### Biz Con DA

#### Growth is strong, including businesses

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Recent economic reports suggest that the blistering pace of growth is easing, and inflationary conditions are cooling. However, over the next 12-18 months both measures should remain above levels consistently seen during the last business cycle.

The fundamentals of the U.S. economy have not changed much from the previous business cycle. Over time, the real, inflation-adjusted economic growth rate for the current cycle should be similar to the previous cycle. However, the economy is still carrying a lot of momentum as it recovers from the pandemic and the reopening continues despite challenges posed by the Delta variant. For example, the latest Purchasing Manager Index (PMI) data suggests economic momentum is persistently stronger than the levels we saw during the last business cycle.

[Graphical user interface, chart

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Our economic growth expectation would be even higher if not for supply chain bottlenecks in everything from microchips to labor. We can see the effects of these supply chain bottlenecks in the latest Purchasing Manager Index (PMI) data that show the pace of growth slipping. Still, the slower pace of economic growth we may see going forward is very strong relative to the last business cycle. Over time, we expect the current momentum to ebb, but growth should remain strong over the near-term.

Similar to the peak we are seeing in the rate of real GDP growth, we think that we have likely seen the peak in the rate of inflation. However, this does not mean that inflation will quickly decline to the low levels that we saw during the previous business cycle. Rather, we expect inflation to persist at a rate well above the rate we experienced during the 2010-2019 period.

One of the major differences in the current environment is the massive amount of fiscal and monetary stimulus in this business cycle that dwarfs the previous business cycle. We think this massive amount of stimulus, along with other factors, will likely keep the rate of inflation higher than the previous business cycle on average. Though some “transitory” inflationary pressures, such as the rate of increase in used cars, may be easing, other longer-term pressures, such as wages and rents, are just beginning to build. We can see one example of this massive monetary stimulus in the growth rate of the money supply, or liquidity, in the financial system. As the following graph illustrates, the rate of liquidity growth in the system is far above anything we saw during the previous business cycle.

Chart, line chart

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This view is consistent with what market-based inflation expectations are showing. For example, the 5-Year Treasury Inflation Protected Securities (TIPS) breakeven spread suggests that we will see an average of 2.55% inflation for the next 5 years. This is well above levels we saw consistently during the previous business cycle.

Given the pace of the U.S. Federal Reserve’s stimulus and the current supply chain and labor market disruptions we have experienced since the pandemic lockdowns, we expect much of this inflation to be frontloaded and it may take years to settle down and work through the system.

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As a result of this continued economic growth, corporate revenue and earnings growth should remain strong while long-term interest rates are likely to move higher as the all-time low in real, inflation-adjusted, interest rates reverse. We have positioned our Strategies to benefit from these trends while managing the associated risks. Our current positioning favors value-oriented equity sectors, such as health care, financials, consumer staples, and dividend payers more broadly. On the fixed income side, we continue to emphasize high-quality, less interest rate sensitive investments that generate a relatively attractive current income.

#### Unpredictable shifts ruin biz con AND overall growth

Sarah Chaney Cambon 21, Reporter on The Wall Street Journal's Economics Team, BA in Business Journalism from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, “Capital-Spending Surge Further Lifts Economic Recovery”, Wall Street Journal, 6/27/2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/capital-spending-surge-further-lifts-economic-recovery-11624798800

Business investment is emerging as a powerful source of U.S. economic growth that will likely help sustain the recovery.

Companies are ramping up orders for computers, machinery and software as they grow more confident in the outlook.

Nonresidential fixed investment, a proxy for business spending, rose at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 11.7% in the first quarter, led by growth in software and tech-equipment spending, according to the Commerce Department. Business investment also logged double-digit gains in the third and fourth quarters last year after falling during pandemic-related shutdowns. It is now higher than its pre-pandemic peak.

Orders for nondefense capital goods excluding aircraft, another measure for business investment, are near the highest levels for records tracing back to the 1990s, separate Commerce Department figures show.

“Business investment has really been an important engine powering the U.S. economic recovery,” said Robert Rosener, senior U.S. economist at Morgan Stanley. “In our outlook for the economy, it’s certainly one of the bright spots.”

Consumer spending, which accounts for about two-thirds of economic output, is driving the early stages of the recovery. Americans, flush with savings and government stimulus checks, are spending more on goods and services, which they shunned for much of the pandemic.

Robust capital investment will be key to ensuring that the recovery maintains strength after the spending boost from fiscal stimulus and business reopenings eventually fades, according to some economists.

Rising business investment helps fuel economic output. It also lifts worker productivity, or output per hour. That metric grew at a sluggish pace throughout the last economic expansion but is now showing signs of resurgence.

The recovery in business investment is shaping up to be much stronger than in the years following the 2007-09 recession. “The events especially in late ’08, early ’09 put a lot of businesses really close to the edge,” said Phil Suttle, founder of Suttle Economics. “I think a lot of them said, ‘We’ve just got to be really cautious for a long while.’”

Businesses appear to be less risk-averse now, he said.

After the financial crisis, businesses grew by adding workers, rather than investing in capital. Hiring was more attractive than capital spending because labor was abundant and relatively cheap. Now the supply of workers is tight. Companies are raising pay to lure employees. As a result, many firms have more incentive to grow by investing in capital.

Economists at Morgan Stanley predict that U.S. capital spending will rise to 116% of prerecession levels after three years. By comparison, investment took 10 years to reach those levels once the 2007-09 recession hit.

Company executives are increasingly confident in the economy’s trajectory. The Business Roundtable’s economic-outlook index—a composite of large companies’ plans for hiring and spending, as well as sales projections—increased by nine points in the second quarter to 116, just below 2018’s record high, according to a survey conducted between May 25 and June 9. In the second quarter, the share of companies planning to boost capital investment increased to 59% from 57% in the first.

“We’re seeing really strong reopening demand, and a lot of times capital investment follows that,” said Joe Song, senior U.S. economist at BofA Securities.

Mr. Song added that less uncertainty regarding trade tensions between the U.S. and China should further underpin business confidence and investment. “At the very least, businesses will understand the strategy that the Biden administration is trying to follow and will be able to plan around that,” he said.

#### Decline cascades---nuclear war

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Various scholars and institutions regard global social instability as the greatest threat facing this decade. The catalyst has been postulated to be a Second Great Depression which, in turn, will have profound implications for global security and national integrity. This paper, written from a broad systems perspective, illustrates how emerging risks are getting more complex and intertwined; blurring boundaries between the economic, environmental, geopolitical, societal and technological taxonomy used by the World Economic Forum for its annual global risk forecasts. Tight couplings in our global systems have also enabled risks accrued in one area to snowball into a full-blown crisis elsewhere. The COVID-19 pandemic and its socioeconomic fallouts exemplify this systemic chain-reaction. Onceinexorable forces of globalization are rupturing as the current global system can no longer be sustained due to poor governance and runaway wealth fractionation. The coronavirus pandemic is also enabling Big Tech to expropriate the levers of governments and mass communications worldwide. This paper concludes by highlighting how this development poses a dilemma for security professionals.

Key Words: Global Systems, Emergence, VUCA, COVID-9, Social Instability, Big Tech, Great Reset

INTRODUCTION

The new decade is witnessing rising volatility across global systems. Pick any random “system” today and chart out its trajectory: Are our education systems becoming more robust and affordable? What about food security? Are our healthcare systems improving? Are our pension systems sound? Wherever one looks, there are dark clouds gathering on a global horizon marked by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA).

But what exactly is a global system? Our planet itself is an autonomous and selfsustaining mega-system, marked by periodic cycles and elemental vagaries. Human activities within however are not system isolates as our banking, utility, farming, healthcare and retail sectors etc. are increasingly entwined. Risks accrued in one system may cascade into an unforeseen crisis within and/or without (Choo, Smith & McCusker, 2007). Scholars call this phenomenon “emergence”; one where the behaviour of intersecting systems is determined by complex and largely invisible interactions at the substratum (Goldstein, 1999; Holland, 1998).

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is a case in point. While experts remain divided over the source and morphology of the virus, the contagion has ramified into a global health crisis and supply chain nightmare. It is also tilting the geopolitical balance. China is the largest exporter of intermediate products, and had generated nearly 20% of global imports in 2015 alone (Cousin, 2020). The pharmaceutical sector is particularly vulnerable. Nearly “85% of medicines in the U.S. strategic national stockpile” sources components from China (Owens, 2020).

An initial run on respiratory masks has now been eclipsed by rowdy queues at supermarkets and the bankruptcy of small businesses. The entire global population – save for major pockets such as Sweden, Belarus, Taiwan and Japan – have been subjected to cyclical lockdowns and quarantines. Never before in history have humans faced such a systemic, borderless calamity.

COVID-19 represents a classic emergent crisis that necessitates real-time response and adaptivity in a real-time world, particularly since the global Just-in-Time (JIT) production and delivery system serves as both an enabler and vector for transboundary risks. From a systems thinking perspective, emerging risk management should therefore address a whole spectrum of activity across the economic, environmental, geopolitical, societal and technological (EEGST) taxonomy. Every emerging threat can be slotted into this taxonomy – a reason why it is used by the World Economic Forum (WEF) for its annual global risk exercises (Maavak, 2019a). As traditional forces of globalization unravel, security professionals should take cognizance of emerging threats through a systems thinking approach.

METHODOLOGY

An EEGST sectional breakdown was adopted to illustrate a sampling of extreme risks facing the world for the 2020-2030 decade. The transcendental quality of emerging risks, as outlined on Figure 1, below, was primarily informed by the following pillars of systems thinking (Rickards, 2020):

• Diminishing diversity (or increasing homogeneity) of actors in the global system (Boli & Thomas, 1997; Meyer, 2000; Young et al, 2006);

• Interconnections in the global system (Homer-Dixon et al, 2015; Lee & Preston, 2012);

• Interactions of actors, events and components in the global system (Buldyrev et al, 2010; Bashan et al, 2013; Homer-Dixon et al, 2015); and

• Adaptive qualities in particular systems (Bodin & Norberg, 2005; Scheffer et al, 2012) Since scholastic material on this topic remains somewhat inchoate, this paper buttresses many of its contentions through secondary (i.e. news/institutional) sources.

ECONOMY

According to Professor Stanislaw Drozdz (2018) of the Polish Academy of Sciences, “a global financial crash of a previously unprecedented scale is highly probable” by the mid- 2020s. This will lead to a trickle-down meltdown, impacting all areas of human activity.

The economist John Mauldin (2018) similarly warns that the “2020s might be the worst decade in US history” and may lead to a Second Great Depression. Other forecasts are equally alarming. According to the International Institute of Finance, global debt may have surpassed $255 trillion by 2020 (IIF, 2019). Yet another study revealed that global debts and liabilities amounted to a staggering $2.5 quadrillion (Ausman, 2018). The reader should note that these figures were tabulated before the COVID-19 outbreak.

The IMF singles out widening income inequality as the trigger for the next Great Depression (Georgieva, 2020). The wealthiest 1% now own more than twice as much wealth as 6.9 billion people (Coffey et al, 2020) and this chasm is widening with each passing month. COVID-19 had, in fact, boosted global billionaire wealth to an unprecedented $10.2 trillion by July 2020 (UBS-PWC, 2020). Global GDP, worth $88 trillion in 2019, may have contracted by 5.2% in 2020 (World Bank, 2020).

As the Greek historian Plutarch warned in the 1st century AD: “An imbalance between rich and poor is the oldest and most fatal ailment of all republics” (Mauldin, 2014). The stability of a society, as Aristotle argued even earlier, depends on a robust middle element or middle class. At the rate the global middle class is facing catastrophic debt and unemployment levels, widespread social disaffection may morph into outright anarchy (Maavak, 2012; DCDC, 2007).

Economic stressors, in transcendent VUCA fashion, may also induce radical geopolitical realignments. Bullions now carry more weight than NATO’s security guarantees in Eastern Europe. After Poland repatriated 100 tons of gold from the Bank of England in 2019, Slovakia, Serbia and Hungary quickly followed suit.

According to former Slovak Premier Robert Fico, this erosion in regional trust was based on historical precedents – in particular the 1938 Munich Agreement which ceded Czechoslovakia’s Sudetenland to Nazi Germany. As Fico reiterated (Dudik & Tomek, 2019):

“You can hardly trust even the closest allies after the Munich Agreement… I guarantee that if something happens, we won’t see a single gram of this (offshore-held) gold. Let’s do it (repatriation) as quickly as possible.” (Parenthesis added by author).

President Aleksandar Vucic of Serbia (a non-NATO nation) justified his central bank’s gold-repatriation program by hinting at economic headwinds ahead: “We see in which direction the crisis in the world is moving” (Dudik & Tomek, 2019). Indeed, with two global Titanics – the United States and China – set on a collision course with a quadrillions-denominated iceberg in the middle, and a viral outbreak on its tip, the seismic ripples will be felt far, wide and for a considerable period.

A reality check is nonetheless needed here: Can additional bullions realistically circumvallate the economies of 80 million plus peoples in these Eastern European nations, worth a collective $1.8 trillion by purchasing power parity? Gold however is a potent psychological symbol as it represents national sovereignty and economic reassurance in a potentially hyperinflationary world. The portents are clear: The current global economic system will be weakened by rising nationalism and autarkic demands. Much uncertainty remains ahead. Mauldin (2018) proposes the introduction of Old Testament-style debt jubilees to facilitate gradual national recoveries. The World Economic Forum, on the other hand, has long proposed a “Great Reset” by 2030; a socialist utopia where “you’ll own nothing and you’ll be happy” (WEF, 2016).

In the final analysis, COVID-19 is not the root cause of the current global economic turmoil; it is merely an accelerant to a burning house of cards that was left smouldering since the 2008 Great Recession (Maavak, 2020a). We also see how the four main pillars of systems thinking (diversity, interconnectivity, interactivity and “adaptivity”) form the mise en scene in a VUCA decade.

ENVIRONMENTAL

What happens to the environment when our economies implode? Think of a debt-laden workforce at sensitive nuclear and chemical plants, along with a concomitant surge in industrial accidents? Economic stressors, workforce demoralization and rampant profiteering – rather than manmade climate change – arguably pose the biggest threats to the environment. In a WEF report, Buehler et al (2017) made the following pre-COVID-19 observation:

The ILO estimates that the annual cost to the global economy from accidents and work-related diseases alone is a staggering $3 trillion. Moreover, a recent report suggests the world’s 3.2 billion workers are increasingly unwell, with the vast majority facing significant economic insecurity: 77% work in part-time, temporary, “vulnerable” or unpaid jobs.

Shouldn’t this phenomenon be better categorized as a societal or economic risk rather than an environmental one? In line with the systems thinking approach, however, global risks can no longer be boxed into a taxonomical silo. Frazzled workforces may precipitate another Bhopal (1984), Chernobyl (1986), Deepwater Horizon (2010) or Flint water crisis (2014). These disasters were notably not the result of manmade climate change. Neither was the Fukushima nuclear disaster (2011) nor the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004). Indeed, the combustion of a long-overlooked cargo of 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate had nearly levelled the city of Beirut, Lebanon, on Aug 4 2020. The explosion left 204 dead; 7,500 injured; US$15 billion in property damages; and an estimated 300,000 people homeless (Urbina, 2020). The environmental costs have yet to be adequately tabulated.

Environmental disasters are more attributable to Black Swan events, systems breakdowns and corporate greed rather than to mundane human activity.

Our JIT world aggravates the cascading potential of risks (Korowicz, 2012). Production and delivery delays, caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, will eventually require industrial overcompensation. This will further stress senior executives, workers, machines and a variety of computerized systems. The trickle-down effects will likely include substandard products, contaminated food and a general lowering in health and safety standards (Maavak, 2019a). Unpaid or demoralized sanitation workers may also resort to indiscriminate waste dumping. Many cities across the United States (and elsewhere in the world) are no longer recycling wastes due to prohibitive costs in the global corona-economy (Liacko, 2021).

Even in good times, strict protocols on waste disposals were routinely ignored. While Sweden championed the global climate change narrative, its clothing flagship H&M was busy covering up toxic effluences disgorged by vendors along the Citarum River in Java, Indonesia. As a result, countless children among 14 million Indonesians straddling the “world’s most polluted river” began to suffer from dermatitis, intestinal problems, developmental disorders, renal failure, chronic bronchitis and cancer (DW, 2020). It is also in cauldrons like the Citarum River where pathogens may mutate with emergent ramifications.

On an equally alarming note, depressed economic conditions have traditionally provided a waste disposal boon for organized crime elements. Throughout 1980s, the Calabriabased ‘Ndrangheta mafia – in collusion with governments in Europe and North America – began to dump radioactive wastes along the coast of Somalia. Reeling from pollution and revenue loss, Somali fisherman eventually resorted to mass piracy (Knaup, 2008).

The coast of Somalia is now a maritime hotspot, and exemplifies an entwined form of economic-environmental-geopolitical-societal emergence. In a VUCA world, indiscriminate waste dumping can unexpectedly morph into a Black Hawk Down incident. The laws of unintended consequences are governed by actors, interconnections, interactions and adaptations in a system under study – as outlined in the methodology section.

Environmentally-devastating industrial sabotages – whether by disgruntled workers, industrial competitors, ideological maniacs or terrorist groups – cannot be discounted in a VUCA world. Immiserated societies, in stark defiance of climate change diktats, may resort to dirty coal plants and wood stoves for survival. Interlinked ecosystems, particularly water resources, may be hijacked by nationalist sentiments. The environmental fallouts of critical infrastructure (CI) breakdowns loom like a Sword of Damocles over this decade.

GEOPOLITICAL

The primary catalyst behind WWII was the Great Depression. Since history often repeats itself, expect familiar bogeymen to reappear in societies roiling with impoverishment and ideological clefts. Anti-Semitism – a societal risk on its own – may reach alarming proportions in the West (Reuters, 2019), possibly forcing Israel to undertake reprisal operations inside allied nations. If that happens, how will affected nations react? Will security resources be reallocated to protect certain minorities (or the Top 1%) while larger segments of society are exposed to restive forces? Balloon effects like these present a classic VUCA problematic.

Contemporary geopolitical risks include a possible Iran-Israel war; US-China military confrontation over Taiwan or the South China Sea; North Korean proliferation of nuclear and missile technologies; an India-Pakistan nuclear war; an Iranian closure of the Straits of Hormuz; fundamentalist-driven implosion in the Islamic world; or a nuclear confrontation between NATO and Russia. Fears that the Jan 3 2020 assassination of Iranian Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani might lead to WWIII were grossly overblown. From a systems perspective, the killing of Soleimani did not fundamentally change the actor-interconnection-interaction adaptivity equation in the Middle East. Soleimani was simply a cog who got replaced.

### NASA DA

#### NASA is preserving resources by leveraging private partnerships

Miriam Kramer 21, author of Space, “NASA's plans for the future hinge on the success of private companies,” Axios, 12-7-2021, https://www.axios.com/nasa-private-spaceflight-plans-5a5710e6-5223-4da3-8c5d-5a712e1d862e.html

The private space players who will drive NASA's plans for the coming decade are declaring themselves and defining the stakes. Why it matters: NASA plans to focus on getting people to Mars and the Moon, and its deep space exploration ambitions hinge on the agency being able to successfully hand over major operations in low-Earth orbit to private companies. The space agency hopes companies will build private space stations that its astronauts can use and to continue to buy space on private rockets for launching its satellites and other payloads to orbit and beyond. NASA's "big experiment" right now is to test where these commercial partnerships work, the Planetary Society's Casey Dreier told Axios. What's happening: Last week, NASA announced it would award multimillion-dollar contracts to three teams of commercial space companies to start designing and building privately operated space stations.

#### Plan forces spending trade-offs that crush effective Earth sciences --- risks catastrophic climate change

Haymet 7 (Tony, Director of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography – University of California, San Diego, Mark Abbott, Dean of the College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Science – Oregon State University, and Jim Luyten, Acting Director – Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, “The Planet NASA Needs to Explore”, Washington Post, 5-10, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/09/AR2007050902451.html](http://www.lexis.com/research/retrieve))

Decades ago, a shift in NASA priorities sidelined progress in human space exploration. As momentum gathers to reinvigorate human space missions to the moon and Mars, we risk hurting ourselves, and Earth, in the long run. Our planet -- not the moon or Mars -- is under significant threat from the consequences of rapid climate change. Yet the changing NASA priorities will threaten exploration here at home.

NASA not only launches shuttles and builds space stations, it also builds and operates our nation's satellites that observe and monitor the Earth. These satellites collect crucial global data on winds, ice and oceans. They help us forecast hurricanes, track the loss of Arctic sea ice and the rise of sea levels, and understand and prepare for climate changes.

NASA's budget for science missions has declined 30 percent in the past six years, and that trend is expected to continue. As more dollars are reallocated to prepare for missions back to the moon and Mars, sophisticated new satellites to observe the Earth will be delayed, harming Earth sciences.

The National Academy of Sciences has noted that the Landsat satellite system, which takes important measurements of global vegetation, is in its fourth decade of operation and could fail without a clear plan for continuation. The same is true for the QuikSCAT satellite, which provides critical wind data used in forecasting hurricanes and El Niño effects.

In January, a partnership of university and NASA scientists demonstrated that climate change and higher ocean temperatures were reducing the growth of microscopic plants and animals at the heart of the marine food web.

Their analysis was based on nearly a decade of NASA satellite measurements of ocean color, which unfortunately are at risk of being interrupted for several years.

Sea levels are rising, and the Arctic Ocean may be ice-free in summer. The buildup of carbon dioxide in the oceans threatens to make them more acidic, which may in turn hinder the ability of some types of marine life, including corals, to build their shells and skeletons. We must learn as much as we can to assess these threats and develop solutions.

Satellites provide coverage of vast, remote regions of our planet that would otherwise remain unseen, especially the oceans, which play an important role in climate change. Without accurate data on such fundamentals as sea surface height, temperatures and biomass, as well as glacier heights and snowpack thickness, we will not be able to understand the likelihood of dangers such as more severe hurricanes along the Gulf Coast or more frequent forest fires in the Pacific Northwest.

Climate change is the most critical problem the Earth has ever faced.

Government agencies and the private sector, as well as individual citizens, need to better grasp the risks and potential paths of global climate change. Mitigating these risks and preparing for the effects of warming will require scientific understanding of how our complex planet operates, how it is changing, and how that change will affect the environment and human society.

John F. Kennedy's brilliant call to put a man on the moon by the end of the 1960s set an arbitrary deadline, but the deadline we face today is set by nature. NASA must continue to play a vital role in helping find ways to protect our planet for (and perhaps from) its intelligent life. Exploration of space is a noble quest. But we can't afford to be so starry-eyed that we overlook our own planet.

#### Warming is inevitable but adjusting government policy can address the worst effects – specifically, for sea level rise. US responses are modeled globally.

**Economist 17**, "How government policy exacerbates hurricanes like Harvey," Economist, https://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21727898-if-global-warming-were-not-enough-threat-poor-planning-and-unwise-subsidies-make-floods

THE extent of the devastation will become clear only when the floodwater recedes, leaving ruined cars, filthy mud-choked houses and the bloated corpses of the drowned. But as we went to press, with the rain pounding South Texas for the sixth day, Hurricane Harvey had already set records as America’s most severe deluge (see Briefing). In Houston it drenched Harris County in over 4.5trn litres of water in just 100 hours—enough rainfall to cover an eight-year-old child. The fate of America’s fourth-largest city holds the world’s attention, but it is hardly alone. In India, Bangladesh and Nepal, at least 1,200 people have died and millions have been left homeless by this year’s monsoon floods. Last month torrential rains caused a mudslide in Sierra Leone that killed over 1,000—though the exact toll will never be known. Around the world, governments are grappling with the threat from floods. This will ultimately be about dealing with climate change. Just as important, is correcting short-sighted government policy and the perverse incentives that make flooding worse. Judgment day The overwhelming good news is that storms and flooding have caused far fewer deaths in recent decades, thanks to better warning systems and the construction of levees, ditches and shelters. The cyclone that struck Bangladesh in 1970 killed 300,000-500,000 people; the most recent severe one, in 2007, killed 4,234. The bad news is that storms and floods still account for almost three-quarters of weather-related disasters, and they are becoming more common. According to the Munich Re, a reinsurer, their number around the world has increased from about 200 in 1980 to over 600 last year. Harvey was the third “500-year” storm to strike Houston since 1979. At the same time, floods and storms are also becoming more costly. By one estimate, three times as many people were living in houses threatened by hurricanes in 2010 as in 1970, and the number is expected to grow as still more people move to coastal cities. The UN reckons that, in the 20 years to 2015, storms and floods caused $1.7trn of destruction; the World Health Organisation estimates that, in real terms, the global cost of hurricane damage is rising by 6% a year. Flood losses in Europe are predicted to increase fivefold by 2050. One cause is global warming. The frequency and severity of hurricanes vary naturally—America has seen unusually few in the past decade. Yet the underlying global trend is what you would expect from climate change. Warmer seas evaporate faster and warmer air can hold more water vapour, which releases energy when it condenses inside a weather system, feeding the violence of storms and the intensity of deluges. Rising sea levels, predicted to be especially marked in the Gulf of Mexico, exacerbate storm surges, adding to the flooding. Harvey was unusually devastating because it suddenly gained strength before it made landfall on Friday; it then stayed put, dumping its rain on Houston before returning to the Gulf. Again, that is consistent with models of a warmer world. Poor planning bears even more blame. Houston, which has almost no restrictions on land-use, is an extreme example of what can go wrong. Although a light touch has enabled developers to cater to the city’s rapid growth—1.8m extra inhabitants since 2000—it has also led to concrete being laid over vast areas of coastal prairie that used to absorb the rain. According to the Texas Tribune and ProPublica, a charity that finances investigative journalism, since 2010 Harris County has allowed more than 8,600 buildings to be put up inside 100-year floodplains, where floods have a 1% chance of occurring in any year. Developers are supposed to build ponds to hold run-off water that would have soaked into undeveloped land, but the rules are poorly enforced. Because the maps are not kept up to date, properties supposedly outside the 100-year floodplain are being flooded repeatedly. Government failure adds to the harm. Developing countries are underinsured against natural disasters. Swiss Re, a reinsurer, says that of the $50bn or so of losses to floods, cyclones and other disasters in Asia in 2014, only 8% were covered. The Bank of International Settlements calculates that the worst natural catastrophes typically permanently lower the afflicted country’s GDP by almost 2%. America has the opposite problem—the federal government subsidises the insurance premiums of vulnerable houses. The National Flood Insurance Programme (NFIP) has been forced to borrow because it fails to charge enough to cover its risk of losses. Underpricing encourages the building of new houses and discourages existing owners from renovating or moving out. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, houses that repeatedly flood account for 1% of NFIP’s properties but 25-30% of its claims. Five states, Texas among them, have more than 10,000 such households and, nationwide, their number has been going up by around 5,000 each year. Insurance is meant to provide a signal about risk; in this case, it stifles it. Mend the roof while the sun shines What to do? Flooding strengthens the case for minimising climate change, which threatens to make wet places wetter and storms stormier. Even those who doubt the science would do well to see action as an insurance policy that pays out if the case is proven. However, that will not happen fast, even if all countries, including America, sign up to international agreements. More immediately, therefore, politicians can learn from Houston. Cities need to protect flood defences and catchment areas, such as the wetlands around Kolkata and the lakes in and around Pokhara in Nepal, whose value is becoming clear. Flood maps need to be up to date. Civil engineers, often starved of funds and strangled by bureaucracy, should be building and reinforcing levees and reservoirs now, before it is too late. The NFIP should start to charge market premiums and developing countries should sell catastrophe bonds. All this is a test of government, of foresight and the ability to withstand the lobbying of homeowners and developers. But politicians and officials who fail the test need to realise that, sooner or later, they will wake up to a Hurricane Harvey of their own.

#### The impact’s global war

Eric **Holthaus 15**, editor at rollingstone magazine citing James Hansen, former NASA climatologist, "The Point of No Return: Climate Change Nightmares Are Here," Rolling Stone, accessed 10-23-2016, http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-point-of-no-return-climate-change-nightmares-are-already-here-20150805

On July 20th, James Hansen, the former NASA climatologist who brought climate change to the public's attention in the summer of 1988, issued a bombshell: He and a team of climate scientists had identified a newly important feedback mechanism off the coast of Antarctica that suggests mean sea levels could rise 10 times faster than previously predicted: 10 feet by 2065. The authors included this chilling warning: If emissions aren't cut, "We conclude that multi-meter sea-level rise would become practically unavoidable. Social disruption and economic consequences of such large sea-level rise could be devastating. It is not difficult to imagine that conflicts arising from forced migrations and economic collapse might make the planet ungovernable, threatening the fabric of civilization."

### US Heg

#### US private economic involvement in the African space race results in hard power advantages against Russia

**Devermont & Oniosun 2020** (Judd Devermont and Temidayo Oniosun, June 23, 2020, War On The Rocks, “IS THE UNITED STATES LOSING THE AFRICAN SPACE RACE?,” <https://warontherocks.com/2020/06/is-the-united-states-losing-the-african-space-race/>) //neth

Advancing American economic and development goals in Africa will translate into influence in harder national security spheres. Africa’s space industry is projected to grow to over $10 billion in the next five years, according to Space in Africa’s African Space Industry Annual Report. This is a significant opportunity for the United States to expand bilateral trade with African countries, which rested at a mere $40 billion in 2018. U.S. companies are well-positioned to sell space equipment and services to African governments. Specifically, the U.S. private sector could build new satellites, sell ground station equipment, provide capacity training, and offer launch services. These investments in the region’s space sector could support America’s goal of substantially increasing two-way trade. The nascent space industry in several African countries also furthers USAID’s efforts to foster self-reliance, boosting growth and employment in sectors such as telecommunications, navigation, and Earth observation. These systems and services help to address major societal challenges including imperfect markets, climate change, scarce resources, health systems, and an aging population. For example, about 61 percent of Africans do not have access to the internet, a problem communications satellites could address. The entire satellite value chain has important implications for U.S. political influence in Africa. The technology transfer process, access to technologies and data, and support for development have the potential to increase U.S. political influence and to deepen national security ties between the United States and African partners. The United States has historically used space diplomacy in Africa to display U.S. commitment. These ties have the potential to translate into African support for U.S. positions on data-sharing, safety coordination, and other international space norms. Currently, Burkina Faso is a vice-chair of the U.N. General Assembly’s First Committee, which oversees disarmament issues in space; Cameroon is vice-chair on the Fourth Committee, which moderates international cooperation in space; and South Africa is chair of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the ad hoc U.N. Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. African support, for example, could add momentum to the U.S. government’s new legal framework, known as the Artemis Accords, to govern the behavior of countries and companies in space and on the moon. NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine recently underscored the importance of these norms, pointing out that debris from a spent Chinese rocket stage landed in Cote d’Ivoire. It also may blunt Chinese and Russian efforts, via state-owned companies, to strengthen their geopolitical influence and surveillance capacity in the region. According to the Defense Intelligence Agency, China uses its commercial sales “to bolster relationships with countries around the world” and “lead the space community.” China established an 18-meter diameter dish in Swakopmund, Namibia in 2001, which some analysts worry could be used to advance the People Liberation Army’s (PLA) cyber, space, and networking objectives. China’s Great Wall Industry Corporation notched its first foreign sale to Nigeria in 2007, delivering the total package: satellite manufacture, launch service, ground station construction, project implementation, financing, insurance, and training. The Russians launched Angola’s first satellite and will do the same for its replacement later this year. Russia claims it is currently negotiating with unnamed African countries to deploy Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS) ground stations across the region. China funded Ethiopia’s first satellite and trained its engineers. It also launched Sudan’s first-ever satellite, which will conduct Earth observation research for military and civilian purposes. If the United States is not engaged, it has a limited ability to counter and mitigate the risks posed by adversaries in this sector. The Big Picture The United States has an opportunity to join the African space race, establishing itself as a major partner in the region’s rapidly expanding space programs. Doing so would advance American economic, diplomatic, and national security interests by increasing U.S. trade and investment, deepening ties with influential African governments, and staking a U.S. claim in a sector where China and Russia are increasingly dominant. Washington should build on some of NASA’s recent engagements, including an agreement last year with South African National Space Agency (SANSA) to conduct technical and environmental research on the potential to establish a ground station in South Africa. The U.S. government ought to promote the space sector as a key focus area for the Trump Administration’s Prosper Africa initiative, showcasing SpaceX’s role in launching satellites in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa. Specifically, Washington should consider providing financial incentives and credits to enable its private sector to compete with state-backed Chinese and Russian firms. Finally, the United States should work with African officials to develop common understandings and positions in international forums to develop norms for outer space, ensuring an even playing field for foreign companies and addressing potential threats to sovereignty. It is in the U.S. interest to be part of this success story — it just has to make the leap.

#### Russia & China will use weaknesses in US hard power as opportunities to strike

**Michta 12-14**-2021 (Andrew A. Michta, December 14 2021, “Russia and China’s Dangerous Decline,” Wall Street Journal, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-and-china-dangerous-population-decline-indo-pacific-pivot-research-development-taiwan-ukraine-11639497466>) //neth

The risk of confrontation between the U.S. and China is greater than it has been in decades, and a broader war, triggered by a Chinese action against Taiwan, is a possibility. In “Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?” (2017), Graham Allison likened the situation to the Peloponnesian War, which the Athenian historian thought inevitable because Sparta feared the rising power of Athens. Yet the real reason for the current tensions has less to do with the decline and rise of great powers than with threat perceptions, balance-of-power estimates, autonomous assessments and internal decisions that have been driving China—and Russia—for several years now. (They have increasingly aligned in their opposition to the U.S. and the post-Cold War international order.) The rising threat of high-intensity state-on-state war is driven by the growing elite conviction in Beijing and Moscow that their power disadvantage relative to the U.S. and its allies will worsen unless they move soon, making victory increasingly unattainable. There are three principal reasons why China and Russia may want to confront the U.S. and its allies sooner rather than later, possibly within five years. First, the U.S. military will require time to restructure and refit away from counterterrorism and toward high-intensity state-on-state great-power conflict. The Army Modernization Strategy published in 2019 sets 2035 as the deadline for transforming the Army into a multidomain-capable force. From a Russian or Chinese perspective, that means each additional year will shift imbalances, which currently favor them in some areas, in America’s favor. The second factor is domestic conditions in the U.S. and Europe. Western democracies are buffeted by the trifecta of Covid-19; increasingly brazen mass in-migration, to which their governments seem unable to respond effectively; and the cresting cultural revolution, especially in the U.S., which is likely to peak within the next two years. All have strained national cohesion across the West, fed distrust in government, and sowed seeds of doubt that legacy democratic institutions and processes are able to meet the basic requirements of governance and satisfy the citizenry. Once America has moved beyond its current internal 1970s-style turbulence, a reconsolidated U.S., with its key manufacturing supply chains re-shored back from China, will present Beijing and Moscow with a far more formidable foe than today. A good indicator is the recent reports that the U.S. has made a qualitative leap in hypersonic missile technology, likely to nullify the edge Russia and China had hoped to maintain through the investment in their own programs. Notwithstanding their blustery propaganda, Beijing and Moscow are keenly aware that America’s research-and-development base can be mobilized to improve U.S. capabilities. Time is on America’s side when it comes to the quality and sophistication of its weapon systems. The third factor: internal pressures building within Chinese and Russian societies. For both countries, population trends and current projections paint a devastating picture. In 2021 China reported its first projected population decline since the famine that accompanied Mao Zedong’s “Great Leap Forward” in the late 1950s. With the official birthrate of 1.3 children per woman—far below the replacement rate of 2.1, and in part a result of the now-relaxed one-child policy—there are credible projections that China’s population will peak in 2022, and that births will continue to decline and deaths will surpass births by six million in 2025. Russia’s population is projected to decline from 146 million today to 121 million in 2050. Historically, wars have often started because of miscalculations based on unsound intelligence estimates and underestimating the enemy. In the case of U.S. strategic competition with China and Russia, the risk of war has grown not because of their rise but because of how China and Russia assess the real near-term implications of Washington’s decision to refocus its defense strategy on the fundamentals of great-power competition and conflict instead of counterterrorism and nation building. Whether war breaks out will depend on how badly Beijing and Moscow fear the global power shift in the next decade and how eager they will be to exploit their perceived current relative advantages to remake the world.

#### US-Russia nuclear war causes nuclear winter, blocks out sunlight, kills life on earth

**Monzon 2019** (Inigo Monzon, August 20, 2019, “US, Russia Nuclear War Would Cause 'Nuclear Winter' And 'Human Extinction,' Study Reveals,” International Business Times, <https://www.ibtimes.com/us-russia-nuclear-war-would-cause-nuclear-winter-human-extinction-study-reveals-2815921>) //neth

A new study has confirmed that the world will be plunged into a nuclear winter following a nuclear war between the U.S. and Russia. According to the study, the war between these two superpowers would trigger a global environmental event that can last for several years. The new study was conducted by a team of researchers from the University of Colorado, Rutgers University and the National Center for Atmospheric Research. It was published in the Journal of Geophysical Research: Atmospheres. For the study, the researchers created a model depicting what would happen to Earth if the U.S. and Russia engaged in an all-out nuclear war. As part of the simulation, the researchers observed what would happen if a large number of nuclear bombs were detonated in urban areas near the U.S. and Russia. In the simulation, the two countries used all of their nuclear weapons. According to the findings of their model, dubbed as the Community Earth System Model – Whole Atmosphere Community Climate Model version 4, the explosions from the nuclear bomb detonations would create a massive amount of smoke that would cover up the Earth’s atmosphere. The smoke, which scientists predict would linger for years, will block out sunlight, leading to a significant drop in Earth’s temperature. According to the scientists, the winter-like season that will be caused by the nuclear war will last for a long time. It will also trigger other environmental events such as changes to the monsoon and El Niño seasons. The scientists noted that the results of their study agree with the findings of a previous research published in 2007. The similarity between these two studies clearly indicates the inevitability of a nuclear winter following a massive nuclear war. “Despite having different features and capabilities, both models produce similar results,” the scientists stated in the study’s abstract. “Nuclear winter, with below-freezing temperatures over much of the Northern Hemisphere during summer, occurs because of a reduction of surface solar radiation due to smoke lofted into the stratosphere.

### Framework

#### A] Only consequentialism treats agents equally since it values their well-being the same- public officials have special obligations by virtue of their role to benefit its people in an equal manner

#### B] Thus, existentialism is the most important consideration in your ethical calculus- moral uncertainty and future gens

Pummer 15 — (Theron Pummer, Junior Research Fellow in Philosophy at St. Anne's College, University of Oxford, “Moral Agreement on Saving the World“, Practical Ethics University of Oxford, 5-18-2015, Available Online at http://blog.practicalethics.ox.ac.uk/2015/05/moral-agreement-on-saving-the-world/, accessed 7-2-2018, HKR-AM) \*\*we do not endorse ableist language=

There appears to be lot of disagreement in moral philosophy. Whether these many apparent disagreements are deep and irresolvable, I believe there is at least one thing it is reasonable to agree on right now, whatever general moral view we adopt: that it is very important to reduce the risk that all intelligent beings on this planet are eliminated by an enormous catastrophe, such as a nuclear war. How we might in fact try to reduce such existential risks is discussed elsewhere. My claim here is only that we – whether we’re consequentialists, deontologists, or virtue ethicists – should all agree that we should try to save the world. According to consequentialism, we should maximize the good, where this is taken to be the goodness, from an impartial perspective, of outcomes. Clearly one thing that makes an outcome good is that the people in it are doing well. There is little disagreement here. If the happiness or well-being of possible future people is just as important as that of people who already exist, and if they would have good lives, it is not hard to see how reducing existential risk is easily the most important thing in the whole world. This is for the familiar reason that there are so many people who could exist in the future – there are trillions upon trillions… upon trillions. There are so many possible future people that reducing existential risk is arguably the most important thing in the world, even if the well-being of these possible people were given only 0.001% as much weight as that of existing people. Even on a wholly person-affecting view – according to which there’s nothing (apart from effects on existing people) to be said in favor of creating happy people – the case for reducing existential risk is very strong. As noted in this seminal paper, this case is strengthened by the fact that there’s a good chance that many existing people will, with the aid of life-extension technology, live very long and very high quality lives. You might think what I have just argued applies to consequentialists only. There is a tendency to assume that, if an argument appeals to consequentialist considerations (the goodness of outcomes), it is irrelevant to non-consequentialists. But that is a huge mistake. Non-consequentialism is the view that there’s more that determines rightness than the goodness of consequences or outcomes; it is not the view that the latter don’t matter. Even John Rawls wrote, “All ethical doctrines worth our attention take consequences into account in judging rightness. One which did not would simply be irrational, crazy.” Minimally plausible versions of deontology and virtue ethics must be concerned in part with promoting the good,

from an impartial point of view. They’d thus imply very strong reasons to reduce existential risk, at least when this doesn’t significantly involve doing harm to others or damaging one’s character. What’s even more surprising, perhaps, is that even if our own good (or that of those near and dear to us) has much greater weight than goodness from the impartial “point of view of the universe,” indeed even if the latter is entirely morally irrelevant, we may nonetheless have very strong reasons to reduce existential risk. Even egoism, the view that each agent should maximize her own good, might imply strong reasons to reduce existential risk. It will depend, among other things, on what one’s own good consists in. If well-being consisted in pleasure only, it is somewhat harder to argue that egoism would imply strong reasons to reduce existential risk – perhaps we could argue that one would maximize her expected hedonic well-being by funding life extension technology or by having herself cryogenically frozen at the time of her bodily death as well as giving money to reduce existential risk (so that there is a world for her to live in!). I am not sure, however, how strong the reasons to do this would be. But views which imply that, if I don’t care about other people, I have no or very little reason to help them are not even minimally plausible views (in addition to hedonistic egoism, I here have in mind views that imply that one has no reason to perform an act unless one actually desires to do that act). To be minimally plausible, egoism will need to be paired with a more sophisticated account of well-being. To see this, it is enough to consider, as Plato did, the possibility of a ring of invisibility – suppose that, while wearing it, Ayn could derive some pleasure by helping the poor, but instead could derive just a bit more by severely harming them. Hedonistic egoism would absurdly imply she should do the latter. To avoid this implication, egoists would need to build something like the meaningfulness of a life into well-being, in some robust way, where this would to a significant extent be a function of other-regarding concerns (see chapter 12 of this classic intro to ethics). But once these elements are included, we can (roughly, as above) argue that this sort of egoism will imply strong reasons to reduce existential risk. Add to all of this Samuel Scheffler’s recent intriguing arguments (quick podcast version available here) that most of what makes our lives go well would be undermined if there were no future generations of intelligent persons. On his view, my life would contain vastly less well-being if (say) a year after my death the world came to an end. So obviously if Scheffler were right I’d have very strong reason to reduce existential risk. We should also take into account moral uncertainty. What is it reasonable for one to do, when one is uncertain not (only) about the empirical facts, but also about the moral facts? I’ve just argued that there’s agreement among minimally plausible ethical views that we have strong reason to reduce existential risk – not only consequentialists, but also deontologists, virtue ethicists, and sophisticated egoists should agree. But even those (hedonistic egoists) who disagree should have a significant level of confidence that they are mistaken, and that one of the above views is correct. Even if they were 90% sure that their view is the correct one (and 10% sure that one of these other ones is correct), they would have pretty strong reason, from the standpoint of moral uncertainty, to reduce existential risk. Perhaps most disturbingly still, even if we are only 1% sure that the well-being of possible future people matters, it is at least arguable that, from the standpoint of moral uncertainty, reducing existential risk is the most important thing in the world. Again, this is largely for the reason that there are so many people who could exist in the future – there are trillions upon trillions… upon trillions. (For more on this and other related issues, see this excellent dissertation). Of course, it is uncertain whether these untold trillions would, in general, have good lives. It’s possible they’ll be miserable. It is enough for my claim that there is moral agreement in the relevant sense if, at least given certain empirical claims about what future lives would most likely be like, all minimally plausible moral views would converge on the conclusion that we should try to save the world. While there are some non-crazy views that place significantly greater moral weight on avoiding suffering than on promoting happiness, for reasons others have offered (and for independent reasons I won’t get into here unless requested to), they nonetheless seem to be fairly implausible views. And even if things did not go well for our ancestors, I am optimistic that they will overall go fantastically well for our descendants, if we allow them to. I suspect that most of us alive today – at least those of us not suffering from extreme illness or poverty – have lives that are well worth living, and that things will continue to improve. Derek Parfit, whose work has emphasized future generations as well as agreement in ethics, described our situation clearly and accurately: “We live during the hinge of history. Given the scientific and technological discoveries of the last two centuries, the world has never changed as fast. We shall soon have even greater powers to transform, not only our surroundings, but ourselves and our successors. If we act wisely in the next few centuries, humanity will survive its most dangerous and decisive period. Our descendants could, if necessary, go elsewhere, spreading through this galaxy…. Our descendants might, I believe, make the further future very good. But that good future may also depend in part on us. If our selfish recklessness ends human history, we would be acting very wrongly.” (From chapter 36 of On What Matters)

### Case

#### They have the link backwards – just because perfect control is impossible doesn’t mean we don’t have direct control over suffering or that there’s a tradeoff between engagement and spirituality – shows that action is necessary and the perm is the best middle ground

Hughes 4 Hughes, James. James J. Hughes (born May 27, 1961) is an American sociologist and bioethicist. He is the Executive Director of the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies[2] and teaches health policy at Trinity College, he was temporarily ordained as a Buddhist monk in 1984 while working as a volunteer in Sri Lanka. Citizen cyborg: Why democratic societies must respond to the redesigned human of the future. Basic Books, 2004. (italics in original, /s added to differentiate lines)

The idea that control over the conditions of life is the path to happiness might seem like a peculiar proposition for a Buddhist like me. Isn’t all life suffering, and spiritual peace found in just accepting the way things are? Perhaps all this technology is a distraction and we should accept the “human condition” as it is. If we really take that approach, why do anything? Why try to improve the world or our own lives with technology, politics or any effort at all? I think the real insight of Buddhism, and all the other religious traditions, is perfectly expressed in the Serenity Prayer written by theologian Reinhold Niebuhr: *God, give us Grace to accept with serenity / the things that cannot be changed, / courage to change the things / which should be changed, / and the wisdom to distinguish / the one from the other.* In other words, diet if you need to, but don’t make yourself miserable if you aren’t very successful. Work for your favorite candidate, but don’t go into a deep funk when they lose. No matter how much progress we make there will always be something that is beyond our grasp, something that we can’t control that we will have to find the serenity to accept. In the meantime, there is a lot of overt suffering in the world that we can control. We can stop violence, war, and torture, and use medical technology to repair bodies and brains. We can clean up the toxins that cause cancer and use the new technologies to cure the cancers that they case. We can treat clinical depression with effective drugs and create a society that causes people as little suffering as possible. Using technology to live longer, smarter and happier lives is not a substitute for spiritual wisdom, but it isn’t a distraction from wisdom either. In fact, ensuring the world has access to technologies that reduce suffering may be a spiritual obligation.

#### Don’t buy the mindfulness hype – multiple meta-analyses of their studies find no benefits but the hype contributes to the billion-dollar mindfulness industrial complex – independently, using science to describe a spiritual practice is nonsense

Stetka 17 Bret Stetka is a writer based in New York City and editorial director of Medscape Neurology (a subsidiary of WebMD). His work has appeared in Wired, NPR and the Atlantic. He graduated from the University of Virginia School of Medicine in 2005. "Where’s the Proof That Mindfulness Meditation Works?" October 10, 2017, getpocket.com/explore/item/where-s-the-proof-that-mindfulness-meditation-works.

The concept of mindfulness involves focusing on your present situation and state of mind. This can mean awareness of your surroundings, emotions and breathing—or, more simply, enjoying each bite of a really good sandwich. Research in recent decades has linked mindfulness practices to a staggering collection of possible health benefits. Tuning into the world around you may provide a sense of well-being, an array of studies claim. Multiple reports link mindfulness with improved cognitive functioning. One study even suggests it may preserve the tips of our chromosomes, which whither away as we age. Yet many psychologists, neuroscientists and meditation experts are afraid that hype is outpacing the science. In an article released in Perspectives on Psychological Science, 15 prominent psychologists and cognitive scientists caution that despite its popularity and supposed benefits, scientific data on mindfulness are woefully lacking. Many of the studies on mindfulness and meditation, the authors wrote, are poorly designed—compromised by inconsistent definitions of what mindfulness actually is, and often void of a control group to rule out the placebo effect. The paper cites a 2015 review published in American Psychologist reporting that only around 9 percent of research into mindfulness-based interventions has been tested in clinical trials that included a control group. The authors also point to multiple large placebo-controlled meta-analyses concluding that mindfulness practices have often produced unimpressive results. A 2014 review of 47 meditation trials, collectively including over 3,500 participants, found essentially no evidence for benefits related to enhancing attention, curtailing substance abuse, aiding sleep or controlling weight. Lead author of the report Nicholas Van Dam, a clinical psychologist and research fellow in psychological sciences at the University of Melbourne, contends potential benefits of mindfulness are being overshadowed by hyperbole and oversold for financial gain. Mindfulness meditation and training is now a $1.1-billion industry in the U.S. alone. “Our report does not mean that mindfulness meditation is not helpful for some things,” Van Dam says. “But the scientific rigor just isn’t there yet to be making these big claims.” He and his co-authors are also concerned that as of 2015, less than 25 percent of meditation trials included monitoring for potential negative effects of the intervention, a number he would like to see grow as the field moves forward. Van Dam acknowledges that some good evidence does support mindfulness. The 2014 analysis found meditation and mindfulness may provide modest benefits in anxiety, depression and pain. He also cites a 2013 review published in Clinical Psychology Review for mindfulness-based therapy that found similar results. “The intention and scope of this review is welcome—it is looking to introduce rigor and balance into this emerging new field,” says Willem Kuyken, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Oxford in England, who was not involved in research for the new report. “There are many areas where mindfulness-based programs seem to be acceptable and promising, but larger-scale randomized, rigorous trials are needed.” Two trials published in Science Advances also support mindfulness practices. The first found mindfulness-like attention training reduces self-perceived stress, but not levels of the hormone cortisol, a commonly used biological gauge of stress levels. The other trial links mindfulness-like attention training to increases in thickness of the prefrontal cortex, a brain region associated with complex behavior, decision-making and shaping personality. The authors called for further research into what these findings could mean clinically. Van Dam characterizes the research methods used in both of these studies as sound. Yet he points out both also represent the field’s larger problem—a lack of standardization. Varying mindfulness-like approaches have been investigated over the years, making comparisons of different studies difficult. Mindfulness is rooted in Buddhist thought and theory. In the West it was popularized in the 1970s by University of Massachusetts professor Jon Kabat-Zinn, a cognitive scientist who founded the university’s Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine. Kabat-Zinn developed what he called “mindfulness-based stress reduction,” an alternative therapy for a variety of often difficult-to-treat conditions. By the early 2000s, the concept of mindfulness had ballooned in popularity. It soon came to have many differing meanings and varying approaches to treatment. “We specifically commented in our article on the fact that many continue to develop novel interventions without fully evaluating those that are already being implemented,” Van Dam says. “I think these studies, while well-designed, may fit within the category of being just different enough from what we already have to prevent us from really knowing whether we could use these results as evidence for [the effectiveness of] other mindfulness-based practices.” As Van Dam and his co-authors wrote, “[there is] neither one universally accepted technical definition of ‘mindfulness’ nor any broad agreement about detailed aspects of the underlying concept to which it refers.” “Overall, I suspect that a large number of the health promises will not be fulfilled, mostly because therapies, phone apps and other interventions are being rushed to market without sufficiently rigorous testing and appropriate implementation,” he says. “But given what we’ve seen to date, I suspect evidence may accumulate supporting mindfulness practices for anxiety, depression and stress-related conditions.” Behavioral and social sciences professor and director of Brown University’s Mindfulness Center Eric Loucks, who was not involved in researching the paper, agrees there are multiple definitions of mindfulness. But it is the trickiness in bringing a rich spiritual concept into a standardized framework for testing and advising patients that he feels might be tough to tackle. “One element in defining mindfulness, if considering its roots in Buddhism, is…the Buddha's recommendation that descriptions of concepts like ‘mindfulness’ are like a finger pointing at the moon,” he explains. “It is important not to confuse the finger for the moon. There will always be variations in people's understanding of mindfulness. It is a personal experience.”

#### Their privileging of the mystical elements of Taoism denies moral responsibility and agency.  Taoism’s denial of the self views the suffering of others as no more significant that the creaking of a door.

**Whitaker** November, 25, 20**04** Justin Whitaker BA in philosophy and MA Buddhist studies student “Buddhism vs Marxism in the West”  Montana Freethinkers <http://www.mtfreethinkers.org/people/justin/buddhis_vs_marxism_in_the_west.html> 2/29/10

Returning to Žižek and Buddhism, there is a potential problem within Buddhist philosophy in the concept of sunyata (pronounced 'shewn-ya-ta'; generally translated as 'voidness' or 'emptiness'). The doctrine states that all things are 'empty' of own-being, meaning nothing exists of it's own nature, everything that exists does so dependent upon other factors. You and I are not self-existent for instance, if we were we would not need food or air to continue existing, nor would we have needed a mother and father to bring us into being. Your computer monitor is not self-existent (even though it doesn't have a mother or need food!) because its existence is dependent upon all of its constitutive elements being fabricated and put into place by outside forces (workers). Some day, just as you or I will die, the monitor will break down, the factors that make it what it is, for you or I our bodies/minds, for the monitor wiring/glass/plastic will begin to fail and at some point will no longer function in a way that is given the title 'Justin' or 'monitor'. What will remain is a corpse and a pile of electronic junk.  This is emptiness, simply the lack of self-existence. The word 'emptiness', or the associated 'not-self', seems to jar a gut-reaction in many people, even academics, resulting in a sort of repulsed fear and misunderstanding. I hope my exposition above is clear and avoids the wrongful conclusion that nothing exists (if everything is empty…), or that you have no self, or anything like that. 'Not Self' (Skt. anatman) is simply the application of sunyata to ourselves as done above. There is no essential, indestructible, eternal, unchanging, etc. 'Self' within you, just like there isn't one in the computer screen in front of you, but you do still exist (thank heavens) and so does the screen, just not with any of those adjectives attachable (if this is a word) to you. There is nothing about you or the computer screen or anything else that is essential, indestructible, eternal, or unchanging.  The problem many Westerners, including Žižek, see with this is that it seems to imply that there is no moral agent in one's self or in other people. Therefore the suffering of others isn't important because there isn't really anybody there. Dr. Webster described this in terms of Descartes' description of animals as soulless automatons. You kick a cat and it makes noises in just the same way that an old door creaks when you open it, it is a mechanical process. There is danger of Buddhism extending this to people, saying that we are nothing more than a conglomeration of ever-changing, law-bound processes. The problem here is of overly desubstantializing the world according to Dr. Webster. However, this notion of seeing individual persons as 'not a part of ultimate reality' is apparent in any mystical tradition (including perhaps Marxism, properly understood).  I believe this danger is minimal, however, so long as this 'mystical' trend in Buddhism is set aside for 'proper mystics' as it is in the Gelugpa tradition and likely in others (though I'm most familiar with the Gelugpa and can definitely assert this). This means that for most of us, the basic virtues of generosity, morality, patience, effort, meditation, and philosophical understanding should be stressed. To spend a lifetime working on these alone is worthy of sainthood in my opinion. For a full exposition of these see Santideva's "Guide to the Bodhisattva's way of Life". It is stressed in the Gelugpa tradition that if you are lacking in any of these, the further 'mystical' (tantric) teachings a) won't make proper sense; and b) they're likely to cause more harm than good. Even so, I believe that the intellectual understanding of emptiness and not-self, unless taught extremely poorly or in the mind of an otherwise insane person, should not be conductive to a harmful way of living.  The practical absorption of Buddhism in the West is itself a matter for volumes of books. The question here of 'spiritual authenticity' is of concern to no one more so than to myself and others who wish to study and practice Buddhism in the West. Dr. Webster notes both an advantage and a problem in Buddhism is its flexibility. Certain elements of Buddhism may come into Western culture and be bent and twisted utterly out of recognition to another Buddhist. The question of the 'core' of Buddhism then must be raised, and for many Americans, it is the search for the True Buddhism that occupies much of their 'spiritual energy' (just referring to time spent on 'spiritual' undertakings). There is a cultural fondness for Buddhism in the West as a 'gentle' religion, not like that 'nasty' Islam. There are even those who brand Buddhism as a sort of 'pacifist atheism' (neither a religion nor 'militant' like 'those other atheists').

#### Taoism justifies and causes Militarism and violence.

**Faure** Dec. 6, **2003** Bernard Faure, Professor of Religious Studies at Stanford University “Buddhism and Violence” <http://www.sangam.org/articles/view/?id=118> 2/28/10

Is Buddhism pacifist? One would think so, to hear the Declarations of the Dalai Lama and those who claim there has never been "Buddhist war." So has Zen Buddhism's "drift" to militarism been only an aberration, after the timeless message of Gautama, the warrior-prince who, once he became the Buddha, preached nonviolence? We are not simply faced here with a gap between theory and practice. Even though Buddhism has no concept of a "holy war," it doesn't mean its doctrine does not at times legitimize the recourse to violence and the just war.  In whatever countries Buddhism has became official ideology—whether Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia or Tantric Buddhism in Tibet or East Asia—war has often been zealously waged. At present, the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, for example, have openly taken up the struggle against the Tamil freedom fighters. What is true of Japanese Zen holds equally for other forms of Buddhism. Long before its lyrical metaphysical flights exerted their charm, Buddhism took hold first and foremost as a tool for protecting States.  The Buddha's sermons seem, however, to condemn all violence, toward oneself and toward others. Suicide, it is true, is not formally forbidden. And Buddhism remains ambivalent toward the interiorized form of violence that is asceticism. Well-ordered violence begins with oneself. Chinese monks, to show their determination, would sometimes mutilate themselves—cutting off or burning one or more of their fingers. In extreme cases self-denial could extend to self-immolation by fire. We recall the horrific image of the Vietnamese monk who, at the start of the U.S. military intervention in his country, chose this death as a sign of protest.  Murder, on the other hand, is clearly condemned. As the Buddha states in the Brahma Net Sutra: "If a child of Buddha himself kills, or goads someone else to kill, or provides with or suggests means for killing, or praises the act of killing or, on seeing someone commit the act, expresses approval for what that person has done, or kills by way of incantations, or is the cause, occasion, means, or instrument of the act of inducing a death, he will be shut out of the community."  Buddhist compassion extends to all beings. By the principle of karmic transmigration, animals are perceived as future Buddhas or past humans, linked to us perhaps by ancient bonds of kinship, so that it seems natural to extend our concern to them. Furthermore, Indian Buddhism distinguished itself from Brahmanism by its rejection of animal sacrifice—whence its vegetarianism. Yet it does not appear that the first Buddhists were strict vegetarians, and the Buddha himself, if we are to believe legend, was said to have died from indigestion after eating pork. If vegetarianism and the related concept of nonviolence gradually took hold in India, the credit seems to belong to Jain rather than Buddhist ascetics. In societies such as Tibet and China, in which a meat diet predominated, a less strict clergy sought to eradicate its sins through grand rites that set fish and birds free.  On the iconographic plane, if compassion is well expressed by serene images of meditating Buddhas, the angry gods of Buddhism and Mongolia partake, conversely, in a puzzling symbolic violence: does it mark a return of the repressed, an outlet for real violence, or is it, on the contrary, its mirror-image, indeed, its underlying cause?  Buddhist law often had to bow to reason of State. But in many instances it also provided an ideology for counterforces, inspiring peasant revolts in the name of a millenarianism centered on the coming of the future Maitreya Buddha. In one of these movements, in China, arising at the start of the sixth century c.e., the rebels, using the Buddhist title of "Grand Vehicle" (Mahayana), undertook to rid the world of its "demons"—starting with the era's Buddhist clergy.  In Japan, on the other hand, Buddhism managed to pave the way for feudal struggles, creating a new type of