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### Disease

#### We got lucky with COVID – future pandemics will be much worse and existing provisions in TRIPs are not used --- the status quo can’t solve.

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A proponent of IP protections may insist TRIPS already includes built-in exceptions adequate to the task. Article 31 grants governments rights to issue licenses for using a patent during the patent term without a patent holder’s consent. This exception was used 144 times between 2001 and 2016 to create flexibilities for 89 countries.29 In 2017, it was extended to allow licensed countries to export products to countries that lack production capacity. Isn’t that enough?

In reply, Article 31 will not take us very far. While useful for some applications, it is cumbersome. For example, for pharmaceutical products, after applying for an exception, exporting countries must prove products go only to destination nations, are readily identifiable based on variations of colour or shape, and include only product necessary to meet requirements of an eligible country; importing nations must notify the TRIPS

council of receipt. Fulfilling these requirements would needlessly delay the vital task of vaccinating the world.

Finally, critics might point to the case of Moderna, which voluntarily pledged (in October 2020) not to enforce its patents during the pandemic. Since companies have not lined up to produce Moderna’s vaccine, doesn’t that show the ineptitude of temporary waivers? In reply, a single pledge by a single company is a start, but insufficient to catalyse the global changes needed. In conclusion, loosening the grip of IP protections is not a miracle fix, and there are many other barriers to a safer world. This paper filled a gap in current debates about IP protections for COVID-19 vaccines by focusing on ethics. In the final analysis, a temporary waiver of IP protections is the world’s best bet.

#### Developing countries need assistance – it’s time for the U.S. to step up to the plate and do its job

Stone 21 – Judy Stone is an Infectious Disease specialist; “Covid Vaccine Equity - Developing Countries Need Our Help”; Forbes, May 11, 2021; <https://www.forbes.com/sites/judystone/2021/05/11/vaccine-equitydeveloping-countries-need-our-help/?sh=10939a363ec8> //advay

A few months ago India was doing relatively well and the U.S. was getting crushed by a devastating second Covid-19 wave. Now it’s the reverse. Public health measures were implemented too sporadically (U.S.) and reversed too quickly (both), with predictable results. While the U.S. is beginning to focus attention on the growing catastrophe in India, not enough attention is being given to other areas in the region. Countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Laos and others in the region may soon be matching the explosive growth of Covid in India. Nepal is one of the poorest countries. Although it has a population of 30 million people, there are only 1595 ICU beds and 480 ventilators throughout the entire country. (This is not much less than in India, at ~1 ICU bed/19,000, but the US has ~1/3800). There are only 80 physicians per 100,000 people, compared to 93 per 100,000 in India or 259 per 100,000 in the US. With a 50% positivity rate for Covid testing, how long do you think those few beds and limited healthcare will last before being completely overwhelmed. Cases in Nepal have increased by 1,645% in the past month. Thailand had a similar rate of increase, with most of their cases being the U.K. variant B.1.1.7, which is known to be more transmissible. Part of the problem in Nepal is that its Prime Minister, Oli, like India’s PM Modi, and Donald Trump had allowed religious festivals and large political gatherings to continue as politically expedient, at the expense of public health and safety. Heavily reliant on tourism to support its economy, Mount Everest has been opened to climbers; there have been outbreaks reported from the base camp although the government has denied this. And much as our former president recommended injecting bleach, PM Oli has reportedly suggested gargling with guava leaves, which is at least less immediately hazardous, although still as useless as treatment. This uncontrolled pandemic will endanger us all by increasing the likelihood of further mutations emerging and spreading globally. India has a new “variant of interest,” called B.1.617⁠, which is also spread more rapidly. The South African variant, B.1.351, is also circulating in India, along with the UK’s B.1.1.7⁠. This—and the huge number of cases—are what prompted the US to ban travel from India. One of the problems in the region is that India’s Serum Institute was to supply much of the area with vaccines. Instead, India is desperate, unable to meet its own country’s needs, and has banned the export of vaccines. Nepal has instead turned to China and Russia, who are engaging in vaccine diplomacy who are donating supplies while the US has been sitting on the sidelines.

#### It’s not too late---COVID will continue across the developing worlds for years to come. Plus, the plan helps for black swan future pandemics.

Brink **Lindsey 21**. Vice President, Niskanen Center; Writes for Brookings, “Why Intellectual Property and Pandemics Don’t Mix,” Brookings, June 3, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2021/06/03/why-intellectual-property-and-pandemics-dont-mix/>, RJP, **DebateDrills**.

Although focusing on these immediate constraints is vital, we cannot confine our attention to the short term. First of all, the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over. Although Americans can now see the light at the end of the tunnel thanks to the rapid rollout of vaccines, most of the world isn’t so lucky. The virus is [currently raging in India and throughout South America](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/world/covid-cases.html), overwhelming health care systems and inflicting suffering and loss on a horrific scale. And consider the fact that Australia, which has been successful in suppressing the virus, recently announced it was sticking to plans to keep its borders closed until mid-2022. Criticisms of the TRIPS waiver that focus only on the next few months are therefore short-sighted: this pandemic could well drag on long enough for elimination of patent restrictions to enable new vaccine producers to make a positive difference.

Furthermore, and probably even more important, this is almost certainly not the last pandemic we will face. Urbanization, the spread of factory-farming methods, and globalization all combine to increase the odds that a new virus will make the jump from animals to humans and then spread rapidly around the world. Prior to the current pandemic, the 21st century already saw outbreaks of SARS, H1N1, MERS, and Ebola. Everything we do and learn in the current crisis should be viewed from the perspective of getting ready for next time.

#### A temporary waiver is sufficient---it creates momentum for America to repeat against harsher future pandemics which spills over

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The extraordinary circumstances of a global pandemic demand more than minimal or even moderate social responsibility. Everyone in a position to help must show the high degree of social responsibility the moment calls for. Governments, especially in wealthy nations, should stand up to influence peddling by pharmaceutical companies,26 and should do their part, beginning with WTO members voting for a temporary waiver to IP protections for COVID-19 vaccines.

Against our proposal it might be claimed a temporary waiver is not enough. Manufacturing COVID-19 vaccines requires technical know-how, technology, raw materials and equipment, which are lacking in many LMICs. Pfizer, for example, says its vaccine requires 280 components from 86 suppliers in 19 countries, along with specialised equipment and trained personnel.27 Since it takes more than simply waiving IP to vaccinate the world, what good is a temporary waiver?

In response, we agree temporarily losing the right to exclude companies from manufacturing vaccines is not enough. However, it can help break the logjam, creating a climate favourable to investment, since it removes the threat of being sued or prosecuted. Expedient investment strategies should focus on developing and repurposing existing capacities; Guzman notes that some middle-income countries are already producing COVID-19 vaccines, and some manufacturers in LMICs are already able to manufacture viral vector vaccines, such as AstraZeneca’s, and to contribute to the fill-and-finish stage of vaccine production.28

#### Future pandemics at 10x more deadly – absent a solution we’re all going to die

Ceballos 5/27 Gerardo Ceballos [PhD, Dr Gerardo Ceballos is an ecologist and conservationist at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico. He is particularly recognized for his influential work on global patterns of distribution of diversity, endemism, and extinction risk in vertebrates. He is also well-known for his contribution to understanding the magnitude and impacts of the sixth mass extinction.], 5/27/21, “THE SIXTH MASS EXTINCTION AND THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY”, Population Matters, <https://populationmatters.org/news/2021/05/sixth-mass-extinction-and-future-humanity> DD AG

Somewhere, sometime in late 2019, a coronavirus from a wild species, perhaps a bat or a pangolin, infected a human in China. This could have been an obscure event, lost without trace in the annals of history, as it is very likely this has occurred many times in the last centuries. But this particular event was somehow different. The coronavirus became an epidemic first and a pandemic later. Covid-19 became the worst pandemic since the Spanish flu in 1918. The horrific human suffering it has caused, and its economic, social and political impacts, are still unraveling.

The reason Covid-19 and more than forty other very dangerous viruses, such as Lassa fever, HIV and Ebola, have jumped from wild animals to humans in the last four decades is the destruction of natural environments and the trafficking and consumption of wild animals.

The wildlife trade is to satisfy the insatiable and extravagant demand for these species in the Asian market, in countries such as China, Vietnam and Indonesia. The illegal wildlife trade is a gigantic business. It is as lucrative as the drug trade, but without the legal implications. The immense appetite of China and other Asian societies for exotic animals has promoted exponential growth in trade and profits. Wild and domestic animals sold in “wet markets” are kept in unsanitary and unethical conditions. There, feces, urine and food waste from cages at the top spill into cages at the bottom, creating the perfect conditions for viruses to leap from wild animals to domestic animals and humans. Thousands of wildlife species or their products are traded annually.

Wildlife trade is one of several human impacts, including habitat loss and fragmentation, pollution, toxification and invasive species, that have caused the extinction of thousands of species and threaten many more. Indeed, most people are unaware that the current extinction crisis is unprecedented in human history. Extinction occurs when the last individual of a species dies. The UN recently estimated that one million species, such as the panda, the orangutan and the Sumatran rhino, are at risk of extinction.

The second finding is that population extinctions, which are the prelude to species extinctions, are occurring at very fast rates (Ceballos et al., 2017). Around 32 percent of a sample of 27,000 species have declining populations and have experienced massive geographic range contractions. Population extinctions are a very severe and widespread environmental problem which we have called “Biological Annihilation”.

Finally, our third finding indicates that the magnitude of the extinction crisis is underestimated because there are thousands of species on the brink of extinction (Ceballos et al., 2020). Those species will likely become extinct in the near future unless a massive conservation effort is launched soon.

Many times, people have asked me why we should care about the loss of a species. There are ethical, moral, philosophical, religious and other reasons to be concerned. But perhaps the one that is most tangible for most people is the loss of ecosystem services, which are the benefits that humans derive from the proper function of nature. Ecosystem services include the proper mix of gases in the atmosphere that support life on Earth, the quantity and quality of water, pollination of wild crops and plants, fertilization of the soil, and protection against emerging pests and diseases, among many others. Every time a species is lost, ecosystem services are likely to erode and human well-being is reduced.

The loss of so many ecosystems and species is pushing us towards the point of collapse of civilization. The good news is that there is still time to reduce the current extinction crisis. The species and ecosystems that we manage to save in the next 10 – 15 years will define the future of biodiversity and civilization. What it is at stake is the future of mankind.

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#### The US retains a plethora of advantages in multiple areas of global leadership in spite of Trump – solution to new challenges is not total abandonment of the US-led global order but refinement and recommitment of our approach to shaping it

--Trump sucks but fundamental pillars of grand strategy remain

--Strong economy, tech innovation, geographical distance, alliances, etc all remain

Schake 19

Kori Schake, Deputy Director General of the International Institute for Strategic Studies and the author Of Safe Passage: The Transition From British to American Hegemony. She served on the National Security Council and in the U.S. State Department in the George W. Bush administration, “Back to Basics: How to Make Right What Trump Gets Wrong,” Foreign Affairs, May/June 2019, accessed through Georgetown libraries

U.S. President Donald Trump's sharp-elbowed nationalism, opposition to multilateralism and international institutions, and desire to shift costs onto U.S. allies reflect the American public's understandable weariness with acting as the global order's defender and custodian. Over the last three decades, post—Cold War triumph- alism led to hubris and clouded strategic thinking. After the 9/11 attacks, Wash- ington stumbled badly in Afghanistan and Iraq; more recently, Russia has reasserted itself in eastern Europe and the Middle East, and China's economic and military power have significantly expanded. Even among Trump's oppo- nents, these developments have led many to conclude that the only solution is a fundamental rethinking of U.S. strategy.

This is an overreaction. In truth, the pillars of U.S. strategy for the past 70 years—committing to the defense of countries that share U.S. values or interests, expanding trade, upholding rules-based institutions, and fostering liberal values internationally—have achieved remarkable successes and will continue to serve the country well going forward. Although some changes are certainly necessary, the biggest risk now is that the United States will in the process of making those changes scrap what is best about its foreign policy.

In his blunt and often crude way, Trump has proved brilliant at poking holes in pieties and asking pointed questions about long-standing principles. His answers to those questions, however, have been self-defeating at best and dangerous at worst. By revealing what happens when U.S. strategy becomes untethered from the ideas that built the American-led order, Trump's time in offce should serve as a wake-up call—but not as a cause for fundamental change. On the contrary: as the costs of an "America first" approach become clear, advocates of a more traditional, global- minded American leadership will get another hearing. They should seize the opportunity by offering a vision of a reformed and updated U.S. foreign policy. But a new vision of the U.S. role in the world should reaffrm some core principles—namely, that the United States can best achieve its objectives through mutually beneficial outcomes that reduce the need for enforcement and encourage like-minded countries to share burdens.

YOU NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD

For all the panic and self-doubt that the political turmoil of recent years has brought, the current crisis is hardly without precedent. In fact, for most of its history, the United States faced more formidable challenges and had fewer resources than it does today. George Washington would have loved to negoti- ate a multilateral trade deal from a position of economic strength rather than having to bring a fledgling nation into being amid hostility from much stronger states. Abraham Lincoln would have considered banding allies together to counter a rising China an easy day's work compared with passing the 13th Amendment or preventing international recognition of the Confederacy. Franklin Roosevelt would have been right to see managing a glut of capital as less compli- cated than resuscitating the entire U.S. economy.

The United States has the most propitious geopolitical environment any country could hope for: surrounded by oceans and peaceful, cooperative neighbors. The U.S. economy generates jobs and drives technological innovation. The country's hegemony in the global balance-of-payments system is so secure that investors are indifferent to its indebtedness and Washington can impose sanctions on foreign entities and governments with impunity. The United States is a dominant power that other strong states voluntarily work to support rather than diminish—a historical anomaly. Its military is so capable that its adversaries have to operate on the margins of the conflict spectrum, in the realm of insurgency or information warfare. The country's cultural products are appealing and accessible, and its language serves as the lingua franca for international transactions.

#### US primacy is hurt by blocking the vaccine

PC 5-3 – Public Citizen is a non-profit, progressive consumer rights advocacy group and think tank based in Washington, D.C., United States) “Don’t Buy Pharma’s Latest Distraction: A Temporary WTO IP Waiver for COVID Meds Would Not Hand “U.S. mRNA Technology” to China,” May 3, 2021. <https://www.citizen.org/article/dont-buy-pharmas-latest-distraction-a-temporary-wto-ip-waiver-for-covid-meds-would-not-hand-u-s-mrna-technology-to-china/> //advay

Real Geopolitical Threat for U.S. Is in Blocking 100+ Countries’ WTO Initiative While China and Russia Share Vaccine Technology Worldwide Russia’s Sputnik-5 vaccine and the Chinese Sinovac and Sinopharm vaccines have become the go-to options for countries in the developing world. The Chinese and Russian companies, probably compelled by their governments who seek to leverage the vaccines for geopolitical gain, have engaged in significant tech and know-how transfer and partnerships with firms all over the world. Meanwhile, the U.S. and EU have pre-ordered vaccines for their populations while blocking the vast majority of WTO countries’ efforts to even negotiate the text of a waiver these countries consider necessary for their populations to also obtain vaccines.

#### Vaccine diplomacy is key to US spheres of influence – the aff creates incentives for other countries to align with US primacy

**Smith 21**, “Russia and China are beating the U.S. at vaccine diplomacy, experts say”, NBC News, 4/2, Alexander Smith: He is a senior reporter at NBC News Digital, where he has worked since 2013. He won an Emmy in 2015 as part of the team that covered the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17. In 2017 he won the Society of Professional Journalists' Sigma Delta Chi Award as part of the NBC News Digital team covering the Brussels terror attacks, URL: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/russia-china-are-beating-u-s-vaccine-diplomacy-experts-say-n1262742>, KR

Soon after Moscow sold 5.2 million doses of its Sputnik V vaccine, President Vladimir Putin was on the phone with his Bolivian counterpart, Luis Arce, in late January, discussing topics as varied as building a nuclear power plant to lithium mining and gas reserves.

In North Africa, Algeria didn't pay a dime for the Chinese vaccines that arrived in March. What it did offer was to support Beijing's "core interests" and oppose interference in its "internal affairs" — language China has used to defend against criticism over Hong Kong's autonomy and allegations of human rights abuses in Xinjiang, which it denies.

Although China and Russia deny it, experts say they are beginning to see how Beijing's and Moscow's strategy of selling or donating their vaccines abroad is greasing the wheels of their international relationships and allowing them to expand their influence throughout the world.

It's a development that should cause grave concern for the United States and other democracies, according to former U.S. ambassadors and other ex-diplomats.

What rankles these observers is not that China and Russia are winning at vaccine diplomacy, it's that the U.S. and others aren't even in the game yet. Washington and its allies have instead chosen to prioritize their domestic populations, keeping most doses at home and causing resentment abroad.

"The United States, until recently, was the go-to country for any major health disaster," said Thomas Shannon, the former U.S. undersecretary of state for political affairs, the third-highest-ranking role in the State Department. "So to pull itself off the playing field is very disconcerting."

Shannon, who served in the administrations of presidents George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump and was ambassador to Brazil from 2010 to 2013, said Trump's decision to step back from the international Covid-19 response has sent a "chilling and worrisome message to many countries that find themselves at a very vulnerable moment."

Unless that changes under President Joe Biden and into the future, "the world will realize we're not a reliable partner, and that would be dangerous for us," he said. "I believe it's something that will be remembered."

'Extremely narrow-minded'

Few would argue that sending lifesaving vaccines around the world is a bad thing.

"We're not talking arms sales here," said John Campbell, who was the U.S. ambassador to Nigeria from 2004 to 2007. "We're talking about something citizens around the world want and desperately need."

Indeed both countries deny exporting vaccines for diplomatic gain.

This idea is "extremely narrow-minded," Guo Weimin, spokesman for the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said at its annual meeting last month. President Xi Jinping has vowed to make vaccines a "global public good."

Similarly, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said that Russia merely believes "there should be as many doses of vaccines as possible" so "all countries, including the poorest, have the opportunity to stop the pandemic."

After a cloud of skepticism, recent studies suggest that the state-made vaccines, China's Sinopharm and Russia's Sputnik V program, are as effective as others. They have been approved by dozens of regulators.

Of the near 250 million vaccine doses it had produced so far, China has sent 118 million to 49 countries, according to Airfinity, a pharmaceuticals analytics company based in London.

Russia has sent vaccines to 22 different countries, and India has exported or donated 64 million of the nearly 150 million shots it has produced, according to Airfinity, which some experts interpret as New Delhi's attempt to counterbalance the vaccine diplomacy overtures of its regional rival, Beijing.

By contrast, the U.S. has delivered just over 200 million vaccine doses to is own population, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It has agreed to share only a tiny number — around 4 million AstraZeneca-Oxford University shots that it wasn't using anyway — with Mexico and Canada.

The West's own vaccine nationalism has created a vacuum in which lower-and middle-income countries have been unable to get access to shots. And Beijing and Moscow have been only too happy to step in.

'Political suicide'

The majority of Chinese and Russian vaccine doses have gone "where Western powers and Russia and China have been competing for years for more influence," said Agathe Demarais the global forecasting director at the Economist Intelligence Unit, a research group based in London.

One key battleground is Egypt, which gets $1.3 billion in U.S. aid every year but whose human rights situation has led to strained ties with the West. It ordered tens of millions of doses from Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Sinopharm and Russia's Sputnik V program. But the first to arrive in Cairo in January were from China.

"For the man on the street" in African countries using the vaccines, "Russia and China become somewhat more attractive as possible models for going forward," said Campbell, the former ambassador to Nigeria. "Arguably, it will help increase the attractiveness of authoritarian forms of government at the expense of more democratic forms of government."

The pandemic has also allowed Russia to build relationships in Latin America beyond its traditional foothold of Venezuela, Shannon said, while the call between the Russian and Bolivian presidents was clearly linked to their vaccine deal, Demarais said. The Bolivian presidency didn't respond to a request for comment.

#### U.S. heg is sustainable – neg authors are wrong – it doesn’t cause overstretch or free-riding – put away your impact turns and this proves the empire is good

Carla Norloff 18, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto, PhD in International Relations from the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Hegemony and inequality: Trump and the liberal playbook, January 2018, International Affairs, Volume 94, Issue 1, <https://academic.oup.com/ia/article/94/1/63/4762707>

LIO = Liberal International Order

The second relevant theoretical approach is grounded in Waltzian realism. According to this approach, states should pursue their national interest defined narrowly, responding to threats that affect them directly. The doctrine of restraint, also called selective engagement, sees the maintenance of long-term hegemony as exceedingly costly and futile, breeding resentment and requiring rivals to be defeated and outcompeted in a continuous effort to thwart attempts at balancing. Balancing occurs when states seek to reduce the military power of exceptionally dominant states. The tendency for states to balance power is a hard systemic law, which no state can escape, and which guarantees that a unipolar distribution of power will eventually become bipolar or multipolar. Academic advocates of selective engagement approve of Trump's call for a more restrained foreign policy while distancing themselves from his other ideas.44 They believe America's postwar grand strategy spills too much blood and treasure and carries high opportunity costs,45 and that the United States should instead pursue a strategy of offshore balancing, refocusing policies around a narrow definition of the national interest limited to preserving regional hegemony in the western hemisphere and preventing the rise of regional hegemons.46 They consider US security interests to be at stake in three areas—Europe, east Asia and the Persian Gulf—with only east Asia requiring significant onshore engagement.47 Broadly agreeing with Trump, they say allies have to learn how to fend for themselves, and that the US should introduce uncertainty about forthcoming military support.48 In order to improve the plight of fellow Americans, the United States should reorientate public policy around domestic goals, giving up some international goals. For proponents of these arguments, America's international commitments clash with its domestic commitments.¶ Three flawed assumptions¶ Three features of the LIO emerge as problematic from these two perspectives. First, other countries free-ride on US political and economic leadership. Second, there are fundamental trade-offs between America's military and economic capability: US security commitments are responsible for US economic decline. Third, there are fundamental trade-offs between America's international and domestic posture. On the basis of this analysis, to promote America's national interest, the grand strategy supporting the LIO should be replaced with strategic restraint; the US should stop bearing a disproportionate share of the costs associated with solving global problems and let others take care of themselves, restricting US involvement to protecting vital security interests, defending the homeland and preventing the emergence of a regional hegemon.¶ However, the three assumptions underlying this analysis, and criticisms of the LIO, mischaracterize America's liberal dilemma. The first questionable assumption is that international cooperation resembles a public goods problem whereby the US, as the largest state, bears disproportionate costs while free-riding allies reap disproportionate benefits. Second, the negative repercussions of US security commitments for US economic strength are rarely balanced against the full benefits of US security commitments to the United States itself. Third, the assumption that there is an international–domestic trade-off and that whatever resources have been ‘squandered’ on international engagement can readily be diverted to the pursuit of productive, welfare-enhancing, domestic goals grossly understates both US benefits from the LIO and the risks attached to dismantling ‘selected’ parts of the LIO.49¶ When international cooperation is cast as a public goods dilemma, it is easy to come to the conclusion that the hegemon is in a disadvantageous position. But the public goods analogy does not adequately capture the essence of international cooperation, because few issues are characterized by the properties that define public goods—non-rivalry and non-exclusion.50 Rather, the hegemon provides a mix of public and private goods, or imperfect public goods.51 Despite these recognized flaws, and much scholarship to the contrary, the public goods version of HST remains influential.¶ Rejecting the ‘exploited hegemon’ version of HST, several scholars point to the ways in which the hegemon is positionally primed to benefit disproportionately from underwriting the LIO.52 They argue that public goods provision offers more opportunities than constraints, and, while they recognize that free-riding is a possible threat to the hegemon's long-term rule,53 they emphasize the ways in which the hegemon can use its dominance to internalize positive externalities and externalize negative externalities.54 As long as the hegemon is not providing pure public goods, the distribution of gains will not necessarily favour other states. And as long as the distribution of gains does not favour other states, providing an open economy does not necessarily compromise the hegemon's security interests or its position of dominance.55¶ The founders of HST, Robert Gilpin and Stephen Krasner, believed that hegemonic orders were particularly robust during the hegemon's ascendancy, and therefore worried greatly about the future of US hegemony and the LIO as the US underwent relative decline in the 1970s and 1980s.¶ Contemporary scholars, on the other hand, emphasize the cyclical property of postwar hegemony, seeing the United States as capable of reversing phases of decline by using different levers of power to avoid absolute decline.56 They see different forms of power interacting favourably for the hegemon, with financial dominance reinforcing commercial dominance, commercial dominance facilitating financial dominance, and security dominance boosting both commercial and financial dominance.57¶ Since the 1980s, IR scholars have tended to view the United States as militarily strong yet economically weak, a development hastened with the rise of China and other emerging economies in the third millennium.58 But even today, after many rounds of decline (and ascent), the United States has no peer competitor either militarily or economically. Commercially robust but financially vulnerable, China ranks as the world's third largest military power after Russia and the United States. While Russia's military continues to be the US military's principal rival, it is not as potent as it was under the Soviet Union. And while Russia's economy is not as debilitated as it was under the Soviet Union, it continues to be frail. Japan and Germany, two of America's principal allies, are economically strong, but militarily weak.¶ As figures 1 and 2 reveal, the United States has sustained its economic lead throughout the postwar era, boasting the world's first economy with an unrivalled capacity for economic output, an impressive commercial record and an unsurpassed financial position. US economic performance is grossly underrated. First, as shown in figure 1, which displays US GDP, trade and company size, US GDP is still roughly a quarter of global GDP (just below the dotted 25 per cent line). Declinists take the considerable fall in America's postwar share of global GDP as a sign of weakness. But it is unrealistic to think that the United States would continue to command a third of global GDP as it did immediately after the Second World War—particularly since much of the observed decline was the result of deliberate efforts by the United States to bolster its allies in western Europe and east Asia through the Marshall Plan and other initiatives.59 What is rather remarkable is that, even with the rise of non-allies such as China, America's share of world GDP has stabilized around a quarter and continues to be nearly twice as large as China's share. Second, as also shown in figure 1, US commercial capability aggregated into its combined share of world exports and imports—trade—is slightly higher than China's. But exports and imports are not the best way to measure commercial prowess, because the contemporary web of production globalizes manufacturing. Owing to global supply chains, imported final goods include intermediate inputs and technology produced and developed in the United States that do not show up as exports but nonetheless provide American jobs and income. And when exporting final goods, US firms depend on low trade barriers to import low-cost intermediate inputs. The United States' ability to spread production worldwide has been accompanied by long-term rising trends in numbers of foreign affiliates, value added and net income, generating significant profits for the United States.60 As shown in figure 1, the aggregate value of US companies far exceeds that of any other country.¶ Figure 1:¶ Great Power production and commercial capability, 2016¶ View largeDownload slide¶ Great Power production and commercial capability, 2016¶ Figure 2:¶ Great Power financial and military capability, 2016¶ View largeDownload slide¶ Great Power financial and military capability, 2016¶ Third, few assessments compare the relative financial capabilities of Great Powers. Studies often favour narrow definitions of financial power over broader assessments. Some focus on the relative size of US financial markets, some on financial networks, some on reserve currency issuance, but few provide an aggregate picture.61 These incomplete portrayals lead to gross underestimation of US financial power.62 As shown in figure 2, US financial markets account for slightly more than a quarter of the global total, and US reserve currency provision far surpasses that of any other state or states, and that of the eurozone.¶ Fourth, as also demonstrated in figure 2, the United States is the world's most formidable military power, its capabilities far exceeding those of any other nation. Taking into account front-line capabilities on the ground, on the sea and in the air, as well as the capacity for reconnaissance, strategic transport and communication to project power, the United States has no rival.63¶ The United States' multidimensional power base clearly puts it in a class above rival powers. Yet its privileged position in the international system is even greater than what these snapshot barometers indicate, because significant synergies exist between the various dimensions.64¶ US security dominance supports US commercial and monetary dominance, and its commercial and monetary dominance are mutually supportive. First, by providing security guarantees, stabilizing hot-spots and securing sea lanes, the United States ensures that international trade and finance can occur without disruption. This is of great value to the United States itself because, as the world's single largest economy, it has a high stake in guaranteeing stable economic relations. Second, propping up the financial realm, America's vast security network provides incentives for allies to continue supporting the dollar's role as the number one global currency.65 Third, the dollar's global role gives the United States the capacity to borrow at exceptionally low rates, providing it with extraordinary macroeconomic flexibility to ease balance of payments adjustments, particularly trade adjustments.66 Fourth, America's commercial position bolsters the dollar's global role by facilitating trade adjustment as governments, particularly in emerging markets, continue to finance US deficits by holding dollar assets in the hope of gaining continued access to US markets.67¶ ‘America first’ promises to touch all of these areas, overhauling longstanding US policies in the security, commercial and monetary spheres. But its real menace lies in its potential for sparking drastic changes by overturning policies in just one sphere. If the United States ceases to defend allies, and reduces its commitment to secure the international environment, cross-border trade and investment will operate in a more uncertain setting. While it is impossible to predict which policy is most likely to unleash an unfavourable chain of events, a hypothetical example can be used to illustrate the presumptive cascade. If we assume the United States follows through with significant commercial retreat, then we should expect monetary consequences. With the United States ceasing to account for a significant portion of international trade, official and private investors will increasingly hold alternative currencies for reserves and payment. If the diversification out of dollars is substantial, the dollar could gradually lose its centrality in the monetary order, complicating the adjustment of US trade imbalances. Balance of payments difficulties could very well ricochet back in the monetary sphere, with a crisis of confidence over trade imbalances triggering a run on the dollar. With the dollar under pressure, its international role for governments and private actors could come into question. If the dollar is no longer widely used for reserves and payments, US financial markets will lose importance relative to other financial markets. A diminished role for US financial markets implies lower demand for US assets, raising US borrowing costs. And the loss of US borrowing privileges will have security ramifications, since financing US military power will become more expensive.68 With these developments, America's slippage in the ranks of Great Powers will be assured.¶ The real liberal dilemma¶ President Trump misidentifies the nature of the redistribution problem confronting America, misinterpreting unequal internal redistribution as unequal external redistribution. The liberal dilemma is not that the LIO distributes gains unfavourably to the United States, but that not everyone in the United States wins because US domestic policies have not kept pace with global economic integration. Economic globalization can deepen domestic inequality. Import competition causes some sectors to shrink, and workers employed in contracting sectors may not be fully absorbed in expanding sectors. Neo-classical trade theory predicts that economic activity will increase in the sector using the country's abundant factor since its reward will increase relative to that of the scarce factor.69 In the case of an advanced capital-abundant country such as the United States, this means that the reward to capital will increase relative to labour. Financial globalization has even more acute effects on the distribution of income, further raising the reward to capital relative to labour.70 However, since suspending international economic exchange reduces national welfare gains, countries are better off expanding the pie, and compensating losers with the higher gains available from economic globalization. The United States needs to bring back ‘embedded liberalism’ to redistribute benefits from openness through greater safeguards and labour adjustment programmes, including trade adjustment, so that the LIO can begin to work for all Americans.71¶ Dissatisfaction with the international distribution of income is, however, insufficient to explain the backlash against globalization. President Trump correctly identified the liberal dilemma inside the United States as the clash between liberal ideals and the preservation of a racial hierarchy which put ‘white America first’—a contradiction which has resulted in a racial and educational divide at the ballot box.72 To fully understand waning American support for the LIO, one must look to the unravelling of America's liberal identity as a principal cause of the less secure domestic foundations of the LIO. Some elements of America's liberal identity, such as ‘political democracy, constitutional government, individual rights [and] private property based economic systems’, remain intact. However, other elements, such as ‘toleration of diversity in non-civic areas of ethnicity and religion’ are in jeopardy.73 In fomenting an ‘us and them’ division between Americans and foreigners alleged to be exploiting the United States, and by stoking an internal division between Americans of different ethnicities and faiths, Trump unveiled an international and domestic hierarchy that some thought no longer existed. How did these factors intermingle with income inequality in the 2016 US elections?¶ The extent of inequality in the United States¶ Income inequality in the United States has increased since the late 1960s. By 2015, the top 5 per cent earned 28 times as much, and the top 20 per cent 16 times as much, as the lowest 20 per cent of Americans. This share has risen over time irrespective of the incumbent president's party affiliation, as shown in figure 3, which traces this development back to the late 1970s. Below I use mean income data from the US Census Bureau to discern the effect of income inequality on different ethnic groups. Ideally, this analysis would be performed using median income data, but this is not consistently available across all measures of interest.74¶ Figure 3:¶ Income inequality between the top and bottom income earners in the United States, 1978–2016¶ View largeDownload slide¶ Income inequality between the top and bottom income earners in the United States, 1978–2016¶ Concerns about income may have loomed large in the 2016 presidential elections. It could be, for instance, that by 2016 income inequality in the United States had reached a tipping point, a level that Americans were no longer prepared to tolerate. The only vote margin—that is, the difference in percentage of votes between Republicans and Democrats—that was consistently and substantially different from those in the 2008 and 2012 elections was the margin for those earning less than US$50,000 a year. Although this group—arguably the most affected by the widening income gap—still supported the Democratic candidate overall (though to a lesser extent than in the two previous elections), the margin between the Democratic and Republican votes narrowed to 12 points from 22 points in 2008 and 2012. The margins for higher-income groups were not as wide, nor were they significantly different from the levels recorded in the 2008 and 2012 elections. In an anti-establishment election, factors other than income, such as Clinton's ‘elitism’, might have been a liability. But the unfavourable opinion of Clinton (81 per cent) was less strong among those who voted for Trump than disapproval of former President Obama (89 per cent).75 It is, however, possible that dissatisfaction with Clinton was greater within the group earning under US$50,000.¶ While income did matter in the 2016 election, it was not, on its own, the most important predictor of the outcome. As shown in figures 4 and 5, income did play a role, but primarily as it intersected with other factors, particularly education and colour.76 In the following paragraphs I consider the income growth of non-college-educated whites relative to college-educated whites; and the absolute income (including income growth) of non-college-educated whites relative to the overall non-college-educated population.¶ Figure 4:¶ Income growth among US citizens with education below college degree level, 1998–2016¶ View largeDownload slide¶ Income growth among US citizens with education below college degree level, 1998–2016¶ Figure 5:¶ Income growth among US citizens with education above college degree level, 1998–2016¶ View largeDownload slide¶ Income growth among US citizens with education above college degree level, 1998–2016¶ In 2016, white voters without a college degree voted for Trump (66 per cent) with much higher percentages than in 2012 (61 per cent) and 2008 (58 per cent), and with much higher margins (see figure 4). But white voters without a college degree (both those with and those without a high school diploma) supported Trump despite experiencing greater income growth during the full span of Obama's presidency than any other white group defined by educational level. Their income expansion was also stronger than any other education group during Obama's second term (2012–2016). However, during Obama's first term (2008–2012), their income did not grow as fast as that of white Americans with advanced degrees, although they did better than those with an associate (i.e. two-year college) degree or bachelor's degree. Despite stronger income development than college-educated income earners, whites without a college degree voted for Trump with a 37-point margin, whereas whites with a college degree favoured Trump with only a 3-point margin. Although these numbers suggest that something other than income explains Trump's victory, it could still be that the higher margins for white voters without college degrees reflect discontent with low real incomes.¶ If low real incomes explain Trump's support among white voters without college degrees, we should find general support for Trump among voters with low real incomes. However, since 1998 the mean income of whites without college degrees has always been higher than the mean income of all those without college degrees. If their income remained higher, was their income growth slower? During the full length of Obama's presidency, and during his first term, whites without a college degree experienced higher growth than all income earners without a college degree. Only during Obama's second term did the mean income of whites without a college degree underperform the income of all earners without a college degree. The growth differential between the two groups during this period,77 however, is quite small, for both those with and those without a high school diploma: the mean income of workers without a high school diploma increased by 13.41 per cent, compared to 12.99 per cent growth for whites without a high school diploma. The mean income of all workers with a high school diploma increased by 5.73 per cent; of whites with a high-school diploma, by 5.60 per cent. It is noteworthy that during Obama's second term the overall mean income of all earners with a college degree increased less than for whites with a college degree. The biggest difference was for whites with an advanced degree, who earned US$1,394 a year less than the mean income of all recipients of advanced degrees. Yet despite slower income growth, white college graduates were disinclined to vote Republican in the 2016 elections (see figure 5).¶ If dissatisfaction with income played a role in explaining why white voters without a college degree endorsed Trump, the only evidence for it is the relatively lower income growth of white earners without college degrees compared to all earners without college degrees between 2012 and 2015. Disaggregating the income differential for non-college-educated whites, those without a high-school diploma experienced 0.43 per cent lower income growth, and those with a diploma 0.13 per cent lower income growth, than all non-college-educated earners within the corresponding educational group. It is highly unlikely that these small percentage differences explain why whites without a college degree favoured Trump with a 37-point margin whereas all earners without a college degree favoured Trump with only a 7-point margin.¶ If income mattered only in conjunction with education and colour in the 2016 elections, income might have been more decisive in distressed regions. One of the biggest surprises in the 2016 presidential election was how the Democrats lost the ‘blue wall’ states in the ‘Rust Belt’—Pennsylvania in the north-east; Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio in the mid-west. The Democrats also lost Florida in the south, a traditionally Republican state, which Obama won in 2008 and 2012.¶ Declining employment and income are said to have contributed to support for Trump in conventionally Democratic states. But there are several problems with this explanation. While the decline in the mid-west is real, it has been in the making for a very long time. During the Obama years, specifically between 2008 and 2016, income in the mid-west rose more sharply than in all other regions. During Obama's second term, both white and overall income growth was stronger in the mid-west than in any other region. Yet the Republican vote exceeded the Democratic vote in the mid-west by the second-highest margin of any region (see figure 6). Moreover, during the same period, income growth for whites was higher than for all ethnic groups combined; and yet whites in the mid-west voted Republican by a margin of 20 points, compared to a margin of 5 points for the region overall. However, during Obama's second term, white income growth in the mid-west was lower than in all other regions except for the west. Overall income growth was worse in the mid-west than in all other regions. Yet the white margin in favour of Trump was stronger in the mid-west (20 points) than in the west (5 points), and the overall margin in favour of Trump in the mid-west (5 points) was considerably lower than for whites in the mid-west (20 points).¶ Figure 6:¶ Income growth by region and race, 1998–2015¶ View largeDownload slide¶ Income growth by region and race, 1998–2015¶ Given the higher proportion of whites in the mid-west (76 per cent) than nationally (61 per cent), and the higher number of voters in the region aged over 25 years without a college degree (71 per cent) than nationally (55 per cent),78 it is likely that factors of education, colour and income combine to explain the level of support for Trump in 2016.¶ In the 2016 election, racial polarization, as measured by the difference between white and non-white preferences for Trump, was highest in the south, second to highest in the mid-west and north-east, and lowest in the west. These cleavages were most apparent in the south and mid-west. White voters were aligned with Trump in the south (67 per cent) and the mid-west (57 per cent), non-white voters with Clinton in the south (77 per cent) and mid-west (75 per cent).¶ Racially differentiated voting patterns do not necessarily mean that voting is racially motivated. It could be that whites are generally more cons ervative on a range of issues and that their views were therefore better aligned with the policies espoused by the Republican than the Democratic candidate. Yet that would not explain why so many white college-educated voters fled the Republican presidential nominee in 2016 (see figure 5). Rather, there exists some evidence that racist attitudes encouraged a portion of the white electorate to align with Trump. For example, 80 per cent of white evangelical Christians supported Trump.79 Their vote is important because although they account for a lower share of the population today (17 per cent) than in 2008 (21 per cent), they still account for 26 per cent of the vote because a lot of them turn out to vote.80 Their high proportion of the vote suggests that racism might have been a relevant issue. In the months before the elections, a non-partisan study by the American Values Atlas revealed that white evangelicals were less likely to perceive discrimination against blacks, with only 36 per cent saying blacks were discriminated against ‘a lot’, compared to the national average of 57 per cent.81¶ Trump and the liberal playbook¶ In 2016, socio-cultural fissures within the United States played a critical role in the election of the presidential candidate most disparaging of the LIO. Trump's call to put America ‘first’ internationally, and white Christians ‘first’ domestically, resonated with non-college-educated white voters who saw their historic privileges fading. Not all grievances were racially motivated; certainly, some poorer non-college-educated whites compared their present situation unfavourably with the rosier circumstances of their families' past.82¶ The relationship between education and race was first noted over seven decades ago. Gunnar Myrdal's 1944 book An American dilemma was famously cited in the Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education (1954), and helped desegregate education in the United States by demonstrating that education could not be separate but equal for blacks.83 Myrdal went further, calling for an ‘educational offensive against racial intolerance’ and the forging of an ‘American creed’, a civic culture with equal rights for all Americans, to overcome the contradiction between American liberal ideals and the reality of racial discrimination.84¶ Since then, great progress has been made. Blacks, and other minorities, in the United States are equal before the law and have equal political rights, and greater social and economic opportunities, than before. Education has no doubt played a significant role in reducing explicit racist behaviour or individual racism, that is, ‘overt acts by individuals, which cause death, injury or the violent destruction of property’.85 But discrimination is a problem beyond what most people would recognize as specific instances of racist behaviour. Institutional racism is a ‘less overt, far more subtle, less identifiable’ form of racism, which ‘originates in the operation of established and respected forces in society’.86 The concept of white privilege is the flip side of institutional racism and refers to the unearned benefits enjoyed as a result of being white.87 The concept is not intended to mean that every white person is ‘privileged’ or that no other form of privilege exists. It is intended to expose the existence of an implicit racial hierarchy in society and the political, economic and legal inequality which it reproduces.88 Attempts to attenuate white privilege are met with suspicion and opposition by those who benefit from it. For example, today a majority of white Americans (55 per cent) believe they are discriminated against, and nearly half of them (26 per cent) attribute this to US ‘laws and government policies’.89 Whites who believe they face institutional racism are unlikely to see a difference between policies designed to reduce unmerited privileges and policies that reduce merited privileges. They are also unlikely to appreciate how restrictive the scope for affirmative action is. For example, in the case of university admissions policies, quotas have been unconstitutional since the 1978 Supreme Court decision in Regents of the University of California v. Bakke. Many states even forbid the use of race in admissions procedures. Where states do permit the use of race, it may be used only as one criterion in promoting diversity, and only if all other methods fail, as laid down in the 2013 Supreme Court decision in Fisher v. University of Texas.¶ The political scientist and public intellectual Walter Russell Mead has explained the 2016 election outcome as a ‘Jacksonian revolt’ in which many ‘white Americans find themselves in a society that talks constantly about the importance of identity, that values ethnic authenticity, that offers economic benefits and social advantages based on identity—for everybody but them’.90 Another political scientist, Mark Lilla, proposes an end to identity politics as a way to secure broader support for liberal policies.91 I agree with Mead that identity politics cannot be unilateral, and I agree with Lilla that the American habit of categorizing individuals according to essentialist criteria is contrary to liberal principles. But I am not sure either of them would agree that there has been an essentialist identity politics in the United States, going back at least to the eighteenth century, constructed around the primacy of a white American identity of European Christian descent. Reactions against this unspoken identity politics lay beneath claims of institutional racism long before Trump gave voice to a ‘white America first’ policy at home.¶ College-educated white Americans are more likely to recognize the advantages attached to being white (47 per cent) than white Americans without college degrees (17 per cent).92 A possible reason for this is that higher education fosters liberal attitudes, and provides exposure to different ethnic groups, limiting blatant forms of racism.93 But even though college-educated whites are less inclined to vote for their privilege, and more prepared to see their privilege, there is plenty of room in the liberal playbook for race-based discrimination. There's a playbook in force that liberals are supposed to follow. The playbook prescribes responses to different forms of racism, and these responses tend to be outraged responses. When no colleague or friend is threatened by charges of racism, the playbook works. But the playbook can also be a trap leading to bad decisions because discriminatory practices often implicate someone's colleague, friend, family or wider community. The trap is especially pernicious in higher education, where people tend to overestimate their liberal inclinations, and where opportunities, support and intellectual attribution are largely network-based.94 It is therefore unsurprising that a higher percentage of college-educated blacks (55 per cent) say they have been disadvantaged by their race than non-college-educated blacks (29 per cent). An even higher percentage of all blacks (81 per cent) who at some point attended college say they were treated differently because of their race: perhaps an overlooked factor in the reasons why blacks are less likely to finish college.95¶ In addition to the different experiences and beliefs about race to which education gives rise, a partisan divide exists, with Republicans (43 per cent) more likely than Democrats (27 per cent) to say whites, rather than blacks, experience a lot of discrimination.96 Only 37 per cent of Republicans (against 76 per cent of Democrats) say racism is a problem.97 Attitudes towards blacks also extend to other groups. From the 2016 exit polls, we know that Trump voters were more likely to support a wall along the Mexican border (85 per cent) than Clinton voters (10 per cent), to support deportation of illegal immigrants (83 per cent vs 14 per cent) and view immigration as the most pressing problem for the country (64 per cent vs 33 per cent).98¶ Overall, the evidence presented in this article suggests not only that education and race were strong predictors of the 2016 presidential vote, but that racism was a contributing factor.¶ Summary and conclusion¶ Trump did not create angst about America's dominant position in the world, or about white America's dominant position vis-à-vis other ethnic groups, but he tapped into these two currents more unabashedly than any other presidential candidate in postwar history. This article deconstructs ‘America first’ into two components, an international component and a domestic component, which share common symptoms (lost greatness) and common remedies (redistribution).¶ In the first two sections of this article, I discussed the international component, and how ‘America first’ threatens to undermine the LIO. I showed how ‘America first’ reflects concerns about American decline and American overextension in three areas: the security, trade and monetary spheres. A common theme in this narrative is how the United States is being exploited by other countries, and how disengaging from the LIO presents a better path forward. In the security area, the world should no longer count on the US to act as global policeman or to tolerate unfair burden-sharing within security alliances. In trade, the US will no longer stand by as other countries free-ride on America's openness. In the monetary realm, the dollar's global role is not as good as gold. While Trump's views on the LIO are quite idiosyncratic, and have yet to be fully implemented, declinists and proponents of retrenchment share certain aspects of this outlook.¶ In opposition to this perspective, I have provided broad-based metrics demonstrating that the United States remains by a long way the leading state in the world today, and argued that it would be a lot worse off under alternatives to the LIO than it has been in the postwar era and is today. A counterfactual setting, where the United States does not provide international security, would be a more uncertain and more economically fragile one, with more limited commerce and investment. A United States of America in which the commercial and financial playing field, including the dollar's role, no longer spans the globe, but is domestically confined, will reduce US prosperity and geopolitical reach. Yet there is a growing sense, correctly identified by President Trump, that America's global engagement is not benefiting all Americans.

#### Absent the plan we risk great power war with China – transition to multipolarity is unstable and collapses deterrence

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As the article argued in 2007, “technological shifts have continuously altered the methods of war,” but in the end, “political arrangements matter, and the deterrent effect of any weapon should be evaluated within the context of the structure of the international system.”20 This claim is as true now as it was then. Indeed, one might conclude that structure matters even more now than it did 10 years ago, given the shift to multipolarity.21 Under “lopsided” multipolarity—where the United States outweighs both China and Russia militarily—it will maintain power advantages on some fronts, but at smaller margins than it did during the unipolar moment when it reigned supreme. Power diffusion, and related great power competition concerns, will be governed by the continued growth of Asian economic and military clout predominantly from China and India and the relative decline of Western economic influence.22 As China continues to translate economic gains into military modernization, the US will “focus mainly on countering China.”23 Avoiding the perils of security competition will require that the US be more cautious about exercising its power abroad.24

Yet exercising diplomacy and restraint could prove to be challenging. Even scholars who adopt a more circumspect view of emerging multipolarity, and the implications of growing military-technological parity, acknowledge its underlying risks. Barry Posen, who questions the assumption that multipolarity is inherently unstable, nonetheless acknowledges that growing parity will only “mute” great power competition. The diffusion of power will not eradicate “great power adventures.”25 China’s rise is apt to entail alliance reconfigurations and temptations to employ conventional military power.26 In fact, just as the original article predicted, the United States and India, Russia and China, and France and Germany have taken steps toward tightening their security relationships. China’s progress toward narrowing its power gap with the US has already met with a return to US defense budget growth and the establishment of new US defense cooperation commitments—notably with India. In parallel, China and Russia have grown closer, with Presidents Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin meeting three times in 2018 and China sending a “strong supporting contingent” to Russia’s Vostok-2018 military exercises.27

Given the complexities and uncertainties of multipolarity, the US arsenal of advanced conventional weapons (and those of other great powers) may not only prove ill suited to deterring great power war but also provide occasion for its inadvertent onset. The stealth, speed, and lethality of advanced conventional technologies—allowing for quick and decisive US victories in the Persian Gulf (1991), Kosovo (1999), and Afghanistan (2001)—have proven increasingly enticing to other great powers. Russia and China drew similar lessons from these conflicts, each embarking on military modernization programs geared toward antiaccess/area-denial (A2/AD) and grey zone strategies.28 Advanced conventional weapons already undergird Russia’s and China’s respective salami-slicing campaigns in Eastern Europe and the South China Sea. Russia began modernizing its military following its 2008 war with Georgia, enhancing its ground force readiness and updating its integrated air defense system. The improvements have allowed for significant defensive and force-projection gains (against border states).29 Though Russia has since dialed back modernization efforts in the wake of its economic downturn, China continues to seek avenues for undermining the United States’ conventional weapons edge. The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) still trails the United States in the areas of innovation and operational proficiency. Its modernization achievements, though—especially the development of intermediate-range missiles that threaten US forward bases and carrier strike groups—have substantially augmented China’s “advantage of proximity in most plausible conflict scenarios.”30

As great power rivals continue to chip away at the United States’ once considerable smart-weapons advantage, national security experts are reevaluating the viability of deterrence. On this front, the diffusion of capabilities, as well as the expansion of competition to the space and cyber domains, do more than complicate appraisals of the balance of power; they threaten to upend the foundations of deterrence.31 The arrival of dualcapable hypersonic weapons (and delivery systems)—currently being designed and tested by the US, China, and Russia—will arguably risk jeopardizing strategic stability. Their ultrahigh velocity could reduce warning time to the extent that “a response would be required on first signal of attack”; likewise, their deployment in ready-to-launch mode could trigger preemptive strikes, as others might perceive it as a sign of impending attack.32 Further, cyber weapons’ potential for disabling an opponent’s “early warning and command systems” may diminish the expected costs of first strike under crisis conditions.33 Autonomous weapons also have the potential to fundamentally alter the psychological underpinnings of strategy And, as Kenneth Payne notes, there is no “a priori reason” to expect that substituting artificial intelligence (AI) for human intelligence—that rapid, accurate, and unbiased information processing and responses—“will necessarily be safer.” Because AI limits the risks of using force, it could make conflict more acceptable to risk-averse states; because its speed and precision favor the offense, it could prove more conducive to aggression than deterrence; and because it shapes a host of processes and technologies rather than a single weapon or system, its effects on strategy (and the challenges of its regulation) could prove counter to deterrence.34

As noted in the original article, nuclear weapons helped sustain the “cold peace” during the Cold War—not because of their awesome destructive power but because that awesome destructive power helped buttress bipolarity.35 The simplicity of bipolarity and superpower balancing, in turn, limited “the dangers of miscalculation and overreaction.”36 Multipolarity, though, makes for complexity; additional great power players provide additional opportunities for miscalculation and overreaction. Given these conditions and the perceived “usability” of advanced conventional weapons relative to nuclear weapons, it seems likely that they will fall short of yielding “the kinds of political structures necessary to enhance deterrence.”37 To counter Posen, the diffusion of advanced conventional technology may well have cheapened the near-term costs and risks of going to war, and particularly engaging in hybrid warfare. Even if the US manages to avoid a direct confrontation with Russia or China, it seems increasingly plausible that it could be dragged into a conflict involving one or more of their allies.

#### US-China war goes nuclear.

[Caitlin Talmadge (10-15-2018), PhD in Political Science from MIT, BA in Government from Harvard, Professor of Security Studies at Georgetown University, “Beijing’s Nuclear Option,” Foreign Affairs, [https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-10-15/beijings-nuclear-option]//recut](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-10-15/beijings-nuclear-option%5d//recut) SLC PK

As China’s power has grown in recent years, so, too, has the risk of war with the United States. Under President Xi Jinping, China has increased its political and economic pressure on Taiwan and built military installations on coral reefs in the South China Sea, fueling Washington’s fears that Chinese expansionism will threaten U.S. allies and influence in the region. U.S. destroyers have transited the Taiwan Strait, to loud protests from Beijing. American policymakers have wondered aloud whether they should send an aircraft carrier through the strait as well. Chinese fighter jets have intercepted U.S. aircraft in the skies above the South China Sea. Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump has brought long-simmering economic disputes to a rolling boil.

A war between the two countries remains unlikely, but the prospect of a military confrontation—resulting, for example, from a Chinese campaign against Taiwan—no longer seems as implausible as it once did. And the odds of such a confrontation going nuclear are higher than most policymakers and analysts think.

Members of China’s strategic com­munity tend to dismiss such concerns. Likewise, U.S. studies of a potential war with China often exclude nuclear weapons from the analysis entirely, treating them as basically irrelevant to the course of a conflict. Asked about the issue in 2015, Dennis Blair, the former commander of U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific, estimated the likelihood of a U.S.-Chinese nuclear crisis as “somewhere between nil and zero.”

This assurance is misguided. If deployed against China, the Pentagon’s preferred style of conventional warfare would be a potential recipe for nuclear escalation. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States’ signature approach to war has been simple: punch deep into enemy territory in order to rapidly knock out the opponent’s key military assets at minimal cost. But the Pentagon developed this formula in wars against Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Serbia, none of which was a nuclear power.

China, by contrast, not only has nuclear weapons; it has also intermingled them with its conventional military forces, making it difficult to attack one without attacking the other. This means that a major U.S. military campaign targeting China’s conventional forces would likely also threaten its nuclear arsenal. Faced with such a threat, Chinese leaders could decide to use their nuclear weapons while they were still able to.

As U.S. and Chinese leaders navigate a relationship fraught with mutual suspicion, they must come to grips with the fact that a conventional war could skid into a nuclear confrontation. Although this risk is not high in absolute terms, its consequences for the region and the world would be devastating. As long as the United States and China continue to pursue their current grand strategies, the risk is likely to endure. This means that leaders on both sides should dispense with the illusion that they can easily fight a limited war. They should focus instead on managing or resolving the political, economic, and military tensions that might lead to a conflict in the first place.

#### Extinction – nuclear winter, crude oil amplifies, smoke covers the world

Snydera and Ruyle 17 (Brian F.Snydera and Leslie E. Ruyle, 12-15-2017, [Brian F. Snyder. Department of Environmental Science, Louisiana State University, United States. Leslie E. Ruyle. Center on Conflict and Development, Texas A&M University, United States]"The abolition of war as a goal of environmental policy," No Publication, [https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969717316431?via%3Dihub)//SLC](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969717316431?via%3Dihub)//CHS) PK

While the precise impacts of a hypothetical nuclear war are difficult to predict, the detonation of the world's nuclear weapons would plausibly kill all or nearly all humans on Earth and initiate a mass extinction event. There are a total of about 9400 nuclear warheads in active service around the world, with approximately 8300 of these weapons in U.S. and Russian arsenals (Kristensen and Norris, 2017a). Because of government secrecy, it is difficult to reliably estimate the total explosive power contained in these warheads, but in most cases, each warhead ranges between 100 and 1200 kt of TNT equivalent (for comparison, the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had yields of approximately 15–20 kt). The combined arsenals of the U.S. and Russia likely have a yield of at least 2–3 billion tons of TNT equivalent (Kristensen and Norris, 2017b,c). 2.1. Nuclear winter In the 1980s climate scientists used simple and early climate models to estimate the effects of large-scale nuclear wars on climate. The estimates they derived were catastrophic. For example, Turco et al. (1983) reported temperature reductions of 43 °C for 4 months in the Northern Hemisphere following nuclear war using the explosive power of 10 billion tons of TNT.1 As the cold war ended, interest in modelling the climate effects of nuclear war declined and some policy-makers considered the threat of nuclear winter to be either disproved or exaggerated (Martin, 1988). Toon et al. (2007) and Robock et al. (2007) reignited interest in the climate effects of nuclear war. Toon et al. (2008) modeled the effects of a medium scale nuclear war with a total explosive yield of 440 million tons of explosive yield (far less than current U.S. and Russian arsenals) and estimated global soot2 emissions of 180 Tg. Using a more conservative estimate of 150 Tg of soot, Toon et al. estimated that this emission would be sufficient to reduce global temperatures by about 8 °C and energy flux by 150 W/m2 ; for comparison, the cumulative greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere since the industrial revolution have increased energy flux by 3 W/m2 (Butler and Montzka, 2017). Robock et al. (2007) modeled a similar 150 Tg smoke emission and found similar results including temperature reduction of about 8 °C lasting for several years. Low temperatures reduced evapotranspiration and weakened the global hydrological cycle and Hadley cells. As a result, precipitation decreased globally by 45% with especially dramatic decreases in the agricultural areas of the United States. In the Northern Hemisphere, growing seasons would be shortened by about 100 days for about 3 years. This would preclude most food production over most of the world for several years. Mills et al. (2014) conducted a detailed analysis of the effects of a small (1.5 million ton) regional exchange lofting just 5 Tg of soot into the atmosphere. This war would be equivalent to an exchange of 100 Hiroshima-sized bombs between, for example, India, Pakistan, or China. Mills et al. found global temperature decreases of 1.6 °C. To our knowledge, no one has studied the effects of a multi-billion ton nuclear exchange using modern atmospheric models. If, as Toon et al. and Robock et al. suggest, a 440 million ton war results in temperature reductions of 8 °C for a decade and a 100 day reduction in the growing season, it is reasonable to assume that a one to five billion ton war would not be survivable for the majority of people on earth. However, as populations and population centers grow, the effects of nuclear wars on the biosphere will also grow. The consequences of nuclear winter increase as the amount of fuel (buildings, cars, biomass, liquid and solid fuels) added to a targeted area increase. As population centers grow and densify over time, the amount of soot added to the stratosphere as the result of any given nuclear exchange may increase (depending in part on building materials). As a result, the nuclear winter resulting from a 400 million ton yield global war in 2020 may be far more severe than if the same war occurred in 2000. Further, there are reasons to believe that the soot emissions from a hypothetical nuclear exchange are conservative because they focus on urban areas and often do not incorporate non-urban energy infrastructure. For example, if ignited and burned completely, the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) alone contains about 14.5 Tg of soot emissions.3 Including all crude held in U.S. commercial facilities, the potential soot emissions increase to 24 Tg. Thus, incorporating crude oil storage in the U.S. alone would increase soot generation estimates by about 16%. Similarly, nuclear war planners would be likely to target coal, oil and gas fields in the U.S., Russia, and their allies. This unaccounted for fuel could increase the total soot contribution to the atmosphere, potentially deepening the resulting nuclear winter. 2.2. Acute effects of particulate matter Studies of nuclear winter typically focus on the effects of smoke lofted into the stratosphere during nuclear firestorms. However, a larger proportion of smoke following nuclear war will be trapped in the troposphere where it would have significantly acute impacts on human and non-human species. Crutzen et al. (1984) calculated that following a major nuclear war (about 5 billion tons of explosives, roughly the combined U.S. and Russian deployed nuclear arms as of 2017) smoke would cover about 30–40% of the earth's surface with airborne smoke concentrations on the order of 5 mg/m3 . While initially this smoke would be composed of very small particles (b0.1 μm), the particles would rapidly coalesce into the 0.1 to 3 μm range, roughly consistent with the wellstudied PM2.5. For comparison, the EPA's National Ambient Air Quality standard for PM2.5 is 0.012 mg/m3 and as of 2017, the highest PM2.5 concentrations in Asia are typically around 0.3 to 1 mg/m3 .

### Solvency

#### The patent system for pandemic-related drugs is currently out of balance---there’s spurious over-patenting under the guise of innovation, which paradoxically hurts innovation by juicing profits. A temporary waiver in the U.S. for pandemics rebalance the system.

Brink **Lindsey 21**. Vice President, Niskanen Center; Writes for Brookings, “Why Intellectual Property and Pandemics Don’t Mix,” Brookings, June 3, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2021/06/03/why-intellectual-property-and-pandemics-dont-mix/>, RJP, **DebateDrills**.

When we take the longer view, we can see a fundamental mismatch between the policy design of intellectual property protection and the policy requirements of effective pandemic response. Although patent law, properly restrained, constitutes one important element of a well-designed national innovation system, the way it goes about encouraging technological progress is singularly ill-suited to the emergency conditions of a pandemic or other public health crisis. Securing a TRIPS waiver for COVID-19 vaccines and treatments would thus establish a salutary precedent that, in emergencies of this kind, governments should employ other, more direct means to incentivize the development of new drugs. Here is the basic bargain offered by patent law: encourage the creation of useful new ideas for the long run by slowing the diffusion of useful new ideas in the short run. The second half of the bargain, the half that imposes costs on society, comes from the temporary exclusive rights, or monopoly privileges, that a patent holder enjoys. Under U.S. patent law, for a period of 20 years nobody else can manufacture or sell the patented product without the permission of the patent holder. This allows the patent holder to block competitors from the market, or extract licensing fees before allowing them to enter, and consequently charge above-market prices to its customers. Patent rights thus slow the diffusion of a new invention by restricting output and raising prices.The imposition of these short-run costs, however, can bring net long-term benefits by sharpening the incentives to invent new products. In the absence of patent protection, the prospect of easy imitation by later market entrants can deter would-be innovators from incurring the up-front fixed costs of research and development. But with a guaranteed period of market exclusivity, inventors can proceed with greater confidence that they will be able to recoup their investment.For the tradeoff between costs and benefits to come out positive on net, patent law must strike the right balance. Exclusive rights should be valuable enough to encourage greater innovation, but not so easily granted or extensive in scope or term that this encouragement is outweighed by output restrictions on the patented product and discouragement of downstream innovations dependent on access to the patented technology.Unfortunately, the U.S. patent system at present is out of balance. Over the past few decades, the expansion of patentability to include software and business methods as well as a general relaxation of patenting requirements have led to wildly excessive growth in these temporary monopolies: the number of patents granted annually has [skyrocketed roughly fivefold](https://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/ac/ido/oeip/taf/us_stat.htm) since the early 1980s.

One unfortunate result has been the rise of “non-practicing entities,” better known as patent trolls: firms that make nothing themselves but buy up patent portfolios and monetize them through aggressive litigation. As a result, a law that is supposed to encourage innovation has turned into a [legal minefield](https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4620&context=clr) for many would-be innovators. In the pharmaceutical industry, firms have abused the law by piling up patents for trivial, therapeutically irrelevant “innovations” that allow them to [extend their monopolies](https://www.i-mak.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/I-MAK-Overpatented-Overpriced-Report.pdf) and keep raising prices long beyond the statutorily contemplated 20 years. Patent law is creating these unintended consequences because policymakers have been caught in an ideological fog that [conflates “intellectual property” with actual property rights](https://www.niskanencenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/LT_IPMisnomer-2-1.pdf) over physical objects. Enveloped in that fog, they regard any attempts to put limits on patent monopolies as attacks on private property and view ongoing expansions of patent privileges as necessary to keep innovation from grinding to a halt. In fact, patent law is a tool of regulatory policy with the usual tradeoffs between costs and benefits; like all tools, it can be misused, and as with all tools there are some jobs for which other tools are better suited. A well-designed patent system, in which benefits are maximized and costs kept to a minimum, is just one of various policy options that governments can employ to stimulate technological advance—including tax credits for R&D, prizes for targeted inventions, and direct government support.

#### The plan seamlessly shifts to a direct support model during pandemics, which allows pharma companies to profit and innovate while speeding up the process---that solves but avoids the innovation DA.

Brink **Lindsey 21**. Vice President, Niskanen Center; Writes for Brookings, “Why Intellectual Property and Pandemics Don’t Mix,” Brookings, June 3, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2021/06/03/why-intellectual-property-and-pandemics-dont-mix/>, RJP, **DebateDrills**.

**PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES AND DIRECT GOVERNMENT SUPPORT**

For pandemics and other public health emergencies, patents’ mix of costs and benefits is misaligned with what is needed for an effective policy response. The basic patent bargain, even when well struck, is to pay for more innovation down the road with slower diffusion of innovation today. In the context of a pandemic, that bargain is a bad one and should be rejected entirely. Here the imperative is to accelerate the diffusion of vaccines and other treatments, not slow it down. Giving drug companies the power to hold things up by blocking competitors and raising prices pushes in the completely wrong direction.

What approach to encouraging innovation should we take instead? How do we incentivize drug makers to undertake the hefty R&D costs to develop new vaccines without giving them exclusive rights over their production and sale? The most effective approach during a public health crisis is direct government support: public funding of R&D, advance purchase commitments by the government to buy large numbers of doses at set prices, and other, related payouts. And when we pay drug makers, we should not hesitate to pay generously, even extravagantly: we want to offer drug companies big profits so that they prioritize this work above everything else, and so that they are ready and eager to come to the rescue again the next time there’s a crisis.

It was direct support via Operation Warp Speed that made possible the astonishingly rapid development of COVID-19 vaccines and then facilitated a relatively rapid rollout of vaccine distribution (relative, that is, to most of the rest of the world). And it’s worth noting that a major reason for the faster rollout here and in the United Kingdom compared to the European Union was the latter’s [misguided penny-pinching](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/17/opinion/europe-vaccines-commission.html?smid=tw-share). The EU bargained hard with firms to keep vaccine prices low, and as a result their citizens ended up in the back of the queue as various supply line kinks were being ironed out. This is particularly ironic since the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was developed in Germany. As this fact underscores, the chief advantage of direct support isn’t to “get tough” with drug firms and keep a lid on their profits. Instead, it is to accelerate the end of the public health emergency by making sure drug makers profit handsomely from doing the right thing.

Patent law and direct support should be seen not as either-or alternatives but as complements that apply different incentives to different circumstances

and time horizons. Patent law provides a decentralized system for encouraging innovation. The government doesn’t presume to tell the industry which new drugs are needed; it simply incentivizes the development of whatever new drugs that pharmaceutical firms can come up with by offering them a temporary monopoly. It is important to note that patent law’s incentives offer no commercial guarantees. Yes, you can block other competitors for a number of years, but that still doesn’t ensure enough consumer demand for the new product to make it profitable. DIRECT SUPPORT MAKES PATENTS REDUNDANT The situation is different in a pandemic. Here the government knows exactly what it wants to incentivize: the creation of vaccines to prevent the spread of a specific virus and other drugs to treat that virus. Under these circumstances, the decentralized approach isn’t good enough. There is no time to sit back and let drug makers take the initiative on their own timeline. Instead, the government needs to be more involved to incentivize specific innovations now. As recompense for letting it call the shots (pardon the pun), the government sweetens the deal for drug companies by insulating them from commercial risk. If pharmaceutical firms develop effective vaccines and therapies, the government will buy large, predetermined quantities at prices set high enough to guarantee a healthy return.

#### Thus the plan: The United States of America ought to reduce intellectual property protections for the COVID-19 vaccine. The plan’s implemented through a TRIPS waiver for the U.S.

-- that’s Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech, Johnson & Johnson/Janssen

#### The plan bolsters the number of vaccines---arguments about supply and logistics are empirically disproven.

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Since consequentialist justifications treat the value of IP as purely instrumental, they are also vulnerable to counterarguments showing that a sought-after goal is not the sole or most important end. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we submit that the vaccinating the world is an overriding goal. With existing IP protections intact, the world has fallen well short of this goal. Current forecasts show that at the current pace, there will not be enough vaccines to cover the world’s population until 2023 or 2024.15 IP protections further frustrate the goal of universal access to vaccines by limiting who can manufacturer them. The WHO reports that 80% of global sales for COVID-19 vaccines come from five large multinational corporations.16 Increasing the number of manufacturers globally would not only increase supply, but reduce prices, making vaccines more affordable to LMICs. It would stabilise supply, minimising disruptions of the kind that occurred when India halted vaccine exports amidst a surge of COVID-19 cases.

It might be objected that waiving IP protections will not increase supply, because it takes years to establish manufacturing capacity. However, since the pandemic began, we have learnt it takes less time. Repurposing facilities and vetting them for safety and quality can often happen in 6 or 7months, about half the time previously thought.17 Since COVID-19 will not be the last pandemic humanity faces, expanding manufacturing capacity is also necessary preparation for future pandemics. Nkengasong, Director of the African Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, put the point bluntly, ‘Can a continent of 1.2billion people—projected to be 2.4billion in 30 years, where one in four people in the world will be African—continue to import 99% of its vaccine?’18

### FW

#### The standard is maximizing expected wellbeing.

#### Prefer it:

#### 1] Actor specificity:

#### A] Aggregation – every policy benefits some and harms others, which also means side constraints freeze action.

#### B] No act-omission distinction – choosing to omit is an act itself – governments decide not to act which means being presented with the aff creates a choice between two actions, neither of which is an omission

o/w

#### 2] Lexical pre-requisite: threats to bodily security preclude the ability for moral actors to effectively act upon other moral theories since they are in a constant state of crisis that inhibits the ideal moral conditions which other theories presuppose

#### 3] Extinction comes first!

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

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