Meng of the University of Virginia find that the post-Cold War expansion of democracy in nations around the world has, on average, held. “Recent studies that find evidence of global backsliding,” they observe, “rely heavily if not entirely on subjective indicators” — such as asking experts to rate, based on their own judgment, the extent to which an election was “free and fair.”

Little and Meng instead measure democracy based on quantifiable factors less susceptible to individual bias. They find, for example, no overall decline in electoral competition. Across the world, “The rate of leader and ruling party turnover has remained fairly constant since the late 1990s,” the paper says. “If anything, the vote shares of incumbent leaders in executive elections and incumbent parties in legislatures have decreased in recent years.”

They also measured the prevalence of constraints on national leaders, such as term limits. From 2000 to 2018, according to the paper, 60 leaders sought to evade term limits, and 34 succeeded, but the rate was “fairly constant” over time. In an attempt to objectively measure press freedom, the authors analyze data from the Committee to Protect Journalists. It’s a mixed picture: Murders of journalists have been declining since 2008, but the number of journalists imprisoned has been rising since 2000.

The authors created their own democracy index reaching back to 1980, relying on hard inputs such as the share of a population eligible to vote, rather than subjective interpretation by experts. “The index in 2020 is nearly as high as it has ever been,” they conclude.

Some countries, such as Hungary and Venezuela, have grown more authoritarian, but those declines have been balanced by more-democratic processes in other countries. When democracy scores are weighted by a country’s population, the index does show a recent downturn, but that essentially disappears when India and China (which has hardened its authoritarianism under Xi Jinping) are excluded.

Reports of a global democratic retreat might partly be driven by a feedback loop between media and experts, where Donald Trump’s candidacy and presidency prompted greater attention to democratic health in the press, a focus that prompted experts to rate political systems more stringently in surveys. Those surveys, in turn, generated more media coverage.

Another study out this month helps explain the divergence between democratic perceptions and realities. The author, James D. Bryan, a doctoral candidate at American University, analyzed the World Values Survey and the European Values Survey between 2010 and 2022 to track how citizens’ understanding of democracy evolved under different political circumstances. His “findings suggest one’s conception of democracy can be a fluid attitude that citizens mold to match their partisan self-interest.”

#### ‘Backsliding’ isn’t existential.

Dr. Christian Fröhlich 23, PhD, Researcher, Institute for Peace Research & Security Policy, "Debunking the Autocratic Fallacy? Improving Public Goods Delivery in Russia," Global Policy, Vol. 14, Issue S4, October 2023, Wiley Online Library.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has not only deeply challenged Russia's international standing but has also endangered its fragile domestic order. Data from the 2022 Berggruen Governance Index reveals that overall state capacity has been stagnating at a fairly low level since the beginning of the millennium, while democratic accountability has been declining steadily and profoundly. In contrast, the provision of public goods has strongly increased during the same period. This puts the assumption of the ‘autocratic fallacy’—the idea that sustained public goods delivery relies on democratic accountability in the long run—to the test. We argue that Russia's resource abundance allowed for the maintenance of a regime-supporting social contract with the population. However, the basis of that contract has changed significantly due to economic decline, fired by, among other factors, several waves of sanctions and the costs of war and will press the Russian government to find urgent solutions to sustain a high level of public goods provision under such unfavourable conditions.

Thirty-two years after the end of the Soviet Union and the re-formation of contemporary Russia as a multiparty representative democracy by constitution, Vladimir Putin, who has served as either president or prime minister since 1999, leads a so-called ‘special military operation’ against the neighbouring state of Ukraine. This aggressive war—which has so far proved indecisive—not only deeply challenges Russia's international standing, but also endangers its fragile domestic order. Indeed, by risking the integrity of state infrastructure, the domestic economy and the living standards of ordinary Russians, Putin's war could backfire with regime-ending consequences. How well is the Russian state prepared to sustain domestic functionality and public support, particularly in light of a stagnating economy as well as the military operation's brutal assault on a country with widespread cultural and historical links to many Russians?

The Russian government has tightened control over media and the public sphere since the beginning of the war on Ukraine in February 2022. Among others, repressive regulations of public speech limit anti-war opposition to informal and ambiguous spaces. Given such repressive policies, how does the Russian regime secure public support? For many years, observers of Russian politics and society had a simple answer. After the devastating, crisis-ridden 1990s, an informal, unspoken social contract between the state and its citizens exchanged political and social stability—in particular, relatively generous public goods provision—for regime legitimacy and pro-government electoral behaviour.

This Russian social contract seems to counter the ‘autocratic fallacy’, that is the assumption held by non-democratic rulers (and others) that state capacity alone is sufficient for delivering public goods and, thus, securing regime legitimacy. This fallacy is often refuted with the argument that democratic accountability is needed to set priorities for state capacity to deliver public goods at higher levels. However, data from the 2022 Berggruen Governance Index (BGI)—which measures democratic accountability, state capacity and public goods provision across 134 countries since 2001—shows how public goods provision improved rapidly and considerably in Russia between 2000 and 2019 (and jumped from 63 to 81 points on the BGI scale), while state capacity remained at a low, but stable level and democratic accountability fell to very low levels (from 53 to 37). This puts Russia into close proximity with China and India and clearly well outside the ‘narrow path’2 to good governance. However, the question remains as to how public goods provision can advance so much while mediocre state capacity barely improves.

### 1NC---Deterrence !

#### No impact to civil collapse

Mueller 21 [John; February 17; Adjunct Professor of Political Science and Senior Research Scientist at the Mershon Center for International Security Studies; The Stupidity of War: American Foreign Policy and the Case for Complacency, “The Rise of China, the Assertiveness of Russia, and the Antics of Iran,” Ch. 6]

Hitlers are very rare, but there are some resonances today in Russia’s Vladimir Putin and China’s Xi Jinping. Both are shrewd, determined, authoritarian, and seem to be quite intelligent, and both are fully in charge, are surrounded by sychophants, and appear to have essentially unlimited tenure in office. Moreover, both, like Hitler in the 1930s, are appreciated domestically for maintaining a stable political and economic environment. However, unlike Hitler, both run trading states and need a stable and essentially congenial international environment to flourish.128 Most importantly, except for China’s claim to Taiwan, neither seems to harbor Hitler-like dreams of extensive expansion by military means. Both are leading their countries in an illiberal direction which will hamper economic growth while maintaining a kleptocratic system. But this may be acceptable to populations enjoying historically high living standards and fearful of less stable alternatives. Both do seem to want to overcome what they view as past humiliations – ones going back to the opium war of 1839 in the case of China and to the collapse of the Soviet empire and then of the Soviet Union in 1989–91 in the case of Russia. Primarily, both seem to want to be treated with respect and deference. Unlike Hitler’s Germany, however, both seem to be entirely appeasable. That scarcely seems to present or represent a threat. The United States, after all, continually declares itself to be the indispensable nation. If the United States is allowed to wallow in such self-important, childish, essentially meaningless, and decidedly fatuous proclamations, why should other nations be denied the opportunity to emit similar inconsequential rattlings? If that constitutes appeasement, so be it. If the two countries want to be able to say they now preside over a “sphere of influence,” it scarcely seems worth risking world war to somehow keep them from doing so – and if the United States were substantially disarmed, it would not have the capacity to even try.

If China and Russia get off on self-absorbed pretensions about being big players, that should be of little concern – and their success rate is unlikely to be any better than that of the United States. Charap and Colton observe that “The Kremlin’s idee fixe that Russia needs to be the leader of a pack of post-Soviet states in order to be taken seriously as a global power broker is more of a feel-good mantra than a fact-based strategy, and it irks even the closest of allies.” And they further suggest that

The towel should also be thrown in on the geo-ideational shadow-boxing over the Russian assertion of a sphere of influence in post-Soviet Eurasia and the Western opposition to it. Would either side be able to specify what precisely they mean by a regional sphere of influence? How would it differ from, say, US relations with the western-hemisphere states or from Germany’s with its EU neighbors?129

Applying the Gingrich gospel, then, it certainly seems that, although China, Russia, and Iran may present some “challenges” to US policy, there is little or nothing to suggest a need to maintain a large US military force-in-being to keep these countries in line. Indeed, all three monsters seem to be in some stage of self-destruction or descent into stagnation – not, perhaps, unlike the Communist “threat” during the Cold War. Complacency thus seems to be a viable policy.

However, it may be useful to look specifically at a couple of worst-case scenarios: an invasion of Taiwan by China (after it builds up its navy more) and an invasion of the Baltic states of Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia by Russia. It is wildly unlikely that China or Russia would carry out such economically self-destructive acts: the economic lessons from Putin’s comparatively minor Ukraine gambit are clear, and these are unlikely to be lost on the Chinese. Moreover, the analyses of Michael Beckley certainly suggest that Taiwan has the conventional military capacity to concentrate the mind of, if not necessarily fully to deter, any Chinese attackers. It has “spent decades preparing for this exact contingency,” has an advanced early warning system, can call into action massed forces to defend “fortified positions on home soil with precision-guided munitions,” and has supply dumps, booby traps, an wide array of mobile missile launchers, artillery, and minelayers. In addition, there are only 14 locations that can support amphibious landing and these are, not surprisingly, well-fortified by the defenders.130

The United States may not necessarily be able to deter or stop military attacks on Taiwan or on the Baltics under its current force levels.131 And if it cannot credibly do so with military forces currently in being, it would not be able to do so, obviously, if its forces were much reduced. However, the most likely response in either eventuality would be for the United States to wage a campaign of economic and military (including naval) harassment and to support local – or partisan – resistance as it did in Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion there in 1979. 132 Such a response does not require the United States to have, and perpetually to maintain, huge forces in place and at the ready to deal with such improbable eventualities.

#### Alt causes to deterrence like budget cuts, lack of modernization, and Trump assurance withdrawals. Plus it’s empirically denied by past crisis situations like the insurrection

### 1NC---AT: Terror !---Right-Wing

#### What’s the scenario for escalation? Which groups? What nukes? Why would they use? It’s at ZERO until they explain a specific scenario.

#### Right wing terror threat low

Jarvis 22 --- Lee Jarvis, Professor of International Politics and Associate Dean for Research in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK, “Critical terrorism studies and the far-right: beyond problems and solutions?”, in Critical Studies on Terrorism Volume 15, 2022 - Issue 1: Critical Approaches to Extreme Right Wing Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism, Published online: 06 Jan 2022, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17539153.2021.2017484

At one extremity is research on the prospects of far-right terrorism employing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) such as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) agents. While Brister and Kollars (Citation2011, 66), for instance, deem the use of such weapons by the US Christian Patriot movement “improbable”, Koehler and Popella (Citation2020) identify 31 incidents of far-right CBRN terrorism in Western states since 1970. These incidents, importantly (and to preface themes below), include hoaxes, proto-plots and failed attempts such as a two-man conspiracy involving “the scifi-esque construction of a technically unfeasible ‘death-ray’” (Koehler and Popella Citation2020, 1864)!

Less dramatic, but related, are explorations within terrorism research of more commonplace threats posed by the far-right. As Cotter (Citation1999, 136) argued twenty years ago now:

Despite the anti-government rhetoric, skinheads are much more “opportunistic” attackers, who are likely to prey on more vulnerable targets, such as immigrants and homosexuals. The weapons of choice are rather crude – fists, boots, and baseball bats, instead of planned bombings of governmental institutions.

Where Schoenteich (Citation2004) is similarly sceptical about the extreme right’s capacity for sustained violence in post-apartheid South Africa, Doering and Davies (Citation2019, 1) offer a more recent example of contemporary apprehensiveness, seeing right-wing extremism as a relatively neglected, yet “increasingly prevalent threat to security both in North America and Western Europe”. Other analyses focus on the threat’s mobility, such as through the return of “foreign fighters” (Koch Citation2021), or via international inspiration, such as in Enstad’s (Citation2017) analysis of Anders Breivik’s importance for the Russian far-right. Related work, too, highlights inconsistencies in the attention afforded far-right and other violences (Brister and Kollars Citation2011; Abbas Citation2017, 58; Freilich et al. Citation2018, 40), as well as the wider socio-political consequences of far-right terrorism, including for multiculturalism (Solheim Citation2020).

As we have seen, several authors urge circumspection in assessing the far-right threat. And yet, work focusing explicitly on this threat’s construction remains relatively rare in the literature – certainly in comparison to critical work on “Islamist” or “jihadist” terrorism. Ravndal (Citation2018a, 846) is an important exception here, suggesting, “anti-racist groups and journalists tend to exaggerate the threat, often through use of anecdotal evidence rather than systematic events data”, and contrasting this to the downplayed assessments of states and their security services. As he argues elsewhere (Ravndal Citation2018b, 787), greater political engagement with the far-right may prove more sagacious than stigmatising such groups and their concerns

one should perhaps be more careful about how these types of actors and opinions are treated publicly. … by dismissing concerns about high immigration as hateful conspiracies, racism, or some form of irrational phobia, Western elites and policymakers (unintentionally) make these threats more real in the eyes of far-right activists, because they regard the elites as an active part of the underlying conflicts. Telling someone who is afraid that his or her fears are groundless generally does not help much, especially if you personify the very thing they fear.

For the purposes of this article, differences between specific threat assessments such as those considered in this section matter less than a common concern with evaluating the threat of far-right groups or movements. It is the question, put otherwise, that concerns me here more than the diverse answers it generates (see Burke Citation2008). For, the question itself – and its continuing prominence – highlights the emphasis on policy-relevant research within this literature, much of which speaks directly to policymakers, their interests, and errors (e.g. Abbas Citation2017; Ravndal Citation2018a, Citation2018b).

Critical incursions

As we have seen, there now exists a significant literature seeking to explain and address the threat of far-right terrorism and extremism. Although internally hetereogeneous, we can discern a relatively coherent focus on the conceptualisation, causes, and consequences of far-right violence that is beginning to address a widely-shared sense of this phenomenon’s historical neglect (Schuurman Citation2019, 465). To conclude this part of my discussion, I now highlight a smaller, but important (and – as evidenced by this Special Issue – growing) critical scholarship in this area. This scholarship occupies itself with rather different questions, even if – as I will argue – it suffers from its own limitations.

A first contribution of critical work in this area is to spotlight far-right violences in order to problematise the contingency of established constructions of terrorism, including through highlighting the omission thereof from important sites of knowledge (see Dixit and Miller CitationThis issue). Priya Dixit’s (Citation2016) study of the Militant Imagery Project database and the National Counterterrorism Center’s Counterterrorism Calendar, for example, offers important analysis of the very specific figure of the “militant” as “brown-skinned and almost always male” (Dixit Citation2016, 104) therein. Such a framing, she argues, contributes to the securitisation of such bodies, while “white persons and the violence they are implicated in are written out of these understandings of ‘militant’ and ‘terrorist’” (Dixit Citation2016, 112). Schuurman, similarly, reviewing terrorism scholarship, highlights the importance of epistemological exclusions for our conceptions of terrorism, arguing, “What we study under the rubric of terrorism and what we leave out of our analyses matters” (Schuurman Citation2019, 465), because:

… the overwhelming focus on jihadism has left our understanding of other types of terrorism underdeveloped. What we define and study as terrorism, and particularly what we do not, has an influence on how politicians, the media and broader society conceptualize this form of political violence and its potential future permutation.

As he continues:

The marked underrepresentation of right-wing extremist terrorism and state terrorism, for example, has arguably helped foster a perception of terrorism as something that is solely the domain of non-state actors and virtually synonymous with jihadists. This is not only incorrect, but a potentially dangerous blind spot as it allows non-jihadist forms of extremism to develop and be carried out relatively unnoticed. Moreover, such biases can contribute to societal polarization by feeding the appearance that terrorism stems from one particular community only. … There is much to be gained both academically and societally from looking beyond jihadism, particularly where it comes to growing concerns about right-wing extremism and terrorism

Related work – such as Mehta’s (Citation2015) analysis of female agency in the Hindu right-wing movement – engages with neglected case studies to problematise dominant (here, Eurocentric) conceptions of the far-right, rather than to unpack wider constructions of “terrorism”. In examples such as these, the neglect of far-right terrorism matters not (only) because it renders individuals and communities less secure from this threat (although it may do this). Rather, the neglect itself is important precisely because it demonstrates the pervasiveness of fundamental biases or distortions in established ways of understanding and addressing terrorisms and extremisms.

This emphasis on discursive inconsistencies in constructions of “terrorism” links to a further contribution of critical scholarship which is to expose political inconsistencies in the response to far-right vis-à-vis other terrorisms (e.g. Da Silva et al Citationthis issue; Meier CitationThis issue). Norris and Grol-Prokopczyk (Citation2018, 259–260), for instance, contrast US “sting operations” post-Oklahoma and post-9/11 to demonstrate dramatic differences in the use of this mechanism in different contexts:

The social construction of the domestic terrorism threat as primarily jihadi, the in-group leniency effect [in which conservative white lawmakers may act more charitably toward perpetrators of shared demographic background], and the translation of these factors into incentives for agents to focus on jihadi prosecutions, likely explain to a large degree the much lower number of investigations and entrapment cases involving right-wing defendants.

In a more recent piece, Norris (Citation2020, 520) contrasts the use of terrorism offences for right-wing and Muslim perpetrators of crime:

although numerous right-wing terrorists have been prosecuted in federal courts, only a small handful were charged with terrorism offences, and only three have been convicted of a terrorism offence since 9/11 … By contrast, hundreds of Muslims since 9/11 have been charged with terrorism-related offences … The failure to charge all terrorists with terrorism offences perpetuates misconceptions about the nature of the terrorism threat, encouraging Islamophobia while reducing vigilance against all types of terrorism.

This matters, for Norris (Citation2020, 539), because political and legal consistency has both symbolic and instrumental importance, including for public understanding, social relationships, and the actions of responders:

US authorities should be careful to consistently label all right-wing terrorists as terrorists for all administrative and publicity purposes, whether or not they are charged with terrorism, and charge them with terrorism offences whenever applicable, even if there will be no effect on sentencing. Such symbolic changes could potentially have important impacts on public perceptions of terrorism, law enforcement priorities, and prejudice against Muslims – perhaps achieving many of [the] goals envisioned for new legislation. In jurisdictions where it is already possible to charge right-wing terrorists with terrorism, it is important that authorities apply these charges whenever appropriate, rather than reserving the terrorism label for Muslim offenders … if the government labels one type of ideologically-motivated violence as terrorism, it should do so consistently for them all.

Far-right terrorism, then, is something that may be misrecognised as well as ignored or forgotten, such that: “Due to stereotypes associating terrorism with Muslims, many fail to perceive ideological violence by non-Muslims as terrorism” (Norris Citation2020, 523). This, I suggest, is why overtly critical literature on the far-right often effectively mobilises around demands for greater consistency: greater consistency in (i) the attention given to particular violences and actions; (ii) the labelling of those violences and actions; and, (iii) political, legal and other responses to distinct threats.

Towards a critique: unpacking assumptions in far-right research

The above – inevitably incomplete – review demonstrates the vibrancy of contemporary research on the far-right. Collectively, this work offers a refreshing counterpoint to familiar case studies which still dominate terrorism scholarship, compelling researchers to engage with neglected histories and geographies of violence. Underpinning this work, I think, are two powerful energies to which I now turn: one problem-solving, and one broadening (see also Jarvis Citation2009). Where the former concentrates on explaining and addressing the far-right threat, the latter aims at expanding this field’s empirical and conceptual horizons. Although each no doubt has its place (see Cox and Sinclair Citation1996, 53), my argument here is that these energies render scholarship such as the above vulnerable to two criticisms. First, is a risk of reproducing the paradigmatic concerns (and limitations) of so-called “traditional” terrorism studies (Jackson Citation2009; Jarvis Citation2009), with its typically narrow epistemological, geographical and political orientation. Second is a risk of reproducing the limitations of earlier critical efforts to escape dominant paradigms within terrorism research through emphasising the importance of neglected types of terrorism (see Jarvis Citation2009; Jarvis and Lister Citation2014).

A useful starting point is to highlight a temptation to approach far-right actors and their violences as specific, concrete examples of terrorism or extremism (although the boundary between these is, as we have seen, often blurred). This is most clearly the case in quantitative efforts to identify, explain, measure, or compare far-right violences (e.g. Post, Ruby, and Shaw Citation2002). But, a temptation towards – or a desire for – denotational clarity is apparent, too, in qualitative and conceptual pieces (e.g. Auger Citation2020; Hart Citation2021), as well as in more overtly critical work which seeks to bring the far-right (back) into terrorism research (e.g. Norris Citation2020).Footnote2 Existing scholarship is not, as we have seen, unaware of the conceptual challenges confronting analyses of the far-right; as demonstrated above, it includes considerable reflection on definitional difficulties and obstacles (e.g. Rich Citation2020, 161–162). Much as with wider debates on “terrorism”, however, such reflection often simply prefaces an attempt to pin down this object of knowledge through identification of generative characteristics or common features distinguishing far-right terrorisms or extremisms from others (see Jackson, Jarvis, Gunning, and Breen-Smyth, Citation2011, 150–173). For much terrorism scholarship (critical and otherwise), then, the existence of far-right terrorism and extremism is ontologically distinct from the labelling of specific actors, events or threats thus. This means that the fundamentally discursive existence of those actors and events is rarely explicitly acknowledged. And neither, moreover, is the productivity of research(ers) in helping to create and sustain the existence of far-right terrorism, despite wider recognition of the role played by terrorism expertise in creating and shaping the problem of terrorism (e.g. Stampnitzky Citation2013)

From this common starting point, though, terrorism research on the far-right begins, as we have seen, to bifurcate, if unevenly. More overtly problem-solving contributions – which dominate the literature – typically approach the far-right as an external object of knowledge to be explained (through causal analysis), catalogued (through typologies and comparative tools), assessed (for the threat to various referents) and, ultimately, resolved. This, in itself, is unsurprising; such an orientation has long-permeated terrorism studies (Jarvis Citation2009). As Gunning (Citation2007, 371–372) noted in one of CTS’ earliest statements, terrorism research often tends towards short-term threat assessments reflecting statist priorities that reduce epistemological space for researcher reflexivity:

The problem-solving approach is positivist and objectivist, and seeks to explain the “terrorist other” from within state-centric paradigms rather than to understand the “other” inter-subjectively using interpretative or ethnographic methods.

For Jackson (Citation2009, 77), similarly:

The problem-solving character of the field is illustrated most prosaically by the ubiquitous efforts of virtually every terrorism studies scholar to provide research that is “policy relevant” and which will assist the state in its efforts to defeat terrorism, and by the widespread tendency to accept the state’s categorisations, definitions, dichotomies and demonisations.

Although work on the far-right contains, as we have seen, descriptively rich and contextually sensitive scholarship, the same critique may be posed again in this context. Specifically, the prominence given to defining, explaining, and addressing the threat of far-right terrorism has diminished the space available for different types of far-right research – research with radically different premises about far-right terrorism’s ontological existence, and/or research with radically different understandings of the purposes of scholarship. Far-right terrorism remains, in short, overwhelmingly approached as a phenomenon to be identified, isolated, and explained by researchers and policymakers attempting to:

fix limits or parameters to a problem area and to reduce the statement of a particular problem to a limited number of variables which are amenable to relatively close and precise examination. (Cox and Sinclair Citation1996, 88).

Beyond reproducing a particular model of scholarship, this emphasis on policy-relevant research has a very specific, and important, consequence. With very few exceptions (e.g. Mehta Citation2015; Enstad Citation2017), it directs our attention to violences and victims of terrorism in the global North, focusing on cases in North America, Europe, or other liberal democracies. This focus on the threat to Western states, institutions, and communities, I argue, risks (re)instituting a perennial imbalance between the attention of terrorism researchers and the distribution of violences widely-deemed “terrorist”. For all of their differences, critical and “traditional” scholars alike tend to agree that terrorism is overwhelmingly concentrated within the global South (E.g. Enders and Sandler Citation2006; Jackson, Jarvis, Gunning, and Breen-Smyth Citation2011). The 2020 Global Terrorism Index, to illustrate briefly, situates eighty percent of terrorist fatalities for 2019 within only ten countries: Afghanistan, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Somalia, Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, Syria, and Mozambique (Institute for Economics and Peace Citation2020, 13). In directing our attention away from such contexts and (back) to the global North, then, this problem-solving emphasis reproduces a long-standing and well-documented bias within terrorism studies which has always historically concentrated precisely on those countries and regions that dominate the attention of far-right researchers (see Silke Citation2009, 47). Although it is true that the critical scholarship to which I return below has important potential to reveal and unpack racialised histories, sociologies and politics within the global North, there is a risk here that greater emphasis on the far-right within terrorism research hinders contemporary efforts to decolonise terrorism studies (e.g. Mohammed Citation2021) by reproducing the field’s traditional – and, arguably, traditionally myopic – gaze. The relevant section of the most recent Global Terrorism Index (Citation2020: 60–66), for instance, focuses explicitly on “far right terrorism and the West”. And, although the West’s contestability is acknowledged in this discussion, its appropriateness as a focus for analysis of the far-right is not problematised.Footnote3

What, then, are we to make of the above critical outliers with their rather different research priorities? As indicated already, this work often takes a similarly essentialist starting-point in which the far-right and its violences become extra-discursive objects to be identified and researched. In Stump and Dixit’s (2012) terminology, drawing on Jackson’s (Citation2008) distinction, this work maintains an ontological dualism in which far-right terrorism/extremism exists as a “real thing” “out there” in the world – an entity (in principle at least) independent of our understanding and labelling thereof. Indeed, generating further recognition of this entity’s importance is crucial to so much of this critical work. It is crucial, on the one hand, in order to address this threat in its own right, not least given its discriminatory targeting against marginalised communities, and its harmful reinforcing of existing inequalities and power relations:

Minority ethnic communities victimised by far‐Right violence contend not only with occasional spectacular campaigns of violence directed at them, such as the David Copeland nail‐bombing campaign in London in 1999, but also with ongoing low‐level harassment which inflicts a different but no less powerful form of terror. There are strong arguments for considering all racially motivated violence as a kind of terrorism; it certainly fits the standard definition of terrorism as violence aimed at instilling fear in a population to advance a political cause (… the preservation of a racially unequal society or the creation of an ethnically homogenous society). (Kundnani Citation2012, 29).

It is crucial, too, though, for critical scholarship because greater attention to the far-right may also help address those analytical and political inconsistencies discussed above. From a similar ontological foundation, then, far-right terrorism emerges now as a solution as much as a problem. It does so because, (re)focusing attention on the far-right – and describing far-right actors and violences as terrorist – may help to combat profound unfairnesses and injustices perpetuated by incomplete and inadequate conceptions of terrorism. Understood thus, much critical commentary mobilises an identifiable broadening energy aiming, ultimately, to expand our understanding of terrorism/extremism/violence beyond the usual targets of these labels. Yet, just as explanatory work on the far-right reproduces the questions and priorities of “traditional” terrorism research, my fear is that this critical work – with its broadening emphasis – risks reproducing the assumptions and limitations of an earlier (critical) debate: on state terrorism (see Jarvis Citation2009).

Critical scholarship on state terrorism offered an important early rejoinder to traditional conceptions of terrorist violence. It did so by challenging the collocation of terrorism with non-state actors; by comparing the harm of non-state terrorisms to the violences of states; by unsettling established intellectual imaginaries including around the distinction between state and non-state actors; and, by encouraging an active, and determinedly critical orientation amongst researchers (Jarvis and Lister Citation2014, 48–50). Such contributions are apparent too in recent work on the far-right. This literature as a whole clearly challenges the typical collocation of terrorism with specific groups – jihadist or “Islamist” – simply by pulling attention to the far-right. It encourages reflection on the significance of better researched forms of terrorism by juxtaposing these against often-overlooked violences. Critical work on the far-right, in particular, unsettles established intellectual imaginaries, by encouraging us to rethink relatively stable assumptions around the politics of counter-terrorism, national interests, and identities. And, much of this work also encourages an overtly critical research stance by calling out the above-discussed inconsistencies. Both debates, in short, seek to broaden the horizon of terrorism research for the same “attractive and doubly emancipatory promise: a promise not only to free scholars from outdated concepts, but also to free the direct or indirect victims of violence from nefarious political manoeuvrings” (Jarvis Citation2009, 17). Yet, they both do so by essentialising and reifying their ostensible object: state terrorism, and far-right terrorism, respectively (Jarvis Citation2009).

To summarise briefly, far-right terrorism is typically approached as a fully-formed threat to be identified, assessed, and addressed. In this sense, the literature, unsurprisingly, reproduces guiding assumptions and questions within terrorism research with its traditional emphasis on policy-relevant, problem-solving work. Collectively, it expands the focus of terrorism studies to potentially neglected or overlooked violences. For many critical scholars, moreover, this broadening energy has a normative imperative which is to destabilise the inconsistences within dominant ways of conceptualising, researching and responding to violence. Beneath this emancipatory appeal, though, is a shared essentialism in which far-right terrorism exists “out there” as an object of knowledge to be discovered and studied, whether as a “problem” in its own right, or (in critical work) as (also) an entry-point for exploring solutions to wider problems.

Problematising and desecuritising the far-right

I finish this article by sketching two research strategies that are, in my view, better suited to a critical engagement with the far-right than the above-discussed problem-solving and broadening aspirations. The first is to problematise “far-right terrorism”, “extremism” and the like in order to render visible their existence as constructs within wider political discourses. The second is to desecuritise the threat of far-right terrorisms and extremisms.Footnote4 My aim here is to reflect on the value of each strategy, and to sketch some concrete research tactics through which work motivated thus might proceed (see also Jarvis Citation2019). In so doing, I highlight and draw upon sources of inspiration already available to us within critical terrorism studies, critical security studies, and beyond.

The problematisation of far-right forms of terrorism and extremism stands as a direct alternative to their overwhelming conceptualisation as extra-discursive phenomena within the academic literature considered above. Rather than seeking to isolate such phenomena as fully-formed entities awaiting explanation, problematisation focuses on how it is that they have been, and can be, discussed as such (Bacchi Citation2012, 1). Doing so mobilises a broadly constructivist logic emphasising the contingency – and therefore contestability – of the world and its constituent parts, recognising, put otherwise, that that which is presently taken for granted is neither necessary nor inevitable (Hay Citation2002, 201). Such a logic has important implications for the focus as well as the methods of (critical) research on the far-right. To adapt Hülsse and Spencer’s (Citation2008: 576) early petition for a constructivist terrorism studies, it involves shifting our gaze so that: “the primary source of terrorism research must be the discourse in which the social construction of [far-right] terrorism takes place, that is, the discourse that constitutes a particular group of people as [far-right] “terrorists”’.

Anyone familiar with developments in critical terrorism studies (CTS) across the past fifteen years or so will recognise its population with scholarship motivated by such an emphasis (for overviews see Heath-Kelly Citation2016; Jarvis Citation2016). Indeed, this constructivist ethos has been the target of sympathetic (Stokes Citation2009, 89; Herring and Stokes Citation2011) and rather less sympathetic (Jones and Smith Citation2009, 295–296) critique of CTS as an academic and political project. Taking our lead from that work, and from related scholarship elsewhere, to problematise “far-right terrorism” or “extremism” involves asking how these phenomena are constructed or produced within specific discourses or dispositifs. What rules and competences govern the production of these entities as seemingly stable categories of terrorism? And what power relations work through the discursive production of far-right terrorism/extremism, and the attribution of these labels to specific individuals or groups?

Answering questions such as these might involve archaeological research tracing the spaces or “surfaces of emergence” in which these phenomena are constituted (Foucault Citation2002, 45–46); exploring who has authority to speak of these phenomena, and the kinds of classificatory system employed to make sense of actors and violences as far-right terrorists and terrorisms by academics, policymakers, the media and others (see Foucault Citation2002, 46–57). It may involve genealogical analysis historicising contemporary productions of the far-right and their emergence from past “struggles, conflicts, alliances, and exercises of power, many of which are nowadays forgotten” (Garland Citation2014, 372). Discourse theoretic work might trace the relations of equivalence and difference (Laclau and Mouffe Citation2001) – the constructions of sameness and distinctiveness – through which “far-right terrorism/extremism” are articulated via comparison and differentiation. “Thinner” constructivist work could look at the political instrumentalization of language, drawing methodological inspiration from scholarship in International Relations and beyond (see Milliken Citation1999). Terrorism scholars might draw productive inspiration too, from a surprisingly small body of related scholarship on the narration or construction of the far-right in specific contexts, such as Graef’s (Citation2020) narrative hermeneutic analysis of the German media’s storying of the National Socialist Underground.

These examples are brief and far from exhaustive. What they share, though, is an effort to “question the question” (Burke Citation2008, 38): an effort to question the ontological status of far-right terrorism before attempting to study, map or resolve it (Burke Citation2008, 38). Such a disposition would be facilitated, I think, by the complexities, caveats, and inconsistencies within existing work on the far-right considered above which often seems to be approaching, yet never quite arriving at, a satisfactory stabilisation of its object of knowledge. Rather than seeking to adjudicate between conceptions of far-right terrorism, and rather than argue for a broader or alternative conception of this entity, our focus should begin precisely with these complexities and fluidities. As Burke (Citation2008, 38) had earlier argued, “Any ‘critical’ terrorism studies must keep this radical instability and inherent politicization of the concept of terrorism at the forefront of its analysis”. This is as accurate, I argue, of “far-right terrorism” as it is of “state terrorism”, “Islamist terrorism”, “new terrorism”, “religious terrorism”, “cyberterrorism” or any other category within our ever-expanding orrery. Indeed, drawing on Jackson, Jarvis, Gunning, and Breen-Smyth, (Citation2011, 159–164), the category of “far-right terrorism” – like those other, far more widely critiqued, concepts – is at equal risk of essentialising its object by decontextualising its constituents and their differences. It is as likely, moreover, to slip from descriptive to causal claim by implying its constituents act as they do because of their (purported) ideological beliefs. It is as likely to suffer from challenges of empirical verification around who is to be included and excluded from this category. It is also, indeed, as intimately bound up within relations of power/knowledge as its predecessors, even if those relations may differ from those within which, say, “Islamist terrorism” emerges. Such challenges have been neglected, I think, in part precisely because of the critical temptation to use far-right terrorism to reorientate terrorism research away from (important) biases and blindspots.

The second analytical strategy I propose is to desecuritise far-right terrorism and extremism in order to reflect more thoughtfully on their threat and the countering thereof. The concept of desecuritisation comes to us from the “Copenhagen School” of critical security studies, referring initially to “the shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining processes of the political sphere” (Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde Citation1991, 4). Desecuritisation’s desirability, in early contributions to this literature, was a product of the exceptionalism and urgency associated with securitising issues – from migration, climate change, terrorism and beyond – logics seen to impede the working and deleteriously shape the outcomes of (ostensibly “normal”) democratic politics (Aradau Citation2004). This is because securitising issues – treating issues as (existential) threats to something or someone that is valued – tends to facilitate secretive and unaccountable decision-making often involving rigid boundary drawing between self and other(s), with frequently ineffective outcomes (Roe Citation2004, 282: 284).

Securitisation theory has evolved considerably since its earliest articulations, including via internal debate (see CASE Collective Citation2006; Balzacq and Guzzini Citation2015; Bigo and McCluskey Citation2018), and criticism of the theory’s own perceived biases (e.g. Hansen Citation2000; Wilkinson Citation2007; Howell and Richter-Montpetit Citation2020). The concept of desecuritisation has itself received considerable critique, with prominent claims including its under-theorisation, inconsistent employment, and normative failings (Hansen Citation2012, 527–528). For my purposes here, I use the term to refer to the broad, powerful, insight that security issues (are) brought into being or constructed (and) can (therefore) equally be undone or deconstructed. A security issue, put otherwise, can be transformed into something other than a threat, which will have important implications for that issue’s management. Desecuritisation, then, involves an unpacking, contestation and unmaking of constellations of threat and response that may involve preventing “normal” political issues from reaching the realm of security, or, indeed, returning security issues to the realm of “normal politics” (Donnelly Citation2015, 915). Roe (Citation2004, 285–287), drawing on Huysmans (Citation1995), discusses three routes through which the latter – which concerns us most here (given the far-right’s already widespread securitisation within terrorism research) – might take place. The first route is objectively to contest an issue’s framing as a security challenge in order to convince a relevant audience to understand that issue differently. Second, is a constructivist highlighting of the processes underpinning an issue’s framing as a security threat. Third is a deconstructivist approach in which security stories are inverted and told from the perspective of the securitised other, for instance:

desecuritization is the telling of the story of the migrant in such manner that is not the recounting of a security drama: the migrant is not just the migrant, but someone with multiple identities – woman, teacher, mechanic, father, etc. The migrant is revealed as being someone who is just like us, just like one of the natives. (Roe Citation2004, 286).

In the case of the far-right, then, an objectivist approach would contest the threat posed by such organisations, perhaps arguing “that the problem can be comprehended or managed within the rubric of normal politics” (Salter Citation2008, 324). This might involve countering securitising moves with statistical evidence on attacks, fatalities, and the consequences of far-right violence, including in absolute terms or relative to other harms (e.g. Ravndal Citation2021, 23–24). This, of course, has already been a powerful strategy within other critical work on terrorism, hence the proliferation of comparisons between terrorism deaths and other (often ostensibly mundane) violences (e.g. Mueller and Stewart Citation2014, Citation2021).Yet such work has made relatively few inroads into research on the far-right which instead tends towards emphasising, and accentuating, the threat thereof for the diverse reasons discussed above. To focus, for instance, on terrorism casualties, the 2020 Global Terrorism Index (Institute for Economics and Peace Citation2020) identifies a total of 332 incidents and 286 fatalities from far-right terrorism in the West (taken to comprise North America, Western Europe and Oceania) between 2002 and 2019, with 128 (or almost 45%) of those fatalities attributable to two incidents: Christchurch, 2019 and Norway, 2011. Without trivialising this suffering, and indeed while recognising the partiality of this figure which neglects more quotidian forms of far-right harm and criminality, this is a threat – calculated thus – generating fewer than sixteen fatalities per year across three continents.

A second, constructivist, approach to desecuritization would highlight the conditions under which far-right terrorism has been produced as a threat to specific referents from human lives to communities, multiculturalism, liberalism, national security, the West, and beyond. It would build on strategies such as those discussed in relation to problematisation above to unpack linguistic, visual and other productions of threat, whether in political speeches, academic articles, think tank reports, advocacy organisations, academic research, popular culture or beyond. Doing so involves asking, as Matt McDonald (Citation2009, 116) puts it, who gets to define responses to (far-right) terrorism? And, whose interests are served – or who benefits – from specific framings of danger? A deconstructivist approach, finally, would shift our attention to the stories of those securitised as far-right extremists and terrorists. This is not, of course, to justify their actions or legitimise their ideas. But, rather, it is to question the simplicity through which such individuals and communities are explained and acted upon as (only) radical, threatening, others to the values and peoples of liberal democratic states. Such research could help delegitimise dominant framings of this threat (Scheel Citation2020), by centring the experiences of those identified or associated therewith. It might profitably build – methodologically, at least – upon ethnographic and narrative work on the far-right in fields distinct from, but relevant to, terrorism studies (e.g. Virchow Citation2007).

Researchers will, of course, differ in the extent to which they believe far-right terrorism has been (successfully) securitised, and the agents and interests behind efforts to do so. Indeed, different routes to answering such questions remain at the heart of ongoing conceptual debates within securitisation theory (Scheel Citation2020, 4–7). It is, though, worth briefly reflecting on potential benefits of desecuritisation in this case, especially as we are discussing individuals or groups with views, values and politics likely so far removed from many researchers working in this area.

First, desecuritisation may provide some reassurance to those feeling endangered by the far-right. As Mueller (Citation2005, 497) argued of the war on terror’s early years: “a sensible policy approach for confronting terrorism might be to stress that any damage terrorists are able to accomplish likely can be absorbed and that, while judicious protective and policing measures are sensible, extensive fear and anxiety over what at base could well prove to be a rather limited problem is misplaced, unjustified, and counterproductive”. We may not yet have reached this level of alarmism in relation to the far-right, but threat assessments from the US Department of Homeland Security (U.S. Department of Homeland Security Citation2020, 18, my emphasis) situating “white supremacist extremists” as “the most persistent and lethal threat in the [United States] homeland” indicate, I suggest, a trajectory towards increasing securitisation. Desecuritisation may be less reassuring or appropriate for the lived experiences of communities directly targeted by the far-right, and their experiences of racism, criminality and violence.Footnote5 Yet, as we saw in the opening section, the far-right terrorist threat is often articulated in far wider general and abstract terms within political and media debate, with additional implications for individuals and communities – as well as for policy and politics .Footnote6

Second, desecuritisation might open space for better engagement with, and even empathy for, individuals identifying with – or identified as identifying with – the far-right, and their own multiple identities, insecurities, and interests (see Sandberg Citation2013). Such an engagement may have added urgency in the case, say, of structurally disadvantaged, or young individuals at risk of targeting by counterterrorism or counter-radicalisation initiatives concentrated on reducing this threat. And, third, again to develop an argument common within wider CTS research, desecuritising far-right terrorism might also facilitate a shift of attention – even resources – to more pressing issues of public policy, whether relating to health, environmental or other forms of insecurity (Jackson, Jarvis, Gunning, and Breen-Smyth Citation2011, 263–264).

There is a risk that such arguments are taken to trivialise the racisms, misogynies, or homophobias associated with the far-right; or, indeed, to trivialise the suffering of victims of violence. None of this is intended, just as arguments to desecuritise, say, “Islamist” terrorism are not justifications for, or trivialisations of, the conservatisms or violences of Al Qaeda or ISIS. Instead, the above attempt to develop existing literatures within and beyond CTS stands, ultimately, as an appeal for greater meta-theoretical, analytical and political reflection on how violences and groups designated “terrorist” are understood, studied, and addressed within (critical) terrorism research.

### 1NC---Circumvention

#### Overturning Trump’s anti-CBR XO gets circumvented---triggers a constitutional crisis, causing deterrence collapse

Andrias 25 [Kate Andrias, Patricia D. and R. Paul Yetter Professor of Law, Columbia Law School, “The Contested Constitution: Plutocrats, Right-Wing Populists, and Labor Rights in the U.S.,” 09/05/2025, p. 32-34, SSRN]

That is not to say that the right-wing populists and the plutocrats are united on all fronts. There are real divides between them. Right-wing populist Josh Hawley, for example, after voting for Trump’s “Big Beautiful Bill,” attempted to roll back some of the Medicaid cuts that it contained.167 He has continued to oppose captive audience meetings.168 But to date, when the two sides divide, the plutocrats have prevailed. Trump has not embraced the specific labor related reforms advanced by American Compass. But he has aggressively put the vision of ethnonationalism, gender hierarchy, and anti-democratic state into place—and has done so with appeals to the Constitution, claiming Article II Executive Power to instantiate his goals.

Ultimately, Trump’s actions regarding labor should not be viewed in isolation. They are part of a broader authoritarian transformation, which includes efforts to limit civil society, to silence and prosecute political opponents, to deploy the military domestically and for political purposes, and to sideline and weaken countervailing institutions.169 A major political dimension of the assault against the labor rights of federal workers is the consolidation of power among loyalists in government. In August, Trump created a new category of civil servants without civil service protections, using his erosion of labor protections to consolidate government work under the executive’s direct control—without the protections traditionally afforded to nonpartisan work.170 He also fired the head of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a traditionally nonpartisan position, after the bureau released monthly jobs data that reflected poor outcomes to Trump’s policies and contradicted Trump’s own social media posts about the economy.171 The removal underscores how assaults on labor from the Right act as both an end and a means, as the firing facilitates Trump’s authoritarian turn by further eroding trust in government and making it more difficult for policymakers, businesses, and citizens to access reliable data about the economy.172

Moreover, the executive orders targeting labor themselves constitute just a few of the over one hundred orders that Trump issued in his first hundred days, as part of his “flood the zone” strategy to disable effective legal resistance.173 Trump’s executive orders, as well as his calls for selective impeachment of judges and claims of bias against any judge who rules against the government, have uniquely targeted institutions previously considered independent and protected from persecution over political and ideological diversity: the judiciary and universities, in particular.174

These strategies mirror authoritarian turns around the globe. While Trumpism is new, it has long historical roots in the United States and parallels around the world; its commitments to traditional hierarchies and xenophobia, unchecked executive power, extractive capitalism, and a decimation of social welfare institutions are common across similar movements.175 Hungary’s autocratic transformation after 2010, for example, was facilitated by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s swift elimination of the opposition’s rights to substantive oversight in Hungary’s legislative process, weakening democratic guardrails in conjunction with an emphasis on xenophobia toward nonwhite arrivals and the state’s obligation to protect “Christian culture.”176 Chillingly, key leaders in the Trump Administration and Trump himself have repeatedly pointed to Hungary as a “model.”177

The putatively pro-labor wing of the Trump coalition has supported many of authoritarian efforts. Indeed, JD Vance previously suggested that any attempt by SCOTUS to strike down the executive order reducing civil service protections would trigger a constitutional crisis and that he would encourage Trump to disobey SCOTUS in pursuit of his aims.178 Josh Hawley is perhaps most famous for raising his fist in support of the January 6 attempted coup.179 Likewise, the plutocratic wing of the Trump coalition has supported the authoritarian turn, which has enabled numerous policies that strengthen plutocratic power, and, in particular, the wealth of the Trump family.180 And while the populist wing of the party may not be leading the pro-corporate, pro-plutocrat reforms, their members are also not actively opposing them.