# Labor AC

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### Plan

#### Plan: The United States should recognize an unconditional right of workers to strike.

### Advantage 1 — Workforce

#### Advantage one is the workforce

#### Labor unrest is increasing and there is momentum to strike, but current laws leave workers powerless.

Semuels 10/8 [(Alana, Journalist and currently senior economics correspondent at TIME magazine, previously The Atlantic, The Los Angeles Times, The Boston Globe.) “U.S. Workers Are Realizing It’s the Perfect Time to Go on Strike,” TIME, 10/8/21. <https://time.com/6105109/workers-strike-unemployment/>] RR

Thousands of workers have gone on strike across the country, showing their growing power in a tightening economy. The leverage U.S. employees have over the people signing their paychecks was amplified in Friday’s jobs report, which showed that employers added workers at a much slower-than-expected pace in September. The unemployment rate fell 0.4 percentage points during the month, to 4.8 percent, the government said Friday, and wages are continuing to tick up across industries as employers become more desperate to hire and retain workers. In the first five days of October alone, there were 10 strikes in the U.S., including workers at Kellogg plants in Nebraska, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee; school bus drivers in Annapolis, Md.; and janitors at the Denver airport. That doesn’t include the nearly 60,000 union members in film and television production who nearly unanimously voted to grant their union’s president the authority to call a strike.

Jess Deyo is one of nearly 700 nurses who have been on strike as part of the longest healthcare strike in Massachusetts history. For the past seven months, Deyo has reported for duty at the hospital in Worcester, Mass. where she worked as a nurse for more than 15 years, sometimes bringing her daughters, and standing outside through the chills of spring and the heat of summer. The nurses are demanding higher nurse-to-patient ratios after a harrowing 19 months of working during a pandemic. “There’s no choice to give up on the strike,” she says. “It’s bigger than us—it’s for everyone.”

Most of these strikes aren’t counted by the federal government, which in the 1980s started only tracking strikes that involved 1,000 or more workers and that lasted one full shift or longer. There have only been 11 of those so far this year, according to government data, at places like Volvo Trucks and Nabisco.

But academics at Cornell University launched a strike database on May 1 that uses social media and Google alerts to keep track of all the strikes and protests happening in the U.S., even if they involve just a few workers. The database shows a picture of growing worker activism, of small actions that tell a story of how people at workplaces small and large are feeling after 19 months of a global pandemic, says Johnnie Kallas, a PhD student who is the director of Cornell’s Labor Action Tracker. It has documented 169 strikes so far in 2021. “Workers are fed up with low pay and understaffing, and they have more labor market leverage with employers needing to hire right now,” he says. “You are seeing a little bit more labor unrest.”

Of course, compared to half a century ago, there still aren’t many strikes in the U.S. There were 5,716 strikes in 1971 alone, according to government data from when the government tracked smaller strikes. And the share of unionized workers in the U.S. is near an all-time low, with just 12.1% of workers represented by unions last year.

But the activism comes at a time when approval of labor unions—even among Republicans—is trending upwards—and when a low unemployment rate is giving leverage to workers who have long put up with poor conditions and pay. A Gallup poll released in the beginning of July showed that 68% of Americans approve of labor unions, higher than it had been in years and up significantly from the 48% approval in 2009 during the throes of the Great Recession. The poll also showed that 47% of Republicans said they approved of unions—the highest share since 2003—and that 90% of Democrats did.

Greater income inequality, more strikes

Part of the support of unions and organizing may come from Americans’ discontent with growing inequality, much as inequality a century ago galvanized a labor movement then, says Tom Kochan, a professor of work and employment research at MIT. There are a growing number of billionaires in America–708 as of August—with a net worth of $4.7 trillion as of August 17. That’s more than the total net worth of the bottom 50% of Americans.

“I think the accumulated effects of the loss of good jobs in manufacturing, stagnant wages, growing inequality, and the growing disparity between executives and managers and the workforce—all of that is fueling increases in organizing,” he says.

Some of this labor activism was happening before the pandemic, Kochan says, when even the government’s strike tracker showed an uptick in unrest. Teachers in states like Arizona and Oklahoma started striking in 2018 because of low pay and a lack of public funding. In 2020, NBA athletes walked out of a playoff game to protest the shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisc.

The year 2019 saw 25 work stoppages involving 1,000 or more workers, the most since 2001. In 2017, 48% of non-unionized workers said they would vote to join a union if given the chance, higher than the share who said that in 1995 (32%) and 1977 (33%), according to Kochan’s research.

The pandemic worsened working conditions for thousands of workers like Deyo. Kellogg workers at a plant in Battle Creek, Mich., told the local news that they were lauded as heroes for working 16 hour days, seven days a week during the pandemic, and rather than reward them, the company recently decided to offshore some of their jobs. They went on strike on Oct. 5. Musicians at the San Antonio Symphony say they voluntarily accepted an 80% pay cut last season, and that the symphony then proposed first to permanently cut their pay by 50% and then to cut the number of full-time members from 72 to 42. They went on strike on Sept. 27.

Do strikes work?

For their part, employers say that they’re being fair, and that workers are being unreasonable. Kellogg provides workers with benefits and compensation that are among the industry’s best, a company spokesman, Kris Bahner, said in a statement. The company says it has not proposed moving any jobs from the Ready to Eat Cereal plants, which are the plants where the workers are striking, as part of negotiations.

The San Antonio Symphony said, in a statement, that the union and the symphony agreed to a 25% reduction in weekly salary for the 2020-2021 season, but that because there were fewer performances and because fewer musicians could fit on stage because of social distancing guidelines, some musicians did make 80% less than they would have made in a normal season. The symphony needs to make “fundamental changes,” a spokesperson said, and it cannot afford to spend more than it makes through ticket sales and donations.

Carolyn Jackson, the CEO of St. Vincent’s, where Deyo and hundreds of other nurses are striking, says that the nurses are trying to push a 1:4 nurse to patient ratio that Massachusetts voters rejected by a large margin in 2018. The hospital has done research and decided its staffing is appropriate, and that its staffing ratios are in fact better than most other hospitals in the state, she says. Ryan says the hospital announced it was hiring 100 permanent replacement nurses in May during a COVID-19 surge, and that the striking nurses are insisting on getting their old positions back.

That the hospital is not budging speaks to the fact that despite this increase in worker activism, workers may not gain much more power in the long run. Over the last 40 years, the government has made it much more difficult for workers to both form unions and to strike, says Heidi Shierholz, the president of the Economic Policy Institute, a progressive think tank. Amazon was able to effectively interfere in a union vote among its workers this spring, she says, preventing the union from succeeding.

Of course, a hearing officer at the National Labor Relations Board has recommended that the board throw out the results of the Amazon election and do it over, which speaks to a resurgence of government support for labor. President Joe Biden said he wanted to be “the most pro-union President leading the most pro-union administration in American history.” Labor has support at the state and local levels too: California Gov. Gavin Newsom recently signed a packet of pro-worker bills, including one that prohibits companies from imposing quotas on warehouse workers that prevent them from following health and safety law, and another that prohibits employers from paying workers with disabilities less than the state’s minimum wage. And in January, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio signed a bill that forbids fast food restaurants from firing workers unless the employer has just cause, making New York City the first jurisdiction in the country that essentially ended at-will employment.

But even that support may not be enough to force a widespread change of working conditions in an economy where employees haven’t had much leverage since before the Great Recession, or earlier. Even some of the recent strikes haven’t led to workers’ desired outcomes. A five-week Nabisco strike recently ended with many of workers’ demands met, for instance, but the company still won the ability to pay weekend workers less than they do currently.

As for Jess Deyo and the Worcester nurses, many have been forced to move on. After Deyo’s unemployment benefits ended and her health insurance premiums spiked, she decided she needed to find another job so that she could support her family. She’s a single mother. She found a job working as a nurse at a doctor’s office, where she says she feels more appreciated than she’s ever felt at work. The hours are better and she finally feels respected. But she makes $13 less an hour.

#### Strikes are key to revitalizing labor unions.

Bahn 19 [(Kate, the director of labor market policy and interim chief economist at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth) “The once and future role of strikes in ensuring U.S. worker power” Washington Center for Equitable Growth, 8/29/19. https://equitablegrowth.org/the-once-and-future-role-of-strikes-in-ensuring-u-s-worker-power/] RR

At the same time, there is an increasing consensus today that unions are a positive force for increasing worker power and balancing against economic inequality. In polling of support for unions and specific aspects of collective bargaining, Equitable Growth grantee Alex Hertel-Fernandez of Columbia University, along with William Kimball and Thomas Kochan of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, find that support for unions has grown overall, with nearly half of U.S. workers in 2018 saying they would vote for a union if given the opportunity. This is a significant increase from one-third of workers supporting unionization in 1995. According to their research, workers primarily value unions’ role in collective bargaining and ensuring access to benefits such as healthcare, retirement, and unemployment insurance.

Strikes have historically been one of the strongest tools used by unions to ensure they have power to engage in collective bargaining. But striking was viewed as a negative attribute in the survey done by Hertel-Fernandez, Kimball, and Kochan. Yet, when they presented workers with the hypothetical choice of a union exercising strike power with other attributes of unions, such as collective bargaining, support increased.

But strikes, of course, do not take place in a bubble. The wider climate of worker bargaining power and institutions that support labor organizing plays a role in making this historically crucial tool effective again. So, too, does the power of employers to resist these organizing efforts when the labor market lacks competition that would increase worker bargaining power.

#### Labor shortages now are because of low wages— unions reverse that by allowing for bargaining.

Lopezlira & Jacobs 9/3 [(Enrique, is the director of the Low-Wage Work program at the UC Berkeley Labor Center. He is a labor economist, directing and conducting research on how policies affect working families, with a particular focus on how these policies impact racial and gender equity. Doctorate in Economics from Howard University) (Ken, the chair of the University of California, Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education, where he has been a labor specialist since 2002.) “Don’t Mistake the Disappointing Jobs Numbers for a Labor Shortage,” Barron’s, 9/3/21. <https://www.barrons.com/articles/dont-mistake-the-disappointing-jobs-numbers-for-a-labor-shortage-51630698151>] RR

Today’s jobs report shows a complicated picture for workers. The economy added only 235,000 jobs in August, despite near-record vacancies, while hourly wages grew faster than expected. But hold off a moment before calling it a labor shortage.

Yes, some employers are experiencing difficulty filling jobs as the economy begins to recover from the effects of the pandemic. But this alone is just one part of the picture. A labor shortage means there aren’t enough workers, and that is simply not the current case. While there are plenty of workers available, there are far fewer available, willing, and able to work at the current wages being offered. In other words, it isn’t that demand for workers is too high, it’s that wages are too low.

While it is true that wages have increased recently for some workers, it would be incorrect to believe that all workers now enjoy higher wages and greater bargaining power with employers. Unfortunately, the truth is millions of workers continue to earn low wages that make it nearly impossible for them to make ends meet.

The pandemic has made the economic situation for low-wage workers more dire, but typical workers’ pay has been growing very slowly over the last 40 years. Economic theory states wages are tied to productivity, but this is only in theory. The reality is that since 1979 the gap between pay and worker productivity has widened significantly, with productivity growing 62% over this period, while wages only grew by 18%. But if workers are more productive than ever before, why have they received few of the benefits of this increased productivity? The answer is that a greater share of the gains are going to those at the top—through higher salaries at the high end of the income distribution, as well as ever-larger corporate profits. And this has been made even worse by the pandemic, during which the net worth of billionaires in the U.S. increased by $1 trillion at the same time that 20 million workers lost their jobs.

Summer 2021 has seen some welcomed wage growth at the middle and bottom of the wage distribution. In terms of industries, the highest wage growth has been in leisure and hospitality (in restaurants and bars, for instance), which traditionally pays some of the lowest wages, and which saw the largest wage drops when Covid-19 hit.

Even with these wage increases, real wages for these service-sector workers have rebounded only to prepandemic trends. For workers in these sectors to experience real improvements in earnings, wages need to grow even further. However, there is no guarantee that the recent wage growth will last, let alone that further increases will materialize.

One way to help ensure a strong wage floor is by increasing the federal minimum wage, which has been stuck at $7.25 an hour since 2009. Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia have higher minimum wages than the federal level, but that means there are 21 other states that do not. Increasing the federal minimum wage to $15 an hour, and indexing it to inflation, would help make sure all workers, regardless of where they live, receive decent pay—and that the value of their wages does not again erode over time.

While the minimum wage raises the floor, more is needed to improve wages and working conditions for the rest of America’s workers. Central to achieving a broad-based improvement in pay is enabling workers who wish to do so to form unions and engage in collective bargaining. Unions have been shown to improve not just wages and benefits, but also to reduce socioeconomic disparities. Unions raise wages and increase access to benefits for all workers, with the largest gains for those who earn the least in nonunion workplaces: women and workers of color. Unions don’t only benefit their members. When more workers in an industry are unionized, pay rises across the industry.

Unions also play an important role in promoting worker health and safety. As the Covid-19 crisis began, unionized workers were more likely to have access to personal protective equipment and paid sick days. Throughout the crisis, unions fought for strong worker protections on the job to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and to get the economy going again.

While support for unions is high, America’s labor laws make it extremely difficult for workers to organize and win collective bargaining. In just one egregious example, currently if an employer violates the National Labor Relations Act, there are no financial penalties. The Protecting the Right to Organize Act (PRO Act), which has now passed the House of Representatives and is waiting to be heard in the Senate, would change that. The PRO Act would create stronger remedies, expand bargaining rights, and put the decision over whether or not to join a union in the hands of the workers, where it belongs.

Many workers at the bottom have received raises over the last year. A growing body of evidence finds that policies which improve wages and family incomes help reduce racial disparities while having long-term, positive effects on a wide range of societal outcomes–from child and adult health to civic participation.

These structural and legal factors provide an important roadmap for us to ensure a robust and sustainable recovery that works for all Americans. Whether wage increases for the majority of workers continue depends on the decisions we make as a society.

#### Industrial workforce shortages are happening now— Covid and inability to compete.

Scull and Stone 8/28 [(John, an associate in the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, office of Jackson Lewis P.C. His practice focuses on representing employers in workplace law matters, including preventive advice and counseling.) (James, a principal of the Cleveland, Ohio, office of Jackson Lewis P.C. From the opening of the office in 2006 until early 2020, Jim served as office managing principal in Cleveland. At that time, he stepped down to focus on his busy practice and increased task force activities within practice groups and serving as co-leader of the firm’s Manufacturing industry group.) “Manufacturing Labor Shortage: Cultivating Skilled Labor By Engaging Local Communities,” JDSupra, 8/28/21. <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/manufacturing-labor-shortage-1463687/>] RR

The worker shortage in manufacturing has been exacerbated by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, which erased over a decade of job gains in the manufacturing sector, eliminating more than 1.4 million positions, according to a report by Deloitte and the Manufacturing Institute (MI). To counter the trend, manufacturers should consider working with local schools and youth programs to develop a sustainable pipeline of talent.

While approximately 820,000 of the jobs lost in the COVID-19 pandemic have since been backfilled, nearly 500,000 positions remain open and manufacturing employers have had difficulty filling these roles. According to the MI report, manufacturing employers say it is currently 36 percent harder to find talent than it was in 2018, even though the unemployment rate today is much higher. This manufacturing employment shortage is likely to intensify as the number of unfilled manufacturing positions in the United States is expected to grow to approximately 2.1 million by 2030 — damaging the U.S. economy by up to $1 trillion.

While the pandemic certainly played a large role in damaging the U.S. manufacturing sector’s employment numbers, the worker shortage is nothing new. There are approximately five million fewer Americans employed in the manufacturing sector today than 20 years ago. Employers hope to reverse this trend and are under pressure to do so quickly as the median age of an American working in manufacturing is 44 years old, and older workers are retiring faster than they are being replaced.

#### A strong industrial workforce is key to US military primacy

Bloomberg Editorial Board 4/7 [(Members of the editorial board will write and edit in other capacities within Bloomberg Opinion. Because our columnists have always spoken for themselves, they will continue as before — though columnists will still refrain from endorsing candidates, a policy we have had in place since we started in 2011.) “America’s Depleted Industrial Base Is a National Security Crisis,” Bloomberg, 4/7/21. <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-04-07/america-s-depleted-industrial-base-is-a-national-security-crisis>] RR

President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s farewell address is most famous for its warning against the “unwarranted influence” of the military-industrial complex. But Eisenhower also stressed the defense industry’s importance to the country’s security: After all, it helped the U.S. maintain superiority over its rivals, forestall great-power conflict and win the Cold War.

Six decades on, America’s military remains the most advanced in the world — but the industrial base supporting it has deteriorated. Industry consolidation, domestic manufacturing decline and dysfunctional federal budgeting have combined to reduce competition throughout the defense supply chain, eroding military readiness and potentially jeopardizing national security.

As Congress considers the Defense Department’s next budget, investing in a more nimble, innovative and resilient defense-industrial base should be among its highest priorities.

Some parts of the defense industry, to be sure, continue to flourish. The U.S. spends more on its military than the next 10 countries combined, with the Pentagon’s budget consuming more than half of all federal discretionary spending. Revenue for defense contractors has increased by 83% since 2011, with annual spending per company doubling in the past five years alone.

That money, however, is flowing to a reduced cast of contractors. An analysis by Bloomberg Government found that the number of Pentagon “prime vendors” — those that receive contracts directly from the government — has dropped by 36% in the last decade. An even smaller handful has reaped the most gains. According to the Government Accountability Office, nearly half of the 183 major contracts awarded by the Pentagon in 2018 went to just five contractors and their subsidiaries.

Such concentration imposes costs on both the military and the public. The first is financial. More than two-thirds of major Defense Department contracts are awarded without a competitive bidding process, according to the GAO; most of the rest receive bids from two or fewer companies. Fewer bidders means pricier contracts: Between 2008 and 2018, the average acquisition cost of a U.S. weapons program, in constant dollars, increased by 12.5%.

A lack of suppliers also undermines America’s ability to respond to crises. The Pentagon has identified a “staggering” number of cases where it relies on a single vendor for critical components. It’s down to a lone domestic source of both ammonium perchlorate, a key ingredient for warship propulsion systems, and chaff, a material that fighter jets release to evade enemy radar systems. A sole manufacturer provides all of the Army’s gun and howitzer barrels and mortar tubes. Meanwhile, offshoring has made the supply chain more vulnerable to trade disruptions, cyberattacks and sabotage.

This attenuation of the U.S.’s military supply chain poses a growing national security risk — and it demands a bold response.

President Joe Biden’s $2.25 trillion infrastructure plan includes $180 billion in investments to strengthen U.S. supply chains. The administration should use the Defense Production Act and other authorities to boost support for smaller domestic suppliers of critical goods and services. The Pentagon should also streamline its cumbersome contracting and acquisition process, which discourages innovation and crowds out nontraditional vendors. Initiatives like the Trusted Capital program, which connects investors with companies developing new military technologies, should be expanded. Finally, the Federal Trade Commission and the Justice Department should increase scrutiny of defense-industry mergers and acquisitions to limit excessive consolidation.

A well-functioning supply chain depends on a diverse array of private-sector companies. The viability of those companies, in turn, depends on a sufficient supply of skilled labor. Upgrading the skills of both service members and the civilian workforce that supports the military is critical. The Pentagon should expand digital training for current employees and offer promotions and higher pay to civilian staff with advanced technical skills. Congress should boost funding for the department’s Skills Imperative initiative, which brings together schools and employers to address defense-industry workforce needs. It should also encourage apprenticeship programs in key sectors, such as shipbuilding, that lack qualified workers.

As Eisenhower recognized, America’s influence abroad depends on its strength at home. Revitalizing the defense-industrial base is essential not only for national security, but also for the preservation of peace around the world.

#### US primacy prevents great-power conflict — multipolar revisionism fragments the global order and causes nuclear war

Brands & Edel, 19 — Hal Brands; PhD, Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Charles Edel; PhD, Senior Fellow and Visiting Scholar at the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney. (“The Lessons of Tragedy: Statecraft and World Order;” Ch. 6: Darkening Horizon; Published by Yale University Press; //GrRv)  
Each of these geopolitical challenges is different, and each reflects the distinctive interests, ambitions, and history of the country undertaking it. Yet there is growing cooperation between the countries that are challenging the regional pillars of the U.S.-led order. Russia and China have collaborated on issues such as energy, sales and development of military technology, opposition to additional U.S. military deployments on the Korean peninsula, and naval exercises from the South China Sea to the Baltic. In Syria, Iran provided the shock troops that helped keep Russia’s ally, Bashar al-Assad, in power, as Moscow provided the air power and the diplomatic cover. “Our cooperation can isolate America,” supreme leader Ali Khamenei told Putin in 2017. More broadly, what links these challenges together is their opposition to the constellation of power, norms, and relationships that the U.S.-led order entails, and in their propensity to use violence, coercion, and intimidation as means of making that opposition effective. Taken collectively, these challenges constitute a geopolitical sea change from the post-Cold War era.

The revival of great-power competition entails higher international tensions than the world has known for decades, and the revival of arms races, security dilemmas, and other artifacts of a more dangerous past. It entails sharper conflicts over the international rules of the road on issues ranging from freedom of navigation to the illegitimacy of altering borders by force, and intensifying competitions over states that reside at the intersection of rival powers’ areas of interest. It requires confronting the prospect that rival powers could overturn the favorable regional balances that have underpinned the U.S.-led order for decades, and that they might construct rival spheres of influence from which America and the liberal ideas it has long promoted would be excluded. Finally, it necessitates recognizing that great-power rivalry could lead to great-power war, a prospect that seemed to have followed the Soviet empire onto the ash heap of history.

Both Beijing and Moscow are, after all, optimizing their forces and exercising aggressively in preparation for potential conflicts with the United States and its allies; Russian doctrine explicitly emphasizes the limited use of nuclear weapons to achieve escalation dominance in a war with Washington. In Syria, U.S. and Russian forces even came into deadly contact in early 2018. American airpower decimated a contingent of government-sponsored Russian mercenaries that was attacking a base at which U.S. troops were present, an incident demonstrating the increasing boldness of Russian operations and the corresponding potential for escalation. The world has not yet returned to the epic clashes for global dominance that characterized the twentieth century, but it has returned to the historical norm of great-power struggle, with all the associated dangers.

Those dangers may be even greater than most observers appreciate, because if today’s great-power competitions are still most intense at the regional level, who is to say where these competitions will end? By all appearances, Russia does not simply want to be a “regional power” (as Obama cuttingly described it) that dominates South Ossetia and Crimea.37 It aspires to the deep European and extra-regional impact that previous incarnations of the Russian state enjoyed. Why else would Putin boast about how far his troops can drive into Eastern Europe? Why else would Moscow be deploying military power into the Middle East? Why else would it be continuing to cultivate intelligence and military relationships in regions as remote as Latin America?

Likewise, China is today focused primarily on securing its own geopolitical neighborhood, but its ambitions for tomorrow are clearly much bolder. Beijing probably does not envision itself fully overthrowing the international order, simply because it has profited far too much from the U.S.-anchored global economy. Yet China has nonetheless positioned itself for a global challenge to U.S. influence. Chinese military forces are deploying ever farther from China’s immediate periphery; Beijing has projected power into the Arctic and established bases and logistical points in the Indian Ocean and Horn of Africa. Popular Chinese movies depict Beijing replacing Washington as the dominant actor in sub-Saharan Africa—a fictional representation of a real-life effort long under way. The Belt and Road Initiative bespeaks an aspiration to link China to countries throughout Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe; BRI, AIIB, and RCEP look like the beginning of an alternative institutional architecture to rival Washington’s. In 2017, Xi Jinping told the Nineteenth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party that Beijing could now “take center stage in the world” and act as an alternative to U.S. leadership.38

These ambitions may or may not be realistic. But they demonstrate just how significantly the world’s leading authoritarian powers desire to shift the global environment over time. The revisionism we are seeing today may therefore be only the beginning. As China’s power continues to grow, or if it is successful in dominating the Western Pacific, it will surely move on to grander endeavors. If Russia reconsolidates control over the former Soviet space, it may seek to bring parts of the former Warsaw Pact to heel. Historically, this has been a recurring pattern of great-power behavior—interests expand with power, the appetite grows with the eating, risk-taking increases as early gambles are seen to pay off.39 This pattern is precisely why the revival of great-power competition is so concerning—because geopolitical revisionism by unsatisfied major powers has so often presaged intensifying international conflict, confrontation, and even war. The great-power behavior occurring today represents the warning light flashing on the dashboard. It tells us there may be still-greater traumas to come.

The threats today are compelling and urgent, and there may someday come a time when the balance of power has shifted so markedly that the postwar international system cannot be sustained. Yet that moment of failure has not yet arrived, and so the goal of U.S. strategy should be not to hasten it by giving up prematurely, but to push it off as far into the future as possible. Rather than simply acquiescing in the decline of a world it spent generations building, America should aggressively bolster its defenses, with an eye to preserving and perhaps even selectively advancing its remarkable achievements.

#### Retrenchment causes nationalism, war, and protectionism – optimists falsely assume current cooperative trends will continue without the US security guarantee

Matthew Fay 17, Director of Defense and Foreign Policy Studies @ The Niskanen Center, 11/16/17, “America Unrestrained?: Engagement, Retrenchment, and Libertarian Foreign Policy,” https://niskanencenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/America-Unrestrained.pdf

A number of the arguments libertarians make in favor of retrenchment have merit, but the cost-benefit analysis derived from them is based on a deterministic view of international politics. Libertarian retrenchers assume that international politics would remain more or less the same absent American engagement and that America’s domestic politics would remain the same even if the international system become more conflict-prone. Given the inherent uncertainty of forecasting, the costs and benefits of engagement and retrenchment need to be considered in a more probabilistic fashion.86 This section begins by exploring a number of scenarios that could occur should the United States adopt a grand strategy of retrenchment. It then reassesses the costs and benefits of retrenchment for a free society.

In a system with more independent states balancing against one another, is war more or less likely? Libertarians are placing a bet that all else would remain equal in international politics if the United States retrenches. While they assume a world where an increased number of states are balancing against one another would remain peaceful, the reality is not entirely clear. Using basic realist premises about state behavior under international anarchy, it is easy to identify a number of scenarios less rosy than the one libertarians assume would occur should the United States retrench. These scenarios might include a world of increased nationalism, eroding norms against military aggression, increased economic autarky, and the further spread of nuclear weapons as states look to produce security for themselves. Some states may also fail to balance against threats in the wake of American retrenchment, increasing the likelihood the United States will be drawn into a major war.

Libertarians assume that in the absence of an alliance with the United States, other countries would simply increase their defense spending if they felt threatened. However, internal balancing is not a mechanical process. According to John Mearsheimer, leaders of states facing security competition are likely to use nationalism to garner support from their populations for the necessary regeneration of military capabilities.87

Writing at the end of the Cold War, Mearsheimer suggested that Europe would revert to a pattern of recurrent warfare. The absence of the United States and the Soviet Union would leave Europe, once again, an anarchic multipolar system. The structure of the system would force the states to compete with one another, as they had prior to the Cold War. Mearsheimer argued that pre-1945 “hypernationalism” was a product of “security competition among the European states, which compelled elites to mobilize public support for national defense efforts.”88

American retrenchment could similarly lead to an anarchic, multipolar Europe—thus increasing the chances of war on the continent. Such a system could engender nationalist sentiments among the populations of Europe, heightening animosities between national groups. These heightened animosities could help erode norms against military aggression that have facilitated the decline in interstate war. Nationalist groups within a country can seize on these sentiments to pursue confrontational and expansionist policies.89 Encouraging support for increased military capabilities through nationalism might lead populations to see war as once again a means to national glory or maintaining national honor. Matters of national prestige and honor can lead to the initiation of wars when bound up in territorial claims, while at the same time increasing the intensity and duration of a conflict.90

Nationalism and security competition might also erode the pacifying effects of economic openness. Realism suggests states are concerned about relative gains.91 States in security competition might be wary of trading with one another due to concerns about how a potential rival’s economic gains might provide it with an advantage if translated into military power. They may also adopt autarkic policies for fear of undermining their economic and military self-sufficiency.92 Territorial conquest has become increasing anachronistic in international politics. However, the proliferation of protectionist policies might once again make aggression and preventive war seem like strategically sensible ways for states to secure the resources necessary to reduce the ability of potential rivals to cut them off economically.

If the risk of territorial aggression increases, the possession of nuclear weapons would become an attractive option for some states whose security was previously guaranteed by the United States. Nuclear weapons are most useful for deterring major territorial aggression, meaning their potential utility increases as the potential for war does.93 A number of U.S. allies have either previously pursued nuclear weapons or have the capability to do so. They might choose to obtain a nuclear arsenal once responsible for their own security.

#### Pursuit is inevitable

Wright 20 [(Thomas, director of the Center on the United States and Europe and a senior fellow in the Project on International Order and Strategy at the Brookings Institution, former lecturer at the University of Chicago's Harris School for Public Policy, PhD from Georgetown University and M.Phil. from Cambridge University) “The Folly of Retrenchment:Why America Can’t Withdraw From the World,” Foreign Affairs, 4/2020] JL

A fifth problem with retrenchment is that it lacks domestic support. The American people may favor greater burden sharing, but there is no evidence that they are onboard with a withdrawal from Europe and Asia. As a survey conducted in 2019 by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs found, seven out of ten Americans believe that maintaining military superiority makes the United States safer, and almost three-quarters think that alliances contribute to U.S. security. A 2019 Eurasia Group Foundation poll found that over 60 percent of Americans want to maintain or increase defense spending. As it became apparent that China and Russia would benefit from this shift toward retrenchment, and as the United States’ democratic allies objected to its withdrawal, the domestic political backlash would grow. One result could be a prolonged foreign policy debate that would cause the United States to oscillate between retrenchment and reengagement, creating uncertainty about its commitments and thus raising the risk of miscalculation by Washington, its allies, or its rivals.

#### **Heg is sustainable – America has strong bones**

Ikenberry 18 [(John, Professor of Politics and International Affairs in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University) reviewing book by Beckley (Michael, Fellow in the International Security Program at Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs) “Unrivaled: Why America Will Remain the World’s Sole Superpower,” Foreign Affairs, November/December 2018]

It has become conventional wisdom that the United States is in decline, the uni-polar era is ending, and China is on the rise. In this smart and sophisticated book, Beckley tackles this thesis head-on. He does not dispute that the United States has its problems or that misguided leaders often squander its advantages. But he points out that the United States’ deep geographic, demographic, and institutional reserves give the country unique resilience. The United States is the only great power without regional rivals. Its companies and universities dominate the world. And most important, Beckley argues that it has by far the best fundamentals for future economic growth, thanks to its abundant natural resources, favorable demographics, secure property rights, and lasting political institutions. China’s growth prospects, in contrast, are “dismal.” Beckley also thinks the declinists use the wrong measures of power. GDP, for example, exaggerates the influence of populous but poor countries, such as China, while overlooking problems that drain those countries’ economic and military resources. He does not argue that the United States can—or should—try to preserve the unipolar era, but he does think that it will long remain the world’s leading power.

#### Nuclear war causes extinction – famine and climate change

Starr 15 [(Steven, Director of the University of Missouri’s Clinical Laboratory Science Program and a senior scientist at the Physicians for Social Responsibility) “Nuclear War, Nuclear Winter, and Human Extinction,” Federation of American Scientists, 10/14/2015] DD

While it is impossible to precisely predict all the human impacts that would result from a nuclear winter, it is relatively simple to predict those which would be most profound. That is, a nuclear winter would cause most humans and large animals to die from nuclear famine in a mass extinction event similar to the one that wiped out the dinosaurs.

Following the detonation (in conflict) of US and/or Russian launch-ready strategic nuclear weapons, nuclear firestorms would burn simultaneously over a total land surface area of many thousands or tens of thousands of square miles. These mass fires, many of which would rage over large cities and industrial areas, would release many tens of millions of tons of black carbon soot and smoke (up to 180 million tons, according to peer-reviewed studies), which would rise rapidly above cloud level and into the stratosphere. [For an explanation of the calculation of smoke emissions, see Atmospheric effects & societal consequences of regional scale nuclear conflicts.]

The scientists who completed the most recent peer-reviewed studies on nuclear winter discovered that the sunlight would heat the smoke, producing a self-lofting effect that would not only aid the rise of the smoke into the stratosphere (above cloud level, where it could not be rained out), but act to keep the smoke in the stratosphere for 10 years or more. The longevity of the smoke layer would act to greatly increase the severity of its effects upon the biosphere.

Once in the stratosphere, the smoke (predicted to be produced by a range of strategic nuclear wars) would rapidly engulf the Earth and form a dense stratospheric smoke layer. The smoke from a war fought with strategic nuclear weapons would quickly prevent up to 70% of sunlight from reaching the surface of the Northern Hemisphere and 35% of sunlight from reaching the surface of the Southern Hemisphere. Such an enormous loss of warming sunlight would produce Ice Age weather conditions on Earth in a matter of weeks. For a period of 1-3 years following the war, temperatures would fall below freezing every day in the central agricultural zones of North America and Eurasia. [For an explanation of nuclear winter, see Nuclear winter revisited with a modern climate model and current nuclear arsenals: Still catastrophic consequences.]

Nuclear winter would cause average global surface temperatures to become colder than they were at the height of the last Ice Age. Such extreme cold would eliminate growing seasons for many years, probably for a decade or longer. Can you imagine a winter that lasts for ten years?

The results of such a scenario are obvious. Temperatures would be much too cold to grow food, and they would remain this way long enough to cause most humans and animals to starve to death.

Global nuclear famine would ensue in a setting in which the infrastructure of the combatant nations has been totally destroyed, resulting in massive amounts of chemical and radioactive toxins being released into the biosphere. We don’t need a sophisticated study to tell us that no food and Ice Age temperatures for a decade would kill most people and animals on the planet.  Would the few remaining survivors be able to survive in a radioactive, toxic environment?

### Framing

**The standard is maximizing expected wellbeing**

**First, pleasure and pain are intrinsically valuable. People consistently regard pleasure and pain as good reasons for action, despite the fact that pleasure doesn’t seem to be instrumentally valuable for anything.**

**Moen 16** [Ole Martin Moen, Research Fellow in Philosophy at University of Oslo “An Argument for Hedonism” Journal of Value Inquiry (Springer), 50 (2) 2016: 267–281] SJDI

Let us start by observing, empirically, that a widely shared judgment about intrinsic value and disvalue is that pleasure is intrinsically valuable and pain is intrinsically disvaluable. On virtually any proposed list of intrinsic values and disvalues (we will look at some of them below), pleasure is included among the intrinsic values and pain among the intrinsic disvalues**.** This inclusion makes intuitive sense, moreover, for there is something undeniably good about the way pleasure feels and something undeniably bad about the way pain feels, and neither the goodness of pleasure nor the badness of pain seems to be exhausted by the further effects that these experiences might have. “Pleasure” and “pain” are here understood inclusively, as encompassing anything hedonically positive and anything hedonically negative.2 The special value statuses of pleasure and pain are manifested in how we treat these experiences in our everyday reasoning about values**.** If you tell me that you are heading for the convenience store, I might ask: “What for?” This is a reasonable question, for when you go to the convenience store you usually do so, not merely for the sake of going to the convenience store, but for the sake of achieving something further that you deem to be valuable**.** You might answer, for example: “To buy soda.” This answer makes sense, for soda is a nice thing and you can get it at the convenience store. I might further inquire, however: “What is buying the soda good for?” This further question can also be a reasonable one, for it need not be obvious why you want the soda. You might answer: “Well, I want it for the pleasure of drinking it.” If I then proceed by asking “But what is the pleasure of drinking the soda good for?” the discussion is likely to reach an awkward end. The reason is that the pleasure is not good for anything further; it is simply that for which going to the convenience store and buying the soda is good.3 As Aristotle observes**:** “We never ask [a man] what his end is in being pleased, because we assume that pleasure is choice worthy in itself.”4 Presumably, a similar story can be told in the case of pains, for if someone says “This is painful!” we never respond by asking: “And why is that a problem?” We take for granted that if something is painful, we have a sufficient explanation of why it is bad. If we are onto something in our everyday reasoning about values, it seems that pleasure and pain are both places where we reach the end of the line in matters of value.

**Moreover, *only* pleasure and pain are intrinsically valuable. All other values can be explained with reference to pleasure; Occam’s razor requires us to treat these as instrumentally valuable.**

**Moen 16** [Ole Martin Moen, Research Fellow in Philosophy at University of Oslo “An Argument for Hedonism” Journal of Value Inquiry (Springer), 50 (2) 2016: 267–281] SJDI

I think several things should be said in response to Moore’s challenge to hedonists. First, **I do not think the burden of proof lies on hedonists to explain why the additional values are not intrinsic values. If someone claims that X is intrinsically valuable, this is a substantive, positive claim, and it lies on him or her to explain why we should believe that X is in fact intrinsically valuable.** Possibly, this could be done through thought experiments analogous to those employed in the previous section. Second, **there is something peculiar about the list of additional intrinsic values** that counts in hedonism’s favor**: the listed values have a strong tendency to be well explained as things that help promote pleasure and avert pain.** To go through Frankena’s list, life and consciousness are necessary presuppositions for pleasure; activity, health, and strength bring about pleasure; and happiness, beatitude, and contentment are regarded by Frankena himself as “pleasures and satisfactions.” The same is arguably true of beauty, harmony, and “proportion in objects contemplated,” and also of affection, friendship, harmony, and proportion in life, experiences of achievement, adventure and novelty, self-expression, good reputation, honor and esteem. Other things on Frankena’s list, such as understanding, **wisdom, freedom, peace, and security, although they are perhaps not themselves pleasurable, are important means to achieve a happy life, and as such, they are things that hedonists would value highly.** **Morally good dispositions and virtues, cooperation, and just distribution of goods and evils, moreover, are things that, on a collective level, contribute a happy society, and thus the traits that would be promoted and cultivated if this were something sought after.** To a very large extent, the intrinsic values suggested by pluralists tend to be hedonic instrumental values. Indeed, pluralists’ suggested intrinsic values all point toward pleasure, for while the other values are reasonably explainable as a means toward pleasure, pleasure itself is not reasonably explainable as a means toward the other values. Some have noticed this. Moore himself, for example, writes that though his pluralistic theory of intrinsic value is opposed to hedonism, its application would, in practice, look very much like hedonism’s: “Hedonists,” he writes “do, in general, recommend a course of conduct which is very similar to that which I should recommend.”24 Ross writes that “[i]t is quite certain that by promoting virtue and knowledge we shall inevitably produce much more pleasant consciousness. These are, by general agreement, among the surest sources of happiness for their possessors.”25 Roger Crisp observes that “those goods cited by non-hedonists are goods we often, indeed usually, enjoy.”26 What Moore and Ross do not seem to notice is that their observations give rise to two reasons to reject pluralism and endorse hedonism. The first reason is that if **the suggested non-hedonic intrinsic values are potentially explainable by appeal to just pleasure and pain** (which, following my argument in the previous chapter, we should accept as intrinsically valuable and disvaluable), **then—by appeal to Occam’s razor—we have at least a pro tanto reason to resist the introduction of any further intrinsic values and disvalues. It is ontologically more costly to posit a plurality of intrinsic values and disvalues, so in case all values admit of explanation by reference to a single intrinsic value and a single intrinsic disvalue, we have reason to reject more complicated accounts.** **The fact that suggested non-hedonic intrinsic values tend to be hedonistic instrumental values does not, however, count in favor of hedonism solely in virtue of being most elegantly explained by hedonism; it also does so in virtue of creating an explanatory challenge for pluralists.** The challenge can be phrased as the following question: **If the non-hedonic values suggested by pluralists are truly intrinsic values in their own right, then why do they tend to point toward pleasure and away from pain?**27

**Moral uncertainty means preventing extinction should be our highest priority.  
Bostrom 12** [Nick Bostrom. Faculty of Philosophy & Oxford Martin School University of Oxford. “Existential Risk Prevention as Global Priority.” Global Policy (2012)]  
These reflections on **moral uncertainty suggest** an alternative, complementary way of looking at existential risk; they also suggest a new way of thinking about the ideal of sustainability. Let me elaborate.¶ **Our present understanding of axiology might** well **be confused. We may not** nowknow — at least not in concrete detail — what outcomes would count as a big win for humanity; we might not even yet **be able to imagine the best ends** of our journey. **If we are** indeedprofoundly **uncertain** about our ultimate aims,then we should recognize that **there is a great** option **value in preserving** — and ideally improving — **our ability to recognize value and** to **steer the future accordingly. Ensuring** that **there will be a future** version of **humanity** with great powers and a propensity to use them wisely **is** plausibly **the best way** available to us **to increase the probability that the future will contain** a lot of **value.** To do this, we must prevent any existential catastrophe.

**Reducing the risk of extinction is always priority number one.   
Bostrom 12** [Faculty of Philosophy and Oxford Martin School, University of Oxford.], Existential Risk Prevention as Global Priority.  Forthcoming book (Global Policy). MP. http://www.existenti...org/concept.pdfEven if we use the most conservative of these estimates, which entirely ignores the   possibility of space colonization and software minds, **we find that the expected loss of an existential   catastrophe is greater than the value of 10^16 human lives**.  **This implies that the expected value of   reducing existential risk by a mere one millionth of one percentage point is at least a hundred times the   value of a million human lives.**  The more technologically comprehensive estimate of 10  54 humanbrain-emulation subjective life-years (or 10  52  lives of ordinary length) makes the same point even   more starkly.  Even if we give this allegedly lower bound on the cumulative output potential of a   technologically mature civilization a mere 1% chance of being correct, we find that the expected   value of reducing existential risk by a mere one billionth of one billionth of one percentage point is worth   a hundred billion times as much as a billion human lives. **One might consequently argue that even the tiniest reduction of existential risk has an   expected value greater than that of the definite provision of any ordinary good, such as the direct   benefit of saving 1 billion lives.**  And, further, that the absolute value of the indirect effect of saving 1  billion lives on the total cumulative amount of existential riskâ€”positive or negativeâ€”is almost   certainly larger than the positive valu