## 1

#### Interpretation: The affirmative must tell the negative what specific affirmative position they will be reading, including the correct aff advocacy and any changes to the aff, at least thirty minutes before the round.

#### Violation –  - said on wiki, but if you check their wiki they don’t have anything for JF, when I asked further they didn’t respond

#### Standards:  Negate for pre round prep – prep becomes atrocious when the aff can say it’s the aff on a wiki or lie preround and then just read a very different advocacy text. The affs on the wiki are all completely different then the neg  2 impacts  a) neg strat – I could spend 30min planning to read a disad to the sat act aff or extra t in this round, then have it switched on me with a small toefl aff which moots all pre round prep which o/w cuz the neg is reactive to the aff  b) clash – it sets a general bad norm where an aff could say it’s the one on the wiki then read sth completely diff which just shifts outta neg args and engagement with the aff

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## 2

#### Our interpretation is that the aff should only defend and garner offense of the implementation of a hypothetical policy where states eliminate their nuclear arsenals – violation: they don’t – to clarify, garnering offense off of the performative offense of the aff is also a violation – CX proves the link they don’t defend a policy action

#### Resolved means a legislative policy

Words and Phrases 64 Words and Phrases Permanent Edition. “Resolved”. 1964.

Definition of the word “resolve,” given by Webster is “to express an opinion or determination by resolution or vote; as ‘it was resolved by the legislature;” It is of similar force to the word “enact,” which is defined by Bouvier as meaning “to establish by law”.

#### Oxford Dictionary defines appropriation:

#### the action of taking something for one's own use, typically without the owner's permission.

#### Our offense is predictable limits --- absent a predictable stasis, the Aff can defend anything, from an infinite number of literature bases, truisms, or personal experience. Any ground is concessionary, which causes a moral hazard where competitive incentives cause teams to choose smaller and inequitable topics. That ensures that the neg has nothing valuable to say, which hurts competitive equity, leads to worse debates, and makes any discussion qualitatively worse. Cutting negs to every possible aff wrecks small schools, which has a disparate impact on under-resourced and minority debaters.

**At best they’re Extra-T, which is a voter for Limits, or Effects-T which is worse, since any small aff can spill up to the res.**

#### Impacts:

#### 1] Fairness is an impact and comes first– [A] it’s an intrinsic good – some level of competitive equity is necessary to sustain the activity – if it didn’t exist, then there wouldn’t be value to the game since judges could literally vote whatever way they wanted regardless of the competing arguments made [B] probability – your ballot can’t solve their impacts but it can solve mine – individual debates can’t alter subjectivity, but can rectify skews [C] They don’t get to weigh the aff – it’s just as likely that they’re winning it because we weren’t able to effectively prepare to defeat it. D] controls i/l to inclusion F]

#### 2] Engagement – they transform debate into a monologue which means their arguments are presumptively false because they haven’t been subjected to well researched scrutiny – engagement is an independent voter since we cannot debate without the ability to precipitate

#### 3] TVA – defend the consequences of how the effects of appropriating outer space is harmful to folk with disability who cant do certain things/aent given opps

#### 4] SSD is good – it forces debaters to consider a controversial issue from multiple perspectives. Non-T affs allow individuals to establish their own metrics for what they want to debate leading to ideological dogmatism. Even if they prove the topic is bad, our argument is that the process of preparing and defending proposals is an educational benefit of engaging it.

#### 5] No impact turns to T—exclusions are inevitable because we only have 45 minutes so it’s best to draw those exclusions along reciprocal lines to ensure a role for the negative

## 3

## Case

#### The role of the ballot is to vote for the better debater—anything else is arbitrary, self-serving, and begs the question of the rest of the debate

#### You should vote negative on presumption – the affirmative’s advocacy of \_\_\_\_\_\_ does not solve the harms they’ve isolated for two reasons

#### A – Systems – the 1AC argues that material institutions recreate the social realities that replicate violence but ceding the state refuses to alter these conditions

#### B – Spillover – the aff assumes that its advocacy of a certain affect is sufficient to result in the liberation of the flesh BUT they are missing a robust internal link to solving oppression inside OR outside the round

#### C-Neoliberalism DA--

#### We’re impact turning any attempt to use the ballot to make debate more accessible ---

#### 1] It leaves zero role for the negative---our only ground is to say that debate should NOT be more accessible, or to just say nothing at all, which is a hobson choice that forces us to be non responsive for offensive

#### 2] It forces the judge into an inappropriate role---if their argument is voting aff makes debate more accessible, voting neg requires the judge determing that debate should NOT be more accessible, and that they don’t deserve to move on, which entails a violent rejection of them, their identity, and accessibility---debate’s just a game and tasking the judge with determining whether someone’s identity should be accepted is incredibly violent

#### 3] It’s a palliative viewing ballots as currency is fundamentally insustainable because it determines our wealth in general

#### American hegemony keeps the world spinning and a decline causes great power transition wars that cascade into extinction – the 1AR will be “America oppressive” but they first have to answer the question…who delivers the MILK in the world of the alternative?!

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The united states of America has been the most powerful country in the world for the past seventy-five years, but will Washington’s reign as the world’s leading superpower continue? At the end of World War II, the United States and its victorious allies built the world we know today. **American military supremacy deterred great power war and undergirded international peace and security**. The U.S. economy was a consistent source of technological innovation, an engine for global growth, and a model for how other countries structure their domestic markets and politics. Democratic forms of governments, inspired by the United States, spread around the world, and **by the late 2000s, more people were living under freedom than at any time in world history**.1 U.S. diplomats led the way in erecting the international institutions that govern contemporary global politics, including the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the World Trade Organization. And U.S. culture permeated the globe from blue jeans, Hollywood, and Coca-Cola during the Cold War, to hip-hop, the National Basketball Association, and Instagram today. These cultural contributions provided the United States with a significant reservoir of “soft power” and made planet Earth a richer and more vibrant home.2 To be sure, Washington’s leadership was not uncontested. During the Cold War, from 1945 to 1989, it faced an intense geopolitical competitor in the form of the Soviet Union, but the Berlin Wall came crashing down, leaving the United States as the globe’s sole and undisputed hegemon. It would not be an exaggeration to say that from 1989 to 2014, the United States may have been the world’s most dominant state at any time since ancient Rome. But all of this may be coming to an end. After twenty-five years of virtually uncontested U.S. global leadership, Russia and China have emerged as great power competitors. In recent years, Russia has invaded its neighbors, Ukraine and Georgia, and intervened forcefully in Syria, establishing itself as a Middle Eastern power broker for the first time since the 1970s. Fueled by petrodollars, Russian President Vladimir Putin has made modernization of the Russian military a top priority. He has built a formidable force, and a U.S. think tank recently estimated that if Putin decided to invade, he could take the capitals of two NATO allies, Estonia and Latvia, within sixty hours.3 Putin is interfering in Western politics, including the 2016 U.S. presidential election, with the objective of discrediting democracy and weakening the NATO alliance. He has declared the collapse of the Soviet Union “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century” and his promises to resurrect a greater Russia could very well force a major clash with the United States and its allies.4 The challenge from China is even more daunting. Since putting in place sound economic reforms in the 1970s, China’s economy has expanded at eye-popping rates. It is now the world’s second-largest economy, and many economists predict that China could surpass the United States within the decade.5 China’s state-led capitalism model of economic growth is proving more appealing to many around the world than the U.S. template of free markets and open politics. In addition, military prowess often follows economic might, and China is ploughing its economic gains into military hardware. The balance of power in East Asia has greatly shifted in recent years, and some U.S. military planners doubt whether the United States still has the ability to defend long-standing allies and partners in the region, such as Taiwan.

China is projecting its power further afield, conducting military exercises with Russia in Europe and establishing military outposts in Africa and Latin America.6 Beijing is making major infrastructure investments around the world, expanding its economic and political clout in every major world region, including Europe. It is also asserting itself politically on the world stage, with President Xi Jinping disingenuously presenting China as a champion of free trade, clean energy, and respect for global norms. China is not shy about its ambitions. Indeed, its leaders promise that by 2049, the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), China will be a global superpower.7 Many believe that things look grim for the United States. CNN host Fareed Zakaria may represent the conventional wisdom when he announced several years ago that we are entering a “post-American world.”8 Some predict that after America, the world will return to a “multipolar” balance of power system among multiple competing great powers, each lording it over its own respective sphere of influence.9 Others forecast a rising China usurping global mastery from the United States.10 Or, perhaps most frighteningly, **a power transition between a rising China and declining America could result in World War III.** Harvard scholar Graham Allison is one of many who believes these two giants may be “destined for war.”11 Washington is belatedly awakening to these challenges to its global leadership. After two decades of squandering strategic attention and resources, fighting in the desert in Iraq and Afghanistan, Washington announced in the 2017 National Security Strategy of the United States of America that “great power competition with Russia and China” is now the number one threat to U.S. security and economic well-being.12 How will this competition play out? Is China bound to lead, as many now seem to believe? Are we returning to a multipolar balance of power system, in which Russia, China, and the United States will establish spheres of influence within their own respective regions? Or will Washington manage to fend off these formidable competitors and refresh its position as the world’s leading superpower? To answer these questions, we lack a crystal ball. But history and political theory can serve as a guide, and they suggest a clear answer: **democracies enjoy a built-in advantage** in long-run geopolitical competitions. The idea that democracies are better able to accumulate and maintain power in the international system has a distinguished pedigree. Herodotus, Machiavelli, and Montesquieu are among the classical political thinkers who argued that republican forms of government are best able to harness available domestic resources toward national greatness. And recent social science research concurs. For the past two decades, cutting-edge research in economics and political science has been obsessed with the issue of whether **democracies are different**, and the consistent finding is that they perform a number of key functions better than their autocratic counterparts. They have higher long-run rates of economic growth.13 They are better able to raise money in international capital markets and become international financial centers.14 They build stronger and more reliable alliances.15 They are more likely to make and keep international agreements.16 They are less likely to fight wars (at least against other democracies).17 And they are more likely to win the wars that they fight.18 This book takes this line of thinking a step further by aggregating these narrower findings into a broader argument about the relative fitness of democracy and autocracy in great power political competitions. The central claim of this book is that **democracies do better in major power rivalries**. After all, it is not much of a logical leap to assume that states that outperform on important economic, diplomatic, and military tasks will do better in long-run geopolitical competitions than those that do not. According to this view, the very constraints on government power and a strict rule-oflaw system that some may see as signs of democratic weakness are, in fact, democracy’s greatest strengths. In other words, this book makes the hard-power case for democracy. The argument is not that democracy is a superior system because it protects human rights and civil liberties, although it does that too. Rather, this book argues that democratic countries are better able to amass power, wealth, and influence on the world stage than their autocratic competitors. **Democracy is a force multiplier that helps states punch above their weight in international geopolitics**. This hunch is supported by the empirical record. As this book will show, autocrats often put up a good fight, but they fail to ultimately seize lasting global leadership. Xerxes, Napoleon, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union are among the examples of authoritarians that launched campaigns for world domination, but came up short. On the other hand, states with relatively more open forms of government have often been able to establish themselves as the international system’s leading state, from Athens and the Roman Republic in the ancient world to the British Empire and the United States in more recent times. According to some scholars, **the world’s leading state since the 1600s has also been among its most democratic**.19 **It is hard to argue with an undefeated record of four centuries and counting.** Indeed, a leitmotif of this book is that the history of Western civilization can be thought of as the passing of the torch of liberal hegemony from Athens to Rome, to Venice, Amsterdam, and London, and on to its current resting place in Washington, DC. America’s greatest strength in its coming competition with Russia and China, therefore, is not its military might or economic heft, but its institutions. For all of its faults, America’s fundamentals are still better than Russia’s and China’s. There is good reason to believe, therefore, that the American era will endure and the autocratic challenges posed by China and Russia will run out of steam. The idea that democracies dominate may seem counterintuitive. After all, throughout history, and in contemporary policy debates, many have argued that dictators have a foreign policy advantage.20 Autocrats can be ruthless when necessary, but democracies are constrained by public opinion and ethical and legal concerns. Autocrats take decisive action, but democracies dither in endless debate. Autocrats strategically plan for the long term while democracies cannot see beyond a two- or four-year election cycle. Many today laud Russia and China’s autocratic systems for precisely these reasons.21 Russians play chess and Chinese play go, but Americans play checkers, as the aphorism has it. It is true that autocracies are better at taking swift and bold action, but impulsive decisions uninformed by vigorous public debate often result in **spectacular failure**. Hitler, for example, was able to harness new technology to create blitzkrieg warfare and conquer much of Western Europe in the early stages of World War II, but he also foolishly invaded Russia and declared war on the United States. Unfortunately for autocracies, this story is all too common. As Machiavelli wrote in his Discourses on Livy in the 16th century: “Fewer errors will be seen in the people than in the prince—and those lesser and having greater remedies.”22 “Hence it arises that a republic has greater life and has good fortune longer than a principality.”23 There is good reason to hope that this argument is true, because continued American leadership would be beneficial to the United States and the rest of the free world. The decline of American power would certainly be unwelcome for the United States. Americans have grown accustomed to the benefits that accrue to the world’s leading power. But billions of others also have a stake in America’s success. For all of its faults, the United States has been a fairly benevolent hegemon. **While far from perfect**, it has gone to extraordinary lengths to provide security, promote economic development, and nurture democracy and human rights. The world is certainly safer, richer, and freer today than it was before the dawn of the American era. Indeed, China itself has been among the greatest beneficiaries of a U.S.- led international order. American military and economic power have provided the peace and macroeconomic stability that allowed China to grow into the major power that it is today. There is little reason to believe that Russia and China will be as kind. These autocratic powers long to establish spheres of influence in their near abroad, and they have shown little concern for the sovereignty or personal freedoms of their own citizens or subjected populations.

To get a vision of a world led by Russia or China, just look at how they treat the people that fall under their influence today. **Russian dictator Vladimir Putin invades neighboring countries and murders critical journalists**. And **China takes contested territory from its neighbors through brute force and locks up one million Muslim minorities in “re-education” camps**. And this is but a small taste of the brutality of these governments. If readers doubt these claims, they can simply ask citizens of American allies in Eastern Europe or East Asia whether they desire continued American leadership, or whether they would prefer to live under the thumb of Moscow or Beijing, respectively. Moreover, just as consequentially for the globe, the decline of the United States could very well result in war. As noted earlier, international relations theory maintains that the decline of one dominant power and the rise of another often results in great power conflict.24 According to this telling, World War I and World War II were primarily the result of the decline of the British Empire and the rise of Imperial and then Nazi Germany. **Falling powers fight preventive wars in a bid to remain on top, and rising powers launch conflicts to dislodge the reigning power and claim their “place in the sun.”**25 Many fear that a power transition between Beijing and Washington would produce a similar **catastrophic** result.26 Continued American leadership, therefore, could forestall this transition and may be necessary for continued peace and stability among the major powers. There are many other works on related subjects, but this book is distinctive. Since the time of Aristotle, scholars have debated the virtues and vices of democratic versus autocratic constitutions, and some, including Machiavelli in his masterpiece Discourses on Livy, argued that republican forms of government were better suited for international ascendance.27 But these arguments have not been updated with the latest advances in social science research nor applied to contemporary cases, like the United States, Russia, and China. Other scholars have written more about whether the American era is coming to an end or enduring, but they do not provide a generalizable argument for why great powers rise and fall or inform their understanding of the current situation with a systematic study of historical cases.28 Fareed Zakaria’s The Post-American World and Joseph Nye’s Is the American Century Over?, despite coming to opposite conclusions, serve as dueling prime examples of this kind of work.29

Others have written about the rise of China and its implications for the future of international politics, but, similarly, they do not embed this analysis in a broader story about what determines the outcomes of long-run geopolitical competitions historically and theoretically.30 Henry Kissinger’s On China fits this description.31 There are many good books on contemporary Russia, including Michael McFaul’s From Hot War to Cold Peace, but none make their central focus the question of how Russia’s domestic political institutions affect its ability to project power and influence on the international stage or compete with the United States and China.32 nternational relations “power transition” theory, including Graham Allison’s Destined for War, deals with the conditions under which power transitions cause great power war, but they largely take the rise of one power and decline of another as a given and do not conduct a systematic investigation into the prior question of why these power transitions happen in the first place.33 Paul Kennedy’s magisterial work The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers describes a long cycle of great power competition, but, like other works in this genre, his historical approach does not provide a clear social scientific explanation of the root causes of power in international affairs and, since the book was published decades ago, he does not focus on the contemporary great power competition among the United States, Russia, and China.34 Finally, there has been much social science research on a possible democratic advantage in discrete areas, such as economic growth and war outcomes, but none has aggregated these mid-range findings into a broader theory about democratic advantages in long-run, great power competitions.35 Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson’s Why Nations Fail, for example, focuses on how open institutions affect economic growth, and Democracies at War by Allan Stam and Dan Reiter explains the democratic wartime advantage, but these works do not tell the larger story of democratic fitness for great power competition across a wide range of economic, political, and military dimensions.36 In sum, **this book is distinctive in at least four ways**. First, it provides an innovative argument about how domestic political institutions are the key to a state’s ability to amass power and influence in the international system. Second, it studies the causes of power transitions. Or, in other words, it seeks to explain why great powers sometimes ascend to and maintain their position atop the international system and are at other times surpassed by rivals. Third, it tests this argument with a sweeping historical analysis of democratic and autocratic competitors from ancient Greece through the Cold War. Fourth, and finally, it employs this framework to understand and analyze the state of today’s competition between the democratic United States and its autocratic competitors, Russia and China. The findings of this book have implications, not just for those in the ivory tower but also for those working in the corridors of power. It suggests that **despite all the talk of American decline, the United States is well positioned to remain the world’s leading nation for the foreseeable future**. History also shows, however, that while **democracies tend to win in the end**, the path from here to there can get messy. Washington must, therefore, prepare to defend itself and its allies from the serious Russian and Chinese threats in the meantime. And this book lays out a strategy for doing just that. Furthermore, this book recommends that U.S.  leaders take seriously growing concerns about a possible erosion in the quality of American democracy. Washington must be careful to nurture its greatest source of strength: its democratic institutions. The book will continue in four parts. Part I lays out the central argument. It draws on ideas from the political philosophy canon and the latest social science research to advance the idea that democracies do better in longrun geopolitical competitions. It also considers and critiques the competing arguments about a possible autocratic advantage. The second part of the book examines the empirical basis for this idea through simple quantitative analysis and a historical study of democratic and autocratic competitors from the ancient world to the present. Specifically, the book will examine the following seven cases: Athens, Sparta, and Persia; the Roman Republic, Carthage, and Macedon; the Venetian Republic, the Byzantine Empire, and the Duchy of Milan; the Dutch Republic and the Spanish Empire; Britain and France in the 18th and 19th centuries; the United Kingdom and Germany in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; and the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. This section of the book does not show that democracies always achieve everlasting hegemony, but it does demonstrate that they tend to excel in great power rivalry and for the precise reasons identified by the theoretical framework. Part III is the real payoff of the book. What does all of this mean for contemporary international politics? This section examines the United States, Russia, and China. It studies how their domestic political systems prepare them for the coming competition and finds that U.S.  institutions are a continuing source of strength, while Russian and Chinese institutions are dragging down their attempts to amass international wealth and power. Part IV takes stock of what we have learned and draws out the implications for U.S. foreign policy and also looks ahead to the future. How can the United States best shore up its sources of strength? How can, or should, it seek to exploit its opponents’ weaknesses? And, given the previous arguments, will the American era endure?

PART I Democracy versus Autocracy

CHAPTER 1 The Democratic Advantage in Theory

Niccolò machiavelli was the political genius of the Italian Renaissance. When people recall this remarkable period of artistic productivity and intellectual flourishing, they often emphasize the scientists, painters, architects, and sculptors:  Leonardo, Raphael, Brunelleschi, and Michelangelo. But Machiavelli was the Michelangelo of politics. Like his contemporaries in the arts, Machiavelli ushered his field out of the dark ages and into the modern world. He is often considered the first modern political scientist and among the first “realist” international relations scholars. Machiavelli was born into a middle-class family in the Santo Spirito neighborhood of Florence, Italy, in 1469.1 At the tender age of twenty-nine, he had risen to become the secretary of the Ten of Liberty and Peace. Essentially what we would today call the national security adviser of Florence, Machiavelli was responsible for all matters of foreign and defense policy. This was the time of the Great Italian Wars, and Florence was a medium-sized city-state, surrounded by competitors, including Venice, Milan, and the Papal States, all of which were constantly threatened by the great powers, France and the Holy Roman Empire, lurking just over the Alps. Machiavelli racked up many achievements while in office. He served as a diplomat, established Florence’s first standing militia, and commanded a successful military operation to retake Florence’s longtime rival Pisa. But, after a fourteen-year run in office, his career in politics came to a sudden halt when the powerful Medici family, with the military backing of the pope, returned to retake Florence by force of arms. The new Medici rulers did not look kindly on the holdovers from the previous government, and they had Machiavelli removed from office, tortured, and exiled to his family estate in Sant’Andrea in Percussina, eleven miles south of Florence. Machiavelli went to his grave believing that this had been his life’s greatest tragedy, and he constantly longed to return to power in the city that, on a clear day, he could see from his country home. Fortunately, for the world and his own legacy, however, his time in exile allowed him to become the Machiavelli we know today. With little else to do other than drink wine and play cards in the local tavern (which we know from his personal correspondence he did quite a bit), he had time to write some of the greatest masterpieces in Western political philosophy. Machiavelli is best known for his short work of advice to the new Medici ruler, The Prince. 2 The book was something of a job application, as Machiavelli hoped it would demonstrate his usefulness to the Medici and cause them to recall him back into public service. The book advised the new prince on how to consolidate power and recommends the use of any means necessary, no matter how diabolical, to protect the city-state in a turbulent and violent era. Unfortunately for Machiavelli, the book did not cause the Medici to reinstate him to his former government post. Subsequent generations, however, took note. Indeed, due to the widespread fame (or infamy) of The Prince, the adjective “Machiavellian” has become synonymous with cunning, double-dealing, and immorality. In actuality, however, Machiavelli was a republican with a small “r.” (Ancient political theorists drew a distinction between democratic and republican forms of government, with “democracy” meaning direct majority rule of the people and “republicanism” connoting a system with a division of power among various branches of government, rule by elected representatives, and strong protections for minority rights.) Before the Medici returned and established themselves as princely rulers, Florence had been a republic with an elected leader and representation from the major families in Florence. Machiavelli believed this was the superior form of government. He makes this case for the democratic advantage most clearly in what many consider to be his greatest masterpiece, The Discourses on Livy. 3 While less well-known than The Prince, The Discourses is nothing short of a fullthroated defense of republican government. In fact, in this work, Machiavelli goes so far as to advise a wise prince to use his fleeting time in office not to rule with an iron fist, but, rather, to establish a republic. This he argues, is what will do most to contribute to the well-being of his people and to the prince’s own legacy. As he writes, “he to whom the heavens have given such an opportunity should consider that there are two paths: one that will make him secure during his lifetime and glorious after his death, and the other that will make him live in constant anguish and after his death leave behind a legacy of everlasting infamy.”4 The Discourses is so named because it contains Machiavelli’s reflections on the monumental History of Rome, written by Roman historian Titus Livius (often translated as “Livy” in English). Machiavelli was fascinated by how Rome, at first a small city-state surrounded by other hostile powers (much like his beloved Florence), had risen to become the most dominant political entity the world had ever known. Machiavelli’s conclusion is straightforward: Rome’s republican institutions were the secret to its success. As he writes, “For it is seen through experience that cities have never expanded either in dominion or in riches if they have not been in freedom.”5 Foreshadowing contemporary arguments about open political institutions and economic growth, Machiavelli argued that polities governed by republican constitutions are better able to harness the talents and ambitions of a broad segment of society and apply them toward state expansion. “The reason is easy to understand, for it is not the particular good but the common good that makes cities great. And without doubt this common good is not observed if not in republics.”6 According to Machiavelli, “The contrary happens when there is a prince, in which case what suits him usually offends the city and what suits the city offends him.” For this reason, “as soon as a tyranny arises . . . the least evil that results for those cities is not . . . to grow more in power or riches, but usually—or rather always—it happens that they go backward.” Note that Machiavelli was somewhat “Machiavellian” in his defense of democracy. He does not extol republican systems of government because they protect the freedoms and human rights of their citizens, but rather for a more instrumental reason: they help the state to become more powerful. Machiavelli was far from the only thinker in the political theory canon to argue that democracies dominate. In fact, in arguing that ancient Rome owed its success to an open political system, Machiavelli was following in the footsteps of Polybius. Polybius was a Hellenic Greek historian who wrote a contemporary history of Rome in the 2nd century bc. Polybius’s work had an important influence on later thinkers, including the framers of the U.S. Constitution. To this day, scholars debate whether Machiavelli had access to and read Polybius’s work, but, either way, both scholars’ analysis of Rome’s rise to power is remarkably similar.7 In The Histories, Polybius provides a history of ancient Rome, but his primary purpose is to explain the sources of Rome’s success. As he writes, “the most admirable and educational part of my project was that it would let my readers know and understand how, and thanks to what kind of political system, an unprecedented event occurred—the conquest of almost all the known world in somewhat under fifty-three years, and its submission to just one ruler, Rome.”8 Polybius’s explanation should by now be familiar: “The chief cause of either success or the opposite is, I would claim, the nature of a state’s system of government.”9 It was the strength of Rome’s domestic political institutions, according to Polybius, that allowed it to best its competitors and conquer the known world. “If one thinks the finer and nobler thing is to be a world-class leader, with an extensive dominion and empire, the center and focal point of everyone’s world—then one must admit that the Spartan constitution is deficient, and that the Roman constitution is superior and more dynamic. The facts themselves demonstrate the truth of this.”10 The French philosopher Montesquieu would pick up these themes in his Greatness of the Romans and Their Decline, published in 1734. Montesquieu also credited Rome’s international standing to its domestic political institutions. On the basis of republican institutions, for its international standing Rome rose to prominence, but the demise of the republic under Caesar and the tyranny of subsequent emperors sowed the seeds of decay. “By means of their maxims they conquered all peoples, but when they had succeeded in doing so, their republic could not endure. It was necessary to change the government, and contrary maxims employed by the new government made their greatness collapse.”11 Before Rome, Athens was a leading state in the ancient world. Like the commentators on Rome mentioned earlier, ancient Greeks also attributed Athens’s success in international affairs to its open political institutions at home. Ancient Greece gave birth to many firsts in Western Civilization, including its first historian: Herodotus. Herodotus’s best-known work, The Histories, focuses on the origins of the Greco-Persian Wars. The book examines how Athens, just a small citystate, was able to stand up to, and then defeat, the mighty Persian Empire. Herodotus concludes that Athens’s greatest asset was its democratic form of government: The Athenians had increased in strength, which demonstrates that an equal voice in government has a beneficial impact not merely in one way, but in every way: the Athenians, while ruled by tyrants, were no better in war than the peoples living around them, but once they were rid of tyrants, they became by far the best of all. Thus it is clear that they were deliberately slack while repressed, since they were working for a master, but that after they were freed, they became ardently devoted to working hard so as to win achievements for themselves as individuals.12 This judgment was also shared by ancient Greece’s, and arguably the world’s, first physician, Hippocrates. In his Airs, Waters, and Places, he considers how one’s environment affects one’s health and well-being. It is a sweeping work that also considers how governmental institutions shape human attitudes and, in turn, the vitality of the state. Hippocrates maintained that freedom domestically contributes to expansion internationally. He writes: where there are kings, there must be the greatest cowards. For men’s souls are enslaved, and refuse to run risks readily and recklessly to increase the power of somebody else. But independent people, taking risks on their own behalf and not on behalf of others, are willing and eager to go into danger, for they themselves enjoy the prize of victory.13 In sum, for centuries, some of the world’s greatest minds argued that Athens and Rome rose to power on the basis of their open institutions. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, better understanding the determinants of world domination has fallen out of favor in the modern academy, but the democratic advantage thesis has nevertheless re-emerged in subtler forms.

Toward a Modern Theory of Democratic Advantage

For the past several decades, social scientists have been obsessed with the question of whether democracies are different. And the answer they have found, in a wide range of discrete issue areas, from economic growth to military effectiveness, is that democracies do better. Before we review this research, however, let us take a step back and consider what it takes for a country to become a leading power in the international system. First, to become a great power, a state must have a strong economy. With amassed wealth, a state can influence other states. It can promise economic aid and access to its markets to friends. Contrarily, it can threaten to revoke economic access or impose economic penalties on enemies or those who defy its commands. Perhaps most importantly, a state can translate economic weight into military power. According to Cicero, “money are the sinews of war.”14 Wealthy states can fund major military buildups, underwrite international commitments, and sustain the high costs of international warfare. As Yale diplomatic historian Paul Kennedy argued, “the history of the rise and later fall of the leading countries in the great power system . . . shows a very significant correlation over the longer term between productive and revenueraising capacities on one hand and military strength on the other.”15 To be a global leader, a state can also benefit from deep and liquid capital markets. Being a financial powerhouse relates to the previous point as functioning markets allocate capital efficiently and help to maintain high levels of economic growth. Granting or denying access to capital to other nations is also an important tool of diplomatic statecraft. Perhaps most importantly, however, the ability to borrow allows states to finance arms buildups and large wars in excess of normal revenue.16 In addition, easy access to credit allows states to engage in “tax smoothing,” financing extraordinary expenditures through debt rather than through large tax increases, which reduces economic and societal disruptions. As political scientists Karen Rasler and William Thompson write, “winners in the struggle for world leadership owed a significant portion of their success to their ability to obtain access to credit inexpensively, to sustain relatively large debts, and in general to leverage the initially limited base of their wealth in order to meet their staggering military expenses.”17 Second, to become an enduring global leader, a state must also be effective diplomatically. It is hard to become a leading global power without strong and reliable alliances and partnerships to help achieve one’s international objectives. Allies can help a state in international diplomacy, carrying the water for the powerful state in international fora. This can provide greater international legitimacy to the hegemon’s efforts and shield it from criticism. Allies can also contribute resources and manpower to share in the burdens of diplomatic efforts, defense buildups, and combat. They can also provide bases or allow the free passage of military forces that can help the powerful state project power beyond its own borders. Enduring global leaders must also be effective not only at building their own alliances, but at preventing rivals from forming counterbalancing coalitions. Even the most powerful state can be brought down, if the rest of the world gangs up against it. See the fates of Napoleon and Hitler for evidence on this point. Some might counter that alliances are more of a burden than a boon. They could claim that a sprawling alliance network increases a state’s commitments and provides little in return. This can sometimes be true. Not all allies are created equal, and more allies are not always better. Indeed, weak or unreliable allies are likely worse than none at all. The value of an alliance, therefore, depends on its quality and reliability. Most things are easier with capable and reliable friends, and geopolitics is no different. **The final ingredient for global mastery is military power**. Military power may be the most important resource in an anarchic international system. There is no world government and so there is no international 911 a state can call if it gets into trouble.18 This makes international politics a “self-help” system. Militarily powerful states are able to defend themselves in a dangerous world. States with effective militaries can use military power to their advantage in other ways as well. They can promise to protect friends. And they can threaten to hurt enemies. An effective military force can help states achieve objectives short of war by deterring rivals. As the ancient Romans used to say, **if you want peace, prepare for war**. War is, however, a recurring feature of international politics, and military power helps states to win wars. States that win wars are better able to accumulate and maintain power than those that lose them. Nations victorious on the battlefield can eliminate threats to their security and gain political influence and access to resources that help them improve their position. Losing a war disastrously, on the other hand, may be the most direct way in which a state can squander power. In 1941, for example, Nazi Germany possessed 20 percent of world power, but by 1945, following its catastrophic defeat in World War II, Germany’s share of global power resources plummeted to a mere 8 percent.19 Over the same time period, however, one of the victors of World War II, the United States of America, saw its share of global power increase from 24 percent to 38 percent. As Kennedy writes, “The triumph of any one Great Power in this period [the years 1500 to 2000] or the collapse of another, has usually been the consequence of lengthy fighting by its armed forces.”20 **In sum, to achieve global mastery, a state must have a strong economy, strong diplomacy, and a strong military**. Recent social science research suggests that democracies may do all of these things better than their autocratic rivals. To be clear, recent research has not theorized the sources of world domination directly. But social scientists have examined whether democracies are better at discrete tasks: economic growth, finance, alliance building, and military effectiveness. And the repeated finding is that democracies appear to have an advantage.

Defining Democracy

As noted earlier, ancient political theorists drew a distinction between democratic and republican forms of government (with a small “d” and a small “r”). They praised republican or “mixed” systems, but denigrated direct democracy for its tendency to devolve into mob rule and tyranny of the majority. They were correct about the dangers of direct democracy, as we will see later in our examination of ancient Athens. But this distinction has become less important over time. It is simply not practical to have every citizen debate and vote on every issue in the modern world. In practice, what we today call democracy is what the ancients would have called a “republican” form of government. This book is really about the advantages of “republican” forms of government, and it concurs with past philosophers who saw downsides to direct democracy. Still, in this book we will follow standard usage and refer to these modern republics as democracies. Contemporary political scientists define democracies as political systems in which political officeholders are selected through competitive, popular elections.21 Thicker definitions add a broad set of political and civil liberties, such as freedom of speech and assembly, that are necessary to make an electoral political system work. Autocracies lack these characteristics. Autocracies come in many forms and can include dictatorships, like Kim Jong Un in North Korea; single-party states, such as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in China; monarchies, like Saudi Arabia; military juntas, as in Thailand; and other forms as well. What unites autocratic forms of government, however, is that their leaders are either unelected or have been selected through sham elections in which the outcome was rigged by authorities. Their citizens also lack the broad sets of political and civil freedoms enjoyed in more open societies. There are often restrictions on free speech and assembly, for example, because autocratic leaders fear that allowing people to openly criticize the government, or hold massive public protests, could threaten their hold on power. Political regime type is generally conceptualized as a continuous variable, ranging from most democratic at one end to most autocratic at the other, with various shades of gray in between. More democratic states have greater constraints on executive authority, and their citizens enjoy more political and civil liberties. More autocratic states place fewer constraints on the executive, and their citizens possess fewer rights. The widely used Polity scores measure the level of democracy of every country in the world from 1800 to the present on a twenty-point scale, ranging from −10 (most autocratic) to +10 (most democratic).22 According to these rankings, Mexico, for example, is considered more democratic than North Korea, but less so than the United States. In this way, countries can be compared to each other as more or less democratic. Social scientists have tended to find, however, that the greatest benefits of open government tend to kick in for those states grouped toward the highest end of this scale, measured at roughly + 6 or above. What are some of these identified democratic advantages?

Democracy and Economic Strength

In their book Why Nations Fail, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson tell the story of the contrasting fates of North and South Korea. These countries straddle the 38th parallel and are separated by a demilitarized zone, but they still have much in common. They share a nearly identical climate and natural resource endowment. The ethnic and cultural makeup of their populations are roughly the same. Yet, despite all these commonalities, there is a stark difference in levels of economic development. The South Korean side of the border is richer. The infrastructure is better. And life expectancy is higher. Why? The question of why some countries achieve higher levels of economic development than others is among the most important subjects in the field of economics. Theories on the deep causes of economic growth point to factors such as culture, climate, or natural resources.23 But all of these cultural, geographic, and resource conditions are basically the same on both sides of the border on the Korean Peninsula. Acemoglu and Robinson argue that the only variable that can explain these countries’ very different fortunes is institutions. Institutions are “the rules of the game in a society or, more formally . . . the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction.”24 Countries with good economic institutions, like those found in South Korea, have higher long-run rates of economic growth, whereas countries with poorer economic institutions, such as in North Korea, suffer from lower rates of growth. Good economic institutions are those that incentivize people to work hard, engage in productive economic activity, and make themselves and their nations richer. They include protections for private property rights, allowing individuals and firms to develop businesses, properties, and products without fear that their assets will be seized by other individuals or the state itself. They contain courts that reliably enforce contracts, so economic actors can transact with confidence that business agreements will be upheld. The rules need to be nondiscriminatory so as to encourage wide swathes of the population to participate in growth-enhancing economic activity. In addition, good economic institutions incentivize innovation by encouraging entrepreneurship, thinking outside the box, and risk-taking.

On the other hand, countries that lack good economic institutions generally suffer from economic underdevelopment. There is little reason to devote time and resources to improving one’s property or experimenting with innovative new products or services if it is unclear whether you will ultimately benefit from your efforts. Business is discouraged in countries where there is a reasonable chance that if you are cheated, the courts will be too corrupt or inept to rectify the situation. If a country systematically discriminates against large segments of its population, it is wasting human resources that could be contributing to economic development. And radical innovation does not tend to happen in societies that enforce conformity and discourage new ways of thinking or doing things. A country’s economic institutions are, in turn, heavily shaped by its political institutions. In autocratic countries where power is concentrated, the narrow elite have incentives to put in place economic institutions that disproportionately benefit themselves but fail to protect the economic interests of broad swathes of society. Autocrats set up instructions to extract wealth from society to redistribute to themselves and their cronies. This makes the rulers richer, but undermines conditions for stable, long-run growth. Contrariwise, countries with inclusive political institutions that distribute political power to a broad segment of society, i.e., democracies, are more likely to produce good economic institutions. In democratic countries in which political power has a broader base, the power holders themselves have economic incentives to develop economic institutions that protect the economic interests of a broad segment of society. In addition, constraints on executive power allow rulers to credibly commit to protecting individual property rights, encouraging citizens to engage in long-term planning, investment, and economic activity. Democracies also facilitate innovation. The great economist Joseph Schumpeter wrote about the need for “creative destruction” in healthy economies.25 Entrepreneurs with new ideas tear down old ways of doing business and create new ones, providing innovative products or services. Democracies are comfortable with the rough and tumble of creative destruction. Individuals are educated and encouraged to be independent and think for themselves. Future entrepreneurs are incentivized to take risks and try new approaches, motivated by the knowledge that they and their families can profit from their innovations. (Democracies may be more innovative in other areas as well. They tend to push the technological frontier and develop new operational concepts in military affairs. And, important for the development of “soft power” in international diplomacy, they often set the style for new cultural movements and artistic expression.)

In contrast, autocratic governments are less comfortable with the tumult and disruption necessary for radical innovation. Thinking outside the box and challenging standard practices is generally discouraged. It is a good way to land oneself in trouble with the authorities. Radical breakthroughs mean innovation and disruption, but autocratic leaders hate innovation and disruption because it might threaten their ability to control society. They like stability. Acemoglu and Robinson argue that autocrats could fix this economics problem in theory, by putting in place inclusive economic institutions despite their closed politics, but they argue that this is difficult, if not impossible, in practice because it would undermine the autocrats’ own base of power. Inclusive institutions would enrich and therefore empower individuals and businesses outside of the government. And autocrats do not like independent centers of power that could challenge their rule. So, dictators face a dilemma. They can put in place policies that encourage economic growth only by threatening their own power. Or they can opt for suboptimal economic performance and the protection of their privileged position. Since humans are not angels, it should come as no surprise that they often choose the latter. In short, economic theory suggests that democracies should enjoy higher long-run rates of economic growth. North and South Korea have such divergent economic outcomes primarily because the rules that incentivize economic activity in the two cities are so different. Social scientists call this a “natural experiment.” Although the research was not performed in a lab, all of the important variables were held constant except the “treatment.” One of the countries was treated with good institutions. The other was not. And it made all the difference. Indeed, a quick glance around the world today shows that the states with the highest standards of living are also among the most democratic: Canada and the United States in North America; Germany and the United Kingdom in Europe; and Australia and Japan in Asia. In contrast, the poorest nations on Earth, such as Congo, North Korea, and Haiti, suffer from poor political and economic institutions. At this point, some readers may object and ask about the prominent exceptions. What about China? It has maintained remarkable rates of economic growth since the early 1970s despite being ruled by the authoritarian Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Acemoglu and Robinson grant that some autocratic states like the Maya Empire, the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and China in recent decades, can temporarily generate high growth rates by using centralized planning to allocate resources from less to more productive sectors, but these models of growth have limits. In China’s case, moving mass numbers of unproductive workers from farms in the countryside to more productive manufacturing jobs in cities was an easy fix. Once the gains are achieved from this more efficient allocation of resources, however, the model does not provide continued growth. The state must find another area where resources are underutilized and force re-allocation. But centrally planned economies do not have a great record at making these bets. Perhaps China will be the sole exception, but every other state-planned economy in history has hit a wall at some point. Democracies also benefit economically due to their greater openness to international flows of goods, people, and money. Ever since Adam Smith and David Ricardo wrote about comparative advantage we have understood that trade is an important engine of economic development. By specializing in the goods and services they can produce most efficiently and engaging in international trade for the rest, nations are richer than when they close themselves off from the international economic system.26 And democracies are more likely to be open to international trade by almost any measure.27

A higher percentage of their GDP comes from imports and exports. They have lower tariffs. They sign more free trade agreements. The logic is the same for trade as for economic institutions. The biggest beneficiary of free trade is the average consumer, who can buy a wide range of products from around the world at lower prices. Democratic leaders care more about the average consumer (who is also the average voter) than do autocrats. On the other hand, autocrats can benefit from protectionism. By placing tariffs on incoming goods, for example, autocrats hurt their own people, who must pay higher prices for these imported goods. But they can reward themselves and elite supporters by shielding selected domestic industries from foreign competition. They can also use the taxes they collect at the border to invest in the apparatus of the state, shoring up their power relative to society. Indeed, autocrats are often threatened by free trade because they fear that the free flow of goods, people, and ideas across their borders could contaminate a system that is working well for them. For example, the Kim dynasty in North Korea has intentionally selected economic isolation and deprivation for decades over international economic engagement in part for this reason. Democracies also benefit economically from the freer flow of people. Democracies tend to be more open to immigration because they are more tolerant of outsiders and less afraid of the disruptions they might bring.28 Openness to immigration allows states to attract high-skilled laborers, causing a brain drain in their favor that is pro-growth and pro-innovation.

It is estimated that without migration, U.S. growth, for example, would be much lower.29 Autocracies tend to be more closed to immigration, because leaders like to maintain strict control and the free flow of people and the ideas that they bring are seen as a threat. Democracies are also more open to international monetary flows and, therefore, enjoy a financial advantage.30 Would you rather invest your retirement savings in a democracy or an autocracy? Why? Capital markets do not flourish in autocratic states. This is largely because investors feel that their money is more secure in democratic societies. It is no coincidence that the leading financial centers in the world today, New York and London, also reside in two of the world’s oldest continuous democracies. Before Wall Street and The City rose to prominence, the center of global finance could also be found in what at the time were the world’s most open societies. Many consider the Venetian Republic to be the first international financial center from the 9th through the 14th centuries. And freewheeling Amsterdam of the 17th and 18th centuries was the center of global finance before London assumed the title in the 19th century.31 One area in which this democratic financial advantage manifests itself most clearly today is in sovereign debt. Nation-states borrow to cover their expenses by issuing government debt. U.S. Treasury bonds are the most prominent and well-known example. Stanford University political economists Douglas North, Barry Weingast, and Kenneth Schultz have argued that democracies enjoy a sovereign debt advantage because they are able to “credibly commit” to repaying their loans.32 Democracies have this credibility advantage because their executives are constrained. If a dictator decides to default on his nation’s debt repayments, he could do so with little resistance. But a democratic leader cannot unilaterally default because there are checks and balances in the system. Other branches of government, public opinion, and forces within the executive branch itself would make it difficult for a democratic leader to make a decision of this magnitude. Just imagine the uproar if a U.S.  president announced they planned to stop payments on U.S. Treasury bonds. And if the leader went ahead with the decision anyway, they and their party could be punished later in public opinion polling, party donations, or at the ballot box. Moreover, since many of the nation’s bondholders are also its citizens and its elected representatives, they themselves have a stake in ensuring regular debt repayments. The openness of democratic systems means that even international bond holders are not completely shut out, as they too can access veto points in the system and lobby for repayment.33

In other words, democracies can make “credible commitments” to repay their debt because it would be difficult for them to default even if they wanted to. On the other hand, autocratic governments cannot make similar commitments because their decisions to default would face little resistance. Investors understand this dynamic, and it is why they prefer to invest in democracies. Indeed, when investors talk about a “flight to safety” in uncertain economic times, they often mean buying U.S. Treasury bonds, which are seen as the most reliable investment on the planet. They certainly do not mean stashing their cash in Russia or China. Since investors are eager to hold the sovereign debt of democracies, democracies have easier access to credit at lower interest rates. On the other hand, bond holders fear that autocratic governments will be more likely to default on their loan payments and, therefore, demand a higher interest rate in order to cover this risk premium.34 The democratic advantage in finance extends beyond sovereign debt, however, to stock markets. Capital controls are tools governments use to regulate the money flowing in and out of their countries. And scholars have found that autocratic states rely more heavily on capital controls than democracies.35 Since capital controls are often implemented through taxes on cross-border capital flows, autocratic governments can capture these rents and, consistent with the model of exclusionary economics discussed earlier, re-allocate them to themselves and their supporters. Capital controls also allow autocratic states greater influence over the money flowing in and through their economies. One of the problems with capital controls, however, is that they prevent the development of functioning stock and bond markets. Capital markets rely on the free flow of capital, and economists have shown that stock and bond markets tend to become deeper and more liquid following capital control liberalization.36 This is important because stock markets are a driver of economic growth. A functioning stock and bond market improves the allocation of capital and enhances prospects for long-term economic growth. But capitalism does not work without capital markets. 37 In sum, national economies work primarily according to a political logic, not an economic one, and the political logic in democracies facilitates the type of economic institutions, practices, and policies that tend to promote economic growth. In autocracies, the countervailing political logic encourages institutions that constrain economic development. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the world’s economic, financial, and trading powerhouses tend also to be the most democratic.

Democracy and Diplomatic Strength

On August 23, 1939, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, named after the countries’ foreign ministers, Vyacheslav Molotov and Joachim von Ribbentrop, respectively. Under the terms of this secret alliance, the powers agreed to divide Eastern Europe between themselves, with the Soviet Union taking the eastern half of Poland, parts of Romania, Finland, and the Baltic states, and Nazi Germany annexing western Poland. Additionally, the powers also committed to a nonaggression pact. They agreed not to invade each other and not to assist any third parties at war with either side. The states immediately followed through in implementing the “sphere of influence” component of the agreement. Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, and the Soviet Union followed, taking its portion of Eastern Europe sixteen days later. But the alliance did not last long. Once Hitler had consolidated his gains in western Poland, his appetite for territorial conquest increased. He now set his sights back on Moscow’s holdings. In direct violation of the nonaggression pact, Hitler attacked Soviet positions along the eastern front in Operation Barbarossa on June 22, 1941. Compare the Soviet-Nazi  alliance to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), founded less than a decade later, in 1949. The organization began as a club of mostly democracies in Western Europe and North America, united by fears of Soviet aggression. While NATO faced tough times during the Cold War, it stuck together. When the Cold War ended in 1989, some predicted that NATO had lost its raison d’être and would, therefore, dissolve. Instead, it went in the other direction and expanded to incorporate much of the former Soviet bloc. Today, the Alliance includes twenty-nine democratic nations stretching from the United States to Estonia. Its newest member, Montenegro, joined in 2017. The Alliance has been successful in deterring major conflict against its members. When it came under threat in the 9/11 terror attacks against the United States, Alliance members invoked the Article 5 mutual defense clause of the Atlantic Charter and joined the United States in its war in Afghanistan. Far from anomalous, political science research suggests that these cases are representative: democracies build larger, more durable, and reliable alliances. In his landmark study Origins of Alliances, Stephen Walt argued that the “balance of threat” was the primary driver of alliance formation; the enemy of your enemy is your friend.38 Walt is in the Realist school of international relations and is skeptical that domestic politics matter much in an anarchic international system. But even he acknowledges that common ideology is an important impetus for alliance formation, and democratic states are especially likely to collaborate. He argued this was because, unlike in other systems, the domestic political ideologies of democratic states do not threaten, but rather reinforce, the legitimacy of other like-minded states. More recent research suggests that democracies do flock together, but this is because of the checks and balances in their domestic political systems. Constraints on the executive branch and domestic political “audience costs” in democracies make it difficult for leaders to quickly shift policies or renege on international commitments.39 Audience costs are the domestic political costs that a leader pays when he or she makes a public commitment and then backs away. Domestic political audiences, including opposition political parties, other branches of government, or the general public, seek to criticize or punish a leader for failing to live up to the country’s international commitments. (Just think of the heat President Trump took, for example, for raising questions about the value and continued relevance of NATO). Since democratic leaders are constrained by their domestic political circumstances, they are hesitant to take on international commitments they do not intend to keep. As a corollary, they are more likely to actually abide by the commitments they do take on. For this reason, (and as we saw previously in the discussion of sovereign debt), it is thought that democracies are better able to make “credible commitments” in international politics.40 Other nations tend to believe the promises (and threats) of democracies. When a U.S. president announces that America’s alliances are “ironclad,” U.S.  partners can generally rest assured that Washington has their back. When a dictator makes the same promise, on the other hand, allies better watch their back. Statistical analysis has found that democracies make more reliable partners. They are more likely to uphold their alliance commitments even in times of war and they might make more effective partners during wartime.41 Alliances between democracies are larger and last longer than those between other states.42 Unlike in autocracies, democratic alliances endure even as leaders come and go.43 Just think of the major democracies fighting victoriously together on the same side in World War I and World War II. Compare NATO’s seventyyear lifespan and more than two dozen members to the short-lived MolotovRibbentrop Pact. There is no autocratic equivalent to NATO. The Soviet-led Warsaw Pact was held together only by coercion. Indeed, the primary fighting experienced by the Warsaw Pact was invading its own members, including attacks against Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. The Pact crumbled quickly at the end of the Cold War, and Moscow’s erstwhile allies eagerly switched sides as soon as they had the chance. Much like modern marriage in which the most desirable partners seek each other out for long-term relationships, democracies prefer to align with other democracies. They eschew formal defense commitments with unreliable autocrats. Indeed, this preference is explicit in the NATO alliance; democratic governance has become a requirement for membership. Scholars have also found in statistical analysis that democracies are more likely to align with other democracies.44 Beyond alliance commitments, democracies appear to be more likely to make and comply with diplomatic commitments of all kinds. We have very few laws in political science, but this may be one of them. Take the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as an example. Many consider this to be the most successful treaty in history, and it enjoys nearuniversal adherence and compliance. In recent years, however, the international community has wrestled with countries, like Iran and North Korea, that have signed the NPT but failed to live up to their treaty obligations. Indeed, these countries seem to be preying on the treaty, using their membership as a cover under which to develop covert bomb programs. What may be less well known, however, is that a democracy has never attempted this path.45 There are democracies that sign the NPT and comply, like Belgium and Canada. There are other democracies that decide that they would like to build nuclear weapons and, therefore, refuse to join the institution, like Israel and India. But never has a democracy signed the NPT and then attempted to build nuclear weapons anyway. In contrast, the list of autocracies that signed the NPT and then secretly pursued the bomb despite their public commitment is long and includes Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, and Syria. It also includes Romania, Taiwan, and South Korea in the past when they were ruled by autocratic governments. In addition to the NPT, democracies are more likely to sign and/or comply with international agreements in a wide range of other areas including human rights, the environment, trade, international monetary affairs, and arms control.46 There are several reasons why democracies may be willing and able to make “credible commitments” internationally. As discussed earlier, democratic leaders may fear “audience costs” for making international agreements and then failing to comply. In addition, democracies will often change their domestic political laws to accord with their international legal agreements, which locks in the international commitment and makes noncompliance illegal domestically. Signing an international treaty may also empower domestic political interest groups by providing them with resources, legitimacy, and information. These groups are then better positioned politically to press their governments to keep their international commitments. The democratic advantage in international diplomacy goes beyond formal commitments, however. Democracies also enjoy more “soft power.”47 Political scientist Joseph Nye defines hard power as the ability to influence others through economic or military threats or promises. He contrasts that with soft power—a term he coined—to mean achieving one’s goals by getting others to want what you want. Nye argued that the United States, due to its attractive political system, culture, and foreign policies, built up large reservoirs of soft power during the Cold War. It was often able to achieve its goals without resorting to bribes or punishments because other nations generally liked the United States and believed in what it stood for. (The American model may have been somewhat tarnished in recent years; this is a subject to which we will return later in the book.) In contrast, the Soviet Union, with its authoritarian politics at home and abroad, lacked soft power and was forced, therefore, to rely more heavily on brute force. These are not isolated examples. Democracies tend to display the types of values, policies, and vibrant cultures that appeal to others. Indeed, according to a recent ranking of soft power, the top twenty nations with the most soft power around the world are all democracies.48 Since democracies also tend to be perceived as less threatening to other states, they are better able to amass power internationally without generating significant resistance or counterbalancing coalitions.49 Finally, democracies may also be better at foreign policy decision-making in general. As we will see later, scholars have argued that democracies may enjoy a wartime advantage due to two factors.50 First, democratic leaders may make better decisions about war and peace due to the free flow of information and open debate in their societies. And second, democracies may produce more capable military officers who are empowered to take initiative on the battlefield. While recent scholarship has focused on how these factors affect war, in theory, these same dynamics should apply to diplomacy as well. The same mechanisms that allow leaders to make better decisions about war initiation may also lead them to more astutely navigate a wide range of diplomatic issues that fall short of war and peace. If democratic warriors are better able to take initiative on the battlefield, then democratic diplomats may also be more effective at the negotiating table. In addition, scholars have argued that when democracies make foreign policy mistakes, they are better able to self-correct.51 In sum, democracies stand out as more reliable, attractive, and judicious (and less threatening) diplomatic partners in an often dodgy, ugly, rash, and dangerous world.

Democracy and Military Strength

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor. Tokyo intentionally picked a fight with the world’s largest economic power on the assumption that the United States did not have the stomach for a major war in the Pacific. A few years later, on September 2, 1945, Japan formally surrendered on the decks of the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay. On October 25, 1983, the United States invaded the tiny Caribbean island nation of Grenada. A military junta had just executed the country’s leader, and the United States intervened to overthrow the upstart military government. The fighting was over within a week, and the United States helped install a democratic system that governs the country to the present day. The democratic peace theory—the idea that democracies do not fight other democracies—is well known. What is less well known is that democracies win the wars they fight.52 Indeed, since 1815, democracies have won over 76 percent of their wars. Compare this to the much lower success rate of autocracies, which have been victorious in only 47 percent of cases. Statistical tests reveal that regime type is an important determinant of victory in war even after controlling for other factors that might matter, such as military power, terrain, strategy, allies, and distance. There are several reasons why democratic states may enjoy an advantage in international conflict. First, as the examples above indicate, democracies are more likely to choose wars they can win, or at least ones in which losses will not be devastating. Democracies go to war with Serbia, while autocracies invade Russia in winter. Democratic leaders may be pickier about the wars they fight because they conduct foreign policy with an eye to the ballot box. Losing a war is a good way to lose popular support and re-election. Winning a war, on the other hand, rallies the country around the flag and boosts one’s support and prospects for remaining in office. In addition, democratic states facilitate free flows of information, which allow leaders to make more accurate assessments about their prospects for victory. Before a democratic leader makes a decision to go to war, he or she has been informed by vigorous debates within his or her own government and in the broader public. These debates weigh the available options and the associated costs and benefits. Autocratic leaders, on the other hand, do not benefit from hearing all sides of an argument. They tend to be surrounded by “yes men” who tell the dictator what he wants to hear. When Saddam Hussein received unwelcome news, for example, it was not uncommon for him to literally shoot the messenger.

Moreover, broader public debate over a state’s policy are not welcomed in a closed society. Foreign policy wonks in the United States can burnish their credentials and advance their career prospects by consistently pointing out the flaws in U.S. foreign policy in op-eds, journal articles, and books. The same behavior in China would land one in jail. Leaders in autocratic states, therefore, may make less sound judgments on issues of war and peace because they need not worry about losing power at the ballot box and because they are less likely to have access to the best information about their chances of prevailing in armed conflict. In addition, democratic states produce better soldiers. To fight effectively, officers must be prepared to take initiative on the battlefield. No plan survives contact with the enemy, and a good military officer must be able to make real-time decisions consistent with political guidance as conditions on the ground change. Higher levels of education and the individualistic culture fostered in democratic states produce soldiers who make good leaders and take initiative on the battlefield. Improvising in an autocratic army, on the other hand, can be risky. Individual initiative may be seen as insubordination. It is much safer to wait for orders from above. Moreover, autocrats do not tend to empower lower-level officers because they like to maintain strict control from the top. Additionally, democratic soldiers are often more motivated because they believe they are fighting for their own nation’s freedom, not because they are forced into battle. Furthermore, democracies are known to comply with the laws of war and treat prisoners humanely. This makes surrender an easier proposition for enemy soldiers. Just think of Saddam Hussein’s army surrendering in droves without much of a fight in the 1991 and 2003 Gulf Wars. Contrariwise, autocracies have less compunction about killing or mistreating enemy POWs. Why not fight to the finish if the alternative may be execution or years of grueling torture in the Hanoi Hilton? Democracies also enjoy a military advantage due to their innovation edge.53 Wars are often won by the state with the superior military technology or the more innovative military operational concepts.54 Military competition is not static; it is a constant cat-and-mouse game, with both sides seeking advantage. The offense creates more powerful artillery; the defense builds better walls. The defense deploys trenches, barbed wire, and machine guns; the offense develops tanks and aircraft. The offense builds aircraft carriers; the defense fields anti-ship missiles. States that push the technological frontier of military technology and, importantly, that can develop the new operational concepts to employ the technology on the battlefield, have an advantage over those that do not.55 It is widely believed that democracies hold a technology and innovation edge in the civilian economy for the reasons discussed previously, and I argue here that democracies also tend to be better innovators in military/technological competitions. They are more likely to develop innovative military technologies and to devise ingenious operational concepts for their employment.

#### Death comes first under any framework

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Contrary to those accounts, I would argue that it is death per se that is really the objective evil for us, not because it deprives us of a prospective future of overall good judged better than the alter- native of non-being. It cannot be about harm to a former person who has ceased to exist, for no person actually suffers from the sub-sequent non-participation. Rather, death in itself is an evil to us because it ontologically destroys the current existent subject — it is the ultimate in metaphysical lightening strikes.80 The evil of death is truly an ontological evil borne by the person who already exists, independently of calculations about better or worse possible lives. Such an evil need not be consciously experienced in order to be an evil for the kind of being a human person is. Death is an evil because of the change in kind it brings about, a change that is destructive of the type of entity that we essentially are. Anything, whether caused naturally or caused by human intervention (intentional or unintentional) that drastically interferes in the process of maintaining the person in existence is an objective evil for the person. What is crucially at stake here, and is dialectically supportive of the self-evidency of the basic good of human life, is that death is a radical interference with the current life process of the kind of being that we are. In consequence, death itself can be credibly thought of as a ‘primitive evil’ for all persons, regardless of the extent to which they are currently or prospectively capable of participating in a full array of the goods of life.81 In conclusion, concerning willed human actions, it is justifiable to state that any intentional rejection of human life itself cannot therefore be warranted since it is an expression of an ultimate disvalue for the subject, namely, the destruction of the present person; a radical ontological good that we cannot begin to weigh objectively against the travails of life in a rational manner. To deal with the sources of disvalue (pain, suffering, etc.) we should not seek to irrationally destroy the person, the very source and condition of all human possibility.82

#### Discount their evidence --- there’s a confirmation bias in favor of new academic radicalism --- liberalism isn’t exciting, but is the most effective way to reduce violence, while radicalism fails and kills millions

--Liberalism not sexy or rhetorically powerful, but historically is the best way to structure a society for continued, iterative gains

--This proves a confirmation bias link – everybody wants to jump on the hip new bandwagon even if it’s less effective – should frame solutions through efficacy – we need practical politics to get things done, not impress 20 year olds

--Left ignores failures of 20th century – this is “ghost Marxism” – Soviet Union/China killed millions through central economic planning post revolution and recreated fascism

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Adam Gopnik, “A Thousand Small Sanities: The Moral Adventure of Liberalism,” Basic Books New York, 2019

\*\*\*Bracketed for ableist language – Raffi

The liberal response to left-wing radicalism has, historically, always been rhetorically weak—even though, historically, it has also been demonstrably correct. I doubt that I can fully remedy that. The rhetorical weakness is apparent on any college campus today. Who would not rather be fiercely radical than circumspectly liberal? Who would not rather inherit some of the passion of the romantic movement and its rebellions rather than settle for all those parenthetical qualifications and rhinoceros-like snortings? It is much easier to convert smart people to a view of the necessities of massive social renewal than to the exigencies of small-step social reform. Since the French Revolution the entirety of Western politics has been practiced on a moral slope canted left. Indeed, people in France used to have a saying: “Better to be wrong with Sartre than right with Aron.” (That I now probably have to explain that Raymond Aron was a great conservative-liberal thinker in France, right about far more “things in the world, from Stalinism to the Resistance, than Sartre ever was, is in itself a sign of the inequality of treatment.) This is one of the things that infuriates constitutional conservatives about liberals when they debate and argue with one another: liberals always assume, and are usually granted, the moral high ground even if it is made up of the refuse of old pieties and half-baked rectitude.

Well, if it’s any comfort, liberals feel the same way about leftists: they convert kids readily, while the objections we liberals can offer always feel as feeble as a dad telling a teenage girl that she should be very careful riding in cars with other teens who drink. You sound like a schmuck compared to the cool boy who drives seat-belt-less with artfully tossed Hunter Thompson paperbacks on the backseat.

But that dad is simply, invariably right—driving drunk is [a bad] an ~~insane~~ practice, and the liberal reproach to leftism is right, too, on more or less the same basis: driving intoxicated on the rhetoric of revolutionary change is [dangerous] ~~crazy~~, especially in light of all the road fatalities already recorded. The romantic utopian visions, put in place, always fail and usually end in a horrific car crash.

There is a tragic rule of twenty-first-century life, a rule of double amnesia: the right tends to act as though the nineteenth century never happened, while the left tends to act as though the twentieth century never took place. The right acts as if the socialist responses to capitalism—economic planning, the welfare state, even Keynesian economics—were the result of crazy abstract ideas of statism imposed on a pliant population by power-mad intellectuals, not, as they actually were, initial responses to mass immiseration and the daily show of extreme poverty and the relentless anxiety that industrial capitalism had produced. The left treats the obvious and inarguable lessons of the twentieth century about radical revolutions—lessons about the failure of revolution in the absence of free speech and open debate, of parliamentary procedures and small-scale experiments in change—as though they had never been learned and learned in the hardest of hard ways. On the left, the product is not just post-Marxism but what I call ghost-Marxism, an eagerness to use the old vocabulary of revolution with zero recognition of the history of what happens when the solutions are actually attempted. It is the language of revolution completely divorced from the evidence of experience.

The liberal response to left-wing views, old and new, is, first, that economic injustice is self-evidently amendable within the liberal order, if we have the will to do it. Second, that while the new radical assault on liberalism suggests a passionate politics, it still doesn’t propose a practical politics—one that seems likely to win elections rather than impress sophomores at Sarah Lawrence. (That is said without disdain; I have subsidized a sophomore at Sarah Lawrence.) And finally—in a way that may seem more tediously abstract but actually is a day-to-day effect on our thinking—that the new radical critiques all depend on forms of determinism and essentialism that have in the past always rightly been seen as reactionary and will still prove false friends to progressive causes.

#### Unethical forms of liberalism should be criticized, but overarching values of humanity are worth preserving --- an example is reform of public health infrastructure that saved millions from cholera --- don’t toss the baby out with the sewage water!

--London sewer system took two generations after 1858, but saved millions from cholera – not a single moment but decades of planning and logistics

--Proves a broader pt about slow reform that chooses to prioritize the rules and process of the system

--Leftist move to take parts of liberalism and overdetermine the system itself are tactics of authoritarians who try to make everything an essentialist signifier – bad people can have good ideas – misuse of humanism/liberalism doesn’t mean we shouldn’t fight for equal protections and rights

--Example of declaration of independence – written by slaveholders but the values of life/liberty were essential in fighting against slavery

**Gopnik, 19 -** American [writer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Writer) and [essayist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essayist) best known as a staff writer for [The New Yorker](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_Yorker)—to which he has contributed non-fiction, fiction, memoir and criticism

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What I mean when I say that Lewes and Eliot represented “liberals of process” may become more tangible—even smelly—if we think about one of the greatest liberal reforms of their time: the creation of the London sewers. London had been caught for a century in a “miasma of raw sewage, which was rightly believed to be a public “health threat, though wrongly, in the years before bacterial theories of disease were fully understood, thought to enter our bodies through a kind of malignant fog. The work of making a safer sewer took two generations and many efforts. Lewes was a close observer of this process. He was intimate friends with F. O. Ward, “the man of the Sewers” and the sanitary affairs writer for the London Times, who even invented a new kind of water closet. (He closely studied the sewage system of Brussels to find the right model, and there was much intense argument about mixing waste and rainwater.) The new system was eventually brought in as the result of the Great Stink of 1858. It took a long time to finish building, but it saved—by direct protection from cholera in London and by indirect example to other cities—hundreds of thousands and, in the long term, possibly millions of lives. Remaking the London sewers required a process of reasoned reform—not merely good principle but evidence and argument and engineering, all unfolding not in a eureka moment in Parliament but over decades of effort underground. The principle of public good and the process of public works became the same.

That’s what we mean by “liberals of process.” We mean that where the Mill generation were obsessed with how individuals could be freed from common prejudices, “the Lewes generation were concerned, in a manner that derives from Darwin, with how individuals change as their environments alter. The complex process of building public sanitation was inseparable from the abstract principle of the public good. People made pipes, and pipes made better people. The sewer was the sanity.

But it wasn’t all sewers and moral support for Lewes. He was also the first to use a term, and discover a concept, that remains one of the key analytic weapons in the liberal arsenal. This was the idea of “emergence”—the great solvent of all determinisms. Lewes’s discovery of emergence was simply the discovery that the rules of a system can be completely different than the rules of the elements that form it. Hydrogen and oxygen make water, but water is not like either. Atoms alone form molecules, but the laws of thermodynamics are completely different from the laws of quantum electrodynamics. Systems are made up of their parts, but the parts are not the system. As Lewes wrote: “The emergent is unlike its components insofar as these are incommensurable, and it cannot be reduced to their sum or their difference.

In a way, Lewes’s idea was simply a more sweeping statement of the same principle that Hume and Smith had offered: they saw that acts of buying and selling could arise from sympathy as much as greed and end in some place larger than a store—that they could help make a city. The market, like any other system, has emergent properties of its own and creates structures it never planned. In Greenwich Village in the 1950s, the small businesspeople, the locksmiths, bread bakers, and shoe repairmen—who are there simply to sell goods and services—become a network, carrying civic functions of connecting, protecting, observing, communing. This beautiful “ballet of the street” is what the great urbanist Jane Jacobs loved to celebrate; it’s an instance of an emergent system, right on the sidewalk. (And of course, the system can turn on us and produce a monoculture of bank branches and chain drugstores that destroys, and renders robotic, the original ballet.)

Autocracies and authoritarians of all stripes want to reduce all things to their elements: we are no more than the race or class or kind we come from. Lewes was saying that the systems that we live in can become very different from the elements they began with even if no one element in that system wills it, or even alters its nature. The system emerging is more important than the elements originally engaged. The origins of our systems, and of our ideas, are less important than the ideas themselves. Slave holders can write documents that carry within them the necessity of the annihilation of slavery.