## FW

#### The standard is maximizing expected wellbeing.

#### Prefer it:

#### 1] Actor specificity:

#### ‘A] Aggregation – every policy benefits some and harms others, which also means side constraints freeze action.

#### B] No act-omission distinction – choosing to omit is an act itself – governments decide not to act which means being presented with the aff creates a choice between two actions, neither of which is an omission

## 1AC: Plan

#### We Affirm the Whole Resolution – Resolved: In a democracy, a free press ought to prioritize objectivity over advocacy.

#### Objective Journalism lies in Objectivity of its methodology.

Jones 9 Alex Jones 9-15-2009 "An Argument Why Journalists Should Not Abandon Objectivity" <https://niemanreports.org/articles/an-argument-why-journalists-should-not-abandon-objectivity/> (Alex S. Jones, a 1982 Nieman Fellow, is director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University.)//Elmer

In their book “The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect,” Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, describe what they call “the lost meaning of objectivity.”… As [they] point out, “In the original concept, in other words, the method is objective, not the journalist.” It was because journalists inevitably arrived with bias that they needed objectivity as a discipline to test that bias against the evidence so as to produce journalism that would be closer to truth. They argue that the quickening of objectivity as the American journalistic standard was born of a desire to have a more scientific way of approaching news. The nation’s faith in science was surging, and the scientific method seemed suited to journalism. Scientists begin their research with assumptions. They have expectations of what will happen, but they don’t know what will happen. They have, in other words, their own opinions and beliefs—their point of view or even bias—about what is likely the truth, and they do their research to test those assumptions. Their objective, scientific inquiry is not one that is without bias, but one in which bias has to stand up to evidence and results. This is the sensible and realistic approach to objectivity that might be termed genuine objectivity. It begins with the assumption that journalists have bias, and that their bias has to be tested and challenged by gathering facts and information that will either support it or knock it down. Often, there is information that does both, and that ambiguity needs to be reported with the same dispassion with which a scientist would report variations in findings that were inconclusive. If the evidence is inconclusive, then that is—by scientific standards—the truth. But journalistic objectivity is an effort to discern a practical truth, not an abstract, perfect truth. Reporters seeking genuine objectivity search out the best truth possible from the evidence that the reporter, in good faith, can find. To discredit objectivity because it is impossible to arrive at perfect truth is akin to dismissing trial by jury because it isn’t perfect in its judgments.

## Advantages

### 1

#### We need climate action NOW

**UN 19** [Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. “Only 11 Years Left to Prevent Irreversible Damage from Climate Change, Speakers Warn during General Assembly High-Level Meeting.” UNITED NATIONS [GENERAL ASSEMBLY](https://www.un.org/press/en/general-assembly), SEVENTY-THIRD SESSION, HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (AM & PM). 28 March 2019. URL: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/ga12131.doc.htm>] Jannat Verma

Ambition, Urgency Needed to Address Global Emergency, Secretary-General Says Just over a decade is all that remains to stop irreversible damage from climate change, world leaders heard today as the General Assembly opened a high‑level meeting on the relationship between the phenomenon and sustainable development. The meeting — held pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/219 (2017) — will run through 29 March with a focus on protection of the global climate for present and future generations, in the context of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. “We are the last generation that can prevent irreparable damage to our planet,” General Assembly President María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés (Ecuador) warned the gathering in her opening remarks, stressing that 11 years are all that remain to avert catastrophe.  Highlighting the meeting’s theme, Ms. Espinosa called for an intergenerational approach to climate change.  “Climate justice is intergenerational justice,” she said, calling on States to act collectively and responsibly.

#### Misinformation about climate change fueled through free press decks any form of climate action

**LA Times 22** [The Times Editorial Board. “Editorial: Misinformation is blocking climate action, and the UN is finally calling it out.” *Los Angeles Times.* 7 March 2022. URL: <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2022-03-07/climate-misinformation>] Jannat Verma

A landmark U.N. climate report on the escalating effects of global warming broke new ground by finally highlighting the role of misinformation in obstructing climate action. It was the first time one of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s exhaustive assessments has called out the ways in which fossil fuel companies, climate deniers and conspiracy theorists have sown doubt and confusion about climate change and made it harder for policymakers to act. The expert panel’s [report released last week](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-ii/) mostly focused on the increasing risk of catastrophe to nature and humanity from climate change. But it also laid out clear evidence of how misinformation about climate change and the “deliberate undermining of science” financed and organized by “vested economic and political interests,” along with deep partisanship and polarization, are delaying action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to their impacts. The assessment describes an atmosphere in which public perception about climate change is continually undermined by fossil fuel interests’ peddling of false, misleading and contrarian information and its circulation through social media echo chambers; where there’s an entrenched partisan divide on climate science and solutions; and people reject factual information if it conflicts with their political ideology. Sound familiar? It should, because the climate misinformation landscape is worse in the United States than practically any other country. While the section on misinformation covers only a few of the more than 3,600 pages in the report approved by 195 countries, it’s notable that it’s in [a chapter about North America](https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg2/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FinalDraft_Chapter14.pdf) and calls out the U.S. as a hotbed for conspiracy theories, partisanship and polarization. [A 2018 study](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-018-0157-2) of 25 countries that was cited in the IPCC report found that the U.S. had a stronger link between climate skepticism and conspiratorial and conservative ideology than in any other nation tested. These forces aren’t just a threat to democracy, they are major roadblocks to climate action and seem to have sharpened with the Trump presidency and the COVID-19 pandemic. Misinformation was included in the North America chapter for the first time this year “because there has been a lot of research conducted on the topic since the last major IPCC report was published in 2014,” said Sherilee Harper, one of the lead authors and an associate professor at the University of Alberta in Canada. “Evidence assessed in the report shows how strong party affiliation and partisan opinion polarization can contribute to delayed climate action, most notably in the U.S.A., but also in Canada.” The IPCC’s language is measured but leaves no doubt that the fossil fuel industry and politicians who advance its agenda are responsible. It is shameful that fossil fuel interests have been so successful in misleading Americans about the greatest threat to our existence. The industry has engaged in a [decades-long campaign](https://www.npr.org/2021/10/27/1047583610/once-again-the-u-s-has-failed-to-take-sweeping-climate-action-heres-why) to [question climate science and delay action](https://graphics.latimes.com/exxon-research/), enlisting conservative think tanks and public relations firms to help sow doubt about global warming and the actions needed to fight it. These dynamics help explain why U.S. politicians have failed time after time to enact significant federal climate legislation, including President Biden’s stalled but desperately needed “Build Back Better” bill that includes $555 billion to spur growth in renewable energy and clean transportation. And they show that combating disinformation is a necessity if we are to break through lawmakers’ refusal to act, which is increasingly out of step with Americans’ [surging levels of alarm and concern](https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2022-01-13/americans-more-worried-climate-change) about the overheating of the planet.

#### Warming causes extinction – It’s linear; every decrease in rising temperatures radically mitigates the risk of existential climate change.

**Xu and Ramanathan 17,** Yangyang Xu, Assistant Professor of Atmospheric Sciences at Texas A&M University; and Veerabhadran Ramanathan, Distinguished Professor of Atmospheric and Climate Sciences at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego, 9/26/17, “Well below 2 °C: Mitigation strategies for avoiding dangerous to catastrophic climate changes,” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, Vol. 114, No. 39, p. 10315-10323//recut CHS PK

We are proposing the following extension to the DAI risk categorization: warming greater than 1.5 °C as “dangerous”; warming greater than 3 °C as “catastrophic?”; and warming in excess of 5 °C as “unknown??,” with the understanding that **changes of this magnitude, not experienced in the last 20+ million years, pose existential threats to a majority of the population**. The question mark denotes the subjective nature of our deduction and the fact that **catastrophe can strike at even lower warming levels.** The justifications for the proposed extension to risk categorization are given below. From the IPCC burning embers diagram and from the language of the Paris Agreement, we infer that the DAI begins at warming greater than 1.5 °C. Our criteria for extending the risk category beyond DAI include the potential risks of climate change to the physical climate system, the ecosystem, human health, and species extinction. Let us first consider the category of catastrophic (3 to 5 °C warming). The first major concern is the issue of tipping points. **Several studies** (48, 49) **have concluded that 3 to 5 °C global warming is likely to be the threshold for tipping points such as the collapse of the western Antarctic ice sheet, shutdown of deep water circulation in the North Atlantic, dieback of Amazon rainforests as well as boreal forests, and collapse of the West African monsoon, among others.** While **natural scientists refer to these as abrupt and irreversible climate changes**, economists refer to them as **catastrophic events** (49). **Warming of such magnitudes** also **has catastrophic human health effects**. Many recent studies (50, 51) have focused on the direct influence of extreme events such as heat waves on public health by evaluating exposure to heat stress and hyperthermia. It has been estimated that the likelihood of extreme events (defined as 3-sigma events), including heat waves, has increased 10-fold in the recent decades (52). **Human beings are extremely sensitive to heat stress**. For example, the 2013 European heat wave led to about 70,000 premature mortalities (53). The major finding of a recent study (51) is that, currently, about 13.6% of land area with a population of 30.6% is exposed to deadly heat. The authors of that study defined deadly heat as exceeding a threshold of temperature as well as humidity. The thresholds were determined from numerous heat wave events and data for mortalities attributed to heat waves. According to this study, **a 2 °C warming would double the land area subject to deadly heat and expose 48% of the population. A 4 °C warming by 2100 would subject** 47% of the land area and almost **74% of the world population to deadly heat, which could pose existential risks to humans and mammals** alike unless massive adaptation measures are implemented, such as providing air conditioning to the entire population or a massive relocation of most of the population to safer climates. Climate risks can vary markedly depending on the socioeconomic status and culture of the population, and so we must take up the question of “dangerous to whom?” (54). Our discussion in this study is focused more on people and not on the ecosystem, and even with this limited scope, there are multitudes of categories of people. We will focus on the poorest 3 billion people living mostly in tropical rural areas, who are still relying on 18th-century technologies for meeting basic needs such as cooking and heating. Their contribution to CO2 pollution is roughly 5% compared with the 50% contribution by the wealthiest 1 billion (55). This bottom 3 billion population comprises mostly subsistent farmers, whose livelihood will be severely impacted, if not destroyed, with a one- to five-year megadrought, heat waves, or heavy floods; for those among the bottom 3 billion of the world’s population who are living in coastal areas, a 1- to 2-m rise in sea level (likely with a warming in excess of 3 °C) poses existential threat if they do not relocate or migrate. It has been estimated that **several hundred million people would be subject to famine with warming in excess of 4 °C** (54). However, **there has essentially been no discussion on warming beyond 5 °C**. Climate change-induced species extinction is one major concern with warming of such large magnitudes (>5 °C). The current rate of loss of species is ∼1,000-fold the historical rate, due largely to habitat destruction. At this rate, about 25% of species are in danger of extinction in the coming decades (56). Global warming of 6 °C or more (accompanied by increase in ocean acidity due to increased CO2) **can act as a major force multiplier and expose as much as 90% of species to the dangers of extinction** (57). **The bodily harms combined with climate change-forced species destruction, biodiversity loss, and threats to water and food security**, as summarized recently (58), **motivated us to categorize warming beyond 5 °C as** unknown??, implying the possibility of **existential** threats. Fig. 2 displays these three risk categorizations (vertical dashed lines).

### 2

#### Best studies prove declining distrust in news objectivity diminishes Democratic accountability.

Sands 20 John Sands 8-4-2020 "Americans are losing faith in an objective media. A new Gallup/Knight study explores why." <https://knightfoundation.org/articles/americans-are-losing-faith-in-an-objective-media-a-new-gallup-knight-study-explores-why/> (Researcher at the Knights Foundation)//Elmer

Americans have high aspirations for the news media to be a trusted, independent watchdog that holds the powerful to account. But in a new Gallup/Knight study, we’ve found the gap is growing between what Americans expect from the news and what they think they are getting. Perceptions of bias are increasing too, which further erodes the media’s ability to deliver on its promise to our democracy. The landmark poll of 20,000 people found that Americans’ hope for an objective media is all but lost. Instead, they see an increasing partisan slant in the news, and a media eager to push an agenda. As a result, the media’s ability to hold leaders accountable is diminished in the public’s eye. The study also explores the connections between political affiliation and attitudes toward the media, as well the public’s view on diversity in newsrooms and the connection between local news consumption, civic engagement and community attachment. A hallmark of Knight Foundation’s Trust, Media and Democracy initiative, “American Views 2020: Trust, Media and Democracy” is a biennial report based on a poll that took place over last winter. It is one of the most comprehensive surveys of public opinion on the media, and holds important implications for the future of journalism and our democracy. You can read more below, or join a discussion of the findings in partnership with the Paley Center at 2 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 6. Here are 10 findings that stood out to us: 1) Americans see increasing bias in the news media: One of the primary reasons Americans don’t think the media works for them is because of the bias they perceive in coverage. Many feel the media’s traditional roles, such as holding leaders accountable, is compromised by bias, with nearly 7 in 10 Americans (68%) who say they see too much bias in the reporting of news that is supposed to be objective as “a major problem,” up from 65% in the 2017 Knight/Gallup study. They see it in their own news sources (57%), and more than 6 in 10 are concerned about bias in the news other people are getting, the survey finds. Some 7 in 10 Americans worry that owners of media companies are influencing coverage. 2) Americans think the media is pushing an agenda. Eight in 10 Americans say that when they suspect an inaccuracy in a story, they worry it was intentional —because the reporter was misrepresenting the facts (52%) or making them up (28%). Only 18% say they think the inaccuracies were innocent mistakes. And when it comes to news sources they distrust, nearly three-quarters of Americans (or 74%) say those outlets are trying to persuade people to adopt a certain opinion.

#### Accountability is critical to a functioning democracy – specifically by an Objective Press.

Hamilton and Krosnick 20 [James Hamilton](https://profiles.stanford.edu/james-hamilton) and [Jon Krosnick](https://profiles.stanford.edu/jon-krosnick) 2-27-2020 "Stanford researchers discuss journalism and democracy in lead up to Super Tuesday" <https://news.stanford.edu/2020/02/27/journalism-and-democracy/> (Hamilton also directs the Stanford Journalism Program, is a co-founder of the Stanford Computational Journalism Lab and a senior fellow at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. Krosnick also directs the Political Psychology Research Group and is a professor, by courtesy, of psychology.)//Elmer

How important is an objective media for a functioning democracy? Hamilton: Objectivity was a commercial product that only evolved in the late 1800s with the high costs of printing presses. Newspapers shifted from partisan to nonpartisan in order to attract larger audiences from both parties and to sell these readers’ attention to advertisers. Fast forward to today’s world of hundreds of cable channels and millions of websites. Each person is better able to find an outlet that reflects their worldview, which can also reinforce their political views and affect their electoral choices. Criticisms of the media can also have political dividends. Historically, attacks by politicians on the credibility of the media have been part of a conscious strategy to weaken the accountability function of reporters. For example, attacks on the media as biased during President Richard Nixon’s administration, especially by Vice President Spiro Agnew, were frequent and virulent. Krosnick: In recent years, we have seen a collapse of the notion that politically relevant facts can be discerned by news professionals, leaving voters uncertain about whether the messages communicated by those professionals can be trusted. President Trump has played a major role in raising doubts about the veracity of information conveyed by major news organizations. Social media has allowed individuals and small organizations to disseminate messages (perhaps accurate, perhaps false) directly to voters, unmediated by major news organizations. And Russia has been accused of disseminating false information via social media, as well. All this means is that voters are forced to identify news sources they trust. And because different news sources are disseminating different messages about the same matters, voters will now end up with more disparate views of reality than was the case decades ago.

#### Democracy solves Nuclear War.

Diamond 19, Larry. Ill winds: Saving democracy from Russian rage, Chinese ambition, and American complacency. Penguin Books, 2019. (professor of Sociology and Political Science at Stanford University, PhD in Sociology)//Elmer

The most obvious response to the ill winds blowing from the world’s autocracies is to help the winds of freedom blowing in the other direction. The democracies of the West cannot save themselves if they do not stand with democrats around the world. This is truer now than ever, for several reasons. We live in a globalized world, one in which models, trends, and ideas cascade across borders. Any wind of change may gather quickly and blow with gale force. People everywhere form ideas about how to govern—or simply about which forms of government and sources of power may be irresistible—based on what they see happening elsewhere. We are now immersed in a fierce global contest of ideas, information, and norms. In the digital age, that contest is moving at lightning speed, shaping how people think about their political systems and the way the world runs. As doubts about and threats to democracy are mounting in the West, this is not a contest that the democracies can afford to lose. Globalization, with its flows of trade and information, raises the stakes for us in another way. Authoritarian and badly governed regimes increasingly pose a direct threat to popular sovereignty and the rule of law in our own democracies. Covert flows of money and influence are subverting and corrupting our democratic processes and institutions. They will not stop just because Americans and others pretend that we have no stake in the future of freedom in the world. If we want to defend the core principles of self-government, transparency, and accountability in our own democracies, we have no choice but to promote them globally. It is not enough to say that dictatorship is bad and that democracy, however flawed, is still better. Popular enthusiasm for a lesser evil cannot be sustained indefinitely. People need the inspiration of a positive vision. Democracy must demonstrate that it is a just and fair political system that advances humane values and the common good. To make our republics more perfect, established democracies must not only adopt reforms to more fully include and empower their own citizens. They must also support people, groups, and institutions struggling to achieve democratic values elsewhere. The best way to counter Russian rage and Chinese ambition is to show that Moscow and Beijing are on the wrong side of history; that people everywhere yearn to be free; and that they can make freedom work to achieve a more just, sustainable, and prosperous society. In our networked age, both idealism and the harder imperatives of global power and security argue for more democracy, not less. For one thing, if we do not worry about the quality of governance in lower-income countries, we will face more and more troubled and failing states. Famine and genocide are the curse of authoritarian states, not democratic ones. Outright state collapse is the ultimate, bitter fruit of tyranny. When countries like Syria, Libya, and Afghanistan descend into civil war; when poor states in Africa cannot generate jobs and improve their citizens’ lives due to rule by corrupt and callous strongmen; when Central American societies are held hostage by brutal gangs and kleptocratic rulers, people flee—and wash up on the shores of the democracies. Europe and the United States cannot withstand the rising pressures of immigration unless they work to support better, more stable and accountable government in troubled countries. The world has simply grown too small, too flat, and too fast to wall off rotten states and pretend they are on some other planet. Hard security interests are at stake. As even the Trump administration’s 2017 National Security Strategy makes clear, the main threats to U.S. national security all stem from authoritarianism, whether in the form of tyrannies from Russia and China to Iran and North Korea or in the guise of antidemocratic terrorist movements such as ISIS.1 By supporting the development of democracy around the world, we can deny these authoritarian adversaries the geopolitical running room they seek. Just as Russia, China, and Iran are trying to undermine democracies to bend other countries to their will, so too can we contain these autocrats’ ambitions by helping other countries build effective, resilient democracies that can withstand the dictators’ malevolence. Of course, democratically elected governments with open societies will not support the American line on every issue. But no free society wants to mortgage its future to another country. The American national interest would best be secured by a pluralistic world of free countries—one in which autocrats can no longer use corruption and coercion to gobble up resources, alliances, and territory. If you look back over our history to see who has posed a threat to the United States and our allies, it has always been authoritarian regimes and empires. As political scientists have long noted, no two democracies have ever gone to war with each other—ever. It is not the democracies of the world that are supporting international terrorism, proliferating weapons of mass destruction, or threatening the territory of their neighbors.

#### Nuke war causes extinction AND outweighs other existential risks

PND 16. internally citing Zbigniew Brzezinski, Council of Foreign Relations and former national security adviser to President Carter, Toon and Robock’s 2012 study on nuclear winter in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, Gareth Evans’ International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament Report, Congressional EMP studies, studies on nuclear winter by Seth Baum of the Global Catastrophic Risk Institute and Martin Hellman of Stanford University, and U.S. and Russian former Defense Secretaries and former heads of nuclear missile forces, brief submitted to the United Nations General Assembly, Open-Ended Working Group on nuclear risks. A/AC.286/NGO/13. 05-03-2016. <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/OEWG/2016/Documents/NGO13.pdf> //Re-cut by Elmer

Consequences human survival 12. Even if the 'other' side does NOT launch in response the smoke from 'their' burning cities (incinerated by 'us') will still make 'our' country (and the rest of the world) uninhabitable, potentially inducing global famine lasting up to decades. Toon and Robock note in ‘Self Assured Destruction’, in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists 68/5, 2012, that: 13. “A nuclear war between Russia and the United States, even after the arsenal reductions planned under New START, could produce a nuclear winter. Hence, an attack by either side could be suicidal, resulting in self assured destruction. Even a 'small' nuclear war between India and Pakistan, with each country detonating 50 Hiroshima-size atom bombs--only about 0.03 percent of the global nuclear arsenal's explosive power--as air bursts in urban areas, could produce so much smoke that temperatures would fall below those of the Little Ice Age of the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries, shortening the growing season around the world and threatening the global food supply. Furthermore, there would be massive ozone depletion, allowing more ultraviolet radiation to reach Earth's surface. Recent studies predict that agricultural production in parts of the United States and China would decline by about **20 percent** for four years, and by 10 percent for a decade.” 14. A conflagration involving USA/NATO forces and those of Russian federation would most likely cause the deaths of most/nearly all/all humans (and severely impact/extinguish other species) as well as destroying the delicate interwoven techno-structure on which latter-day 'civilization' has come to depend. Temperatures would drop to below those of the last ice-age for up to 30 years as a result of the lofting of up to 180 million tonnes of very black soot into the stratosphere where it would remain for decades. 15. Though human ingenuity and resilience shouldn't be underestimated, human survival itself is arguably problematic, to put it mildly, under a 2000+ warhead USA/Russian federation scenario. 16. The Joint Statement on Catastrophic Humanitarian Consequences signed October 2013 by 146 governments mentioned 'Human Survival' no less than 5 times. The most recent (December 2014) one gives it a highly prominent place. Gareth Evans’ ICNND (International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament) Report made it clear that it saw the threat posed by nuclear weapons use as one that at least threatens what we now call 'civilization' and that potentially threatens human survival with an immediacy that even climate change does not, though we can see the results of climate change here and now and of course the immediate post-nuclear results for Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well.

### 3

#### Fact-focused Journalism is necessary to disseminate the truth and combat misinformation and fake news.

Beckerman 21 Jim Beckerman 2-18-2021 "Fair and balanced press? When do newspapers cross the line? | Matters of Fact" <https://www.northjersey.com/story/entertainment/columnists/jim-beckerman/2021/02/18/media-bias-newspapers-objective-press-fake-news/4094763001/> //Elmer

Many of us, watching the storming of the Capitol building, would probably consider that headline none too strong. But the matter-of-fact blaming of the president, the loaded words like "mob," are things an editor of an earlier day might have avoided. Such word choices are emblematic of the issues newspapers have faced, throughout the Trump era. They get to the heart of what a newspaper is, what "objective" journalism is, and especially how the media should respond to the firehose of misinformation, disinformation, and distortion that has gushed into the news cycle over the last four years. "I look for my reporters and editors — we don't always get it right — to find the truth in stories and explain that truth to readers," said Daniel Sforza, executive editor of The Record. Not easy, when readers themselves are so polarized. "That's important now, because of the amount of misinformation and disinformation that is out there," said Sforza, who has been here 27 years and worn many hats. "We've seen that, with the aftermath of the election, and the growth of conspiracy theories, and groups that push conspiracy theories. Truth is hard. But it's important, not only to the field of journalism, but to our democracy." Words matter Back in 2016, when the Times published its "Trump Gives Up a Lie" headline, some readers were outraged. "[It] lessens the Times credibility as an objective, fact-based messenger of the news," one wrote. Others thought it was past time. “I want the NYT to tell me in plain language and not use a euphemism like ‘stretches the truth’ when the truth has not been ‘stretched’ but has been totally and clearly broken,” was another response. "To me, that was an important moment, and certainly they [the Times] have referred to lies subsequently," said Matthew Pressman, assistant professor of journalism at Seton Hall University and author of "On Press: The Liberal Values that Shaped the News." With that headline, there was no equivocating, no show of balance, no "on the other hand." "On the other hand," says Tevye in "Fiddler on the Roof," "there is no other hand." Candidate Donald Trump, by spreading the "birther" conspiracy — without evidence — and then abruptly announcing that he no longer believed it — without explanation or apology — had been lying, said the Times. Full stop. But "lie," as Spayd observed, is a loaded word. It suggests deliberate, malicious intent, based on a full knowledge of the mental state of the speaker. Which of course doesn't exist, and could never exist. "It might even be the case that he isn't a liar," said Michael S. Schudson, professor of journalism in the graduate school of journalism of Columbia University, and author of "Why Democracies Need an Unlovable Press" and "The Sociology of News." "He's a [BS-er], for sure," Schudson. "But he also is so far from reality that he doesn't have a primary simply understanding of what counts as true and what counts as falsehood. He's a fabulist. He doesn't know reality from unreality. That's different from being a liar." So what word do you use? "Falsehood"? That's scarcely less harsh than lie. "Unproven allegation"? That suggests that there is something to prove — and risks lending credibility to banana oil. "Unproven allegations" are what send journalists — in the name of fairness — scurrying to Washington D.C. pizza parlors to discover evidence of nonsensical sex trafficking rings, or to Hawaii to investigate birth certificates. It's because journalists do take the job of reporting seriously, do feel bound to investigate unlikely claims, and do become sidetracked by such investigations, that bad-faith actors fling "unproven allegations" left and right, like fleeing criminals tossing chairs behind them. So just what is objective journalism? Can it still exist, in the post-Trump era? Did it ever exist? Either way, the idea exerts a powerful spell. "Fair & balanced," "We report, you decide" were long the tag-lines of Fox News — one of the more biased news sources on the dial. Fox News doesn't even make a pretense of airing a liberal perspective, any more than its liberal cousin MSNBC — note our balance! — airs a conservative one. But the idea of of objective journalism was still a big selling point. "I think there are a lot of people who want to be able to open a newspaper and not think of it as a liberal paper or a conservative paper, but as a place to get their news," said David Greenberg, a professor of History and of Journalism & Media Studies at Rutgers New Brunswick, author of "Republic of Spin: An Inside History of the American Presidency." "I think that's still a strong feeling in America."

#### Fake News is an independent Existential Threat - hurts global cooperation on every significant issue and results in geopolitical conflict spirals.

Al-Rodhan 17 Nayef Al-Rodhan 6-7-2017 "Post-Truth Politics, the Fifth Estate and the Securitization of Fake News" <https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/07/06/2017/post-truth-politics-fifth-estate-and-securitization-fake-news> (Prof Nayef Al-Rodhan is an Honorary Fellow at St Antony’s College, University of Oxford, and Senior Fellow and Head of the Geopolitics and Global Futures Programme at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy)//Elmer

Even so, what we are witnessing today, in the “post-truth” era is more menacing because of the multiplication of channels of communication. Information now can circulate freely and unverified on the Internet, providing possibilities of misinformation and propaganda on a scale that was previously virtually impossible. In effect, it is now possible to share fake news more frequently than verified news, also due to the fact that social media has enabled the proliferation of authentic-looking or misleading fake accounts that help spread lies, most often directed against the liberal public. What is truth anyway? The Oxford Dictionaries dates the first use of the term to a 1992 essay by Steve Tesich, a Serbian-American playwright writing in The Nation following the Iran/Contra scandal. Tesich reflected that after the Watergate revelations and reporting of atrocities from Vietnam, Americans had become contemptuous of uncomfortable truths. He noted: “we came to equate the truth with bad news (…). We looked to our government to protect us from the truth”. Journalist David Roberts also used the term “post-truth” more than two decades ago to refer to the response of some US politicians refuting scientific claims about climate change. In 2004, Ralph Keyes proclaimed we had reached the age of “post-truth”. In his 2004 book, “The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life”, Keyes expressed the concern that we are losing the stigma attached to lying, meaning that lies can be told with impunity. For Keyes, such times of “post truthfulness” represent an ethical twilight zone. The common theme running across the history of the term is that post-truth is defined by lies spread routinely by politicians, with little or no significant consequences for their legitimacy and reputation. But there are inevitable consequences for the future of democracy and the future of humanity: a future in which scientific facts are repudiated cannot be anything but insecure. Veritas, or truth, and facts are crucial for humanity, and indispensible for effective decision-making and ultimately, for human progress. Moreover, facts-based policies are also important in an existential sense and indispensible to our own survival – the case of the debate on climate change being a prime example. Geopolitics and Fake News Geopolitics in the era of fake-news is also complicated because post-truth disrupts a fundamental element of diplomacy and international politics, namely communication. Unsubstantiated allegations and groundless claims will distort diplomatic relations and lead political and military processes astray. False claims about the money ‘extorted’ from the UK by the European Union helped build the case for Brexit, with its ensuing implications for stability in Europe and elsewhere. The Russian state used social media to spread allegations that the Ukranian government crucified a child – a claim later debunked, yet telling of how fake news can help fuel wars. Similarly, populist rhetoric about NATO’s inadequacy and misinformation about its funding mask ignorance about the real benefits of the alliance for its members’ common security. Although unsubstantiated, such comments are enough to create anxiety in political quarters and prompt some Eastern European nations to see their state security in a wholly different geopolitical light. In the post-truth era, a complete lack of understanding of military strategy and the intricacies of warfare will be less relevant in devising policies, and this comes at the risk of dismantling security communities and the foundations of the liberal order. The possibility of hijacking national elections also has profound geopolitical and security implications. This has been a particularly key topic in the aftermath of the US elections. The stakes are especially high in France, which is a key member of the European Union and NATO, and where the winning candidate can, quite unequivocally, impact the future of the liberal order.

#### Independently, causes support for Populist Movements that are “anti-establishment” – declining trust in media institutions is the critical Internal Link.

Cantarella et Al 19 Michele Cantarella, Nicolò Fraccaroli, and Roberto Volpe 7-11-2019 "The effect of fake news on populist voting: Evidence from a natural experiment in Italy" <https://voxeu.org/article/effect-fake-news-populist-voting> //Elmer

Over the last decade, the erosion of trust in public institutions and traditional media sources have been proceeding in parallel. The electoral success of populist or anti-establishment parties has been accompanied by radical changes in the consumption of information. Indeed, many have found connections between consumption of misinformation and support for ‘anti-establishment’ rhetoric. In the US, as discussed in Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) and Guess et al. (2018), Trump voters were more likely to be exposed and believe to misinformation. In the Italian context, these findings have been replicated in a recent report from the financial newspaper Il Sole 24 Ore,1 where the likelihood of believing and sharing so-called fake news was found to be higher for voters of the MoVimento 5 Stelle and Lega than for voters of other parties. In Italy, not only does the consumption of fake news appear to be linked with populism, but the content of the overwhelming majority of pieces of misinformation also displays an obvious anti-establishment bias, as found in Giglietto et al. (2018).

#### Populism causes Extinction.

Leigh 21, Andrew. What's the Worst that Could Happen?: Existential Risk and Extreme Politics. MIT Press, 2021. (Australian member of Parliament, former professor of economics at the Australian National University)//Elmer

How likely is it that humanity could end? Experts working on catastrophic risk have estimated the chances of disaster for a wide range of the hazards that our species faces. Adding up the threats, philosopher Toby Ord estimates the odds that humanity could become extinct over the next century at one in six, with an out-of-control superintelligence, bioterrorism, and totalitarianism among the largest risks. He argues that most of the risks have arisen because technology has advanced more rapidly than safeguards to keep it in check. To encapsulate the situation facing humanity, Ord titled his book The Precipice. A one in six chance of going the way of dodos and dinosaurs effectively means we are playing a game of Russian roulette with humanity’s future. Six chambers. One bullet. Even the most foolhardy soldier usually finds an excuse not to play Russian roulette. And that’s when just their own life is at stake. In considering extinction risk, we’re contemplating not one fatality but the death of billions or possibly trillions of people—not to mention countless animals. It can seem impossible to imagine our species becoming extinct due to a catastrophe such as nuclear war, asteroids, or a pandemic. But in reality, the danger surpasses plenty of perils we already worry about. One way to put catastrophic risk into perspective is to compare it with more familiar risks. If extinction risk poses a one in six risk to our species over the next century, then it means that it is far more hazardous than many everyday risks. Specifically, it suggests that the typical US resident is fifteen times more likely to die from a catastrophic risk—such as nuclear war or bioterrorism—than in car crash.2 Extinction risk outstrips other dangers too. Ask people about their greatest fears, and you’ll get answers like “street violence,” “snakes,” “heights,” and “terrorism."4 But in reality, these are much less hazardous than catastrophic risks. People in the United States are 31 times more likely to die from a catastrophic risk than from homicide. Catastrophic risk is 3,519 times likelier to kill than falls from a height, and 6,194 times more likely to kill than venomous plants and animals. If you have ever worried about any of these threats, you should be more fearful about cata- strophic risk. Extinction risks aren’t just more dangerous than any of them; they are more hazardous than all of them put together. Catastrophic risk poses a greater danger to the life of the typical US resident than car accidents, murder, drowning, high falls, electrocution, and rattlesnakes put together. A one in six risk is just the danger in a single century. Suppose that the risk of extinction remains at one in six for each century. That means there’s a five in six chance humanity makes it to the end of the twenty-first century, but less than an even chance we survive to the end of the twenty-fourth century. The odds that we survive all the way to the year 3000 are just one in six. In other words, if we continue playing Russian roulette once a century, it’s probable that we blow our brains out before the millennium is halfway through, and there’s only a small chance that we make it to the end of the millennium. Part of the reason humans undervalue the future is that it’s hard to get our heads around the idea that our genetic code could live on for millions of years. At present, the best estimates are that our species, Homo sapiens, evolved around three hundred thousand years ago.1 That means we have existed for about ten thousand generations. But we have another one billion years before the increasing heat of our sun brings most plant life to an end.1 That’s plenty of time to figure out how to become an interstellar species and move to a more suitable solar system. Humans could live to enjoy another thirty million generations on earth. Thinking about the mind-boggling scale of these numbers, I’m reminded of the Total Perspective Vortex machine, created by Douglas Adams in The Restaurant at the End of the Universe. Anyone brave enough to enter sees a scale model of the entire universe, with an arrow indicating their current position. As a result, their brain explodes. As Adams reflects, the machine proves that “if life is going to exist in a universe of this size, then the one thing it cannot afford to have is a sense of proportion.” Still, let’s try. Imagine your ancestors a hundred generations ago. They are your great-great-great-great-great-great-great- great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great- great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great- great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great- great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great- great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great- great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great- great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great- great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great- great-great-great-grandparents. These people lived around 1000 BCE, at the start of the Iron Age. They might have been part of Homeric Greece, ancient Egypt, Vedic age India, the preclassic Maya, or Zhou Dynasty China. Contemplate for a moment about what the hundred genera- tions between our Iron Age ancestors and today have achieved. They built the Taj Mahal and Sistine Chapel, the Angkor Wat and Empire State Building. Thanks to them, we can relish the poetry of Maya Angelou, novels of Leo Tolstoy, and music of Ludwig van Beethoven. An abundance of inventions has delivered us deli- cious food, homes that are comfortable year-round, and technol- ogy that provides online access to a bottomless well of entertain- ment. If time machines existed, we might pop in to visit our great100 grandparents, but few would volunteer to stay in the Iron Age. Yet humanity is really just getting started. If things go well, it’s ten thousand generations down, thirty million to go. Imagine what those future generations could do, and how much time they have to enjoy. Here’s one way to think about what it means to have thirty million generations ahead. Suppose humanity’s potential time on the planet was shrunk down to a single eighty- year life span. In that event, we would now be a newborn baby— just nine days old. Homo sapiens is a mere 0.03 percent through all we could experience on earth. We won’t meet most of those who follow us on the planet, but we should cherish future generations all the same. If you value humanity’s past achievements—the Aztec and Roman civiliza- tions, art of the Renaissance, and breakthroughs of the Industrial Revolution—then the generations to come are just as worthy. This is what political philosopher Edmund Burke meant when he described society as “a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.’- To appreciate the past is akin to admiring the achievements of distant places. Like geography, his- tory helps us better understand the way of the world. Politicians like me like to speak fondly about looking after "our children and our grandchildren.” But it usually stops after a generation or two. Policy pays little heed to the many generations that will follow. For my own part, it took a coronavirus-induced shutdown to have the time to spend reflecting deeply about the long term. This book had been rattling around in my head for years, but it was only when all my meetings, events, and travel were canceled that I had the time to write it. Pandemics are one of the threats to humanity that I’ll discuss in this book, but in this instance, it provided a chance to reflect on the long term. It’s tempting to ignore the distant future. It’s easier to love the grandchildren whom we hug than the great-great-great-grand- children whom we’ll never get to smile on. But that doesn’t make those far-flung generations any less important. Via my wife, our children can trace their lineage to Benjamin Franklin, but I’m more excited about the potential achievements of the generations yet to be born. For companies and governments, a major impediment to long- term thinking is the idea of discounting the future. When investing money, this is a reasonable approach. A dollar in a decade’s time is less valuable than a dollar today for the simple reason that a dollar today could be invested and earn a real return. Share markets have good and bad years, but based on returns from the past 120 years, someone who put $1,000 into the US stock market for an average year could expect it to be worth $1,065 after twelve months (accounting for dividends and inflation).2 Approximating these returns, when governments contemplate making investments, they often apply a discount rate of around 5 percent, while companies use rates that are higher still.2 When it comes to growing your greenbacks, this makes perfect sense. If Kanesha offered you $ 1,000 today, and Jane offered you $ 1,000 in a year’s time, most of us would think that Kanesha was making the more generous offer. Kanesha’s cash can be put to productive use and would be worth more than Jane’s when the year is out. But what if we’re talking about Kanesha and Jane themselves? Suppose Kanesha is alive today, and Jane is yet to be born. When discounting is applied to lives, it suggests that Kanesha’s life to- day is worth twice as much as Jane’s life in fifteen years’ time. It implies that Kanesha today is worth 132 times as much as Jane in a century’s time. So if we’re spending money to keep them safe, a 5 percent discount rate indicates that we should spend more than a hundred times as much to protect Kanesha today than to pro- tect Jane in a century’s time. The further we stretch the time period, the more ridiculous the results become. Discounting at a rate of 5 percent implies that Christopher Columbus is worth more than all eight billion people on the planet today.— Naturally, it also implies that your life is worth more than eight billion lives in five hundred years’ time. Even if you value the hug of a loved one over the unseen successes of next century’s generations, is it fair to ruthlessly dis- miss the distant future? Discounting is the enemy of the long term. As philosopher Will MacAskill points out, there is something morally repugnant about concluding that the happiness of those who will be alive in the 2100s is inconsequential simply because they live in the future. MacAskill coined the term “presentism” to refer to prejudice against people who are yet unborn.” Just like racism, sexism, or other forms of bigotry, he argues that mis- treating those who live a long way in the future is unfair. To dis- criminate in favor of Kanesha against unborn Jane is a form of presentism. If you traveled back in time to the 1500s and met someone who claimed that they were worth more than everyone alive in the 2000s, you’d rightly regard them as an egomaniac. Isn’t it equally narcissistic to ignore the happiness of people in the 2500s? Some have contended that we should favor the living over the unborn for the same reason that philanthropy favors the down- trodden over the wealthy. If incomes rise over time, the argument goes, then asking today’s citizens to help those in the future is like taking from the poor to give to the rich.— But this reasoning ignores the fact that we are talking about the survival of future generations. Theoretical riches won’t do them any good if they are practically dead—or if planetary apocalypse snuffs out their chance to be born. Similarly, it misses the possibility that future pandemics, wars, or climate disasters could make coming genera- tions significantly poorer.— Insights from behavioral science help explain why humans aren’t good at understanding extinction risk.— Our thinking about dangers is skewed by an “availability bias”: a tendency to focus on familiar risks. Like the traders who failed to forecast the collapse of the securitized housing debt market, we are lousy at judging the probability of rare but catastrophic events. Most important, our instincts fail us as the magnitudes grow larger. In research titled "The More Who Die, the Less We Care,” psychologists Paul Slovic and Daniel Vastfjall argue that we become numb to suffering as the body count grows.— Humans’ compassionate instincts are aroused by stories, not statistics. Indeed, one study found that people were more likely to donate to help a single victim than they were to assist eight victims. This may help explain why the international community has been so slow to respond to genocide, including recent incidents in Rwanda, Darfur, and Myanmar. As artificial intelligence researcher Eliezer Yudkowsky notes, human neurotransmitters are unable to feel sorrow that is thousands of times stronger than a single funeral.— The problem is starker still when it comes to extinction risk. Our emotional brains cannot multiply by billions. Add to this a media cycle that has become a media cyclone, in which stories explode in a matter of minutes, and “outrage porn” seems to drive the news choices of many outlets. In the 2016 US election, researchers found that for every piece of professional news shared on Twitter, there was one piece of “junk news.’’— Conflict fueled by social media keeps us in a primal state of rage and retaliation. And this isn’t the only force that makes politics myopic. Campaign contributions tend to come from donors who have an immediate interest in a “today” issue rather than from people aiming to solve long-term problems. This kind of “instant noodle” politics prioritizes quick results and sidelines fundamental challenges. In this environment, a special style of politics has thrived: populism. The term “populist" gets thrown around a lot—typically as an insult—so it’s worth taking a moment to define it precisely.— Populists see politics as a conflict between crooked elites and the pure mass of people. Many candidates trying to defeat an incumbent will criticize “insiders,” but populists make a stronger attack on elites, claiming that they are dishonest or corrupt. Populists then claim that they—and only they—represent the “real people.” Populists combine a fierce critique of elites and personal appeal to the “silent majority.” The political strategy of populists involves critiquing intellectuals, institutions, and internationalism. The political style of populists tends to be fierce. They do not strive for unity and calm consensus. Populists share with revolutionaries a desire for sudden and dramatic change. They have little respect for experts and the systems of government. Populists’ priorities tend to be immediate issues such as crime, migration, jobs, and taxes. Consequently, the electoral success of populists has served to sideline work on long-term dangers such as climate change and nuclear war. Donald Trump may have lost his presidential reelection bid, but he has transformed the Republican Party, which has jettisoned its longstanding commitment to free trade, immigration, and global alliances. Many moderate Republicans, who might have served comfortably under Ronald Reagan or George H. W. Bush, have quit the party or been defeated by Trump-supporting populists. The Republican Party, which holds nearly half the seats in Congress and controls a majority of state legislatures, has embraced populism to a degree that was unimaginable when it was led by George W. Bush, John McCain, or Mitt Romney. After four years under President Trump, the Republican Party is now more cynical and isolationist, focused on immediate grievances rather than long-term challenges. Yet while the strength of populism threatened to sideline issues of catastrophic risk, coronavirus did the opposite. The worst pandemic in a century led to the most severe economic crisis since the Great Depression. Churches and concert halls fell silent. International travel collapsed. The Summer Olympics were postponed. Stocks plunged, and for a brief moment, the price of a barrel of oil went negative. Globally, millions lost their jobs, and millions more faced famine. COVID-19 never threatened to extinguish humanity, but it highlighted our vulnerability to infectious diseases. More than at any time in living memory, people focused on the dangers of pandemics. The popularity of Geraldine Brooks’s Year of Wonders, Stephen King’s The Stand, Emily St. John Mandel’s Station Eleven, and Albert Camus’s The Plague vividly illustrates the way in which fear of pandemics has become more acute. We know that disasters can remake society. The black death helped usher in the Renaissance.— The Great Depression made a generation of investors more risk averse.— World War II spawned the United Nations and formed the modern welfare state. In autocracies, droughts and floods can topple dictators.— Coronavirus is reshaping the world in numerous ways.— Handwashing is in. Cheek kissing is out. The rise of big cities is slowing as people consider the downsides of density. Firms that automated their production systems to deal with physical dis- tancing requirements and stay-at-home orders are discovering that they can get by permanently with fewer staff. More tele- working and less business travel is leading to a drop in demand for receptionists, bus drivers, office cleaners, and security guards. When it comes to our use of technology, coronavirus suddenly accelerated the world to 2030. When it comes to globalization, the pandemic took us back to 2010. But it’s still an open question as to how COVID-19 will affect humanity’s ability to think about the long term. Most of the examples I’ve listed are instances in which crises affected societies organically: the shock came, and it changed our behavior. But accentuating the long term requires taking risk more seriously and placing greater emphasis on saving our species. Linebackers are swift to respond when an offensive player suddenly takes a step to the right. But it takes longer to recognize that a team’s offensive plays are skewed to the right and modify the defensive formation accordingly. Like a football team that adapts its tactics, this book argues that we should lengthen our thinking. At minimal cost, society can massively reduce the odds of catastrophe. By ensuring that the big threats get the attention and resources they need, we can safeguard the future of our species. As insurance policies go, this one is a bargain. In the chapters that follow, I’ll outline the biggest risks facing humanity. I’ll begin in chapter 2 with pandemics, such as the possibility that the next virus might combine the infectiousness of COVID-19 with the deadliness of Ebola. What can we do to shut down exotic animal markets, speed up vaccine develop- ment, and create surge capacity in hospitals? I’ll then delve into bioterrorism, and the danger of extremists developing their own versions of smallpox or the bubonic plague. How difficult is it for them to create these devilish diseases, and what can we do to prevent it? In chapter 3, I’ll then explore climate change—perhaps the in- tergenerational issue that has received the most public attention in recent years. While much of the modeling looks at how global warming could be bad, my focus is on the chances that it’s catastrophic. This isn’t about climate change shortening the ski season; it’s about the possibility of temperatures rising by 18°F (10°C), rendering large sections of the planet uninhabitable. What does the risk of cataclysmic climate change mean for energy policy? Next, I’ll turn to nukes. As a child in the 1980s, I vividly re- member watching The Day After. My classmates and I agreed that a nuclear war was inevitable. When the Cold War ended, the world seemed safer, but in the three decades since, the threat from new nuclear powers has made the problem less predictable. As I discuss in chapter 4, what we used to call an arms race now looks more like a bar fight, with hazards coming from unexpected directions, including terrorist groups. Yet just as there are practical ways to avoid pub brawls (don’t drink past midnight, avoid the stairs, look out for the glass), so too are there sensible strategies that can reduce the odds of nuclear catastrophe (adopt a “no first use" policy, reduce the stockpiles, control loose nukes). A superintelligence has been dubbed the “last invention” we’ll ever make. An artificial intelligence machine whose abilities exceed our own could turbocharge productivity and living stan- dards. But it could also spell disaster. If we program our artificial intelligence to maximize human happiness, it could fulfill our wishes literally by immobilizing everyone and attaching electrodes to the pleasure centers of our brains. As chapter 5 notes, what makes artificial intelligence different from every other risky technology is its runaway potential. Once a superintelligence can improve itself, it is unstoppable. So we need to build the guardrails before the highway. What are the odds? In chapter 6,1 complete the discussion of catastrophic danger by examining less risky risks, including asteroids and supervolcanoes. I also consider the prospect of “unknown unknowns.” For example, prior to the first atomic bomb test, some scientists thought there was a chance it could set the atmosphere on fire, destroying the planet. When the Large Hadron Collider was being built, critics warned that the particle collisions inside it could create micro black holes. Although neither situation eventuated, they raise the question of what other doomsday scenarios could be lurking around the corner. How should the prospect of these unexpected risks change our approach to cutting-edge science? Drawing together these dangers with the major hazards, I report the likely probability of each, benchmarking existential risks such as nuclear war and pandemics against individual risks such as being struck by lightning or dying on the battlefield. Ultimately, tackling existential risks is a political problem. Private citizens can achieve many things, but preventing nuclear war, averting bioterrorism, and curbing greenhouse emissions are fundamentally problems of government. Governments control the military, levy taxes, and provide public goods. So the values of those who run the country will determine how much of a priority the nation places on averting catastrophe. That’s why the rise of populists is crucial to humanity’s long- term survival. In chapter 7,1 discuss the factors that have led to the electoral success of populists during recent decades, and why populists tend to be uninterested in dealing with long-term threats. Populists’ focus on the short term means that—like a driver distracted by a back seat squabble—we’re in danger of missing the threats that could kill us. I’ll explore why populists around the world struggled to respond to COVID-19, and what this says about the dangers that populism poses to our species. Most critics of populism have concentrated on the present day. They’re missing the bigger picture. Populists are primarily endangering the unborn. Bad politics doesn’t just exacerbate other dangers; it represents a risk factor in itself through the possibility of a totalitarian turn —in which democracy is replaced by an enduring autocracy. The road to democracy is not a one-way street. Over the centuries, dozens of countries have backslid from democracy into autocracy —abandoning the institutions of fair elections, protection for minorities, and free expression. Such an outcome could be deadly for dissenters and miserable for the multitudes. Chapter 8 explores why democracy dies and identifies the signs that institutions are being undermined. Chapter 9 suggests how we might strengthen democracies to allow citizens to have a greater say, and lower the chances of the few taking over from the many. Chapter 10 concludes the book. When COVID-19 hit, many rushed out to buy life insurance.— In our personal lives, we know that spending a small amount on insurance can guard against financial ruin. Societies can take a similar approach: implementing modest measures today to safe- guard the immense future of our species. For each of the existential risks we face, there are sensible approaches that could curtail the dangers. For all the risks we face, a better politics will lead to a safer world. Because of its focus on the urgent over the important, populist politics should perhaps bear the label, “Warning: populism can harm your children." But what is the alternative? In the conclusion, I argue that the answer lies in the ancient philosophy of stoicism. A stoic approach to politics isn’t about favoring one side of the ideological fence over another. Instead, it’s about the temperament of good political leadership. Stoicism emphasizes that character matters and holds that virtue is the only good. Decisions are based on empirical evidence, not emotion. Anger has no place in effective leadership. Strength comes from civility, courage, and endurance. Stoics make a sharp distinction between the things they can change and those they cannot.