## FW - Util

#### The standard is maximizing expected wellbeing, or utilitarianism.

#### Pleasure and pain are intrinsic values and disvalues.

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**Pleasure** is not only one of the three primary reward functions but it also **defines reward.** As homeostasis explains the functions of only a limited number of rewards, the principal reason why particular stimuli, objects, events, situations, and activities are rewarding may be due to pleasure. This applies first of all to sex and to the primary homeostatic rewards of food and liquid and extends to money, taste, beauty, social encounters and nonmaterial, internally set, and intrinsic rewards. Pleasure, as the primary effect of rewards, drives the prime reward functions of learning, approach behavior, and decision making and provides the **basis for hedonic theories** of reward function. We are attracted by most rewards and exert intense efforts to obtain them, just because they are enjoyable [10]. Pleasure is a passive reaction that derives from the experience or prediction of reward and may lead to a long-lasting state of happiness. The word happiness is difficult to define. In fact, just obtaining physical pleasure may not be enough. One key to happiness involves a network of good friends. However, it is not obvious how the higher forms of satisfaction and pleasure are related to an ice cream cone, or to your team winning a sporting event. Recent multidisciplinary research, using both humans and detailed invasive brain analysis of animals has discovered some critical ways that the brain processes pleasure [14]. Pleasure as a hallmark of reward is sufficient for defining a reward, but it may not be necessary. A reward may generate positive learning and approach behavior simply because it contains substances that are essential for body function. When we are hungry, we may eat bad and unpleasant meals. A monkey who receives hundreds of small drops of water every morning in the laboratory is unlikely to feel a rush of pleasure every time it gets the 0.1 ml. Nevertheless, with these precautions in mind, we may define any stimulus, object, event, activity, or situation that has the potential to produce pleasure as a reward. In the context of reward deficiency or for disorders of addiction, homeostasis pursues pharmacological treatments: drugs to treat drug addiction, obesity, and other compulsive behaviors. The theory of allostasis suggests broader approaches - such as re-expanding the range of possible pleasures and providing opportunities to expend effort in their pursuit. [15]. It is noteworthy, the first animal studies eliciting approach behavior by electrical brain stimulation interpreted their findings as a discovery of the brain’s pleasure centers [16] which were later partly associated with midbrain dopamine neurons [17–19] despite the notorious difficulties of identifying emotions in animals. Evolutionary theories of pleasure: The love connection BO:D Charles Darwin and other biological scientists that have examined the biological evolution and its basic principles found various mechanisms that steer behavior and biological development. Besides their theory on natural selection, it was particularly the sexual selection process that gained significance in the latter context over the last century, especially when it comes to the question of what makes us “what we are,” i.e., human. However, the capacity to sexually select and evolve is not at all a human accomplishment alone or a sign of our uniqueness; yet, we humans, as it seems, are ingenious in fooling ourselves and others–when we are in love or desperately search for it. It is well established that modern biological theory conjectures that **organisms are** the **result of evolutionary competition.** In fact, Richard Dawkins stresses gene survival and propagation as the basic mechanism of life [20]. Only genes that lead to the fittest phenotype will make it. It is noteworthy that the phenotype is selected based on behavior that maximizes gene propagation. To do so, the phenotype must survive and generate offspring, and be better at it than its competitors. Thus, the ultimate, distal function of rewards is to increase evolutionary fitness by ensuring the survival of the organism and reproduction. It is agreed that learning, approach, economic decisions, and positive emotions are the proximal functions through which phenotypes obtain other necessary nutrients for survival, mating, and care for offspring. Behavioral reward functions have evolved to help individuals to survive and propagate their genes. Apparently, people need to live well and long enough to reproduce. Most would agree that homo-sapiens do so by ingesting the substances that make their bodies function properly. For this reason, foods and drinks are rewards. Additional rewards, including those used for economic exchanges, ensure sufficient palatable food and drink supply. Mating and gene propagation is supported by powerful sexual attraction. Additional properties, like body form, augment the chance to mate and nourish and defend offspring and are therefore also rewards. Care for offspring until they can reproduce themselves helps gene propagation and is rewarding; otherwise, many believe mating is useless. According to David E Comings, as any small edge will ultimately result in evolutionary advantage [21], additional reward mechanisms like novelty seeking and exploration widen the spectrum of available rewards and thus enhance the chance for survival, reproduction, and ultimate gene propagation. These functions may help us to obtain the benefits of distant rewards that are determined by our own interests and not immediately available in the environment. Thus the distal reward function in gene propagation and evolutionary fitness defines the proximal reward functions that we see in everyday behavior. That is why foods, drinks, mates, and offspring are rewarding. There have been theories linking pleasure as a required component of health benefits salutogenesis, (salugenesis). In essence, under these terms, pleasure is described as a state or feeling of happiness and satisfaction resulting from an experience that one enjoys. Regarding pleasure, it is a double-edged sword, on the one hand, it promotes positive feelings (like mindfulness) and even better cognition, possibly through the release of dopamine [22]. But on the other hand, pleasure simultaneously encourages addiction and other negative behaviors, i.e., motivational toxicity. It is a complex neurobiological phenomenon, relying on reward circuitry or limbic activity. It is important to realize that through the “Brain Reward Cascade” (BRC) endorphin and endogenous morphinergic mechanisms may play a role [23]. While natural rewards are essential for survival and appetitive motivation leading to beneficial biological behaviors like eating, sex, and reproduction, crucial social interactions seem to further facilitate the positive effects exerted by pleasurable experiences. Indeed, experimentation with addictive drugs is capable of directly acting on reward pathways and causing deterioration of these systems promoting hypodopaminergia [24]. Most would agree that pleasurable activities can stimulate personal growth and may help to induce healthy behavioral changes, including stress management [25]. The work of Esch and Stefano [26] concerning the link between compassion and love implicate the brain reward system, and pleasure induction suggests that social contact in general, i.e., love, attachment, and compassion, can be highly effective in stress reduction, survival, and overall health. Understanding the role of neurotransmission and pleasurable states both positive and negative have been adequately studied over many decades [26–37], but comparative anatomical and neurobiological function between animals and homo sapiens appear to be required and seem to be in an infancy stage. Finding happiness is different between apes and humans As stated earlier in this expert opinion one key to happiness involves a network of good friends [38]. However, it is not entirely clear exactly how the higher forms of satisfaction and pleasure are related to a sugar rush, winning a sports event or even sky diving, all of which augment dopamine release at the reward brain site. Recent multidisciplinary research, using both humans and detailed invasive brain analysis of animals has discovered some critical ways that the brain processes pleasure. Remarkably, there are pathways for ordinary liking and pleasure, which are limited in scope as described above in this commentary. However, there are **many brain regions**, often termed hot and cold spots, that significantly **modulate** (increase or decrease) our **pleasure or** even **produce the opposite** of pleasure— that is disgust and fear [39]. One specific region of the nucleus accumbens is organized like a computer keyboard, with particular stimulus triggers in rows— producing an increase and decrease of pleasure and disgust. Moreover, the cortex has unique roles in the cognitive evaluation of our feelings of pleasure [40]. Importantly, the interplay of these multiple triggers and the higher brain centers in the prefrontal cortex are very intricate and are just being uncovered. Desire and reward centers It is surprising that many different sources of pleasure activate the same circuits between the mesocorticolimbic regions (Figure 1). Reward and desire are two aspects pleasure induction and have a very widespread, large circuit. Some part of this circuit distinguishes between desire and dread. The so-called pleasure circuitry called “REWARD” involves a well-known dopamine pathway in the mesolimbic system that can influence both pleasure and motivation. In simplest terms, the well-established mesolimbic system is a dopamine circuit for reward. It starts in the ventral tegmental area (VTA) of the midbrain and travels to the nucleus accumbens (Figure 2). It is the cornerstone target to all addictions. The VTA is encompassed with neurons using glutamate, GABA, and dopamine. The nucleus accumbens (NAc) is located within the ventral striatum and is divided into two sub-regions—the motor and limbic regions associated with its core and shell, respectively. The NAc has spiny neurons that receive dopamine from the VTA and glutamate (a dopamine driver) from the hippocampus, amygdala and medial prefrontal cortex. Subsequently, the NAc projects GABA signals to an area termed the ventral pallidum (VP). The region is a relay station in the limbic loop of the basal ganglia, critical for motivation, behavior, emotions and the “Feel Good” response. This defined system of the brain is involved in all addictions –substance, and non –substance related. In 1995, our laboratory coined the term “Reward Deficiency Syndrome” (RDS) to describe genetic and epigenetic induced hypodopaminergia in the “Brain Reward Cascade” that contribute to addiction and compulsive behaviors [3,6,41]. Furthermore, ordinary “liking” of something, or pure pleasure, is represented by small regions mainly in the limbic system (old reptilian part of the brain). These may be part of larger neural circuits. In Latin, hedus is the term for “sweet”; and in Greek, hodone is the term for “pleasure.” Thus, the word Hedonic is now referring to various subcomponents of pleasure: some associated with purely sensory and others with more complex emotions involving morals, aesthetics, and social interactions. The capacity to have pleasure is part of being healthy and may even extend life, especially if linked to optimism as a dopaminergic response [42]. Psychiatric illness often includes symptoms of an abnormal inability to experience pleasure, referred to as anhedonia. A negative feeling state is called dysphoria, which can consist of many emotions such as pain, depression, anxiety, fear, and disgust. Previously many scientists used animal research to uncover the complex mechanisms of pleasure, liking, motivation and even emotions like panic and fear, as discussed above [43]. However, as a significant amount of related research about the specific brain regions of pleasure/reward circuitry has been derived from invasive studies of animals, these cannot be directly compared with subjective states experienced by humans. In an attempt to resolve the controversy regarding the causal contributions of mesolimbic dopamine systems to reward, we have previously evaluated the three-main competing explanatory categories: “liking,” “learning,” and “wanting” [3]. That is, dopamine may mediate (a) liking: the hedonic impact of reward, (b) learning: learned predictions about rewarding effects, or (c) wanting: the pursuit of rewards by attributing incentive salience to reward-related stimuli [44]. We have evaluated these hypotheses, especially as they relate to the RDS, and we find that the incentive salience or “wanting” hypothesis of dopaminergic functioning is supported by a majority of the scientific evidence. Various neuroimaging studies have shown that anticipated behaviors such as sex and gaming, delicious foods and drugs of abuse all affect brain regions associated with reward networks, and may not be unidirectional. Drugs of abuse enhance dopamine signaling which sensitizes mesolimbic brain mechanisms that apparently evolved explicitly to attribute incentive salience to various rewards [45]. Addictive substances are voluntarily self-administered, and they enhance (directly or indirectly) dopaminergic synaptic function in the NAc. This activation of the brain reward networks (producing the ecstatic “high” that users seek). Although these circuits were initially thought to encode a set point of hedonic tone, it is now being considered to be far more complicated in function, also encoding attention, reward expectancy, disconfirmation of reward expectancy, and incentive motivation [46]. The argument about addiction as a disease may be confused with a predisposition to substance and nonsubstance rewards relative to the extreme effect of drugs of abuse on brain neurochemistry. The former sets up an individual to be at high risk through both genetic polymorphisms in reward genes as well as harmful epigenetic insult. Some Psychologists, even with all the data, still infer that addiction is not a disease [47]. Elevated stress levels, together with polymorphisms (genetic variations) of various dopaminergic genes and the genes related to other neurotransmitters (and their genetic variants), and may have an additive effect on vulnerability to various addictions [48]. In this regard, Vanyukov, et al. [48] suggested based on review that whereas the gateway hypothesis does not specify mechanistic connections between “stages,” and does not extend to the risks for addictions the concept of common liability to addictions may be more parsimonious. The latter theory is grounded in genetic theory and supported by data identifying common sources of variation in the risk for specific addictions (e.g., RDS). This commonality has identifiable neurobiological substrate and plausible evolutionary explanations. Over many years the controversy of dopamine involvement in especially “pleasure” has led to confusion concerning separating motivation from actual pleasure (wanting versus liking) [49]. We take the position that animal studies cannot provide real clinical information as described by self-reports in humans. As mentioned earlier and in the abstract, on November 23rd, 2017, evidence for our concerns was discovered [50] In essence, although nonhuman primate brains are similar to our own, the disparity between other primates and those of human cognitive abilities tells us that surface similarity is not the whole story. Sousa et al. [50] small case found various differentially expressed genes, to associate with pleasure related systems. Furthermore, the dopaminergic interneurons located in the human neocortex were absent from the neocortex of nonhuman African apes. Such differences in neuronal transcriptional programs may underlie a variety of neurodevelopmental disorders. In simpler terms, the system controls the production of dopamine, a chemical messenger that plays a significant role in pleasure and rewards. The senior author, Dr. Nenad Sestan from Yale, stated: “Humans have evolved a dopamine system that is different than the one in chimpanzees.” This may explain why the behavior of humans is so unique from that of non-human primates, even though our brains are so surprisingly similar, Sestan said: “It might also shed light on why people are vulnerable to mental disorders such as autism (possibly even addiction).” Remarkably, this research finding emerged from an extensive, multicenter collaboration to compare the brains across several species. These researchers examined 247 specimens of neural tissue from six humans, five chimpanzees, and five macaque monkeys. Moreover, these investigators analyzed which genes were turned on or off in 16 regions of the brain. While the differences among species were subtle, **there was** a **remarkable contrast in** the **neocortices**, specifically in an area of the brain that is much more developed in humans than in chimpanzees. In fact, these researchers found that a gene called tyrosine hydroxylase (TH) for the enzyme, responsible for the production of dopamine, was expressed in the neocortex of humans, but not chimpanzees. As discussed earlier, dopamine is best known for its essential role within the brain’s reward system; the very system that responds to everything from sex, to gambling, to food, and to addictive drugs. However, dopamine also assists in regulating emotional responses, memory, and movement. Notably, abnormal dopamine levels have been linked to disorders including Parkinson’s, schizophrenia and spectrum disorders such as autism and addiction or RDS. Nora Volkow, the director of NIDA, pointed out that one alluring possibility is that the neurotransmitter dopamine plays a substantial role in humans’ ability to pursue various rewards that are perhaps months or even years away in the future. This same idea has been suggested by Dr. Robert Sapolsky, a professor of biology and neurology at Stanford University. Dr. Sapolsky cited evidence that dopamine levels rise dramatically in humans when we anticipate potential rewards that are uncertain and even far off in our futures, such as retirement or even the possible alterlife. This may explain what often motivates people to work for things that have no apparent short-term benefit [51]. In similar work, Volkow and Bale [52] proposed a model in which dopamine can favor NOW processes through phasic signaling in reward circuits or LATER processes through tonic signaling in control circuits. Specifically, they suggest that through its modulation of the orbitofrontal cortex, which processes salience attribution, dopamine also enables shilting from NOW to LATER, while its modulation of the insula, which processes interoceptive information, influences the probability of selecting NOW versus LATER actions based on an individual’s physiological state. This hypothesis further supports the concept that disruptions along these circuits contribute to diverse pathologies, including obesity and addiction or RDS.

#### Extinction outweighs and comes first.

Pummer 15 [Theron, Junior Research Fellow in Philosophy at St. Anne's College, University of Oxford. “Moral Agreement on Saving the World” Practical Ethics, University of Oxford. May 18, 2015] AT

There appears to be lot of disagreement in moral philosophy. Whether these many apparent disagreements are deep and irresolvable, I believe there is at least one thing it is reasonable to agree on right now, whatever general moral view we adopt: that it is very important to reduce the risk that all intelligent beings on this planet are eliminated by an enormous catastrophe, such as a nuclear war. How we might in fact try to reduce such existential risks is discussed elsewhere. My claim here is only that we – whether we’re consequentialists, deontologists, or virtue ethicists – should all agree that we should try to save the world. According to consequentialism, we should maximize the good, where this is taken to be the goodness, from an impartial perspective, of outcomes. Clearly one thing that makes an outcome good is that the people in it are doing well. There is little disagreement here. If the happiness or well-being of possible future people is just as important as that of people who already exist, and if they would have good lives, it is not hard to see how reducing existential risk is easily the most important thing in the whole world. This is for the familiar reason that there are so many people who could exist in the future – there are trillions upon trillions… upon trillions. There are so many possible future people that reducing existential risk is arguably the most important thing in the world, even if the well-being of these possible people were given only 0.001% as much weight as that of existing people. Even on a wholly person-affecting view – according to which there’s nothing (apart from effects on existing people) to be said in favor of creating happy people – the case for reducing existential risk is very strong. As noted in this seminal paper, this case is strengthened by the fact that there’s a good chance that many existing people will, with the aid of life-extension technology, live very long and very high quality lives. You might think what I have just argued applies to consequentialists only. There is a tendency to assume that, if an argument appeals to consequentialist considerations (the goodness of outcomes), it is irrelevant to non-consequentialists. But that is a huge mistake. Non-consequentialism is the view that there’s more that determines rightness than the goodness of consequences or outcomes; it is not the view that the latter don’t matter. Even John Rawls wrote, “All ethical doctrines worth our attention take consequences into account in judging rightness. One which did not would simply be irrational, crazy.” Minimally plausible versions of deontology and virtue ethics must be concerned in part with promoting the good, from an impartial point of view. They’d thus imply very strong reasons to reduce existential risk, at least when this doesn’t significantly involve doing harm to others or damaging one’s character. What’s even more surprising, perhaps, is that even if our own good (or that of those near and dear to us) has much greater weight than goodness from the impartial “point of view of the universe,” indeed even if the latter is entirely morally irrelevant, we may nonetheless have very strong reasons to reduce existential risk. Even egoism, the view that each agent should maximize her own good, might imply strong reasons to reduce existential risk. It will depend, among other things, on what one’s own good consists in. If well-being consisted in pleasure only, it is somewhat harder to argue that egoism would imply strong reasons to reduce existential risk – perhaps we could argue that one would maximize her expected hedonic well-being by funding life extension technology or by having herself cryogenically frozen at the time of her bodily death as well as giving money to reduce existential risk (so that there is a world for her to live in!). I am not sure, however, how strong the reasons to do this would be. But views which imply that, if I don’t care about other people, I have no or very little reason to help them are not even minimally plausible views (in addition to hedonistic egoism, I here have in mind views that imply that one has no reason to perform an act unless one actually desires to do that act). To be minimally plausible, egoism will need to be paired with a more sophisticated account of well-being. To see this, it is enough to consider, as Plato did, the possibility of a ring of invisibility – suppose that, while wearing it, Ayn could derive some pleasure by helping the poor, but instead could derive just a bit more by severely harming them. Hedonistic egoism would absurdly imply she should do the latter. To avoid this implication, egoists would need to build something like the meaningfulness of a life into well-being, in some robust way, where this would to a significant extent be a function of other-regarding concerns (see chapter 12 of this classic intro to ethics). But once these elements are included, we can (roughly, as above) argue that this sort of egoism will imply strong reasons to reduce existential risk. Add to all of this Samuel Scheffler’s recent intriguing arguments (quick podcast version available here) that most of what makes our lives go well would be undermined if there were no future generations of intelligent persons. On his view, my life would contain vastly less well-being if (say) a year after my death the world came to an end. So obviously if Scheffler were right I’d have very strong reason to reduce existential risk. We should also take into account moral uncertainty. What is it reasonable for one to do, when one is uncertain not (only) about the empirical facts, but also about the moral facts? I’ve just argued that there’s agreement among minimally plausible ethical views that we have strong reason to reduce existential risk – not only consequentialists, but also deontologists, virtue ethicists, and sophisticated egoists should agree. But even those (hedonistic egoists) who disagree should have a significant level of confidence that they are mistaken, and that one of the above views is correct. Even if they were 90% sure that their view is the correct one (and 10% sure that one of these other ones is correct), they would have pretty strong reason, from the standpoint of moral uncertainty, to reduce existential risk. Perhaps most disturbingly still, even if we are only 1% sure that the well-being of possible future people matters, it is at least arguable that, from the standpoint of moral uncertainty, reducing existential risk is the most important thing in the world. Again, this is largely for the reason that there are so many people who could exist in the future – there are trillions upon trillions… upon trillions. (For more on this and other related issues, see this excellent dissertation). Of course, it is uncertain whether these untold trillions would, in general, have good lives. It’s possible they’ll be miserable. It is enough for my claim that there is moral agreement in the relevant sense if, at least given certain empirical claims about what future lives would most likely be like, all minimally plausible moral views would converge on the conclusion that we should try to save the world. While there are some non-crazy views that place significantly greater moral weight on avoiding suffering than on promoting happiness, for reasons others have offered (and for independent reasons I won’t get into here unless requested to), they nonetheless seem to be fairly implausible views. And even if things did not go well for our ancestors, I am optimistic that they will overall go fantastically well for our descendants, if we allow them to. I suspect that most of us alive today – at least those of us not suffering from extreme illness or poverty – have lives that are well worth living, and that things will continue to improve. Derek Parfit, whose work has emphasized future generations as well as agreement in ethics, described our situation clearly and accurately: “We live during the hinge of history. Given the scientific and technological discoveries of the last two centuries, the world has never changed as fast. We shall soon have even greater powers to transform, not only our surroundings, but ourselves and our successors. If we act wisely in the next few centuries, humanity will survive its most dangerous and decisive period. Our descendants could, if necessary, go elsewhere, spreading through this galaxy…. Our descendants might, I believe, make the further future very good. But that good future may also depend in part on us. If our selfish recklessness ends human history, we would be acting very wrongly.” (From chapter 36 of On What Matters)

#### Governments are forced to use util and can only understand generalities.

**Goodin 95** (Robert, philsopher at the Research School of the Social Sciences, Utilitarianism as Public Philosophy. P. 62-63)

My larger argument turns on the proposition that there is something special about **the situation of public officials that makes utilitarianism more probable** for them than private individuals. Before proceeding with the large argument, I must therefore say what it is that makes it so special about public officials and their situations that make it both more necessary and more desirable for them to adopt a more credible form of utilitarianism. Consider, first, the argument from necessity. **Public officials are obliged to make their choices under uncertainty**, and uncertainty of a very special sort at that. All choices – public and private alike – are made under some degree of uncertainty, of course. But in the nature of things, private individuals will usually have more complete information on the peculiarities of their own circumstances and on the ramifications that alternative possible choices might have for them. **Public officials,** in contras**t,** **are** relatively **poorly informed as to the effects that their choices will have on individuals**, one by one. What **they typically** do **know** are **generalities: averages and aggregates. They know what will happen most often to most people** as a result of their various possible choices**, but that is all.** That is enough to allow public policy-makers to use the utilitarian calculus – assuming they want to use it at all – to choose general rules or conduct.

#### Plan text: The United States of America ought to recognize the unconditional right to strike.

## Advantage – Climate Change

#### Climate change is evident right now – we are on the brink of catastrophe and the point of no return

**Harvey 21’** (“We’re on the brink of catastrophe, warns Tory climate chief”, 8/7/2021, Fiona Harvey, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/aug/07/were-on-the-brink-of-catastrophe-warns-tory-climate-chief)

**The world will soon face “catastrophe” from climate breakdown if urgent action is not taken**, the British president of vital UN climate talks has warned. Alok Sharma, the UK minister in charge of the [Cop26 talks](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/cop26-glasgow-climate-change-conference-2021) to be held in Glasgow this November, told the Observer that **the consequences of failure would be “catastrophic**”: “I don’t think there’s any other word for it. **You’re seeing** on a daily basis **what is happening** across the world. **Last year was the hottest** on record, **the last decade the hottest** decade **on record.”** But Sharma also insisted the UK could carry on with fossil-fuel projects, in the face of mounting criticism of plans to license [new oil and gas fields](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/mar/24/uk-government-to-allow-new-north-sea-oil-and-gas-exploration). He defended the government’s record on plans to reach net zero emissions by 2050, which have been heavily criticised by the UK’s independent [Committee on Climate Change](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jun/25/road-to-net-zero-what-the-committee-on-climate-change-recommends), and dismissed controversies over his [travel schedule](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/aug/06/one-rule-for-them-alok-sharma-criticised-over-flights-to-30-countries). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world’s leading authority on climate science, will publish a [comprehensive report](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/aug/06/reduce-methane-or-face-climate-catastrophe-scientists-warn?fbclid=IwAR061pAQp1wAJM-wqHo_RsW0lwhkC_utM8iwv9h1Rppce-jooQuu3tkoJi8) on Monday showing how close humanity is to the brink of potentially irreversible disaster caused by extreme weather. “This is going to be the starkest warning yet that human behaviour is alarmingly accelerating global warming and this is why [Cop26](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/cop26-glasgow-climate-change-conference-2021) has to be the moment we get this right. **We can’t afford to wait** two years, five years, 10 years – this is the moment,” Sharma warned, in his first major interview since taking charge of the climate talks. “I don’t think we’re out of time but I think **we’re getting dangerously close to when we might** **be out of time**. We will see [from the IPCC] a very, very clear warning that unless we act now, we will unfortunately be out of time.” **The consequences of global heating were already evident**, he said. “**We’re seeing the impacts across the world** – **in the UK** **or the terrible flooding we’ve seen across Europe and China, or forest fires**,the record temperatures that we’ve seen in North America. **Every day you will see a new high** being recorded in one way or another across the world.” This was not about abstract science but people’s lives, he added. “Ultimately this comes down to the very real human impact this is having across the world. I’ve visited communities that as a result of climate change have literally had to flee their homes and move because of a combination of drought and flooding.” Sharma spoke exclusively to the Observer on the eve of the IPCC report to urge governments, businesses and individuals around the world to take heed, and press for stronger action on greenhouse gas emissions at the Cop26 conference, which he said would be almost the last chance. “This [IPCC report] is going to be a wake-up call for anyone who hasn’t yet understood why this next decade has to be absolutely decisive in terms of climate action. We will also get a pretty clear understanding that **human activity is driving climate change at alarming rates**,” he said. Disaster was not yet inevitable, and actions now could save lives in the future, he added: “**Every fraction of a degree rise** [in temperature] **makes a difference** and that’s why countries have to act now.”

#### Current labor laws pose a huge barrier for climate strikes – it’s too restrictive

**Ghazarian 19’** (“The Climate Strikers Walked Out of School. Next, Let’s Walk Off the Job”, Sydney Ghazarian, 11/5/2019, <https://inthesetimes.com/article/climate-change-strike-labor-union-school-strike-protest>, Sydney Ghazarian started the National Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) Ecosocialist Working Group and is a member of its current Steering Committee. She is also a climate organizer and an advisory board member for The Trouble.”

One possible route forward comes from Francisco Cendejas, a long-time labor organizer who helped start National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW). He suggests that unions could resolve to strike for a Green New Deal if a number of other national unions agreed to do so as well. The simple explanation for this ​“strike pact” approach is that there is safety in numbers, but the reasoning goes deeper. **The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and** U.S. **labor laws overtly favor employers over workers — and place strict parameters around striking. This imbalance has created a mountain of legal barriers preventing an entire union from going on strike — especially for a Green New Deal or other demands for the common good.**

#### Climate strikes are successful in spreading awareness – we need more to truly force action.

**Thunberg et al 19’** (“Why We Strike Again”, Greta Thunberg, Luisa Neubauer, Angela Valenzuela, 11/29/2019, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/climate-strikes-un-conference-madrid-by-greta-thunberg-et-al-2019-11>)

For more than a year, children and young **people** from **around the world have been striking for the climate**. We launched a movement that defied all expectations, with [millions](https://globalclimatestrike.net/7-million-people-demand-action-after-week-of-climate-strikes/) of people lending their voices – and their bodies – to the cause. We did this not because it was our dream, but because we didn’t see anyone else taking action to secure our future. And despite the vocal support we have received from many adults – including some of the world’s most powerful leaders – we still don’t. Striking is not a choice we relish; **we do it because we see no other options.** We have watched a string of United Nations climate conferences unfold. Countless negotiations have produced much-hyped but ultimately empty commitments from the world’s governments – the same **governments** that **allow** fossil-fuel **companies to** drill for ever-more oil and gas, and **burn away our futures** for their profit. Politicians and fossil-fuel companies have known about climate change for decades. And yet the politicians let the profiteers continue to exploit our planet’s resources and destroy its ecosystems in a quest for quick cash that threatens our very existence. Don’t take our word for it: scientists are [sounding the alarm](https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/advance-article/doi/10.1093/biosci/biz088/5610806). They [warn](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/26/climate/greenhouse-gas-emissions-carbon.html) that **we have never been less likely to limit the rise in global temperatures** to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels – the threshold beyond which the most destructive effects of climate change would be triggered. Worse, recent [research](https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/report/production-gap-report-2019) shows that we are on track to produce 120% more fossil fuels in 2030 than would be consistent with the 1.5°C limit. The concentration of climate-heating greenhouse gases in our atmosphere has reached a [record high](https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/greenhouse-gas-concentrations-atmosphere-reach-yet-another-high), with no sign of a slowdown. Even if countries fulfill their current emissions-reduction pledges, we are headed for a [3.2°C increase](https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2019). Young people like us bear the brunt of our leaders’ failures. Research [shows](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29295510) that pollution from burning fossil fuels is the world’s most significant threat to children’s health. Just this month, five million masks were [handed out](https://edition.cnn.com/2019/11/01/asia/delhi-pollution-schools-intl-hnk/index.html) at schools in New Delhi, India’s capital, owing to toxic smog. Fossil fuels are literally choking the life from us. The science is crying out for urgent action, and still our leaders dare to ignore it. So we continue to fight. After a year of strikes, **our voices are being heard. We are being invited to speak in the corridors of power.** At the UN, we [addressed](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAJsdgTPJpU) a room filled with world leaders. At the World Economic Forum in Davos, we met with prime ministers, presidents, and even the pope. We have spent hundreds of hours participating in panels and [speaking](https://www.ted.com/talks/greta_thunberg_school_strike_for_climate_save_the_world_by_changing_the_rules/transcript?language=en) with journalists and filmmakers. We have been [offered](https://time.com/5713794/greta-thunberg-turns-down-environment-prize/) awards for our activism. **Our efforts have helped to shift the wider conversation on climate change.** **People now increasingly discuss the crisis** we face, not in whispers or as an afterthought, but **publicly and with a sense of urgency**. **Polls confirm changing perceptions**. **One**[recent survey](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/sep/18/climate-crisis-seen-as-most-important-issue-by-public-poll-shows) **showed that, in seven of the eight countries included, climate breakdown is considered to be the most important issue facing the world**. Another confirmed that schoolchildren have led the way in raising awareness. **With public opinion shifting, world leaders, too, say that they have heard us.** They say that they agree with our demand for urgent action to tackle the climate crisis. But they do nothing. As they head to Madrid for the 25th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP25) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, we call out this hypocrisy. On the next two Fridays, **we will again take to the streets**: worldwide on November 29, and in Madrid, Santiago, and many other places on December 6 during the UN climate conference. Schoolchildren, young people, and adults all over the world will stand together, demanding that our leaders take action – not because we want them to, but because the science demands it. That action must be powerful and wide-ranging. After all, the climate crisis is not just about the environment. It is a crisis of human rights, of justice, and of political will. Colonial, racist, and patriarchal systems of oppression have created and fueled it. We need to dismantle them all. Our political leaders can no longer shirk their responsibilities. Some say that the Madrid conference is not very important; the big decisions will be made at COP26 in Glasgow next year. We disagree. As the science makes clear, we don’t have a single day to lose. We have learned that, **if we do not step up, nobody will**. So we will keep up a steady drumbeat of strikes, protests, and other actions. We will become louder and louder. We will do whatever it takes to persuade our leaders to unite behind science so clear that even children understand it. **Collective action works; we have proved that.** But to change everything, we need everyone. Each and every one of us must participate in the climate resistance movement. We cannot just say we care; we must show it. Join us. Participate in our upcoming climate strikes in Madrid or in your hometown. Show your community, the fossil-fuel industry, and your political leaders that you will not tolerate inaction on climate change anymore. With numbers on our side, we have a chance. And to the leaders who are headed to Madrid, our message is simple: the eyes of all future generations are upon you. Act accordingly.

#### The US is uniquely key in leading the fight against climate change

**Butcher 20’** (“The US must lead in the fight against climate change”, Danielle Butcher, 9/11/20, <https://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/515980-the-us-must-lead-in-the-fight-against-climate-change>)

The premise is simple: **climate change is a global challenge** and thus requires global solutions. **The United States has a major leadership role to play in this fight**, but the truth is that if we are fighting alone, we’ve already lost. A global approach to reducing emissions around the world is required. While international cooperation has always been used as a buzzword in climate discussions, previous attempts have fallen flat. We live in a chaotic world with a multitude of challenges, but we cannot allow the future of our planet to be lost in the noise. Carbon emissions don’t stay confined within a nation’s borders, so emissions anywhere affect people everywhere. Any serious climate plan must include measures for global engagement because we cannot solve climate change, and its many effects, by ourselves. **The U**nited **S**tates **produces** approximately [**15 percent**](https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/global-greenhouse-gas-emissions-data)**of global carbon emissions,** which by all means is **a significant amount**. However, this figure leaves 85 percent of emissions out of our hands, 30 percent of which come from China. While reaching net zero emissions in our own nation is a worthy goal, we can’t make global progress if we keep mitigation efforts within our borders. In fact, only [16 out of 197](https://www.euractiv.com/section/climate-environment/news/only-16-countries-meet-their-commitment-to-paris-agreement-new-study-finds/) countries signed on to the Paris climate accord are actually on track to meet their climate goals. Effects of climate change are felt in every corner of the world, so to help ourselves, we must help others too. [The American Climate Contract](http://www.climatesolution.eco/), a platform introduced by our organization, recognizes this reality and presents a new way forward. While climate change and emissions are the chief concern, energy poverty is also a serious problem globally. The American Climate Contract aims to help those at the frontlines of climate change and other environmental challenges because citizens of every country in the world need and deserve energy. By pursuing an innovation-based approach here at home, **we** can not only lower our own emissions, but also **export new technologies abroad to industrializing countries with high levels of emissions.** **Industrializing countries do not produce energy as cleanly as we do here in the United States**, so by innovating and creating new, clean technologies, **we’re helping everyone, including the environment**. The benefits of global engagement don’t start and stop with technology, though. Exporting **American energy, too, is beneficial** — not only for our nation, but for nations who are dependent on authoritarian regimes such as Iran and Russia for their energy. Not only are those countries growing geopolitical threats, but **American natural gas exports are significantly cleaner than Russian natural gas exports** and have anywhere from [41 to 47 percent](https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2019/09/f66/2019%20NETL%20LCA-GHG%20Report.pdf) lower lifecycle emissions. Exporting natural gas, renewable technologies and energy infrastructure technology will benefit **the U.S.** economy and **assist developing countries in lowering emissions and raising standards of living.** In addition to the national security component, it’s far easier to export technologies than it is to impose a domestic policy in another country. Instead of attempting to implement policy in an entirely different country with different politics, we can empower foreign governments with new technologies and cleaner energy sources. Not only is this more feasible, it’s more effective. That’s real American leadership. Trying to address climate change without international cooperation would be a grave mistake. Past international agreements may have failed to live up to their promises, but that doesn’t mean collaboration doesn’t have merit. **The United States has an opportunity to set a positive example for the rest of the world by promoting the increased development of innovative technologies and by producing cleaner energy for the world to use.** This approach makes economic and environmental sense and improves countless lives while mitigating the effects of a changing climate. There’s little time to wait and every reason to work together. We can make a difference domestically, without a doubt, but to truly adapt to climate change, we are all in this together.

**Warming causes extinction and turns every impact – no adaptation and each degree is worse**

**Krosofsky ’21** [Andrew, Green Matters Journalist, “How Global Warming May Eventually Lead to Global Extinction”, Green Matters, 03-11-2021, https://www.greenmatters.com/p/will-global-warming-cause-extinction]

Eventually, yes. **Global warming will invariably result in the mass extinction of millions of different species,** humankind included. In fact, **the Center for Biological Diversity says that global warming is currently the greatest threat to life on this planet**. **Global warming causes a number of detrimental effects on the environment that many species won’t be able to handle long-term**. Extreme weather patterns are shifting climates across the globe, eliminating habitats and altering the landscape. **As a result, food and fresh water sources are being drastically reduced**. Then, of course, **there are the rising global temperatures themselves, which many species are physically unable to contend with**. Formerly frozen arctic and antarctic regions are melting, increasing sea levels and temperatures. Eventually, **these effects will create a perfect storm of extinction conditions**. The melting glaciers of the arctic and the searing, **unmanageable heat indexes being seen along the Equator are just the tip of the iceberg, so to speak.** **The species that live in these climate zones have already been affected by the changes caused by global warming.** Take polar bears for example, whose habitats and food sources have been so greatly diminished that they have been forced to range further and further south. **Increased carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere and oceans have already led to ocean acidification**. **This has caused many species of crustaceans to either adapt or perish and has led to the mass bleaching of more than 50 percent of Australia’s Great Barrier Reef**, according to National Geographic. According to the Center for Biological Diversity, the current trajectory of global warming predicts that more than 30 percent of Earth’s plant and animal species will face extinction by 2050. By the end of the century, that number could be as high as 70 percent. We won’t try and sugarcoat things, humanity’s own prospects aren’t looking that great either. According to The Conversation, **our species has just under a decade left to get our CO₂ emissions under control. If we don’t cut those emissions by half before 2030, temperatures will rise to potentially catastrophic levels. It may only seem like a degree or so, but the worldwide ramifications are immense.** The human species is resilient. We will survive for a while longer, even if these grim global warming predictions come to pass, **but it will mean less food, less water, and increased hardship across the world — especially in low-income areas and developing countries. This increase will also mean more pandemics, devastating storms, and uncontrollable wildfires**.

## Advantage – Civil War

#### Unions weaker now but there’s a huge opportunity to gain momentum.

**Isidore 21’** (“US unions are better off, but still a long way from their former might”, Chris Isidore, 9/6/2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/06/business/unions-strength-labor-day/index.html>, Chris Isidore is a senior writer for CNN Business, where he covers the auto industry, airlines, labor and all other manner of breaking financial news. Over the last 30 years, he has covered most major US bankruptcies, including GM, Chrysler, Lehman Brothers, most US airlines and Sears, as well as the city of Detroit.)

**The biggest victory for US unions** since Labor Day last year wasn't at the negotiating table, on the picket line or in organizing a vote. It **was in the 2020** presidential **election.** In Joe **Biden**, organized labor **has the most**[**pro-union president**](http://www.cnn.com/2021/03/01/tech/biden-amazon-union/index.html) since at least Lyndon Johnson, or perhaps ever, depending upon who you ask. And **unions are** actually **more popular now** than they've been since their heyday. A survey by Gallup released last week found that 68% of r**espondents have a positive view of unions — the best reading for that question** dating back to 1965, and up from only 48% in 2009. Younger workers are even bigger backers of unions, with 77% of those 34 and younger having a positive view. "I think because of the pandemic, **the country has taken a second look at unions and they like what they see**," said Tim Schlittner, communications director for the AFL-CIO union federation. "**Workers are finding power in each other. And this is a moment of great opportunity for the labor movement to build on this momentum and grow our ranks**." There is also a generally more positive environment for workers today, with [more job openings than job candidates](http://www.cnn.com/2021/08/09/economy/record-job-openings-june/index.html) resulting in [rising wages](http://www.cnn.com/2021/04/28/tech/amazon-raising-wages/index.html) in many sectors of the economy. **But despite that, the very union-friendly administration and growing popularity, 2021 was once again a tough year for the nation's unions — which represent only a small sliver of US workers and are having trouble growing their numbers.** "**US unions are in a much weaker position than they were in the 50s, 60s, 70s**," said Alexander Colvin, dean of Cornell University's Industrial and Labor Relations School. "**There's opportunities now to revitalize, but it's an opportunity, not a reality yet**."

#### Strikes are necessary to sustain union strength.

**Reich, Adam, et al 20.** (Adam Reich received his PhD in sociology from UC Berkeley in 2012, and was a Robert Wood Johnson Health & Society Scholar at Columbia from 2012 to 2014.  He focuses on economic and cultural sociology.  Much of his research concerns how people make sense of their economic activities and economic positions within organizations.  Reich is the author of three books, the most recent of which is Selling Our Souls: The Commodification of Hospital Care in the United States (Princeton, 2014).  He is also the author of several peer-reviewed articles, which have appeared in journals such as the American Journal of Sociology and Social Science & Medicine. Education Ph.D.  University of California, Berkeley, 2012.) "Schooled by Strikes? The Effects of Large-Scale Labor Unrest on Mass Attitudes Toward the Labor Movement." Cambridge Core, 2 June 2020, www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/abs/schooled-by-strikes-the-effects-of-largescale-labor-unrest-on-mass-attitudes-toward-the-labor-movement/0B7101A887DCE4134E26B758D082C8DB.

Strikes and Labor Power in an Era of Union Decline 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: they 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.**

#### Unions are uniquely critical for reducing economic inequalities.

**EPI 21’** (“Unions help reduce disparities and strengthen our democracy”, Economic Policy Institute, 4/23/21, https://www.epi.org/publication/unions-help-reduce-disparities-and-strengthen-our-democracy/)

**Unions improve wages and benefits for all workers**, not just union members. **They help reduce income inequality by making sure all** Americans, and not just the wealthy elite, **share in the benefits of their labor. Unions also reduce racial disparities** in wages and raise women’s wages, **helping to counteract** disparate labor market outcomes by race and gender that result from **occupational segregation, discrimination, and other labor market inequities** related to structural racism and sexism. Finally, unions help win progressive policies at the federal, state, and local levels that benefit all workers. And conversely, where unions are weak, wealthy corporations and their allies are more successful at pushing through policies and legislation that hurt working people. **A strong labor movement protects workers, reduces disparities**, and strengthens our democracy. **Unions lower inequality** By bringing workers’ collective power to the bargaining table, unions are able to win better wages and benefits for working people—reducing income inequality as a result. As seen in Figure A, there was less income inequality in the decades following World War II than there is today. Not coincidentally, union membership was at its highest rate in 1945, just as the war was ending. But as union strength steadily declined—particularly after 1979—income inequality got worse, and it is now at its worst point since the Great Depression. **Deunionization depressed the wages of middle-wage earners** but had little impact on high-wage earners **and** therefore **greatly increased wage inequality** between these two groups. For instance, deunionization explains a third of the growth of the wage gap between high- and middle-wage earners over the 1979–2017 period.[1](https://www.epi.org/publication/unions-help-reduce-disparities-and-strengthen-our-democracy/#_note1) The **erosion of collective bargaining** is the second largest factor that suppressed wage growth and **fueled wage inequality over the last four decades**—only excessive unemployment had a larger impact.[2](https://www.epi.org/publication/unions-help-reduce-disparities-and-strengthen-our-democracy/#_note2) When unions are strong, they set wage standards for entire industries and occupations; they make wages more equal within occupations; and they close pay gaps between white workers and workers of color. The reasons **unions are such a major force for equality** are set out more fully below. Unions raise wages for both union and nonunion workers While union workers receive higher wages than nonunion workers, nonunion workers also benefit immensely from the presence of unions. This raises wages for working people and reduces wage inequality. We explain below. Union workers earn more than nonunion workers. On average, a worker covered by a union contract earns 10.2% more in hourly wages than someone with similar education, occupation, and experience in a nonunionized workplace in the same sector.[3](https://www.epi.org/publication/unions-help-reduce-disparities-and-strengthen-our-democracy/#_note3) When union density is high, nonunion workers benefit from higher wages. When the share of workers who are union members in an industry or occupation is relatively high, as it was in 1979, wages of nonunion workers are higher than they would otherwise be. For example, had union density remained at its 1979 level, weekly wages of nonunion men in the private sector would be 5% higher (that’s an additional $2,704 in earnings for year-round workers), while weekly wages for nonunion men in the private sector without a college education would be 8%, or $3,016 per year, higher.[4](https://www.epi.org/publication/unions-help-reduce-disparities-and-strengthen-our-democracy/#_note4) Figure B shows how much more nonunion workers would earn had union density remained the same, by gender. Figure C shows the numbers for nonunion workers without a college degree.

#### Economic inequality causes US civil war.

Aldhous 10-24-20

(Peter, https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/peteraldhous/political-violence-inequality-us-election)4r

Many Americans are clinging to the idea that if Joe Biden wins the presidential election, calm can return to a nation riven by protests and rattled by President Donald Trump’s authoritarian rhetoric. Not so fast, caution two academics who claim they have devised a measure of political instability that shows that the nation will still be a powder keg that is waiting to blow, even if a Biden landslide means that Trump has little choice but to step aside. “The tendency is to blame Trump, but I don’t really agree with that,” Peter Turchin, an evolutionary anthropologist at the University of Connecticut who studies the forces that drive political instability, told BuzzFeed News. “Trump is really not the deep structural cause.” The most dangerous element in the mix, argue Turchin and George Mason University sociologist Jack Goldstone, is the corrosive effect of inequality on society. They believe they have a model that explains how inequality escalates and leads to political instability: Worsened by elites who monopolize economic gains, narrow the path to social mobility, and resist taxation, inequality ends up undermining state institutions while fomenting distrust and resentment. Building on Goldstone’s work showing that revolutions tend to follow periods of population growth and urbanization, Turchin has developed a statistic called the political stress indicator, or PSI. It incorporates measures of wage stagnation, national debt, competition between elites, distrust in government, urbanization, and the age structure of the population. Turchin raised warning signs of a coming storm a decade ago, predicting that instability would peak in the years around 2020. “In the United States, we have stagnating or declining real wages, a growing gap between rich and poor, overproduction of young graduates with advanced degrees, and exploding public debt,” he wrote, in a letter to the journal Nature. “Historically, such developments have served as leading indicators of looming political instability.” Today, with the nation in turmoil, Turchin’s prediction seems remarkably prescient. We live in a pandemic hellscape that has disproportionately harmed Black and brown Americans and those living in poverty. We have widespread civil unrest over racial injustice. And we are hurtling toward an election in which Trump is stoking unfounded fears of voter fraud and refusing to commit to a peaceful transition of power. In August, Turchin gave himself a pat on the back for his predictive ability with an analysis showing a significant rise in political demonstrations and violent riots over the last 10 years. But he and Goldstone fear that much worse is to come. The political stress indicator for the US is rising rapidly, much like it did before the Civil War. Charts show a similar rise in the political stress indicator in the buildup to the Civil War and today When Goldstone talks about America’s darkest days in the 1860s, he provocatively calls it the “First Civil War.” He fears that we may be on the way to a second one, with the 2020 election serving as a potential “fire-starter” event. Goldstone has some credentials in predicting conflict. In 1994, shortly after the US military’s ill-fated efforts to support UN intervention in Somalia’s civil war, which led to the downing of two Black Hawk helicopters and the gruesome spectacle of a dead US soldier being dragged through the streets, Goldstone was tapped by the CIA to help lead the State Failure Task Force. This group of academic social scientists was asked to identify factors that predict when a nation is likely to spiral into chaos. The task force’s initial report, published in 1995, identified three risk factors that seemed to predict whether a state would fail within the next two years in about two-thirds of cases: high infant mortality, low openness to international trade, and level of democracy. On the last measure, partial democracies were more vulnerable to collapse than fully democratic states or autocratic regimes. Goldstone continued to work on the project, later renamed the Political Instability Task Force, until 2012, tweaking its statistical model to predict both civil wars and democratic collapses with about 80% accuracy over the same two-year lead time. He didn’t think of applying a similar approach to assess the risk of political conflict in the US until Turchin got in touch in 2015. “I didn’t expect political violence because I believed the US was a strong and flexible democracy,” Goldstone said. But he is now convinced that Turchin’s PSI heralds a disturbing future for the US that won’t be solved by politics as usual after the 2020 election, even if Trump is defeated and goes quietly. “If those trends continue after Trump departs, then the risks and the occurrence of violence will likely continue,” Goldstone told BuzzFeed News. “I’m worried about that no matter who wins,” he added. “The social problems are the gasoline. Trump is throwing matches.” The PSI doesn’t explicitly address America’s deep divisions over racial justice. “Race has been an enduring faultline, ever since the founding of the Republic,” Turchin said. But he argued that it’s the additional dynamics captured by the PSI that explain why tensions are boiling over right now. One key concern, according to Goldstone, is that people across the political spectrum have lost faith in government and political institutions. “In short, given the accumulated grievances, anger and distrust fanned for the last two decades, almost any election scenario this fall is likely to lead to popular protests on a scale we have not seen this century,” he and Turchin wrote in a recent article published by the Berggruen Institute, a think tank based in Los Angeles. This would hurtle the US into a period of political instability the researchers dubbed “the turbulent twenties.” “Given the Black Lives Matter protests and cascading clashes between competing armed factions in cities across the United States, from Portland, Oregon, to Kenosha, Wisconsin, we are already well on our way there,” the article said. “But worse likely lies ahead.” “The social problems are the gasoline. Trump is throwing matches.” Turchin said people who rule out the possibility of serious political violence in the US based on “the strength of American institutions” are being “unduly optimistic.” “The social system that we live in is extremely fragile, Turchin said. Other social scientists consulted by BuzzFeed News were skeptical that the US is on the brink of a civil war. But they were concerned about the trends highlighted by Goldstone and Turchin, and worried about the potential for violence around the coming election — especially from right-wing militia groups if Trump loses and contests the result. “No matter what the outcome is, it is going to be disputed by some components of the other side,” Craig Jenkins, a sociologist at Ohio State University who studies political violence, told BuzzFeed News. “The difference is that the Trump forces have militia that have some capacity for violence and mayhem.” One reason that most experts in conflict studies don’t predict an outright civil war as a consequence of the US’s gap between rich and poor is that inequality hasn’t emerged as a major driving factor in studies of such conflicts in the modern era. “Civil war has been predominantly a phenomenon in low-income countries,” James Fearon, a political scientist at Stanford University and coauthor of a 2003 paper that identified national poverty as an important condition that can lead to violent insurgency, told BuzzFeed News. Another influential study, published in 2000 by the economists Paul Collier of the University of Oxford and Anke Hoeffler, now at the University of Konstanz in Germany, suggested that an armed group’s ability to seize control over significant economic resources — such as diamonds in several conflict-prone African nations and drug crops in Colombia — was a key driver of modern civil wars. As a rich nation with a diverse and robust economy, the US should have a fairly low chance of falling into civil war according to these theories. And if push comes to shove and order needs to be restored by force, few experts in political conflict expect even a well-armed militia to be a match for federal law enforcement or the National Guard. The circumstances in the 19th century that led the US into the bloodiest conflict in its history were also unusual. The young nation was growing, adding states that either opposed or supported slavery, creating a fundamental economic and moral divide that couldn’t easily be resolved. “That was an irreconcilable dynamic,” Jenkins said. “I think you need the accumulation of irresolvable conflicts to get a true civil war.” But recent events, notably the plot by a group of right-wing militants to kidnap and potentially kill the Democratic governor of Michigan, Gretchen Whitmer, over her policies to limit the spread of the coronavirus, have shocked even skeptics of the idea that the US is teetering on the brink of civil conflict. “This is really concerning,” Fearon said. The PSI isn’t the only indicator that has set alarm bells ringing about the stability of the US. The Fund for Peace, a nonprofit based in Washington, DC, has developed a measure called the Fragile States Index (FSI) that, like the work of the State Failure Task Force, seeks to identify nations that are at risk of violence and instability from a range of underlying pressures including economic distress, refugee flows, and their record on human rights. Overall, the US looks reasonably healthy on the FSI, ranked 149th out of 178 countries for its potential for instability. But there are worrying signs for the US on a component of the FSI labeled “cohesion,” according to Fund for Peace programs manager Natalie Fiertz. “Over the past decade-plus, we’ve seen very rapid worsening of the score for those dimensions,” she told BuzzFeed News. The Fragile States Index shows that the US is becoming a less cohesive society. Chart showing how the cohesion component of the Fragile States Index for the US rose from the second best in the G7 in 2005 to the worst in 2019 Peter Aldhous / BuzzFeed News / Via fragilestatesindex.org ADVERTISEMENT This chart shows change in the average score across the three cohesion components of the FSI for the members of the G7 group of rich democracies. These measure security threats including terrorism and organized crime, factionalization of a nation’s elites, and schisms between different groups in society. Not surprisingly, given the intense and growing political polarization in the US, it is the last two measures that explain why the nation’s cohesion score has gone from the second best among the G7 to the worst in just 15 years. (In recent years, the UK has closely followed the US on this measure, driven by its own political divisions over Brexit.) But political polarization may be just another consequence of the economic inequality that Goldstone and Turchin argue lies at the heart of the US’s current vulnerability to political violence. Political scientists have put a great deal of energy into identifying why polarization in the US is escalating. But factors including the influence of partisan cable TV news and congressional redistricting don’t seem to provide the answer — the latter, for instance, can’t explain why the Senate has become increasingly divided. What is clear is that polarization in Congress has historically tracked closely with income inequality. And recent studies have shown that states with greater income inequality tend to have more polarized state legislatures — supporting the idea that inequality is a fundamental cause of America’s deep political divisions. “The social system that we live in is extremely fragile.” Even the International Monetary Fund has weighed in, warning nations of the corrosive effects of inequality in a 2017 publication: “While some inequality is inevitable in a market-based economic system, excessive inequality can erode social cohesion, lead to political polarization, and ultimately lower economic growth.” Inequality can also damage public health. In their 2009 book The Spirit Level, the British epidemiologists Kate Pickett of the University of York and Richard Wilkinson of the University of Nottingham looked at differences across rich nations for an index of health and social outcomes including infant mortality, life expectancy, mental illness, incarceration, and literacy. They could find no correlation with gross national income per person, but found a strong relationship between poor outcomes and inequality, measured by the gap in incomes between the top and bottom 20% of a country’s earners. “Inequality is a social stressor,” Wilkinson told BuzzFeed News. “One of the big changes in our understanding of social determinants of health is the role of chronic stress.” The pandemic has made inequality much worse — but it may also be a catalyst for change. Given all of the evidence linking inequality to a raft of bad outcomes, it should come as no surprise that unrest has surged during the coronavirus pandemic. Americans living in poverty and people of color have not only been disproportionately sickened and killed by the virus, but they have also been hit harder by the recession it has caused — which has further widened the gulf between rich and poor. “What we need is a new social contract that will enable us to get past extreme polarization to find consensus, tip the shares of economic growth back toward workers and improve government funding for public health, education and infrastructure,” Goldstone and Turchin wrote in their Berggruen Institute article. Can that really happen in today’s combat zone of weaponized social media, in which even modest proposals to ratchet back inequality are framed as “communism”? One hopeful sign is that the US has pulled back from the brink of chaos before through similar reforms, within the lifetime of its oldest citizens. In the 1930s, as parts of Europe slid into fascism, the US went in a different direction, electing Franklin D. Roosevelt to drag the nation out of the Great Depression by ushering in the New Deal. At least some social scientists think the US could pull off a similar feat again. “You can reform your way out of dramatically polarized societies,” said George Lawson of the Australian National University in Canberra, who has studied societal transformations including the peaceful transition to majority rule in South Africa. Even given Trump’s flouting of democratic norms and the current upsurge in civil unrest, Lawson believes the US, by and large, has withstood a political “stress test.” “I would err on the side that the system has shown to be more robust than fragile,” Lawson said. “One thing to come out of the past few years is an energization of political engagement that is healthy.”

#### Civil war causes extinction – nuclear powers get drawn in and start WWIII.

Michael Laitman, PhD, 8-25-17 [Professor of Ontology and Theory of Knowledge, PhD in Philosophy, MSc in Medical Bio-Cybernetics] "There Will Be No Winners in the Second Civil War," Newsmax, https://www.newsmax.com/MichaelLaitman/america-civil-war-newt-gingrich-don-lemon/2017/08/25/id/809867/

Earlier this week, CNN news anchor Don Lemon stated that the president “is clearly trying to ignite a civil war in this country.” In response to Lemon’s words, historian and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich said in an interview on "Tucker Carlson Tonight": “I think we should take the threat of civil war very seriously.” Referencing Dennis Prager’s piece, “America's Second Civil War,” Gingrich added, “What you’re seeing with Antifa, what you’re seeing on college campuses, what you’re seeing, to some extent, in the bureaucracy, is a real division of the country. …I wish we could all sing Kumbaya and come together but I don’t think that’s what’s gonna happen. …As a historian, my view is pretty straightforward: one side or the other wins.” America is already so rife with extremists on both sides of the political aisle that many people see war not only as imminent, but as virtually inevitable. If that’s the case, we’d better get busy digging ourselves bunkers… and graves. And not just in the U.S. A civil war in America will not end in America. If the country plunges into battle, many will be vying for the loot. China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, and others will destroy whatever the war doesn’t, the American empire will become history, and a third world war, with multiple nuclear powers, will follow. There will be no winners because, to quote Machiavelli, “Wars begin when you will, but they do not end when you please.” Is there really no alternative? I think there is, or I wouldn’t be writing here. In my previous column, I noted that President Trump needs to take a more appeasing tone in order to start building national cohesion. It’s great to state, “No matter our color, creed, religion or political party, we are ALL AMERICANS FIRST,” but doing so right after the Charlottesville murderous car ramming is the epitome of poor timing. Such statements should be part of the president’s routine, not rare occasions. Trump excels in using social media. If he uses it to broadcast a constant stream of unifying messages, notwithstanding the cynicism of the press, he will win over the American people’s hearts regardless of their political affiliation. I wholly agree that America requires massive infrastructure projects. But the real infrastructure of the country is its people, not its asphalt roads or railroads. The administration needs to implement ASAP solidarity programs that will create a uniform American identity. People need to learn that an ideology that undermines freedom of speech, freedom of religious practice, and freedom of the press, cannot use the First Amendment to legitimize itself. Even more importantly, people need to learn that plurality of views is not a recipe for war; it is precisely what has made America great in the first place. When people of different approaches and views strive for the same goal, they are far more likely to achieve it. If the goal is the well-being of all Americans, the entire country will benefit from it, and this goal should top the priority list of every American. It might not seem possible to patch up the divided United States, but 1) no one has ever sincerely tried, and 2) the other option is war. With my students, I have developed simple and easily applicable techniques that create a sense of unity and connection even among the most unlikely populations, such as Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, ultra-Orthodox and devout agnostics, and affluent and needy. These techniques work wonders wherever we have tried them: North America, Western and Eastern Europe, and in Israel. Today’s world is pushing toward connection. The interconnectedness of reality requires that we learn how to work in a world where everyone is dependent on everyone else. When we think in terms of “one side or the other wins,” we cannot succeed because we are perpetuating a mindset of separation. This will inevitably create unions of extremists that will feed on hatred of the other side, which in turn will lead to war. The only way to avoid this route is to make unity mainstream. If this seems unrealistic, think of your own body. Without the unity of radically different organs all working in unison for the common cause of sustaining you and keeping you healthy, you would not exist. Therefore, unity is not unrealistic; it is the only realistic option for society. The sooner we make American solidarity the prime value of America, the better it is for the entire country. Any decision that Trump’s administration and Congress make from here on should first and foremost promote unity and solidarity because this is truly the only realistic option.