## 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.

## Advantage – Climate Strikes

#### 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**.

#### Climate change perpetrates slow violence that hurts the most vulnerable

Nelson 16 – Sara Nelson is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Geography, Environment, and Society at the University of Minnesota. Her research explores the political economy of conservation and environmental management (Sara Nelson, 2/17/16, “The Slow Violence of Climate Change”, JacobIn, [https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/02/cop-21-united-nations-paris-climate-change/)](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/02/cop-21-united-nations-paris-climate-change/)//A-Sharma)

The Paris Agreement, achieved December 12 at the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United National Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP21), has been heralded as a “[turning point for humanity](http://content.sierraclub.org/press-releases/2015/12/sierra-club-paris-climate-agreement-turning-point-humanity)” and “[a new type of international cooperation](http://www.wri.org/blog/2015/12/paris-agreement-turning-point-climate-solution).” In his remarks to the General Assembly following the close of COP21, UN Secretary General [Ban Ki-moon](http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sgsm17417.doc.htm) called it “a triumph for people, the planet, and multilateralism.” More critical voices have pointed to the “[wrinkles](http://fpif.org/seven-wrinkles-paris-climate-deal/)” that mar the agreement, while influential climate scientist James Hanson has dismissed it as “[just worthless words](http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/climate-scientists-paris-1.3366751).” Most commentary falls in a middle ground, viewing the agreement as an important, if faltering,[step in the right direction](http://www.economist.com/news/international/21683990-paris-agreement-climate-change-talks): even if we’re not entirely happy with what has been achieved, that something was achieved at all signals a “[political will](http://earthinnovation.org/2015/12/paris-unifying-global-political-will/)” for change. But the drama and significance of the COP as an event isn’t primarily about the emergence of an agreement. The history of international climate negotiations — with the exception of the spectacular failure at Copenhagen — boasts a long line of Outcomes, Accords, and even Protocols. Throughout, emissions have continued not only unabated, but [at an accelerated pace](https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/ar5/pr_wg3/20140413_pr_pc_wg3_en.pdf). Bolivian president Evo Morales remarked on this uncomfortable truth at last year’s COP20 in Lima, when he admonished delegates for having little to show for over two decades of climate change negotiations other than “a heavy load of hypocrisy and neocolonialism.” The COP as an event, then, does not simply represent the failure to contend with the ongoing catastrophe of climate change. Its very process perpetrates what Rob Nixon calls the “slow violence” of climate change. Nixon uses this term to describe how contemporary imperialism transfers its toxic byproducts to peoples and ecosystems at the peripheries of the global economy, challenging us to recognize imperial violence in the cumulative, attritional, and mundane forms of death and disease that do not resolve into moments of spectacular destruction**. Climate change**, for Nixon, is the ultimate expression of slow violence, a “[temporal and geographical outsourcing](http://harvardpress.typepad.com/hup_publicity/2013/11/when-slow-violence-sprints-rob-nixon.html)” of environmental devastation to the most vulnerable populations and to future generations, a “discounting” of lives and livelihoods that cannot prove their worth in economic terms. But if climate change is “slow violence” in terms of its cumulative effects, it is equally slow in its execution — and nothing illustrates this quite so effectively as the trudging pace of international negotiations. Geopolitical power operates here in decidedly non-spectacular ways, through the procedural minutiae of negotiations over subtleties of wording. The drama of urgency around the production of an outcome distracts from the reality of negotiations as a long process of strategic refusal, whereby wealthy countries deny their historical responsibility for global emissions and thereby lock in catastrophic climate trajectories. Rather than heralding the success of an agreement or rejecting it outright as a failure, we should attend to the COP as an instance of slow violence in action.

## Advantage – Democracy

#### First is civic engagement – strikes increase democratic participation which reinvigorates democracy.

McElwee 15 [Sean; Research Associate at Demos; “How Unions Boost Democratic Participation,” The American Prospect; 9/16/15; https://prospect.org/labor/unions-boost-democratic-participation/]

Labor organizer Helen Marot once observed, "The labor unions are group efforts in the direction of democracy." What she meant is that more than simply vehicles for the economic interests of workers (which they certainly are), labor unions also foster civic participation for workers. And nowhere is this clearer than in voter turnout, which has suffered in recent years along with union membership. Indeed, new data from the Census Bureau and a new analysis of American National Election Studies data support the case that unions' declining influence has also deeply harmed democracy.

In 2014, voter turnout was abysmal, even for a midterm. Census data suggest that only 41.9 percent of the citizen population over 18 turned out to vote. However, as I note in my new Demos report Why Voting Matters, there are dispiriting gaps in turnout across class, race, and age. To examine how unions might affect policy, I performed a new analysis of both Census Bureau and American National Election Studies data. The data below, from the 2014 election, show the differences in voter turnout between union and non-union workers (the sample only includes individuals who were employed, and does not include self-employed workers). While only 39 percent of non-union workers voted in 2014, fully 52 percent of union workers did.

As part of ongoing research, James Feigenbaum, an economics PhD candidate at Harvard, ran a regression using American National Election Studies data suggesting that union members are about 4 percentage points more likely to vote and 3 points more likely to register (after controlling for demographic factors) and individuals living in a union household are 2.5 points more likely to vote and register. This is largely in line with the earlier estimates of Richard Freeman.

These numbers may appear modest, but in a close national election they could be enough to change the result.

Other research has found an even stronger turnout effect from unions. Daniel Stegmueller and Michael Becher find that after applying numerous demographic controls, union members are 10 points more likely to vote.

What's particularly important is that unions boost turnout among low- and middle-income individuals. In a 2006 study, political scientists Jan Leighley and Jonathan Nagler found that, "the decline in union membership since 1964 has affected the aggregate turnout of both low and middle-income individuals more than the aggregate turnout of high-income individuals." In 2014, the gap between unions and non-union workers shrunk at the highest rung of the income ladder. There was a 15-point gap among those earning less than $25,000 (40 percent turnout for union workers, and 25 percent turnout for non-union workers). Among those earning more than $100,000, the gap was far smaller (49 percent for non-union workers and 52 percent for union workers).

Individuals living in union households are also more progressive than those in non-union households. I examined 2012 ANES data and find that union households aren't largely different from non-union households on many issues regarding government spending, but they are more likely to have voted for Obama, identify as Democratic, and support a robust role for the government in reducing income inequality. When looking at union members specifically, the gaps become slightly larger.

More upscale union members are far more progressive than their non-union counterparts. Non-union households with an income above $60,000 oppose government intervention to reduce inequality by 11 points, with 32.2 percent in favor and 43.4 percent against. But richer union households support government intervention, with 42.5 percent in favor and 29.9 percent opposed. As Richard B. Freeman has pointed out, "union members are more likely to vote for a Democrat for the House or Presidency than demographically comparable nonunion voters." He similarly finds that "unionism moves members to the left of where they would be given their socioeconomic status," in line with the data I examined from 2012.

A 2013 study by Jasmine Kerrissey and Evan Schofer finds that union members are not only more likely to vote, but also more likely to belong to other associations, and to protest. They also find that these effects are strongest among people with lower levels of education, suggesting that unions may help mobilize the least politically active groups. A recent study of European countries finds union members vote more and identifies those aspects of union membership that contribute to the higher turnout.

The strongest factor is that workers who engage in democratic organizations in the workplace (via collective bargaining) are more likely to engage in democracy more broadly by, for instance, voting.

Other studies support the idea that civic participation creates a feedback loop that leads to higher voting rates. Another factor is that union members make more money, and higher income is correlated with voting behavior. Finally, union members are encouraged by peers and the union to engage in politics, which also contributes to higher levels of turnout.

It's not entirely surprising that politicians who savage unions often share a similar contempt for the right to vote. Democracy in the workplace leads to democracy more broadly throughout society. Workers with more democratic workplaces are more likely to democratically engage in in society. Further, when unions and progressives demonstrate that government can benefit them, Americans are more likely to want to participate in decision-making. For all these reasons, unions play a unique and indispensable role in the progressive project. As Larry Summers, certainly not a leftist, recently argued, "the weakness of unions leaves a broad swath of the middle class largely unrepresented in the political process."

#### Second - the right to strike flips the concentration of power – makes it key to preserve democracy.

**IER 17** (The IER exists to inform the debate around trade union rights and labour law by providing information, critical analysis, and policy ideas through our network of academics, researchers and lawyers. We were established in February 1989 as an independent organisation to act as a focal point for the spread of new ideas in the field of labour law. In 1994 the Institute became a registered charity.) "UN Rights Expert: Right to Strike is Essential to Democracy." IER, 10 Mar. 2017, www.ier.org.uk/news/un-rights-expert-right-strike-essential-democracy/.

The United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai, has reminded member states of the International Labour Organization (ILO) – including the UK – that they have a positive obligation to uphold the right to strike. Speaking at an ILO meeting on Monday 06 March 2017 in Geneva, Kiai argued that **the right to strike is fundamental to the preservation of democracy.** “**The concentration of power in one sector –** whether in the hands of government or business – **inevitably leads to the erosion of democracy, and an increase in inequalities and marginalization** with all their attendant consequences. **The right to strike is a check on this concentration of power**,” he explained. The right to strike has been established in international law as a corollary to the right of freedom of association for decades, and is enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights as Article 11. As a member state of the ILO and of the EU, the UK is legally obliged to uphold the right to strike, although through the Trades Union Act 2016 and the anti-trade union laws that preceded it, the government is making it harder and harder for trade unions to take industrial action. Kiai criticised such actions, saying government’s have a duty not to impede workers’ ability to take industrial action. “I deplore the various attempts made to erode the right to strike at national and multilateral levels,” the expert said, reminding delegates: “**Protest action** in relation to government social and economic policy, and against negative corporate practices, forms part of the basic civil liberties whose **respect is essential for the meaningful exercise of trade union rights.** **This right enables them to engage with companies and governments on a more equal footing, and Member States have a positive obligation to protect this right, and a negative obligation not to interfere with its exercise.”**

#### Reviving unions is also critical to restoring global democracy

Nussbaum 19 [Karen Nussbaum, former Director of the United States Women's Bureau at the Department of Labor with a BA from Goddard College, 2019, “Unions and Democracy,” Labor Studies Journal, https://sci-hub.se/https://doi.org/10.1177/0160449X19890523]/Kankee

Nottage was commissioned to write a play about an American revolution. She chose de-industrialization. Trump had not yet been elected when the play was written, but “Trumpism” is the coda in real life. I’ve seen this story repeated in communities across the country. Many have become inured to the decline of unions but were unprepared for the rise of authoritarianism around the globe. “You can’t have a strong middle class without unions, and you can’t have democracy without a strong middle class.” That succinct analysis didn’t come from a labor leader but from Tim Collins, CEO of the private equity firm Ripplewood. Collins is not representative of business leaders, but he is right. The link between unions and the middle class is well-made. But how important are unions to democracy? Very. Workers Do with Less So Big Business Gets More The reality depicted in “Sweat” started years ago, around the time I got my start in the labor movement. I got a job as a clerk-typist in 1970 and organized my coworkers— women office workers in Boston and then nationally in 9to5, a national association and our sister organization, District 925, SEIU. We built 9to5 on the wave of women’s liberation, a term our members would have rejected. But we were confronted by corporate opposition, characterized by an abrupt shift in strategy to maximize profits in an increasingly competitive world. American employers chose to cut workers’ pay. To do that, companies had to break workers’ collective power. Business Week laid it out in stark terms in a 1974 editorial: “It will be a bitter pill for many American to swallow the idea of doing with less so that big business can have more.” Bennett Harrison and Barry Bluestone (1988) called this new strategy and the corporate restructuring and the polarization of America it created “The Great U-Turn.” Rather than compete with Germany, Japan, and Scandinavia on product quality, worker productivity, and skill level, corporations slashed wages and benefits, and outsourced jobs. I remember discovering that law offices were outsourcing the typing of legal briefs to Asia, and coming to terms with the fact that it was cheaper to have non-English-speaking workers type what to them would be nonsense characters than to employ American workers who were likely not making much more than minimum wage. Union busting firms sprang up to go after organized industries. In the 1980s and 1990s, unions suffered hallmark defeats throughout the economy: PATCO in transportation,1 Phelps-Dodge in mining,2 Hormel in food processing,3 and Caterpillar in manufacturing,4 to name a few. Union busters even went after 9to5. One seminar which focused on beating back clerical worker organizing had a slide show warning “Don’t be fooled into thinking you need to look out for the likes of Jimmy Hoffa . . . Here’s who you should be worried about” with a picture of me.5 Americans did with less so that banks and big business could have more. The wealth from productivity gains, which had been distributed relatively evenly after World War II and built the middle class, now skewed dramatically to the top. According to Joseph Stiglitz, Some 90 percent [of American citizens] have seen their incomes stagnate or decline in the past 30 years. This is not surprising, given that the United States has the highest level of inequality among the advanced countries and one of the lowest levels of opportunity. The Economic Policy Institute (2018) reports that income inequality is continuing at such a dramatic pace that federal data can’t keep up with it. From Collective Power to Self-Reliance Public consciousness changed as well. In the 1970s, when I asked working women, “who do you turn to if you have a problem on the job?” they imagined calling their Congressperson or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, National Organization of Women, or 9to5. Over the years, their view of their options narrowed: “I’d complain to a co-worker”; “I’d call my mother”; “I’d pray to God.” After some years, the most typical answer was, “No one. I rely on myself.” Shaun Barclay, international secretary-treasurer of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), remembers being part of a strong community in his poor neighborhood. The community’s cohesion was reinforced by his job as a union clerk at an organized grocery store at the age of 16. But over the years he has seen the erosion of communal values in popular culture. “When I was young, the most popular magazine was Life. It was replaced by People—not as comprehensive as Life but still pretty broad. Us came along, narrower than People, to be replaced finally by Self.” Working America, the community affiliate of the AFL-CIO, sees the effects of declining unions as they go door to door in working-class communities. With twelve million conversations over the last sixteen years, they found fewer people who had a family member in a union. Without the anchor of a labor union, Working America canvassers found that working people were vulnerable to right-wing social wedge issues, and since 2016 more explicitly racist appeals. Unions, a Cornerstone of Civic Life Unions provide trusted information to members about issues and elections and boost voter civic participation. Union members are 12 points more likely to vote than nonunion workers (Freeman 2003). The passage of Right to Work laws reduced turnout by 2 percent in presidential elections (Feigenbaum, Hertel-Fernandez, and Williamson 2018). And democracy declines with union density. In states with low union density (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor 2018), new voter suppression laws (Brennan Center for Justice n.d.) were passed in ten states,6 compared to two states with high union density.7 How does the union have this impact? By engaging it’s members on politics. Consider one historical example. One million women belonged to the United Auto Workers (UAW) Union Women’s Auxiliary in the 1950s. The Auxiliary’s membership was far more than the union’s. It was the biggest political action organization in the country. The women had an ambitious agenda. They lobbied for free nurseries for working mothers, maternity leave, equal pay, and an end to job discrimination against African Americans. And, according to the UAW, the women led discussions around the dinner table with their children about the role of work and unions. Union influence on members was tested when Barack Obama ran for president in 2008. Elected labor leaders struggled with how to communicate to white members who didn’t want to vote for a black man. Rich Trumka, then secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, led by example in a speech to the United Steelworkers that fall. He described meeting a woman in his home town of Nemocolin, Pennsylvania. They talked about the election. “I just don’t trust Obama,” she said. When Trumka pressed her on why, she admitted, “because he’s black.” Trumka then said, Look around. Nemacolin’s a dying town. There’re no jobs here. Kids are moving away because there’s no future here. And here’s a man, Barack Obama, who’s going to fight for people like us and you won’t vote for him because of the color of his skin. He went on to tell his steelworker audience, Brothers and sisters, we can’t tap dance around the fact that there are a lot of folks out there just like that woman. A lot of them are good union people; they just can’t get past this idea that there’s something wrong with voting for a black man. Well, those of us who know better can’t afford to look the other way. Labor leaders around the country leaned into this complicated, racially charged discussion with members. A massive member outreach campaign reached one-third of union members at the workplace, and 83 percent received mail from their unions about the election. Sixty-seven percent of union members voted for Obama that year.8 The Culinary Workers Union 226, UNITE HERE in Las Vegas is a stunning example of member political mobilization today. They represent 60,000 workers who come from 178 countries and speak more than forty languages. Despite these challenges, they have good paying, stable jobs in hotels and casinos. They are engaged and militant, and run the most impressive political outreach program in the country by building community among their members. Their members can get two months of time off to work on elections, and they have been turning the state a political “blue.” Organizers for Working America connect with working people on economic issues and find common ground outside of a workplace context through door-todoor canvassing. Canvasser Mike Logan worked on the 2017 Virginia governor’s race near Lynchburg, a very conservative part of the state. “Who are you voting for?” Mike asked a middle-aged white male voter. “The Republican.” “What’s your biggest issue?” Mike continued. “Confederate statues.” “Well, check out this petition for expanding Medicaid,” Mike pressed on. “Oh yeah, my daughter’s on Medicaid,” the voter responded, signing the petition, talking to Mike about the election, and being open to now voting for the Democrat. Those conversations resulted in moving the vote by 8 points in a part of the state that voted more than 20 points for Trump the year before.9 The Rise of Authoritarianism The democratic civic space provided by unions and the subsequent decline of unions as a countervailing force to corporate power, contributes to the appalling trends of the last fifty years: Gilded Age levels of inequality, devastated communities, and heightened civic polarization by race, religion, and ethnic origin. These conditions have led to a wave of autocratic governments around the globe. Alarm is growing. How Democracies Die (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019) is a New York Times bestseller; The People Vs. Democracy (Mounk 2019) warns, “this may be our last chance to save democracy.” When people lose high-paying, unionized jobs they do not just lose their footing in the middle class; rather they also stand to lose a whole set of social connections that structure their lives and give them meaning. Cas Mudde (2019) in The Far Right Today describes the evolution of right-wing ideologies since World War II. “In the fourth wave, which roughly started in the 21st century, radical right parties have become mainstreamed and, increasingly normalized, not just in Europe, but across the world.” Unions, Bridging Divides I talked to union leaders in Minnesota about how they deal with the rise of anti-democratic ideologies and how they bridge divides among their members in a state that voted both for Ilhan Omar in Minneapolis and Donald Trump in the southern and northern parts of the state. “We need more organizations where people take minutes!” insisted Bethany Winkels,10 political director of the Minnesota AFL-CIO: There’s a lack of opportunity for people to experience democracy—debate issues, argue about how to spend dues money, vote, take minutes—the tools of transparency and accountability. People need to experience power on issues. They need structures and systems. Unions are a place where people can get that, and can change their minds. Political strategist Michael Podhorzer says, “there is a growing consensus that unions are an agent keeping authoritarianism at bay.”11 He cites the daily work of union activists who handle grievances, bargain contracts, and organize new workers. In each instance, to be successful you have to include everyone. And success is tangible, in better wages and benefits, fair working conditions, and solidarity. He notes that studies show that union members are more likely to have racially progressive views than nonunion working people. “Can you have a liberal progressive America without unions? (Plumer 2012)” asks historian Nelson Lichtenstein? “History says no. For 200 years the existence of the union movement has been wedded to the rise of democracy. We saw this here, in South Korea, in Spain, in Africa.” And the decline of unions is wedded to the rise of the authoritarianism. A major shift by working-class voters in Brazil elected right-winger Jair Bolsonaro in October 2018. Brazilian sociologist Ruy Braga (2019) argues that “Bolsonaro’s election marked the decline of trade unions as the primary site of working-class organization; and the rise of Evangelical churches in their place” with collective identities being shaped by the church rather than by unions. Braga points to a painful symbol of this shift in influence in the working class—the sale of the labor federation, CUT, headquarters in Sao Paulo to the World Church of the Power of God. On the positive side is Tunisia, the birthplace of the Arab Spring in 2011. The union federation backed the uprising, 150,000 workers went on strike, and President Ben Ali fled the country. The Nobel Committee recognized the role of unions in promoting democracy when it granted the 2015 Peace Prize to the Tunisian General Labor Union as one of four civic society partners (the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet), which created a constitutional form of government. Solutions: Policy + Organizing We can strengthen unions and rebuild this crucial element of civic society through public policy. The key bill for broadening the rights of workers to organize in Congress is the Protect the Right to Organize (PRO) Act. It eliminates right to work provisions, expands the coverage of eligible workers, prohibits the use of permanent replacement workers during strikes, repeals the restriction on secondary activity, provides for first contract arbitration, addresses misclassification of workers and the overuse of independent contractors, and imposes much tougher penalties for employer violations. There are other bills focused on expanding bargaining rights to all public sector workers. But good legislation will need much more than rhetorical from politicians. Lynn Rhinehart, labor lawyer and former general counsel of the AFL-CIO, argues that as part of strengthening protections for workers engaged in collective action, giving workers the power to act in solidarity with each other beyond the borders of their own workplaces is key: Workers should have the right to require multiple employers to sit down and bargain with them at the same time. And the law needs to allow for strikes, picketing, and other solidarity actions by workers outside their own workplace, including up and down the supply chain.12 Rhinehart is cautious about embracing a tripartite wage board-type system to set wages for an industry. “I worry that a focus on government wage boards might undermine efforts to build strong, democratic, member-based worker organizations because of the distance this government process puts between workers and the decisions affecting their working lives.”13 Worker mobilization is key to getting new laws passed and enforced. Union organizing, including in new forms, is growing. The wave of teachers’ strikes continues throughout the country. Gig drivers are finding ways to bargain, with the help of unions including the Teamsters, National Taxi Workers Alliance, and the Machinists union. And developers in the video game industry are reacting to profit maximization at their expense, calling for unionization. These gamers are getting support from the International Association of Theater Stage Employees, which represents illustrators and others in the entertainment industry, the Writers Guild East, and a new association called Game Workers Unite. These are encouraging efforts, but still not at the scale we need to turn around historic low union density. In the meantime, we need to build intermediate forms of organization that bridge divides within the working class and promote collective power. A number of organizations are connecting with workers through membership: Working America, which reaches more than half a million working people face-to-face every year, two-thirds of whom sign up as members; Fight for $15 with organizing in 300 cities around the world; and local advocacy organizations such as Casa de Maryland, organizing immigrant workers since 1985. Building organizations that confront citizen polarization isn’t easy. Josh Lewis,14 a long-time Working America lead organizer, talked about how ugly it can get and why he perseveres. “There was a lot of hate at the doors,” Josh summed up his experience as a black organizer in white working-class communities in 2018: It was especially bad for black women. Our biggest challenge was to keep people on the job. It wasn’t enough for me to do one-on-ones with black staff. We went to Sartre in the tool box. I said, “We’re in this fight because it’s the right thing to do. We may not win. But we are fighting fascism, staring down the beast.” We expect the hostility to be worse in 2020, when the worst racists will feel backed into a corner and come out even more. But I’m not going to let them get me down. The fire in my belly is too strong. There is a crisis in democracy. We should heed Bethany Winkels’ call for democratic structures, and Josh Lewis’ challenge to have the passion and discipline that is needed. We need unions, not because they boost turnout and change a voter’s choice, but because they create the muscle memory of democratic control. Without that, democracy is lost.

#### **Democratic decline means weakened relations and international order. Tons of impacts – conflict, climate change, violence, and instability.**

Kendall-Taylor 16 [Andrea; Deputy national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the National Intelligence Council, Senior associate in the Human Rights Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington; “How Democracy’s Decline Would Undermine the International Order,” CSIS; 7/15/16; <https://www.csis.org/analysis/how-democracy%E2%80%99s-decline-would-undermine-international-order>/]

**Democratic decline would** weaken U.S. partnerships and erode an important foundation for U.S. cooperation abroad. [Research demonstrates](file:///C:\Users\PMeylan\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\5V2CJVRN\160715_KendallTaylor_DemocracysDecline_Commentary.docx#http://cmp.sagepub.com/content/18/1/49.abstract) that domestic politics are a key determinant of the international behavior of states. In particular, **democracies** are **more likely to form alliances and cooperate more fully with other democracies than with autocracies**. Similarly, **authoritarian countries have established mechanisms for cooperation and sharing of “worst practices.” An increase in authoritarian countries**, then, **would provide a broader platform** for coordination that could enable these countries to overcome their divergent histories, values, and interests—factors that are frequently cited as obstacles to the **formation of a cohesive challenge to the U.S.-led international system**. Recent examples support the empirical data. **Democratic backsliding in Hungary and** the hardening of **Egypt’s autocracy** under Abdel Fattah el-Sisi **have led to enhanced relations between these countries and Russia. Likewise, democratic decline in Bangladesh has led Sheikh Hasina Wazed and her ruling Awami League to seek closer relations with China and Russia**, in part **to mitigate Western pressure and bolster** the **regime’s domestic standing**. Although none of these burgeoning relationships has developed into a highly unified partnership, democratic backsliding in these countries has provided a basis for cooperation where it did not previously exist. And while the United States certainly finds common cause with authoritarian partners on specific issues, **the** depth and reliability of such cooperation is limited. Consequently, **further democratic decline could** seriously compromise **the United States’ ability to form the kinds of deep partnerships that will be required** **to confront** today’s increasingly complex challenges. Global issues such as **climate change, migration, and** violent extremism demand the coordination and cooperation that democratic backsliding would put in peril. Put simply, **the United States is a less effective and influential actor if it loses its ability to rely on its partnerships** with other democratic nations. A **slide toward authoritarianism could also** challenge the current global order by diluting U.S. influence in critical international institutions, including the [United Nations](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/christopher-walker-authoritarian-regimes-are-changing-how-the-world-defines-democracy/2014/06/12/d1328e3a-f0ee-11e3-bf76-447a5df6411f_story.html) , the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Democratic decline would **weaken Western efforts within these institutions to advance issues such as Internet freedom and the responsibility to protect**. In the case of Internet governance, for example, Western **democracies support an open, largely private, global Internet. Autocracies**, in contrast, **promote state control over the Internet**, including laws and other mechanisms that facilitate their ability to censor and persecute dissidents. Already many autocracies, including Belarus, China, Iran, and Zimbabwe, have coalesced in the “Likeminded Group of Developing Countries” within the United Nations to advocate their interests. Within the IMF and World Bank, autocracies—along with other developing nations—seek to water down conditionality or the reforms that lenders require in exchange for financial support. If successful, diminished conditionality would enfeeble an important incentive for governance reforms. In a more extreme scenario, **the rising influence of autocracies could enable these countries to bypass the IMF and World Bank all together**. For example, **the Chinese-created Asian Infrastructure** and Investment Bank and the BRICS Bank—which includes Russia, China, and an increasingly authoritarian South Africa—**provide countries with the potential to bypass existing global financial institutions when it suits their interests. Authoritarian-led alternatives pose the risk that global economic governance will become** [**fragmented and less effective**](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00396338.2016.1161899?journalCode=tsur20#.V2H3MRbXgdI)**.**  **Violence and instability would** also likely increase if more democracies give way to autocracy. [International relations literature](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/1995-05-01/democratization-and-war) tells us that **democracies are** less likely to fight wars **against other democracies, suggesting that interstate wars would rise as the number of democracies declines**. Moreover, **within countries that are already autocratic, additional movement** away from democracy, or an “authoritarian hardening,” would **increase global instability**. Highly repressive autocracies are the most likely to **experience state failure, as was the case in the Central African Republic**, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen. In this way, **democratic decline would significantly strain the international order** because rising levels of instability would exceed the West’s ability to respond to the tremendous costs of peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and refugee flows.