### 1NC – Royal Science – Grove

#### International Relations is the royal science of empire – the aff engineers “sustainable warfare” through a mutating geopolitics of violence.

Grove ‘19

[Jarius, PoliSci at the University of Hawai’i. 2019. “Savage Ecology: War and Geopolitics in the Anthropocene.”] pat – ask me for the PDF!

Because I wanted this book to inspire curiosity beyond the boundaries of international relations (ir), I considered ignoring the field altogether, removing all mentions of ir or ir theory. However, upon closer reflection, I have decided to keep these references as I think they are relevant for those outside the discipline and for those who, like myself, often feel alienated within its disciplinary boundaries. In the former case, it is important to know that, unlike some more humble fields, ir has always held itself to be a kind of royal science. Scholarship in ir, particularly in the United States, is half research, and half biding time until you have the prince’s ear. The hallowed names in the mainstream of the field are still known because they somehow changed the behavior of their intended clients—those being states, militaries, and international organizations. Therefore, some attention to ir is necessary because it has an all-too-casual relationship with institutional power that directly impacts the lives of real people, and ir is all too often lethal theory. As an American discipline, the political economy of the field is impossible without Department of Defense money, and its semiotic economy would be equally dwarfed without contributory figures like Woodrow Wilson, Henry Kissinger, and Samuel Huntington. The ubiquity of Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” thesis and Kissinger’s particular brand of realpolitik are undeniable throughout the field, as well as the world. Each, in their own way, has saturated the watchwords and nomenclature of geopolitics from an American perspective so thoroughly that both political parties in the United States fight over who gets to claim the heritage of each. Although many other fields such as anthropology and even comparative literature have found themselves in the gravitational pull of geopolitics, international relations is meant to be scholarship as statecraft by other means. That is, ir was meant to improve the global order and ensure the place of its guarantor, the United States of America. Having spent the better part of a decade listening to national security analysts and diplomats from the United States, South Korea, Japan, Europe, China, Brazil, and Russia, as well as military strategists around the planet, I found their vocabulary and worldview strikingly homogeneous.

If this seems too general a claim, one should take a peek at John Mearsheimer’s essay “Benign Hegemony,” which defends the Americanness of the ir field. What is most telling in this essay is not a defense of the U.S. as a benign hegemonic power, which Mearsheimer has done at length elsewhere. Rather, it is his vigorous defense that as a field, ir theory has done well by the world in setting the intellectual agenda for global challenges, and for creating useful theoretical approaches to addressing those problems. For Mearsheimer, the proof that American scholarly hegemony has been benign is that there is nothing important that has been left out. A quick scan of the last ten or twenty International Studies Association conferences would suggest otherwise.

That issues like rape as a weapon of war, postcolonial violence, global racism, and climate change are not squarely in the main of ir demonstrates just how benign American scholarly hegemony is not. As one prominent anthropologist said to me at dinner after touring the isa conference in 2014, “it was surreal, like a tour through the Cold War. People were giving papers and arguing as if nothing had ever changed.” These same provincial scholars aspire and succeed at filling the advisory roles of each successive American presidency. One cannot help but see a connection between the history of the ir field, and the catastrophes of U.S. foreign policy during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. One could repeat the words of the anthropologist I mentioned to describe the 2016 presidential campaign debates over the future of U.S. foreign policy: it is as if “nothing had ever changed.” And yet these old white men still strut around the halls of America’s “best” institutions as if they saved us from the Cold War, even as the planet crumbles under the weight of their failed imperial dreams.

If international relations was meant to be the science of making the world something other than what it would be if we were all left to our own worst devices, then it has failed monumentally. The United States is once again in fierce nuclear competition with Russia. We are no closer to any significant action on climate change. We have not met any of the Millennium Development Goals determined by the United Nations on eradicating poverty. War and security are the most significant financial, creative, social, cultural, technological, and political investments of almost every nation-state on Earth. The general intellect is a martial intellect.

Despite all this failure, pessimism does not exist in international relations, at least not on paper. The seething doom of our current predicament thrives at the conference bar and in hushed office conversations but not in our research. In public, the darkness disavowed possesses and inflames the petty cynicisms and hatreds that are often turned outward at tired and predictable scapegoats.

After the fury of three decades of critique, most ir scholars still camp out either on the hill of liberal internationalism or in the dark woods of political realism. Neither offers much that is new by way of answers or even explanations, and each dominant school has failed to account for our current apocalyptic condition. One is left wondering what it is exactly that they think they do. Despite the seeming opposition between the two, one idealistic about the future of international order (liberals) and the other self-satisfied with the tragedy of cycles of war and dominance (realists), both positions are optimists of the positivist variety.

For both warring parties, ir optimism is expressed through a romantic empiricism. For all those who toil away looking for the next theory of international politics, order is out there somewhere, and dutifully recording reality will find it—or at least bring us closer to its discovery. For liberal internationalism, this will bring the long-heralded maturity of Immanuel Kant’s perpetual peace. For second-order sociopaths known as offensive realists, crumbs of “useful strategic insight” and the endless details that amplify their epistemophilia for force projection and violence capability represent a potential “advantage,” that is, the possibility to move one step forward on the global political board game of snakes and ladders. Still, the cynicism of ir always creeps back in because the world never quite lives up to the empirical findings it is commanded to obey. Disappointment here is not without reason, but we cynically continue to make the same policy recommendations, catastrophe after catastrophe.

I have an idea about where ir’s recent malaise comes from. I think it is a moment, just before the awareness of the Anthropocene, after the Cold War and before September 11, when the end of everything was only a hypothetical problem for those of a certain coddled and privileged modern form of life. The catastrophe of the human predicament was that there was no catastrophe, no reason, no generation-defining challenge or war. Now the fate of this form of life is actually imperiled, and it is too much to bear. The weird denial of sexism, racism, climate change, the sixth extinction, and loose nukes, all by a field of scholars tasked with studying geopolitics, is more than irrationalism or ignorance. This animosity toward reality is a deep and corrosive nihilism, a denial of the world. Thus ir as a strategic field is demonstrative of a civilization with nothing left to do, nothing left to destroy. All that is left is to make meaning out of being incapable of undoing the world that Euro-American geopolitics created. Emo geopolitics is not pretty, but it is real. The letdown, the failure, the apocalypse-that-was-not finally arrived, and we are too late.

Still, the United States of America continues to follow the advice of “the best and the brightest,” testing the imperial waters, not quite ready to commit out loud to empire but completely unwilling to abandon it. Stuck in between, contemporary geopolitics—as curated by the United States—is in a permanent beta phase. Neuro-torture, algorithmic warfare, drone strikes, and cybernetic nation-building are not means or ends but rather are tests. Can a polis be engineered? Can the human operating system be reformatted? Can violence be modulated until legally invisible while all the more lethal? Each incursion, each new actor or actant, and new terrains from brains to transatlantic cables—all find themselves part of a grand experiment to see if a benign or at least sustainable empire is possible. There is no seeming regard for the fact that each experiment directly competes with Thomas Jefferson’s democratic experiment. One wonders if freedom can even exist anywhere other than temporarily on the fringe of some neglected order. Is this some metaphysical condition of freedom, or is the world so supersaturated with martial orders that the ragged edges between imperial orders are all that we have left? It feels like freedom’s remains persist only in the ruins of everything else. No space is left that can be truly indifferent to the law, security, or economy. Such is the new life of a human in debt. The social contract has been refinanced as what is owed and nothing more: politics without equity. Inequity without equality.

What about the impending collapse of the post–World War II order, the self-destruction of the United States, the rise of China and a new world order? If humanity lasts long enough for China to put its stamp on the human apocalypse, I will write a new introduction. Until then, we live in the death rattle of Pax Americana. While I think the totality of this claim is true, I do not want to rule out that many of us throughout the world still make lives otherwise. Many of us even thrive in spite of it all. And yet, no form of life can be made that escapes the fact that everything can come to a sudden and arbitrary end thanks to the whim of an American drone operator, nuclear catastrophe, or macroeconomic manipulation like sanctions. There are other ways to die and other organized forms of killing outside the control of the United States; however, no other single apparatus can make everyone or anyone die irrespective of citizenship or geographic location. For me, this is the most inescapable philosophical provocation of our moment in time.

The haphazard and seemingly limitless nature of U.S. violence means that even the core principles of the great political realist concepts like order and national interest are being displaced by subterranean violence entrepreneurs that populate transversal battlefields, security corridors, and border zones. Mercenaries, drug lords, chief executive officers, presidents, and sports commissioners are more alike than ever. Doomsayers like Paul Virilio, Lewis Mumford, and Martin Heidegger foretold a kind of terminal and self-annihilating velocity for geopolitics’ technological saturation, but even their lack of imagination appears optimistic. American geopolitics does not know totality or finality; it bleeds, mutates, and reforms. Furthermore, the peril of biopolitics seems now almost romantic. To make life live? Perchance to dream. The care and concern for life’s productivity is increasingly subsumed by plasticity—forming and reforming without regard to the telos of productivity, division, or normative order.

There are, of course, still orders in our geoplastic age, but they are almost unrecognizable as such. When so many citizens and states are directly invested in sabotaging publicly stated strategic ends, then concepts like national interest seem equally quaint. We are witnessing creative and horrifying experiments in the affirmative production of dying, which also deprive those targeted and in some cases whole populations from the relief of death. To follow Rucker, I want to try to see the world for what it is. We can only say that tragedy is no longer a genre of geopolitics. Tragedy redeems. The occluded character of contemporary geopolitics shoehorned into experience produces the feeling that there is no relief, no reason, no victory, no defeats, and no exit within the confines of national security’s constricted world. This is not tragedy: it is horror. We live in an age of horror that, like the victims of gore movies who never quite die so that they can be tortured more, furthers our practice of collective violence and goes on for decades as a kind of sustainable warfare.

### 1NC – L – Topic – Havercroft and Duvall

#### The 1AC is embedded within an critical astropolitics of empire – the desire to command, control, and cooperate over the unique processes of space represent an attempt to make the cosmos into a geopolitical chess game

Havercroft and Duvall 9 (Jonathan Havercroft and Raymond Duvall; 2009; *“Critical astropolitics The geopolitics of space control and the transformation of state sovereignty”*; accessed 12/13/21; <https://www.law.upenn.edu/live/files/7892-havercroft-and-duvallcritical-astropoliticspdf>; Jonathan Havercroft is an Associate Professor in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Southampton. He teaches in the areas of political theory and international relations. He is the editor of the journal Global Constitutionalism; Raymond Duvall is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Minnesota; pages 44-50) HB

Astropolitics: realist and liberal strands Realism and astropolitik Everett Dolman3 draws on the writings of Mackinder and Mahan as inspiration for his development of a theory, which he titles Astropolitik. By the term, astropolitik, Dolman means “the application of the prominent and refined realist vision of state competition into outer space policy, particularly the development and evolution of a legal and political regime for humanity’s entry into the cosmos” (Dolman 2002a: 1). While Mahan focused on the structure of the ocean to develop his theories, and Mackinder focused on the topography of land, Dolman turns his attention toward the cartography of outer space. Whereas, at first glance, space may appear to be a “featureless void,” Dolman argues that it “is in fact a rich vista of gravitational mountains and valleys, oceans and rivers of resources and energy alternately dispersed and concentrated, broadly strewn danger zones of deadly radiation, and precisely placed peculiarities of astrodynamics” (Dolman 2002a: 61). In a manner similar to Mahan’s focus on natural sea lanes and “choke points” and Mackinder’s emphasis of geographic regions, Dolman emphasizes orbits, regions of space, and launch points as geopolitically vital assets over which states can be expected competitively and strategically to struggle for control. Orbital paths are important because stable orbits require virtually no fuel expenditure for satellites, whereas unstable orbits make it impossible for satellites to remain in space for a long time. Furthermore, different types of orbits pass over different parts of the earth at different frequencies. As such, the mission of a spacecraft determines in large part which orbit is most useful for it. There are essentially four types of orbits: low-altitude (between 150 km and 800 km above the Earth’s surface); medium-altitude (ranging from 800 km–35,000 km); high-altitude (above 35,000 km); and highly elliptical (with a perigee of 250 km and an apogee of 700,000 km) (Dolman 2002a: 65–7). In addition to pointing to the division of space into orbital planes, Dolman also identifies four key regions of space: 1 Terra, which includes the Earth and its atmosphere up until “just below the lowest altitude capable of supporting unpowered orbit” (Dolman 2002: 69); 2 Earth Space, which covers the region from the lowest possible orbit through to geo-stationary orbit; 3 Lunar Space, which extends from geo-stationary orbit to the Moon’s orbit; and 4 Solar Space, which “consists of everything in the solar system . . . beyond the orbit of the moon” (Dolman 2002a: 70). For Dolman, Earth Space is the astropolitical equivalent of Mackinder’s Outer Crescent, because controlling it will permit a state to limit strategic opportunities of potential rivals and at the same time allow the projection of force for indirect control (i.e. without occupation) of extensive territory of vital strategic importance, in this case (unlike Mackinder’s) potentially the entire Earth. “Control of Earth Space not only guarantees long-term control of the outer reaches of space, it provides a near-term advantage on the terrestrial battlefield” (Dolman 1999: 93). On the basis of these principles, Dolman develops an “Astropolitik policy for the United States” (Dolman 1999: 156), which calls on the U.S. government to control Earth Space. In the current historical–political juncture, no state controls this region. However, rather than leave it as a neutral zone or global commons, Dolman calls for the U.S. to seize control of this geo-strategically vital asset. According to Dolman’s reasoning, the neutrality of Earth Space is as much a threat to U.S. security as the neutrality of Melos was to Athenian hegemony. To leave space a neutral sanctuary could be interpreted as a sign of weakness that potential rivals might exploit. As such, it is better for the U.S. to occupy Earth Space now. Dolman’s astropolitik policy has three steps. The first involves the U.S. withdrawing from the current space regime on the grounds that its prohibitions on commercial and military exploitation of outer space prevent the full exploitation of space resources. In place of the global commons approach that informs that regime, Dolman calls for the establishment of “a principle of free-market sovereignty in space” (Dolman 2002a: 157), whereby states could establish territorial claims over areas they wish to exploit for commercial purposes. This space rush should be coupled with “propaganda touting the prospects of a new golden age of space exploration” (Dolman 2002a: 157). Step two calls for the U.S. to seize control of low-Earth orbit, where “space-based laser or kinetic energy weapons could prevent any other state from deploying assets there, and could most effectively engage and destroy terrestrial enemy ASAT facilities” (Dolman 2002a: 157). Other states would be permitted “to enter space freely for the purpose of engaging in commerce” (Dolman 2002a: 157). The final step would be the establishment of “a national space coordination agency ... to define, separate and coordinate the efforts of commercial, civilian and military space projects” (Dolman 2002a: 157). Within Dolman’s theory of astropolitik is a will-to-space-based-hegemony fuelled by a series of assumptions, of which we would point to three as especially important. First, it rests on a strong preference for competition over collaboration in both the economic and military spheres. Dolman, like a good realist, is suspicious of the possibilities for sustained political and economic cooperation, and assumes instead that competition for power is the law of international political–economic life. He believes, though, that through a fully implemented astropolitical policy “states will employ competition productively, harnessing natural incentives for self-interested gain to a mutually beneficial future, a competition based on the fair and legal commercial exploitation of space” (Dolman 2002a: 4). Thus, underpinning his preference for competition is both a liberal assumption that competitive markets are efficient at producing mutual gain through innovative technologies, and the realist assumption that inter-state competition for power is inescapable in world politics. As we will note more fully below, this conjunction of liberal and realist assumptions is a hallmark of the logic of empire as distinct from the logic of a system of sovereign states. The second and most explicit of Dolman’s key assumptions is the belief that the U.S. should pursue control of orbital space because its hegemony would be largely benign. The presumed benevolence of the U.S. rests, for Dolman, on its responsiveness to its people. If any one state should dominate space it ought to be one with a constitutive political principle that government should be responsible and responsive to its people, tolerant and accepting of their views, and willing to extend legal and political equality to all. In other words, the United States should seize control of outer space and become the shepherd (or perhaps watchdog) for all who would venture there, for if any one state must do so, it is the most likely to establish a benign hegemony. (Dolman 2002a: 157) However, even if the U.S. government is popularly responsive in its foreign policy – a debatable proposition – the implication of Dolman’s astropolitik is that the U.S. would exercise benign control over orbital space, and, from that position, potentially all territory on Earth and hence all people, by being responsible to its 300 million citizens. As such, this benign hegemony would in effect be an apartheid regime where 95 percent of the world would be excluded from participating in the decision-making of the hegemonic power that controls conditions of their existence. This, too, is a hallmark of empire, not of a competitive system of sovereign states. Third, Dolman’s astropolitik treats space as a resource to be mastered and exploited by humans, a Terra Nulius, or empty territory, to be colonized and reinterpreted for the interests of the colonizer. This way of looking at space is similar to the totalizing gaze of earlier geopolitical theorists who viewed the whole world as an object to be dominated and controlled by European powers, who understood themselves to be beneficently, or, at worst, benignly, civilizing in their control of territories and populations (Ó Tuathail 1996: 24–35). This assumption, like the first two, thus also implicates a hallmark of the logic of empire, namely what Ó Tuathail (1996) calls the ‘geopolitical gaze’ (about which we have more to say below), which works comfortably in tandem with a self-understanding of benign hegemony. When these three assumptions are examined in conjunction, Dolman’s astropolitik reveals itself to be a blueprint for a U.S. empire that uses the capacities of space-based weapons to exercise hegemony over the Earth and to grant access to the economic resources of space only to U.S. (capitalist) interests and their allies. This version of astropolitics, which is precisely the strategic vision underlying the policy pronouncements of the National Security Space Management and Organization Commission (Commission 2001) – and subsequently President George W. Bush – with which we began this chapter, is a kind of spatial, or geopolitical, power within the context of U.S. imperial relations of planetary scope. Its ostensive realist foundations are muted, except as a rather extreme form of offensive realism, because the vision is not one of great power competition and strategic balancing, but rather one of imperial control through hegemony. As such, it brings into question the constitution of sovereignty, since empire and sovereignty are fundamentally opposed constitutive principles of the structure of the international system – the subjects of empire are not sovereign. Thus, if astropolitics is to be in the form of Dolman’s astropolitik (and current U.S. policy aspirations), the future of sovereignty is in question, despite his efforts to position the theory as an expression of the realist assumption of great power competition. In later sections of this chapter, we attempt to show what this bringing sovereignty into question is likely to mean, conceptually and in practice. Before turning to that principal concern, however, we consider an alternative geopolitical theory of astropolitics. Liberal-republican astropolitics Over the past twenty-five years, in a series of articles and recently a major book, Daniel Deudney has attempted to rework the tenets of geopolitics and apply them to the contemporary challenges raised by new weapons technologies – particularly nuclear and space weapons (Deudney 1983, 1985, 1995, 2000, 2002, 2007).4 While Deudney finds geopolitical theory of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century theoretically unsophisticated and reductionist, he believes that geopolitical attention to material conditions, spatiality, change, and political processes could form the basis of a theoretically sophisticated contextual–materialist security theory of world politics. Deudney starts from a premise about space weaponization similar to the core of Dolman’s astropolitik, namely that if any state were able to achieve military control of space, it would hold potential mastery over the entire Earth. One preliminary conclusion, however, seems sound: effective control of space by one state would lead to planet-wide hegemony. Because space is at once so proximate and the planet’s high ground, one country able to control space and prevent the passage of other countries’ vehicles through it could effectively rule the planet. Even more than a monopoly of air or sea power, a monopoly of effective space power would be irresistible. (Deudney 1983: 17) Rather than developing the implications of this as a strategic opportunity for any one state (e.g. the U.S.), however, Deudney sees it as a collective problem to be kept in check through collaboration; his project is to avoid space-based hegemony through cooperation among states. In a series of articles on global security written in the 1980s – while Cold War tensions between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. continued to frame much theoretical discussion in international relations – Deudney saw the space age as a double-edged sword in superpower relations. On the one side, space weaponization posed a risk that the superpowers would extend their conflict extra-terrestrially and devise new, deadlier technologies that would enhance the risk of exterminating all of humanity; on the other, according to Deudney, the space age had found productive opportunities for the superpowers to deal with their rivalries in stabilizing collaboration. He notes that the Sputnik mission, while in the popular understanding only an escalation of the Cold War, initially was the result of an internationally organized research program – the International Geophysical Year (Deudney 1985; though see Dolman 2002a: 106–107 for an alternate interpretation of these events as Cold War competition). Another example was President Eisenhower’s proposed “Atoms for Peace” project, which involved the great powers sharing nuclear technology with developing nations for energy purposes. Most famous was the collaboration between the Soviet Union and the U.S. during the 1970s on the rendezvous between an Apollo capsule and the Soyuz space station. Similar multinational collaborations continue to this day, with the most notable example being the International Space Station. In addition to promoting collaboration, according to Deudney, the space age has also enhanced the ability of space powers to monitor each other – through spy satellites – thereby increasing the likelihood that they abide by arms control treaties. Deudney believes that these types of collaboration and increased surveillance could be strengthened and deepened so that great powers could be persuaded over time to “forge missiles into spaceships” (Deudney 1985: 271). In the 1980s this led Deudney to develop a set of specific proposals for a peaceful space policy, including collaboration between space powers on manned missions to the Moon, asteroids, and Mars. The development of an International Satellite Monitoring Agency would make “space-based surveillance technology accessible to an international community” for monitoring ceasefires, crises, compliance with international arms control treaties, and the Earth’s environment (Deudney 1985: 291). These proposals are aimed at promoting collaboration on projects of great scientific and military significance for the individual states. Deudney’s expectation is that such cooperation would mitigate security dilemmas and promote greater ties between states that would co-bind their security without sacrificing their sovereignty. While Deudney has not been explicit about how his astropolitics of collaboration would alter world order, in his more theoretical writings he has elaborated the logic of a liberal-republican international system. In a 2002 article on geopolitics and international theory, he developed what he called a‘historical security materialist’ theory of geopolitics: “[I]n which changing forces of destruction (constituted by geography and technology) condition the viability of different modes of protection (understood as clusters of security practices) and their attendant ‘superstructures’ of political authority structures (anarchical, hierarchical, and federal-republican)” (Deudney 2002: 80). In that work, he identified four different eras in which distinct modes of destruction were predominant: Pre-modern; Early Modern; Global Industrial; and Planetary-Nuclear, as well as two modes of protection: real-statism, which is based on an internal monopoly of violence and external anarchy; and federal-republicanism, which is based on an internal division of powers and an external symmetrical binding of actors through institutions that reduces their autonomy in relation to one another. According to Deudney, in the Planetary-Nuclear age the federal-republican mode of protection is more viable because states “are able to more fully and systematically restrain violence” than under the power balancing practices of real-statist modes of protection (Deudney 2002: 97; see also Deudney 2007: 244–277 for an elaboration of this argument). Although Deudney has not extended his “historical security materialist” approach into explicitly theorizing space weapons, per se (dealt with only tangentially and implicitly in the last two chapters of his recent book), his proposals during the Cold War to foster institutional collaboration between space powers as a way of promoting peace can safely be understood as a form of the mutually binding practices that he associates with the federalrepublican mode of protection. In addition, one of the general conclusions that Deudney reaches about “historical security materialism” is that the more a security context is rich in the potential for violence, the better suited a federal-republican mode of protection is to avoid systemic breakdown. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that within Deudney’s work is a nascent theory of how a federal-republican international system could limit conflict between space powers by binding them together in collaborative uses of space for exploratory and security uses. In this sense, Deudney can be read as the liberal-republican astropolitical counterpart to Everett Dolman.5 While Deudney’s astropolitical theorizations hold out the promise of a terrestrial pacification through space exploration it is interesting to note a significant aporia in his theory – empire as a possible mode of protection. While real-statist modes of protection have an internal hierarchical authority structure, they are based on assumptions of external-anarchy, which is to say a system of sovereign states. Conversely, the federal-republican model is based on a symmetrical binding of units, in a way that no single unit can come to dominate others and accordingly in which they preserve their sovereignty (Deudney 2000, 2002, 2007). In a third mode, to which Deudney gives only scant attention, the case of empire, the hegemony of a single unit is such that other units are bound to it in an asymmetrical pattern that locates sovereignty only in the hegemon, or imperial center. Successful empires, including the Roman, British, and American, permit local autonomy in areas that are not of the imperial power’s direct concern while demanding absolute obedience in areas that are of vital concern to it, particularly when it comes to issues of security.6 Deudney’s implicit astropolitical theory thus ignores structurally asymmetric relations – in effect he ignores power. It is as if in wanting to have the world avoid the possibility of a planetary hegemony at the heart of the premise with which he and Dolman began their respective analyses, he white-washes it by failing to acknowledge the profound asymmetries of aspirations and technological–financial–military capacities among states for control of orbital space. In the next two sections we respond to Deudney’s call for “historical security materialism” by focusing on the premise that he skirts but that Dolman emphasizes, that military control of space means (at least the possibility of) mastery of the Earth. Specifically we examine how a new mode of destruction – space weapons – is the ideal basis for the third mode of protection – empire – through its potential for substantial asymmetry. We argue that the power asymmetries of space weapons have very significant constitutive effects on sovereignty and international systemic anarchy, and underlie the constitution of a new, historically unprecedented, form of empire. Before turning to that central thesis, however, we will first sketch the general contours of a critical astropolitics, which builds on the foundational premise of Dolman and Deudney, but modifies their theories in light of the significant insights of critical theory, particularly with respect to constitutive power. We ask: what consequences of astropolitics can a critical approach illuminate that may be concealed by an astropolitics informed by either liberal-republican or realist assumptions? How can insights offered by the revival of geopolitics in the writings of Deudney and Dolman – particularly the call for a new security materialist mode of analysis – be used to supplement and refine critical international relations theory?

### 1NC – L – Non-Prolif – Considine

#### The aff’s humanitarian approach to disarmament colludes with the non-proliferation complex – solutions to nuclear violence through international non-proliferation norms posits a false universality which naturalizes imperial interventions.

Considine ‘16

[Laura, International Relations at the University of Leeds. 2017. “The ‘standardization of catastrophe’: Nuclear disarmament, the Humanitarian Initiative and the politics of the unthinkable,” <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1354066116666332>] pat

The Humanitarian Initiative rests on the claim that nuclear weapons are fundamentally inhumane and thus incompatible with the principles of discrimination, proportionality and precaution that are embedded in international humanitarian law. Tom Sauer and Joelien Pretorius (2014) provide a history of this movement, which has its roots in post- Cold War international reports on disarmament in the 1990s and 2000s by the Canberra and Blix Commissions and was facilitated by high-profile public statements on the need for disarmament by the so-called ‘Four Horsemen’ of US foreign policy, George Schultz, Henry Kissinger, William Perry and Sam Nunn in 2007, and by President Obama in 2009. The end of the Cold War and an increasing frustration with incremental arms control approaches and the flaws of the NPT system led to a feeling among anti-nuclear states and activists that the dominant approach to disarmament was inadequate. New non-governmental organisations (NGOs), particularly the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and (to a lesser extent) Global Zero, began to push for an alternative approach. The ‘catastrophic humanitarian consequences’ of nuclear weapons use were mentioned in an NPT final document for the first time in 2010 (in Sauer and Pretorius, 2014: 241), and at the last of the three large international conferences on the issue in Vienna in 2014, 158 states as well as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent (ICRC), civil society groups and NGOs discussed the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and the Austrian government issued the Humanitarian Pledge. In 2013, the UNGA established an open-ended working group to discuss this avenue for disarmament, and in November 2015, the UNGA adopted four resolutions based on the Humanitarian Initiative, committing to work together to ‘fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons’ (UNGA, 2015).

The Humanitarian Initiative, while rejecting as flawed the dominant structure of disarmament as embodied in the NPT process, nonetheless still aims for multilateral nuclear disarmament, to be achieved through the promotion of anti-nuclear norms within the existing institutions of international society. The movement attempts to rethink the issue of nuclear weapons in terms of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use and the harm already done by previous nuclear testing. This involves the need to ‘stigmatize’ nuclear weapons in terms of their ‘unacceptable humanitarian consequences and associated risks’ (Humanitarian Pledge, see note 9). While it is clear that the NWS and their allies would not sign a ban on nuclear weapons initially, the success of a potential legal prohibition would rest on the promotion of a norm of unacceptability of both use and possession that would spread over time as more states sign. Supporters argue that there are precedents in existing international conventions on cluster munitions and antipersonnel mines, which have delegitimised these weapons over time (Borrie, 2014: 626).

Framing opposition to nuclear weapons in humanitarian terms is not new; Sauer and Pretorius (2014) provide an overview of this discourse that can be traced back to 1945. However, combining this with a legal prohibition in order to delegitimise the possession of nuclear weapons has been welcomed as an innovation in disarmament politics by many academics and civil society actors working on nuclear non-proliferation, who have labelled it as a ‘seismic shift in the global structure of norms around nuclear weapons’ (Burke, 2015), a ‘game changer’, which ‘fundamentally challenges the nuclear deterrence paradigm’ (Sauer, 2015) and, as such, ‘will go down in history’ (Johnson, 2015). However, rather than a new or transformative approach to the international politics of nuclear weapons, the Humanitarian Initiative, as the latest extension of an ongoing attempt to rethink the unthinkability of nuclear weapons through reframing and delegitimisation, is another recurrence of a cycle of disarmament activism that began over 70 years ago and has been repeated ever since. This can be seen in various forms, from the ‘Franck Report’ written by scientists involved in the Manhattan Project in June 1945, acknowledging the ‘infinitely greater dangers than were all the inventions of the past’, to protests against atmospheric testing in the 1950s, to the nuclear freeze movement, the Pugwash organisation, the Catholic Bishops and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). The familiar and cyclical nature of the anti-nuclear debate was noted by Boyer in the 1980s, who argued that ‘[e]xcept for a post-holocaust “Nuclear Winter,” every theme and image by which we express our nuclear fear today has its counterpart in the immediate post-Hiroshima period’ (Boyer, 1985: 364). The Humanitarian Initiative is the latest manifestation of a repeated impulse in disarmament discourse to conceive of the politics of nuclear weapons as rethinking the unthinkable.

Rethinking as norm creation — re-speaking nuclear weapons

Concomitant with the cycles of nuclear activism, much of the mainstream academic work on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation has been founded in an either explicit or implicit commitment to rethink the unthinkable. This can be seen in two related and often overlapping sets of work. The first body of work focuses on rethinking the meaning of nuclear weapons to move towards disarmament through processes of delegitimising, devaluing and stigmatising nuclear weapons within a broadly international society approach. This has become a key feature of work on nuclear weapons, where rethinking the unthinkable has been most often articulated and operationalised as a process of changing social meaning and value. Nick Ritchie’s (2013: 146) work is based on reducing the value assigned to nuclear weapons, most notably, for what he terms the ‘defence and security elite’. Ritchie (2013: 151; see also Ritchie 2014) claims that in order to progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons, one must understand the process by which they gain value and so the question to be asked is ‘how do we “know” nuclear value?’ In a recent European Journal of International Relations article, Senn and Elhardt (2013: 317, emphasis in original) take a Bourdieu-inspired approach and argue that we need to ‘change the doxa’ of nuclear weapons. This reading of the disarmament process is also associated with further work on nuclear weapons and norms, for example, that of Nina Tannenwald (2007) on the nuclear taboo, in which the use of these weapons is agreed to be so abhorrent that it has become, as Press et al. (2013: 189) describe it, ‘virtually unthinkable’. T.V. Paul (2009) has also argued that there is a tradition of non-use of nuclear weapons based largely on reputation, which is combined with the knowledge of the horrible consequences of nuclear weapons use and has fixed a policy of nuclear non-use over the past 60 years (see also Rost Rublee, 2009).

he drive to delegitimise nuclear weapons through the creation of norms as the first step to disarmament has been the main focus of anti-nuclear NGOs and civil society groups, particularly in the post-Cold War period; indeed, the NPT itself is founded on the idea of spreading and maintaining the norm of nuclear non-proliferation (Nielsen and Hanson, 2014). Marianne Hanson (2002: 364) writes about the consensus that, in general, ‘there is agreement that although these weapons cannot be disinvented, their possession and use — and their eventual elimination — can nevertheless be managed by strong norms and institutions’.

The second strand of literature grounded in the nuclear unthinkable is characterised by William Chaloupka as work on the ‘unspeakability’ of nuclear weapons (see also Fishel, 2015). There exists a common public discourse that begins with the premise of a collective muteness in the face of the nuclear. Obama’s remarks at Hiroshima typify this and it is also common in NGO and diplomatic language, often regarding the ‘unspeakable suffering’ caused by nuclear weapons.12 In the academic literature, the unspeakability of nuclear weapons is exemplified in the work on ‘nukespeak’, defined by Edward Schiappa as the ‘use of metaphor, euphemism, technical jargon and acronym to portray nuclear concepts in a “neutral” or positive way’ (Schiappa, 1989: 253; see also Chilton, 1982, 1985; Hilgartner et al., 1982). The literature on nukespeak is founded on the need to overcome the unspeakability of the nuclear and argues that the deficiencies of nuclear weapons politics are because it has not been properly spoken, that the dominant obfuscatory language not only naturalises the ideological basis behind the supposedly neutral strategic deterrence language, but also prevents us from understanding and expressing the ‘new reality’ of the nuclear world, which leads to a ‘crisis of comprehension’ (Chilton, 1982: 95–96). This literature is based on the idea that we could rethink nuclear weapons by getting past the bureaucratic and euphemistic speech that constrains debate and instead somehow overcome their unspeakability, returning to ‘a prior condition of innocence where things had “real” names’ by speaking the unthinkable (Chaloupka, 1992: 20).

Thus, in both the mainstream anti-nuclear movement and the academic literature that is positioned as the dominant challenger to the state-centric and strategic assumptions of deterrence theory, we are left with a drive for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament that is based, in broad terms, on changing how we know nuclear weapons — rethinking and respeaking their meaning, role and value within the institutions of international society. These approaches rest on the argument of changing the meaning of nuclear weapons for political and defence decision-makers and/or for broader global populations as a way of coercing these decision-makers; nuclear disarmament as a process of devaluing or stigmatising requires the nuclear states to ‘think differently about the values currently assigned to their nuclear weapons’ (Ritchie, 2013: 147). Rethinking the politics of nuclear weapons has been translated into changing our collective understandings of nuclear weapons, either by clearly speaking their ‘reality’, or by speaking them differently in order to promote and manage anti-nuclear norms, all within existing international political structures and all grounded in a discourse of the unthinkable.

Why this matters

Of course, the fact that the Humanitarian Initiative and associated work on rethinking nuclear weapons and creating and promoting anti-nuclear norms is not an entirely original or transformative approach to the politics of nuclear weapons does not automatically mean that it is not a valuable and worthwhile endeavour. One could argue that the consequences of nuclear weapons are, indeed, ‘unthinkable’ and that such things need to be repeated because they are important. In fact, it might be even more important today to repeat them in a context that might be more receptive to their message. There has been an obvious and fundamental change from previous cycles of non-proliferation and disarmament activism: the end of the Cold War and the bipolar world of arms racing, ‘missile gaps’ and superpower nuclear crises. This is combined with the growth in prominence of humanitarian approaches in other areas, for example, ideas of human security and the Responsibility to Protect, as well as increasing prominence of international law approaches and the further development of international institutions. All of this, one could claim, makes the humanitarian approach, if not original, at least timely.

However, this article contends that the dominance of the broadly international society- based approaches to the political problem of nuclear weapons carries with it limitations that render the approach not only ultimately ineffectual, but also potentially damaging. This is the case for two overlapping reasons. The first is related to what Campbell Craig and Jan Ruzicka (2012, 2013) have labelled as the ‘non-proliferation complex’. Craig and Ruzicka argue that the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda is doomed to failure because of the nature of nuclear weapons and the vast benefits accruing to any state that would cheat on a disarmament process. Claiming that the problem of nuclear weapons can be solved while failing to challenge the interests of what they term the ‘nuclear haves’ (Craig and Ruzicka, 2013: 330) and while remaining within the current international system simply ignores the true nature and extent of the problem and the transformative effects of the thermonuclear revolution. They argue that there is a wide industry of think-tanks, NGOs, government agencies and academics, the aforementioned ‘non-proliferation complex’, who have access to a large amount of resources to push mainstream non-proliferation and disarmament agendas that do not significantly challenge the status quo and fundamentally ignore the completely revolutionary nature of the problem of nuclear weapons, instead proposing, as Deudney (1995) put it, a solution of reformation to an issue of transformation. While the limitations of the existing disarmament regime are well known and acknowledged by those within the complex, the response to these limitations, by continuing to push another variation of this approach, only acts to, as Craig and Ruzicka (2013: 337) state, ‘entrench the permanent nuclearization of international politics’, as well as permitting action by powerful states, in particular, by the US, against those who they say may be attempting to gain nuclear weapons illegitimately. Attempting a solution to the problem of nuclear weapons within the current international environment not only is a futile endeavour therefore, but also sustains an unacceptable status quo through the maintenance of a facade of action.

This argument is an important challenge to a dominant mainstream consensus and makes a key intervention into the nuclear weapons debate that highlights how the existing non-proliferation and disarmament approaches have, so far, failed to really challenge entrenched global powers and power structures. Craig and Ruzicka wrote their article when the Humanitarian Initiative was still at a nascent stage, but while the new initiative pushes back against the interests of the NWS and challenges the status quo and the ‘hypocrisy inherent in the NPT system’ much more strongly than previously, by continuing to promote the same goals without acknowledging the need for alternative political forms, it remains vulnerable to Craig and Ruzicka’s (2013: 337) complaint of pushing for disarmament ‘within the current international environment’. However, while critiquing the corruption of the NPT regime by the interests of the great powers, Craig and Ruzicka nonetheless give general support to the underlying idea of the NPT and the international society approach to nuclear politics. They do not challenge the value of strong anti-nuclear norms and institutions in the politics of nuclear weapons, but rather lament how these have been damaged.15 The ‘endless betrayals’ of the ‘nuclear haves’ (Craig and Ruzicka, 2013: 341) have undermined the power of international regimes such as the NPT to effectively stigmatise nuclear weapons, subverting the original intentions of the NPT and weakening the anti-nuclear norm and the nuclear taboo. While contesting the institutional constraints of the current disarmament agenda and its overall compliance with existing power structures and international structures, they do not challenge the conceptual constraints of this agenda and its compliance with dominant modes of understanding and expressing the nuclear. Craig and Ruzicka speak about this in terms of interests and power. The great powers get to keep their weapons and the non-proliferation complex receives its publicity and funding and continues to push an uncontroversial, progressive disarmament agenda.

By contrast, the argument of this article is that there is something at work here that goes beyond interest as a reason for a lack of action or political imagination and instead can be investigated by returning to the dominance of the discourse of the unthinkable. The question to which the nuclear realists answered with a definitive negative in the 1950s and 60s, and which has been repeated since by authors such as Craig and Ruzicka, was ‘can nuclear weapons be reconciled with the foundational institutions of international society?’ (van Munster and Sylvest, 2014: 535). This question, while crucial, needs to be supplemented with an additional query of whether we can reconcile the nuclear, as a political, cultural and conceptual change in our very way of being and understanding the world, with the foundational, institutional discourses of international society that dominate anti-nuclear politics. If, as so many have claimed, nuclear politics demand new ways of thinking, one must question how the dominant understanding of nuclear politics as the politics of the unthinkable and anti-nuclear politics as norm-creation and institution-building has constrained our ability to politically conceive of, and thus address, this demand and what this can show us about the limits of these approaches to international politics more broadly.

Indeed, it is not an International Relations scholar, but the poet Seamus Heaney, who has best articulated a central problem of the nuclear age as ‘our inability to trust too far a language of continuity’ (in Schley, 1983: 150). The darkness of the shadow of nuclear annihilation is not only that of our own destruction, but also that of the loss of what Morgenthau (1961) termed symbolic immortality: that which ‘gives the individual at least a chance to survive himself in the collective memory of mankind’. The possibility of nuclear destruction changes this by ‘making both history and society impossible’ (Morgenthau, 1961). Heaney has eloquently expressed our resulting struggle to speak in a language of nuclear politics that is premised on universal claims. The mainstream approach to non-proliferation and disarmament replaces one ‘language of continuity’ (nuclearism and deterrence) with another (humanitarianism and universal anti-nuclear norms) without interrogating how the very form of this language is undermined and subverted by what Morgenthau (1961) terms ‘nuclear death’. Both the deterrence and humanitarian discourses, though oppositional in their content, are nonetheless based on the same foundation of nuclear politics as the politics of the unthinkable and propose responses of containment based on similar claims to universality and continuity, whether through the perceived universal rationality of deterrence or the perceived universality of an appeal to humanitarian law. They are an extension of each other, both trying to address the nuclear through rethinking the unthinkable in a discourse that, as Chaloupka (1992: 2) states, ‘constantly moves to universalistic levels’.

An example of this universalistic tendency can be seen in the claims of the Humanitarian Pledge, which are founded on ‘the security of all humanity’ (Humanitarian Pledge, see note 9). ‘Humanity’ is, at once, the object of security, the basis from which nuclear weapons are denounced and the foundation upon which universal anti-nuclear norms can be built. The danger to ‘humanity’ posed by nuclear weapons also leaches into a continuous future, simultaneously threatening the total destruction of human existence as well as an empty, post-apocalyptic eternity, ‘enabling both the absolute end of time and the exponential proliferation of a toxic future’ (Masco, 2006: 12). The often-repeated goal of a ‘nuclear-weapons-free’ world (sometimes shortened to NWF as if it were a technical status) is another example of this language of continuity, representing the process as one of the permanent eradication of a condition, with nuclear weapons as an external affliction imposed upon ‘humanity’. This obscures the political structures and processes involved, instead predicating a future in which a global ‘we’ is ‘freed’ from nuclear weapons. Shampa Biswas has described this nuclear ‘we’ as a ‘mythical international community’, whose creation precludes certain questions about the existing nuclear order (Biswas, 2014: 3; see also Chaloupka, 1992).

It is therefore important to think about the limits that our current ways of expressing the politics of nuclear weapons place on the possibility of political action, for, as Chaloupka (1992: 1–2) has argued, political opposition to nuclearism is generally phrased within ‘familiar political ways of speaking, despite their proponents’ considered judgment that precisely these understandings have made the world so different, so dangerous’. Both the deterrence and the mainstream disarmament discourses propose the solution of containment as a response to nuclear weapons, whether containment as military strategy or containment through (re-)speaking and thus taming the nuclear sublime. In fact, despite the drastic statements about the extreme, unthinkable consequences of nuclear weapons used in the repeated calls for non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, there is something conservative and conceptually limiting about this approach, which speaks to a deeper problem of the politics of nuclear weapons and of International Relations as a discipline than Craig and Ruzicka’s diagnosis of the sway of interests.

The Humanitarian Initiative, as the latest manifestation of this approach, continues the assumption of a particular relationship between speaking and thinkability as a way of addressing the problem of nuclear weapons, in which speaking and re-speaking tame and contain the unthinkable. Rather than perpetuating or even contesting this relationship, one might better question this by challenging the idea of either unspeakability or unthinkability as permanent boundaries imposed by qualities of the nuclear, and instead, as W.J.T. Mitchell (2005: 293) writes, consider them as ‘rhetorical tropes that simultaneously invoke and overcome the limitation of language and depiction, discourse and display’. The unspeakable is, in fact, a ‘strategy’ that actually says something specific about the nuclear, for, as Mitchell (2005: 293) notes, ‘the invocation of the unspeakable is invariably expressed in and followed by an outpouring of words’. This is borne out by the fact that the label of ‘nuclear unspeakability’ does not generally result in silence, but in ‘its rhetorical opposite; namely a proliferation of discourses about vulnerability and insecurity’ (Masco, 2006: 3). In anti-nuclear political discourse, the ‘outpouring’ often takes the form of a series of contradictions: the bomb is unthinkable but must be continually rethought; we are rendered dumb by the unspeakable effects of nuclear war but they must be spoken; the nuclear is uncontainable but has been contained by the pernicious effects of nukespeak; the bomb changes everything but can be managed within existing international political structures.

The prevailing conception of the nuclear as unthinkable demands speech, and the dominant assumptions of mainstream anti-nuclear politics require that this speech takes the form of a ‘language of continuity’, where rethinking the nuclear is circumscribed into changing how we collectively think about the nuclear. Attempting to change the content of the politics of nuclear weapons while within this language of continuity, as so much of the literature does, or attempting nuclear critique while tied to its limits can only lead to another repeat of the cycle of discourse identified here. The problem identified by the nuclear realists, of reconciling nuclear weapons with international society, is not only one of the limits of institutions, but also one of the limits of forms of speech, whose perpetual repetition maintains the political status quo. It is therefore in form that one can begin to challenge this discourse. The following section of the article will propose that one way to accomplish this is by examining the form of nuclear speech through a study of cliché.

### o1NC – Die Sad – Grove

#### Voting negative adopts failed IR for a healthy dose of pessimism – at the end of the world, all we can do is hope to be buried alive together.

Grove ‘19

[Jarius, PoliSci at the University of Hawai’i. 2019. “Savage Ecology: War and Geopolitics in the Anthropocene.”] pat – ask me for the PDF!

Failed ir affirms the power of this kind of negative thinking as an alternative to the endless rehearsing of moralizing insights and strategic foresight. The negative is not “against” or reacting to something. Rather, it is the affirmation of a freedom beyond the limits of life and death. That is, it is making a life by continuing to think about the world, even if that thinking is not recuperative, and even if nothing we think can save us. In the face of it all, one celebrates useless thinking, useless scholarship, and useless forms of life at the very moment we are told to throw them all under the bus in the name of survival at all costs. This is a logic referred to lately as hope and it is as cruel as it is anxiety inducing. Hope is a form of extortion. We are told that it is our obligation to bear the weight of making things better while being chided that the failure of our efforts is the result of not believing in the possibility of real change. In such an environment, pessimism is often treated as a form of treason, as if only neoliberals and moral degenerates give up—or so goes the op-ed’s insisting upon the renewed possibility of redemption.

In response to these exhortations, pessimism offers a historical atheism, both methodologically and morally. The universe does not bend toward justice. Sometimes the universe bends toward the indifference of gravity wells and black holes. Affirming negativity, inspired by Achille Mbembe, is grounds for freedom, even if that freedom or relief is only fleeting and always insecure. I am not arrogant enough to think a book can attain freedom of this sort, but this book is inspired by refusals of critique as redemption in favor of useless critique and critique for its own sake.

That the pursuit of knowledge without immediate application is so thoroughly useless, even profane, is a diagnosis of our current moment. The neoliberal assault on the university is evidence of this condition, as is the current pitch of American politics. Our indifference as intellectuals to maximizing value has not gone unnoticed. We are still dangerous, worthy of vilification, of attack, sabotage, and derision because we fail so decadently. We are parasites according to Scott Walker, Donald Trump, and the rest. So be it. We are and shall remain irascible irritants to a worldwide assault on thinking that is well underway and facing few obstacles in other jurisdictions.

What would failed scholarship do? Learn to die, learn to live, learn to listen, learn to be together, and learn to be generous. These virtues are useless in that they do not prevent or manage things. They do not translate into learning objectives or metrics. Virtues of this order are selfsame, nontransferable experiences. They are meaningful but not useful. These are luxurious virtues. Like grieving or joy, they are ends unto themselves. But how will these ideas seek extramural grants, contribute to an outcomes-based education system, or become a policy recommendation? They will not, and that is part of their virtue.

Even if there is no straight line to where we are and where we ought to be, I think we should get over the idea that somehow the U.S. project of liberal empire is conflicted, or “more right than it is wrong,” or pragmatically preferable to the alternatives. I hope this book can contribute to the urgent necessity to get out of the way by reveling in the catastrophic failure that should inspire humility but instead seems to embolden too many to seek global control yet again. Demolition may be an affirmative act if it means insurgents and others can be better heard. And yet this may fail too. If we can accomplish nothing at all, we can at least, as Ta-Nehisi Coates and other pessimists have said, refuse to suborn the lie of America any longer. Telling the truth, even if it cannot change the outcome of history, is a certain kind of solace. In Coates’s words, there is a kind of rapture “when you can no longer be lied to, when you have rejected the dream.” Saying the truth out loud brings with it the relief that we are not crazy. Things really are as bad as we think.

If there are those of us who want to break from this one-hundred-year-old race to be the next Henry Kissinger, then why do we continue to seek respect in the form of recognizable standards of excellence? I am not sure where the answer finally lies, but I do know that professionalization will not save us. To appear as normal and recognizably rigorous will not be enough to stave off the neoliberal drive to monetize scholarship, or to demand of us strategically useful insights. The least we can do in the face of such a battle is to find comfort in meaningful ideas and the friendships they build rather than try to perform for those we know are the problem. Some will ask, who is this “we” or is that “they”—where is your evidence? More will know exactly what I am talking about.

The virtues I seek are oriented toward an academy of refuge, a place we can still live, no matter how dire the conditions of the university and the classroom. It is not the think tank, boardroom, or command center. We are, those of us who wish to be included, the last of the philosophers, the last of the lovers of knowledge, the deviants who should revel in what Harney and Moten have called the undercommons.

In one of his final lectures, Bataille speaks of the remnants of a different human species, something not quite so doomed, something that wasted its newly discovered consciousness and tool-being on the art that still marks the walls of prehistoric caves. This lingering minor or vestigial heritage is philosophy’s beginning. Philosophy survives war, atrocity, famine, and crusades. Thinking matters in a very unusual way. Thinking is not power or emancipation. Thinking matters for a sense of belonging to the world, and for believing in the fecundity of the world despite evidence to the contrary.

How do you get all this from pessimism, from failure? Because willing failure is a temptation, a lure to think otherwise, to think dangerous thoughts. Pessimism is a threat to indifferentism and nihilism in the sense of the phenomenon of Donald Trump. Pessimism is a provocation and an enemy of skepticism, particularly of the metaphysical variety. It is not redemption from these afflictions, but in pessimism there is solace in the real. To put it another way, to study the world as it is means to care for it.

The exhortation that our care or interest should be contingent on how useful the world is and how much of it conforms to our designs is as much opposed to care as it is to empiricism. We can study airports, poetry, endurance races, borders, bombs, plastic, and warfare, and find them all in the world. To consider the depth of their existence can be an invitation to the world rather than a prelude to another policy report. One cannot make a successful political career out of such pursuits, but you might be able to make a life out of it, a life worth repeating even if nothing else happens.

At the end of Jack Halberstam’s The Queer Art of Failure, we are presented with the Fantastic Mr. Fox’s toast as an exemple of something meaningful in these dark times of ours.

They say all foxes are slightly allergic to linoleum, but it’s cool to the paw—try it. They say my tail needs to be dry cleaned twice a month, but now it’s fully detachable—see? They say our tree may never grow back, but one day, something will. Yes, these crackles are made of synthetic goose and these giblets come from artificial squab and even these apples look fake—but at least they’ve got stars on them. I guess my point is, we’ll eat tonight, and we’ll eat together. And even in this not particularly flattering light, you are without a doubt the five and a half most wonderful wild animals I’ve ever met in my life. So let’s raise our boxes—to our survival.

Halberstam says of this queer moment:

Not quite a credo, something short of a toast, a little less than a speech, but Mr. Fox gives here one of the best and most moving—both emotionally and in stop-motion terms—addresses in the history of cinema. Unlike Coraline, where survival is predicated upon a rejection of the theatrical, the queer, and the improvised, and like Where the Wild Things Are, where the disappointment of deliverance must be leavened with the pragmatism of possibility, Fantastic Mr. Fox is a queerly animated classic in that it teaches us, as Finding Nemo, Chicken Run, and so many other revolting animations before it, to believe in detachable tails, fake apples, eating together, adapting to the lighting, risk, sissy sons, and the sheer importance of survival for all those wild souls that the farmers, the teachers, the preachers, and the politicians would like to bury alive.

Although not as much fun as Halberstam’s monument to low theory, Savage Ecology is for all the other wild animals out there studying global politics. May we be buried alive together.

### 1NC – Martial Empiricism – Bousquet

#### The Role of the Judge is to adopt martial empiricism.

Bousquet et al ‘20

[Antoine Bousquet, University of London, Jairus Grove, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, and Nisha Shah University of Ottawa. 2020. “Becoming war: Towards a martial empiricism,” <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0967010619895660>] pat

Haunting the formations and deformations of global life, war confronts us as an abyss in the face of which cherished interpretative frameworks perilously buckle and warp. Indeed, Tarak Barkawi and Shane Brighton (2011: 129) accurately identify a ‘conceptual black hole surrounding the notion of war’ that has insistently gnawed at the study of the phenomenon. Locating the source of this lacuna in the absence of an ‘ontology of war’, they propose to ground one in ‘fighting’ (Barkawi and Brighton, 2011: 136). Although we concur on the diagnosis, we take issue with the suggested remedy. War does not obey any neat philosophical division between epistemology and ontology. For us, the resolute elusiveness of any definitive understanding of war is inherent in that very object. Every attempt to conceptually shackle war is undone by the creative advance of its new modes, residences and intensities. This speaks against the value of ontology per se less than it calls for a strange, paradoxical and provisional ontology that is consonant with the confounding mutability of war. Such an ontology, suspended between infinity and totality, being and nothingness, the sheer fecundity and utter catastrophe of war, may not be too uncanny for its object. In fairness, Barkawi and Brighton (2011: 133) gesture towards this in acknowledging ‘war’s recalcitrance as an object of knowledge’ and allowing for war to unmake any truth. Yet they seem unwilling to embrace the full force of their own insight, which Marc von Boemcken (2016: 239) ultimately declares: ‘even the statement that “war is fighting” may well be eventually undone by war. In a very fundamental manner, war escapes human intelligibility.’

This special issue on ‘Becoming War’ grapples with war as obdurate mystery. In its recurring persistence yet constant reinvention, its paradoxical ordering of life for the generation of death, or its stubborn affront to the better world we all purport to want, war never ceases to perplex us. Our world is one shot through by war, manifest in the nation-states we inhabit, the ecologies of technics that bind us to one another, and the very thoughts ricocheting through our communities of sense. And yet we still do not know war.

Rather than endeavour yet again to ‘say something fundamental about what war is’ (Barkawi and Brighton, 2011: 134, emphasis in original), we choose to explore how war becomes. This is not to say that we deny any durability or regularities in the phenomenon of war over time. Simply that, as Alfred Whitehead (1978: 35) puts it, ‘there is a becoming of continuity, but no continuity of becoming’. Accordingly, we seek to trace the lines of becoming that congeal into what comes to count as war, even as it continually frays at the edges and insolently defies habituated frames of reference. We do not, therefore, offer a theory of continuity, a formula for what all lines of becoming war might have in common, but instead sketch a style of investigation that encompasses both the enduring cohesion and the radical dispersion of war. We call this endeavour ‘martial empiricism’ to renounce attempts to devise a definitive theory of war. Instead, we favour an open-ended conceptual arsenal for following the trail of war wherever it leads us, as opposed to camping in the places where we already expect to find it.

Although we do not aim to circumscribe the remit of its investigations, martial empiricism is nonetheless inherently situational, spurred by the impulse to grasp the present martial condition we inhabit in all its calamity and promise. We would be far from the first to point out the growing inadequacy of the conceptual frameworks of war inherited from the Westphalian historical interval. Yet we still collectively flounder in the face of a combined and uneven landscape of armed conflict populated by metastasizing war machines encompassing overseas contingency operations, fullspectrum hybrid theatres, ethno-supremacist militias, crowd-sourced paramilitaries, Incel shooters and narco-state assassins. The game is definitely up when a task force led by the former head of United States Central Command can write that ‘basic categories such as “battlefield,” “combatant” and “hostilities” no longer have clear or stable meaning’ (Abizaid and Brooks, 2014: 35). Confronted with this reality and the persistent bewilderment it induces, we contend that a certain epistemic humility is in order. Rather than professing to know where war begins and ends, martial empiricism starts in the middle, with only the barest tentative intuitions necessary to explore the logistics, operations and embodiments that engender armed conflict as an unremitting condition of global life.