# 1AC

#### Plan- The United States ought to recognize an unconditional right of workers to strike.

### Inherency

#### Unionization percentages in the US are declining.

Human Rights Watch, 4-29-2021, "Why the US PRO Act Matters for the Right to Unionize: Questions and Answers," https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/29/why-us-pro-act-matters-right-unionize-questions-and-answers

What is the state of union membership in the United States? (Loyola IB)

In 2020, after a period of steady decline, union membership (the share of workers who are members of a union, also referred to as union density) in the United States stood at a very low [10.8 percent](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/union2.pdf). The share of US workers with collective bargaining coverage (those represented by a union, including nonunion members) was similarly low, at [12.1 percent](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/union2.pdf). Union membership was significantly higher in the 1950s through the 1970s with about a third of workers being part of, or protected by, a union, but after 1973, union membership in the private sector became the target of antiworker politicians and corporations.

Historical [data](https://www.nber.org/papers/w24587) show that the decline in [bargaining](https://www.nber.org/papers/w24587) power coincided with stagnating [wages for lower income workers and growing](https://www.epi.org/publication/charting-wage-stagnation/) income inequality. Researchers at Harvard University and the University of Washington found that the drop in union density may have accounted for as much as [40 percent of rising inequality](https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/images/journals/docs/pdf/asr/WesternandRosenfeld.pdf).

Presently, a worker covered by a collective bargaining agreement in the United States [on average earns about 11.2 percent more](https://www.epi.org/publication/why-unions-are-good-for-workers-especially-in-a-crisis-like-covid-19-12-policies-that-would-boost-worker-rights-safety-and-wages/) than a worker with a similar education, occupation, and experience in a nonunionized workplace in the same sector. This difference is more pronounced for Black and Hispanic workers, which suggests that unions can help to reduce the racial wage gap. On average, Black workers represented by a union earn [13.7 percent more](https://www.epi.org/publication/why-unions-are-good-for-workers-especially-in-a-crisis-like-covid-19-12-policies-that-would-boost-worker-rights-safety-and-wages/) than their nonunionized peers, and [Hispanic workers](https://www.epi.org/publication/why-unions-are-good-for-workers-especially-in-a-crisis-like-covid-19-12-policies-that-would-boost-worker-rights-safety-and-wages/) represented by a union earn [20.1 percent more](https://www.epi.org/publication/why-unions-are-good-for-workers-especially-in-a-crisis-like-covid-19-12-policies-that-would-boost-worker-rights-safety-and-wages/).

#### Under the National Labor Relations Act, the US right to strike has become meaningless with a laundry list of exceptions and loopholes that prevents effective strikes

Reddy 21 [Diana S. Reddy, Doctoral Fellow at the Law, Economics, and Politics Center at UC Berkeley Law, PhD candidate in UCB's Jurisprudence and Social Policy Program and former Fellow in the General Counsel's Office of the AFL-CIO, “There Is No Such Thing as an Illegal Strike”: Reconceptualizing the Strike in Law and Political Economy,” Yale Law Journal, https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/there-is-no-such-thing-as-an-illegal-strike-reconceptualizing-the-strike-in-law-and-political-economy]/Kankee

The “Right” to Strike Under the NLRA, workers are generally understood to have a “right” to strike. Section 7 of the Act states that employees have the right to engage in “concerted activities for . . . mutual aid or protection,”79 which includes striking. To drive this point home, section 13 of the NLRA specifies, “Nothing in this [Act] . . . shall be construed so as either to interfere with or impede or diminish in any way the right to strike . . .”80 Note that it is a testament to deeply-held disagreements about the strike (is it a fundamental right which needs no statutory claim to protection, or a privilege to be granted by the legislature?) that the statute’s language is framed in this way: the law which first codified a right to strike does so by insisting that it does not “interfere with or impede or diminish” a right, which had never previously been held to exist.81 To say that a strike is ostensibly legal, though, is not to say whether it is sufficiently protected as to make it practicable for working people. Within the world of labor law, this distinction is often framed as the difference between whether an activity is legal and whether it is protected. So long as the state-as-regulator will not punish you for engaging in a strike, that strike is legal. But given that striking is protest against an employer, rather than against the state-as-regulator, being legal is insufficient protection from the repercussion most likely to deter it—job loss. Employees technically cannot be fired for protected concerted activity under the NLRA, including protected strikes. But in a distinction that Getman and Kohler note “only a lawyer could love—or even have imagined,”82, judicial construction of the NLRA permits employers to permanently replace them in many cases. Consequently, under the perverse incentives of this regime, strikes can facilitate deunionization. Strikes provide employers an opportunity, unavailable at any other point in the employment relationship, to replace those employees who most support the union—those who go out on strike—in one fell swoop. As employers have increasingly turned to permanent replacement of strikers in recent decades, strikes have decreased.83 A law with a stated policy of giving workers “full freedom of association [and] actual liberty of contract” offers a “right” which too many workers cannot afford to invoke.84 It is not just that the right is too “expensive,” however; it is that its scope is too narrow, particularly following the Taft-Hartley Amendments. Law cabins legitimate strike activity, based on employees’ motivation, their conduct, and their targets. The legitimate purposes are largely bifurcated, either “economic,” that is to provide workers with leverage in a bargain with their employer, or to punish an employer’s “unfair labor practice,” its violation of labor law (but not other laws). A host of reasons that workers might want to protest are unprotected—Minneapolis bus drivers not wanting their labor to be used to “shut down calls for justice,” for instance. Striking employees also lose their limited protection if they act in ways that are deemed “disloyal to their” employer,85 or if they engage in the broad swath of non-violent activity construed to involve “violence,” such as mass picketing.86 Tactically, intermittent strikes, slow-downs, secondary strikes, and sit-down strikes are unprotected.87 Strikes are also unprotected if unionized workers engage in them without their union’s approval,88 if they concern nonmandatory subjects of bargaining,89 or if they are inconsistent with a no-strike clause.90 Independent contractors who engage in strikes face antitrust actions.91 Labor unions who sanction unprotected strikes face potentially bankrupting liability.92 The National Labor Relations Board—the institution charged with enforcing the policies of the Act—summarizes these “qualifications and limitations” on the right to strike on its website in the following way: The lawfulness of a strike may depend on the object, or purpose, of the strike, on its timing, or on the conduct of the strikers. The object, or objects, of a strike and whether the objects are lawful are matters that are not always easy to determine. Such issues often have to be decided by the National Labor Relations Board. The consequences can be severe to striking employees and struck employers, involving as they do questions of reinstatement and backpay.93 The “right” to strike, it seems, is filled with uncertainty and peril. Collectively, these rules prohibit many of the strikes which helped build the labor movement in its current form. Ahmed White accordingly argues that law prohibits effective strikes, strikes which could actually change employer behavior: “Their inherent affronts to property and public order place them well beyond the purview of what could ever constitute a viable legal right in liberal society; and they have been treated accordingly by courts, Congress, and other elite authorities.”94 B. The Limits of Legal Categories

#### Union decline is driving economic inequality – Right to strike is key

Pope et al. 17 [James Gray Pope Professor of Law and Sidney Reitman Scholar at Rutgers University. Before joining Rutgers in 1986, he worked in a shipyard and represented labor unions at the Boston law firm of Segal, Roitman & Coleman. Ed Bruno is the former director of the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America, and past southern director for the National Nurses Union. Peter Kellman is past president of the Southern Maine Labor Council and is currently working with the Movement Building/Education Committee of the Maine AFL-CIO. His books on labor history include Building Unions: Past, Present and Future, Pain on Their Faces, and Divided We Fall: The Story of the Paperworkers’ Union and the Future of Labor. https://bostonreview.net/forum/james-gray-pope-ed-bruno-peter-kellman-right-strike//lhs-ap]

In December 2005 more than 30,000 New York City transit workers walked out over economic issues despite the state of New York’s Taylor Law, which prohibits all public sector strikes. Not only did the workers face the loss of two days’ pay for each day on strike, but a court ordered that the union be fined $1 million per day. Union president Roger Toussaint held firm, likening the strikers to Rosa Parks. “There is a higher calling than the law,” he declared. “That is justice and equality.” The transit strike exemplified labor civil disobedience at its most effective. The workers were not staging a symbolic event; they brought the city’s transit system to a halt. They claimed their fundamental right to collective action despite a statute that outlawed it. For a precious moment, public attention was riveted on the drama of workers defying a draconian strike ban. How did national labor leaders react? AFL-CIO president John Sweeney issued a routine statement of support, while most others did nothing at all. To anybody watching the drama unfold, the message was clear: there is no right to strike, even in the House of Labor. About a decade earlier in 1996, Stephen Lerner, fresh from a successful campaign to organize Los Angeles janitors, had warned in Boston Review that private sector unions faced an existential crisis: density could soon drop from 10.3 percent to 5 percent if unions did not expand their activity beyond the limits imposed by American law. He called for unions to develop broad organizing strategies—industry-wide and regional—and to engage in civil disobedience. Few embraced these radical strategies. Today private sector union density is about 6.5 percent, not quite as low as Lerner predicted, but down from a high of over 30 percent in the mid-1950s. Union decline matters. For half a century, it has moved in lock step with the increase in income inequality. According to an International Monetary Fund study of twenty advanced economies, union decline accounted for about half of the increase in net income inequality from 1980 to 2012. In the heyday of American unionism, CEOs made about 25 times the annual compensation of the average worker; today, the multiple is more than 350. Meanwhile, as Thomas Edsell and others have warned for decades, the decline of unions has deprived the Democratic Party of its strongest link to white workers. The overwhelming majority of unions continue to endorse Democratic candidates (including Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election), but with ever-diminishing effect. Until two decades ago it was possible to blame union decline on backward labor leaders, such as George Meany, who were so steeped in business unionism that they could not see the need to organize broadly, much less to ally with other social movements across lines of race, gender, and immigration status. Since then, however, we have seen continued shrinkage under leaders who are, for the most part, well intentioned and savvy. The problem is structural. National union officials are not well positioned to lead a challenge to corporate power. Institutions with big treasuries and tit-for-tat relations with establishment politicians cannot be expected to undertake risky and polarizing actions. Although leaders might see the need to build working-class power, the immediate incentives all point toward the narrow needs of their particular union’s members. This constraint is rooted in the American system of exclusive representation, which divides workers into thousands of bargaining unit boxes, gives unions property interests in particular boxes, and penalizes unions for doing anything other than defending existing boxes and acquiring new ones. The prospects for union revival may seem bleaker than ever during the Trump administration, even as the triumph of right-wing populism makes more urgent what was already apparent: the need to build a labor movement that can fight for the interests of the working class in the face of corporate power. But prospects are not as grim as they appear. Over the past decade, there has been an undeniable shift toward class politics, most visibly evidenced by Occupy Wall Street, the Bernie Sanders campaign, the Fight for Fifteen, and the rise of a Black Lives Matter movement that supports economic justice demands, including the right to organize. Building the labor movement in this period of danger and opportunity will require not only heeding Lerner’s call for a strategic shift and extralegal action; labor must also reclaim the right to strike and confront the deep structural disabilities that impede unions from challenging corporate power. As Lerner diagnosed twenty years ago, U.S. labor law blocks unions and workers from effective organizing and striking. Then as now, the law’s protections for workers’ rights amount to little more than paper guarantees, while its restrictions are downright deadly. Indeed the Committee on Freedom of Association of the International Labor Organization (ILO) has held that the United States is violating international standards by failing to protect the right to organize, by banning secondary strikes and boycotts across the board, and by allowing employers to permanently replace workers who strike. The ban on secondary strikes is especially debilitating, because it prevents workers who have economic power, such as organized grocery workers, from aiding workers who do not, for example unorganized packing house workers. If the grocery workers support striking packers by refusing to handle food packed by strikebreakers, they are said to be engaging in an illegal secondary strike. But the law cuts even deeper, deforming workers’ organizations at their inception. As amended by the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 (tagged by unionists as the “Slave Labor Law”), the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) confronts workers with a choice between two inadequate forms of organization: statutory “labor organizations,” popularly known as unions, and “others,” for example workers’ centers that organize outside the statutory framework. At first glance, the choice seems obvious. Only unions can demand and engage in collective bargaining. But unions are subject to so many restrictions that some workers’ organizations (such as the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United) are willing to forego collective bargaining in order to avoid them, while others (including the Coalition of Immokalee Workers) consider themselves lucky to be excluded from the NLRA altogether. In the 1960s Cesar Chavez of the United Farm Workers rejected NLRA coverage for farm workers on the ground that it would inscribe “a glowing epitaph on our tombstone.” The obvious response would be to reform the law. But labor faces a double bind: American workers have never won a significant piece of workers’ rights legislation without first engaging in exactly the kind of strikes and other forms of noncooperation that current labor laws forbid. The Erdman Act of 1898, the Clayton Act of 1914, the Railway Labor Act of 1926, the Norris-LaGuardia Anti-Injunction Act of 1932, the Wagner Act (NLRA) of 1935, and the public sector collective bargaining laws of the 1970s were all preceded by dramatic strikes and mass disobedience. By comparison, organized labor’s more recent legislative campaigns all failed despite Democratic ascendancy in both houses of Congress and the White House. The Labor Law Reform bill of 1978, the striker replacement bills of the early 1990s, and the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) of 2007–9 succumbed to a combination of tepid presidential support (Carter, Clinton, and Obama to labor leaders: “I’m with you; just wait until I’ve spent my political capital on other things”) and the filibuster. Even if enacted, those bills would have provided only modest protections for workers’ rights, well short of the far-reaching changes necessary to reverse union decline. Given the booming influence of money on politics, the skewed representation in the Senate, and the gerrymandered House, we simply cannot expect ordinary politics to produce the reforms that would give unions a fighting chance of revival. Organizing, it seems, must precede legislation. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) is the only big union to launch the kind of confrontational campaign urged by Lerner. For the past four years, SEIU has poured money and organizers into the nationwide Fight for Fifteen campaign. With its combination of sectoral organizing and civil disobedience, Fight for Fifteen has scored a number of victories, including the enactment of fifteen-dollar minimum wage laws in several jurisdictions as well as the inclusion of a fifteen-dollar minimum wage plank in the Democratic Party platform. The campaign has gained SEIU few dues-paying union members—which to some critics earns it a failing grade—but it has validated organized labor as a champion of low-wage workers and accelerated the shift toward class politics. It should come as no surprise that Fight for Fifteen has made more progress on wages than on union growth. Employers have always resisted unionization far more tenaciously than wage increases. They understand that unionism entails a workplace regime shift, while wage increases merely redistribute wealth for a time. Conversely, organized labor has never achieved major growth without prioritizing the rights to organize and strike above economic gain. The Fight for Fifteen and—for that matter—most of the labor movement’s activity, would be far more effective if it were tied to a long-term strategy for winning three core rights for workers: rights to organize, strike, and act in solidarity. Lacking those rights (whether de facto or officially), the movement will be of little use in struggles for social justice or in alliances with other movements. The labor movement of the early twentieth century, which propelled unionism to its historic high, grasped this point. Even the cigar-chomping business unionists of Samuel Gompers’s era seized on opportunities to trumpet the constitutional rights to organize and strike, sometimes in support of open lawbreaking by leftist unions and workers. In order to win workers’ rights, organized labor should act like a rights movement. History tells us that rights movements—from abolition to women’s suffrage to civil rights—succeed when they claim a few key rights, exercise them at every opportunity, and place them front and center in every phase of movement activity, including organizing, protest, civil disobedience, legislative advocacy, administrative advocacy, and litigation. Not only does this kind of focus help to sway public opinion, but also—perhaps more importantly—it assures adherents and convinces opponents that the movement is serious. No workers contemplating extralegal exercise of labor rights should doubt that the movement will come to their support and that they are participating in a historic struggle for rights that will be carried through to victory. How can workers claim their rights in defiance of duly enacted laws? Social movements typically answer this kind of question with reference to higher law, especially the Constitution. For example, the civil rights movement defied Jim Crow in the name of the Constitution’s equal protection clause. The labor movement of the early twentieth century held that anti-strike laws established “involuntary servitude” in violation of the Thirteenth Amendment, while anti-picketing and anti-boycott laws transgressed the First Amendment freedoms of free speech and association. Neither movement waited for courts to recognize their rights; they interpreted the Constitution for themselves. International norms also protect the rights to organize, strike, and act in solidarity. A tremendous advance would be to bring U.S. labor law into compliance. In the meantime workers are fully justified in deploying tactics of peaceful disobedience in the course of organizing, striking, and acting in solidarity.

#### Strikes generate support for unions – its critical to their power

Reich et al, 2021. Alexander Hertel-Fernandez et al,. Suresh Naidu, and Adam Reich et al, 2021. Alexander Hertel-Fernandez is an associate professor of public affairs at Columbia University, where he studies American political economy, with a focus on the politics of business, labor, wealthy donors, and policy. Adam Reich is an associate professor of sociology at Columbia University, Naidu is a professor of economics and public affairs at Columbia University. “Schooled by Strikes? The Effects of Large-Scale Labor Unrest on Mass Attitudes toward the Labor Movement.” *Perspectives on Politics*, American Political Science Association, March 2021 Vol 19 No. 1. doi:10.1017/S1537592720001279

We examined the political consequences of large-scale teacher strikes, studying how firsthand exposure changed mass attitudes and public preferences. Across a range of specifications and approaches, we find that increased exposure to the strikes led to greater support for the walkouts, more support for legal rights for teachers and unions, and, especially, greater personal interest in labor action at people’s own jobs, though not necessarily through traditional unions. Returning to the theoretical expectations we outlined earlier, the teacher strikes appear to have changed the ways that parents think about the labor movement, generating greater public support. The results regarding workers’ interest in undertaking labor action in their own jobs also suggests evidence in favor of the public inspiration and imitation hypothesis, underscoring the role that social movements and mobilizations can play in teaching noninvolved members about the movement and tactics. Still, an important caveat to these findings is that strike-exposed parents were not more likely to say that they would vote for a traditional union at their jobs, possibly reflecting the fact that the strikes emphasized individual teachers and not necessarily teacher unions as organizations either in schools or in parents’ own workplaces. Further research might explore this difference, together with the fact that we find somewhat stronger evidence in favor of the imitation hypothesis (i.e., support for labor action at one’s own work) than for the public support hypothesis (i.e., support for the striking teachers). Before we discuss the broader implications of our findings for the understanding of the labor movement, we briefly review and address several caveats to the interpretation of our results. One concern is whether the results we identify from a single survey can speak to enduring changes in public opinion about the strikes and unions. Given the timing of the teacher strikes in the first half of 2018, our respondents were reflecting on events that happened 7–12 months in the past. We therefore think that our results represent more durable changes in opinion as a result of the strikes, in line with other studies of historical mobilizations and long-term changes in attitudes (Mazumder 2018). The AFL-CIO time-series polling data, moreover, further suggest that there were increases in aggregate public support for unions in the strike states after the strikes occurred. Nevertheless, follow-up studies should examine how opinion toward, and interest in, unions evolve in the mass teacher strike states, and it would be especially interesting to understand whether unions have begun capitalizing on the interest in the labor movement that the strikes generated. We also note that, despite the large sample size of our original survey, we still lack sufficient statistical power to fully explore the effects of the strikes on all of our survey outcomes. Future studies ought to consider alternative designs with the power to probe the individual outcomes that were not considered in this study.

Another question is how to generalize from our results to other strikes and labor actions. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to develop and test a more general theory of strike action, there are factors that suggest that the teacher strikes we study here represent a hard test for building public support. The affected states had relatively weak public sector labor movements, meaning that few individuals had personal connections to unions; most were also generally conservative and Republican leaning, further potentially reducing the receptivity of the public to the teachers’ demands. And lastly, the type of work we study —teaching—involves close interaction with a very sympathetic constituency: children and their parents. This should make strike disruptions more controversial and increase the likelihood of political backlash (and indeed, we do find that the strikes were less persuasive for parents who may have lacked access to childcare). Nevertheless, additional factors may have strengthened the effects of the strikes; namely, that education spending in the strike and walkout states had dropped so precipitously since the Great Recession, giving teachers the opportunity to connect their demands to broader public goods. Considering these factors together, we feel comfortable arguing that strikes are likely to be successful in other contexts where involved employees can successfully leverage close connections to the clients and customers they serve and connect their grievances to the interests of the broader community. This is likely to be especially true in cases where individuals feel they are not receiving the level of quality service they deserve from businesses or governments. The flip side of our argument is that strikes are less likely to be successful—and may produce backlash—when the mass public views striking workers’ demands as illegitimate or opposed to their own interests or when individuals are especially inconvenienced by labor action and do not have readily available alternatives (such as lacking childcare during school strikes). This suggests that teachers’ unions’ provision of meals and childcare to parents (as happened in a number of the recent strikes) is a particularly important tactic to avoid public backlash. In addition, our results suggest that future strikes on their own are unlikely to change public opinion if all they do is to provide information about workers’ grievances or disrupt work routines. Our exploratory analysis of the mechanisms driving our results suggests that it was not necessarily information about poor school quality or the strikes themselves that changed parents’ minds, but perhaps the fact that the teachers were discussing the public goods they were seeking for the broader community. We anticipate that strikes or walkouts that adopt a similar strategy—similar to the notion of “bargaining for the common good”—would be most likely to register effects like ours in the future (McCartin 2016). Notably, that is exactly the strategy deployed by teachers in Los Angeles, who spent several years building ties to community members and explaining the broader benefits that a stronger union could offer to their community in the run-up to a strike in early 2019 (Caputo-Pearl and McAlevey 2019). In all, our results complement a long line of work arguing for the primacy of the strike as a tactic for labor influence (e.g. Burns 2011; Rosenfeld 2006; Rubin 1986). Although this literature generally has focused on the economic consequences of strikes, we have shown that strikes can also have significant effects on public opinion. Even though private sector strikes have long sought to amass public support, public-facing strikes are even more important for public sector labor unions, given their structure of production and the fact that their“managers”are ultimately elected officials. But how should we view strikes relative to the other strategies that public sector unions might deploy in politics, such as campaign contributions, inside lobbying, or mobilization of their members (cf. DiSalvo 2015; Moe 2011)? Given the large cost of mass strikes in terms of time and grassroots organizing, we expect that public sector unions will be most likely to turn to public-facing strikes (like the 2018 teacher walkouts) when these other lower-cost inside strategies are unsuccessful and when their demands are popular in the mass public.

Under these circumstances, government unions have every reason to broaden the scope of conflict to include the mass public (cf. Schattschneider 1960). But when unions can deploy less costly activities (like simply having a lobbyist meet with lawmakers) or when they are pursuing demands that are more controversial with the public, we suspect that unions will opt for less public-facing strategies (on the logic of inside versus outside lobbying more generally, see, for example, Kollman 1998). Indeed, our results complement work by Terry Moe and Sarah Anzia describing how teacher unions work through low-salience and low-visibility strategies, such as capturing school boards, pension boards, or education bureaucracies, when they are pushing policies that tend not to be supported by the public (Anzia 2013; Anzia and Moe 2015; Moe 2011). Our results yield a final implication for thinking about the historical development of the labor smovement: suggest that the decline of strikes we tracked in Figure 1 may form a vicious cycle for the long-term political power of labor. As we have documented, strikes seem to be an important way that people form opinions about unions and develop interest in labor action. As both strikes and union membership have declined precipitously over the past decades, few members of the public have had opportunities to gain firsthand knowledge and interest in unions. Moreover, strikes appear to foster greater interest in further strikes, feeding on one another. If unions are to regain any economic or political clout in the coming years, our study suggests that the strike must be a central strategy of the labor movement.

### Advantage

#### The advantage is Right Wing Populism.

#### RWP is on the rise in democracies especially the United States even after Biden’s victory

Stryker, 11-11-2021, "Liberal democracy is still under threat," New Statesman, <https://www.newstatesman.com/international-politics/democracy-international-politics/2021/11/liberal-democracy-is-still-under-threat> (Loyola IB)

Sighs of relief could be heard around the world following Joe Biden’s election victory as US president last year. For many in the West, his win over Donald Trump signalled that populism could be beaten. The Biden campaign’s strategy of firing up the liberal base while also reaching out to those on the fence worked wonders, and presented advocates for liberal democracy with a win.

But Biden’s victory can’t be read as the death knell for populism, be it in the US or elsewhere. The issues that transformed public disillusionment into wins for Trump, Brexit and other populist movements worldwide – both on the left and the right – are just as strong today as they were five or so years ago.

A Pew Research survey of global attitudes earlier this year found distrust of the political and economic order was highest in some of the richest countries in the world. In the US, 85 per cent of Americans said the political order should be either completely reformed or subject to a major change, while 66 per cent said the same about the economy, and 76 per cent about the healthcare system.

In Italy, Spain, Greece and France, the vast majority of voters were in alignment with Americans, expressing disaffection with the status quo, not to mention a dissatisfaction over the effectiveness of democracy, too.

Research shows that the electorates of many countries around the world are unsatisfied with their current political and economic systems. The groups agitating for change in these countries may not be far right or far left. They don't need to be. But they could threaten to destabilise those systems if those in power stick to a “steady as she goes” agenda rather than a “change things up” one.

Data indicates that the current systems most under threat are in the Mediterranean, France and the US. Biden's victory last year was more a win *against*Trump than a win *for*Biden. His victory shouldn’t be written as an endorsement for all things Bidenite. The political and economic order there is in need of repair. Voters want something to be done, and want their leaders to be seen doing it. If they feel the systems, parties and candidates available are unable to deliver on that, they may go searching for alternative movements. Pessimism in America that anything *can*change stands at 58 per cent. If Biden fails to convince voters that he can make changes, the conditions for a Trump (or Trump-style) comeback and subsequent win are there.

It appears Biden and his strategists know that, however. His first 100 days have, [as my colleague Emily Tamkin writes](https://www.newstatesman.com/world/2021/04/joe-biden-s-first-100-days-have-been-action-packed-foreign-policy-he), been more “action-packed” than many expected. As to whether he continues to implement change though – and be seen to be making change – it is too early to say. Right now, he is more popular than Trump, but that gap grows smaller by the day.

#### Inequality causes populism and conflict – It’s the biggest internal link

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[Thomas, and Ronald Rogowski, UCLA political science professor, "Rising Inequality As a Threat to the Liberal International Order," International Organization, 75.2, 4-12-21, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-organization/article/rising-inequality-as-a-threat-to-the-liberal-international-order/4CDE05DEB3AB076CE338E1AA4A9C8087, accessed 6-27-21]

The rise of top-heavy inequality—earnings concentration in a very thin layer of elites—calls into question our understanding of the distributional effects of the Liberal International Order. Far more people lose from globalization, and fewer gain, than traditional economic models suggest. We review three modern trade theories (neo-Heckscher-Ohlin-Stolper-Samuelson or H-O-S-S, new new trade theory, and economic geography) that each arrive at the conclusion of top-heavy inequality by introducing some form of unit heterogeneity—an assumption that the actors we once treated as identical actually differ from one another in important ways. Heterogeneity allows the gains from globalization to concentrate in a narrow segment of workers with superlative talents, extraordinarily productive firms, or heavily agglomerated cities. An analysis of European voting data shows that shocks from trade and migration elicit populist opposition only where the top 1 percent have gained the most. With few politically feasible alternatives to protectionism, most notably the failure of democracies to redistribute income, our analysis predicts a persistence of public support for antiglobalization parties, especially those on the Right.

Presiding over the November 2016 meeting of the International Political Economy Society, which followed that year's US presidential election by only three days, David Lake began by saying, “To our theories, this result unfortunately comes as no surprise.” And indeed the field at large has believed that the growing “populist”1 backlash against the Liberal International Order (LIO)—not just the Trump victory but Brexit, the election of illiberal governments in Hungary, Poland, Turkey, the Philippines, and Brazil (to name only a few), and growing support for anti-immigrant and illiberal parties and candidates in many other democracies—has followed almost inevitably from the very changes the LIO has wrought, including of course increased trade and migration but also one major concomitant, rising economic inequality within states. According to our traditional economic theories,2 advanced and even middle-income countries are abundantly endowed with human capital, and poorly endowed with low-skill labor. And it is a rudimentary implication of international economics that, in those countries, expanded trade—or, even more, immigration of low-skill workers—will benefit the highly skilled and harm the less educated. Inequality will rise, and—perhaps the most prescient conclusion of the traditional analysis—partisanship will correlate increasingly with possession of human capital: opposition to the LIO will be strongest among the least educated and will decrease monotonically with more years of schooling.

The evidence, which we survey briefly, admits of no doubt that in almost all of the wealthier (and not a few semiwealthy) countries, inequality has risen, often quite sharply; returns on education3 have risen markedly; and education, even more than occupational status, has emerged as one of the most important predictors of electoral support for antiglobalization parties. What our theories however did not anticipate, and so far cannot explain, may well prove to have been even more important:

1. Not all who are well endowed in human capital, but chiefly a very thin upper layer—the top 1 percent, or even 0.1 percent—have harvested most of the gains from globalization.

2. The antiglobalization movements we observe

adopt a populist rhetoric that often excoriates not just globalization or immigration but also allegedly nefarious elites, who conspire, both domestically and across borders, to enrich each other at the expense of their fellow citizens;4

benefit chiefly parties of the radical Right; and

have in important cases attracted non-negligible support among university-educated segments of the electorate, albeit far less than among the less skilled.5

We suggest that the extreme inequality and the anomalies are related, and that some insights from recent work in international economics may help explain them. Three advances in trade theory predict extreme inequality. “New new” trade theory (NNTT), with its emphasis on superstar firms, offers a natural framework. So too does an “enriched” neo-H-O-S-S (Heckscher-Ohlin-Stolper-Samuelson) perspective that explores how superstar workers arise in the context of heterogeneous talent.6 Finally, economic geography, explored thoroughly by Broz, Frieden, and Weymouth in this issue, shows how globalization gives rise to superstar cities.7 These three trade theories predict top-heavy inequality primarily by allowing for unit heterogeneity—an assumption that the actors our traditional theories treated as identical actually differ in important ways. Firms within sectors differ in productivity, workers within a factor class differ in innate talents, and regions within countries differ in agglomeration economies.

None of this suggests, of course, that rising inequality is the only, or even necessarily the most important, cause of the growing popular backlash against the LIO. Skill-biased technological innovation and resistance to cultural change also matter, as we discuss more fully later. We do find, however, at least from a cursory analysis of European elections, that backlash against shocks from immigration and imports is conditional on high inequality, disappearing where inequality is low; and we suspect that rising “top-heavy” inequality is related to a particularly prominent strain, within the antiglobalization movements, of anti-elite and anti-expert sentiment.

We go on to suggest why rising inequality matters, not only as a source of opposition to the LIO but as an impediment to economic growth and an exacerbant of domestic polarization and international conflict.

We assess the implications of top-heavy inequality for the LIO. What remedies have been proposed? And if they lack sufficient political support, what sources of resilience can sustain the LIO under top-heavy inequality? Relatedly, we return to the question of why antiglobalization sentiment has benefited the political Right more than the Left. Finally, we chart a course for future research on models of top-heavy inequality, and discuss how they illuminate “blind spots” in the literature on international political economy.

First, however, we survey briefly the extent of growing economic inequality in advanced economies and its seeming relation, chiefly through a human-capital channel, to antiglobalization and anti-elite attitudes and voting.

Convergence Across Countries, Divergence Within Them

The triumph of the LIO in the 1980s and 1990s—the collapse of Communism, the dismantling of trade barriers, the strengthening of institutions of international governance—coupled with, and facilitated by, breakthrough innovations in transport, communication, and finance, affected economic inequality in two ways that standard factor-endowment theories predicted: inequality declined significantly between countries, thus beginning to erode three centuries of the Great Divergence between rich and poor nations; but inequality within countries, especially among the advanced economies, increased almost as sharply.

Between countries. As late as 1990, the richest 10 percent of the world's population earned on average over ninety times what the poorest decile received; only twenty years later, that ratio had fallen to sixty-five times,8 or only slightly more than the within-country ratio of Brazil, where in 2008 the average income of the richest decile was about fifty times that of the poorest.9

Within countries. Beginning even earlier, inequality of incomes, whether measured as the Gini index or the share of total income accruing to the top decile, has risen in virtually all of the advanced economies,10 and indeed in many of the middle-income ones.11 Bourguignon notes that the collapse of the Soviet empire and the opening of China, India, and Latin America injected roughly “a billion workers, for the most part unskilled, into international competition.”12 That will have drastically lowered the global capital-labor ratio and hence further raised returns on human and physical capital, while reducing those on low-skill labor, in virtually all but the poorest, most labor-abundant countries.

In short, across much of the globe, the enormous overall gains from trade have benefited the highly skilled, the inventive entrepreneurs, and the owners of capital; the incomes of the less skilled and the capital-poor have risen more slowly, stagnated, or actually declined—exactly the development whose early manifestations alarmed Dani Rodrik two decades ago.13

Surely not all of the rise in inequality stems from globalization.14 Many analyses attribute much of the widening within-country gap—in the US, perhaps as much as four-fifths15—not to globalization but to skill-biased technological innovation.16 Bourguignon contends, to be sure, that innovation has been largely endogenous to globalization: wider markets and intensified competition have raised the returns on cost-reducing innovation.17 Cheaper labor, however, whether from offshoring or the competition of low-wage imports, might be expected to curtail the demand for labor-saving technologies, not to increase it.18 A stronger case is implied by “new new” trade theory: if managerial pay correlates closely with firm size, and if the most successful firms in a globalized economy tend to be the largest, it follows that globalization contributes directly to the rise in top incomes.19 Perhaps most importantly, however, whatever skill-biased innovation may have contributed to the gains of the top quintile or decile, it can say little about the gains of the top 1, or 0.1, percent of the distribution.20 Trade, as we argue, can more readily explain those disproportionate gains.

Rising Skills Premia

Also consistent with mainstream theory were the rising returns on education and the widening gap between high- and low-skill workers’ attitudes toward trade and migration. Exactly as theory would lead us to expect, antiglobalization sentiment rose sharply, and was increasingly concentrated, among voters with the least human capital—that is, the less educated.

Returns on education have indeed risen sharply. In the US in the 1970s, workers with a college degree earned only about a quarter more than ones of comparable ethnicity and age who had completed only high school; by 2010, that gap had risen to almost 50 percent.21 The “raw” difference in annual earnings (i.e., without controlling for ethnicity and age) between college graduates and those who have completed only high school is now 64 percent in the US, and on average in the OECD economies 45 percent.22

At the same time, less educated voters have mobilized strongly against globalization in almost all of the advanced economies. In the US, whites with less than a college education, having up to the year 2000 differed little in their partisanship from whites with university degrees, began to tilt Republican in the early 2000s23 and supported Trump in 2016 by a margin of more than two to one (64 to 28 percent).24 In the Brexit referendum, similarly, 70 percent of voters with only a General Certificate of Secondary Education, roughly equivalent to a US high-school diploma, supported leaving the European Union, while those with university degrees voted by almost the same margin (68 percent) to remain.25 And a recent International Monetary Fund working paper finds that since 2002 tertiary (i.e., university or equivalent) education has correlated, more than any other single variable, with not voting for a populist party in European parliamentary elections—an effect that has grown only stronger since 2012.26

The Riddle of the 1 Percent

In many ways, then, a standard factor-proportions picture of globalization's distributional and political effects holds up. What it cannot explain, as economists have by now noted repeatedly,27 is why so much of the bounty has gone to the top 1 percent and why even the remainder of the top decile, let alone the highly educated generally, have benefited comparatively little. This pattern is reflected in average real income trends since 1991 across five advanced economies (Figure 1). Much of the real income growth of the top 10 percent owes to gains by the top 1 percent (compare panels 1 and 2); the next 9 percent (i.e., the remainder of the top decile) have seen a comparatively paltry increase. At the same time, the incomes of next 9 percent, which stagnate or even decline after about 2000, mirror those of the middle 40 percent (compare panels 2 and 3). Taken together, the three panels demonstrate the extent to which a narrow elite has risen above the rest of society's otherwise skilled workers.

Haskel and colleagues more vividly make this case in the US with data on returns on education, finding that the median income of the top 1 percent had risen by 60 percent between 1990 and 2010, while the returns on university education, even for holders of advanced degrees, had declined in real terms after about 2000, virtually erasing their modest gains from the previous decade.28

The seemingly inexorable rise of the 1 percent, when contrasted with the relative stagnation of the rest of the top decile, and of owners of human capital in the middle 40 percent, raises at least three questions. Can our standard theories be modified to explain this “top-heavy” form of inequality? Would such a modified theory still provide a plausible link to globalization? And does such a theory help us understand the simultaneously anti-elitist and antiglobalization character of recent populist movements?

Heterogeneous Workers, Firms, and Regions: Three Ways Globalization Affects Top-Heavy Inequality

We argue that the top-heavy inequality we observe is consistent with three recent advances in trade theory. Each highlights how the bulk of globalization's gains concentrate in a narrow subset of superstar workers, superstar firms, or superstar cities. An “enriched” H-O-S-S model shows how globalization concentrates wages in a small share of highly talented workers. New new trade theory implies that globalization concentrates profits in a few multinational corporations. Finally, economic geography, extensively reviewed by Broz, Frieden, and Weymouth (in this issue), predicts that globalization concentrates economic growth in a few metropolitan regions.29 By producing far more extreme inequality than traditional models suggest, these theories may help explain the puzzling composition of antiglobalization interests and why these movements adopt a populist tone that demonizes elites.

In presenting these advances, we spare the reader their mathematical exposition and instead focus on their sometimes subtle intuitions. We then explore their similarities and differences, as well as how they illuminate the puzzles of LIO backlash.

Neo-H-O-S-S

The first advance injects new life into the increasingly disesteemed, yet still heavily used, factor-endowments framework of Heckscher-Ohlin and Stolper-Samuelson. It turns out that modest enhancements introduced by Haskel and colleagues yield productive insights into the puzzles of LIO backlash.30 The key amendment introduces heterogeneous workers with varying degrees of innate talent. To state briefly the salient and surprising implications of that model, a drop in the relative price of labor-intensive goods, whether induced by globalization or by technology, can not only reduce the wages of low-skill workers, as in traditional models, but also distribute almost all of the resultant gains to a thin layer of highly talented people—and, at least as importantly, induce stagnation, or actual decline, in the earnings of highly skilled but less talented workers.31 And, once we observe that such a shift is both quite recent and plausibly linked to globalization, we may have shed some light on (a) the rabidly anti-elitist and antiglobalization tinge of the populist movements, (b) why such movements have recently peaked, and (c) why they gain (and may well continue to gain) support not only from the “usual suspects” among low-skill workers but also from those with moderate or even relatively high endowments of human capital.32

For those who appreciate a more rigorous introduction, we offer a graphical exposition of the “richer” H-O-S-S model in online Appendix A2. More intuitively, the key to understanding that model is what happens to high-skill workers when the relative price of capital rises.33 First consider the unsurprising fact that within most firms, sectors, and professions, some workers possess natural talent while the majority are perfectly average. Naturally, the most talented employees are far more productive than their average colleagues, even when everyone works with the same amount of capital. In Hollywood, for example, all actors may read the same script, but only A-list talent like Meryl Streep, Denzel Washington, or Tom Hanks can turn that script into an Oscar-winning performance.

In the classic model, trade lowers wages and raises the relative cost of capital; in the enriched model, the owners of capital make up for that higher cost by lowering the wages of mediocre employees and raising the wages of superstars. Capital owners become less able to afford mediocre workers whose productivity cannot keep up with rising capital costs. Instead, they hire the superstars, whose superior productivity can more than cover the increased costs of capital.

Consider the Hollywood example that Haskel and colleagues used, where film scripts represent intellectual capital, indeed the most important form of capital for the entertainment industry. As the world's tastes and purchasing power increase demand for Hollywood entertainment, the price of scripts rises—those of stellar scripts, most of all. As that price rises, studios or streaming services become less and less likely to hire actors of only middling quality to perform such a script. The studios’ investment in a high-quality script will pay off, and bring their film the requisite audience, only if it stars actors of extremely high talent: Robert Downey Jr., Scarlett Johansson, or Samuel L. Jackson (or all three in the same film!).34

Admittedly, this analysis assumes, rather than explains, that we can attribute the rise of the top 1 percent to differences in talent but a lot of evidence supports the thesis. For one thing, in almost all countries—including such improbable cases as France and Spain—half to two-thirds of the income of the top 1 percent consists of salaries (compensation for work). Rarely, in any present-day advanced economy, do returns on capital constitute more than a quarter of the incomes of the top 1 percent (in the US, it is less than 15 percent), Thomas Piketty's arguments notwithstanding.35 As one observer notes, “The fact that so many of [today's] top earners work for a living is striking,”36 given that a century ago the great majority of elite incomes came from investments in property, bonds, or equities. For another, the model accurately predicts the kind of “fractal” inequality that so far has seemed to prevail almost everywhere in advanced and semi-advanced economies.37 That is, inequality seems to have grown not only between, but within firms and occupations: the top lawyers, academics, physicians, middle managers, and even shop floor workers, have begun to earn far more than the median member of their profession, or even the median co-worker of equal qualifications in their firm.

Once we grant that such differences in talent can become important, the model suggests that any globalization-induced rise in the relative price of capital-intensive goods (or, equivalently, decline in the relative price of labor-intensive products) in advanced economies will depress (or threaten to depress) the wages not only of low-skill workers but also of high-skill ones of less than superlative talent. It thus raises the prospect that the growing resistance to global markets may be embraced, sooner rather than later, not only by low-skill workers but by a growing segment of those with higher education or advanced training.

New New Trade Theory

“New new” trade theory (NNTT) offers an alternative firm-centric view of top-heavy inequality.38 Whereas neo-H-O-S-S focuses on how workers of different talents select into different sectors, NNTT focuses on how firms of different productivity levels sort into import-export activities. One of its salient implications is that increases in foreign trade concentrate the distribution of profits into the largest and most productive firms in each sector.39

The intuition is simple: import and export activities require large upfront costs, such as setting up global logistics networks and investing overseas—costs that only the largest firms can afford. The benefits of trade, access to larger markets, for example, then make these large firms even larger, which subsequently allows them to out-compete their smaller domestic rivals. Armed with global economies of scale, superstars like Walmart and Amazon flood the domestic market with low-cost goods and services. This squeezes out the smallest firms, for example, local mom-and-pop establishments, while reducing the profits of the midsize firms, whose middling productivity permits them to sell only domestically. In sum, NNTT implies, and offers evidence to show, that superstar firms in each sector reap the lion's share of the gains from globalization.

In its earliest formulation, NNTT implied no wage inequality, because it assumed workers to be homogeneous. Recent advances draw implications for wage inequality by allowing some profits to pass through to workers—what the literature calls rent-sharing. One modification allows firms to screen, and bargain over quasi-rents with, workers of varying abilities.40 More productive exporting firms pay higher wages to attract higher-ability talent. In the end, rent-sharing allows inequality in firm profits to spill over into inequality in workers’ wages.41

NNTT implies that globalization-induced inequality should manifest itself principally at the level of the firm, pulling up the compensation of all workers in the larger and more successful firms, and leaving behind all of those employed in smaller, domestically oriented firms (or those unemployed through the demise of the smallest firms). This is exactly what Helpman and colleagues find in Brazil, where 70 percent of overall inequality occurs within sectors and occupational categories; similar results were obtained by Akerman and co-authors in an analysis of wage inequality in Sweden from 2000 to 2007.42

Economic Geography

Economic geography explores the origins and effects of one of society's most readily observable features: the unequal distribution of economic activity across space, a phenomenon commonly called agglomeration.43 Broz, Frieden, and Weymouth (in this issue) document how globalization's effects appear most clearly at the level of communities, and operate through the mechanisms specified by economic geography.44 Here we complement their account by situating economic geography within only the broader set of trade models that contribute to extreme inequality. Globalization, we contend, exacerbates regional inequality by inflicting economic stagnation and decline on all but a handful of superstar cities. The mechanism works through the joint effect of agglomeration forces and trade costs. Globalization facilitates the lowering of trade costs (not just those of transportation and communication, but also costs imposed by tariff policies), and this frees up firms to locate in the places that confer the greatest advantage.

The literature identifies many advantages to urban agglomerations. Large cities increase access to suppliers of intermediate inputs, as well as to transportation infrastructure, large pools of specialized talent, and diverse consumers. Moreover, they facilitate the exchange of information about changes in competition, technology, and consumer tastes.45 Some locations also offer a fixed advantage such as access to deep ports or natural resources. Overall, large cities exist and continue to grow because they confer some large basket of benefits on those who locate there.46 The link to globalization seems obvious: the cheaper transportation becomes, and the farther tariff barriers fall, the easier it is for firms and workers to realize the benefits of agglomeration.

For regional inequality to speak to the puzzle of earnings inequality, it must be true that changes in regional growth both reflect and pass through to the wages of resident workers. We find this plausible and consistent with evidence of the stark spatial inequality in returns on skills. A growing literature documents the “end of spatial wage convergence” since 1980, with the bulk of wage gains going to high-skill workers concentrating in just a handful of large cities.47 However, enormous wage inequality within the largest cities suggests that between-region inequality provides only a partial picture. In reality, heterogeneity among workers and firms likely overlaps with, and is accentuated by, the effects of large cities.

Notable Similarities and Differences

All three advances in trade theory point to the same pessimistic outcome, that globalization produces extreme inequality, where a narrow segment of society benefits to the exclusion of the rest. Each theory identifies a different set of “superstars” within this narrow segment: workers with superlative talents, extraordinarily productive firms, or urban agglomerations. Despite varying mechanisms, each arrives at the conclusion of extreme inequality by introducing some form of unit heterogeneity—an assumption that the actors we once treated as identical actually differ from one another in important ways. Workers of similar education differ in innate talent; firms in the same sector vary in productivity; and regions in the same country vary in their advantages of agglomeration. This heterogeneity suggests a radically different perspective on the politics of globalization, one where we should not be surprised that populist protectionist movements arise; that they vilify elites; or that, despite finding their base constituency among low-skill workers, they enjoy nontrivial support from high-skill workers across many sectors.

We highlight two differences among these theories. First, they arrive at the implication of extreme inequality by varying degrees of theoretical complexity. In this regard, neo-H-O-S-S offers a clear advantage: its general framework requires no added assumptions about heterogeneous firms, economies of scale, locational mobility, or rent sharing.

Second, and at least as important, is the empirical accuracy of key theoretical assumptions. In the case of NNTT, evidence for the crucial rent-sharing assumption is decidedly mixed.48 For economic geography, countries almost certainly differ in the degree to which factors are spatially mobile. The neo-H-O-S-S model of differently talented workers will enjoy the most traction in longer-run analyses of wage outcomes, where factors are fully mobile across sectors and regions. Overall, the evident variance in empirical support for different modeling assumptions should caution users to validate these assumptions in their particular research contexts.

Finally, these unit heterogeneity models are not mutually exclusive—they likely reinforce one another in interesting ways. The most talented workers can earn the highest wage by working for the largest firms that can afford them. Regional agglomeration facilitates this advantageous match by locating these superstar workers and superstar firms in the same city. Thus, the top-heavy inequality we observe may very well arise at the intersection of heterogeneous workers, firms, and regions.

Hypothesis

Under any of the three trade theories described here, globalization produces top-heavy inequality, wherein a thin margin of workers benefits while the rest are left behind. This drives a populist strain of backlash that views globalization as a struggle of the masses versus the elites. To our mind, this casts a different light on recent research that sees the backlash as a response to shocks from immigration or imports. To state our key hypothesis:

H when top-heavy inequality is high, shocks from trade, whether in goods, services, or factors of production, increase public support for populist parties. 49 In the absence of top-heavy inequality, however, such shocks have no effect on support for populism. 50

This assumes that inequality reflects the long-run wage effects of trade and migration. That is, if our trade theories accurately predict wage outcomes, then we should observe extreme, or top-heavy, inequality. As previously discussed, even though much of the inequality we observe does reflect trade patterns, inequality also derives from other sources, such as technological change.51

Inequality and Antiglobalization: Evidence from European Elections

We offer a very preliminary test of this hypothesis in the context of two recent studies of populist far-right vote shares in Europe. Their wide empirical coverage, spanning between them twenty-eight countries over twenty-six years (1988 to 2014), affords a high degree of external validity, at least among economically developed nations in recent decades. Also, the two studies focus on different aspects of globalization-related shocks, one on immigration and the other on imports. Finally, both papers offer rigorous research designs. In further examining and extending their findings, we introduce as few modifications as possible to the original designs.

Immigration and Inequality

The study by Georgiadou, Rori, and Roumanias (hereafter GRR) requires the least modification.52 It explores the role of immigration shocks and inequality in all national and European Parliament elections in the twenty-eight member states of the European Union between 2000 and 2014. In particular, the authors study, at the level of Eurostat's NUTS-2 regions,53 the vote shares obtained by “populist radical right” parties,54 which rose dramatically in the wake of the 2008–09 financial crisis (from 0.05 to 0.15 mean vote share across all countries).

In their original analysis, GRR find a positive association between right-populist vote share and both inequality and immigration, controlling for unemployment, immigration, and economic growth.55 Figure 2 replicates this result under the model labeled GRR2018.56

IO2020 extends that model simply by interacting their measures of inequality and immigration. We report the coefficients in standardized units for visual comparability and ease of interpretation. These models are also posted in Table A2 in the online appendix. Two findings follow from our analysis. First, GRR's original finding remains intact: an increase of one standard deviation in national-level inequality, all else equal, is associated with a 2.8-percentage-point increase in populist vote shares (p < .01). Since this exercise holds immigration constant, it suggests that inequality independently undermines support for the LIO. This likely reflects, as we discuss later in the paper, inequality's well-known effects on economic growth, polarization, and external conflict.

Second, our interaction model produces strong evidence for our key hypothesis, that surges in populist support from immigration shocks (which GRR found to have a modest and imprecisely estimated effect) are important but highly conditional on the level of inequality: magnifying backlash at extreme levels and nullifying backlash at lower levels. We visualize this result in a marginal effects plot in Figure 3. The differences in magnitudes are impressive. A one-standard-deviation (0.3 percentage point) increase in the share of migrants in the local population is associated with precisely zero change in vote shares for populist parties at even moderate levels of inequality (Gini < 0.29). At high levels of inequality (Gini > 0.34), the same one-standard-deviation increase in the share of migrants relates to a twenty-point increase in vote share for populist parties. These magnitudes are striking, given that the average NUTS-2 vote share for these parties is 6 percent, with a maximum of 54 percent. Rising immigration, it seems, poses a populist threat to the LIO only when paired with an income distribution that is, or has become, highly unequal.

Imports and Inequality

That inequality mediates shocks from immigration raises the obvious parallel question: does it similarly mediate import-related shocks? To this end, we repeat the earlier analysis, this time employing the data set from Colantone and Stanig (hereafter CS), who examine “China trade shocks” in the European context: fifteen Western European countries over the years 1988 to 2007.57 They report strong effects of Chinese imports on vote shares for radical Right parties58 at the level of the electoral district.59 We replicate their principal results, including their two-stage least squares estimators,60 in specifications 1 and 2 of Table A3 (in the online appendix).

The CS data set does not include a measure of income inequality. To test our interactive hypothesis, we employ inequality measures from the World Inequality Database.61 We report top 1 percent shares of post-tax income at the country level.62 We also apply logarithmic transformations to address issues of fit resulting from extreme outliers.63 Finally, we adopt a multilevel estimator that serves our particular data needs.64 The results rely on this preferred hierarchical estimator.65 Table A3 (in the online appendix) documents how these modifications affect the original CS findings.66

The results for import shocks closely mirror those for immigration. Figure 4 plots the coefficients of our preferred model (IO2020) alongside a baseline model in CS (CS2018). As expected, the positive association between Chinese imports and populist vote shares is highly conditioned by inequality. The coefficient on the China shock remains significant only when interacted with top-1-percent income shares. The marginal effects plot in Figure 5 translates this into real-world terms. At low to medium top-heavy inequality (top 1 percent shares < 0.09), a one-standard-deviation increase in imports (approximately 170 EUR per NUTS-2 worker) relates to no statistically significant change in district vote shares for populist parties—that is, no populist backlash from rising imports. However, in countries where the top 1 percent earns approximately 10 percent or more of national income, the same magnitude of imports is associated with a 25-to-50-percent increase in district vote shares, on average, for right-populist parties.

In combination with the results from immigration shocks, this analysis provides strong support for our hypothesis that the politics of LIO backlash are best understood from the perspective of the three recent advances in trade theory that predict top-heavy inequality. Trade in goods, or in factors of production, in the context of heterogeneous firms, workers, and regions, produces top-heavy inequality that, we argue, sets the stage for a particularly populist form of backlash. We provide suggestive evidence from European elections that is largely consistent with this; migration and imports drive support for populist parties only where we observe high inequality.

Possible Remedies and Sources of Resilience

An optimistic reading of this analysis is that national redistribution provides an effective remedy against right-populist backlashes. This finding is consistent with the “compensation hypothesis,” that government redistribution to globalization's losers increases public support for trade.67 Our paper contributes to this literature by suggesting that redistribution targeted at top-heavy inequality (superstar earners, regions, and firms) to the benefit of otherwise skilled workers in smaller firms and cities would be especially effective.

#### Rising inequality drives diversionary nationalism that sparks international conflict AND obscures structural violence and disrupts counter-movements

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[Frederick, “Diversionary Nationalism: Economic Inequality and the Formation of National Pride,” The Journal of Politics, Vol. 73, No. 3 (Aug. 3, 2011), pp. 821-830, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1017/s002238161100048x?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents>, accessed 6-27-21]

One of the oldest theories of nationalism is that states instill the nationalist myth in their citizens to divert their attention from great economic inequality and so forestall pervasive unrest. Because the very concept of nationalism obscures the extent of inequality and is a potent tool for delegitimizing calls for redistribution, it is a perfect diversion, and states should be expected to engage in more nationalist mythmaking when inequality increases. The evidence presented by this study supports this theory: across the countries and over time, where economic inequality is greater, nationalist sentiments are substantially more widespread.

This result adds considerably to our understanding of nationalism. To date, many scholars have focused on the international environment as the principal source of threats that prompt states to generate nationalism; the importance of the domestic threat posed by economic inequality has been largely overlooked. However, at least in recent years, domestic inequality is a far more important stimulus for the generation of nationalist sentiments than the international context. Given that nuclear weapons—either their own or their allies’—rather than the mass army now serve as the primary defense of many countries against being overrun by their enemies, perhaps this is not surprising: nationalism-inspired mass mobilization is simply no longer as necessary for protection as it once was (see Mearsheimer 1990, 21; Posen 1993, 122-24).

Another important implication of the analyses presented above is that growing economic inequality may increase ethnic conflict. States may foment national pride to stem discontent with increasing inequality, but this pride can also lead to more hostility towards immigrants and minorities. Though pride in the nation is distinct from chauvinism and outgroup hostility, it is nevertheless closely related to these phenomena, and recent experimental research has shown that members of majority groups who express high levels of national pride can be nudged into intolerant and xenophobic responses quite easily (Li and Brewer 2004). This finding suggests that, by leading to the creation of more national pride, higher levels of inequality produce environments favorable to those who would inflame ethnic animosities.

Another and perhaps even more worrisome implication regards the likelihood of war. Nationalism is frequently suggested as a cause of war, and more national pride has been found to result in a much greater demand for national security even at the expense of civil liberties (Davis and Silver 2004, 36-37) as well as preferences for “a more militaristic foreign affairs posture and a more interventionist role in world politics” (Conover and Feldman 1987, 3). To the extent that these preferences influence policymaking, the growth in economic inequality over the last quarter century should be expected to lead to more aggressive foreign policies and more international conflict. If economic inequality prompts states to generate diversionary nationalism as the results presented above suggest, then rising inequality could make for a more dangerous world.

The results of this work also contribute to our still limited knowledge of the relationship between economic inequality and democratic politics. In particular, it helps explain the fact that, contrary to median-voter models of redistribution (e.g., Meltzer and Richard 1981), democracies with higher levels of inequality do not consistently respond with more redistribution (e.g., Benabou 1996). Rather than allowing redistribution to be decided through the democratic process suggested by such models, this work suggests that states often respond to higher levels of inequality with more nationalism. Nationalism then works to divert attention from inequality, so many citizens neither realize the extent of inequality nor demand redistributive policies. By prompting states to promote nationalism, greater economic inequality removes the issue of redistribution from debate and therefore narrows the scope of democratic politics.

**Income inequality spurs gridlock- causes extinction**

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[Julian, Fellow, Australian Academy of Technology, Science and Engineering, *Surviving The 21st Century: Humanity’s Ten Great Challenges and How We Can Overcome Them*, Switzerland: Springer International, 2017, p. 166-167, accessed 2017]

The argument that income inequality leads to **legislative stalemate** and **government indecision** was advanced by Mian and colleagues in a study of the political outcomes of the 2008–2009 Global Economic Recession (Mian et al. 2012 ), stating “…politically countries become more polarized and fractionalized following financial crises. This results in legislative stalemate, making it less likely that crises lead to meaningful macroeconomic reforms.” It also affects intergenerational cohesion, explains Nobel economics laureate Joseph Stiglitz: “These three realities – social injustice on an unprecedented scale, massive inequities, and a loss of trust in elites – define our political moment, and rightly so…. But we won’t be able to fix the problem if we don’t recognize it. Our young do. They perceive the absence of intergenerational justice, and they are right to be angry” (Stiglitz 2016). From the perspective of the survival of civilization and the human species, financial inequality does not represent a direct threat—indeed most societies have long managed with varying degrees of income disparity. Where it is of concern to a human race, whose numbers and demands have already exceeded the finite boundaries of its shared planet, is in the capacity of inequality to wreck social cohesion and hence, to **undermine** the prospects for a **collaborative effort** by the whole of humanity to tackle the **multiple existential threats** we face. Rich-against-poor is a good way to divert the argument and so de-rail climate action, disarmament, planetary clean-up or food security, for instance. Disunity spells electoral loss in politics, rifts between commanders and their troops breed military defeat, lack of team spirit yields failure in sport, disharmony means a poor orchestra or business performance, family disagreements often lead to dysfunction and violence. These lessons are well-known and attested, from every walk of life. Yet humans persistently overlook the cost of socioeconomic disunity and grievances when it comes to dealing with our common perils as a species. For civilisation and **our species to survive** and prosper sustainably in the long run, common understandings and co-operation are essential, across all the gulfs that divide us—political, ethnic, religious and economic. A sustainable world, and a viable human species, will not be possible unless the poverty and inequity gaps can be reduced, if not closed. This is not a matter of politics or ideology, as many may argue: it is the same lesson in collective wisdom and collaboration which those earliest humans first learned on the African savannah a million and a half years ago: together we stand, divided we fall. It is purely an issue of co-existence and co-survival. Neither rich nor poor are advantaged by a state of civilisation in collapse. An unsustainable world will kill the affluent as surely as the deprived.

### Solvency

#### Right to strike solves

#### 1] Reduces inequality and resulting political alienation

Human Rights Watch, 4-29-2021, "Why the US PRO Act Matters for the Right to Unionize: Questions and Answers," https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/29/why-us-pro-act-matters-right-unionize-questions-and-answers

How does the right to organize affect economic and social inequality? (Loyola IB)

Protecting the rights to organize and bargain collectively can play a key role in [reducing economic and social inequality](https://www.nber.org/papers/w24587). These rights allow workers to stand together and bargain for fair wages, adequate benefits, and safe working conditions, and they protect against unjustified job loss and discriminatory or unfair employer behavior, which can help to narrow the racial and gender wage gap.

Many policymakers and commentators have long promoted hard work and [academic success](https://equitablegrowth.org/the-wage-divide-for-black-and-latinx-workers-goes-deeper-than-a-skills-gap-or-requiring-more-credentials/) as primary tools for overcoming a precarious economic existence, but research published in 2018 for the [National Bureau of Economic Research](https://www.nber.org/papers/w24587) in the US shows that this approach overemphasizes the ability of individuals to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and neglects the many structural barriers that limit economic opportunity or keep people trapped in poverty. Labor movements and unions are tools of workers to overcome these barriers collectively and to [address power imbalances](https://equitablegrowth.org/factsheet-the-pro-act-addresses-income-inequality-by-boosting-the-organizing-power-of-u-s-workers/) between workers and employers in a labor market. They can also play a critical role in tempering exploitation through [monopsony](https://equitablegrowth.org/understanding-the-importance-of-monopsony-power-in-the-u-s-labor-market/), a situation in which a few powerful employers depress workers’ wages by dominating the labor market.

Protecting the right to organize may also limit the [corporate capture](https://investorsforhumanrights.org/corporate-capture#:~:text=Corporate%20capture%20refers%20to%20the%20means%20by%20which,or%20remove%2Fundermine%20relevant%20regulations%20that%20seek%20to%20) of public institutions. Companies regularly lobby and pressure legislatures, policymakers and government agencies to weaken workers’ rights protections that the companies perceive to be detrimental to their business interests. The collective power of unions and other labor groups serves as a critical check on this influence. In a 2019 study, researchers at [Duke University and the University of Toulouse](https://people.duke.edu/~ds381/papers/Stegmueller_Becher_UnionsRepresentation_Jan2019.pdf) found that where unions are weaker, politicians tend to be less responsive to the preferences of low-income earners and more attentive to the interests of the elites. Participation in unions also [appears](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2669299?seq=1) to [promote voter participation](https://prospect.org/labor/unions-boost-democratic-participation/) in elections.

#### 2] The RTS spills over – democratized labor creates a culture of participation that offsets authoritarian populism

Spiegelaere 18 [Stan De Spiegelaere is a researcher at the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI). "An Unlikely Cure For Populism: Workplace Democracy." https://socialeurope.eu/an-unlikely-cure-for-populism-workplace-democracy]

Trump in the White House, Orban in Hungary, the Law and Justice party in Poland, the AfD in Germany, Erdoğan in Turkey… It seems like the list of challenges to our democracies is becoming worryingly extensive. Time to act! And the area where one should act might surprise you: our companies.

Democracy lives on values of speaking up, participating in decision making and being involved. It’s when societies think their voices and votes don’t matter, that democracies are threatened in their core. Yet, the place where we spend a good deal of our active days, companies, is quite authoritarian. Speaking up is not always values, participating in decision making not welcome and don’t even think about suggesting to vote out your management.

Think about it. Our societies want us to spend about 40 hours a week in non-democratic environments, doing as we are told and at the same time be critical, voicing and engaged citizens in the remaining time. No surprise that many resolve this cognitive dissonance by retreating from political democracy altogether, with all due consequences.

Democracy starts at work

It’s not the first time our societies are confronted with this limbo between democracy and the capitalist organization of the firm. And many countries have found ways to at least lessen this painful spread by introducing some types of democracy in the companies: employees are given a vote. Not to choose the company management (yet), but to choose some representatives that can talk with the management on their behalf.

Unions, works councils and similar institutions take democracy down to the company floors. Imperfect, sure, but they give at least a slim democratic coating to our rather autocratic working lives. They enable workers to voice their demands, suggest changes and denounce issues without risking personal retaliation.

And by doing so, they create an environment in which individual employees feel more comfortable to speak up too about their own work. About how it can be improved, about when to do what. And these hands-on experiences of democracy breed a more general democratic culture. According to two recent studies, employees being involved in decision making about their work are more likely to be interested in politics, have a pro-democratic attitude, vote, sign a petition or be active in parties or action groups. And this is what democracy is all about. It’s more than just casting a vote every so often, it’s about being engaged and involved in decision making that affects you.

The picture is quite clear: if we want political democracy to succeed we need citizens to have practical experiences with participation and involvement. And where better to organize this then in companies by giving people a vote on their representatives and a say in how they do their day-to-day work. Empowered employees bring emancipated citizens. No coincidence the European Trade Union Confederation aims to put this back on the policy agenda.

Populism gives us a fish, workplace democracy teaches us how to fish

Lacking voice in the workplace, lacking hands on experiences with the (often difficult) democratic decision making, many turn to politicians promising to be their voice. “I am your voice” said Trump to working America in 2016. Similarly, the German AfD stressed to be the voice of the ‘little man’.

They all promise of restoring ‘real democracy’ by being their voice on the highest level. At the same time, all these populists take measures which break the voice of workers on the company level. Trump is making it harder for unions to organize or bargain collectively. In Hungary, the Orban government has limited the right to strike and made organizing more difficult.\

#### 3] RTS reduces political alienation by promoting participation

(Sean Mcelwee, 9-15-2015, “Why increasing Voter Turnout Affects Policy,” Atlantic, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/why-non-voters-matter/405250/>) (Loyola IB)

The Mobilization Gap

There are many reasons why people don’t vote, but research suggests that three factors are particularly crucial: registration, unions, and parties.

Registration is a barrier that exists in the United States but not in any other country in the developed world. Political scientists [have](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1953597?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents) [shown](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1957082?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents) [that](http://pan.oxfordjournals.org/content/14/1/83.abstract) the requirement to register dramatically reduces voter turnout. This effect primarily hurts the poor. One [study finds](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40421537) that, “states with restrictive voter registration laws are much more likely to be biased toward upper-class turnout.” But if so, America is moving in the wrong direction. In the wake of a recent Supreme Court case restricting the Voting Rights Act, [states have begun](http://www.demos.org/blog/6/4/15/two-year-anniversary-blow-vra-new-evidence-voter-id-laws-are-racially-biased) to pass an increasing number of restrictive voter ID laws, with racially disparate impacts.

There are other barriers to voting as well. Counties with large black populations are [less likely](http://apr.sagepub.com/content/43/2/283.abstract) to have access to early voting. Felon disenfranchisement disproportionately [reduces turnout](http://sociology.as.nyu.edu/docs/IO/3858/Democratic_Contraction.pdf) among potential voters of color and those with low-incomes, and [explains some of the decline](http://polisci2.ucsd.edu/ps100da/McDonald%20%26%20Popkin%20%20APSR%20Myth%20vanishing%20Voter.pdf) in voter turnout over the last few decades. (There [is a strong correlation](http://www.demos.org/blog/5/18/15/racism-destroying-right-vote) between the pervasiveness of racial bias in a state and the ease of access for a state’s voting system.) Conversely, a [recent study](https://electionsmith.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/convenience-voting-and-turnout_mit.pdf) suggests that easier access to voting does indeed boost turnout.

Unions were once key catalysts for voter turnout, but without them, turnout has slipped. In a recent study, Jasmine Kerrissey and Evan Schofer [find](http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/content/91/3/895.abstract) that, “union membership is associated with many forms of political activity, including voting, protesting, association membership, and others. Union effects are larger for less educated individuals, a group that otherwise exhibits low levels of participation.” This is important because these activities, like voting, tend to be dominated by the wealthy. However, [as unions have declined](http://prospect.org/article/one-big-reason-voter-turnout-decline-and-income-inequality-smaller-unions) in power and influence, [so has turnout](http://prospect.org/article/one-big-reason-voter-turnout-decline-and-income-inequality-smaller-unions) among low- and middle-income people.

In low turnout elections, politicians are incentivized to cater to the interests of a small portion of the general public.

It’s not just unions that are no longer moving blue-collar voters to the polls. Parties have systematically failed to mobilize low-income voters. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, political scientists Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hanse argue, half the decrease in turnout can be attributed to less effort by political parties to contact voters. The rate at which the Democratic Party reached out to high-income voters increased nearly four-fold between 1980 and 2004. In 2004, high income Americans were nearly three times more likely to be mobilized by the parties. In tight elections, however, when parties compete and Democrats are forced to mobilize low-income voters, [the turnout gap declines](http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=8543003&fileId=S0022381611001666).

It may be that those who have the most to lose from lower turnout among low-income voters least understand its significance. Although the parties have dramatically polarized in the last few decades, lower-income people and nonvoters remain largely unaware of this dramatic shift, and may be inclined to believe that there are few differences between the parties. In their book, Leighley and Nagler find that “those in the top income quintile see a larger difference between the candidates on ideology than do those in the bottom quintile.”

If the public wants to increase turnout, this research suggests a clear set of tools for accomplishing that. First, remove the barriers to registration. Vigorous enforcement of the National Voter Registration Act, combined with same-day or automatic voter registration, could substantially increase access to the polls. Second, create more competitive elections, to incentivize parties to mobilize low-income people. Third, since the decline in unionization has also contributed to the decline in low and middle-income mobilization, unions need to be revived or replaced. (Or, to flip that around, increasing turnout may be the best hope unions have for revival.)

Inequality creates a worrying double-bind: Low-income people become more supportive of interventionist policies, even as they drop out of the political system. The result is a troubling divergence between the economic views of the population as a whole, and the policies that voters and the politicians that they elect tend to favor. The simplest way to reverse that is to mobilize the great mass of potential voters who don’t currently head to the polls. Universal registration, Jan Leighley said, would lead to a “more serious conversation about economic inequality, and one that included a wider range of views.”

#### Don’t sacrifice long-term success for short-term gains by compromising on right to strike – Even if unsuccessful, RTS campaigns best protect labor

Pope et al. 17 [James Gray Pope Professor of Law and Sidney Reitman Scholar at Rutgers University. Before joining Rutgers in 1986, he worked in a shipyard and represented labor unions at the Boston law firm of Segal, Roitman & Coleman. Ed Bruno is the former director of the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America, and past southern director for the National Nurses Union. Peter Kellman is past president of the Southern Maine Labor Council and is currently working with the Movement Building/Education Committee of the Maine AFL-CIO. His books on labor history include Building Unions: Past, Present and Future, Pain on Their Faces, and Divided We Fall: The Story of the Paperworkers’ Union and the Future of Labor. https://bostonreview.net/forum/james-gray-pope-ed-bruno-peter-kellman-right-strike//lhs-ap]

A rights movement can also gain ground by campaigning for rights legislation, even if its bills fall short of passage. Consider the twentieth-century labor movement, which won all of our major national workers’ rights statutes. Strikes were no more popular then than they are now. Yet for decades unions campaigned for the total abolition of anti-strike, anti-organizing, and anti-boycott laws and injunctions. Many bills were defeated, but each gave unionists an opportunity to demand the rights to organize and strike under the First Amendment freedom of association and the Thirteenth Amendment ban on involuntary servitude. And, although the provisions of the bills varied, the focus on rights remained strong until Congress finally passed the Norris-LaGuardia Anti-Injunction Act of 1932 and the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, which protected the rights to organize and strike until eroded by judicial decisions and the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947.

Compare that to the campaign for the Employee Free Choice Act of 2008–9 (EFCA), organized labor’s only major effort to reform labor law in the past two decades. Right down to the title, every feature was shaped to nest comfortably in the prevailing labor law regime and dominant (anti-labor) politics. The bill declared the stirring principle that workers should have a “Free Choice” between unbridled employer domination and the crabbed version of unionism decreed by Taft-Hartley. And on the right to strike, the bill added another constraint: compulsory arbitration of first contracts. This might have made it easier for unions to sign up dues-paying members in the short run,

but it would have impeded the long-run struggle. With compulsory arbitration of first contracts, organized labor would have had a hard time convincing anyone that, as Richard Trumka once put it, unions must have “their only true weapon—the right to strike.”

#### Past movements prove

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#### Extinction outweighs

GPP 17 (Global Priorities Project, Future of Humanity Institute at the University of Oxford, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, “Existential Risk: Diplomacy and Governance,” Global Priorities Project, 2017, <https://www.fhi.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Existential-Risks-2017-01-23.pdf>

1.2. THE ETHICS OF EXISTENTIAL RISK In his book Reasons and Persons, Oxford philosopher Derek Parfit advanced an influential argument about the importance of avoiding extinction: I believe that if we destroy mankind, as we now can, this outcome will be much worse than most people think. Compare three outcomes: (1) Peace. (2) A nuclear war that kills 99% of the world’s existing population. (3) A nuclear war that kills 100%. (2) would be worse than (1), and (3) would be worse than (2). Which is the greater of these two differences? Most people believe that the greater difference is between (1) and (2). I believe that the difference between (2) and (3) is very much greater. ... The Earth will remain habitable for at least another billion years. Civilization began only a few thousand years ago. If we do not destroy mankind, these few thousand years may be only a tiny fraction of the whole of civilized human history. The difference between (2) and (3) may thus be the difference between this tiny fraction and all of the rest of this history. If we compare this possible history to a day, what has occurred so far is only a fraction of a second.65 In this argument, it seems that Parfit is assuming that the survivors of a nuclear war that kills 99% of the population would eventually be able to recover civilisation without long-term effect. As we have seen, this may not be a safe assumption – but for the purposes of this thought experiment, the point stands. What makes existential catastrophes especially bad is that they would “destroy the future,” as another Oxford philosopher, Nick Bostrom, puts it.66 This future could potentially be extremely long and full of flourishing, and would therefore have extremely large value. In standard risk analysis, when working out how to respond to risk, we work out the expected value of risk reduction, by weighing the probability that an action will prevent an adverse event against the severity of the event. Because the value of preventing existential catastrophe is so vast, even a tiny probability of prevention has huge expected value.67 Of course, there is persisting reasonable disagreement about ethics and there are a number of ways one might resist this conclusion.68 Therefore, it would be unjustified to be overconfident in Parfit and Bostrom’s argument. In some areas, government policy does give significant weight to future generations. For example, in assessing the risks of nuclear waste storage, governments have considered timeframes of thousands, hundreds of thousands, and even a million years.69 Justifications for this policy usually appeal to principles of intergenerational equity according to which future generations ought to get as much protection as current generations.70 Similarly, widely accepted norms of sustainable development require development that meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.71 However, when it comes to existential risk, it would seem that we fail to live up to principles of intergenerational equity. Existential catastrophe would not only give future generations less than the current generations; it would give them nothing. Indeed, reducing existential risk plausibly has a quite low cost for us in comparison with the huge expected value it has for future generations. In spite of this, relatively little is done to reduce existential risk. Unless we give up on norms of intergenerational equity, they give us a strong case for significantly increasing our efforts to reduce existential risks. 1.3. WHY EXISTENTIAL RISKS MAY BE SYSTEMATICALLY UNDERINVESTED IN, AND THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY In spite of the importance of existential risk reduction, it probably receives less attention than is warranted. As a result, concerted international cooperation is required if we are to receive adequate protection from existential risks. 1.3.1. Why existential risks are likely to be underinvested in There are several reasons why existential risk reduction is likely to be underinvested in. Firstly, it is a global public good. Economic theory predicts that such goods tend to be underprovided. The benefits of existential risk reduction are widely and indivisibly dispersed around the globe from the countries responsible for taking action. Consequently, a country which reduces existential risk gains only a small portion of the benefits but bears the full brunt of the costs. Countries thus have strong incentives to free ride, receiving the benefits of risk reduction without contributing. As a result, too few do what is in the common interest. Secondly, as already suggested above, existential risk reduction is an intergenerational public good: most of the benefits are enjoyed by future generations who have no say in the political process. For these goods, the problem is temporal free riding: the current generation enjoys the benefits of inaction while future generations bear the costs. Thirdly, many existential risks, such as machine superintelligence, engineered pandemics, and solar geoengineering, pose an unprecedented and uncertain future threat. Consequently, it is hard to develop a satisfactory governance regime for them: there are few existing governance instruments which can be applied to these risks, and it is unclear what shape new instruments should take. In this way, our position with regard to these emerging risks is comparable to the one we faced when nuclear weapons first became available. Cognitive biases also lead people to underestimate existential risks. Since there have not been any catastrophes of this magnitude, these risks are not salient to politicians and the public.72 This is an example of the misapplication of the availability heuristic, a mental shortcut which assumes that something is important only if it can be readily recalled. Another cognitive bias affecting perceptions of existential risk is scope neglect. In a seminal 1992 study, three groups were asked how much they would be willing to pay to save 2,000, 20,000 or 200,000 birds from drowning in uncovered oil ponds. The groups answered $80, $78, and $88, respectively.73 In this case, the size of the benefits had little effect on the scale of the preferred response. People become numbed to the effect of saving lives when the numbers get too large. 74 Scope neglect is a particularly acute problem for existential risk because the numbers at stake are so large. Due to scope neglect, decision-makers are prone to treat existential risks in a similar way to problems which are less severe by many orders of magnitude. A wide range of other cognitive biases are likely to affect the evaluation of existential risks.75