### Extinction Outweighs

#### Extinction outweighs because it precludes the possibility of future value, and existential focus is good and valuable – acknowledging and discussing possibility of self-destruction shifts targets away from each other and towards extinction.

Khan ‘18

Risalat Khan is an activist and intrapreneur from Bangladesh passionate about addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and other existential challenges. He was featured by The Guardian as one of the “young climate campaigners to watch” (2015). As a campaigner with the global civic movement Avaaz (2014-17), Risalat was part of a small core team that spearheaded the largest climate marches in history with a turnout of over 800,000 across 2,000 cities. After fighting for the Paris Agreement, Risalat led a campaign joined by over a million people to stop the Rampal coal plant in Bangladesh to protect the Sundarbans World Heritage forest, and elicited criticism of the plant from Crédit Agricolé through targeted advocacy. Currently, Risalat is pursuing an MPA in Environmental Science and Policy at Columbia University as a SIPA Environmental Fellow. He also regularly consults with mission-driven organizations on building effective and loving team cultures. Previously, he graduated magna cum laude from Amherst College, where he launched a campaign that eventually resulted in the replacement of the College’s racist mascot ‘Lord Jeff’ with a cuddly ‘Mammoth’. Finally, Risalat is absolutely blown away to be alive at this amazing time in history, and approaches life like a roller-coaster ride, “5 reasons why we need to start talking about existential risks”, World Economic Forum, 10 January 2018, accessed: 15 December 2020, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/01/5-reasons-start-talking-existential-risks-extinction-moriori/>, R.S.

I find the story of the Moriori profound. It teaches me two lessons. Firstly, that human culture is far from immutable. That we can struggle against our baser instincts. That we can master them and rise to unprecedented challenges. Secondly, that even this does not make us masters of our own destiny. We can make visionary choices, but the future can still surprise us.

This is a humbling realization. Because faced with an uncertain future, the only wise thing we can do **is prepare** for possibilities. Standing at the launch pad of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the possibilities seem endless. They range from an era of abundance to the end of humanity, and everything in between. How do we navigate such a wide and divergent spectrum?

I am an optimist. From my bubble of privilege, life feels like a rollercoaster ride full of ever more impressive wonders, even as I try to fight the many social injustices that still blight us. However, the accelerating pace of change amid uncertainty elicits one fundamental observation. Among the infinite future possibilities, only **one outcome is** truly **irreversible: extinction.**

Concerns about extinction are often dismissed as apocalyptic alarmism. Sometimes, they are. But repeating that mankind is still here after 70 years of existential warning about nuclear warfare is a straw man argument. The fact that a 1000-year flood has not happened does not negate its possibility. And there have been far too many nuclear near-misses to rest easy.

As the World Economic Forum’s Annual Meeting in Davos discusses how to create a shared future in a fractured world, here are five reasons why the possibility of existential risks should raise the stakes of conversation:

1. **Extinction is the rule, not the exception**

More than 99.9% of all the species that ever existed are gone. Deep time is unfathomable to the human brain. But if one cares to take a tour of the billions of years of life’s history, we find a litany of forgotten species. And we have only discovered a mere fraction of the extinct species that once roamed the planet.

In the speck of time since the first humans evolved, more than 99.9% of all the distinct human cultures that have ever existed are extinct. Each hunter-gatherer tribe had its own mythologies, traditions and norms. They wiped each other out, or coalesced into larger formations following the agricultural revolution. However, as major civilizations emerged, even those that reached incredible heights, such as the Egyptians and the Romans, eventually collapsed.

It is only in the very recent past that we became a truly global civilization. Our interconnectedness continues to grow rapidly. “Stand or fall, we are the last civilization”, as Ricken Patel, the founder of the global civic movement Avaaz, put it.

2. **Environmental pressures can drive extinction**

More than 15,000 scientists just issued a ‘warning to humanity’. They called on us to reduce our impact on the biosphere, 25 years after their first such appeal. The warning notes that we are far outstripping the capacity of our planet in all but one measure of ozone depletion, including emissions, biodiversity, freshwater availability and more. The scientists, not a crowd known to overstate facts, conclude: “soon it will be too late to shift course away from our failing trajectory, and time is running out”.

In his 2005 book Collapse, Jared Diamond charts the history of past societies. He makes the case that overpopulation and resource use beyond the carrying capacity have often been important, if not the only, drivers of collapse. Even though we are making important incremental progress in battles such as climate change, we must still achieve tremendous step changes in our response to several major environmental crises. We must do this even while the world’s population continues to grow. These pressures are bound to exert great stress on our global civilization.

3. **Superintelligence**: unplanned obsolescence?

Imagine a monkey society that foresaw the ascendance of humans. Fearing a loss of status and power, it decided to kill the proverbial Adam and Eve. It crafted the most ingenious plan it could: starve the humans by taking away all their bananas.

Foolproof plan, right? This story describes the fundamental difficulty with superintelligence. A superintelligent being may always do something entirely different from what we, with our mere mortal intelligence, can foresee. In his 2014 book Superintelligence, Swedish philosopher Nick Bostrom presents the challenge in thought-provoking detail, and advises caution.

Bostrom cites a survey of industry experts that projected a 50% chance of the development of artificial superintelligence by 2050, and a 90% chance by 2075. The latter date is within the life expectancy of many alive today.

Visionaries like Stephen Hawking and Elon Musk have warned of the existential risks from artificial superintelligence. Their opposite camp includes Larry Page and Mark Zuckerberg. But on an issue that concerns the future of humanity, is it really wise to ignore the guy who explained the nature of space to us and another guy who just put a reusable rocket in it?

4. Technology: known knowns and **unknown unknowns**

Many fundamentally disruptive technologies are coming of age, from bioengineering to quantum computing, 3-D printing, robotics, nanotechnology and more. Lord Martin Rees describes potential existential challenges from some of these technologies, such as a bioengineered pandemic, in his book Our Final Century.

Imagine if North Korea, feeling secure in its isolation, could release a virulent strain of Ebola, engineered to be airborne. Would it do it? Would ISIS?

Projecting decades forward, we will likely develop capabilities that are unthinkable even now. The unknown unknowns of our technological path are profoundly humbling.

5. **'The Trump Factor'**

Despite our scientific ingenuity, we are still a confused and confusing species. Think back to two years ago, and how you thought the world worked then. Has that not been upended by the election of Donald Trump as US President, and everything that has happened since?

The mix of billions of messy humans will forever be unpredictable. When the combustible forces described above are added to this melee, we find ourselves on a tightrope.

What choices must we now make now to create a shared future, in which we are not at perpetual risk of destroying ourselves?

Common enemy to common cause

Throughout history, we have **rallied against the ‘other’.** Tribes have overpowered tribes, empires have conquered rivals. Even today, our fiercest displays of unity typically happen at wartime. We give our lives for our motherland and defend nationalistic pride like a wounded lion.

But like the early Morioris, we 21st-century citizens find ourselves on an increasingly unstable island. We may have a violent past, but we have no more dangerous enemy than ourselves. Our task is to find our own Nunuku’s Law. Our own shared contract, based on equity, would help us navigate safely. It would ensure a future that unleashes the full potential of our still-budding human civilization, in all its diversity.

We cannot do this unless we are humbly grounded in the possibility of our own destruction. Survival is life’s primal instinct. In the absence of a common enemy, we must find **common cause in survival.** Our future may depend on whether we realize this.

### Private Sector Good

#### Only private sector allows for effective space colonization.

Diakovska & Aliieva 20 [Halyna Diakovska and Olga Aliieva, Ph.D.s in Philosophy, Associate Professors, Donbass State Pedagogical University, “Consequentialism and Commercial Space Exploration,” 2020, *Philosophy and Cosmology*, Vol. 24, pp. 5-24, https://doi.org/10.29202/phil-cosm/24/1, EA]

The experience of the USA showed that leadership in space exploration, which is maintained solely through public funding, could be erroneous. Since 1984, the share of public funding has gradually decreased in space telecommunications, commercial space transportation, remote sensing, etc., while the share of participation of non-state enterprises has increased rapidly. A legal and regulatory framework has been modified to stimulate space commercialization. The stages of space law development are discussed in the research of Valentyn Halunko (Halunko, 2019), Larysa Soroka (Soroka & Kurkova, 2019), etc. Larysa Soroka and Kseniia Kurkova explored the specifics of the legal regulation of the use and development of artificial intelligence for the space area (Soroka & Kurkova, 2019).

As a result of changing the legal framework and attracting private investors to the space market, the US did not lose its leadership in space exploration, but rather secured it. Private investment along with government funding have significantly reduced the risk of business projects in the space industry. The quality and effectiveness of space exploration programs have increased.

In 2018, Springer published an eloquent book The Rise of Private Actors in the Space Sector. Alessandra Vernile, the author of the book, explores a broad set of topics that reveal the role of private actors in space exploration (Vernile, 2018). The book covers the following topics: “Innovative Public Procurement and Support Schemes,” “New Target Markets for Private Actors,” etc. In the “Selected Success Stories,” Vernile provides examples of successful private actors in space exploration (Vernile, 2018).

The current level of competition, which has developed on the space market, allows us to state the following fact. Private space companies have been able to compete with entire states in launching spacecraft, transporting cargo to orbital stations, and exploring space objects. The issue of mining on space objects, the creation of space settlements and the intensive development of the space tourism market are on the agenda.

In the 21st century, the creation of non-governmental commercial organizations specializing in the field of commercial space exploration, is regarded as an ordinary activity. They are established as parts of the universities around projects funded by private investors. For example, Astropreneurship & Space Industry Club based on the MIT community (Astropreneurship, 2019).

Large-scale research in the field of commercial space exploration, as well as the practical results achieved, led to the formation of a new paradigm called “New Space” ecosystem. The articles of Deganit Paikowsky’s (Paikowsky, 2017), Clelia Iacomino (Iacomino & Ciccarelli, 2018) et al. reveal its key meanings and the opportunities it offers in the space sector. The “New Space” ecosystem is a new vision for commercial space exploration. It is the formation of a cosmic worldview, in which the near space with all the wealth of its resources and capabilities, becomes a part of the global economy and the sustainable development of the society. The “New Space” ecosystem offers the following ways for commercial space exploration (Iacomino & Ciccarelli, 2018):

1. Innovative public procurement and support schemes, which significantly expand the role of commercial actors in space exploration.

2. Attracting new entrants in the space sector. First of all, these are companies working in the domain of Information and communications technology, artificial intelligence, etc. that are expanding their research in space markets. They offer innovative business models and new solutions to space commercialization.

3. Innovative industrial approaches based on new processes, methods, and industrial organization for the development and production of space systems or launchers.

4. Disruptive market solutions, which significantly reduce commercial space exploration prices, increase labor productivity, provide new types of services, etc.

5. Substantial private investment from different sources and involving different funding mechanisms. For instance, these are private fortunes, venture capital firms, business angels, private equity companies, or banks, etc.

6. Involvement of an increasing number of space-faring nations investing in the acquisition of turnkey space capabilities or even in the development of a domestic space industrial base. This expands the space markets and makes it more competitive.

The analysis of the research and advances in commercial space exploration allows us to draw the following conclusions:

1. In fact, the space market has already been created. It is currently undergoing continuous development that will integrate the resources and capabilities of the near space into the global economy over the next decade.

2. A new paradigm, denoted by the term “New Space” ecosystem, is at the heart of the created space market. The “New Space” ecosystem is a step towards the formation of cosmic thinking, in which outer space, with its resources and capabilities, is considered as a sphere of human activities.

3. Space market regulates space law, which is constantly evolving. The space law develops within the bounds of international law. In essence, the space market is integrated into the international legal field and is governed by its laws.

#### Only markets can provide the energy necessary to solve space colonization.

Kovic '19 [Marko; March 2019; co-founder president of the Zurich Institute of Public Affairs Research; "The future of energy," https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/aswz9/download]

Ideally, the mitigation of climate risks will coincide with and contribute to the development of improved or even entirely novel sources of energy that will increase the long-term chances of humankind’s survival by means of space colonization. This is not an unrealistic expectation, given that the mitigation of climate risks consists, to a large degree, of replacing fossil fuels with other, less harmful sources of energy. However, some climate change mitigation strategies might actually harm the long-term prospects of humankind.

First, it is possible that dominant climate change mitigation strategies will actively exclude any form of nuclear energy from the repertoire of climate-friendly energy sources. Existing and experimental (molten salt) fission reactors could play a significant role in replacing carbon-heavy energy sources, but pro-environmental attitudes often overlap with anti-nuclear sentiments [65]. As a result, and in combination with other problems such as large-scale market failures of existing fission reactors (one of the reasons being that generating electricity from fossil fuels is cheaper) [66], nuclear fission does not currently have significant standing as a “cleantech” contribution to climate change mitigation. From a long-term perspective, an unfavorable view of nuclear energy in the context of climate change might mean that technological progress in the areas of nuclear fission and fusion might come to a halt (for example, due to explicit bans or implicit disincentives). If such a scenario came to be, our attempts at colonizing space would almost certainly fail: There are currently no alternatives to fission and fusion, and it is highly improbable that Solar power alone could suffice for sustaining extraterrestrial habitats.

Second, there is some probability that climate change mitigation strategies will change the social order towards a degrowth philosophy. Degrowth is a vague socio-economic concept and social movement that, in general, calls for a contraction of the global and national economies by means of lower production and consumption rates, and, to some degree, to more profound changes to the “capitalist” system of economic production [67]. Degrowth or degrowth-like approaches are being actively considered as climate risk mitigation strategies [68, 69], and degrowth would almost certainly be a highly effective measure for mitigating climate change. After all, if we were to drastically reduce or even completely eliminate the (industrial) sources of greenhouse gases, the amount of greenhouse gases that are being emitted would accordingly drastically sink. From the long-term perspective of humankind’s survival, degrowth is problematic in at least two ways. First, there is a risk that the general contraction of economic activity would also slow or eliminate progress in the domain of energy, which would, in turn, reduce the probability of successful space colonization due to an absence of suitable energy sources. Second, and more fundamental: If degrowth were to become a dominant societal paradigm, it is uncertain whether the long-term survival of humankind by means of space colonization would be regarded a desirable goal. In a literal sense, establishing extraterrestrial colonies would mean growth; the size of the total human population would grow, and the area of space-time that humans occupy would grow.

In a more philosophical sense, degrowth might even be antithetical to space colonization. Even though both degrowth and space colonization have a similar moral goal – increasing wellbeing – , the ends to that goal are very different. Within degrowth philosophy, the goal is, metaphorically speaking, not to “live beyond our means”: We should strive for “ecological balance”, and such a state should increase the average wellbeing. But the frame of reference is the status quo; Earth and humankind as we know it today. Space colonization, on the other hand, operates with a much larger frame of reference: All the future generations of humans (and other sentient beings) who could enjoy wellbeing if we succeed in colonizing space – and who will categorically be denied that wellbeing if we fail to colonize space [70]. The goal of space colonization as a moral project is not to live beyond our means, but to actively redefine and expand what our means are through scientific and technological progress.

### Cap Good

#### Capitalism is sustainable – their environment scenarios are empirically denied and the transition crushes value to life.

Pinker 18 [Steven, Johnstone Family Professor in the Department of Psychology at Harvard University. February 2018. “Enlightment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress.” Chapter 10: The Environment, Viking, Accessed through the Wake Forest Library] AMarb RC/JCH-PF

Ecomodernism begins with the realization that some degree of pollution is an inescapable consequence of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. When people use energy to create a zone of structure in their bodies and homes, they must increase entropy elsewhere in the environment in the form of waste, pollution, and other forms of disorder. The human species has always been ingenious at doing this—that’s what differentiates us from other mammals—and it has never lived in harmony with the environment. When native peoples first set foot in an ecosystem, they typically hunted large animals to extinction, and often burned and cleared vast swaths of forest.4 A dirty secret of the conservation movement is that wilderness preserves are set up only after indigenous peoples have been decimated or forcibly removed from them, including the national parks in the United States and the Serengeti in East Africa.5 As the environmental historian William Cronon writes, “wilderness” is not a pristine sanctuary; it is itself a product of civilization. When humans took up farming, they became more disruptive still. According to the paleoclimatologist William Ruddiman, the adoption of wet rice cultivation in Asia some five thousand years ago may have released so much methane into the atmosphere from rotting vegetation as to have changed the climate. “A good case can be made,” he suggests, that “the people in the Iron Age and even the late Stone Age had a much greater per-capita impact on the earth’s landscape than the average modern-day person.”6 And as Brand has pointed out (chapter 7), “natural farming” is a contradiction in terms. Whenever he hears the words natural food, he is tempted to rail: No product of agriculture is the slightest bit natural to an ecologist! You take a nice complex ecosystem, chop it into rectangles, clear it to the ground, and hammer it into perpetual early succession! You bust its sod, flatten it flat, and drench it with vast quantities of constant water! Then you populate it with uniform monocrops of profoundly damaged plants incapable of living on their own! Every food plant is a pathetic narrow specialist in one skill, inbred for thousands of years to a state of genetic idiocy! Those plants are so fragile, they had to domesticate humans just to take endless care of them!7 A second realization of the ecomodernist movement is that industrialization has been good for humanity. It has fed billions, doubled life spans, slashed extreme poverty, and, by replacing muscle with machinery, made it easier to end slavery, emancipate women, and educate children (chapters 7, 15, and 17). It has allowed people to read at night, live where they want, stay warm in winter, see the world, and multiply human contact. Any costs in pollution and habitat loss have to be weighed against these gifts. As the economist Robert Frank has put it, there is an optimal amount of pollution in the environment, just as there is an optimal amount of dirt in your house. Cleaner is better, but not at the expense of everything else in life. The third premise is that the tradeoff that pits human well-being against environmental damage can be renegotiated by technology. How to enjoy more calories, lumens, BTUs, bits, and miles with less pollution and land is itself a technological problem, and one that the world is increasingly solving. Economists speak of the environmental Kuznets curve, a counterpart to the Ushaped arc for inequality as a function of economic growth. As countries first develop, they prioritize growth over environmental purity. But as they get richer, their thoughts turn to the environment.9 If people can afford electricity only at the cost of some smog, they’ll live with the smog, but when they can afford both electricity and clean air, they’ll spring for the clean air. This can happen all the faster as technology makes cars and factories and power plants cleaner and thus makes clean air more affordable. Economic growth bends the environmental Kuznets curve by advances not just in technology but in values. Some environmental concerns are entirely practical: people complain about smog in their city, or green space getting paved over. But other concerns are more spiritual. The fate of the black rhinoceros and the well-being of our descendants in the year 2525 are significant moral concerns, but worrying about them now is something of a luxury. As societies get richer and people no longer think about putting food on the table or a roof over their heads, their values climb a hierarchy of needs, and the scope of their concern expands in space and time. Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, using data from the World Values Survey, have found that people with stronger emancipative values—tolerance, equality, freedom of thought and speech— which tend to go with affluence and education, are also more likely to recycle and to pressure governments and businesses into protecting the environment. Ecopessimists commonly dismiss this entire way of thinking as the “faith that technology will save us.” In fact it is a skepticism that the status quo will doom us—that knowledge will be frozen in its current state and people will robotically persist in their current behavior regardless of circumstances. Indeed, a naïve faith in stasis has repeatedly led to prophecies of environmental doomsdays that never happened.

#### We control uniqueness – cap’s sustainable thanks to dematerialization and the alt’s transition fails.

McAfee, 20—cofounder and codirector of the MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy at the MIT Sloan School of Management, former professor at Harvard Business School and fellow at Harvard’s Berkman Center for Internet and Society (Andrew, “Why Degrowth Is the Worst Idea on the Planet,” <https://www.wired.com/story/opinion-why-degrowth-is-the-worst-idea-on-the-planet/>, dml)

Over that same span, an unexpected and encouraging pattern has emerged: The world's richest countries have learned how to reduce their footprint on Earth. They're polluting less, using less land and water, consuming smaller amounts of important natural resources, and doing better in many other ways. Some of these trends are also now visible in less affluent countries.

However, many in the degrowth movement seem to have trouble taking yes for an answer. The claims I just made are widely resisted or ignored. Some say they’ve been debunked. Of course, debate over empirical claims like these is normal and healthy. Our impact on our planet is hugely important. But something less healthy is at work here. As Upton Sinclair put it, “It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it.” Some voices in the conversation about the environment seem wedded to the idea that degrowth is necessary, and they are unwilling or unable to walk away from it, no matter the evidence.

But evidence remains a powerful way to persuade the persuadable. The one thing everyone agrees on is that the last 50 years have been a period of growth, not degrowth. In fact, growth has never been faster, except for the 25-year rebuilding period after World War II. The population and economic growth rates of the past half-century are remarkably fast by historical standards. Between 1800 and 1945, for example, the world’s economy grew less than 1.5 percent per year, on average. Between 1970 and 2019, that average increased to almost 3.5 percent.

It's natural to assume that, as this growth continued, every nation’s planetary footprint would only increase. After all, as people become more numerous and prosperous they consume more, and producing all the goods and services they consume uses up resources, takes over ecosystems, and generates pollution. The logic seems ironclad that our gains have to be the environment’s losses.

Easing Pollution, Not Exporting It

In some important areas, however, a very different pattern emerged after 1970: Growth continued, but environmental harm decreased. This decoupling occurred first with pollution, and first in the rich world. In the US, for example, aggregate levels of six common air pollutants have declined by 77 percent, even as gross domestic product increased by 285 percent and population by 60 percent. In the UK, annual tonnage of particulate emissions dropped by more than 75 percent between 1970 and 2016, and of the main polluting chemicals by about 85 percent. Similar gains are common across the highest-income countries.

How were these reductions achieved? The two possibilities are cleanup and offshoring. Either rich countries figured out how to reduce their “air pollution per dollar” so much that overall pollution went down even as their economies grew, or they sent so much of their dirty production overseas that the air at home got cleaner. The first of these paths reduces the total burden of human-caused pollution; the second just rearranges it.

The evidence is overwhelming that rich countries cleaned up their air pollution much more than they outsourced it. For one, a great deal of air pollution comes from highway vehicles and power plants, and rich countries haven’t outsourced driving and generating electricity to low-income ones. In fact, high-income countries haven't even offshored most of their industry. The US and UK both manufacture more than they did 50 years ago (at least until the Covid-19 pandemic sharply reduced output), and Germany has been a net exporter since 2000 while continuing to drive down air pollution. The rest of the world has been exporting its manufacturing pollution to Germany (to use degrowthers’ phrasing), yet Germans are breathing cleaner air than they were 20 years ago.

Rich countries have reduced their air pollution not by embracing degrowth or offshoring, but instead by enacting and enforcing smart regulation. As economists Joseph Shapiro and Reed Walker concluded in a 2018 study about the US, “changes in environmental regulation, rather than changes in productivity and trade, account for most of the emissions reductions.” Research about the cleanup of US waters also concludes that well-designed and enforced regulations have successfully reduced pollution.

It is true that the US and other rich countries now import lots of products from China and other nations with higher pollution levels. But if there were no international trade at all, and rich countries had to rely exclusively on their domestic industries to make everything they consume, they’d still have much cleaner air and water than they did 50 years ago. As a 2004 Advances in Economic Analysis and Policy study summarized: “We find no evidence that domestic production of pollution-intensive goods in the US is being replaced by imports from overseas.”

The rich world’s success at decoupling growth from pollution is an inconvenient fact for degrowthers. Even more inconvenient is China's recent success at doing the same. China’s export-led, manufacturing-heavy economy has been growing at meteoric rates, but between 2013 and 2017 air pollution in densely populated areas declined by more than 30 percent. Here again the government mandated and monitored pollution declines and so decoupled growth from an important category of environmental harm.

Prosperity Bends the Curve

China's progress with air pollution is heartening, but it's not surprising to most economists. It's a clear example of the environmental Kuznets curve (EKC) in action. Named for the economist Simon Kuznets, EKC posits a relationship between a country's affluence and the condition of its environment. As GDP per capita rises from an initial low level, so too does environmental damage; but as affluence continues to increase, the harms level off and then start to decline. The EKC is clearly visible in the pollution histories of today's rich countries, and it's now taking shape in China and elsewhere.

Also consider air pollution death rates around the world. As the invaluable website Our World in Data puts it, “Rates have typically fallen across high-income countries: almost everywhere in Europe, but also in Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Israel and South Korea and other countries. But rates have also fallen across upper-middle income countries too, including China and Brazil. In low and lower-middle income countries, rates have increased over this period.”

The EKC is a direct refutation of a core idea of degrowth: that environmental harms must always rise as populations and economies do. It's not surprising that today's degrowth advocates rarely discuss the large reductions in air and water pollution that have accompanied higher prosperity in so many places around the world. Instead, degrowthers now focus heavily on one kind of pollution: greenhouse gas emissions.

The claims made are familiar ones: that any apparent reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in rich countries are due to offshoring rather than actual decarbonization. Thanks to the Global Carbon Project, we can see if this is the case. GCP has calculated “consumption-based emissions” for many countries going back to 1990, taking into account imports and exports, yielding the greenhouse gas emissions embodied in all the goods and services consumed in each country each year.

For several of the world's richest countries, including Germany, Italy, France, the UK, and the US, graphs of consumption-based carbon emissions follow the familiar EKC. The US, for example, has 22reduced its total (not per capita) consumption-based CO2 emissions by more than 13 percent since 2007.

These reductions are not mainly due to enhanced regulation. Instead, they've come about because of a combination of tech progress and market forces. Solar and wind power have become much cheaper in recent years and have displaced coal for electricity generation. Natural gas, which when burned emits fewer greenhouse gases per unit of energy than does coal (even after taking methane leakage into account), has also become much cheaper and more abundant in the US as a result of the fracking revolution.

To ensure that these greenhouse gas declines continue to spread and accelerate, we should apply the lessons we've learned from previous pollution reduction success. In particular, we should make it expensive to emit carbon, then watch the emitters work hard to reduce this expense. The best way to do this is with a carbon dividend, which is a tax on carbon emissions where the revenues are not kept by the government but instead are rebated to people as a dividend. William Nordhaus won the 2018 Nobel Prize in economics in part for his work on the carbon dividend, and an open letter advocating its implementation in the US has been signed by more than 3,500 economists. It's an idea whose time has come.

How We Learned to Lighten Up

Tech progress and price pressure aren't just leading to the demise of coal. They're also causing us to exploit the planet less in many other important ways, even as growth continues. In other words, EKCs are not just about pollution any more.

A good place to start examining this broad phenomenon of getting more from less is US agriculture, where we have decades of data on both outputs—crop tonnage—and the key inputs of cropland, water, and fertilizer. Domestic crop tonnage has risen steadily over the years and in 2015 was more than 55 percent higher than in 1980. Over that same period, though, total water used for irrigation declined by 18 percent, total cropland by more than 7 percent. That is, over that 35-year period, US crop agriculture increased its output by more than half while giving an area of land larger than Indiana back to nature and eventually using a Lake Champlain less water each year. This was not accomplished by increasing fertilizer use; total US fertilizer consumption in 2014 (the most recent year for which data are available) was within 2 percent of its 1980 level.

The three main fertilizers of nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus (NKP) are an interesting case study. Their total US consumption (once other uses in addition to agriculture are taken into account) has declined by 23 percent since 1980, according to the United States Geological Survey. Yet some within the degrowth movement find ways to argue that these declines are also an illusion. These materials thus serve to clearly illustrate the differences in methodology, evidence, and worldview between ecomodernists like myself and degrowthers.

The USGS tracks annual domestic production, imports, and exports of NKP and uses these figures to calculate “apparent consumption” each year. Consumption of each of the three resources has declined by 16 percent or more from their peaks, which occurred no later than 1998. This seems like a clear and convincing example of dematerialization—getting more output from fewer material inputs.

As I argue in my book More From Less, dematerialization doesn’t happen for any complicated or idiosyncratic reason. It happens because resources cost money that companies would rather not spend, and tech progress keeps opening up new ways to produce more output (like crops) while spending less on material inputs (like fertilizers). Modern digital technologies are so good at helping producers get more from less that they're now allowing the US and other technologically sophisticated countries to use less in total of important materials like NKP.

Forest products provide another clear example of dematerialization in the US. Total annual domestic consumption of paper and paperboard peaked in 1999, and of timber in 2002. Both totals have since declined by more than 20 percent. Could these be mirages caused by offshoring that’s not properly captured? That’s highly unlikely, as the country is now onshoring more than it’s offshoring. The US has been a net exporter of forest products since 2009 and is now the world’s largest exporter of these materials.

Is the US economy also dematerializing its use of metals? Probably, but it’s hard to say for sure. The USGS tallies do show dematerialization in steel, aluminum, copper, and other important metals. But these figures don’t include the metals contained in imports of finished goods like cars and computers. America is a net importer of manufactured goods, so it could be that we’re using more metal year after year, but that much of this consumption is “hidden” from official statistics because of imports of heavy, complex products. However, my estimates indicate that this is extremely unlikely and that the country is in fact now reducing its overall consumption of metals.

Constructing a Weak Argument

Degrowth exponent Jason Hickel responds to this broad evidence of dematerialization by making once again the shopworn argument that there are no real environmental gains; there’s only globalization of harms. Hickel has argued repeatedly that once offshoring is properly taken into account, dematerialization vanishes. How can this be, when tallies take into account imports and exports of raw materials like NKP, timber, and paper? Because, he contends, they don't take into account the true “material footprint” of production around the world.

At this point the degrowth argument departs from reality. I mean literally. As “The Material Footprint of Nations” (the main paper Hickel cites) states, material footprint measures do “not record the actual physical movement of materials within and among countries.” Instead, they’re derived from a “calculation framework [that] … enumerates the link between the beginning of a production chain (where raw materials are extracted from the natural environment) and its end.”

Material footprint models estimate the total weight of all the materials disturbed by humans around the world as they produce the goods they eventually consume. All of the ores mined to make metal, the rock quarried to make gravel, the sand scooped up to make glass and microchips—all of these are estimated by country by year in the material footprint calculation framework.

A nation’s material footprint, then, is always higher than its direct material consumption (DMC). This is straightforward enough. What’s puzzling is that according to “The Material Footprint of Nations,” some rich countries are seeing their footprint go up even as their consumption goes down. The paper shows that many countries are now dematerializing. DMC has been trending downward for some time in the US, UK, and Japan and may recently have peaked for the European Union and OECD as a whole. Yet in all these cases, the material footprint continues to rise.

How can this be? It’s not because the material footprint models do a better job than the USGS of accounting for the metals and other materials in finished goods imports. The technical annex for the global material flows database notes that, as is the case with the USGS tallies, “complex manufactured items are largely excluded.” Instead, the paper notes, “the main reason in most cases was increased indirect use of (dependency on) construction materials.”

This is problematic, because those materials are so poorly tracked. As the appendix states, “Many countries have no data on extraction of non-metallic minerals primarily used for construction … When they are available, they are often unreliable, partial, and underreported.” It’s a poor strategy to use sparse, low-quality data to overturn conclusions based on uniform, high-quality data, yet this is what Hickel is doing when he argues that material footprint calculations show dematerialization is an illusion.

There’s one other serious problem with this argument. It’s based largely on the estimated “raw material equivalents” of Chinese exports of construction minerals, yet China is not at all a big exporter of these minerals. Instead, China’s main exports are electrical and mechanical machinery, plastics, furniture, apparel, and vehicles. None of these contain a lot of sand, gravel, stone, or clay.

So then how do such huge quantities of these and other construction minerals end up somehow being counted among China’s exports? Because China is building a lot of factories, railroads, highways, and other industrial infrastructure each year. The materials footprint calculation framework estimates how much tonnage of construction minerals all this building requires, then allocates about one third of this tonnage to exports. So by this logic, the smartphones and solar panels the US imported from China in, say, 2018 “contain” some of the stone and gravel used to build up China that year. By that same logic, if my neighbors bring me a cake the same year they renovate their house, then my consumption of lumber, drywall, and copper pipe goes up as soon as I have a slice.

Hickel doesn’t stand on any firmer ground when he moves from conclusions to recommendations. He has often claimed that 50 billion tons is the maximum weight of global resource extraction that Earth can sustainably handle and that we’re already well past this limit. In the face of this alleged crisis, he maintains that “the only fail-safe strategy is to impose legally binding caps on resource use and gradually ratchet it back down to safe levels.” However, the paper he cites to support his views contains a frank admission: “There is still no hard scientific evidence of causal relationship between human-induced resource flows and the possible breakdown of life-supporting functions at continental or global scale from which … targets [like a 50 billion ton limit] could directly be derived.” Before taking the unprecedented step of setting up a central resource planning bureaucracy, it doesn’t seem like too much to ask for hard scientific evidence that it’s actually necessary.

Let’s Keep Climbing

Throughout our history, we humans have been climbing a difficult path toward longer, healthier, more prosperous lives. As we climbed that path, we turned the environment around it brown and gray. Our mania for growth was in many ways bad news for the planet we all live on.

Recently, however, we have figured out how to make our path a green one, how to continue to grow while reducing our impact on Earth. The world’s richest countries are also putting more land and water under conservation, reintroducing native species into ecosystems from which they had been hunted into oblivion, and improving Earth in many other ways.

For reasons that I don't understand well, and that I understand less the more evidence I look at, degrowthers want to make us turn around and start walking back down the path, away from higher prosperity. Their vision seems to be one of a centrally planned, ever-deepening recession throughout the rich world for the sake of the environment.

Thanks to Covid-19, we have an inkling of how this would feel. A “degrowth recession” wouldn't have the virus’ deaths and sickness, and it wouldn't require us to practice social distancing. But it would have all the economic contractions’ job losses, business closures, mortgage defaults, and other hardships and uncertainties. And it would have them without end—after all, growth can't be allowed to restart. Corporate and government revenue would decrease permanently, and therefore so would innovation and R&D.

How many of us would be willing to accept all of this in exchange for somewhat less pollution and resource use? To sharpen the question, how many of us would be willing to accept this recession if it wasn’t necessary—if it were clear that we could get environmental improvements while continuing to grow and prosper?

The ecomodernist argument is that that is in fact clear. Unlike the degrowth argument, it's supported by a great deal of evidence. What's at least important is that it will be supported by a great deal of the world's people, who will eagerly sign up to climb our new green path to prosperity.

#### Capitalism creates good subjectivities – it ingrains socially conscious and progressive values – prefer statistics.

Haidt 15 [Jonathan, social psychologist and professor at NYU. “How Capitalism Changes Conscience.” <https://www.humansandnature.org/culture-how-capitalism-changes-conscience>] JCH-PF

I agree that the planet can’t support ten billion people consuming at the level of today’s Americans. But I’d like to point out how capitalist development tends to change values and lifestyles in ways that might be reassuring to those who identify as left-leaning, politically, on social and environmental issues. The best research on how rising prosperity changes people comes from the World Values Survey (WVS), led by Ron Inglehart and Christian Welzel. The WVS has collected data on representative samples of people in many countries every six years or so since the early 1980s. They started with twenty countries and are now up to ninety-five countries in the sixth wave of research. They ask more than a hundred questions on topics such as religion, democracy, women’s rights, capitalism, and national priorities. After each wave, the authors compute the average scores within each country on each value question, and then they do a procedure called “multi-dimensional scaling” to create a two-dimensional map within which countries can be placed. The computer has no idea what the two dimensions mean—it simply aligns countries with similar value profiles, as you can see in the figure below. World Values Survey Graph Figure 2. The Inglehart-Welzel culture map. Based on wave 6 data, 2015. For more information see: www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp The authors of the WVS interpret the two dimensions, as follows: The vertical dimension runs from “traditional values” at the bottom (in which people report a high valuation on religion, ritual, hierarchy, and deference to authorities such as God and parents) to “secular rational” values, at the top (which are the opposite). The Horizontal dimension runs from “survival values” on the left (where people emphasize economic and physical security above all else) to “self-expression” values on the right (where people begin to value things beyond money—in particular they value autonomy and rights; they want the freedom to chart their own course in life, and get more out of life than financial wealth). The best way to understand the graph is to consider that nearly all societies used to be agricultural societies. Pre-industrial farming cultures generally have traditional and survival values (they cluster in the bottom left quadrant of the map). Life is hard and unpredictable, so you should do your duty, pray to the gods, and cling to your extended family for protection. But as countries industrialize and people leave the land and enter factories, wealth rises and values shift. Interestingly, countries don’t just move diagonally, from the poor quadrant (currently occupied by the Islamic and African nations) to the rich quadrant (anchored by Scandinavia, in the upper right). Rather, there is a two-step process. First, countries move upward, from traditional/survival values to secular/survival values. When money comes from fitting yourself into the routines of factory production, there’s little time or room for religious ritual. People express materialistic values in this quadrant—they want money, not just for security, but for the social prestige it can buy. This, I believe, is the step that gives capitalism a bad name in so many countries, particularly among intellectuals and artists. It sure looks like the capitalists are exploiting the workers (for the capitalists keep almost all of the surplus economic value created), and the workers are buying into it, going crazy for consumer goods, seemingly fueling the cycle of their own exploitation. But if you just wait a few generations, you usually get to the second step. Societies transition to more service-based jobs, which require (and foster) very different skills and values compared to factory jobs. Also, as societies get wealthier, life generally gets safer, not just due to reductions in disease, starvation, and vulnerability to natural disasters, but also due to reductions in political brutalization. People get rights. The net effect of rising security is to transform people’s values in ways that the modern political left should love. Welzel explains what happens when countries move to the right in Figure 2: Fading existential pressures open people’s minds, making them prioritize freedom over security, autonomy over authority, diversity over uniformity, and creativity over discipline. The generation raised with these “open minds” and “expressive values” starts caring about women’s rights, animal rights, gay rights, human rights, and environmental degradation. They start expecting more out of life than their parents did. When women have education and career prospects, they start having fewer children—so few, in fact, that if we set aside sub-Saharan Africa (which will be the last region to undergo this “demographic transition”), the population in the rest of the world will begin declining in just a few decades and will plummet in the twenty-second century. Shanghai City lights at night I recently returned from a three-month trip across Asia, and Welzel’s words were like the Rosetta stone for understanding the vast generation gap opening up in rapidly rising Asian nations. Most Asians under thirty-five have not experienced famine, war, or the fear of being abducted during the night. But most of their grandparents (or parents in some countries) grew up with such existential threats, and their values—the so called “Asian values” that prioritize authority over freedom—don’t sit well in the minds of today’s young people, who have moved to the right along the WVS spectrum. As people become richer and safer, their values change just as Welzel describes. Young people begin to demand more socially and environmentally responsible behavior from each other and from their governments. People and countries move in a direction that can only be described as progressive, or left leaning. That doesn’t mean that left-leaning political parties have an advantage—they often get out too far ahead, or too far leftward, of the average voter. And this process works only for social issues—not for economic issues such as taxation and the size of government. But the general consensus on social and environmental issues shifts leftward (politically), and this is my central point: Capitalism and the wealth it creates changes nature and humanity simultaneously. Any discussion of a “sustainable” or “resilient” future should acknowledge not only the devastation wrought by the industrial revolution and the consumer society but also the progressive environmental values, environmentally-friendly technologies, and shrinking populations that are the inevitable result of economic development. Capitalism changes conscience. Capitalism got us into this ecological mess, back when most people had materialist values and cared little for the environment. But as values and cultures shift toward post materialism all over the world, capitalism might just get us out.

#### Capitalism reforms with technologies and innovations that benefit the whole of society – any alternative is a system of oppression.

Ashworth 10 [Stephen, academic publishing at Oxford. 12/18/2010. “Towards the Sociology of the Universe, Part 2.” <http://www.astronist.demon.co.uk/space-age/essays/Sociology2.html>] JCH-PF

Under capitalism, social benefit is primarily expressed in monetary terms, and society is stratified economically, with richer classes nearer the top of the social scale and poorer classes nearer the bottom. Under the socialist mode of society, the central function of capital – deciding the allocation of resources – is performed by political ideology. Social benefit is now primarily expressed in terms of ideological capital, being the level of influence, official or unofficial, which an individual enjoys within the institutions, such as in the Soviet Union the Communist Party, which express, teach and propagate that ideology. The rich in such a system are therefore the ideologically rich: those who rise to prominence in the political process and occupy official posts in the Party apparatus; while the poor are those who merely dutifully consume the Party propaganda. The poorest are those who disagree with or actively resist the ruling ideology, and who end up marginalised or criminalised as a result. In view of historical precedents such as the Soviet Union, it is highly unlikely that any realistic socialist society represents an advance over capitalist society in terms of the well-being of the majority of its members (as judged by those members). It is not known whether any third option exists that is compatible with industrialism; however, it is highly plausible that new options will appear in due course, given continued technological development and corresponding social change. Recent history suggests that politically driven attempts at creating a socially just society put all its members, except those at the very top of the Party hierarchy, at a considerable material disadvantage to corresponding members of capitalist societies. One reason for this is that democratic capitalist institutions tend to be flexible and thus capable of responding to changing circumstances, while ideology tends to resist change even in changing circumstances. It must also be clear that any beneficial changes to the modern global liberal democratic market capitalist order can only come about in an incremental fashion, as argued in the social philosophy of Karl Popper (in his book The Open Society and its Enemies). Violent political revolution would, judging by historical precedents, be so destructive that it cannot be contemplated except with extreme horror. Incremental changes in technology, for example the recent introduction of the internet, allow the institutions of democratic capitalism to evolve in ways which are unpredictable but generally beneficial to most groups in society. As civilisation continues to change under the influence of new technologies of computing, medicine and transport, particularly space transport, the democratic capitalist system will naturally also change. Considering the freedoms and privileges enjoyed by the peoples of developed countries compared with their forebears of a few generations ago, it is reasonable to look forward to continued incremental social evolution with optimism concerning the nature of future society, while setting impractical utopian dreams aside

#### Capitalism solves war on a massive scale – it creates lock-in mechanisms that bind countries together and dampen conflict – best studies.

Dafoe and Kelsey ‘14

(Allan & Nina; assistant professor in political science at Yale & research associate in international economics at Berkeley; Journal of Peace Research, “Observing the capitalist peace: Examining market-mediated signaling and other mechanisms,” http://jpr.sagepub.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/content/51/5/619.full)

Countries with liberal political and economic systems rarely use military force against each other. This anomalous peace has been most prominently attributed to the ‘democratic peace’ – the apparent tendency for democratic countries to avoid militarized conflict with each other (Maoz & Russett, 1993; Ray, 1995; Dafoe, Oneal & Russett, 2013). More recently, however, scholars have proposed that the liberal peace could be partly (Russett & Oneal, 2001) or primarily (Gartzke, 2007; but see Dafoe, 2011) attributed to liberal economic factors, such as commercial and financial interdependence. In particular, Erik Gartzke, Quan Li & Charles Boehmer (2001), henceforth referred to as GLB, have demonstrated that measures of capital openness have a substantial and statistically significant association with peaceful dyadic relations. Gartzke (2007) confirms that this association is robust to a large variety of model specifications. To explain this correlation, GLB propose that countries with open capital markets are more able to credibly signal their resolve through the bearing of greater economic costs prior to the outbreak of militarized conflict. This explanation is novel and plausible, and resonates with the rationalist view of asymmetric information as a cause of conflict (Fearon, 1995). Moreover, it implies clear testable predictions on evidential domains different from those examined by GLB. In this article we exploit this opportunity by constructing a confirmatory test of GLB’s theory of market-mediated signaling. We first develop an innovative quantitative case selection technique to identify crucial cases where the mechanism of market-mediated signaling should be most easily observed. Specifically, we employ quantitative data and the statistical models used to support the theory we are probing to create an impartial and transparentmeans of selecting cases in which the theory – as specified by the theory’s creators –makes its most confident predictions.We implement three different case selection rules to select cases that optimize on two criteria: (1) maximizing the inferential leverage of our cases, and (2) minimizing selection bias. We examine these cases for a necessary implication of market-mediated signaling: that key participants drew a connection between conflictual events and adverse market movements. Such an inference is a necessary step in the process by which market-mediated costs can signal resolve. For evidence of this we examine news media, government documents, memoirs, historical works, and other sources. We additionally examine other sources, such as market data, for evidence that economic costs were caused by escalatory events. Based on this analysis, we assess the evidence for GLB’s theory of market mediated costly signaling. Our article then considers a more complex heterogeneous effects version of market-mediated signaling in which unspecified scope conditions are required for the mechanism to operate. Our design has the feature of selecting cases in which scope conditions are most likely to be absent. This allows us to perform an exploratory analysis of these cases, looking for possible scope conditions. We also consider alternative potential mechanisms. Our cases are reviewed in more detail in the online appendix.1 To summarize our results, our confirmatory test finds that while market-mediated signaling may be operative in the most serious disputes, it was largely absent in the less serious disputes that characterize most of the sample of militarized interstate disputes (MIDs). This suggests either that other mechanisms account for the correlation between capital openness and peace, or that the scope conditions for market-mediated signaling are restrictive. Of the signals that we observed, strategic market-mediated signals were relatively more important than automatic market-mediated signals in the most serious conflicts. We identify a number of potential scope conditions, such as that (1) the conflict must be driven by bargaining failure arising from uncertainty and (2) the economic costs need to escalate gradually and need to be substantial, but less than the expected military costs of conflict. Finally, there were a number of other explanations that seemed present in the cases we examined and could account for the capitalist peace: capital openness is associated with greater anticipated economic costs of conflict; capital openness leads third parties to have a greater stake in the conflict and therefore be more willing to intervene; a dyadic acceptance of the status quo could promote both peace and capital openness; and countries seeking to institutionalize a regional peace might instrumentally harness the pacifying effects of liberal markets. The correlation: Open capital markets and peace The empirical puzzle at the core of this article is the significant and robust correlation noted by GLB between high levels of capital openness in both members of a dyad and the infrequent incidence of militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) and wars between the members of this dyad (Gartzke, Li & Boehmer, 2001). The index of capital openness (CAPOPEN) is intended to capture the ‘difficulty states face in seeking to impose restrictions on capital flows (the degree of lost policy autonomy due to globalization)’ (Gartzke & Li, 2003: 575). CAPOPEN is constructed from data drawn from the widely used IMF’s Annual Reports on Exchange Arrangements and Exchange Controls; it is a combination of eight binary variables that measure different types of government restrictions on capital and currency flow (Gartzke, Li & Boehmer, 2001: 407). The measure of CAPOPEN starts in 1966 and is defined for many countries (increasingly more over time). Most of the countries that do not have a measure of CAPOPEN are communist.2 GLB implement this variable in a dyadic framework by creating a new variable, CAPOPENL, which is the smaller of the two dyadic values of CAPOPEN. This operationalization is sometimes referred to as the ‘weak-link’ specification since the functional form is consonant with a model of war in which the ‘weakest link’ in a dyad determines the probability of war. CAPOPENL has a negative monotonic association with the incidence of MIDs, fatal MIDs, and wars (see Figure 1).3 The strength of the estimated empirical association between peace and CAPOPENL, using a modified version of the dataset and model from Gartzke (2007), is comparable to that between peace and, respectively, joint democracy, log of distance, or the GDP of a contiguous dyad (Gartzke, 2007: 179; Gartzke, Li & Boehmer, 2001: 412). In summary, CAPOPENL seems to be an important and robust correlate of peace. The question of why specifically this correlation exists, however, remains to be answered. The mechanism: Market-mediated signaling? Gartzke, Li & Boehmer (2001) argue that the classic liberal account for the pacific effect of economic interdependence – that interdependence increases the expected costs of war – is not consistent with the bargaining theory of war (see also Morrow, 1999). GLB argue that ‘conventional descriptions of interdependence see war as less likely because states face additional opportunity costs for fighting. The problem with such an account is that it ignores incentives to capitalize on an opponent’s reticence to fight’ (Gartzke, Li & Boehmer, 2001: 400.)4 Instead, GLB (see also Gartzke, 2003; Gartzke & Li, 2003) argue that financial interdependence could promote peace by facilitating the sending of costly signals. As the probability of militarized conflict increases, states incur a variety of automatic and strategically imposed economic costs as a consequence of escalation toward conflict. Those states that persist in a dispute despite these costs will reveal their willingness to tolerate them, and hence signal resolve. The greater the degree of economic interdependence, the more a resolved country could demonstrate its willingness to suffer costs ex ante to militarized conflict. Gartzke, Li & Boehmer’s mechanism implies a commonly perceived costly signal before militarized conflict breaks out or escalates: if market-mediated signaling is to account for the correlation between CAPOPENL and the absence of MIDs, then visible market-mediated costs should occur prior to or during periods of real or potential conflict (Gartzke, Li & Boehmer, 2001). Thus, the proposed mechanism should leave many visible footprints in the historical record. This theory predicts that these visible signals must arise in any escalating conflict, involving countries with high capital openness, in which this mechanism is operative Clarifying the signaling mechanism Gartzke, Li & Boehmer’s signaling mechanism is mostly conceptualized on an abstract, game-theoretic level (Gartzke, Li & Boehmer, 2001). In order to elucidate the types of observations that could inform this theory’s validity, we discuss with greater specificity the possible ways in which such signaling might occur. A conceptual classification of costly signals The term signaling connotes an intentional communicative act by one party directed towards another. Because the term signaling thus suggests a willful act, and a signal of resolve is only credible if it is costly, scholars have sometimes concluded that states involved in bargaining under incomplete information could advance their interests by imposing costs on themselves and thereby signaling their resolve (e.g. Lektzian & Sprecher, 2007). However, the game-theoretic concept of signaling refers more generally to any situation in which an actor’s behavior reveals information about her private information. In fact, states frequently adopt sanctions with low costs to themselves and high costs to their rivals because doing so is often a rational bargaining tactic on other grounds: they are trying to coerce their rival to concede the issue. Bargaining encounters of this type can be conceptualized as a type of war-of-attrition game in which each actor attempts to coerce the other through the imposition of escalating costs. Such encounters also provide the opportunity for signaling: when states resist the costs imposed by their rivals, they ‘signal’ their resolve. If at some point one party perceives the conflict to have become too costly and steps back, that party ‘signals’ a lack of resolve. Thus, this kind of signaling arises as a by-product of another’s coercive attempts. In other words, costly signals come in two forms: self-inflicted (information about a leader arising from a leader’s intentional or incidental infliction of costs on himself) or imposed (information about a leader that arises from a leader’s response to a rival’s imposition of costs). Additionally, costs may arise as an automatic byproduct of escalation towards military conflict or may be a tool of statecraft that is strategically employed during a conflict. The automatic mechanism stipulates that as the probability of conflict increases, various economic assets will lose value due to the risk of conflict and investor flight. However, the occurrence of these costs may also be intentional outcomes of specific escalatory decisions of the states, as in the case of deliberate sanctions; in this case they are strategic. Finally, at a practical level, we identify three different potential kinds of economic costs of militarized conflict that may be mediated by open capital markets: capital costs from political risk, monetary coercion, and business sanctions.

#### Conventional war is uncontainable and causes extinction.

**Dvorsky '12** (George Dvorsky; George P. Dvorsky (born May 11, 1970) is a Canadian bioethicist, transhumanist and futurist. He is a contributing editor at io9[1] and producer of the Sentient Developments blog and podcast. He was Chair of the Board for the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies (IEET)[2][3] and is the founder and chair of the IEET's Rights of Non-Human Persons Program,[4] a group that is working to secure human-equivalent rights and protections for highly sapient animals. He also serves on the Advisory Council of METI (Messaging Extraterrestrial Intelligence); 12-12-2012; "9 Ways Humanity Could Bring About Its Own Destruction"; https://io9.gizmodo.com/9-ways-humanity-could-bring-about-its-own-destruction-5967660, io9, accessed 12-3-2019; JPark)

World War III At the close of the Second World War, nearly 2.5% of the human population had perished. Of the 70 million people who were killed, about 20 million died from starvation. And disturbingly, civilians accounted for nearly **50 percent** of all deaths — a stark indication that war **isn't just for soldiers** any more. Given the incredible degree to which **technology has advanced** in the nearly seven decades since this war, it's reasonable to assume that the next global ‘**conventional war'** — i.e. one fought without nuclear weapons — would be near **apocalyptic** in scope. The degree of human suffering that could be unleashed would **easily surpass** anything that came before it, with combatants using many of the technologies already described in this list, including autonomous **killing machines** and **weaponized nanotech**nology. And in various acts of desperation (or sheer malevolence), some **belligerent** nations could choose to unleash **chemical and biological agents** that would result in countless deaths. And like WWII, food could be used as a weapon; agricultural yields could be brought to a grinding halt. Thankfully, we're a far ways off from this possibly. Though not guaranteed, the global conflicts of the 20th century may have been an historical anomaly — one now greatly **mitigated** by the presence of nuclear arms.

### Communal Property Bad

#### Collective ownership, especially of resources like space is an incoherent concept.

Feser, E. (2005). THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN UNJUST INITIAL ACQUISITION. Social Philosophy and Policy, 22(1), 56–80. doi:10.1017/s0265052505041038 JS

Surely the reverse is true: the claim that we all own everything is more in need of justification than the claim that no one initially owns anything. Surely such a claim is not merely unjustified, but counterintuitive, even mysterious. Consider the following: a pebble resting uneasily on the surface of the asteroid Eros as it orbits the sun, a cubic foot of molten lava churning a mile below the surface of the earth, one of the polar icecaps on Mars, an ant floating on a leaf somewhere in the mid-Pacific, or the Andromeda galaxy. It would seem odd in the extreme to claim that any particular individual owns any of these things: In what sense could Smith, for example, who like most of the rest of us has never left the surface of the earth or even sent a robotic spacecraft to Eros, be said to own the pebble resting on its surface? But is it any less odd to claim we all own the pebble or these other things? Yet the entire universe of external resources is like these things, or at least (in the case of resources that are now owned) started out like them—started out, that is to say, as just a bunch of stuff that no human being had ever had any impact on. So what transforms it into stuff we all commonly own? Our mere existence? How so? Are we to suppose that it was all initially unowned, but only until a group of Homo sapiens finally evolved on our planet, at which point the entire universe suddenly became our collective property? (How exactly did that process work?) Or was it just the earth that became our collective property? Why only that? Does something become collective property only when we are capable of directly affecting it? But why does everyone share in ownership in that case—why not only those specific individuals who are capable of affecting it: for example, explorers, astronauts, or entrepreneurs? It is, after all, never literally “we” collectively who discover Antarctica, strike oil, or go to the moon, but only particular individuals, together perhaps with technical assistance and financial backing provided by other particular individuals. Smith’s being the first to reach some distant island and build a hut on it at least makes it comprehensible how he might claim—plausibly or implausibly—to own it. This fact about Smith gives some meaning to the claim that he has come to own it. But it is not at all clear how this fact would give meaning to the claim that Jones, whom Smith has never met or even heard of, who has had no involvement in or influence on Smith’s journey and homesteading, and who lives thousands of miles away (or even years in the future), has also now come to own it. Still less intelligible is the claim that Smith’s act has given all of us—the human race collectively, throughout all generations—a claim to the island.

### Defense

#### Growth and innovation solves warming.

Ogutonye, 21—Policy Lead, Science & Innovation Unit, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (Olamide, “Should Tech Make Us Optimistic About Climate Change?,” <https://institute.global/policy/should-tech-make-us-optimistic-about-climate-change>, dml)

In the middle of a climate emergency, it is challenging to stay upbeat. Yet the good news is that investment in climate technology has continued to grow since the early 2010s. US-listed companies involved with providing technology solutions that support global decarbonisation have consistently outperformed the average since 2019 (Figure 7). Venture capital (VC) investment in the sector grew tenfold between 2013 and 2018, representing five times the growth rate of the overall VC market. By comparison, the growth rate of VC investment in Artificial Intelligence was a third of climate tech between 2013 and 2018 although AI is renowned for its uptick within the same timeframe. Beyond VC, public investment in climate technology research has continued to grow too. In 2019, government research and development funding for energy technologies alone stood at $30 billion, with around 80 per cent of it aimed at low-carbon solutions.

In addition to the positive role of technology, political leaders are increasingly showing a willingness to make ambitious commitments on climate. The Paris Agreement is a case in point. The international treaty was adopted in 2015 and ratified internationally within a year – a much quicker pace than its predecessor, the Kyoto Protocol, which took eight years. The Paris deal grew into a political snowball, galvanising further commitment from most of the world’s leading emitters and arguably becoming the most symbolic climate event of the 21st century. The US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement in 2019 dealt a political blow to the global pact although the decision, since reversed by President Biden, did not resonate or last long enough to have any major impact.

The Biden-Harris administration has already indicated that it will not sit on the fence but will instead revive the country’s leadership on climate action. In the UK and elsewhere, similar efforts can be observed as more countries commit to some form of net zero target. More than 100 countries have pledged a commitment towards net zero, with estimates suggesting that over 70 per cent of global GDP and 55 per cent of CO2 emissions are now covered by a similar target. A Climate Action Tracker Report indicates that the cumulative effect of countries’ pledges to the Paris Agreement – if kept and fully achieved – could keep global temperature rise below 2.1°C by 2100, putting the stated goal of 1.5°C within striking distance.

As explored in our recent Institute paper, there are also important insights for politicians in terms of applying lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic to the climate emergency. Although the pandemic is different in scale, complexity and timeline, it offers an immediate window into how policy leaders can adapt and make decisions in order to better support climate innovation. Countries can also apply the “recovering better together” principles outlined by the UN, which calls for a commitment to climate-related actions as economies recover from the Covid-19 slowdown. More than 60 countries, including high emitters, are already making an explicit promise to link their nationally determined contributions (NDC) to Covid-19 recovery, supported by the United Nations Development Programme’s Climate Promise programme. Countries in the Global South are equally aligning their climate mission with international support for various NDC support programmes. A green recovery can cut the level of 2030 emissions to 25 per cent lower than projections based on pre-Covid commitments and put the world close to a 2°C pathway. The pandemic has also highlighted the significance of tech innovation, not least in record-breaking vaccine delivery but also in the suite of digital solutions developed for contact tracing, compliance monitoring and management of health-care records.

The global financial landscape is evolving to become more responsive to climate innovation. Since they were first issued in 2007, green bonds have grown into what is now estimated to become a $1 trillion market. Analysts expect as much as $500 billion of green bonds this year as the EU raises capital for its Covid recovery fund. From target-linked to transition bonds, innovations in this green market are being used to bring projects in energy, transport, buildings and other economic sectors to life. Investor-led initiatives such as Climate Action 100+, whose members control over $50 trillion of assets, are actively using funds to ensure the world’s largest corporate greenhouse gas emitters commit to climate action. Other investor networks are pursuing a similar agenda, including Europe’s Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change (IIGCC) and Australia and New Zealand’s Investor Group on Climate Change (IGCC). Humanity’s competence in technology and innovation will be central to the race in mitigating and tackling climate change.

#### The overall environment is resilient---‘existential’ threats are false

Ronald Bailey 20, Science Correspondent at Reason, Member of the Society of Environmental Journalists and the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities, “The Global Environmental Apocalypse Has Been Canceled”, Reason Magazine, 8/1/2020, <https://reason.com/2020/08/01/the-global-environmental-apocalypse-has-been-canceled/> [grammar edit]

According to these activists and politicians, humanity is beset on all sides by catastrophes that could kill off civilization, and maybe even our species. Are they right?

Absolutely not, answers the longtime environmental activist Michael Shellenberger in an engaging new book, Apocalypse Never: Why Environmental Alarmism Hurts Us All. "Much of what people are being told about the environment, including the climate, is wrong, and we desperately need to get it right," he writes. "I decided to write Apocalypse Never after getting fed up with the exaggeration, alarmism, and extremism that are the enemy of positive, humanistic, and rational environmentalism." While fully acknowledging that significant global environmental problems exist, Shellenberger argues that they do not constitute inexorable existential threats. Economic growth and technological progress, he says, can ameliorate them.

Shellenberger's analysis relies on largely uncontroversial mainstream science, including reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization. And as a longstanding activist, Shellenberger is in a good position to parse the motives behind the purveyors of doom.

Shellenberger's activism is the real deal. To raise a donation to the Rainforest Action Network, he charged his friends $5 to attend his 16th birthday party. At 17 he went to Nicaragua to experience the Sandinista revolution. In the 1990s he worked with the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil.

In 2003, Shellenberger and allies launched the New Apollo Project to jumpstart a no-carbon energy revolution over the next 10 years. In 2008, Time named him "A Hero of the Environment." He co-founded the ecomodernist Breakthrough Institute, which advocates the use of advanced technologies such as nuclear power and agricultural biotechnology to decouple the economy from the ecology, allowing both humanity and the natural world to flourish. More recently, he founded Environmental Progress, which campaigns for, among other things, the deployment of clean modern nuclear power. He is an invited expert reviewer of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's next assessment report.

Ohio Passes Controversial Conscience Clause for Doctors

So what does he say about climate change? "On behalf of environmentalists everywhere, I would like to formally apologize for the climate scare we created over the last 30 years," he wrote in an essay to promote his new book. "Climate change is happening. It's just not the end of the world. It's not even our most serious environmental problem." Needless to say, there are environmentalists everywhere who do not believe they have anything to apologize for. A group of six researchers assembled by the widely respected Climate Feedback fact-checking consortium rated his article as having low scientific credibility.

Shellenberger doesn't devote much of Apocalypse Never to the science behind man-made climate change. He basically accepts the consensus that it's a significant problem and instead focuses on various claims about the harms it is supposedly already causing. In that promotional essay, he argues that (1) human[s] being are not causing a "sixth mass extinction," (2) the Amazon rainforests are not the "lungs of the world," (3) climate change is not making natural disasters worse, and (4) fires have declined 25 percent around the world since 2003.

Shellenberger isn't denying the reality of man-made climate change. He's arguing that humanity is already adapting to the ways climate change has been making weather patterns evolve, and that we will continue to adapt successfully in the future. His book is ultimately a sustained argument that poverty is world's most important environmental problem, and that rising prosperity and increasing technological prowess will ameliorate or reverse most deleterious environmental trends.

#### Uniqueness is definitively on the side of Capitalism—all forms of violence are on the decline because of capitalism.

Cohen and Zenko 19 (Michael A. Cohen, former lecturer at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs, regular contributor for The Boston Globe on national politics and foreign affairs, has written for dozens of news outlets, including as a columnist for the Guardian and Foreign Policy, US Political Correspondent for the London Observer, former speechwriter at the US State Department; and Micah Zenko, Whitehead Senior Fellow on the US and Americas Programme at Chatham House, former Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, former research associate on the Project on Managing The Atom, Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, PhD Politics, Brandeis University; *Clear and Present Safety: The World Has Never Been Better And Why That Matters To Americans*, Yale University Press, Kindle Edition, 2019, locations 57-712)

Introduction Neither a man nor a crowd nor a nation can be trusted to act humanely or to think sanely under the influence of a great fear. —Bertrand Russell On a crisp January day in 2016, in the small hamlet of Pittsfield, New Hampshire, several hundred voters were gathered for what is a quadrennial rite of passage in the Granite State: listening to a politician make his or her pitch to be the next president of the United States. The speaker this day was Chris Christie, who was then the Republican governor of New Jersey and one of more than a dozen presidential candidates campaigning across the state. Christie discussed everything from illicit drugs and immigration to the federal budget and the U.S. war against the self-proclaimed Islamic State. “He was pretty good,” one woman unenthusiastically shrugged after he finished. But as she struggled to say anything of substance, it seemed clear that Christie had not made much of an impression. When asked, though, if any specific policy issue took on particular importance, her face lit up: “ISIS. I’m really worried about ISIS.” The thought of her kids and grandkids growing up in a world where groups like the Islamic State would be threatening their future seemed to cause her genuine and palpable concern.1 The woman’s anxieties were sincere, but her fear could not have been more misplaced. The Islamic State had yet to launch even one direct terrorist attack within the United States, and if the group had drawn up a list of potential targets, the chances that Pittsfield, New Hampshire—an hour’s drive north of Manchester—would be high on that list were decidedly slim. At a time of ever-widening income inequality, stagnant wage growth, gun violence, and a raging opioid epidemic that in the previous year had claimed 422 lives in New Hampshire alone, this woman considered a shadowy terrorist group that had not killed a single American on U.S. soil one of the biggest challenges facing the country.2 She was far from alone. Public opinion polling consistently shows that Americans have long exaggerated the danger that terrorism represents to the United States. Since 9/11 the average number of Americans killed yearly in a terrorist attack is twenty-seven—and 90 percent of them were in Afghanistan or Iraq. Yet, in 2018, 81 percent of Americans ranked “cyberterrorism” as the most critical threat facing the United States, followed by international terrorism at 75 percent.3 Eighty-three percent of voters expect that a major terrorist incident with large numbers of casualties is likely to occur in the near future. Remarkably, in November 2017, more than half (52 percent) of Americans thought the United States was less safe then than it was before 9/11—as if the trillions spent on homeland security and fighting terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan had done nothing to make America less vulnerable to international terrorism. Seventeen years after September 11, the outsized fears of another 9/11-style terrorist attack provided compelling—and depressing—evidence that terrorist groups had succeeded, beyond their wildest imaginations, in transforming American society.4 It is not just armed jihadists that scare Americans. A 2012 poll showed that six out of seven Americans agree that “the United States faces greater threats to its security today than it did during the Cold War”—a time when the United States found itself in the crosshairs of approximately ten thousand nuclear weapons, each with a destructive power up to fifty times that of the nuclear bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima.5 How Americans, such as this woman from a small town in the “Live Free or Die” state, became convinced that the United States faces such acute and harmful foreign threats is, at its core, the story of this book. The American public is being fed, by politicians and pundits alike, a steady diet of threat inflation that has made them deeply fearful of the world outside their borders. They have become convinced that overseas menaces are perpetually becoming more likely, lethal, and complex. The world is forever on fire; America is always getting weaker; and its citizens are facing a constant drumbeat of tremendous and unceasing risks. The pervasiveness of threat inflation is such conventional wisdom that alternative—or even less threatening—descriptions of the world are largely nonexistent in foreign policy debates. As a result, most Americans are simply unaware of the extraordinary and unprecedented political, economic, and social progress that has taken place in virtually every corner of the globe over the past three decades. On that January day in New Hampshire, while alluding to the national debate on the balance between security and privacy, Christie declared ominously, “You can’t protect civil liberties from a coffin.” Pittsfield voters who had watched the most recently aired Republican presidential debate would have heard former Florida governor Jeb Bush tell them that the Islamic State had formed “a caliphate the size of Indiana with . . . 30,000 to 40,000 battle-tested soldiers that are organized to destroy our way of life.”6 They would have heard candidate and former pediatric neurosurgeon Ben Carson claim that dirty bombs and cyberattacks are, “in fact, an existential threat to us.”7 Those following the Republican primaries would have heard Donald Trump, the eventual Republican nominee and president of the United States, tell them that the only way to keep America safe was to ban all Muslims from entering the country, torture suspected terrorists, and “take out” (murder) their families.8 As regular consumers of news, Republican voters might have heard South Carolina senator Lindsey Graham tell Americans, “The world is literally about to blow up,” in January 2014 (spoiler: it did not).9 They might have caught Sen. John McCain, who, having been born in 1936, had lived through conflicts that killed an estimated sixty million people and had fought in one of those wars, say in 2015, “We are probably in the most serious period of turmoil in our lifetime.”10 Perhaps in the spring of 2017, they caught secretary for homeland security John Kelly claiming, “Make no mistake—we are a nation under attack” and “We are under attack every single day. The threats are relentless.”11 Or, in the summer of 2018, they might have heard his boss, President Trump, warn that “people coming in from the Middle East” would come across the border by using “children to get through the lines.”12 This incessant, default threat-mongering is neither a partisan issue nor a habit reserved for elected officials. Those Americans tuning in to CNN in October 2014 might have the chyron asking the hypothetical question “Ebola: ‘The ISIS of Biological Agents?’ ”13 Maybe they saw local reporting on defense secretary Chuck Hagel saying, “Cyber threats . . . are just as real and deadly and lethal as anything we’ve ever dealt with,” or New York senator Kirsten Gillibrand calling Iran an “existential threat” to America, or perhaps Arkansas senator Tom Cotton warning that the Islamic State, in coordination with Mexican drug cartels, could infiltrate the border and “attack us right here.”14 Even if viewers missed all that, they would have found it far more difficult to avoid the nonstop news coverage of the latest terrorist attack in Paris, Barcelona, or London. Even more important than what Americans hear from the nation’s leaders is what they do not hear. They do not hear that terrorism harms fewer Americans each year than falling televisions and furniture, bathtub drownings, and lightning strikes do. Annually, more Americans lose their lives from these three rare killers—roughly thirty-three, eighty-five, and forty fatalities, respectively—than at the hands of wild-eyed Islamic jihadists.15 These numbers pale next to the number of Americans killed each year prematurely by preventable, noncommunicable diseases (more than 2.5 million), suicide (44,100), and gun homicides (14,400). In short, Americans do not hear that America is unusually safe and secure from foreign threats. Part of this is a function of geography, but it is also true that the United States faces no serious great-power rival and no near-term political or economic competitor. So it should not be surprising that 86 percent of Americans view Russia’s military power as either an important or a critical threat to America, even though Russia is hemmed in by NATO, has a moribund economy, and has no enduring military partnerships in South Asia, the Middle East (outside of Syria), or the Western Hemisphere. Nor should it be surprising that 87 percent of Americans are concerned about China’s military power even though China faces its own pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges—and its primary near-term interest is maintaining Communist Party rule, not directly challenging the United States. Nor should it be surprising that 75 percent of Americans called the development of nuclear weapons by Iran a “critical threat”—even though Iran has surrendered its nuclear fuel and has allowed invasive inspections of its nuclear facilities through at least 2030.16 Finally, we should not be surprised that half the American people believe that U.S. armed forces are not the number-one military in the world, even though the United States spends more on national defense than the next nine nations combined, is allied or has mutual defense treaties with five of those countries, enjoys long-term security partnerships in every region of the world (outside Antarctica), and is, quite simply, the world’s most dominant nation and more secure than any other great power in history.17 In addition, the Republican primary voters in Pittsfield—or those who voted for a president who regularly told them “the world is a mess”—almost certainly did not hear that the world today is cumulatively more peaceful, freer, healthier, better educated, and wealthier than at any point in human history.18 Like most Americans, they would not have heard that in the year 2015 the proportion of people living in extreme poverty (on less than two dollars a day) dropped to below 10 percent of the global population, the lowest level ever and down from close to 50 percent in 1981.19 They are likely unaware that AIDS deaths have declined for more than fifteen years in a row, global life expectancy has increased by seven years since 1990 alone, and child mortality rates (for children under five years old) has been halved over that same period. Unbeknownst to them and the overwhelming majority of Americans, improvements in polio vaccines and delivery methods have practically eradicated the disease (just eleven active global cases by July 2018), saving more than 650,000 lives since 1988.20 What is most remarkable about all these positive developments is that they are uncontestable—the data are simply that strong. This fundamental disconnect between what Americans have been encouraged to believe about the world and the reality of global affairs is the most critical foreign policy issue facing the United States today. The American people are being sold a dangerous bill of goods that is distorting our foreign policy choices and leading politicians and policy makers to focus more on the threats that Americans perceive, rather than the ones that actually exist. This strategic misdiagnosis has led to consistently mistaken foreign (and domestic) policy choices that are diverting resources and attention away from the actual dangers that Americans face in their homes, neighborhoods, and workplaces. Every dollar spent bombing and then rebuilding Middle Eastern countries, modernizing a duplicative nuclear weapons arsenal, or building the next generation of combat aircraft that are intended to fight yesterday’s enemies means less money for America’s greatest domestic challenges. This includes America’s underperforming schools; a health care system that performs far worse than those of other affluent countries; crumbling roads, bridges, and water systems in places like Flint, Michigan; inadequate preparation for the inevitable and irreversible effects of climate change; and a tattered social safety net that is a far cry from those enjoyed by other developed countries. Pointing out that foreign threats pose a relatively insignificant risk to Americans compared to vastly greater domestic dangers and systemic harms is not to suggest that the United States should pull up the drawbridge and abandon its global role. If anything, at a time of relative peace and stability in the world, smart American leadership and active involvement in global affairs are more important than ever. In the seventy-plus years since the end of World War II, the United States, along with its allies and partners, has helped construct an international system that limits large-scale interstate conflict; encourages democratization, adherence to the rule of law, and respect for human rights; and advances human development. The challenge for the next generation of U.S. policy makers is to solidify the gains that have been made and to ensure that this extraordinary progress is not reversed. For that to happen, Americans must change the ways they think and talk about foreign policy and national security—and the first step is to acknowledge that foreign-threat inflation and the corresponding policy choices that it encourages are a problem. Americans need to think about the world in a whole new way, one that is more accurate and more uplifting than the dystopian view promoted by politicians and pundits. In the following six chapters, we will spell out how this paradigm shift might occur. First, there must be greater recognition that potential rivals and complex issues—frequently portrayed as dangers to Americans—are, in reality, relatively minor threats to Americans. Great-power wars have disappeared, interstate wars have become vanishingly rare, and the world is a safer and freer place than it has ever been in human history. Second, there needs to be better appreciation of the extraordinary global progress that has been made over the past several decades—and why it benefits the American people. The world today is healthier than would have been scarcely imaginable decades ago and is far richer and better educated than ever before. It is also more united and interconnected through travel, communications, economic links, and diplomatic relations. These trends make this current era of relative peace, safety, and prosperity not a momentary blip but, more likely than not, the future reality of global affairs. Third, it is imperative that Americans rethink what “national security” means and focus on the systemic dangers that diminish economic opportunities and the American people’s basic quality of life. From noncommunicable diseases to gun violence to crippling political dysfunction, the things that actually injure and kill us receive rare moments of national attention, while foreign terrorists and other outside threats perpetually occupy our minds. Political attention, policy changes, and expanded government resources can significantly—and cost-effectively—reduce these risks, but that will happen only if Americans recognize the need to address them. Fourth, the loose collection of politicians, government officials, pundits, private security firms, think tankers, academics, cable news hosts, and news editors that we call the Threat-Industrial Complex demands far greater scrutiny. These are the individuals—and institutions—who shape public perceptions about international relations and promulgate a false narrative of danger and insecurity. Fifth, our modern era of threat inflation must be placed in a larger political and historical context: namely, as an enduring feature of American politics and foreign policy debates since World War II. From “missile gaps” and the “domino theory” to the “evil empire” and “evildoers,” foreign threats have been consistently manipulated both in times of actual danger and in times of genuine peace and security. Sixth, to dramatize our argument, we offer a case study and cautionary tale of how threat inflation occurs and its larger political consequences: namely, the response to the tragedy of September 11. Public statements and policy decisions made by President George W. Bush and his administration set the tone, agenda, and political incentives of our contemporary fear-mongering but also wasted opportunities in a disproportionate response to a relatively minor and manageable threat. Finally, we lay out recommendations for reversing this unbalanced perspective and approach to foreign policy that will answer the question of what a U.S. domestic and global policy—properly informed by a more accurate understanding of the world—should look like. This book is not meant to be a comprehensive treatment of threat inflation or the final word about the nature and degree of foreign threats facing the United States and its citizens. As has been true for the past 240 years, the degree to which foreign dangers threaten America and its citizens has changed dramatically over time and will continue to evolve in ways that nobody can predict today. Nonetheless, it is quantitatively true that the current global environment is one of relatively few foreign threats, particularly in comparison to other great powers and to America’s historical experience. The fixation of American foreign policy and national security should not be what former president John Quincy Adams spoke of nearly two hundred years ago: namely, the impulse to look “abroad in search of monsters to destroy.” Rather, it must be to remain focused on ensuring that today’s hopeful present is America’s brighter future. A Safer and Freer World I think, what we need to do is to remind people that the earth is a very dangerous place these days. —White House press secretary Sean Spicer, February 7, 2017 February 16, 2012, was, from all appearances, an unremarkable day. The political world was focused on the upcoming Republican presidential primary in Michigan, in which the frontrunner, Mitt Romney, was facing a spirited challenge from former Pennsylvania senator Rick Santorum. Journalists were mourning the loss of the New York Times reporter Anthony Shadid, who had died on a reporting trip to Syria. New Yorkers obsessed over the Knicks’ budding superstar point guard, Jeremy Lin; the Simpsons marked its five hundredth episode; and Chinese President Xi Jinping was in Iowa hoping, as the Washington Post put it, “to emphasize the idea of an enduring U.S.-Chinese friendship.”1 Yet, on Capitol Hill, the most senior officer in the world’s most powerful military, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey, saw something else altogether: danger. Testifying before the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee on budget sequestration—the congressional mandate passed in 2011 that required all federal agencies, including the Pentagon, to automatically cut their budgets by 5 to 10 percent in the following decade—Dempsey warned, “in my personal military judgment, formed over thirty-eight years, we are living in the most dangerous time in my lifetime, right now.”2 This is a surprising statement. After all, Martin Dempsey was born in March 1952, during the tail end of the Korean War—which killed more than two million people, including 36,574 Americans. When he attended elementary school, the Cuban Missile Crisis brought the world closer to nuclear holocaust than at any other point during the Cold War. By the time he enlisted in the army in 1974, the Vietnam War had been going on for several years and before it ended would take the lives of more than three million people, including 58,220 Americans. As Dempsey rose through the military ranks, he witnessed the strategic nuclear arms buildup of the 1980s, when the United States and the Soviet Union had tens of thousands of nuclear-armed missiles pointed at each other. Later, on September 11, 2001, the most lethal terrorist attack in American history took the lives of nearly three thousand people. While all of these events directly affected Americans, there were plenty of other dangerous moments in Dempsey’s lifetime, such as the Biafra separatist civil war in Nigeria that killed two hundred thousand, the Angolan civil war in which one million people died, the Khmer Rouge’s genocide in Cambodia that took the lives of approximately a quarter of that nation’s eight million people, the Iran-Iraq War during the 1980s that killed more than one million people, and the internationalized civil war in Congo that has led to three million war-related deaths since the mid-1990s.3 Yet, if Dempsey is to be taken literally, none of those moments compared to the dangers facing the world on the morning of February 16, 2012. What made Dempsey’s statement particularly odd was an observation he made one year later testifying before Congress: “I will personally attest to the fact that [the world is] more dangerous than it’s ever been”—in other words, since the earth was fully formed 4.6 billion years ago.4 Though Dempsey’s comments were clearly hyperbolic—and easily disprovable—they garnered little attention. In a political environment dominated by habitual threat inflation, they barely stand out. Indeed, two years after Dempsey’s testimony, the director of national intelligence, James Clapper, told Congress, “looking back over my more than half a century in intelligence, I have not experienced a time when we have been beset by more crises and threats around the globe.” Remarkably, he had made virtually the same statement—word for word—a year earlier when testifying before Congress.5 In January 2015, army chief of staff Gen. Raymond Odierno told the Senate Armed Services Committee, “today the global environment is the most uncertain I have seen in my thirty-six years of service.”6 This assertion was especially well received by the committee’s chairman, Sen. John McCain, who only days before had proclaimed, “we are probably in the most serious period of turmoil in our lifetime.”7 In November 2017, Air Force Lt. Gen. Steve Kwast went further back in time proclaiming, “There’s no question that this generation . . . is living in the most dangerous time since the Civil War for the Republic.”8 There are specific bureaucratic and political reasons for such apocalyptic descriptions of the global environment (the more vivid the threat, the more likely Congress will be to maintain military and intelligence-community funding). Such views, however, are mimicked across the national security community. Indeed, in the elite world of foreign policy punditry (and national politics), the notion of grave, growing, and irreversible dangers facing the United States is the default (and unchanging) position. So we should not be surprised that most Americans think the world is getting more and more dangerous.9 In the immediate aftermath of the bombing of a subway train and airport terminal in Brussels in March 2016, MSNBC news anchor Brian Williams asked Senator McCain if the world was on the verge of World War III. McCain unsurprisingly said yes.10 Sen. Lindsay Graham, then in the running for the Republican nomination for president, echoed these fears, claiming, “there is a sickness in the world that has to be dealt with, and the civilized world must come together to confront it.”11 Quite simply, this is the lingua franca of the Threat-Industrial Complex. There is one problem: this image of the world is completely wrong. In virtually no element of our national discourse are Americans provided with a more inaccurate depiction of the world than when it comes to matters of war, peace, and freedom. Americans live in a world that is safer and freer than ever before in human history—and it is not even close. To state this is not to be insensitive to those who are suffering real harms or being denied their personal freedoms. It doesn’t mean one is naïve to the potential of current global challenges—some of which are neither illusory nor false—to become serious threats in the future. But facts are facts, and the transformation in the human experience over the past two to three decades is the most consequential global trend in security affairs in any of our lifetimes—and it is largely unknown to the wider public. A Safer World The data supporting the proposition that the world is safer than ever are so overwhelming that they can barely be disputed. For example, interstate war, or war between states, was the defining characteristic of international relations for centuries. Today, such wars have largely disappeared. Since 2012, there have been just two interstate wars: one between Sudan and South Sudan in 2012 and one between India and Pakistan in 2014 and 2015 that led to fewer than one hundred fatalities in total over both years.12 In the seven years before 2010, there was one major interstate conflict—started by the United States in Iraq in March 2003.13 How about great-power conflict? These protracted and bloody wars—such as the Thirty Years’ War, World War I, and World War II—have been historically the most devastating and consequential conflicts. They’ve repeatedly led to massive death tolls of soldiers and civilians, forced transfers of millions of people, and the redrawing of national boundaries to the benefit of the victors. As the historian Timothy Snyder has documented in Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin, 10.5 million civilians (Germans, Poles, Belarusians, Ukrainians, and Jews from various countries) were killed by Germany and the Soviet Union between 1939 and 1945.14 Put another way by the eminent British historian Max Hastings, approximately twenty-seven thousand people lost their lives every single day of that conflict.15 That means that during World War II, between a given Monday and Thursday, there would have been as many deaths as there were battle-related deaths in all of 2016.16 Despite the December 2015 claim by Chris Christie that the United States was “already in World War III,” the world has not seen such a total global conflict in more than seven decades.17 All of this might sound like apostasy when you consider the daily fare on cable news segments, in social media feeds, and in the nation’s newspapers and magazines. Foreign reporting in these outlets has been dominated in recent years by North Korea’s nuclear weapons development, stories of terrorist attacks in Iraq and western Europe, a bloody civil war in Syria that has killed an estimated five hundred thousand people, the barbaric cruelty of the Islamic State, Russia’s meddling in its near abroad, and China’s campaign of building military facilities on disputed territories in the South China Sea.18 For those whose lives are directly affected, these crises are serious matters. But alarmist coverage of these global hot spots has deluded Americans into believing that the world is a chronically violent place. It’s not. In fact, modern war is not only a rare occurrence, but when it does happen, it tends to be less violent and of shorter duration. On average, conflicts kill about 80 percent fewer people now than in the 1950s, when wars in Korea, Southeast Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa took millions of lives.19 The vastly greater harm today is the displacement of civilians caught up in the fighting between combatants. By June 2018, sixty-eight million people around the world had been forced from their homes.20 To the credit of the United Nations, international organizations, and nongovernmental groups, the breadth and depth of understanding about the underlying dynamics and drivers of conflict have expanded dramatically, and there now exist far more tools for preventing and mitigating such armed violence. Not surprisingly, conflict gets more attention than does the successful use of international and regional conflict-prevention methods to prevent wars from occurring in the first place. The wars that never occurred between Israel and Iran, Peru and Ecuador, Russia and its Baltic neighbors, and Turkey and Russia after the shooting down of a Russian fighter in 2016 receive precious little attention. Despite routine alarms of mounting tensions between China and its neighbors over territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas, conflict there has been avoided. This is true of the overwhelming number of maritime and land disputes, which a majority of countries have with their neighbors. Additionally, of the 430 bilateral maritime boundaries in the world, most are not defined by formal agreements between affected states. Unfortunately, peace, even between bitter adversaries, is not an “event” worth recognizing, much less celebrating; the dominant media narrative is that of an ever-threatening world.21 The current era of relative peace and stability has also contributed to a notable decline in the prevalence of state-directed mass killings of civilians.22 During the Cold War, approximately one in seven countries experienced a state-sponsored mass killing. This number increased to nearly 25 percent immediately after the Berlin Wall came down and declined to between 5 and 10 percent by the 2010s.23 In fact, far fewer people have been killed in war in the past quarter century than in any other quarter century over the past six hundred years. In 1800, one out of every two thousand people on earth—civilians and combatants—died from a combat-related death; in 1900, it was one in every twenty thousand; by 2016, it was one in every one hundred thousand.24 The overall decline in global conflict has had extraordinary ripple effects. William Tecumseh Sherman famously declared in 1879 that “war is hell,” but his words barely capture the full costs of warfare and armed violence. As one would expect, warfare significantly limits life expectancy. The Syrian civil war, for example, reduced life spans there from 79.5 years before 2011 to 55.7 in 2015, an extraordinary twenty-year decline in just a four-year period.25 Children living in conflict-affected poor countries are twice as likely to die before their fifth birthday as are children in other poor countries, and warfare diminishes educational opportunities at all levels as well as overall quality of life. For example, children who grow up in conflict-affected countries are less likely to be literate and far less likely to be enrolled in primary school.26 Beyond the immediate human costs, wars do untold physical and environmental damage. In 2016, a time of relative peace and stability, all of the world’s armed conflicts combined cost the global economy an estimated $14.3 trillion. That is nearly 12.5 percent of global GDP.27 The relationship between conflict and economic distress is self-perpetuating—just as war drains government coffers, economic slowdowns also increase the likelihood of the outbreak and recurrence of conflict. Finally, conflict-prone countries are far less democratic, and, in fact, the presence of an autocratic government increases the risk of a civil war starting within that government’s territory.28 As noted previously, this matters because civil wars—including those like Syria’s that became “internationalized” with external support—are virtually the only type of armed conflicts that still occur in the world today. Ironically, Americans tend to see the world as far more dangerous than it is precisely because the world is safer. Conflicts that were once far more routine have become more unusual and thus receive greater (and more vivid) media attention. This bolsters the impression that we live in a world of constant conflict when compared to recent history. Yet it is often forgotten exactly how bloody the final years of the Cold War were, particularly in comparison to today. The Cold War is mistakenly remembered as an era of relative quiet in which Washington and Moscow co-managed global affairs. For example, in February 2016, Clapper said the reason there were more threats than at any point in his seventy-three-year lifetime was the disappearance of the superpower rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union. “Virtually all other threats were sort of subsumed in that basic bipolar contest that went on for decades and was characterized by stability,” said Clapper.29 Yet, in the decade preceding the end of the Cold War in 1991, there were more than two million battle-related deaths around the world. In the ten years immediately after, there were 651,000, and in the past ten years, there were even fewer: 402,000.30 While the Cold War saw a bipolar (albeit unimaginably costly) peace between two nuclear-armed superpowers, it does not mean the rest of the world enjoyed peace and safety. There were significant internationalized wars, genocides and mass killings, and lengthy and bloody civil wars dotting the globe, from Indonesia and Afghanistan to Vietnam, Nigeria, and throughout Central America. There is also the inconvenient fact that the United States and Soviet Union possessed nearly seventy thousand nuclear weapons, many perched on intercontinental missiles pointed directly at each other. The two adversaries also had tactical nuclear weapons deployed in twelve countries—many poorly secured or with the authority to use them resting with local military commanders.31 In the event of a full-scale superpower conflict, human life as we know it would have likely ceased to exist. Since Americans misremember what happened during the Cold War—and forget how real the threat of nuclear conflict was—they are far more prone to accept claims that the world is less stable and safe today. One more reason Americans perceive the world to be so dangerous is that the overwhelming foreign policy focus of government leaders, Congress, and the media is on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Chronic political instability, proxy wars, and occasional interstate wars have long come to dominate the region. Indeed in 2017 alone, eight of nineteen MENA countries experienced intrastate conflicts (noninternational conflicts that resulted in twenty-five or more battlefield deaths).32 That is the exception, not the rule, in comparison to every other part of the world. Though the MENA region gets oversized media attention, it constitutes less than 5 percent of the world’s population and is not representative of the overwhelming majority of the planet’s seven and a half billion residents. Painting a picture of the world solely using the chaotic and violent imagery from the Middle East severely distorts one’s image of global affairs. More Freedom The world is not merely safer than ever before; it has also become demonstrably freer over the past quarter century. Just as the Cold War is misremembered for being an era of relative peace and stability, it is often forgotten that the world then was defined far more by authoritarianism and totalitarianism than by democracy. In most corners of the globe, political freedom represented an aspirational, seemingly unachievable, goal. Today, even in the face of troubling reversals and assaults on democracy, a greater percentage of people are freer than before. They enjoy personal, political, and economic self-determination that would have been unimaginable to most people living outside the United States and western Europe just thirty years ago. In November 1989, as the Berlin Wall was being dismantled, there were just 69 electoral democracies in the world, or 41 percent of 167 countries in total. Today, according to the Freedom House Index, that number is 116 (out of 196 countries), or 59 percent.33 In the 1980s, Latin America was mired in economic stagnation, social injustice, persistent conflict (both civil wars and cross-border conflicts), and above all, an almost complete lack of democratic governance. In Chile in 1973, a democratic election was overturned by a military coup, leading to dictatorship, widespread human rights abuses, and a full-fledged economic crisis. In Argentina, a military junta invaded the Falkland Islands in 1982, sparking a pointless war with the United Kingdom. Throughout the late ’70s and ’80s, Central America became a hotbed of human rights abuses, civilian massacres, and economic deprivation, fueled by superpower competition between Washington and Moscow. Today, while economic and political progress across the region has been uneven and backsliding is evident, all of Latin America—with the exception of Venezuela and Cuba—is today designated as “free” or “partly free” by Freedom House. Thirty years ago in Europe, half the continent was under the thumb of totalitarian leaders, basic freedoms were restricted, and barbed-wire-topped walls prevented citizens from traveling outside their borders. With the exception of Belarus and Russia, every country in western and eastern Europe is today considered a free or partly free democracy. In the Far East, South Korea, Mongolia, and Taiwan—countries once (wrongly) considered by Western academics as culturally inappropriate for political liberalization—have become full-fledged democracies. Even in sub-Saharan Africa, which has experienced a decline or stagnation in democratization since 2005, the majority of people live in free or partly free countries.34 Once again, it is the Middle East that remains outside the global shift toward greater political freedom, with only Tunisia and Israel being considered free countries and a handful ranked as partly free.35 These gains have also led to greater political stability as there has been a marked decline in the number of coup attempts across the globe over the past three decades.36 The Polity IV project, a widely respected data source of global governance trends, assigns “polity scores” to states to quantify their governing authority on a scale of –10 to +10. It does this by coding democratic and autocratic traits, such as political participation, competitiveness of political leadership positions, and constraints on the chief of state. A polity score of +10 would be a full democracy, such as Sweden, while a –10 would be a severe autocracy, such as North Korea.37 In 1989, the average score for all governments was –0.5, the equivalent of an Afghanistan governance score by the latest rankings. By 2016, it had moved all the way to +4.3.38 Meanwhile, today a country with a score of –0.5 would be somewhere between Afghanistan and the Central African Republic. Moreover, when changes in polity scores from 1949 to 2014 are tracked against changes in “human rights scores” over the same period, a hopeful trend is apparent: as countries become more democratic, their respect for human rights also increases.39 Democratic progress, however, remains fragile, and according to Freedom House—which tracks relative democratic rankings—global freedom has declined for the past twelve years. In aspiring great and midlevel powers such as China, Russia, and Turkey, there has been a disturbing uptick in autocratic behaviors. In all three countries, there’s been the silencing and even murder of independent journalists, the overregulation and harassment of civil society organizations, consolidation of political rule by authoritarian leaders, and more centralized control of security forces. Notable and troubling declines are also evident in the Philippines, Poland, Hungary, and Nicaragua. Moreover, confidence in elected officials in strongly democratic countries—including the United States and in western Europe—has notably fallen in recent years as populist, nativist, and xenophobic political movements have made inroads.40 The extraordinary democratic progress made in the years after the fall of the Berlin Wall is now moving in the opposite direction. Struggles for more entrenched democratization and personal freedoms are constantly contested, messy, and even bloody affairs—and many young democracies go through extended periods of political turmoil. Those who hold power generally seek to exercise it with the fewest possible restraints, and those restraints are growing. Indeed, if there is one area where the path of human progress could potentially be slowed or even reversed, it is on the expansion of political freedom. The growing disinterest among U.S. policy makers toward the issue—and the cultivation of authoritarian leaders by President Donald Trump—will undoubtedly make this situation worse. Yet the path of progress over the past thirty years cannot be denied. Quite simply, the world is far more democratic and free today than it was during the height of the Cold War. Why Does This Matter for America? While fewer armed conflicts and increased political freedom is good news for the vast majority of the world’s seven and a half billion people, it is also great news for America. If there is one relatively ironclad rule of international affairs, it is that democracies tend to have happier, healthier, and better-educated citizens. They almost never go to war with other democracies, much less even threaten each other; and they are also far less likely to find themselves in conflict with nondemocratic governments.41 A world that is relatively freer and thus less conflict-prone is one that is indisputably better for the United States. It means the U.S. homeland is less likely to be threatened or attacked by great powers with conventional or nuclear weapons. It means treaty allies are not at war, and as a result, the U.S. military is not required to come to their defense. Indeed, in 2015, only five armed conflicts (all internal) took place in countries that are U.S. treaty allies: Philippines (two of them), Colombia, Thailand, and Turkey.42 It means that fewer countries host or sponsor transnational terrorist groups dedicated to attacking the United States, its citizens, or its overseas diplomatic facilities. It means there are fewer disruptions to global flows of trade, tourism, and energy supplies that benefit the U.S. economy and American jobs. It means fewer people grow up in societies where hopelessness, resentment, and alienation make them susceptible to the appeals of violent extremists. Finally, it means governments are more likely to cooperate on transnational challenges such as fighting climate change, preventing the spread of infectious diseases, lowering the barriers to global trade and furthering human development.43 Since terrorism dominates contemporary foreign policy debates, Americans might immediately ask, “What about 9/11?” Understandably, the September 11, 2001, attacks are deeply imprinted into our national consciousness and will remain an inflection point for the division of historical eras, similar to the “Cold War” and “post-Cold War” eras. Yet it is important to understand just how tragically lucky al-Qaeda was on 9/11 and why the attacks were such an anomaly. U.S. homeland security policies, intelligence cooperation, and commercial aviation security were hugely deficient, and this combined negligence made America needlessly vulnerable. As we will detail later, the United States is vastly safer today from such a mass-casualty terror attack. There are still terrorist groups seeking to kill Americans on American soil, yet they have been overwhelmingly unsuccessful in their efforts to do so. Since 9/11, 103 Americans have been killed within the United States by jihadist terrorists or affiliated terrorist actors, which is almost the same number of Americans killed in hate-crime attacks since 2002.44 Since 9/11, 402 U.S. citizens have died in terrorist incidents while living abroad, but nearly 75 percent of them died working as diplomats, contractors, aid workers, or journalists in Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, and Afghanistan—the very places where the United States started wars and continues to conduct air strikes to destroy terrorist safe havens.45 It is tragic but unsurprising that individuals bravely serving in places where conflict is occurring face severely heightened risks to their personal safety, but that does not mean Americans should feel at increased risk of being killed by terrorists.46 Indeed, at the same time that Americans have become safer from terrorism, such attacks have increased globally. In 2002, there were fewer than 200 terror incidents worldwide, which killed a total of 725 people; in 2017, there were 8,584 incidents, which took the lives of 18,753 people, one-quarter of whom were the perpetrators.47 Yet seventy percent of all these fatalities occurred in just five countries: Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, and Syria. The perpetrators are relatively weak, nonstate actors using violence to achieve their political objectives, while the victims are overwhelmingly civilians (who themselves are overwhelmingly Muslims) caught between government security forces that cannot protect them and terrorist armies willing to kill them. Even in these five countries, however, there have been notable improvements, especially within Pakistan, which has experienced a decline in civilian deaths from terrorism every year between 2012 and 2017, with 3,007 deaths in 2012 and 540 in 2017.48 Contrary to General Dempsey’s apocalyptic warnings, the world that existed on February 16, 2012, was far less dangerous than at any point since he had been alive—and it remains so today. In the years after the end of the Cold War, many foreign policy analysts predicted a very different world—a “coming chaos” of continuous ethnic conflicts and genocidal civil wars.49 The political scientist Samuel Huntington warned of a potential “clash of civilizations,” while John Mearsheimer wrote ominously in the pages of the Atlantic that we would soon miss the Cold War.50 The journalist Robert Kaplan predicted that the post-Cold War years would be defined by “anarchy” and regional wars sparked by ancient, tribal hatreds. U.S. senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan warned that renewed ethnic tensions could turn the planet into a “pandaemonium.”51 Contrary to this drumbeat of doomsaying, globalization failed to produce the xenophobia and unchecked ethnic and racial hatreds that were confidently predicted.52 If anything, the end of the Cold War led to a period of expanded global commerce, communications, and travel, as well as vastly higher living standards for the majority of people on earth. Global and regional cooperation, not competition, is the defining characteristic of international politics today. That includes national governments, corporations, industry associations, nongovernmental organizations, and individual citizens. As we demonstrate in the following chapter, the world is not just safer and freer; it is a far better place to live now than at pretty much any point in the history of the human race. Healthier, Wealthier, Better Educated, and More Interconnected When you look at all the measures of well-being in the world, if you had a choice of when to be born and you didn't know ahead of time who you were going to be—what nationality, whether you were male or female. v/hat religion—but you had said. ‘When in human history would be the best time to be born?'” the time would be now. —President Barack Obama, September 7,201 a In 2013, a Swedish research firm wanted to know what the residents of the world's most powerful and influential nation knew about the world outside its borders.: What it found out is not pretty. That its survey showed the American people lacked detailed knowledge about global affairs was unsurprising. More interesting, however, is the way Americans are wrong. Eighty-three percent believed that less than half of the world's children had been vaccinated for measles. In fact. 85 percent of kids have received this life-saving vaccines. Americans underestimated the number of adults with basic literacy skills (a majority guessed 00 percent; it is actually 30 percent). Most telling, however, was the response to a question about the proportion of people in the world living in extreme poverty. Two-thirds said the global poverty rate had "almost doubled.\*’ 29 percent said it has •‘remained more or less the same,\* and a mere 5 percent picked what was then the correct answer—that it has been cut in half. This survey is an incomplete snapshot, but it is backed up by other data. When Americans were polled in the fall of 2017 about their perceptions of the world, just 10 percent agreed that “the world is getting better;" while nearly four times as marry (63 percent) thought it was getting worse.! A 2010 poll found that 92 percent of Americans believed that extreme poverty has either increased or stayed the same over the past two decades.! In short. Americans think the world is a pretty lousy place. That means they are missing the most important international story of any of our lifetimes—namely, that it has never been a better time to be a human being than right now. Today, the seven and a half billion people who reside on our planet live longer lives; are better educated; have greater access to health care, sanitation, and food; and are far less likely to live in extreme poverty. These improvements, most of which have occurred over the previous two to three decades, have reduced the potential for military conflict, created social and economic opportunities for women and girls that previously never existed, and improved the happiness and quality of life for billions of people. Indeed, these are the fastest and most extraordinary advances in human progress in the history of the species. Recognizing and celebrating this unprecedented improvement in the human experience does not mean that global development work has reached its conclusion. Neither does it diminish the obstacles facing those who continue to lack access to health services or live in countries where poverty eradication has stalled, which increasingly includes the United States. There are still hundreds of millions of people around the world who remain in dire need. However, to overlook positive social trendlines ignores the unquestioned successes of global development endeavors and further cements the pessimistic view that little can be done to improve the lives of others. If recent history teaches us anything, it is that the opposite is true—the power to enhance people's lives for the better is overwhelmingly within our grasp. These vast improvements in the health and well-being of people outside the United States—and the increased global interconnectivity among governments, markets, and people—matters a great deal for ordinary Americans. The United States has global interests that range from protecting treaty allies and preventing nuclear proliferation to expanding export markets. Those interests are far better secured when children across the world are in school learning, women are able to work and have greater control of their bodies and their lives, and people's time on earth is longer, happier, and more fulfilling. All of these factors are strongly correlated with greater political stability and lesser chances for conflict. Fewer states at war means reduced regional tensions that may otherwise compel a government to obtain weapons of mass destruction and more stable and prosperous economies to purchase American goods and services. When the world is a better place for more people, it is also a better place for the United States. How the World Became Far Better for Far More People Why has the world become such a wealthier, healthier, freer, and less violent place? It is no coincidence that it began to occur at the same time that the Cold War was winding down. As communism was cast into the ashbin of history, once-closed-off countries adopted policies that made them more economically dynamic and interdependent. At the same time, new information technologies became increasingly ubiquitous—even in some of the world’s poorest countries. Take the experience of China. Beginning in the early 1990s. Chinese leaders opened their country to foreign investment and global trade. Economic growth became a national priority, and while the reigning Communist Party stubbornly clung to one-party rule, it began to loosen the political, economic, and social restrictions that had impeded the country's development. Similar efforts at moving to a more-market-based economy began in India, the world's second-most-populous country. Between 1990 and 2010, GDP per capita increased by $7,300 in China and $1,350 in lndia.1 The success of the world's two most populous nations in raising living standards has been a critical driver of global social and economic change. But the advances in the human condition over the past several decades have hardly been restricted to these two nations. In practically every country on earth, there have been significant and notable improvements in reducing poverty, extending life expectancies, and improving health outcomes. TO chart that growth, a good place to start is the Millennium Development Coals (MDGs). The MDGs are an initiative that will be familiar to few Americans outside the world of global development. Indeed, even for most foreign policy professionals, the MDGs are not well understood or appreciated. But this landmark commitment—agreed to unanimously by all 193 countries in September 2000—has been translated into eight sweeping goals that have transformed the developing world and changed the lives of hundreds of millions of people for the better. Moreover, the MDGs offer a compelling lesson of how the international community can continue to work together for the common global good—which will be essential as world leaders face the growing and potentially calamitous threat of climate change. When the MDGs were initially proposed, development trend lines were already moving in a more positive direction, but their global adoption brought more sustained political focus and consolidated numerous governmental and nongovernmental resources. By definition, the creation of strategic goals only occurs when leaders and states agree that they want to accelerate progress. The MDGs represented concrete and actionable goals that every country in the world supported. Moreover, they created metrics that allow us to assess the trajectory of human development—and the results speak for themselves. The first and most essential MDG was aimed at eradicating extreme poverty and hunger—and for good reason. Reducing poverty, besides making life better, opens up innumerable economic opportunities: more food, more leisure, longer lives, and perhaps, above all else, lowers economic anxiety and stress. It means children in developing countries are more likely to live past their fifth birthday. It means they go to school, rather than toil infields or factories. And it means they will have access to healthcare that will ensure they will not be felled by preventable diseases and illnesses. Mothers who have confidence that their children will not just survive into adolescence and adulthood but have an opportunity for success will get pregnant less often. With fewer kids to care for, women are more likely to enter the workforce, which increases overall household wealth. Higher income means that even the smallest luxuries of life—which people in the devel- oped world take for granted, such as taking a vacation, buying a toy, or getting an ice cream cone as a treat for our children—suddenly become available. Quite simply, a life not lived in poverty means far greater happiness.L Since 1990. the reduction in global poverty rates has been astounding-Over the past twenty-eight years, the number of people in the developing world living on less than $1.25 a day (a traditional definition for extreme poverty) has been reduced by one billion! Back then, approximately half the developing world was mired in such crippling poverty; today, it is fewer than one in ten, and it continues to drop year after year, with further reductions challenging but likely.! China accounts for much of this decline, having seen its extreme poverty rate drop by 60 percent in just eighteen years. This means that by 2017 more than eight hundred million Chinese citizens had been lifted out of economic deprivation.. But China's evolution has been replicated in countries across the globe. Iran's poverty rate has gone from 17.6 percent in 1986 to under 1 percent in 2014!£ El Salvador's fell from 36 percent in 1989 to 1.9 percent in 20 IS. and Ethiopia went from 92 percent in 1981 to under 30 percent today.il The underlying cause for these rapid improvements has been the end of conflict: bloody civil wars in El Salvador and Ethiopia and. for Iran, the end to a brutal eight-year struggle with Iraq. It is yet another reminder that fewer wars and greater peace and stability bring enormous residual benefits. In other places, however, the story is simpler: countries liberalized their economies and removed trade barriers that prevented them from selling their products overseas. They attracted new investment and new businesses with the advantage of lower labor costs. They sent workers overseas to send back remittances to family members, and at home, they strengthened the social safety net to help give those who were mired in poverty a helping hand. And perhaps above all, as more countries became democratic, it put pressure on political leaders to keep the good economic times going—or face the potential prospect of losing their own jobs. We can see positive results from Brazil, where the poverty rate dropped from 20 percent in 1990 to just 4.3 percent in 201 5!! In Namibia, it went from 69 percent in 1993 to 27 percent in 201S!land in Bangladesh, it dropped from 44 percent in 1990 to 24.3 percent in 2016.11 While these countries still face serious social and economic challenges, their success in reducing poverty is staggering. As for hunger, the trend lines are similarly positive. In 1990, about one in five people in the developing world suffered from undernourishment. Since then, that number has been cut in half—i At one time, famine was one of the world's worst killers. In the 1960s alone, it took the lives of more than eighteen million people. Biafra. Bangladesh, North Korea, and Ethiopia had all been witness to famines that killed more than a million in each country. China is estimated to have lost thirty million people during the 19SOs and '60s in a famine caused, in part, by horribly misguided government policies. By contrast, from 2010 through 2016. the number of people killed in famine was around a quarter of a million—a tragedy, of course, but also an indication of how far the world has come in preventing such deaths!! The MDGs also established benchmarks for universal primary education and promoted greater gender equality by ensuring that young girls had the same opportunity to go to school as young boys. The benefits of such a strategy are self-evident: abetter-educated populace means that more people can read and write. When more people are literate, that translates into a workforce that is more highly skilled and innovative, less unequal, and more productive. But the benefits of education are particularly important when it comes to young women. Girls who are enrolled in school at a young age are more likely to get married later in life. They have fewer children and thus lower levels of poverty. They are at reduced danger of the most common and acute diseases that have long ravaged the developing world. And girls who are given the chance to attend school along with their male peers are more likely to grow up to be women who arc socially and per- sonally empowered to take control of their own destiny. Ask any development expert about the best way to lift up adeveloping economy, and virtually all of them will give you the same answer: make sure girls are going to school.il Increasingly that is exactly what is happening. Primary-education enrollment rates in the developing world have jumped from 33 percent in 2000 to 91 percent today.!! That might seem like a relatively small rise, but, in fact, it means that more than forty million more children spend their day in a classroom today than did fifteen years ago. In 1990. in sub-Saharan Africa, only 4 5 percent of the population received a basic education; today, 80 percent do.il The jump in South Asia and Southeast Asia has gone from 75 percent to 95 percent; and in the Middle East and North Africa, from 63 percent to 95 percent 11 Today, the global literacy rate stands at 91 percent among young people and 86 percent for adults; in 1990. just 61 percent of the world could read or write!l For young girls, the story is even more positive. In South Asia, in 1990, the girls' literacy rate was 49 percent, and an average of 74 girls compared to lOO boys were in primary school; today, the rate is 85 percent, and the enrollment ratio stands at 103 girls for every lOO boys!\* Across all developing countries, girls are less likely than boys to repeat grades or drop out of school. This has helped to promote steady advances in female labor-force participation (for both formal and informal work)!! Tt>day. a previously unimaginable percentage of young boys and girls around the world are being educated. This both improves lives and. once again, makes the world a safer place, since countries with higher education levels are less likely to find themselves mired in armed conflict.il Two MDGs were aimed at decreasing child mortality and improving maternal health. This has led to notable increases in vaccination rates that have reduced the number of children felled by preventable diseases by more than seven million This decline has helped cut the under-five child mortality rate in half since 1990. That means that every year, 2 72,000 children who two or three decades ago would have died are alive today !! Here, enhanced access to education has had an enormous impact, since increases in education levels for women strongly correlate with reduced levels of childhood mortality!! In the same period, maternal mortality rates have dropped globally by 45 percent, with the sharpest decline occurring from 2000 to 200S.il This means that in 2017, more than 136.000 mothers who would have died a couple of decades ago are alive and able to help raise their children. Finally, the increased availability of family planning op- tions cut the number of unintended pregnancies around the world by 44 percent between 1990 and 2014.21 An MDG focused on combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other infectious diseases has been similarly transformative. Since 2000. new HIV infections have dropped 45 percent around the world, and more than thirteen million AIDS-related deaths have been averted!: Additionally, tuberculosis prevention and treatment saved an estimated fifty-three million lives, increased measles immunizations prevented more than twenty million deaths between 2000 and 2016, and polio has largely been eradicated. There were just eleven active cases of the disease as of July 2018.11 An oral polio vaccine—delivered with just two drops—and the necessary funding to make it widely available had. as of 2014, saved the lives of more than 650,000 people over the previous twenty-five years!! In March 2018. South Sudan announced that it had eradicated guinea worm, a parasitic illness that causes agonizing and incapacitating pain. In 1986, the disease afflicted three and a half million people in the developing world. In 2017, the number had fallen to thirty, and by May 2018, there were just three reported casesll According to the Carter Center, which has been at the forefront of the guinea-worm eradication effort, close to eighty million cases of the illness have been averted over the past thirty Improved access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation has been another target of the MDGs. The expanded international commitment to these issues has helped more than a fifth of the current global population (1.3 billion people) gain access to sanitation since 200011 In addition to saving the lives of 340,000 children who used to die from diarrhea because they were exposed to dirty water, improved sanitation also keeps children in school instead of sick at home. Even better, children with access to clean drinking water are in better shape physically, cognitively, and even socially!! Nutritional advances have come so quickly and been so significant that public health officials now express concern over what is known as the 'double burden of malnutrition,'’ in which developing countries are simultaneously experiencing health perils generally associated with being overweight as well as those from undernourishment. Amazingly, obesity now poses greater harm globally than lack of adequate nutrition does, a phenomenon that would have been unimaginable even a quarter century ago.!! What is perhaps most remarkable about all this sweeping progress is that it was achieved at the same time that the planet's population grew by one and a half billion people, and global life expectancy increased by more than five full years since the MDGs were announced in 2000!! Yet for all of the success of the MDGs (and also the full panoply of public health and human development changes), they are rarely mentioned in current foreign policy debates. Long-term positive trends go largely unreported, with the focus instead, almost exclusively, on-hard" security issues, such as coercive “redlines," nuclear weapons, terrorism, and drone strikes. Highlighting polio eradication, for example, does not drive internet clicks, justify’ a larger Pentagon budget, or motivate voters to support a more interventionist foreign policy. In the United States, good news about the world has little political salience, and it is sim- ply not deemed newsworthy. The development scholar Laura Freschi pithily captured why this phenomenon matters. She observed in 2010 that more Americans believed that their president was a Muslim than had heard of the improvements in quality of life on our planet!! Global Interconnectivity While the global development community deserves enormous credit for many of the advances chronicled above, they drafted off of historic geopolitical changes. When the Cold War ended, the most resonant image was the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9. 1939. The pictures of Germans chipping away at the barrier that hid separated them for thirty-eight years—and the pictures of supposed enemies joyfully embracing—were poignant reminders of the universal desire for freedom. From that moment forward, hundreds of millions of people around the world—from Jakarta to Johannesburg and Managua to Minsk—began choosing their own leaders, holding them accountable, and voicing their opinions without the government interference they endured while living under dictatorship. Yet, in the nearly thirty years since that epoch-making event, it is the economic bonds built between peoples and countries that have played the leading role in changing the human experience for the better. Communism, by its very nature, was an overwhelmingly closed economic system that purposely avoided commercial and business ties with capitalist nations. Even countries outside the Soviet and Chinese orbits often pursued economic policies that protected failing native industries; suppressed talented entrepreneurs, investment, economic innovation, and development: and. more generally, shut the door to the outside world. But with the breakup of the Soviet Union and the gradual shift in China toward an export-driven economic strategy, all of that began to change. China transitioned along with its regional neighbors—Japan and South Korea and then Taiwan. Singapore, and Hong Kong. Even in noncommunist countries like India and Brazil, the end of the Cold War ushered out protectionist policies in favor of those seeking foreign investment, encouraging entrepreneurship, and creating new and vibrant trade links. Tariffs went down, and subsidies were slowly eased out, as countries worked to fashion themselves into more attractive investment destinations for global businesses. The results are overwhelming. Foreign direct investment in the developing world has gone from $20 billion a year in 1990 to Jo 53 billion in 2017, while private capital flaws went from $91 billion to $1.2 trillion during the same time.li Emerging economies are today deeply reliant on international trade not only as a means of development and job creation but also for attracting new capital investments and technical expertise. The result is stronger and more diversified economies, higher productivity, significant improvements in the welfare of women, and of course, reduced poverty.:\*® Recent trends, such as a decline inG-20 imports and new trade restrictions, suggest that this economic openness has slowed—the consequences of which have been hundreds of billions of dollars in lost global GDP.il In addition, while the process of globalization has contributed to higher living standards, it can contribute to greater income inequality and has given impetus to nativist and anti-immigrant movements in Europe and the United States. These are issues of serious concern, and if they go unaddressed in Western democracies, it could undermine the economic progress made over the past quarter century. Nonetheless, it is undoubtedly true that far more people have benefited from globalization than have been harmed.42 From the perspective of global security, the benefits are even more clear-cut because when a country trades with other states, it significantly diminishes the likelihood of conflict. Doubling a country's international commerce can reduce its risk of interstate violence by up to 30 percent, while countries with no regional trade tics are more than twice as likely as their highly integrated neighbors to experience a civil war.43 Similarly, when a country experiences an increase in foreign direct investment, it significantly improves the welfare of women and reduces the likelihood that the country will participate in an armed conflict.44 Being an active participant in today's globalized economy does not eliminate the possibility of a country going to war, as is evinced by America's ongoing military operations in Afghanistan. Iraq, and Syria. However, it is a fact that countries with increased economic interconnectivity are less likely to find themselves mired in conflict. The Smartphone Story The foregoing numbers, while impressive, do not fully do justice to the impact of economic integration over the past few decades. Visualizing the spectrum of changes that global interdependence has wrought is as simple as reaching into your pocket and pulling out your phone. That device that you use to talk to and text with your friends and family, get news, watch soccer or basketball clips, find out what the president of the United States just tweeted, or play Words wick Friends offers one of the best possible explanations for how the world has become more connected, wealthier, and safer—and why it is likely to stay that way. Since there are many smartphones, let's pick the one that is perhaps most ubiquitous: Apple’s iPhone. Since its introduction in 2007, the iPhone has improved productivity, sped up communications, and allowed for more people to live and work remotely from their employers, customers, or clients. The iPhone is sold in more than 130 countries—a symbolic example of how the removal of trade barriers has spurred the rapid adoption of transformative technologies in both rich and poor countries. Some 725 million smartphones were sold in 2012, increasing to more than l.S billion by 2010, of which more than 000 million went to emerging-market customers from China. India, Brazil, and IndonesiaJi. Additionally, while mobile internet usage in Western countries is increasing fourfold annually, it is rising twenty-seven-fold in developing countries. There are 5.2 billion smartphone subscriptions globally, with 3.5 billion projected by 2023—and most of them will be in the developing world.iLIn many countries, there arc actually more cell phones than people. In places like Afghanistan, one of the poorest countries in the world, the landscape is defined by omnipresent cell towers that now provide mobile services to more than 80 percent of the population.47 The iPhone contains components that have been developed and manufactured in multiple countries, which exemplifies how patent protections, increased foreign investment, and globalized supply chains have spread economic development across the globe. Take, for example, the iPhone X, which was released in fall 2017. Its accelerometer comes from the German firm Bosch, the display screen from the South Korea-based giant Samsung, the electronic compass from the Japanese firm Alps Electronic Company, and various radio-frequency components from Sky works Solutions, a compary located in a suburb of Boston. Massachu- setts \_li The iPhone X was assembled at a Taiwanese-owned Foxconn plant in southern China, which is emblematic of the inflow of low-wage manufacturing jobs that have taken the world's most populous nation from impoverishment to becoming among the most dynamic and steadily growing economies in the world. The iPhone and the internet access it provides have further empowered hundreds of millions of people in developing nations. From Tunisia to Egypt's Tahrir Square and in multiple elections in fledgling democracies, ordinary citizens have used their cell phones to safeguard votes against electoral fraud and organize activists and pro-democracy demonstrators. Mobile technology and social media apps have made it possible for citizens to compile damning information about their governments, report abuses to news outlets outside their communities, and more easily publicize those abuses on a variety of social media plat- forms. This has even, ironically, become a problem for Apple itself- In 2012. after workers at the company's Foxconn factories in China documented and publicized poor working conditions there. Apple agreed to independent audits of the facilities by the Fair Labor Association. Here in America, cell-phone cameras have served as an invaluable tool for documenting and holding local police officers accountable for police shootings and gave critical impetus to the Black Lives Matter movement. Governments have also occasionally used mobile technology to expand democratic participation. In 2014, Libya's election commission worked with the firm Reboot to digitize the country's voter registration system, making it possible for voters (including diaspora Libyan citizens) to register for upcoming parliamentary elections on their phones. Considering that mobile penetration in Libya stood at nearly 150 percent, it was amove that made more sense than asking Libyans to register in person. More than l.l million citizens living in Libya and thirteen other countries were successfully signed up. and the system is still being used today to manage voter rolls. Libya remains fractured along ethnic and geographic lines, but the digital voting infrastructure remains in place if political leaders choose to reuse it in future elections. Communication technologies are, of course, a double-edged sword, and governments have leveraged internet and mobile-phone penetration to spy on, influence, track, and harass their citizens. Journalists, activists, opposition-party leaders, and others have found their phones unknowingly implanted with spyware—often with the assistance of Western cyber security firms—that allows security services to monitor political opponents. Governments have also, at times, blacked or limited access to social media networks on the whims of political leaders. Yet technologically savvy and creative citizens are constantly developing workarounds to such spying—with encrypted communications, like Tt leg ram and WhatsApp, as well as virtual private networks and other digital solutions that are not widely publicized. Government authorities have tried to control the flow of information and communications for centuries, and one should be under no il- lusion that this will not continue for the foreseeable future, ftt never before have so many people been more empowered to learn, connect, and collaborate in real time for relatively little cost. Moreover, one does not need a cutting-edge smartphone to take advantage of the mobile revolution. Basic mobile phones are increasingly essential in those places where citizens do not have access to brick-and-mortar banks or any credit history. Mobile banking is benefiting hundreds of millions of new individuals each year by allowing them to document and save money, safely transfer funds, and pay down loans±l In Kenya, 90 percent of households use mobile phones and mobile money, mostly through a text-message-based payment system called M-PESA.li Researchers found that mobile banking makes it easier for breadwinners to provide for their families or for friends and family to send emergency funds immediately to each other when feeing a health crisis. Between 2003 and 2014, more than 194,000 households were lifted out of poverty and 185,000 women were induced to enter the business world as a direct result of the soci- etal shift provided by M-PESA.1L Similarly, smartphones are empowering a wide range of entrepreneurs in all sectors, from small business owners to farmers. For example, a free mobile app called MandiTrades allows farmers in India to receive real-time market information to help manage their crops, upload information about their produce right from the field, and finally connect with markets for salesJ2 In India, where one of the biggest challenges to cell-phone proliferation is getting the devices in the hands of women, wider access to smartphones will make it easier for women to find and apply for jobs outside the home and. as a result, increase their partic- ipation in the workforce. Finally, that iPhone on which you pi a)1 Candy Crush Saga and Fortnitc is also saving lives. In Mozambique, for example, a free app alerts patients with HIV or tuberculosis when to take their medicine and reminds them of upcoming appointments.!! Other programs send text messages and voice mails to new and expectant mothers, with basic advice on nutrition, health, and immunization schedules. In Bangladesh, the Mobile Alliance for Maternal Action has reached more than five hundred thousand pregnant women and new moms” In Pakistan, targeted calls from provincial educational officials and local school council members increased the school enrollment rates for young girls by 12 percent-11 More broadly, in classrooms around the developing world, tablets and cell phones are increasingly replacing books and notepads, as students can now download reading assignments directly, helping to improve literacy and promote reading. There are hundreds, if not thousands, more stories that speak to the direct positive impact that mobile technology has had on global public health, the promotion of democracy, the improvement of educational outcomes, and the expansion of economic growth. But there is one behind-the-scenes component that makes all of this possible. What, for example, protects the patents used to develop the iPhone? The answer: international treaties (starting with the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property of 18 84) that uphold patent rights and bolster international organizations (namely, the Patent Cooperation Treaty), which ensures that Apple's intellectual property rights are protected. What makes it possible for you to get on a plane, fly to China, anduseaphone as if you were in your home country? Answer: several international agreements (starting with the International Convention for the Protection of Submarine Telegraph Cables, also of 1884) and industry groups (particularly the International Cable Protection Committee), which govern and share best practices for laying and maintaining undersea cables. This might seem minor, but keep in mind that these three hundred transoceanic cables stretching six hundred thousand miles are responsible for 95 percent of the world's internet, phone, and data traffic. This overlapping web of reciprocal agreements and international understandings is unknown to all but a few Americans. But the ability to connect people, ideas, and markets from every corner of the earth is the direct result of an international system that is specifically constructed to further global coopera- tion. That iPhone in your hand tells the story of an interdependent and interconnected world that would have been unimaginable just a generation ago. Why should Americans care that the world has become a far better place for far more people than ever before? Because a world that is more prosperous, healthier, better educated, and closely connected is a less chaotic and violent place—and more likely to stay that way22 Countries that are more democratic are also more politically stable and more open to trade and foreign investment that is likely to benefit American workers and consumers 1\_1 Yet, despite all of these remarkable gains, there is significant work to be done. Eight hundred million people still live in extreme poverty, 100 million children under age five do not get enough to eat, and 01 million are not attending school. Only half of the 30.7 million who are living with HIV in developing regions receive antiviral treatments, and 884 million people still lack adequate drinking water.!! These numbers are sobering, and they demand greater resources and a more concerted effort on the part of the international community.!! But the fact that sizable problems remain cannot take away from the sustained progress that has been made. Domestic politics, in part, explain why Americans remain unaware of these tremendous changes. Stating that the world is actually a pretty safe and much-better place to live is somehow a taboo, a sign of naivete, or deeply insensitive in light of the real harms experienced by Americans. Yet politicians should recognize and celebrate the positive accomplishments that have improved the lives of so man)' people, and U5 citizens should come to expect this from their elected leaders. All too rarely have U.S. '\*national interests" included advancing the health, well-being, and economic opportunities of humanity. But the top foreign pol- icy priority for whoever sits in the Oval Office or controls Congress should be precisely that—not just because it is the right thing do but also because it makes America safer.

### ROB

#### The ROB is to vote for the better debater in the context of the resolution –

#### 1] Anything else is arbitrary and self-serving since it only allows one particular type of offense – prefer our ROB – all your offense proves that appropriation of space is bad, so you can get all your education and read your aff anyway – means there’s no net benefit to your framing.

#### 3] Anything else moots 7 minutes of the 1NC and there’s no possibility for a 2NR restart.