# 2AC---DRR---Round 4

## Administration ADV

### Polycrisis---Impact---2AC

### Debt---Impact---2AC

### Disease---Impact---2AC

### Ports---Impact---2AC

### Disasters---Impact---2AC

### Terror---Impact---2AC

### De-development---2AC

#### No link! we do not de-develop.

Anthea Roberts 23, Professor of Global Governance, Australian National University; Founder, Dragonfly Thinking, “From Risk to Resilience,” https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/risk-resilience-economics

These debates tend to frame the tradeoffs in black-and-white terms: globalization versus deglobalization and interdependence versus decoupling. But such binaries have never been realistic. The COVID-19 pandemic, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and rising tensions between the United States and China have all made Western companies and countries more wary of the risks associated with economic interdependence. Few, however, are prepared to make the sacrifices that full-scale decoupling would entail.

No wonder that “de-risking” has entered the policy lexicon as a softer alternative to decoupling. In January 2023, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen coined the term as she laid out the EU’s strategy for reducing critical vulnerabilities while maintaining economic relations with China. The United States and the rest of the G-7 have since embraced de-risking, in part to assuage growing fears of a painful economic divorce from China. The idea is to differentiate connections that are high risk, for which selective decoupling is appropriate, from those that are low risk, for which it makes sense to maintain ties while also diversifying.

But inherent to de-risking is the idea that policymakers need to accept a zero-sum tradeoff between the risks and rewards of interconnection. There is a better way to understand the problem. Companies and countries need to embed calculations about risk and reward in a broader framework of systemic resilience — that is, the characteristics of a system that determine its ability to survive and thrive over time. Although resilience is commonly understood as the ability to withstand shocks and stressors, it is about more than just effectively responding to risks. It is also about evolving to better capture future rewards and cope with change.

To achieve systemic resilience, governments and firms must strike the right balance between risk and reward. If they always aim to minimize risks, they will not only reduce their rewards but also create new vulnerabilities over time. Likewise, if they always aim to maximize rewards in the short term, they may overlook existing risks and create new ones that could cost them dearly later. As a framework for weighing these competing objectives, systemic resilience can help policymakers and business executives think through questions of economic interdependence. It can help them decide when they should take risks in search of rewards and how they should prepare for potentially transformative changes — none more pressing than the coming energy transition.

THE BINARY BIAS

The rewards of economic connection can be immense. Global markets create extraordinary opportunities for economies of scale and enable companies and countries to develop their capabilities by specializing in what they do best and trading for the rest. Trade and investment treaties facilitate access to such markets, as do improvements in infrastructure, communications, and transportation. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, global supply chains proliferated as the rewards of international trade and investment seemed to far outstrip any potential risks. But by the first decade of the next millennium, the dangers of international connectedness had become manifest. The global financial crisis of 2008 stoked fears about financial contagion. China’s economic rise and growing assertiveness fueled Western capitals’ concerns about economic coercion. And Western sanctions made Moscow and Beijing more worried about weaponized interdependence.

Risks arise when a vulnerable system is exposed to threats or hazards. Interconnection exposes countries to intentional threats, such as economic coercion, as well as unintentional hazards, including financial crises and pandemics. Specialization creates additional vulnerabilities in the form of dependencies and concentration risks, such as when a country relies on critical goods manufactured by a foreign country or by a small group of suppliers in a region that is subject to extreme weather events. But because the same things that promise economic rewards often pose security risks, interdependence creates a dilemma. “Just in time” global supply chains that enable companies to reduce costs by storing minimal inventory can be tremendously efficient. But as the COVID-19 pandemic revealed, they can also leave societies dangerously exposed to disruptions, including in the supply of vital medical goods. The United States’ deep economic integration with China has produced enormous economic rewards, but it has also created vulnerabilities and dependencies for both countries, for example, in access to active pharmaceutical ingredients and semiconductors.

Interdependence does more than create tradeoffs between risk and reward; sometimes an increase in rewards can lead to a reduction in risks — a classic win-win outcome. Trade is often thought to promote peace and prosperity because rich and economically interdependent countries have powerful incentives to avoid war. But the effect is more ambiguous: interdependence may reduce the probability of conflict, but it can also make the consequences of conflict more dire if it does break out—since strong economic ties can be weaponized to devastating effect.

Efforts to mitigate one risk can also create or exacerbate others. Reshoring global supply chains may make countries less vulnerable to international disruptions while making them more vulnerable to domestic ones. Insulation from international supply chains can cause its own problems. For example, the United States generally manufactures enough baby formula to meet its own needs. But in 2022, a major U.S. baby formula plant was shut down because of bacterial contamination, causing nationwide shortages and forcing the Biden administration to take emergency actions to secure international supplies. People often struggle to acknowledge such tradeoffs because doing so is cognitively taxing. Rather than attempting to weigh the necessary multiple factors, people overwhelmed by that exercise tend to lump them together and simply declare that their chosen course of action is preferable on all counts. The psychologist Adam Grant calls this the “binary bias”—the tendency to collapse shades-of-gray spectrums into black-and-white categories. The result is tradeoff denialism: one side argues for globalization because it promotes peace and prosperity, while the other argues for decoupling on the grounds that it reduces the risks of coercion and stimulates the economy through reshoring.

The rhetorical shift from decoupling to de-risking is important because it represents an effort to move past the binary bias and tradeoff denialism. In this vein, Europe’s new economic security strategy, released by the European Commission in June 2023, begins by noting “the inherent tensions that exist between bolstering our economic security, and ensuring that the European Union continues to benefit from an open economy.” Policymakers must acknowledge those tensions instead of obfuscating them if their goal is to manage risk, not just minimize it.

In some sectors, the rewards from economic globalization are high and the risks are comparatively low. “Most of our trade in goods and services remains mutually beneficial and ‘un-risky,’” von der Leyen said in March 2023. Decoupling in these areas makes little sense. In other sectors, the risks arising from interdependence are high and the rewards are low. For example, trade in sensitive military technologies is too high a risk for the reward. In cases such as these, decoupling seems sensible. The hardest cases are where both the risks and rewards of economic interdependence are high. Here, focusing on systemic resilience is particularly helpful.

BOUNCING BACK

Resilience is a rich concept, with applications in engineering, psychology, disaster management, climate change adaptation, and more. In engineering, resilience describes the ability of a substance to return to its original shape after bending or stretching. Applied to people, communities, corporations, and countries, it describes the ability to absorb and adapt to changes. Scholars call this “socioecological resilience.”

Absorbing shocks means enduring them without incurring lasting damage or undergoing minor adaptations or major transformations. When countries stockpile semiconductors and other goods that are critical for manufacturing, they aim to create a cushion against supply chain disruptions. Building in redundancies such as multiple suppliers, some onshore and some offshore, helps systems weather shocks without suffering harm or disruption.

Adapting to shocks or stressors involves making incremental changes. When stocks of hand sanitizer ran low during the COVID-19 pandemic, some gin manufacturers adjusted their operations to produce needed supplies. Companies that specialized in three-dimensional printing began producing face masks and oxygen valves, while still others responded to shortages of medical supplies by finding alternative vendors. Adaptive changes are often small and short in duration. For example, schools shifted their classrooms online during the height of the pandemic, but most have since returned to in-person learning.

Transforming in the face of shocks is even more radical. It involves making more permanent structural changes that either reduce exposure and vulnerability to risks or increase the ability to capture rewards. Whereas adaptation can be achieved through incremental adjustments that largely preserve the status quo, transformation involves dramatic change to a new and better state. COVID-19 vaccines enabled governments to transform their response to the pandemic, fundamentally changing the risk-reward calculus for lockdowns and allowing countries to open their economies. Clean energy will prove even more transformative in the future. Governments will be able to use green technology to remake their economies in response to climate change.

These three modes of resilience — absorption, adaptation, and transformation — can operate alone or in combination. Often, they work on different timelines. For example, when China abruptly cut off exports of rare-earth elements to Japan in 2010 amid tensions in the East China Sea, Japan used all three modes of resilience to minimize harm. In the short term, it used careful inventory management to absorb the initial shock of the disruption and stretch existing supplies as far as possible. In the medium term, it adapted by recycling old rare-earth elements and finding substitutes for them. And in the long term, it took advantage of a transformation in the market for rare-earth minerals as new mines opened outside China.

THE RISE OF RESILIENCE

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, policymakers are beginning to appreciate the importance of resilience, which requires weighing polarities such as centralization and decentralization, diversification and concentration, and independence and interdependence. When it comes to free trade, for instance, U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai has said that it is “critical” to “incentivize resilience as opposed to just efficiency.” Sabine Weyand, the European Commission’s director general for trade, has identified a similar rebalancing of priorities in policymaking, arguing that “it is not just about efficiency in trade relations today; it’s about resilience.”

The key is to strike a balance between two extremes. Whereas optimizing for efficiency can create too many risks, optimizing for resilience can generate too few rewards. The scholar and former management consultant Roger Martin has characterized the dilemma well: “Pursuit of all resilience and no efficiency is as problematic as pursuit of efficiency with no resilience. The only difference is in the nature of the death.” By death, he meant the eventual demise of the system. Systems that are not resilient tend to die suddenly. They work well in the short term and sometimes the medium term, producing impressive rewards. But over time, they accumulate systemic vulnerabilities, eventually reaching a state of extreme fragility caused by factors such as excessive concentration and lack of diversity. When a shock disrupts such a system, its lack of absorptive and adaptive capacities can cause it to fail spectacularly. Inefficient systems, however, tend to die gradually as they compete unsuccessfully against more efficient ones.

To thrive over the long term, systems need to find a middle ground between efficiency and resilience and between the desire to minimize risks and maximize rewards. Countries that aim to minimize risks in the short term often leave themselves vulnerable to long-term threats. Just as children who grow up without being exposed to viruses can end up with weak immune systems, countries that have never experienced pandemics or other public health emergencies can be ill-prepared for them. During the COVID-19 pandemic, countries that had previously dealt with respiratory viruses such as SARS and MERS — for example, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan — mounted the most effective initial responses to the new disease. The risk analyst Nassim Nicholas Taleb uses the term “antifragile” to refer to systems that grow stronger when exposed to moderate levels of stress as opposed to ones that atrophy when they are shielded from all risks.

Likewise, countries that aim to maximize short-term rewards often make themselves vulnerable to future shocks. Maximizing rewards from just-in-time supply chains may seem economically efficient in the short term, but as the pandemic showed, it can eventually prove catastrophic. Similarly, countries that seek to accelerate their development by offshoring low-cost manufacturing and pivoting their domestic economies to high-end services could wind up forfeiting the industrial capacity needed to power the sectors of the future, including clean energy. And countries that rely heavily on their most profitable industry risk creating a monoculture that makes money in the short term but is vulnerable to the effects of environmental or market changes.

WALK THE LINE

So what is the right balance between peril and payoff? Where high risks promise high rewards, countries should abide by a simple rule: run the risk only when the relevant system has sufficient resilience to absorb, adapt, or transform if that risk becomes reality.

With 5G networks, for example, countries have taken clear steps toward decoupling because they perceive high risks and low resilience. The Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei is a cheap provider of leading 5G technologies that have the potential to generate strong economic rewards. But for many Western governments, the risks that the Chinese government would abuse access to 5G networks to engage in espionage or sabotage were too high to discount. Laying 5G networks is also expensive, and 5G network providers are almost always the service providers. These features of the technology mean that it would be extremely difficult for a government to adapt and find a new 5G supplier should Beijing weaponize Huawei’s networks. In areas where countries cannot adapt during a crisis, they often seek to reduce their exposure, even if that means forsaking possible rewards.

By contrast, where countries have sufficient resilience — for instance, in the trade of basic commodities, where global markets are deep and diversified — they are more likely to maintain interdependence, despite the risks of economic coercion. Many Australian exporters depended heavily on the Chinese market before Beijing instituted trade bans and other coercive economic measures in 2020, following Australia’s call for an inquiry into the origins of COVID-19. But not all these exporters proved resilient. Those selling high-end products such as lobsters and fine wines struggled to find alternative markets, whereas those trading basic commodities such as coal, barley, and cotton were able to adapt and redirect their inventory to global markets.

It is telling that Australia’s response to Chinese economic coercion was not to decouple. Even after the risks had been laid bare, the potential rewards of continued economic engagement were too great. Australia continued to trade in goods that were unaffected by the bans, such as iron ore, while seeking to reopen export markets with China in the industries that were affected. But the Australian government also advised exporters to adopt a more diversified “China plus” strategy to make pivoting markets easier in the event of future disruptions. When resilience is high, countries can take greater risks in pursuit of rewards because they have something to fall back on if their fears are realized. For many traded goods, including agricultural products and raw resources, diversification rather than decoupling is the more practical and prudent path.

Another advantage of systemic resilience is that it can help governments and firms proactively adapt to changing circumstances. Greater resilience often makes it easier to maintain something close to the status quo. But sometimes the status quo is the problem, in which case more transformational approaches are needed to ensure long-term resilience. That is why many Western countries are turning to industrial policy — official encouragement of specific domestic economic sectors — as they attempt to address climate change and heightened threat perceptions from increased geopolitical tensions.

In some cases, governments are using industrial policy to promote transformative innovations that will reduce risks and build resilience. For example, the U.S. government has invested in developing Open Radio Access Networks, new mobile network technology that runs on the cloud and would break the connection between 5G network providers and 5G service providers, allowing users to mix and match providers. If successful, this technology would reduce some of the risks inherent in 5G networks and increase resilience. The 5G markets would be more open and competitive, making it easier for countries and companies to switch service providers if networks are weaponized.

In other cases, governments are using industrial policy so they can reap future rewards as well as limit risks. The United States is subsidizing the development and deployment of green technologies not just to address the dangers of a changing climate but also to ensure that American companies capture a sizable share of important emerging markets, including the one for electric vehicles. The CHIPS and Science Act, which aims to boost the domestic semiconductor industry; the Inflation Reduction Act, which made historic investments in clean energy; and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which has upgraded infrastructure in areas such as bridges, rail, and broadband are also designed to transform the U.S. economy and society. These laws, passed in 2021 and 2022, reduce supply chain vulnerabilities; provide incentives to manufacturers of renewable energy, batteries, electric vehicles, and semiconductors; and enhance access by building a national network of electric vehicle chargers and overhauling the nation’s power grid to improve clean energy transmission.

#### Growth is sustainable AND they fail.

Dr. Brian Albrecht 12-15, PhD, MS, Chief Economist, Economics, International Center for Law & Economics, "The Only Number That Really Matters," Vox, 12/15/2025, https://www.vox.com/policy/471950/gross-domestic-product-economics-metrics-growth. [italics in original]

Today, GDP faces fierce criticism from economists, journalists, and even Elon Musk, all of whom argue it doesn’t capture what really matters. Critics love proposing alternatives, such as happiness indices, well-being measures, and sustainability metrics. Yet all of these critiques have a common flaw. They are correct that GDP isn’t a perfect measure of human flourishing, but it does reliably capture whether your economy is actually developing. And economic development is the foundation that makes progress on many other goals possible.

What GDP measures

To understand why GDP remains indispensable, we need to look at what it actually is. GDP is a “national account,” or a record that tracks all the economic activity in a country. Think of it as a country’s financial statement, similar to how a business tracks its revenues and expenses.

In the early 1930s, Congress tapped economist Simon Kuznets to develop the first national account. The government wanted to know whether the economy was recovering from the onset of the Great Depression, and if so, how fast, and by how much.

Before that, policymakers had price indices and production numbers, but they lacked a comprehensive measure of economic activity. Creating one required Kuznets to solve a series of conceptual and practical problems: how to aggregate millions of transactions across different industries, how to avoid double-counting when one business sells to another, and how to collect data from businesses that had never reported such figures before. Kuznets gave them such a measure.

The history of GDP is interesting, but the important part for people today is what the number means. GDP measures the *total market value* of all *final* goods and services *produced within a country* in a given time period. Each of these words matters. Let’s go through them in a logical order.

The “market value” part means GDP uses the prices at which goods and services actually sell. In its measurement, a $50,000 car counts 50,000 times more than a $1 soda. The “final” part prevents double-counting. If Ford buys steel from US Steel to make a truck, GDP only counts the truck’s sale price, not both the steel and the truck. The steel’s value is embedded in the truck’s price. Since we are looking at gross domestic *product*, we only want to look at things *produced within a country*, not what people buy.

The “total” seems straightforward: We don’t want to just look at one part of the economy, like manufacturing. In practice, we can only get to the total value by adding up different categories of the economy — everything from groceries to software to net exports (exports of American-made products to other countries minus imports).

This is similar to how your personal budget line items tell you whether you’re spending more on housing or entertainment. These categories help break down where economic activity occurs, but they are not GDP itself. GDP is the total. Accordingly, some critiques of GDP — such as when Patrick Fitzsimmons recently wrote that GDP is “completely wrong” and “totally broken” — are really critiques of how to interpret those specific components and which interpretations get used in public discourse, not of GDP itself.

It should be immediately apparent what GDP leaves out. GDP was designed to measure market production, so it doesn’t count unpaid work. If you cook dinner for your family, that doesn’t show up in GDP. If you pay someone to cook dinner for you, it does. Spending to rebuild after a hurricane adds to GDP, even though the hurricane itself destroyed wealth. Moreover, GDP doesn’t track environmental costs. While people talk about “the cost of carbon,” most of the time, it is not a price that anyone actually pays, so it’s not counted.

GDP doesn’t measure income distribution. GDP doesn’t distinguish between activities that improve welfare, like going to a movie, and activities that respond to problems, like deciding to buy a new lock because crime has risen. None of these missing parts is hidden or controversial.

The critiques of GDP

The critiques of GDP come from different angles. The first concerns what GDP measures. For example, in 2009, the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, led by Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, argued “What we measure affects what we do; and if our measurements are flawed, decisions may be distorted.” And because GDP leaves some stuff out, it is flawed as a measure, according to the commission.

Yet this critique judges GDP against a standard it was never designed to meet and that no one ever claimed it met. No metric is all-encompassing. Kuznets himself warned Congress in 1934 that “the welfare of a nation can scarcely be inferred from a measurement of national income.” The people who created GDP knew what they were building: a measure of market production, not a measure of human flourishing.

A slightly different line of critique, as Stiglitz has argued elsewhere, is that focusing on GDP makes policymakers “more materialistic” and leads them to neglect policies that would improve health, education, wealth equality, and the environment. Similarly, journalist David Pilling argues in *The Growth Delusion* that our fixation on GDP growth can justify destructive policies that lead to environmental degradation and growing inequality.

Yet these critiques are more aimed at politicians who focus on GDP than on the measure itself. The critics position themselves as revealing that we need multiple measures, but no country has ever made decisions based solely on GDP growth. Governments do also pay attention to these other issues.

Ultimately, Stiglitz’s own commission recommended maintaining GDP as part of a broader “dashboard” of indicators. Pilling, after cataloguing GDP’s limitations, concludes it “should definitely not be scrapped.”

The other outcomes that GDP can capture

GDP carries weight as a metric for good reason; despite its narrowness, it relates closely with nearly every outcome people care about.

For example, people in countries with higher GDP per capita live longer. While detractors sometimes point to cherry-picked examples, such as New Zealand, which has a lower GDP than the United States but higher life expectancy, that’s not the case in general.

Higher GDP per capita also correlates with lower infant mortality, higher educational attainment, reduced extreme poverty, and higher self-reported happiness. This last point deserves emphasis: life satisfaction, the primary measure used in the World Happiness Report and similar well-being indices that critics often propose as alternatives to GDP — itself highly correlates with GDP.

The closest thing to an exception is environmental quality, which often shows a U-shaped relationship with GDP. Pollution tends to rise in early stages of economic growth before declining as countries grow wealthy enough to invest in clean technology and environmental protection. For wealthy countries like the United States, higher GDP does seem to correlate with improving environmental quality.

And these correlations make sense. Economic production is the foundation of tons of other things we care about. You can’t have broad or universal health care without the economic capacity to pay for it. You can’t fund education, build infrastructure, or protect the environment without resources. And GDP tells you how much resource-generating capacity you have by looking at how much you are doing right now.

The practical advantages of GDP

These correlations explain the appeal of GDP, but not why it, uniquely, is the measure of choice. Why does nearly every country produce GDP estimates quarterly? Why do markets and policymakers treat it as such an important economic indicator? Simply put, GDP has practical advantages that no alternative measure can match.

The most important advantage is the timeliness. In the United States, the Bureau of Economic Analysis releases preliminary GDP estimates roughly one month after each quarter ends, with revisions following as more complete data arrives. This frequent reporting allows governments to spot recessions early and adjust policy accordingly, as they hoped to do during the Great Depression. By contrast, Bhutan’s latest Gross National Happiness data is from 2022. Presumably, that could be sped up with more funding, but I’m not sure happiness rising from 0.76 to 0.77 from July to August is going to help Bhutan’s central bank when setting interest rates.

The importance of accurate, up-to-date data became painfully clear during the policy mistakes of the 1970s. As economist Athanasios Orphanides has documented, faulty GDP data, caused by measurement problems and data revisions, led the Federal Reserve to believe that the economy was operating further below its capacity than it actually was. As a result, the Fed pursued policies that accelerated inflation.

Statistical agencies have made substantial improvements since then. The Bureau of Economic Analysis now collects data electronically from businesses rather than waiting for paper forms. Preliminary GDP estimates arrive faster and with smaller revisions than in the 1970s, though measurement challenges remain.

Policymakers want timely GDP data so bad that the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta created GDPNow, a forecasting model that produces real-time estimates of GDP growth based on incoming economic data. Rather than waiting a month after quarter-end for the BEA’s preliminary numbers, GDPNow updates continuously as new data on retail sales, industrial production, trade, and other indicators become available. It’s still preliminary but highlights the importance of up-to-date data that is aggregated.

Given all of the effort put into improving GDP metrics over the years and across the world, we also have measures across time and place. While different countries’ measures have different levels of reliability — for instance, China’s numbers are always suspect — we can meaningfully compare economies across borders. We can compare GDP across decades, even centuries in some cases, to understand long-run growth patterns. This historical perspective is helpful for economic research and broader policy knowledge.

Are there situations where raising GDP might conflict with other goals? Sure. Trade-offs exist, but we shouldn’t get bogged down in imaginary ones. There are people for whom training to become a faster 5K runner might hurt their marathon time. But that’s really only if you’re an elite athlete optimizing for specific events. For most people, like me, there is no real trade-off.

For most countries, for more policy decisions, what we need is to build productive capacity, and raising GDP captures whether they’re succeeding. All the outcomes move together. Debating little trade-offs between GDP and alternative metrics misses the point.

#### Best data proves.

Dr. Detlef Pietsch 25, PhD, General Manager, BMW Group, "The Emergence of the Capitalism-Critical Society," in The Anti-Capitalist Society: Why a Successful Economic Model Is Under Fire, Chapter 1, pg. 1-14, 2025, Springer.

If one were to assess the viability of capitalism based on the number of its devastating critiques, it should not have survived the 19th century, let alone the 20th and especially the 21st century. And yet it still lives. It seems that the more frequently and intensely capitalism is criticized, the longer and more persistently it survives. It even thrives, regardless of financial market crises. Even though theoretical economics may have been disqualified as incapable of forecasting and clueless according to the famous dictum of the Queen (during a visit to the renowned London School of Economics in the context of the financial market crisis, cf. Dohmen, 2017), the world’s most famous economic system, capitalism, has survived these discussions unscathed. The Robinson Crusoe of economic models survives on his lonely island. Communism and socialism have given up all hope, especially after the fall of the “Iron Curtain”. Yet we live in the heyday of criticism of capitalism. Hardly an economics book is published that does not deal more or less critically with capitalism and its neoliberal excesses or its ecological consequences (representatively only the works published in recent years without claim to completeness: cf. Altvater, 2022; Chomsky & Waterstone, 2022; Fraser, 2023; Fraser & Jaeggi, 2021; Häring, 2021; Herrmann, 2022, 2018; Frevert, 2019; Ivanova et al., 2020; Piketty, 2023, 2020, 2014; Reimer, 2023; Ziegler, 2019; most recently Saito, 2023; Kaczmarczyk, 2023).

The abundance of literature critical of capitalism is almost overwhelming. Almost daily, it seems, a new critical work is added to the sea of publications that predict the end of this economic system. At the same time, the capitalist system, in its various forms and variants that have adapted to societal developments over the centuries (cf. Kocka, 2017, p. 77 ff.), has proven to be extremely successful: As the historian and sociologist Rainer Zitelmann demonstrated in his 2022 book (cf. Zitelmann, 2022) using all the rules of statistical art, none of the arguments critical of capitalism seem to hold water, at least statistically. All arguments can be statistically refuted. According to Zitelmann, capitalism is neither responsible for hunger and poverty in the world nor for increasing inequality, let alone for environmental destruction and climate change. The crises of the years around 1873, 1929/30, the (“Great Depression”) or 2007/2008 (“financial market crisis”) (cf. Kocka, 2017, p. 122) can no more be attributed to capitalism than wars or even Germany’s path into National Socialism. Not even the unanimously presented knockout arguments against capitalism, such as the promotion of profit greed and egoism at the expense of the common good, solidarity or simply humanity, are statistically significantly confirmed. Let alone that the rich determine politics or that capitalism leads to monopolies. Zitelmann does not accept any of these arguments in his admittedly painstakingly researched book “The 10 Misconceptions of Anti-Capitalists”.

#### Movements fail AND cause transition wars.

Zak Cope 25, Visiting Researcher, Queen's University Belfast, "Geopolitics and Anti-Capitalism: Global Power Dynamics and Left Economics," in The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Geopolitics, Chapter 55, pg. 1142-1143, 2025, dml

From a geopolitical standpoint, strong anti-capitalist movements or policies could disrupt established economic systems, trade relationships, and political alliances structured around free market principles. If a significant number of nations adopt anti-capitalist policies, this can lead to a shift away from open markets toward more protectionist and statist economic models. Such a shift would undermine the economic growth model upon which many countries rely, potentially leading to economic contractions and increased tensions between nations having differing economic ideologies. The promotion of protectionist nationalism as a socialist response to free market internationalism risks fueling imperial expansionism. When countries adopt trade barriers or protectionist tariffs, they disrupt established supply chains and trade relationships, damaging domestic industries that rely on imports of raw materials or exports of finished goods and lowering economic efficiency by reducing competition. Countries affected by other countries’ protectionist measures typically respond with countermeasures of their own such as retaliatory tariffs, sparking cycles of escalating international trade conflicts that can lead directly to war. A shift toward more state-controlled and autarkic economic nationalism, whether of the left or right, risks the segmentation of the global market into colonial spheres of influence, thereby reducing overall growth. This has profound geopolitical consequences insofar as countries’ strategic interests are closely tied to their economic interests. Growing trade conflicts and a fragmented global economy could damage necessarily multilateral cooperation on issues such as security, technology, infrastructure development, and the environment (Rohac, 2019). It must also increase distrust and tensions between nations having differing approaches to economic and trade policy. Strong anti-capitalist movements challenging the status quo could significantly disrupt existing geopolitical alignments and international relationships structured around the liberal international order.

#### Growth key to innovate past risks. Extinction.

Leopold Aschenbrenner 24, former Member of OpenAI’s superalignment team and former researcher at the Oxford’s Global Priorities Institute; Philip Trammell, Global Priorities Institute and Department of Economics at the University of Oxford, December 2024, Existential Risk and Growth, https://globalprioritiesinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/Philip-Trammell-and-Leopold-Aschenbrenner-Existential-Risk-and-Growth.pdf

Technologies may pose existential risks to civilization. Though accelerating technological development may increase the risk of anthropogenic existential catastrophe per period in the short run, two considerations suggest that a sector-neutral acceleration decreases the risk that such a catastrophe ever occurs. First, acceleration decreases the time spent at each technology level. Second, since a richer society is willing to sacrifice more for safety, optimal policy can yield an “existential risk Kuznets curve”; acceleration then pulls forward a future in which risk is low. Acceleration typically increases risk only given sufficiently extreme policy failures or direct contributions of acceleration to risk. JEL codes: O32, O33

1 Introduction

Technology brings prosperity. On the other hand, some technological developments have arguably raised, or would raise, existential risk: the risk of human extinction or of an equally complete and permanent loss of human welfare.1 This raises a possible tradeoff: concern for the survival of civilization may motivate slowing development. Environmentalist sentiments along these lines go back at least to the Club of Rome’s 1972 report on the “Limits to Growth”, and have arguably reemerged with calls to pause AI development (Future of Life Institute, 2023). Jones (2024) explores how to trade off between AI development and AI risk, assuming the tradeoff exists.

Even if some technological developments directly raise existential risk, however, others may directly lower it. Advances in game theory may render us less vulnerable to nuclear war; vaccines render us less vulnerable to plagues. The prosperity technology brings can also lower existential risk indirectly, by increasing a planner’s willingness to pay for safety. This paper offers an argument that these salutary possibilities probably dominate in the long run, and that the proposed tradeoff is thus typically illusory. That is, concern for long-term survival should typically motivate speeding rather than slowing technological development.

We begin in Section 2 with a simple model in which the hazard rate—the probability of catastrophe per period—is a positive function of the technology level. Here, an existential catastrophe must occur unless higher technology levels carry hazard rates that eventually fall toward zero.

In this setting there are only two possibilities. If advanced technology does not eventually drive the hazard rate toward zero, then a catastrophe is inevitable, so accelerating technological development cannot increase its probability. Otherwise, a catastrophe is avoidable, and acceleration can lower its probability by hastening the arrival of safety.

This simple model formalizes two observations. First, if we believe the hazard rate is currently high, our only hope for a long future is the hope that we are in a temporary “time of perils”. This view was famously expressed by Sagan (1997), and its implications for those especially concerned about the long-term future are emphasized by Parfit (1984), Ord (2020), and others. The second observation is less widely appreciated: that if we are in a time of perils, with the hazard rate a positive function only of the technology level, then deceleration for the sake of long-term survival is misguided. Speeding technological development may be temporarily risky, but in this setting it must be safer in the long run.2

The model of Section 2 is not “economic”. It studies the impact on risk of quickly escaping risky states, not optimal policy under constraints. It thus leaves open the possibility that, when consumption–risk tradeoffs are navigated by a planner with little concern for long-term survival, technological acceleration can increase risk after all. Section 2 also offers no reason to believe that future states will be safe. If one believes that technology has historically increased the hazard rate, the hope that this relationship will reverse in the future may seem naive. As Thorstad (2022) emphasizes, the “time of perils hypothesis” has to date largely been asserted without strong defense.3

Section 3 therefore introduces an environment in which technology grows exogenously and its risks can be mitigated by policy. As dangerous new technologies are introduced, a planner, discounting the future at an arbitrary rate, decides how much consumption to sacrifice to lower the hazard rate. We illustrate that, even if technological advances always directly raise the hazard rate, optimal policy can generate an “existential risk Kuznets curve”, with the hazard rate rising and then falling as technology advances. Early, when the expected discounted value of the future of civilization is low and the marginal utility of consumption is high, it is worthwhile to adopt risky technologies as they arrive. Later, when the discounted future is more valuable and the marginal utility of consumption has fallen, substantial risk mitigation becomes worthwhile.

#### No transition---degrowth causes right-wing populism.

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

3.2. Implications of rapidly transforming social systems

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

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

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

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

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

#### Independently, extinction through nuclear instability.

Hymans 22 – Associate Professor of Int’l Relations, USC. Dr. Jacques E. C. Hymans, Ph.D. in Government from Harvard, “Comment on Meier and Vieluf's ‘Upsetting the Nuclear Order: How the Rise of Nationalist Populism Increases Nuclear Dangers,’” *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 28, Iss. 1-3 (Sept. 2022): 44-51, DOI:10.1080/10736700.2022.2093512

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

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

Questioning Meier and Vieluf’s faith in the establishment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Bounce-back is worse for the environment.

Antoniades ’22 [Andreas; January 3; Senior Lecturer of International Relations, Senior Lecturer of International Development at University of Sussex; Sustainable Development Goals Series book series, “The Crises-Poverty-Sustainability Nexus in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals and Covid-19,” pp. 1—15]

This collapse of economic activity and the lockdown measures have had visibly positive environmental effects (e.g. reductions in air and water pollution, reclaiming of land and waters by wildlife). Yet, past experience with financial crises teaches us that the environmental benefits of financial crises are short-lived, while at the same time the financial distress caused by the crises across economic sectors (government, corporations, households) sets in motion new or/and locks in old environmentally destructive patterns of action, from illegal logging for subsistence purposes to a fall in green R&D and loosening of environmental protection (see Antoniades and Antonarakis this volume).

It is indicative that after the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008/09, the world experienced the largest annual increase in CO2 emissions on record (Fig. 1.3; IEA 2021; Peters at al. 2012). Pacca et al. (2020) find a similar pattern for a very large number of financial crises across the globe—any crisis-triggered positive environmental effects are short-lived and evaporate in the rebound-from-the-crisis period. International Financial Institutions are now projecting a divergent, uneven but robust recovery from the Covid-19 economic crisis, estimating global economic growth at 6 percent for 2021 (from −3.3. in 2020) (IMF 2021; Fig. 1.1). In this context, the IEA (2021) projects a strong rebound in global energy-related CO2 emissions for 2021, that is estimated to be the largest annual increase on record after the recovery from the GFC in 2010 (Fig. 1.3). This will follow the decade of ‘Great Stagnation’ after the GFC which was characterised by mixed environmental trends (Cantone et al. 2021).

Other familiar crisis patterns (Antoniades and Antonarakis this volume) were also visible in 2020. For instance, there have been reports for increases in illegal logging and illegal resource extraction linked to loss of rural livelihoods and reduced monitoring and enforcement capacity (IUCN 2020). Similarly, the large number of unemployed people migrating from urban centres back to villages contribute to subsistence-related illegal activities such as logging and agricultural encroachment, and add new pressures on biodiversity, for instance via wildlife poaching or intensified nearshore fishing (ibid; and Rosado et al. this volume; Shepherd et al. this volume). Furthermore, pandemic-related restrictions and the corresponding economic crisis has led to the collapse of a wide range of environmental monitoring and protection activities, including protected area management, restoration programmes and wildfire fire management (IUCN 2020).

#### No modelling and international bounce-back.

Kallis ’15 [Giorgos; Feb; ICREA Research Professor at ICTA; “The Degrowth Alternative,” https://greattransition.org/publication/the-degrowth-alternatives]

Governing Degrowth Despite the richness of degrowth theory, proponents are still grappling with questions of scale and governance. Advocates of degrowth privilege relocalization, anticipating that it will emerge and flourish, leading to a national political movement that can change the state from within. However, there is a tension between a desire for local autonomy and the need for action at a broader scale. A certain degree of hierarchy is unavoidable because the redistribution of burdens and resources among more and less privileged localities will require intermediation and decision-making at broad geographic levels. Some of the degrowth reforms discussed above are, in fact, quite interventionist and would require strong state action. Likewise, engagement with governance at a global scale is largely absent from the discussions within the degrowth movement. This is curious given the centrality of issues like climate change, free trade, and relentless global competition. Many degrowth advocates appear to assume that limitations on trade and capital at the national level will extricate a country from global economic forces, or that generalized global change will ensue as the aggregate effect of local grassroots initiatives. However, such developments remain unlikely. Climate change, for instance, cannot be tackled solely by summing up various local low-carbon initiatives in the absence of international agreements that cap total greenhouse gas emissions. Under the prevailing neoliberal regime, global interdependence makes it impossible for a country to undertake a degrowth transition on its own. Doing so would entail substantial penalties from capital flight, bank and currency collapses, asset devaluations, collapse of public and security institutions, and political isolation. This would undermine the ability of a nation to pursue a quiet contraction on its own. Likewise, if a single country or block of countries were to successfully downscale their economies, a global reduction of resource prices would likely follow, producing a rebound in consumption elsewhere. In a sense, then, escaping growth is a global collective action problem. To be successful, the transition to degrowth must be global.

## OFF

### T Substantially---2AC

#### Counter-interp: ‘substantially’ means considerable.

Joseph W. Dorn & Michael P. Mabile 03, JD, Partner, Law, King & Spalding LLP; JD, Counsel, Law, King & Spalding LLP, Committee for Fairly Traded Venezuelan Cement v. United States, United States Court of Appeals, Federal Circuit, No. 04-1016, 12/16/2003, Westlaw. [italics in original]

In particular, the use of the word “substantial” in the second part of the standard clearly indicates that import concentration can be found where much less than 50 percent of the subject imports enter the region. “A fundamental canon of statutory construction is that, unless otherwise defined, words will be interpreted as taking their ordinary, contemporary, common meaning.”7 To determine the ordinary meaning of a term, it is appropriate to consult dictionary definitions.8

The primary dictionary definition of “substantial” is “of ample or considerable amount, quantity, size, etc.” *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (1994 ed.); *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (2d ed. 1987). Neither this nor any other dictionary definition of \*19 the word “substantial” requires, or even implies, that something must constitute a majority of the whole in order to be substantial. The Federal courts commonly recognize that a substantial portion, proportion, or percentage does not have to constitute 50 percent and may be much less than 50 percent.9

### T-Scope---2AC

### ASPEC---2AC

### Disability K---2AC

#### Framework: evaluate links to the plan, and alternatives that solve.

#### FAIRNESS---the neg shouldn’t get infinite, unpredictable angles to contest the 1AC---side equity matters, debate is a competition, the ballot only solves our offense.

#### If debate shapes subjects, CLASH turns offense---objectively comparing consequences permits argument refinement, and good policy conclusions instead of abstraction.

#### Extinciton is really bad.

#### Viewing violence as endemic to society naturalizes it, which undermines our capacity to *mitigate* and *move beyond* violent social practices.

Jonathan Luke Austin 24, Assistant Professor of International Relations at the University of Copenhagen and Director of the Centre for Advanced Security Theory,” 2024, “6: The Ecology of Violence,” in Routledge Handbook of the Future of Warfare, Eds. Artur Gruszczak and Sebastian Kaempf, Routledge, pp. 63-68.

Borrell’s speech was attacked for its seeming attachment to racist civilizational stereotypes that centre a Western European and North American metropole (the ‘garden’) in need of protection from the ‘jungle’ of ‘most of the rest of the world.’ Such rhetoric also echoes – however – a long intellectual history, still present within Political Science and International Relations, that has made similar claims. This ranges from long-standing controversy surrounding Huntington’s (1997) clash of civilizations thesis, towards Robert Kagan’s (2018) more recent claim that the ‘jungle grows back’ and, as such, neo-imperial action by the United States and its allies is a necessary part of maintaining the liberal international order. Setting aside the controversy surrounding remarks like these, they attest to the strength of a particular ‘ecological’ vision of world politics. Particularly when referencing violence, war, or conflict, frequent appeal is made to biological, natural, and cognate metaphors across history. These metaphors render political violence a systemic phenomenon (‘the jungle has a strong growth capacity’) embedded in natural processes. They have also proliferated, more recently, given the rise of environmentally-linked security concerns that render the planet itself a source of potential conflict and violence (Chandler, Cudworth & Hobden 2018).

In this chapter, I address the politics and implications of such ‘ecological’ understandings of (political) violence in three ways. First, I stress that while the rhetoric of Borrell or Kagan is disquieting, it tends to remain rhetoric. Here, analogies between political violence, conflict, or war and natural phenomena are essentially metaphorical. Although the consequences of such rhetoric can be severe, it must be distinguished from what I will refer to as ‘ecological ontologies’ of violence. Ecological ontologies of political violence can be traced to a mix of complexity, systems, and cybernetic theory, cross-fertilized with the insights of post-structuralist and post-modern philosophy (Coyne 2008). In general, such approaches are relational ontologies that foreground a post-humanist, distributed, and complexity-orientated understanding of social life. These ecological ontologies have – importantly – grown in influence both for the academic study of violence but also within military, security, and other agencies whose operational doctrines are now directly influenced by natural concepts in order to foreground warfare’s rhizomatic, symbiotic, fluid, embodied, and environmentally fluctuating qualities (Bousquet 2018; Öberg 2018; Austin 2019c, 2020a; Grove 2019).

Second, I discuss the ethico-political questions that are raised when such ecological ontologies are deployed. In theory, ecological ontologies are normatively neutral, and should be sharply distinguished from the risk of civilizational, racist, and neo-imperialist tropes that are frequently associated with the use of ecological metaphors. Nonetheless, these ontologies do risk presenting social life in a ‘naturalized’ form that raises multiple ethico-political questions. This includes the question of attributing responsibility for the use of political violence, the risk of a further naturalization of the use of literally posthuman forms of warfare (autonomous weapons systems, etc.), and – ultimately – the return to a naturalized cosmology of violence that sees the presence of violence as integral to (post)human society. The third focus of this discussion seeks to address these concerns. It does so by stepping outside the realm of political violence to see how ecological ontologies/approaches have been deployed within the field of public health to prevent harm. My goal there is to stress how similar methods of intervening-in/against political violence can be imagined within the scope of ecological ontologies, but that doing so requires a sustained shift away from a contemporary preoccupation with legal and ideational approaches to violence prevention. My final focus here is thus on teasing out an agenda for what such a future – in line with the goals of this handbook – of violence prevention might look like. A future, to put it simply, of designing-against ecologies of violence.

Metaphor or ontology?

Political violence has a long history of being spoken about through natural metaphors. Indeed, one might argue that earlier explanations for the persistence of organized violence in human society embraced a naturalistic view in which for evolutionary, theological, or other reasons, such violence was an inevitable part of the circle of life (Keeley 1996; Collins 2008). Slowly, such cosmologies of violence as a natural phenomenon – akin to the winds and tides – declined as an ethico-political imperative to avoid the ravages of total war took hold in the 20th century. Nonetheless, the metaphorical appeal to natural, ecological, or cognate concepts continues. Israel, for instance, speaks of its military activities in occupied Palestine as ‘mowing the grass’ (Inbar & Shamir 2014). The United States developed a ‘Human Terrain’ system in Iraq, with the hope of better capturing the ‘hearts and minds’ of Iraqis, implicitly equating physical, natural, and human ‘terrains’ or ‘landscapes’ to be conquered (Zehfuss 2012). More generally, violence, conflict, and war have been suffused with bodily metaphors of health and disease: with enemies described as cancerous cells and those to be protected as bodies (Wilcox 2015). Such metaphors are important, as in any sphere of social life. Metaphorical reasoning allows for the production of concepts that help us make sense of the complexity of the world and – therefore – to act within it more or less ‘effectively’ (Chilton 1996).

Nonetheless, as many have noted, these use of naturalistic metaphors to explain violence, conflict, and war is frequently a depoliticizing move (Bell 2012). By taking phenomena fundamentally connected to human society and its political disjunctures, but reading them through ecological metaphors, we seem to take them away from the sphere of political debate and contestation. Such a depoliticizing tendency has been especially evident in security politics after the Cold War, for example, as well as in the rise of concepts like ‘resilience’ within peace-building discourse (Neocleous 2011, 2022; Duffield 2019). When Borrell describes Europe as a garden, and the rest of the world as a jungle, he appears (despite his denials1 ) to endorse a naturalized status quo in which Europe’s intervention elsewhere in the world is not a political move but simply a pragmatic response that addresses the dynamics of a ‘naturalized’ international order. It is important to stress, however, that when these processes are left at a metaphorical level, critique of such depoliticization remains possible. We can critique a military commander for using such metaphors during a counter-insurgency campaign, as critiques of US doctrine in Iraq, or any other case, make clear. Equally, we can critique a politician who declares their enemy to be a subhuman, cancerous, plague on the nation. And Borrell’s remarks were indeed met with immediate – and harsh – critique. Put simply, while metaphors can work to depoliticize, the possibility of re-politicization remains open at this discursive-rhetorical level.

But what occurs when the use of natural or ecological terminology is meant ontologically, rather than metaphorically? Increasingly, ecological or natural terms are not deployed analogically, but with the goal of expressing a distinct ontological understanding of social reality. For example, in Jairus Grove’s Savage Ecology, he defines an ecological approach to politics as involving a:

Form of analysis characterized by inhuman encounters and deep relational processes across geographical scales rather than a form of political thinking that relies on discreteness, causality, and an exceptional notion of human agency (Grove 2019, p. 10)

He stresses that this is not “a metaphor for analysing the world” but, instead, something that emerges from “empirical scrutiny” (Grove 2019, p. 14). Such ecological ontological thinking can be traced to numerous social theoretical traditions, but especially those inspired by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, as well as earlier work within complex systems, chaos, and cybernetic theory, and which have coalesced today into work around assemblage theory, actornetwork theory, new materialism, and cognate work.2 The precepts of such ecological social theory are diverse. But, broadly speaking, they share some common assumptions. First, ecological ontologies are – ultimately – relational understandings of social life that deny any object (human or non-human) possesses an autonomous ‘essence’ that exists outside its relational ties to other objects. In this view, social phenomena are produced through entangled relations between objects, which can be assembled, reassembled, or disassembled in an infinite number of ways (Best et al. 2013). Second, ecological ontologies generally follow a ‘symmetry’ principle in which agency can be attributed to non-human actors, including technologies, tools, landscapes, atmospheres, etc. These non-human entities possess agency because their presence or absence within ecological relations fundamentally changes the nature of social reality (Sayes 2014). Third, because of this symmetry principle, agency is also seen as a ‘distributed effect’ in which no single actor can possess autonomous agency in the world: their capacity to act is, instead, reliant on the agency of other human and non-human things. In this reading, actions taken by specific individuals, groups, or objects cannot be said to have entirely originated within those objects. Instead, the potential for these actions to occur relied upon agency distributed across other persons, objects, and things.

Ecological-relational ontologies have a long history of being deployed to study social and political events. However, their use in the academic study of (political) violence is relatively nascent. The accounts that exist are generally preoccupied with the ‘posthuman’ understanding of violence that emerges from ecological ontologies, in large part because this aspect of such ontologies is most disruptive for our typically humanist understanding of the mechanics of violence. For example, Austin (2016, 2019b) describes how the practice of torture emerges through a globalized set of relations that bind individual human perpetrators into a historically sedimented set of techniques of violence that are materialized in both banal and everyday (chairs, whips) and more high-technological (internet platforms, etc.) material infrastructures. At the broader level of ‘war’ itself, Bousquet, Grove and Shah (2020, p. 104) describe how “war is both a thing and a process, a unity and an assembly, an event and an ecology of relations.” In this, their focus – alongside others – is on the distributed agentic drivers of war and violence (De Landa 1991; Der Derian 2009). Naturally, much attention has also been focused on how an ecological ontology can unpack the emergence of, and potential effects of, autonomous weapons systems. Especially notably, this literature focuses on how the rise of the drone is radically changing the nature of warfare, both from the perspective of those who perpetrate violence and the communities who fall under the gaze of the drone by drawing – in particular – on the focus on ‘affect’ within ecological ontologies (Walters 2014; Chamayou 2015; Austin 2020b; Malaviya 2020).

Practice and purpose

The status of ecological ontologies for exploring political violence is not an academic question. Indeed, academic research in this area has followed work within military science and practice. Weizmann discussed this development in 2006 when exploring how the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) drew on post-modern social theory to re-think military action, deploying concepts such as inverse geometry, swarming, emergence, connectivity, and beyond to augment their capacity to (violently) control Palestinian space. As he notes, this represents a paradoxical situation in which concepts from “the humanities, [which are] often believed to be the best lasting weapon with which to combat imperialism… [have] been adopted as imperialism’s own weapon” (Weizman 2007, p. 15). Indeed, a sustained ‘military design’ movement has developed across the world, predicated on deploying variants of ecological ontologies to augment military capacity (Öberg 2018). These developments are relatively unsurprising given a long lineage of military thinking preoccupied with the logistics of organizing large-scale operations, which lead to an interest in cybernetics and complex systems theory from an early stage (Lawson 2011; Bousquet, Grove & Shah 2017; Bousquet 2018). The ‘reality’ of the deployment of ecological ontologies of violence in practice is important because it moves us away from the realm of pure intellectual reflection. All ontological claims are contestable, but their impact becomes acutely felt when they are taken to be ‘real’ by those who deploy them in practice and for specific purposes. In her classical Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defence Intellectuals – for instance – Carol Cohn described how US defence professionals were immersed in a (linguistic) world that legitimized a rationalist ontology of conflict, risking nuclear catastrophe. As she put it:

Those of us who find US nuclear policy desperately misguided… faced a serious quandary. If we refuse to learn the language [of a rationalist ontology], we are virtually guaranteed that our voices will remain outside the ‘politically relevant’ spectrum of opinion. Yet, if we do learn and speak it, we not only severely limit what we can say but we also invite the transformation, the militarization, of our own thinking. (Cohn 1987, p. 716)

When taken as ‘reality’ and put ‘into practice’ ontologies have real effects that limit our capacity to think differently. Thus, when Grove (2019) describes ecological ontologies as not simply one contestable ontology among another but as an observable truth that “accretes from reality,” he is simultaneously referencing the way this ontology aligns with what we see in the world analytically and its deployment by violence workers of all kinds in practice. This unusually practicallyembedded ‘reality’ of ecological ontologies is important because it raises several serious ethical and political implications that are – in many ways – more acute than those that emerge from the simple use of contestable ecological metaphors seen above.

First, ethical questions of adjudicating responsibility emerge especially strongly via ecological ontologies. While natural metaphors depoliticize, natural ontologies radically diffuse questions of responsibility for violence. This is true at multiple scales. At the macro-level, ecological theories appear to make it difficult to adjudicate ‘why’ a war began, as its dynamics would be rooted in complex emergent relations without a linear causal path to trace (De Landa 1991; Bousquet, Grove & Shah 2020). In and of itself, this may not be entirely problematical: even within more traditional ontologies of social life, adjudicating responsibility for macro-level events is exceptionally difficult. The challenge – however – is that the solution to this indeterminacy has often rested on addressing ‘conduct’ in situations of conflict or war, and assuming the capacity of individuals – whether political leaders or soldiers – to be held accountable for their actions once an ‘event’ has occurred (Sikkink 2011). An ecological perspective – taken to its logical conclusion – however, also undermines our capacity to see individual beings as fully agentic actors in control of their conduct: whether violent or not. Principles of distributed agency equally imply that the presence of material objects or technologies, the affective conditions of the environments in which our actions occur, and so on, all dilute the autonomous capacity of human beings. In this regard, ecological ontologies radicalize the older ‘banality of evil’ thesis by extending its focus on the ideationally, bureaucratically, and/or culturally produced ‘thoughtlessness’ underlying mass violence towards a focus on how material infrastructures and affective atmospheres make thinking against violence frequently impossible (c.f. Haraway 2016; Arendt 1963). Under this reading – to put it simply – we can locate ‘responsibility’ for violence neither at an individual nor structural level of social reality. Instead, violence becomes a ‘subjectless’ thing (Austin 2020a).

Second, if ecological ontologies are embraced as reflecting social reality, they also seem likely to contribute to the rise of literally post-humanist modes of violence. Debates over the place of autonomous weapons systems in warfare, for instance, are usually situated in a dichotomy that compares their affordances, capacities, and effects to those of human beings engaging in acts of violence. There is the capacity to claim, for instance, that emerging technologies might comply more closely with international human rights and humanitarian law than human beings are capable of, or vice versa (Müller 2016). But if ecological perspectives stress that war always-already-hasbeen posthuman, and human violence is inextricably shaped by material, environmental, atmospheric, etc. conditions, then this comparison dissolves. Indeed, if violence is accepted to already be driven by our ecological entanglement with non-human agency, then different justifications for deploying more advanced technologies can be developed. For example, the post-humanist sensibilities of ecological ontologies would imply that the capacity of human beings to act ‘ethically’ or in compliance with international law can be augmented through their further enmeshing with material-technological infrastructures. In this reading, an ethical imperative to deploy novel technological modes of warfare might emerge through the practical acceptance of ecological ontologies as reflecting social reality.

Third, the above factors, alongside others, combine to – in essence – take us back in time to older ‘natural’ cosmologies of violence. For example, Bousquet, Shah, and Grove (Bousquet, Grove & Shah 2020, pp. 103, 112) describe how though the ‘radical empiricism’ through which they engage the study of violence risks “downplaying its abominable destructive consequences,” they are ultimately forced to “insist on the inherently generative powers of war – its intimate affinity to the pre-personal flux of becoming.” In their view, this is necessary because ecological ontologies describe “the world as it is, not as we wish it were” (Bousquet, Grove & Shah 2020). Indeed, though ecological ontologies tend to stress the indeterminacy, flux, and non-linear nature of social reality – thus appearing to be the opposite of a ‘naturalizing’ framework – their focus on intense relational complexity and distributed agency can often make it as difficult to imagine a world without violence as it was in earlier theological or evolutionary perspectives on its place in human society. It was, in part, for this reason that distinct ontological and epistemological perspectives on war, violence, and conflict came to prominence in the 20th century. The rise of human rights discourse and humanitarian law, for instance, stems directly from theories of normativity and contestation that more radically embrace the capacity for human beings to make change in and/on the world (Sikkink 2011). By contrast, within ecological ontologies, violence risks becoming seen as being a ‘viscous plasma’ that encompasses such a vast proportion of human (and non-human) history that escaping the hold of its relational entanglements appears impossible (Austin 2023).

#### Exclusion is contingent. Progress is real and possible, but mediated by gaps that should be combatted by political engagement.

Andrew Pulrang 23, freelance writer and disability activist, 25 August 2023, “Disability Progress Is Real, But So Is Intense Ableism,” *Forbes*, https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewpulrang/2023/08/25/disability-progress-is-real-but-so-is-intense-ableism/.

There has been significant progress on disability rights, opportunity, and respect that have made life markedly better for at least some disabled people. And most disabled people have more recourse and avenues for improvement than existed decades ago. But still for many, being disabled in 2023 is as bad as it was in the 1950s and before.

It’s important to be specific about both progress and ableism today. For example:

The first examples of progress most often cited are disability rights laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act, and detailed, comprehensive accessibility guidelines like the ADA Accessibility Standards. These created federal, state, and local requirements to make buildings and public environments more accessible. They helped bring about truly vast improvements in accessibility in all sorts of public environments over the last 30 years. And it's not just in the U.S. While specific mandates differ from country to country, accessibility is no longer a new concept, and is a priority to some degree globally.

Still, architectural barriers are still common, especially in older buildings and neighborhoods. Communication and internet accessibility lags behind as well. And companies and governments still too often fail to deliver reliable access to individuals, even as they do somewhat better with standard features like ramps and door widths. People with disabilities still encounter unnecessary barriers every day. Every restaurant with no accessible restroom, curb without a curb ramp, and apartment no wheelchair user could possibly live in makes it hard to fully appreciate the countless access improvements that work so seamlessly that they are all but invisible.

Employment Opportunities

Title I of the ADA includes very specific and innovative provisions to fight employment discrimination against disabled workers and job applicants. And recently, post-pandemic employment rates for people with disabilities have been on the rise – even improving at a slightly higher rate than for people without disabilities. In some ways, job prospects for disabled people are better now than they have ever been.

But employment discrimination is still notoriously hard to prevent, despite the ADA's protections. For many disabled people, it doesn't feel like anyone has their back in the job market. And the overall employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people has always been massive. It still is. A Center for Research on Disability at the University of New Hampshire report on June to July 2023 disability employment statistics offers a stark picture:

The Labor Force Participation Rate for people with disabilities went from 37.9 to 40.4 percent – for people without disabilities the rate stayed the same at 78.4 percent.

The Employment to Population Ratio for people with disabilities rose from 37 to 37.4 percent – for people without disabilities the rate also stayed the same at 75 percent.

This again demonstrates that while employment rates are improving more at the moment for disabled than for non-disabled people, the overall gap is still massive. Employment gaps of 30 to 40 percent between disabled and non-disabled people are staggering, and a few percentage points in either direction don’t seem to mean much for the average disabled person looking for work and a career. Progress is real. But there is so far to go that it’s hard for many people with disabilities to see or believe.

Financial Security

Income support and health insurance programs for unemployed and low-income Americans with disabilities do exist. And disabled people can and do benefit at least a bit from more thriving economies with more plentiful well-paying jobs, as well as from other aspects of 21st century developed economies.

But poverty rates for people with disabilities are still enormous compared to those for non-disabled people. A 2021 report from The Century Foundation states:

“In 2019, 21.6 percent of disabled people were considered poor under the Census’s Supplemental Poverty Measure, compared with just over 10 percent of people without disabilities.”

A recent Esquire article, "The Cost of Living With a Disability in America.” further explores the high cost of living with disabilities, and the inadequacy of supports designed to make disabled life affordable and stable. Benefits programs are decades out of date. This is true both in the amount of monthly incomes they provide, and in eligibility, earning, and savings limits that discourage disabled people from working when and how they can. And in the U.S. and elsewhere, it seems more lawmakers are interested in "cracking down" on a few cases of supposed fraud than on reforming benefits to encourage real financial security. Few disabled people would truly want to be transported back in time to the 19th century or before, when there were virtually no formal supports available. But failures and flaws of otherwise helpful and necessary safety net programs create real hardship for millions of disabled people, even as they support millions more at the same time.

Social Acceptance

Even in the current environment of polarization and backlash against "woke" social progress, the taboos against blatant, insulting ableism are much stronger than they were 30 to 50 years ago. This is reflected in language changes that continue to evolve towards better accuracy and affirmation. It’s visible the increased number of disabled characters, stories, and actors in TV and movies. Disability culture is thriving like never before, amplified by the internet and social media. And overall, it’s much more common now to see disabled people participating and just being present in everyday life, rather than hidden away in homes and institutions.

And yet, individual disabled people still experience personal neglect, rudeness, and insult from non-disabled people. One ugly encounter can carry the same emotional weight and long-term effect as decades of progress on "disability awareness." Plus, "tolerance" and "acceptance" of disabled people isn't the same thing as true respect or inclusion. A lot of otherwise positive interactions between disabled and non-disabled feel forced and fake. It's better than abuse, but disabled people still too often feel socially sidelined and vulnerable.

Disability communities are diverse. And not all disabled people experience progress and ableism in the same way, or in the same amount. Which disabled people benefit most from progress so far in the fight against ableism? It’s hard to say for certain. And it’s risky to generalize for whole populations. But it helps to note some possible trends and correlations. Broadly speaking, there are some disabled people who though they also encounter physical barriers and ableism, tend to find it easier to see progress and maintain optimism:

People with physical disabilities.

Those who are able to present as more or less "normal," aside from their specific disabilities.

Disabled people who can speak and / or communicate effectively.

Those who live with supportive families and communities.

Disabled people who have comparatively stable finances.

People with disabilities who live and work in environments where ableism is more thoroughly discouraged.

Disabled people who are able to choose where they live and who they interact with.

And disabled people who are otherwise privileged in terms of race, gender, socioeconomic class.

Meanwhile, other disabled people often see comparatively less progress, and experience more ableism, isolation and discrimination, such as:

People with cognitive disabilities or mental illness.

People with disabilities that are harder to see and understand.

Those whose physical appearance is more dramatically different or "abnormal" in the eyes of others.

Disabled people with impaired speech, hearing, vision, or other barriers to communication.

People with disabilities who are trapped in dysfunctional, unsupportive families and communities.

Disabled people who are poor, and have unstable financial situations.

Those who live and work in more hostile, cutthroat, unregulated environments that are more openly and freely hostile to disability.

Disabled people who have little or no choice in where they live who they must interact with every day.

And disabled people whose experience of ableism is compounded and intensified by racism, gender inequality, homophobia and transphobia, and other forms of social and economic marginalization.

Disability experience, both positive and negative, isn’t evenly distributed throughout disability communities. Some disabled people have more to celebrate than others. And there are real-life, concrete, and at least somewhat predictable reasons for this. Optimism and pessimism among disabled people is about much more than just their attitudes.

Why it matters

Celebrating progress in the disability community is valid and important. But it's often also alienating to people with disabilities who don't see the fruits of progress in their own lives. Disabled people themselves need to be aware of the divisions and relative levels of privilege within and between disability communities. They need to hear and validate the experiences of disabled people who find it hard or even hypocritical to celebrate Disability Pride Month every July.

It's also important for non-disabled people to remember that ableism can't be conquered by a few disability rights laws and disability etiquette workshops. Both are necessary, but not sufficient. And evidence of progress on disability issues cannot by itself repair or refute actual disabled people's direct experience of ableism in their everyday lives. Progress and ableism both exist. Both must be acknowledged and validated.

#### Pessimism is wrong. Legal engagement is effective in challenging ableism and allows disabled people to articulate a normative vision of a future beyond ableism.

Gisli Vogler 24, Teaching Fellow in the Social Sciences in the Centre for Open Learning at the University of Edinburgh, 2024, “Acting as if: the utopian political thought and actions of the US disability rights movements,” *Contemporary Political Theory*, vol. 23, pp. 598-601, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41296-023-00675-9.

This section articulates how the minor utopia of the US disability rights movement was in at least three ways focused on groundedness, that is, actualizing the emancipatory potential within existing power structures. Each example contributes to a practical criptopia that acts as if, by asserting the right to articulate in practical terms alternative, better ways of being centered on a positive vision of disability.

Firstly, the movement actualized the emancipatory potential within existing power structures by challenging assumptions about what it means to be a member of society. Citizens are supposed to be autonomous, rational human beings that can sustain themselves economically and live without significant support. In overemphasizing the independence of average citizens, society is, in turn, badly placed to judge the ability of disabled people to live as equal members in society. Against this view, the movement’s leaders held that there ‘are very few people even with the most severe disabilities who can’t take control of their own life. The problem is, the people around us don’t expect us to’ (Roberts, 1989). They founded independent living centers to help spread this inclusive vision of society and provide evidence in support of it.

The ‘independent living philosophy’ emerged as part of the headway made by disability activists following World War II in their fight against institutionalization and for inclusion into public life (Levy, 1988). As more and more disabled people gained access to urban spaces, this created a need for support of people’s life outside of institutions and the family. In response, independent living centers provided practical guidance and support on how to live as autonomously as possible in your decision-making. As practical criptopias they were not ‘totalizing lifelong places’ (Cooper, 2014, p. 8) but instead pooled funding, expertise, and information to offer important points of contact in finding suitable accommodation, jobs, or personal assistance (Figueroa, 2000). They also introduced peer-counseling schemes to replace the paternalistic medical framework and became an often-preferred alternative to underfunded state-run services. At the same time, the centers combined the services with teaching radical ideas of the de-institutionalization of disabled people, their self-determination by allowing disabled people to make choices that come with risks, and of consumer control over the services provided by the state (Nielsen, 2012, p. 163). They championed the uniqueness of each disabled person and their knowledge over their own body and needs (Bagenstos, 2009, p. 15).

One of the most famous centers was founded in Berkeley by students under the leadership of Ed Roberts (Levy, 1988). Roberts had successfully litigated his way into further education at the University of California, Berkeley, where he was influenced by the counterculture of the 1960s. The aim of the center was to serve the local community of disabled people, but it also played an influential role at the beginning of the disability rights movement, including in funneling federal and local funds towards supporting disabled people and activism and in forming a normative vision of a better society (Charlton, 2000, p. 132). The center offered one, important, launchpad for the leadership of the disability rights movement to launch protests, inform wider society about the efforts of the movement and changes to legal provisions for disabled people, and coordinate with other groups to develop and lobby for new legislative initiatives. The independent living centers are thus practical criptopias that used the material and ideational structures of their time (such as federal and local funding and consumer ideology) to produce concrete evidence that—with suitable community support for people with physical impairments to overcome social and physical barriers, such as inaccessible housing—a fully integrated society is possible and plausible.

Secondly, the movement pursued a grounded utopia by lobbying for the passing of legislation to enforce equal status as citizens and contributors to the economy. The focus on law may seem antithetical to the utopian project because laws serve to regulate conflict and disagreements which arise in imperfect societies, for instance about the distribution of limited resources. For this reason, classic writers such as More highlighted the absence of a comprehensive body of laws as a notable feature of their utopian society (Herman, 2016; More, 1685, p. 148). I introduced above how utopianism has since broadened beyond the articulation of universal blueprints of the perfect society and this move necessitates a greater concern with how to transform an unjust legal system. A broader conception of utopia also reveals the social dreaming that motivates legislation, most obviously in the articulation of, and struggle for the protection of, human and civil rights (cf. Moyn, 2012, p. 1).

Law’s utopian dimension has historically had a negative impact on disabled people. In the early 20th century, immigration and forced sterilization laws reflected societal anxieties about the decline of US society caused by rapid urbanization, immigration, and industrialization, and the subsequent popularity of eugenics (Nielsen, 2012, p. 100). Disability became a threat to the future wellbeing, or ‘purity’, of society (or specifically, elites) and laws served to manage or ideally eradicate the ‘problem’ of disability. However, just as citizenship was defined by excluding and controlling those deemed different, the dominated found in the language of rights and citizenship a framework to voice their oppression and how to transcend it (Nielsen, 2012, p. 133). The expanding welfare state both provided at times humiliating hurdles to a life of dignity and also a way to demand rights, services, and fund activism. Crucially, the emphasis on rights and discrimination within disability activism exploited a tension within the medical model: it assumes a neat connection between impairment, diagnosed by a medical practitioner or immigration officer, and disability; yet disability has a strong socio-cultural dimension to it as it serves to delineate moral behavior in modern mass society, for instance by associating certain disabilities with morally deviant behavior. Disabled people (especially those otherwise privileged) often experience this sleight of hand as they become subject to seemingly arbitrary decision-making on their ability to work or receive federal benefits (Longmore & Goldberger, 2000). Disability activists reverted the sleight of hand by focusing on disability and not impairment and claiming that it is a signifier of discrimination not diagnosis. This is visible in one of the early organizations founded in the 20th century, The League of Physically Handicapped. The name of the organization alludes to the fact that disabled people in New York were disqualified from work through the arbitrary requirement of physical examinations for all jobs—disabled people were stamped as ‘PH’ in their records (Fleischer et al., 2012). What characterized members was therefore a shared sense of discrimination rather than the specifics of their impairment and it is this discrimination that prevents their equal participation in the economy.

To exploit this weakness in the medical model, The League of Physically Handicapped employed strategies of civil disobedience familiar from the labor movements of the early 20 century—activists however consistently note the additional dimension that disability brings to these strategies, both for activists (e.g. getting to inaccessible places), and judges and police officers unsure how to deal with them. The focus deepened further as new generations of activists engaged with other civil rights struggles. The movement was ‘energized by, overlapping with, and similar to other civil rights movements across the nation, as disabled people experienced the 1960s and 1970s as a time of excitement, organizational strength, and identity exploration’ (Nielsen, 2012, p. 160). The public protests of the African American civil rights movement and landmark rulings such as Brown vs Education, Topeka, brought home the importance of litigation, legislation, and demonstrations and treating disability in terms of a rights issue (Winter, 2003).

The struggle for equal rights before the law often involved a focus on concrete, immediate issues. The Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) in 1968, for instance, offered the important requirement that buildings leased or built and altered using federal funds be accessible. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited the discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex, and country of origin but did not mention disability, sparked a decade of struggles across US states centered on extending the protections to disabled people (Patterson, 2018, p. 418). Activists used a 1972 reauthorization of the Federal Rehabilitation Act to advance their cause. Specifically, an initially little-discussed addition of section 504 to the legislation by a liberal Democratic Senator, prohibiting discrimination against disabled people by services and activities receiving federal funds, provided the legislative foothold for disability-centric anti-discrimination legislation (Erkulwater, 2018, p. 375). Crossdisability alliances lobbied for the implementation of 504 and on 5 April 1977 occupied a number of buildings of the US department for health, education, and welfare (Cone, 1996). The eventual implementation of section 504 was followed by other legislations and renewed activism, but the law’s provisions remained narrow in focus and weak in enforcement. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 promised to alleviate these problems by putting into place protections against discrimination based on, and requirements of reasonable accommodation of, disability (Bagenstos, 2009; Winter, 2003). Again, disability activists used common strategies to influence the ADA’s passing, including by setting up sophisticated lobbying networks in Washington and adding pressure through public protest. One example of this is activists in March 1990 ‘crawling up’ the US Capitol steps (Pelka, 2012, pp. 419, 515).

Litigation and legislation offered important means to utilize the toolkit developed by previous civil rights movements to make the utopian visions of the social model concrete. Together with the independent living centers, legislation helped normalize the model’s radical assumption that society needed to work towards enabling disabled people’s equal access to socio-economic activities. Acting ‘as if’, the movement helped shift the legislative focus from ‘managing’, erasing, or separating out disability from society towards changing society to include disabled people.

### Buddhism K---2AC

#### Consequences first---inner serenity depends upon external peace, which requires political engagement to create minimal conditions of security

Dr. Christopher Ford 10, D.Phil from Oxford University, JD from Yale Law School, Rhodes Scholar, BA from Harvard University, Former Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute, “Action and Force in Engaged Buddhism: Public Policy and the Koan of Engagement”, Dissertation Submitted in Partial Satisfaction of Requirements for Chaplaincy Ordination at the Prajna Mountain Order of Soto Zen Buddhism, 2-1, p. 23-25

On the other hand, some authors do at least hint at the type of answer Engaged Buddhism must provide if it is to defend itself as a specifically Buddhist variety of activism addressed to suffering as Buddhists understand the term. Kenneth Kraft, for example, has suggested that “inner serenity is fostered or impeded by external conditions.”104 He has not, however, spelled out the critical details that any such theory would have to provide in order for Engaged Buddhists to be able to articulate an intelligible plan for social action. Despite his prioritization of internal work, Thich Nhat Hanh has also articulated a clear call for creating conditions favorable to other beings’ enlightenment: in order for individuals to recover from the mental sicknesses of the world and be whole, he says, they must be in “an environment favorable to healing.” Analogizing spiritual progress to psychiatric treatment, he declares that health “requires environmental change and psychiatrists must participate in efforts to change the environment.”105 Sulak Sivaraksa has also suggested that engagement is necessary to improve the conditions of samsara because “[w]ithout freedom from want and oppression, people cannot be expected to appreciate more sublime forms of personal liberation.”106 This is genuine insight, but more is needed: such vague generalities are still a thin reed upon which to hang a serious public policy agenda.

David Loy has attempted to provide a specifically Buddhist theory of social engagement – a full-blown “Buddhist Social Theory” – in some detail. For each type of dukkha described in the Pali suttas, for instance, he tries to articulate what this category would mean as applied in the social sphere: he asks whether it has a specifically “communal” manifestation. He suggests, for instance, that dukkha-dukkhata corresponds in the social realm, in part, to things such as the gap between rich and poor, or the “deteriorating biosphere.” 107 This translation from individual to social, he thinks, is what helps give him the conceptual traction to articulate a political agenda of engagement, prescribing specific policies and structures suited to addressing this form of suffering. Unfortunately, however, Loy’s ambitious articulation of “social” suffering still fails to provide a clear theory of connection and redress – an account of what circumstances in the samsaric world promote enlightenment and which ones impede it, and of how social activism can help increase the frequency of the former compared to the latter. As we will see, Loy has much to say about what specific policies he believes Buddhists should promote in their activism to change the circumstances of samsara. He does not, however, always clearly or compellingly ground such recommendations in a theory of why such steps contribute to ending suffering in the very specific sense that Buddhists use the term.

This is not to say that such a theory is impossible. Quite the contrary. Such writers would seem to be right to intuit that there exists a rationale for social “engagement” in an appreciation for the fact that – notwithstanding Buddhism’s understanding that suffering arises not from conditions themselves but from how we relate to them through the delusive attachments of the ego-self – there exists some nexus between the circumstances of the samsaric world and the likelihood of sentient beings being able to achieve enlightenment. Circumstances may not be the fundamental causes of suffering, this argument might run, but neither are they entirely irrelevant to its alleviation. As Tashi Tsering reminds us, while the Dalai Lama has noted that our external surroundings can only cause us limited disturbance if we maintain a calm and peaceful mind, “His Holiness does not say that once we have a calm mind, we will never be disturbed by external things. His Holiness presents a more realistic view.”108 Engaged Buddhists, one might argue, are realistic as well.

Some circumstances, in other words, are likely to be more conducive than others to sentient beings’ progress toward awakening, and it is the job of Engaged Buddhists to bring about more (rather than less) enlightenment-facilitating circumstances out of the messy raw materials of samsara. A Buddhist social theory might not care about changing samsaric circumstances per se, but it should care about worldly conditions to the extent that they create an environment more or less conducive to the enlightenment of the sentient beings therein. Buddhist social engagement, therefore, should be about creating ever more enlightenment-facilitating conditions. In Jones’ words, “[t]he social order to which Buddhist social action is ultimately directed must be one that … offers encouraging conditions for its citizens to see more clearly into their true nature and overcome their karmic inheritance.” 109

A Buddhist politics, therefore, would presumably focus upon developing theories about how to do this, and policies designed to achieve this end of creating enlightenmentconducive circumstances. Such work inescapably involves us in the classically political and policy-focused tasks of finding levers with which to manipulate the conditions of the modern world.

Some policy agendas might seem to flow relatively easily from this insight. As we have seen with the example of the Buddha’s decision to abandon his harsh asceticism because hunger and weakness prevented proper dharma practice, it may be possible to conclude that there exists at least a minimum set of concrete circumstances that are necessary to permit the kind of spiritual endeavor needed for Awakening. If so, a Buddhist social policy would presumably devote itself to helping ensure that members of the public did not fall below this “floor” of practice-impeding absolute penury, wracking illness, civil chaos, or wartime bloodshed. Nelson Foster has suggested that the prevention of nuclear warfare is an easy case for a Buddhist policy priority, wryly quoting the slogan of one group within the Buddhist Peace Fellowship that “[n]uclear war is bad for our practice.”110

### Midterms DA---2AC

#### GOP wins now AND messaging fails.

Aaron Zitner 1/16, reporter and editor in The Wall Street Journal's Washington bureau, 1-16-2026, “Exclusive,” Wall Street Journal, https://www.wsj.com/politics/elections/trump-approval-rating-economy-poll-b3a62e57

The Democratic Party is contending with a badly tarnished image, making it hard for it to capitalize on any GOP weakness. Some 58% of voters have an unfavorable view of the party, compared with 39% who hold a favorable view. That’s marginally better for the Democrats than in July, when the party recorded its weakest image rating ever in Journal polls dating back more than 30 years.

Negative views of the party now outweigh positive ones by 19 points, compared with an 11-point gap for the Republican Party. “Our branding is still as bad as it’s ever been,” said Anzalone, the Democratic pollster. “We see it in focus groups: No one can say anything positive about the Democrats.”

By several measures, the poll shows that even while many voters disapprove of Trump’s economic management, they don’t see the Democrats as a better alternative. Republicans in Congress are favored over Democrats as better able to handle the economy and inflation.

#### Other issues outweigh.

Zack Beauchamp 1-1, Senior Correspondent, Vox, "26 Things We Think Will Happen in 2026," Vox, 01/01/2026, https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/473166/forecasts-2026-trump-congress-democrats-musk-artificial-intelligence-hurricanes.

Point 5: Voter dissatisfaction is driven by a combination of affordability and concerns about his extreme policies in areas like immigration, and the White House seems either unable or unwilling to change in response to these concerns.

For all these reasons, Democrats are basically a lock to take back the House — barring hard-to-pull-off election tampering or some kind of unforeseen event that transforms the political environment. The Senate map is unfavorable, making it a much tougher fight, but they’re still competitive given the fundamentals.

#### Venezuela thumps.

Conor Friedersdorf 1-3, Staff Writer, The Atlantic, "Trump's Risky War in Venezuela," Atlantic, 01/03/2026, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/2026/01/trumps-risky-war-in-venezuela/685485/. [italics in original]

This morning, President Trump unilaterally launched a regime-change war against Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela, ordering strikes on multiple military targets in the country and seizing its leader and his wife. They were “captured and flown out of the country,” Trump stated on Truth Social. “They will soon face the full wrath of American justice on American soil in American courts,” Attorney General Pam Bondi stated, in something like an inversion of the notion that justice should be blind and impartial.

After Pearl Harbor, Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed Congress and asked it to declare war on Japan. Prior to waging regime-change wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, George W. Bush sought and secured authorizations to use military force. Those presidents asked for permission to conduct hostilities because the supreme law of the land, the Constitution, unambiguously vests the war power in Congress. And Congress voted to authorize force in part because a majority of Americans favored war.

Trump says he will speak to the nation at 11 a.m. eastern time and address his rationale for the attack. The president may point to the fact that the State Department has branded Maduro the head of a “narcoterrorist” state, and that in 2020 Maduro was indicted in the United States on charges that he oversaw a violent drug cartel. For months Trump has been seeking the ouster of Maduro, and aligning the United States with opposition figures who contest the legitimacy of his presidency.

But these accusations and the indictment wouldn’t seem to constitute legal justification. Overnight, multiple members of Congress pointed out that Trump’s new war is illegal because he received no permission to wage it, and it was not an emergency response to an attack on our homeland or the imminent threat of one.

The probable illegality of Trump’s actions does not foreclose the possibility that his approach will improve life for Venezuelans. Like too many world leaders, Maduro is a brutal thug, and opposition figures have good reason to insist he isn’t the country’s legitimate leader. I hope and pray his ouster yields peace and prosperity, not blood-soaked anarchy or years of grinding factional violence.

But “toppling Maduro is the easy part,” Orlando J. Pérez, the author of *Civil-Military Relations in Post-Conflict Societies*, warned in November. “What follows is the hard strategic slog of policing a sprawling, heavily armed society where state services have collapsed and regime loyalists, criminal syndicates, and *colectivos*—pro-government armed groups that police neighborhoods and terrorize dissidents—all compete for turf.” Two groups of Colombian militants “operate openly from Venezuelan safe havens, running mining and smuggling routes,” he added. “They would not go quietly.”

If those challenges are overcome, Trump may lack the leadership qualities necessary for long-term success. Now that the United States has involved itself this way, its leaders are implicated in securing a stable postwar Venezuela and in staving off chaos that could destabilize the region. Yet Trump is best suited to military operations that are quick and discrete, like the strikes on the Iranian general Qassem Soleimani or Iran’s nuclear sites, as they do not require sustained focus or resolve. He is most ill-suited, I think, to a regime change war against a country with lucrative natural resources. I fear Trump will try to enrich himself, his family, or his allies, consistent with his lifelong pattern of self-interested behavior; I doubt he will be a fair-minded, trusted steward of Venezuelan oil. If he indulges in self-dealing, he could fuel anti-American resentment among Venezuelans and intensify opposition to any regime friendly to the United States and its interests.

Another problem confronting Trump as he goes to war is that his political coalition, and indeed his Cabinet, is divided between interventionists and noninterventionists. “The United States needs to stay out of Venezuela,” Tulsi Gabbard, his director of national intelligence, declared in 2019. “Let the Venezuelan people determine their future. We don't want other countries to choose our leaders—so we have to stop trying to choose theirs.”

Whether the outcome is ultimately good for Venezuelans, as I hope, or bad, Trump has betrayed Americans. He could have tried to persuade Congress or the public to give him permission to use force. He didn’t bother. He chose war despite polls that found a large majority of Americans opposed it. Perhaps, like me, they fear America is about to repeat the mistakes of its interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, where brutal regimes were ousted, then ruinous power vacuums followed.

“I look forward to learning what, if anything, might constitutionally justify this action in the absence of a declaration of war or authorization for the use of military force,” Senator Mike Lee, Republican of Utah, posted. After a phone call with Secretary of State Marco Rubio, he posted again: Rubio had informed him that Maduro “has been arrested by U.S. personnel to stand trial on criminal charges in the United States, and that the kinetic action we saw tonight was deployed to protect and defend those executing the arrest warrant,” he said. “This action likely falls within the president’s inherent authority under Article II of the Constitution to protect U.S. personnel from an actual or imminent attack.” But surely the president can’t invade any country where a national has an outstanding arrest warrant.

The real question isn’t whether this action was legal; it is what to do about its illegality. Ignoring the law and the people’s will in this fashion is a high crime. Any Congress inclined to impeach and remove Trump from office over Venezuela would be within their rights. That outcome is unlikely unless Democrats win the midterms. But Congress should enforce its war power. Otherwise, presidents of both parties will keep launching wars of choice with no regard for the will of people or our representatives. And antiwar voters will be radicalized by the dearth of democratic means to effect change.

War-weary voters who thought it was enough to elect a president who called the Iraq War “a stupid thing” and promised an “America First” foreign policy can now see for themselves that they were wrong. In 2026, as ever, only Congress can stop endless wars of choice. And if Trump faces no consequences for this one, he may well start another.

#### So do black swans.

David Corn 1/3, Washington DC Bureau Chief at Mother Jones, author of Our Land newsletter, "Maybe Donald Trump Isn't Immune to Political Gravity After All," Mother Jones, 01/03/2026, https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2025/12/donald-trump-polls-lame-duck-venezuela-hegseth-political-gravity/

It’s far too early to make any predictions. External circumstances can always change any political equation. What happens if there’s a war in Venezuela? Or if the White House can find a trans migrant who commits a heinous crime? And we all ought to worry about Trump and his crew concocting ways to screw with next year’s elections.

Don’t put on any rose-colored glasses. Trump has done so much harm and damage. According to Impactcounter.com, the ending of US foreign assistance and the demolition of USAID has led to nearly 700,000 deaths, including the deaths of 451,000 children. There’s still much harm and damage to come, here and abroad. But it is reassuring that the laws of politics remain partially intact. Trump, the GOP, and MAGA are not immune. But their opponents need to keep in mind that these vulnerabilities do not predetermine a downfall; they only provide an opportunity for a fight.

#### Redistricting.

Julia Mueller 12-31, Staff Writer, The Hill, "5 Takeaways from the 2025 Elections," The Hill, 12/31/2025, https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/5662518-redistricting-war-congress-2025/.

Redistricting is major wild card

A tense redistricting war gripped states across the country this year as both parties seek to improve their odds of winning control of Congress.

A Trump-backed plan for GOP-friendly redistricting in Texas kick-started a high-profile standoff: State Democratic legislators fled Texas to stall the process, and Democrats in other states started eyeing ways to offset the projected Republican gains.

In response to the Texas push, California voters overwhelmingly passed Proposition 50, a ballot measure that aims to effectively nullify the changes in Texas by creating five additional Democratic seats that will hold until the next census.

Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio and Utah also crafted new House maps this year. And more states could be added to the list next year: Florida, Indiana and Virginia are among those looking at redistricting.

Democrats are also bracing for the Supreme Court to weigh in next year on a case around Louisiana’s congressional map that could decide the fate of the Voting Rights Act. If the high court guts a section of the act that limits racial discrimination in voting, it could give several Republican states in the South the green light to redraw their congressional lines ahead of the midterms.

With the House majority potentially coming down to just a handful of seats, the national redistricting war shows no signs of slowing down and has thrown a wild card into parties’ calculus for winning Congress next fall.

#### No vote-switching.

Adam Bonica 25, Associate Professor of Political Science; et al., 14 August 2025, “The Electoral Consequences of Ideological Persuasion: Evidence from a Within-Precinct Analysis of U.S. Elections,” *Working Paper*, pp. 41, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\_id=5172049.

This study advances our understanding of ideological accountability in contemporary U.S. elections by employing a within-precinct design to isolate persuasion effects and estimate the electoral penalty associated with candidate ideology. Our findings demonstrate that while voters consider candidate ideology when voting, responsiveness to ideology is often muted and filtered through contextual factors.

The small electoral penalty presented here challenges traditional theories of voter behavior that assume a large and uniform response to candidate ideology. This might help explain the ongoing polarization of political elites; if the electoral costs of ideological extremity are small and potentially offset by turnout effects, political parties may have little incentive to moderate their positions. This creates an interesting tension with our supplementary macro-level analysis (see Appendix B), which finds that party-level ideological moderation is negatively correlated with electoral performance, as favorable wave elections have coincided with years when the winning party, on average, adopted more ideologically extreme positions. While individual candidates may reap small rewards from moderation, parties appear to benefit from the broader forces at play in wave elections where ideological extremity is not punished at the macro level.

Our results also inform the debate over mobilizing the base versus persuading swing voters. The limited size of the persuasion effect suggests that investments in voter registration and mobilization are likely to yield greater electoral benefits than broad-based ideological moderation. This is particularly true for Democrats, whose coalition often includes groups with historically lower turnout rates. Ultimately, while a candidate’s ideological positioning can be decisive in very close races, factors like incumbency, fundraising, and, most critically, the partisan composition of the electorate appear to be the primary determinants of election outcomes.

#### Disinfo shreds predictions.

Erica Orange 1-2, Partner, The Future Hunters, "15 Scenarios That Could Stun the World in 2026," POLITICO, 01/02/2026, https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2026/01/02/black-swan-events-2026-00708074.

The shift in this scenario is from today’s highly polarized but still shared world — where groups interpret events differently — to a fractured reality in which the events themselves cannot be verified, origins cannot be traced, and no authoritative source can prove what is real. Instead of opposing political narratives and conspiracy theories, society enters a state of psychosocial freefall where AI creates a series of parallel realities. It will mark a transition not from disagreement to deeper disagreement, but from disagreement to the collapse of a shared reality altogether.

This leads to the upending of the midterm elections. Ultra-realistic deepfakes flood the infosphere. One week before the election, a deepfake shows one candidate accepting a bribe from a foreign government. Minutes later, another deepfake shows the opposing candidate calling for the abolition of elections. Both clips go viral before fact-checkers can respond. AI instantly generates thousands of supporting “eyewitness accounts,” each with hyper-realistic voices, backstories and social profiles. In the following days, AI-generated “leaked documents” allege voting manipulation, foreign hacks and corrupted ballots. The public no longer mistrusts the government. They mistrust reality.

Democratic institutions prove incapable of responding at digital speed. While verification protocols are debated, AI systems generate thousands of new, contradictory narratives every hour. Trust erodes. Civic responsibility withers. Fragmented truth enclaves harden into antagonistic tribes. Citizens become more apathetic. Institutional authority collapses. The vacuum is quickly filled by fast-moving authoritarian actors and ever-more powerful tech platforms that step in as the new arbiters of “truth.”

AT: Federal Workers Link

#### BUT, the GOP is aligned with those workers.

Mark Gruenberg 12-23, Journalist, People's World. Editor, Press Associates Inc, "Labor's Year in Review: Trump, Biggest Union-Buster in History, Dominates Workers' Struggles," People's World, 12/23/2025, https://peoplesworld.org/article/labors-year-in-review-trump-biggest-union-buster-in-history-dominates-workers-struggles/.

Meanwhile, a handful of House Republican lawmakers from swing districts, concerned about losing their seats, and the majority, in fall 2026, joined Democrats to pry at least one pro-worker measure out from under the clutches of Trump and anti-worker House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La.

That bill, which passed 211-195 on a bipartisan vote on Dec. 13, would restore all the federal union contracts Trump eliminated, and give the workers their rights back. But in a note of continued Trump defiance, even after that balloting, Trump’s Transportation Security Administration, which is under Homeland Security Secretary Noem’s control, tried to trash the contract of the 47,000 Transportation Security Officers—the airport screeners—all over again.

Still, AFGE President Everett Kelley hailed passage of the Protect America’s Workforce Act. It went to the Senate, where its prospects are as yet unknown. House members “demonstrated their support for the nonpartisan civil service, for the dedicated employees who serve our country with honor and distinction, and for the critical role collective bargaining has in fostering a safe, protective, and collaborative workplace,” Kelley said.

AT: Golden Dome Impact

#### It’s inevitable OR impossible.

Henry Sokolski 25, MA, Executive Director, Nonproliferation Policy, The Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, "Golden Dome: What's Its Story?" SpaceNews, 10/08/2025, https://spacenews.com/golden-dome-whats-its-story/.

It could survive even if the Republicans lose control of the House or Senate in 2026. How? If the Space Force lofts a “working” space-based interceptor constellation of any sort by 2028, the Republicans could lock the program in no matter who wins the White House in 2029.

None of this, however, would be easy. The project could easily run over budget and behind schedule. Therefore, I recommend hedging with a narrative that could garner bipartisan support — something which has not yet been attempted.

#### No arms racing NOR instability.

Dr. Keith B. Payne 25, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Defense and Strategic Studies, Missouri State University. Co-founder, National Institute for Public Policy. Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense. Former Senior Advisor to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Why Does America Need Golden Dome?" National Institute for Public Policy, No. 628, 06/18/2025, https://nipp.org/information\_series/keith-b-payne-why-does-america-need-golden-dome-no-628-june-18-2025/.

Critics of Golden Dome now repeat tired arguments against homeland missile defense that date to the 1960s.[12] These arguments are that: 1) mutual vulnerability to nuclear destruction is necessary for “stable” deterrence, and thus Golden Dome’s protection must be rejected as “destabilizing”; 2) missile defenses will not protect perfectly, and short of near perfection, they are not worth the cost; and, 3) the deployment of Golden Dome will start an “action-reaction” arms race, while rejecting homeland missile defense enables nuclear arms control.[13] In short, critics argue that Golden Dome would be imperfect, “destabilize” deterrence, and cause an arms race, while the continuing absence of serious homeland defense is the basis for arms control. These are the standard arguments rolled out once again to reach the desired conclusion that continued vulnerability to Russian and Chinese nuclear missiles is preferable to missile defenses.

These arguments have driven U.S. missile defense policy for decades. But for all their repetition and policy influence, they were suspect during the Cold War and are demonstrably bogus in the contemporary threat context. Each can be addressed in order.

### Advantage CP---2AC