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### Adv - democracy

#### The free press is at risk because of Indian laws – prioritizing objectivity is key to keep politicians accountable

Mukherjee 21 Aditya Mukherjee, senior journalist based in Delhi, 9-29-2021, "There are digital warriors who go out on a limb for truth and objectivity, writes Aditya Mukherjee," Free Press Journal, [https://www.freepressjournal.in/analysis/there-are-digital-warriors-who-go-out-on-a-limb-for-truth-and-objectivity-writes-aditya-mukherjee //](https://www.freepressjournal.in/analysis/there-are-digital-warriors-who-go-out-on-a-limb-for-truth-and-objectivity-writes-aditya-mukherjee%20//) ella

These portals stoutly defend freedom of expression and don’t shy from speaking the truth, as long as they have facts and data in their armoury. The kind of thought-provoking articles they publish twist our structured perpendiculars of comfort, and put things in perspective In these highly polarised times, it is never easy being a fearless journalist who burns with the precision of a laser beam to expose the dirty underbelly of our socio-political system. How would one define an ideal journalist in a democratic society? They are the quintessential truth-seekers, who shun ideological baggage of any kind, rise above their prejudices of caste and community, spurred on by the hunger for truth and objectivity. In their quest, they often find themselves in the crosshairs of the ruling establishment, but they soldier on, regardless. The disturbing and disconcerting portrait of a publicity-crazy journalist, Parkinson, in Graham Greene’s famous novel, A Burnt-Out Case, out to ruin the reputation of a well-known architect, may show this profession in an adverse light, but on the face of it, an average journalist is considered a purveyor of truth and a steely warrior determined to blow the lid off corruption, political double-speak, inefficiency and financial shenanigans. Gutsy online media portals Something of this nature is playing out in Indian journalism these days. And spearheading this rare revolution are not mainstream newspapers and electronic media, but gutsy and feisty online media portals who, despite financial limitations, are punching above their weight, depending only on themselves and their innate moral strength to swim all the way to the shore. Mainstream print media dispensed with hardcore investigative reporting long ago. If one thinks back to the tumultuous and golden era of Indian journalism in the 80s, the first thing that comes to mind is the Bofors scam, whose embers smoulder even after three decades. As the curious nation glommed on to this scam, newspapers such as The Indian Express and The Hindu took it upon themselves to do investigative stories on this controversy, unearthing startling facts with a rare resilience. No amount of political pressures or blandishments could deter them from their avowed objectives. Mainstream media plays safe However, these days, promoting hard-core journalism is anathema to most of the big media houses and also the monkey on their back as it would mean rubbing the establishment the wrong way and risking loss of advertisement revenues worth crores. That is why they play safe and stay away from unnecessary kerfuffle. They sell these ad-cluttered, well-packaged newspapers, more as a consumer product that has no room for controversy and which can give the readers a feel-good factor. The colourful supplements, filled with lifestyle stories, Bollywood and Hollywood-centric news, enable the readers to live in some Pollyanna blur. Mainstream media are comfortable in their own skins, moving the goalposts to balance journalism with revenue. Which means journalism that never makes a politician or controversial figures in high places squirm and uncomfortable with facts. Role usurped No wonder, the role of the print media in taking on the establishment head-on has now been usurped by digital portals, which are the crucible of fearless journalistic endeavours where the effort to get to the bottom of truth is not hamstrung by considerations of advertisement revenues. These websites have successfully established a template for fearless journalism and the need for political transparency. These portals stoutly defend freedom of expression and don’t shy from speaking the truth, as long as they have facts and data in their armoury. The kind of thought-provoking articles they publish twist our structured perpendiculars of comfort, and put things in perspective. More often than not, the efforts of these websites at defending their stories are labyrinthine. At times, they have to pay a heavy price for sticking to their opinion and for questioning the government’s policies consistently and constantly and without any fear. Take the case of the two online portals, Newsclick and Newslaundry. These are known to ask uncomfortable questions and call a spade a spade, often leaving the political class red-faced. The premises of both these portals were raided recently by the Enforcement Directorate which wanted to check their financial records. But it was clear that the main motive of the raid was something else -- to silence critical journalism and harass those who do not toe the official line. The editors of several online portals are often slapped with legal notices and defamation suits for daring to publish a well-researched story on a political controversy, or on a powerful and influential industrialist or politician. But despite such threats of defamation suits and intimidation, these online portals continue to go out on a limb for truth and objectivity, becoming a fly in the ointment of the politicians and other vested interests trying to muzzle voices of intrepid journalists. It is high time all right-thinking individuals extended their moral support to these websites struggling to keep independent journalism alive.

#### Biased reporting that advocates for the government undermines Indian democracy and leads to populism and backsliding

**Mohan***, Jahani* **2021** *Media bias and democracy in india • stimson center*. Stimson Center. (2021, July 2). Retrieved March 4, 2022, from https://www.stimson.org/2021/media-bias-and-democracy-in-india/ // sosa

As the COVID-19 pandemic rages out of control in India, many are rightly focusing on the content of stories on the death toll and months of lockdown. The lack of journalistic integrity behind some of the stories deepens this grim situation. In April, [reports emerged](https://www.medianama.com/2021/04/223-twitter-mp-minister-censor/) that, at the request of the Indian government, Twitter censored 52 tweets criticizing the government’s handling of the pandemic. Meanwhile, pro-government TV channels [blamed](https://www.dw.com/en/covid-why-is-india-censoring-media-during-public-health-crisis/a-57353096) the farmers’ protests for limited oxygen supplies for COVID-19 patients, though supplies were [actually scarce](https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2021/05/05/989461528/why-is-india-running-out-of-oxygen) due to poor public health infrastructure. This reporting is not only misleading and traumatic to those affected by the pandemic, but also poses a major threat to India’s vibrant democracy.

Even before the pandemic, media bias in India existed across the largest newspapers throughout the country, and political forces shape this bias. For example, funds from the government are critical to many newspapers’ operations and budgets, and the current Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) government has previously [refused to advertise](https://www.reuters.com/article/india-media-idINKCN1TT1R6) with newspapers that do not support its initiatives. This pressure leads media to endorse government policies, creating unbalanced reporting where media bias can affect political behavior in favor of the incumbent. Many media outlets enjoy a symbiotic relationship with the government, in turn receiving attention, funding, and prominence. These trends damage India’s democracy and also put journalists critical of the government in danger, threatening their right to physical safety.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated media bias in India, it is hardly a new phenomenon. A [study](https://globalgiants.com/archives/2019/05/21/) of 30 Indian newspapers and 41 Indian TV channels with the largest viewership rates in the country confirms the existence of rampant media bias during a two-year period from 2017 to 2018.[1](https://southasianvoices.org/media-bias-and-democracy-in-india/#easy-footnote-bottom-1-14657)

The study relies on rating editorial articles that focus on religious, gender, and caste issues as either liberal, neutral, or conservative; and then compiling these scores by each newspaper to find the overall bias in each outlet. The results unsurprisingly and unfortunately show the consistent existence of media bias—for example, except for eight newspapers, the papers all express biases far from neutral. And this bias consistently correlates with viewers in India expressing similarly biased social, economic, and security attitudes.

What this suggests is either that biases in the media shape viewer attitudes or Indians are viewing outlets that align with their pre-existing views. Meanwhile, political parties capitalize on this bias to influence public attitudes and further their own power. The BJP [spends](https://factly.in/the-central-government-spent-10000-crore-on-publicity-in-the-last-16-years/) almost USD $140 million on publicity per year, with 43 percent of this expenditure focusing specifically on print ads in newspapers. Government advertisements serve as a financial lever for influencing media content and public opinion. For example, during the year leading to the 2019 elections, newspapers that received more advertisement revenue from the BJP were likelier to espouse more conservative ideology and to have more conservative readers.

This ability of media bias to influence political support in India can contribute significantly to democratic backsliding by harming journalists, preventing freedom of expression and government accountability, and influencing voters. Media bias in itself causes democratic backsliding because the media neither holding the government accountable nor informing the public about policies that strengthen the incumbent’s power can increase authoritarian practices.

In addition, government efforts to constrain the media harms journalists, undemocratically violating citizens’ rights and physical safety. Freedom House [rates](https://freedomhouse.org/country/india/freedom-world/2021) India as only two on a four-point scale for whether there is a “free and independent media,” because of “attacks on press freedom…under the Modi government.” In fact, the government [imprisoned several journalists](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jul/31/india-arrests-50-journalists-in-clampdown-on-critics-of-covid-19-response) in 2020 who reported critically on Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi’s response to the pandemic. The crackdown on journalists engendered an unsafe environment for free reporting, a feature of many authoritarian states.

A biased media also prevents citizens from receiving information that might be essential to public wellbeing by filtering information through a lens that supports government interests first. When the BJP cracked down on coverage of COVID-19 last year, journalists were [unable to disseminate](https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/covid-19-and-shrinking-press-freedom-in-india/) critical information to Indians. This included where migrants suffering from the sudden lockdown could receive necessities—information that could save lives. Notably, these crackdowns also meant an absence of reporting criticizing the government’s response to the pandemic. In a democratic society, a critical press is essential for holding the government accountable for its actions and motivating it to change its practices.

Finally, media bias plays an influencing role at the voting booth as propaganda can skew voter decisions and perceptions of what is true. During India’s 2014 general elections, the BJP advertised more than the Congress Party and voters exposed to more media were [likelier](https://www.jstor.org/stable/24480739?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents) to vote for the BJP. To influence voters, media bias often utilizes inflammatory messaging to convince more people to vote, selective information to bias what voters believe about the efficacy of the candidates, and appeasement to convince voters that they will personally benefit from voting a certain way. For example, a TimesNow interview of PM Modi before the 2019 elections [made it seem](https://scroll.in/article/865942/fact-check-what-narendra-modi-told-timesnow-and-what-the-data-actually-shows) that Modi’s economic policies—widely criticized as ineffectual—were successful.

#### A declining free press is the biggest threat to global democracy

Repucci 19 Sarah Repucci, Senior Director for Research and Analysis, 2019, "Media Freedom: A Downward Spiral," Freedom House, [https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-and-media/2019/media-freedom-downward-spiral //](https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-and-media/2019/media-freedom-downward-spiral%20//) ella

In some of the most influential democracies in the world, populist leaders have overseen concerted attempts to throttle the independence of the media sector. While the threats to global media freedom are real and concerning in their own right, their impact on the state of democracy is what makes them truly dangerous. Experience has shown, however, that press freedom can rebound from even lengthy stints of repression when given the opportunity. The basic desire for democratic liberties, including access to honest and fact-based journalism, can never be extinguished. The fundamental right to seek and disseminate information through an independent press is under attack, and part of the assault has come from an unexpected source. Elected leaders in many democracies, who should be press freedom’s staunchest defenders, have made explicit attempts to silence critical media voices and strengthen outlets that serve up favorable coverage. The trend is linked to a global decline in democracy itself: The erosion of press freedom is both a symptom of and a contributor to the breakdown of other democratic institutions and principles, a fact that makes it especially alarming. According to Freedom House’s Freedom in the World data, media freedom has been deteriorating around the world over the past decade, with new forms of repression taking hold in open societies and authoritarian states alike. The trend is most acute in Europe, previously a bastion of well-established freedoms, and in Eurasia and the Middle East, where many of the world’s worst dictatorships are concentrated. If democratic powers cease to support media independence at home and impose no consequences for its restriction abroad, the free press corps could be in danger of virtual extinction. Experience has shown, however, that press freedom can rebound from even lengthy stints of repression when given the opportunity. The basic desire for democratic liberties, including access to honest and fact-based journalism, can never be extinguished, and it is never too late to renew the demand that these rights be granted in full. Attacks on Press Freedom in Democracies In some of the most influential democracies in the world, large segments of the population are no longer receiving unbiased news and information. This is not because journalists are being thrown in jail, as might occur in authoritarian settings. Instead, the media have fallen prey to more nuanced efforts to throttle their independence. Common methods include government-backed ownership changes, regulatory and financial pressure, and public denunciations of honest journalists. Governments have also offered proactive support to friendly outlets through measures such as lucrative state contracts, favorable regulatory decisions, and preferential access to state information. The goal is to make the press serve those in power rather than the public. The problem has arisen in tandem with right-wing populism, which has undermined basic freedoms in many democratic countries. Populist leaders present themselves as the defenders of an aggrieved majority against liberal elites and ethnic minorities whose loyalties they question, and argue that the interests of the nation—as they define it—should override democratic principles like press freedom, transparency, and open debate. Among Free countries in Freedom House’s Freedom in the World report, 19 percent (16 countries) have endured a reduction in their press freedom scores over the past five years. This is consistent with a key finding of Freedom in the World—that democracies in general are undergoing a decline in political rights and civil liberties. It has become painfully apparent that a free press can never be taken for granted, even when democratic rule has been in place for decades. Viktor Orbán’s government in Hungary and Aleksandar Vučić’s administration in Serbia have had great success in snuffing out critical journalism, blazing a trail for populist forces elsewhere. Both leaders have consolidated media ownership in the hands of their cronies, ensuring that the outlets with the widest reach support the government and smear its perceived opponents. In Hungary, where the process has advanced much further, nearly 80 percent of the media are owned by government allies. \* Cultivation of progovernment media is spreading to neighboring states. The leader of the far-right Freedom Party of Austria, until recently part of that country’s ruling coalition, was caught on video attempting to collude with Russians to purchase the largest national newspaper and infuse its coverage with partisan bias. Score declines linked to economic manipulation of media—including cases in which the government directs advertising to friendly outlets or encourages business allies to buy those that are critical—were more common across Europe over the past five years than in other parts of the world. Such tactics of influence and interference are a relatively recent phenomenon on the continent, which has generally displayed strong support for press freedom since the fall of the Berlin Wall 30 years ago. In Israel, one of the few democracies in the Middle East, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly excoriated investigative reporters and now faces corruption charges for allegedly offering regulatory favors to two major media firms in exchange for positive coverage. Although Netanyahu has resisted efforts to formally indict and try him on these charges, the evidence suggests that the prime minister was willing to sacrifice press freedom in order to maintain political power. Many voters apparently accepted this tradeoff in the April 2019 elections, putting Netanyahu’s party and its allies in a position to form a new ruling coalition. India, the world’s most populous democracy, is also sending signals that holding the government accountable is not part of the press’s responsibility. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party has supported campaigns to discourage speech that is “antinational,” and government-aligned thugs have raided critical journalists’ homes and offices. The media have become widely flattering of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who won reelection last month, amid allegations that the government issues directives on how the press should cover his activities and intimidates journalists who push back. The government has also been selective in the allocation of television licenses, effectively excluding unfriendly outlets from the airwaves. In perhaps the most concerning development of recent years, press freedom has come under unusual pressure in the United States, the world’s leading democratic power. Although key news organizations remain strong and continue to produce vigorous reporting on those in office, President Donald Trump’s continual vilification of the press has seriously exacerbated an ongoing erosion of public confidence in the mainstream media. Among other steps, the president has repeatedly threatened to strengthen libel laws, revoke the licenses of certain broadcasters, and damage media owners’ other business interests. The US constitution provides robust protections against such actions, but President Trump’s public stance on press freedom has had a tangible impact on the global landscape. Journalists around the world now have less reason to believe that Washington will come to their aid if their basic rights are violated. Fueling a Global Decline The breakdown of global press freedom is closely related to the broader decline of democracy that Freedom House has tracked for the past 13 years. Although the press is not always the first institution to be attacked when a country’s leadership takes an antidemocratic turn, repression of free media is a strong indication that other political rights and civil liberties are in danger. Assaults on media independence are frequently associated with power grabs by new or incumbent leaders, or with entrenched regimes’ attempts to crush perceived threats to their control. Over the past five years, countries that were already designated as Not Free in Freedom House’s Freedom in the World report were also those most likely to suffer a decline in their press freedom scores, with 28 percent of Not Free countries experiencing such a drop. Partly Free countries were almost equally likely to experience a gain as a decline in press freedom, reflecting the volatility of these middle performers and the complex forces influencing their trajectory. The worsening records of Not Free states, combined with the negative trend among Free countries, have driven the overall decline in global press freedom. While populist leaders in democracies seek to secure and build on their gains by taming the press, established autocratic governments continue to tighten the screws on dissenting voices, as any breach in their media dominance threatens to expose official wrongdoing or debunk official narratives. In Russia in 2018, authorities moved to block the popular messaging application Telegram after the company refused to hand over its encryption keys to security officials. The government in Cameroon shut down internet service in the restive Anglophone region for most of last year, a heavy-handed reaction to protests and a nascent insurgency stemming from long-standing discrimination against the large Anglophone minority. In Myanmar, two Reuters journalists were sentenced to seven years in prison after a flawed trial in which the court ignored plain evidence that they had been entrapped to halt their investigation of military atrocities against the Rohingya minority; although they were recently pardoned, they were not exonerated.

#### **Backsliding undermines institutional checks on Indo-Pak escalation. The level of democracy matters for conflict risks.**

Alizada & Boese et al. 21 [Nazifa Alizada, Dr. Vanessa Boese, Prof. Staffan Lindberg, Martin Lundstedt, Natalia Natsika, and Shreeya Pillai – University of Gothenburg, Varieties of Democracy Institute: V-Dem Policy Brief, No. 30, May 2021. “Does Democracy Bring International and Domestic Peace and Security?” <https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/1a/98/1a98c2d0-887e-4857-8f0d-3a0f4139f564/pb30.pdf>] brett

A large body of scientific evidence demonstrates that human security, as well as international and domestic peace are strongly and positively related to democracy. The democratic peace axiom – that democracies do not fight wars against each other, and that the spread of democracy reduces armed disputes and wars – is soundly confirmed by a wealth of rigorous studies (e.g., Altman et al., 2020; Hegre et al., 2020; Hegre, 2014; Hegre, 2008). A recent study using the V-Dem democracy indices shows that there is no case of a war in any pair of states whose democratic level was above 0.61 on the V-Dem electoral democracy index (Altman et al., 2020).

Being part of a region with high levels of democracy also matters. Two states located in a region with low levels of democracy are 70% more likely to have a fatal armed conflict than a pair of states placed in a region with high levels (Altman et al., 2020). Consequently, the current wave of autocratization should be expected to lead to a world with more international conflicts, with devastating consequences for human security.

Hegre et al. (2020) demonstrate that vertical (free and fair multiparty elections), horizontal (institutional constraints on the executive), and diagonal (civil society) accountability mechanisms all contribute to lowering the risk of interstate war. For example, this means that after India turned into an electoral autocracy (Alizada et al., 2021), the statistical odds of a militarized dispute with at least one death between **India and Pakistan** is now 3 times higher than 10 years ago.

A series of scientific studies demonstrate that democracies are also less prone to civil war and domestic volatility compared to autocracies, especially long-term, institutionalized democracies. The key is that democracies are better at absorbing and channeling discontent through legal institutional means and accountability mechanisms that in turn lower the risk of domestic conflict (Fjelde et al., 2021; Hegre et al., 2001; Hegre, 2014).

Yet, it is vital to recognize that semi-democracies and countries with recent transitions tend to be more volatile with a higher risk of civil and international conflict. Such a regime is around four times more likely to experience domestic unrest compared to a well-established democracy. In addition, the risk of civil war in a regime transitioning from an autocracy to a semi-democracy is nine times higher compared to before the transition (Hegre et al., 2001). That is why long-term strategies toward stabilizing and improving the quality of newly established democracies are critical.

#### Even limited Indo-Pak nuclear war causes extinction.

Trevithick and Rogoway ’19 [Joseph and Tyler; February 27; Military Analyst, M.A. in Conflict Resolution from Georgetown University, B.A. in the History and Policy of International Relations at Carnegie-Mellon University; Defense Journalist; The Drive, “Yes, India And Pakistan Could End The World As We Know It Through A Nuclear Exchange,” <https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/26674/yes-india-and-pakistan-could-end-the-world-as-we-know-it-through-a-nuclear-exchange>] brett

A global threat

India and Pakistan's nuclear arsenals are tiny compared to those of the [United States and Russia](http://thedrive.com/the-war-zone/26013/russia-says-its-own-new-weapons-are-exempt-after-accusing-u-s-of-violating-nuclear-arms-deal), and these weapons are focused primarily on deterring each other, but that does not mean they're purely regional threats. Unlike conventional weapons, nuclear weapons create lasting and far-reaching effects that scientists have posited could upend life on Earth if warring parties were to use them in sufficient numbers.

[In 2012](http://climate.envsci.rutgers.edu/pdf/RobockToonSAD.pdf), Alan Robock, a distinguished professor in the Department of Environmental  Sciences and Associate Director of the Center for Environmental Prediction at Rutgers University, and Owen Brian Toon, a professor in the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences and a research associate at  the Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics at the University of Colorado, Boulder, argued that it might not take a large amount of nuclear weapons to create a scenario commonly known as "[Nuclear Winter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_winter)."

In general, this hypothesized event occurs when smoke and soot from nuclear explosions block significant amounts of sunlight from reaching the earth's surface, leading to a precipitous drop in temperatures that results in mass crop failure and widespread famine.

Robcock and Toon summarized their findings, which were based in part on their previous work, in an article in the Bulletin of The Atomic Scientists, [writing](http://climate.envsci.rutgers.edu/pdf/RobockToonSAD.pdf):

"Even a 'small' nuclear war between India and Pakistan, with each country detonating 50 Hiroshima-size atom bombs – only about 0.03 percent of the global nuclear arsenal's explosive power – as airbursts in urban areas, could produce so much smoke that temperatures would fall below those of the [Little Ice Age](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Ice_Age) of the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries, shortening the growing season around the world and threatening the global food supply. Furthermore, there would be massive ozone depletion, allowing more ultraviolet radiation to reach Earth's surface. Recent studies predict that agricultural production in parts of the United States and China would decline by about 20 percent for four years, and by 10 percent for a decade.

The bomb the United States dropped on Hiroshima Japan, known as [Little Boy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Boy), was an inefficient and essentially experimental design with a yield of around 15 kilotons. The reported results from [Indian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_nuclear_weapons_tests_of_India) and Pakistani nuclear testing indicate that both countries can meet this threshold and both countries' weapons programs have almost certainly matured in the decades since.

In previous studies, Robcock, working with others, postulated that temperature changes could begin within 10 days of a limited nuclear exchange and the effects from the detonations of 100 nuclear weapons in the 15-kiloton class would directly result in the deaths of [at least 20 million people](http://www.nucleardarkness.org/warconsequences/fivemilliontonsofsmoke/). The second order impacts would be even worse in the years that followed.

In 2014, Michael Mills and Julia Lee-Taylor, both then working at the federally-funded National Center for Atmospheric Research's (NCAR) Earth System Laboratory, authored another paper with Robcock and Toon. This [study concluded](https://web.archive.org/web/20140308191334/http:/acd.ucar.edu/~mmills/pubs/2014_EarthsFuture_Mills_et_al.pdf) again that detonation of 100 15-kiloton yield bombs in a purely regional conflict would result in "multi-decadal global cooling" and "would put significant pressures on global food supplies and could trigger a global nuclear famine."

It is important to note that[critics have questioned](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_winter#Critical_response_to_the_more_modern_papers) whether the Nuclear Winter concept relies on too many assumptions and would ever actually occur. At the center of many of these rebuttals are debates about whether the nuclear explosions would truly create the amount of smoke and soot necessary for major climate change, as well as the specific conditions for those particles to remain in the atmosphere for a prolonged period of time.

The studies here do indicate significant impacts based on a relatively limited number of nuclear detonations of smaller yield devices, though. But even if the impacts are less pronounced than projected in this particular scenario, they could be far more severe if India and Pakistan were to use a larger number weapons and/or ones of higher yields, which both belligerents readily have.

In addition, Nuclear Winter is just one of the potential things that might happen following a nuclear exchange between the longtime foes. A detonation of dozens of nuclear weapons, even small ones, would throw hazardous nuclear fallout [into the air](http://thedrive.com/the-war-zone/19450/u-s-training-for-arctic-nuclear-satellite-disaster-amid-russian-weapons-developments) that, depending on the weather pattern, could carry that material [far and wide](https://futureoflife.org/background/us-nuclear-targets/?cn-reloaded=1#nukemap), causing both near- and short-term health impacts. The various [ground zeroes](https://nuclearsecrecy.com/nukemap/) themselves would be irritated and potentially hazardous for many years to come.

Depending on where the detonations occur, a nuclear exchange could potentially cut people off from critical water and food supplies, putting increased and potentially unsustainable strains on uncontaminated areas.  After the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, situated in Ukraine, [melted down and exploded](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chernobyl_disaster) in 1986, authorities established a 1,000 square mile restricted access "[exclusion zone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chernobyl_Exclusion_Zone)" that remains in place today.

There would also be a major danger of second-order "spillover" effects, as individuals fled affected areas, putting economic and political strains on neighboring regions. This could inflame existing tensions not directly related to the inter-state conflict between India or Pakistan or lead to all new and potentially violent competition for what might already be limited resources. India has already threatened to [weaponize water access](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/21/world/asia/india-pakistan-water-kashmir.html) in its latest spat with the Pakistanis.

Any serious impacts on food and water supplies, or other economic upheavals as a direct or indirect result of the conflict, would have cascading impact across South Asia and beyond, as well. The very threat of a potential India-Pakistan war of any kind already caused [some negative reactions](https://www.cnbc.com/2019/02/27/indian-air-force-plane-crashes-in-kashmir-says-indian-police-official.html) in regional financial markets. Those markets would certainly collapse after an unprecedented nuclear exchange actually occurred, and that is before the long-term physical impacts of such an event would even manifest themselves.

Overall, we are talking about a sudden and dramatic geopolitical, financial, and environmental shift that would change our reality in a matter of hours. Even then, the darkness, both figuratively and literally, that could propagate over the weeks, months, and years would be far more damaging.

How great is the risk?

So far, India and Pakistan have not made any clear indications that the fighting is close to crossing their nuclear thresholds. Pakistan's warnings about the [risks of escalation](http://thedrive.com/the-war-zone/26642/pakistan-promises-retaliation-makes-nuclear-threats-after-indian-jets-bomb-its-territory) seem more calculated to try and prompt India to back down.

India itself has a so-called "no first use" policy, which means it has publicly pledged to use its nuclear weapons only in retaliation to a nuclear strike. However, experts have increasingly called into question whether this is truly the case and whether India might be developing delivery systems more suited to a first strike should there be a need to shift policies.

Pakistan, however, does not have a no first use policy and has insisted on its right to employ nuclear weapons to defend itself even in the face of purely conventional threat. Pakistani officials have, in the past, [specifically cited this policy](https://www.cfr.org/event/promoting-us-pakistan-relations-future-challenges-and-opportunities) as way of deterring India, which has a much larger and in some cases more advanced conventional force, and preventing larger wars.

The concern, then, is that this policy appears to have failed, at least to some degree, with India's strike on undisputed Pakistani territory on Feb. 26, 2019. India, however, did not target Pakistani forces in that instance and exchanges between the two countries have been limited, at least so far, to the disputed Jammu and Kashmir region, where violent skirmishes occur semi-regularly without precipitating a larger confrontation.

We can only hope that the two countries will find a diplomatic solution to this latest conflict and avoid any further escalation. If things were to spiral out of control and lead to the use of nuclear weapons, it would be something that would threaten all of humanity.

#### **Democracy key to US hegemony**

Ashraf 19 Nussaiba Ashraf, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University, Giza, Egypt, “Revisiting international relations legacy on hegemony The decline of American hegemony from comparative perspectives”, 8-18-2019, <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/REPS-05-2019-0061/full/pdf?title=revisiting-international-relations-legacy-on-hegemony-the-decline-of-american-hegemony-from-comparative-perspectives> // ella

The realist perspective of hegemony The concept of hegemony in classical realism assumes a status of power imbalance in the international system. One country, defined by its possession of material power, has the advantage over the rest of states, enabling it to exercise leadership or domination over this international system (Giplin, 1981, War and change in world politics). This inherently grants the hegemonic state a great capacity for coercion, influence and control over the international system structure and, consequently, the international behavior of its constituent units (Goldstone, 1987). Thus, the unipolar international order defines the system of hegemony for the realists. Hegemonic stability is considered one of the most important realist contributions to hegemony analysis. The theory assumes that the international system is likely to remain stable with the existence of one hegemonic state. Furthermore, the fall of this hegemonic state or the decline in its hegemony reduces the chances of stability in the international system (kindelberger, 1973). The theory of hegemonic stability assumed that, the decline of hegemonic power would be accompanied by the rise of a new competitor, the prospect of war will increase, and the emergence of a new regime will result from the outbreak of a world war or a hegemonic war between the previous hegemonic state and the rising competitor, creating a new system of hegemony (Giplin, 1988, The theory of hegemonic war). The realist analysis of hegemony explained how a state rises to the hegemonic position in the international system, and clarified the mechanisms and relationship between the rising and declining hegemonic powers. However, realism was heavily criticized for being limited by defining a hegemonic state primarily on a materialistic dimension of power, being the sole indicator for a state’s survival as a leader of the international system or its decline. This alienates non-material dimensions of hegemony, such as cultural dimensions, in favor of material ones – particularly military and economic dimensions. In addition, the realistic interpretation of hegemony was criticized for focusing on State – specifically superpowers – as the only actor capable of establishing a hegemonic system. Therefore, neglecting the role of other actors in influencing and building global hegemony. In an attempt to analyze the relationship between system structure and states strategies, Strategic hedging theory (Tessman and Wolfe, 2011; Tessman, 2012; Wolfe, 2013) offered an explanation to the behavior of second tire states -like China and Russia- against the system leader, in cases where the international system witnesses a change in its structure; when the previously unipolar system is going through a process of power de-concentration and the hegemonic power is declining (Tessman, 2012). The theory aims at finding a balance between soft and hard balancing by examining the strategies followed by second tire states (the hedging states, which adopt a specific behavior against the system leader where they attempt to improve their competitive ability [military and economic] while avoiding direct confrontation with the system leader, to achieve their own security) (Salman and Geeraerts, 2015)Hegemony and international systems may be complementary, or even to a certain extent, an alternative to each other: both work to make agreements possible and help facilitate compliance with rules (Keohane, 1984). In this context, John Ikenberry emphasized this idea of institutionalism, which was based on the liberal and constitutional nature of American hegemony. The global system governed by American-led liberal hegemony, depends on a cooperative and diplomatic solution to conflict through institutions governed by international rules and regulations (Ikenberry, 1998). The end of the Cold War, marked the emergence of the concept of “global governance” to reflect this international liberal understanding of “good hegemony” coordinated by major powers with the help of supra-national organizations and transnational civil society (Ikenberry, 1999). Therefore, neo-liberalism has succeeded in shifting the analysis on hegemony from focusing on the subject of hegemony to analyzing the conditions of hegemony and its mechanisms of action, where global hegemony from a liberal perspective relates to international leadership coordinated through multilateral norms, and institutions. In this context, direct military and diplomatic coercion can be employed by the hegemonic power, not as a general rule but as an exception.

#### Leadership ensures military overmatch but decline emboldens rivals and causes miscalc and arms races that escalate.

Brands 18 [Hal, Henry Kissinger Distinguished Professor at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies and a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments." American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump." Page 129-133]

Since World War II, the United States has had a military second to none. Since the Cold War, America has committed to having overwhelming military primacy. The idea, as George W. Bush declared in 2002, that America must possess “strengths beyond challenge” has featured in every major U.S. strategy document for a quarter century; it has also been reflected in concrete terms.6

From the early 1990s, for example, the United States consistently accounted for around 35 to 45 percent of world defense spending and maintained peerless global power-projection capabilities.7 Perhaps more important, U.S. primacy was also unrivaled in key overseas strategic regions—Europe, East Asia, the Middle East. From thrashing Saddam Hussein’s million-man Iraqi military during Operation Desert Storm, to deploying—with impunity—two carrier strike groups off Taiwan during the China-Taiwan crisis of 1995– 96, Washington has been able to project military power superior to anything a regional rival could employ even on its own geopolitical doorstep.

This military dominance has constituted the hard-power backbone of an ambitious global strategy. After the Cold War, U.S. policymakers committed to averting a return to the unstable multipolarity of earlier eras, and to perpetuating the more favorable unipolar order. They committed to building on the successes of the postwar era by further advancing liberal political values and an open international economy, and to suppressing international scourges such as rogue states, nuclear proliferation, and catastrophic terrorism. And because they recognized that military force remained the ultima ratio regum, they understood the centrality of military preponderance.

Washington would need the military power necessary to underwrite worldwide alliance commitments. It would have to preserve substantial overmatch versus any potential great-power rival. It must be able to answer the sharpest challenges to the international system, such as Saddam’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 or jihadist extremism after 9/11. Finally, because prevailing global norms generally reflect hard-power realities, America would need the superiority to assure that its own values remained ascendant. It was impolitic to say that U.S. strategy and the international order required “strengths beyond challenge,” but it was not at all inaccurate.

American primacy, moreover, was eminently affordable. At the height of the Cold War, the United States spent over 12 percent of GDP on defense. Since the mid-1990s, the number has usually been between 3 and 4 percent.8 In a historically favorable international environment, Washington could enjoy primacy—and its geopolitical fruits—on the cheap.

Yet U.S. strategy also heeded, at least until recently, the fact that there was a limit to how cheaply that primacy could be had. The American military did shrink significantly during the 1990s, but U.S. officials understood that if Washington cut back too far, its primacy would erode to a point where it ceased to deliver its geopolitical benefits. Alliances would lose credibility; the stability of key regions would be eroded; rivals would be emboldened; international crises would go unaddressed. American primacy was thus like a reasonably priced insurance policy. It required nontrivial expenditures, but protected against far costlier outcomes.9 Washington paid its insurance premiums for two decades after the Cold War. But more recently American primacy and strategic solvency have been imperiled.

THE DARKENING HORIZON For most of the post–Cold War era, the international system was— by historical standards—remarkably benign. Dangers existed, and as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, demonstrated, they could manifest with horrific effect. But for two decades after the Soviet collapse, the world was characterized by remarkably low levels of great-power competition, high levels of security in key theaters such as Europe and East Asia, and the comparative weakness of those “rogue” actors—Iran, Iraq, North Korea, al-Qaeda—who most aggressively challenged American power. During the 1990s, some observers even spoke of a “strategic pause,” the idea being that the end of the Cold War had afforded the United States a respite from normal levels of geopolitical danger and competition. Now, however, the strategic horizon is darkening, due to four factors.

First, great-power military competition is back. The world’s two leading authoritarian powers—China and Russia—are seeking regional hegemony, contesting global norms such as nonaggression and freedom of navigation, and developing the military punch to underwrite these ambitions. Notwithstanding severe economic and demographic problems, Russia has conducted a major military modernization emphasizing nuclear weapons, high-end conventional capabilities, and rapid-deployment and special operations forces— and utilized many of these capabilities in conflicts in Ukraine and Syria.10 China, meanwhile, has carried out a buildup of historic proportions, with constant-dollar defense outlays rising from US$26 billion in 1995 to US$226 billion in 2016.11 Ominously, these expenditures have funded development of power-projection and antiaccess/area denial (A2/AD) tools necessary to threaten China’s neighbors and complicate U.S. intervention on their behalf. Washington has grown accustomed to having a generational military lead; Russian and Chinese modernization efforts are now creating a far more competitive environment.

#### The best studies confirm our impact – err on the side of a consensus of empirical research – our evidence assumes every skeptic.

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Consistency with influential relevant theories lends credence to the expectation that US security commitments actually can shape the strategic environment as deep engagement presupposes. But it is far from conclusive. Not all analysts endorse the theories we discussed in chapter 5. These theories make strong assumptions that states generally act rationally and focus primarily on security. Allowing misperceptions, emotions, domestic politics, desire for status, or concern for honor into the picture might alter the verdict on the strategy’s net expected effects. And to model the strategy’s expected effects we had to simplify things by selecting two mechanisms— assurance and deterrence— and examining their effects independently, thus missing potentially powerful positive interactions between them.

This chapter moves beyond theory to examine patterns of evidence. If the theoretical arguments about the security effects of deep engagement are right, what sort of evidence should we see? Two major bodies of evidence are most important: general empirical findings concerning the strategy’s key mechanisms and regionally focused research.

General Patterns of Evidence Three key questions about US security provision have received the most extensive analysis. First, do alliances such as those sustained by the United States actually deter war and increase security? Second, does such security provision actually hinder nuclear proliferation? And third, does limiting proliferation actually increase security?

Deterrence Effectiveness The determinants of deterrence success and failure have attracted scores of quantitative and case study tests. Much of the case study work yields a cautionary finding: that deterrence is much harder in practice than in theory, because standard models assume away the complexities of human psychology and domestic politics that tend to make some states hard to deter and might cause deterrence policies to backfire. 1 Many quantitative findings, mean- while, are mutually contradictory or are clearly not relevant to extended deterrence. But some relevant results receive broad support:

* Alliances generally do have a deterrent effect. In a study spanning nearly two centuries, Johnson and Leeds found “support for the hypothesis that defensive alliances deter the initiation of disputes.” They conclude that “defensive alliances lower the probability of international conflict and are thus a good policy option for states seeking to maintain peace in the world.” Sechser and Fuhrmann similarly find that formal defense pacts with nuclear states have significant deterrence benefits. 2 3
* The overall balance of military forces (including nuclear) between states does not appear to influence deterrence; the local balance of military forces in the specific theater in which deterrence is actually practiced, however, is key. 4
* Forward- deployed troops enhance the deterrent effect of alliances with overseas allies. 5
* Strong mutual interests and ties enhance deterrence. 6
* Case studies strongly ratify the theoretical expectation that it is easier to defend a given status quo than to challenge it forcefully: compellence (sometimes termed “coercion” or “coercive diplomacy”) is extremely hard.

The most important finding to emerge from this voluminous research is that alliances— especially with nuclear- armed allies like the United States— actually work in deterring conflict. This is all the more striking in view of the fact that what scholars call “selection bias” probably works against it. The United States is more inclined to offer— and protégés to seek— alliance rela- tionships in settings where the probability of military conflicts is higher than average. The fact that alliances work to deter conflict in precisely the situations where deterrence is likely to be especially hard is noteworthy.

More specifically, these findings buttress the key theoretical implication that if the United States is interested in deterring military challenges to the status quo in key regions, relying only on latent military capabilities in the US homeland is likely to be far less effective than having an overseas military posture. Similarly, they lend support to the general proposition that a forward deterrence posture is strongly appealing to a status quo power, because defending a given status quo is far cheaper than overturning it, and, once a favorable status quo is successfully overturned, restoring the status quo ante can be expected to be fearsomely costly. Recognizing the significance of these findings clearly casts doubt on the “wait on the sidelines and decide whether to intervene later” approach that is so strongly favored by retrenchment proponents.

The Causes of Nuclear Proliferation Matthew Kroenig highlights a number of reasons why US policymakers seek to limit the spread of nuclear weapons: “Fear that nuclear proliferation might deter [US leaders] from using military intervention to pursue their interests, reduce the effectiveness of their coercive diplomacy, trigger regional instability, undermine their alliance structures, dissipate their strategic attention, and set off further nuclear proliferation within their sphere of influence.” These are not the only reasons for concern about nuclear proliferation; also notable are the enhanced prospects of nuclear accidents and the greater risk of leakage of nuclear material to terrorists. 9 8

Do deep engagement’s security ties serve to contain the spread of nuclear weapons? The literature on the causes of proliferation is massive and faces challenges as great as any in international relations. With few cases to study, severe challenges in gathering evidence about inevitably secretive nuclear programs, and a large number of factors in play on both the demand and the supply sides, findings are decidedly mixed. Alliance relationships are just one piece of this complex puzzle, one that is hard to isolate from all the other factors in play. And empirical studies face the same selection bias problem just discussed: Nuclear powers are more likely to offer security guarantees to states confronting a serious threat and thus facing above- average incentives to acquire nuclear weapons. Indeed, alliance guarantees might be offered to states actively considering the nuclear option precisely in order to try to forestall that decision. Like a strong drug given only to very sick patients, alliances thus may have a powerful effect even if they sometimes fail to work as hoped. 10

Bearing these challenges in mind, the most relevant findings that emerge from this literature are:

* The most recent statistical analysis of the precise question at issue concludes that “security guarantees significantly reduce proliferation proclivity among their recipients.” In addition, states with such guarantees are less likely to export sensitive nuclear material and technology to other nonnuclear states. 12 11
* Case study research underscores that the complexity of motivations for acquiring nuclear weapons cannot be reduced to security: domestic politics, economic interests, and prestige all matter. 13
* Multiple independently conceived and executed recent case studies nonetheless reveal that security alliances help explain numerous allied decisions not to proliferate even when security is not always the main driver of leaders’ interest in a nuclear program. As Nuno Monteiro and Alexandre Debs stress, “States whose security goals are subsumed by their sponsors’ own aims have never acquired the bomb. … This finding highlights the role of U.S. security commitments in stymieing nuclear proliferation: U.S. protégés will only seek the bomb if they doubt U.S. protection of their core security goals.” 15 14
* Multiple independently conceived and executed recent case research projects further unpack the conditions that decrease the likelihood of allied proliferation, centering on the credibility of the alliance commitment. In addition, in some cases of prevention failure, the alliances allow the patron to influence the ally’s nuclear program subsequently, decreasing further proliferation risks. 17
* Security alliances lower the likelihood of proliferation cascades. To be sure, many predicted cascades did not occur. But security provision, mainly by the United States, is a key reason why. The most comprehensive statistical analysis finds that states are more likely to proliferate in response to neighbors when three conditions are met: (1) there is an intense security rivalry between the two countries; (2) the prospective proliferating state does not have a security guarantee from a nuclear- armed patron; and (3) the potential proliferator has the industrial and technical capacity to launch an indigenous nuclear program. 18 19 16

In sum, as Monteiro and Debs note, “Despite grave concerns that more states would seek a nuclear deterrent to counter U.S. power preponderance,” in fact “the spread of nuclear weapons decelerated with the end of the Cold War in 1989.” Their research, as well as that of scores of scholars using multiple methods and representing many contrasting theoretical perspectives, shows that US security guarantees and the counter- proliferation policy deep engagement allows are a big part of the reason why. 20

The Costs of Nuclear Proliferation General empirical findings thus lend support to the proposition that security alliances impede nuclear proliferation. But is this a net contributor to global security? Most practitioners and policy analysts would probably not even bring this up as a question and would automatically answer yes if it were raised. Yet a small but very prominent group of theorists within the academy reach a different answer: some of the same realist precepts that generate the theoretical prediction that retrenchment would increase demand for nuclear weapons also suggest that proliferation might increase security such that the net effect of retrenchment could be neutral. Most notably, “nuclear optimists” like Kenneth Waltz contend that deterrence essentially solves the security problem for all nuclear- armed states, largely eliminating the direct use of force among them. It follows that US retrenchment might generate an initial decrease in security followed by an increase as insecure states acquire nuclear capabilities, ultimately leaving no net effect on international security. 21

This perspective is countered by “nuclear pessimists” such as Scott Sagan. Reaching outside realism to organization theory and other bodies of social science research, they see major security downsides from new nuclear states. Copious research produced by Sagan and others casts doubt on the expectation that governments can be relied upon to create secure and controlled nuclear forces. The more nuclear states there are, the higher the probability that the organizational, psychological, and civil- military pathologies Sagan identifies will turn an episode like one of the numerous “near misses” he uncovers into actual nuclear use. As Campbell Craig warns, “One day a warning system will fail, or an official will panic, or a terrorist attack will be misconstrued, and the missiles will fly.” 22 23

Looking beyond these kinds of factors, it is notable that powerful reasons to question the assessment of proliferation optimists also emerge even if one assumes, as they do, that states are rational and seek only to maximize their security. First, nuclear deterrence can only work by raising the risk of nuclear war. For deterrence to be credible, there has to be a nonzero chance of nuclear use. If nuclear use is impossible, deterrence cannot be credible. It follows that every nuclear deterrence relationship depends on some probability of 24 nuclear use. The more such relationships there are, the greater the risk of nuclear war. Proliferation therefore increases the chances of nuclear war even in a perfectly rationalist world. Proliferation optimists cannot logically deny that nuclear spread increases the risk of nuclear war. Their argument must be that the security gains of nuclear spread outweigh this enhanced risk.

Estimating that risk is not simply a matter of pondering the conditions under which leaders will choose to unleash nuclear war. Rather, as Schelling established, the question is whether states will run the risk of using nuclear weapons. Nuclear crisis bargaining is about a “competition in risk taking.” Kroenig counts some twenty cases in which states—including prominently the United States—ran real risks of nuclear war in order to prevail in crises. As Kroenig notes, “By asking whether states can be deterred or not … proliferation optimists are asking the wrong question. The right question to ask is: what risk of nuclear war is a specific state willing to run against a particular opponent in a given crisis?” The more nuclear- armed states there are, the more the opportunities for such risk- taking and the greater the probability of nuclear use. 27 26 25

#### Pursuit inevitable – decline causes global war.

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The finding that U.S. entanglement is rare has important implications for international relations scholarship and U.S. foreign policy. For scholars, it casts doubt on classic theories of imperial overstretch in which great powers exhaust their resources by accumulating allies that free ride on their protection and embroil them in military quagmires.22 The U.S. experience instead suggests that great powers can dictate the terms of their security commitments and that allies often help their great power protectors avoid strategic overextension.

For policy, the rarity of U.S. entanglement suggests that the United States’ current grand strategy of deep engagement, which is centered on a network of standing alliances, does not preclude, and may even facilitate, U.S. military restraint. Since 1945 the United States has been, by some measures, the most militarily active state in the world. The most egregious cases of U.S. overreach, however, have stemmed not from entangling alliances, but from the penchant of American leaders to define national interests expansively, to overestimate the magnitude of foreign threats, and to underestimate the costs of military intervention. Scrapping alliances will not correct these bad habits. In fact, disengaging from alliances may unleash the United States to intervene recklessly abroad while leaving it without partners to share the burden when those interventions go awry.

#### For them to win an impact turn, they need to defend and robustly define their alternative to US primacy—the LIO is the best possible system

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Robert Kagan, “The World America Made—and Trump Wants to Unmake,” POLITICO Magazine, September 28, 2018, <https://politi.co/2zB3qCg>.

So, yes, the liberal order has been flawed, with its share of failure and hypocrisy. Liberal goals have sometimes been pursued by illiberal means. Power, coercion and violence have played a big part. The order has been the product of American hegemony and it has also served to reinforce that hegemony. But to note these facts is hardly to condemn the order. No order of any kind can exist without some element of hegemony. The Roman order was based on the hegemony of Rome; the British order of the 18th and 19th centuries was based on the hegemony of the Royal Navy; such order as existed briefly in Europe after the defeat of Napoleon—the so-called Concert of Europe—rested on the collective hegemony of the four victorious great powers. The idea of a peaceful, stable multipolar world where no power or powers enjoy predominance is a dream that exists only in the minds of one-world idealists and international relations theorists.

The same is true of those who would condemn the liberal world order because of the persistence of violence, coercion, hypocrisy, selfishness, stupidity and all the other evils and foibles endemic to human nature. Perhaps in the confines of academia it is possible to imagine a system of international relations where our deeply flawed humanness is removed from the equation. But in the real world, even the best and most moral of international arrangements are going to have their dark, immoral aspects.

The question is, as always, compared to what? Patrick Porter, the author of a widely discussed critique of the liberal world order, acknowledges that “if there was to be a superpower emerging from the rubble of world war in midcentury, we should be grateful it was the United States, given the totalitarian alternatives on offer. Under America’s aegis, there were islands of liberty where prosperous markets and democracies grew.” Indeed, that would seem to be the key point. At any given time there are only so many alternatives, and usually the choice is between the bad and the worse.

Are the alternatives on offer so much better now? Graham Allison, dismissing any return to the “imagined past” when the United States shaped an international liberal order, proposes that we instead make the world “safe for diversity” and accommodate ourselves to “the reality that other countries have contrary views about governance and seek to establish their own international orders governed by their own rules.” Others, such as Peter Beinart, similarly argue that we should accommodate Russian and Chinese demands for their own spheres of interest, even if that entails the sacrifice of sovereign peoples such as Ukrainians and Taiwanese. This wonderfully diverse world would presumably be run partly by Xi Jinping, partly by Vladimir Putin, and partly, too, by the Ayatollah Khamenei and by Kim Jong Un, who would also like to establish orders governed by their own rules. We have not enjoyed such diversity since the world was run partly by Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini.

The idea that this is the solution to our problems is laughable. Porter points out American policy has led to “multiplying foreign conflicts” and put the United States “on a collision course with rivals.” Setting aside the fact that multiplying foreign conflicts and collisions between rivals is the natural state of international relations in any era, it is hard for any student of history to imagine that these problems would lessen if only we returned to the competitive multipolar world of the 19th and early 20th centuries. To suggest that there could be a world with no collisions and no foreign conflicts, if only the United States would pursue an intelligent policy, is the very opposite of realism.

Strikingly absent from all these critiques of the liberal world order, too, is any suggestion of an alternative approach. The critiques end with lists of questions that need to be answered. Allison calls for a “surge of strategic thinking.” Others call for “new thinking” about “difficult trade-offs.” Some critics even complain that so long as people continue to talk about a U.S.-dominated liberal order, it will be “impossible for us to construct a reasonable alternative for the future.”

The most the critiques will offer are suggestions that sound more like attitudes than policies. They throw around words like “realism,” “restraint” and “retrenchment.” Allison proposes that the United States “limit its efforts to ensuring sufficient order abroad.” Beinart comes closest to offering an alternative, but he clearly has not yet thought it through fully. He wants to grant other powers their spheres of interest, for instance, but he mentions only Russia and China. Does this mean Russia should be granted full sway in, say, Ukraine, the Balkans, the Baltics and the Caucuses? Should China be able to impose its will on the Philippines and Vietnam?

And what of the other great powers? Does Japan get its own sphere of interest? Does India? Do Germany, France and Britain? They all had their spheres a century ago, and of course it was the clashes over those inevitably overlapping spheres that led to all the great wars. Is Beinart suggesting we should return to that past?

Of course, we may be moving toward that world, anyway. That is the implication of Trump’s “America First” foreign policy philosophy, his attacks on “globalism” and his recent suggestion that all nations look out strictly for themselves. Trump’s speech at the U.N. was an invitation to global anarchy, a struggle of all against all. His boasting about American power put the world on notice that the United States was turning from supporter of a liberal order to rogue superpower. This breakdown may be our future, but it seems odd to choose that course as a deliberate strategy, as Allison and others seem to do. Little wonder that they don’t wish to spell out the details of their alternative but prefer to carp at the inevitable failures and imperfections of the liberal world we have. As John Hay once remarked, “Our good friends are wiser when they abuse us for what we do, than when they try to say what ought to be done.”

No honest person would deny that the liberal world order has been flawed and will continue to be flawed in the future. The League of Nations was also flawed, as was Woodrow Wilson’s vision of collective security. Yet the world would have been better had the United States joined in upholding it, given the genuine alternative. The enduring truth about the liberal world order is that, like Churchill’s comment about democracy, it is the worst system—except for all the others.

### Solvency

#### Thus, the plan: In the Republic of India, a free press ought to prioritize objectivity over advocacy.

#### Indian press should prioritize the principle of objectivity- here’s what that looks like

**Sharma**, M. (**2020**, May 2). *Opinion: Journalism, the crumbling pillar of Indian democracy*. Youth Ki Awaaz. Retrieved March 5, 2022, from https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2020/04/journalism-the-crumbling-pillar-of-indian-democracy/ // sosa

Print journalism dates back to 17th Century Germany, but the practice of the distribution of news was practiced in the Roman era in 59 B.C. where it was recorded in Acta Diurna through which news was hung in the city center every day for the consumption of the people. In this day and age of capitalism and Information Technology, commercialization of journalism and the abundance of fake and unreliable information are some of the predominant issues eroding the industry in India.

The principle of ‘[objectivity](https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2019/11/ownership-issues-in-media-hindrance-in-objective-reporting/)‘ is one of the foremost lessons in journalism, and it was considered of prime importance by Lichtenberg (1996:225) especially in liberal democracies. The term ‘objectivity’ is a comprehensive term and implies a ‘rational’ perspective on any given situation, and Westerstahl’s model defines it to include several components like truth, facts, and impartiality as well. Objectivity and truth are always considered at the top of the journalistic ethos.

In addition, autonomy and neutrality have become equally important to reiterate the first principle of objectivity and truth. If a media house is not autonomous, it would eventually end up losing objectivity for either political or commercial gains. In light of these events, neutrality and autonomy became two very important pillars of the industry. Commercialization along with political pressures has threatened the freedom and autonomy of the industry in this era of capitalism.

While these threats were non-existent during the nascent stage of the industry, there was immense political pressure which prevented newspapers or journalists from reporting on parliamentary actions, criticism of the king/government/ruler, and any form of rebellious speech or language. It was with the onset and dissemination of the enlightenment principles of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity that the industry became much more autonomous and free of the political shackles. Today, [freedom](https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2020/04/security-situation-for-indias-media-to-have-improved-the-world-press-freedom-index-2020/) is one of the inevitable prerequisites for practicing serious and substantial journalism.

Over the last 5 centuries, journalism has become a medium to change the world, a medium to share knowledge, ideas, and has played an extraordinary role in revolutions and movements across the world. To rejig our memories, it is important we understand journalism through the most effective outcomes that have been achieved in different parts of the world where journalism challenged and even changed the status quo.

#### An objective press overcomes the barriers and leads to democratic reforms

Jha 16 Ravi Jha, Toronto-based senior Public Policy & Governance Administrator, journalist and member of a free press advocacy group, 6-22-2016, "India's Free Press Problem: Politics and Corporate Interests Invade Journalism," CJFE | Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, [https://www.cjfe.org/indias\_free\_press\_problem //](https://www.cjfe.org/indias_free_press_problem%20//) ella

The media in South Asian countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh has never been more obedient to corporate and political forces as it is today. As these countries are scrutinized for human rights violations and atrocities committed against minority groups, the freedom of journalists to objectively report is ceasing to exist, with governments and legal systems failing to protect or rescue them. Every day, journalists battle for autonomy, fight for their rights to speak out freely, protect media pluralism and counter the ills of monopolies. While Pakistan and Bangladesh have been well-known press freedom battlefields in recent years, with many journalists and bloggers killed, wounded or sued for speaking the truth, the surprising entry to this list is India. This is a country of 1.2 billion people where the media was until recently deemed “free [and] fair with equal access”—a Fourth Estate to the world’s largest democracy. Today, prominent Indian politicians and corporate entities are making increasingly underhanded investments in news media, and the press is failing to serve as a potent, unbiased tool to inform public perception. In this way, it is also increasingly unable to provide an arena for public debates where issues of shared interest can be represented and discussed. Unlike many democracies, where political and corporate entities are ostensibly supposed to be prohibited from holding news media broadcasting and publishing rights, media outlets in India are openly owned and controlled by political and business conglomerates, which are using the media to undermine the relevance of their opponents with scant regard for overall national interest. The main casualty has been the ability of the citizen to find out the objective truth, as different media outlets divide into camps on any major issue, polarizing the reporting and their readerships. This has become so evident that in a report to the government, India’s regulatory body, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), recommended legislation to empower journalists for free and fair expression. “Instances of irresponsible reporting and sensationalization are common these days when controversial news stories are bandied in the public domain through media outlets,” the report reads. It suggests Indian journalism, with its lack of freedom and self-regulation, cannot be trusted now—it is currently known for manipulation and bias. Subir Ghosh, co-author of Sue The Messenger, a book about how corporate ownership and legal harassment by powerful business houses are shackling reportage and undermining democracy, states, “If writing and reportage are shackled, it is democracy which gets undermined. It is the people who lose their unfettered right to know.” Ghosh said the reality on the ground is that the editorial policies of most media outlets are affected by corporate entities, either through influence or by the heft commanded by advertising and revenue generation. Leading Indian newspapers like the Times of India are increasingly market-driven, and have long diluted editorial authority. India’s biggest TV network, CNN-IBN and the Eenadu group of regional language channels, is directly controlled by one of the world’s richest business tycoons, Mukesh Ambani. Ambani is the chairman, managing director and largest shareholder of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), a US $100 billion asset and Fortune Global 500 company with interests in energy, petrochemicals, textiles, natural resources, retail and telecommunications. RIL, which owns businesses across India, also has stakes in several other media entities. Ambani’s brother Anil runs Reliance Big Broadcasting and has stakes in numerous publications and TV channels, including American film production label DreamWorks. Other prominent media houses—New Delhi Television (NDTV) and India Today, for instance—also have corporate investments, which are significantly influenced by political preferences. TRAI points out that the primary motivation for a media company to have a presence in multiple media segments, i.e. to have cross media holdings, is to maximize its reach to consumers in different demographics with varying media consumption patterns. This translates into higher economic gains for these media owners. “Media pluralism is getting restricted with entities having cross media holdings occupying dominant positions in different media sectors,” said journalist Naveen Upadhyay, a political editor with a Delhi-based Indian English language daily. Ghosh also writes that readers need to understand that persecution is fast becoming the norm for Indian journalists. “What was earlier intermittent is now increasingly taking the shape of a distinct trend in the targeting of journalists. While more journalists want to expose corporate corruption and crony capitalism, it is increasingly being seen that corporations are openly intimidating writers and journalists.” In this environment, how can journalists not be forced—or feel compelled for the sake of job security—to report in ways that reflect the political opinions and corporate interests of shareholders? This trend of interference also extends to political actors having close ties to news media. For example, News 24 is owned by Annuradha Prasad, the wife of opposition Congress Party leader Rajeev Shukla, whose name surfaced in corruption and spot-fixing scandals in the Indian Premier League. As journalists are intimidated for attempting to expose corruption, it is extremely worrisome when politicians accused of corruption have such close and personal ties to those in charge of the media. TRAI, in addition to recommending the need for regulations of media ownership, has stated that “media influences ideas and therefore can swing opinions. It is, therefore, important that an arm’s length distance is ensured between the media and organs of governance, political institutions and other entities which have a profound sway over public opinion. It is, thus, essential in the public interest, as a guarantee of the plurality and diversity of opinion.” Such alarming observations about corporate and political interference are made when several top Indian journalists are themselves becoming politically active, queuing up to become Members of Parliament in the Upper House and lobbying for political parties that often make compromises to serve their own interests. In one instance, Zee News editor Sudhir Chaudhary was arrested in 2012 for allegedly trying to extort US $15 million from former Congress MP and industrialist Naveen Jindal. And not long ago, NDTV’s top editor Barkha Dutt, along with many other journalists like former Hindustan Times editor Vir Sanghvi, were caught “political lobbying” in the infamous Nira Radia tapes controversy, when conversations allegedly between Radia, an influence peddler and journalists were recorded, revealing their intention of promoting money laundering and tax evasion. Writing about the controversy, TV commentator Rajdeep Sardesai said, “The robust Indian tradition of adversarial journalism has been mortgaged at the altar of cozy networks.” This scandal revealed that these journalists served as power brokers for a deal considered to be among India’s biggest ever political scams. Where else has the line between journalism and politics been blurred? Jaya TV in southern India is controlled by Tamil Nadu State Chief Minister Jayalalithaa Jayaram. Sun TV is led by former TeleCommunications Minister Dayanidhi Maran. Shobhna Bhartia, Chairperson and Editorial Director of the Hindustan Times, was a Congress Party Parliamentary member. A popular national TV news channel is owned by editor Rajat Sharma, who is open about his lobbying interests and support for the ruling political party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Chandan Mitra, the editor of Pioneer newspaper in Delhi, and veteran Indian journalist and author M. J. Akbar, are members of BJP. Arun Shourie, former editor of the Indian Express newspaper, is a public BJP sympathizer. Journalists are free to pursue political careers and actions, but the potential for conflicts of interest are high, with no regulations to prevent them from using their positions in the media to promote personal political agendas. For a truly free press, they must ensure that political aspirations do not affect their objective news reporting in the meantime.

### Framework

#### The standard is maximizing expected well-being:

#### Extinction outweighs

Todd 17 [Ben has a 1st from Oxford in Physics and Philosophy, has published in Climate Physics, once kick-boxed for Oxford, and speaks Chinese, badly. "The case for reducing extinction risk." <https://80000hours.org/articles/extinction-risk/>] brett

In this new age, what should be our biggest priority as a civilisation? Improving technology? Helping the poor? Changing the political system? Here’s a suggestion that’s not so often discussed: our first priority should be to survive. So long as civilisation continues to exist, we’ll have the chance to solve all our other problems, and have a far better future. But if we go extinct, that’s it. Why isn’t this priority more discussed? Here’s one reason: many people don’t yet appreciate the change in situation, and so don’t think our future is at risk. Social science researcher Spencer Greenberg surveyed Americans on their estimate of the chances of human extinction within 50 years. The results found that many think the chances are extremely low, with over 30% guessing they’re under one in ten million.3 We used to think the risks were extremely low as well, but when we looked into it, we changed our minds. As we’ll see, researchers who study these issues think the risks are over one thousand times higher, and are probably increasing. These concerns have started a new movement working to safeguard civilisation, which has been joined by Stephen Hawking, Max Tegmark, and new institutes founded by researchers at Cambridge, MIT, Oxford, and elsewhere. In the rest of this article, we cover the greatest risks to civilisation, including some that might be bigger than nuclear war and climate change. We then make the case that reducing these risks could be the most important thing you do with your life, and explain exactly what you can do to help. If you would like to use your career to work on these issues, we can also give one-on-one support. Reading time: 25 minutes How likely are you to be killed by an asteroid? An overview of naturally occurring existential risks A one in ten million chance of extinction in the next 50 years — what many people think the risk is — must be an underestimate. Naturally occurring existential risks can be estimated pretty accurately from history, and are much higher. If Earth was hit by a 1km-wide asteroid, there’s a chance that civilisation would be destroyed. By looking at the historical record, and tracking the objects in the sky, astronomers can estimate the risk of an asteroid this size hitting Earth as about 1 in 5000 per century.4 That’s higher than most people’s chances of being in a plane crash (about one in five million per flight), and already about 1000-times higher than the one in ten million risk that some people estimated.5 Some argue that although a 1km-sized object would be a disaster, it wouldn’t be enough to cause extinction, so this is a high estimate of the risk. But on the other hand, there are other naturally occurring risks, such as supervolcanoes.6 All this said, natural risks are still quite small in absolute terms. An upcoming paper by Dr. Toby Ord estimated that if we sum all the natural risks together, they’re very unlikely to add up to more than a 1 in 300 chance of extinction per century.7 Unfortunately, as we’ll now show, the natural risks are dwarfed by the human-caused ones. And this is why the risk of extinction has become an especially urgent issue. A history of progress, leading to the start of the most dangerous epoch in human history If you look at history over millennia, the basic message is that for a long-time almost everyone was poor, and then in the 18th century, that changed.8 Large economic growth created the conditions in which now face anthropogenic existential risks This was caused by the industrial revolution — perhaps the most important event in history. It wasn’t just wealth that grew. The following chart shows that over the long-term, life expectancy, energy use and democracy have all grown rapidly, while the percentage living in poverty has dramatically decreased.9 Chart prepared by Luke Muehlhauser in 2017. Literacy and education levels have also dramatically increased: Image source. People also seem to become happier as they get wealthier. In The Better Angels of Our Nature, Steven Pinker argues that violence is going down.10 Individual freedom has increased, while racism, sexism and homophobia have decreased. Many people think the world is getting worse,11 and it’s true that modern civilisation does some terrible things, such as factory farming. But as you can see in the data, many important measures of progress have improved dramatically. More to the point, no matter what you think has happened in the past, if we look forward, improving technology, political organisation and freedom gives our descendants the potential to solve our current problems, and have vastly better lives.12 It is possible to end poverty, prevent climate change, alleviate suffering, and more. But also notice the purple line on the second chart: war-making capacity. It’s based on estimates of global military power by the historian Ian Morris, and it has also increased dramatically. Here’s the issue: improving technology holds the possibility of enormous gains, but also enormous risks. Each time we discover a new technology, most of the time it yields huge benefits. But there’s also a chance we discover a technology with more destructive power than we have the ability to wisely use. And so, although the present generation lives in the most prosperous period in human history, it’s plausibly also the most dangerous. The first destructive technology of this kind was nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons: a history of near-misses Today we all have North Korea’s nuclear programme on our minds, but current events are just one chapter in a long saga of near misses. We came near to nuclear war several times during the Cuban Missile crisis alone.13 In one incident, the Americans resolved that if one of their spy planes were shot down, they would immediately invade Cuba without a further War Council meeting. The next day, a spy plane was shot down. JFK called the council anyway, and decided against invading. An invasion of Cuba might well have triggered nuclear war; it later emerged that Castro was in favour of nuclear retaliation even if “it would’ve led to the complete annihilation of Cuba”. Some of the launch commanders in Cuba also had independent authority to target American forces with tactical nuclear weapons in the event of an invasion. In another incident, a Russian nuclear submarine was trying to smuggle materials into Cuba when they were discovered by the American fleet. The fleet began to drop dummy depth charges to force the submarine to surface. The Russian captain thought they were real depth charges and that, while out of radio communication, the third world war had started. He ordered a nuclear strike on the American fleet with one of their nuclear torpedoes. Fortunately, he needed the approval of other senior officers. One, Vasili Arkhipov, disagreed, preventing war. Thanks to Vasili Arkhipov, we narrowly averted a global catastrophic risk from nuclear weapons Thank you Vasili Arkhipov. Putting all these events together, JFK later estimated that the chances of nuclear war were “between one in three and even”.14 There have been plenty of other close calls with Russia, even after the Cold War, as listed on this nice Wikipedia page. And those are just the ones we know about. Nuclear experts today are just as concerned about tensions between India and Pakistan, which both possess nuclear weapons, as North Korea.15 The key problem is that several countries maintain large nuclear arsenals that are ready to be deployed in minutes. This means that a false alarm or accident can rapidly escalate into a full-blown nuclear war, especially in times of tense foreign relations. Would a nuclear war end civilisation? It was initially thought that a nuclear blast might be so hot that it would ignite the atmosphere and make the Earth uninhabitable. Scientists estimated this was sufficiently unlikely that the weapons could be “safely” tested, and we now know this won’t happen. In the 1980s, the concern was that ash from burning buildings would plunge the Earth into a long-term winter that would make it impossible to grow crops for decades.16 Modern climate models suggest that a nuclear winter severe enough to kill everyone is very unlikely, though it’s hard to be confident due to model uncertainty.17 Even a “mild” nuclear winter, however, could still cause mass starvation.18 For this and other reasons, a nuclear war would be extremely destabilising, and it’s unclear whether civilisation could recover. How likely is a nuclear war to permanently end civilisation? It’s very hard to estimate, but it seems hard to conclude that the chance of a civilisation-ending nuclear war in the next century isn’t over 0.3%. That would mean the risks from nuclear weapons are greater than all the natural risks put together. (Read more about nuclear risks.) This is why the 1950s marked the start of a new age for humanity. For the first time in history, it became possible for a small number of decision-makers to wreak havoc on the whole world. We now pose the greatest threat to our own survival — that makes today the most dangerous point in human history. And nuclear weapons aren’t the only way we could end civilisation. How big is the risk of run-away climate change? In 2015, President Obama said in his State of the Union address that:19 “No challenge  poses a greater threat to future generations than climate change” Climate change is certainly a major risk to civilisation. The graph below shows estimates of climate sensitivity. Climate sensitivity is how much warming to expect in the long-term if CO2 concentrations double, which is roughly what’s expected within the century. Does climate change pose an existential risk? Wagner and Weitzman predict a greater than 10% chance of greater than 6 degrees celsius of warming. Image source The most likely outcome is 2-4 degrees of warming, which would be bad, but survivable. However, these estimates give a 10% chance of warming over 6 degrees, and perhaps a 1% chance of warming of 9 degrees. That would render large fractions of the Earth functionally uninhabitable, requiring at least a massive reorganisation of society. It would also probably increase conflict, and make us more vulnerable to other risks. (If you’re sceptical of climate models, then you should increase your uncertainty, which makes the situation more worrying.) So, it seems like the chance of a massive climate disaster created by CO2 is perhaps similar to the chance of a nuclear war. Researchers who study these issues think nuclear war seems more likely to result in outright extinction, due to the possibility of nuclear winter, which is why we think nuclear weapons pose an even greater risk than climate change. That said, climate change is certainly a major problem, which should raise our estimate of the risks even higher. (Read more about run-away climate change.) What new technologies might be as dangerous as nuclear weapons? The invention of nuclear weapons led to the anti-nuclear movement just a decade later in the 1960s, and the environmentalist movement soon adopted the cause of fighting climate change. What’s less appreciated is that new technologies will present further catastrophic risks. This is why we need a movement that is concerned with safeguarding civilisation in general. Predicting the future of technology is difficult, but because we only have one civilisation, we need to try our best. Here are some candidates for the next technology that’s as dangerous as nuclear weapons. In 1918-1919, over 3% of the world’s population died of the Spanish Flu.20 If such a pandemic arose today, it might be even harder to contain due to rapid global transport. What’s more concerning, though, is that it may soon be possible to genetically engineer a virus that’s as contagious as the Spanish Flu, but also deadlier, and which could spread for years undetected. That would be a weapon with the destructive power of nuclear weapons, but far harder to prevent from being used. Nuclear weapons require huge factories and rare materials to make, which makes them relatively easy to control. Designer viruses might be possible to create in a lab with a couple of biology PhDs. In fact, in 2006, The Guardian was able to receive segments of the extinct smallpox virus by mail order.21 Some terrorist groups have expressed interest in using indiscriminate weapons like these. (Read more about pandemic risks.) In fact, in 2006, The Guardian was able to receive segments of the extinct smallpox virus by mail order. Relevant experts suggest synthetic pathogens could potentially pose a global catastrophic risk. Who ordered the smallpox? Credit: The Guardian Another new technology with huge potential power is artificial intelligence. The reason that humans are in charge and not chimps is purely a matter of intelligence. Our large and powerful brains give us incredible control of the world, despite the fact that we are so much physically weaker than chimpanzees. So then what would happen if one day we created something much more intelligent than ourselves? In 2017, 350 researchers who have published peer-reviewed research into artificial intelligence at top conferences were polled about when they believe that we will develop computers with human-level intelligence: that is, a machine that is capable of carrying out all work tasks better than humans. The median estimate was that there is a 50% chance we will develop high-level machine intelligence in 45 years, and 75% by the end of the century.22 Graph of expert prediction from Grace et al: The median estimate was that there is a 50% chance we will develop high-level machine intelligence in 45 years These probabilities are hard to estimate, and the researchers gave very different figures depending on precisely how you ask the question.23 Nevertheless, it seems there is at least a reasonable chance that some kind of transformative machine intelligence is invented in the next century. Moreover, greater uncertainty means that it might come sooner than people think rather than later. What risks might this development pose? The original pioneers in computing, like Alan Turing and Marvin Minsky, raised concerns about the risks of powerful computer systems,24 and these risks are still around today. We’re not talking about computers “turning evil”. Rather, one concern is that a powerful AI system could be used by one group to gain control of the world, or otherwise be mis-used. If the USSR had developed nuclear weapons 10 years before the USA, the USSR might have become the dominant global power. Powerful computer technology might pose similar risks. Another concern is that deploying the system could have unintended consequences, since it would be difficult to predict what something smarter than us would do. A sufficiently powerful system might also be difficult to control, and so be hard to reverse once implemented. These concerns have been documented by Oxford Professor Nick Bostrom in Superintelligence and by AI pioneer Stuart Russell. Most experts think that better AI will be a hugely positive development, but they also agree there are risks. In the survey we just mentioned, AI experts estimated that the development of high-level machine intelligence has a 10% chance of a “bad outcome” and a 5% chance of an “extremely bad” outcome, such as human extinction.22 And we should probably expect this group to be positively biased, since, after all, they make their living from the technology. Putting the estimates together, if there’s a 75% chance that high-level machine intelligence is developed in the next century, then this means that the chance of a major AI disaster is 5% of 75%, which is about 4%. (Read more about risks from artificial intelligence.) People have raised concern about other new technologies, such as other forms of geo-engineering and atomic manufacturing, but they seem significantly less imminent, so are widely seen as less dangerous than the other technologies we’ve covered. You can see a longer list of existential risks here. What’s probably more concerning is the risks we haven’t thought of yet. If you had asked people in 1900 what the greatest risks to civilisation were, they probably wouldn’t have suggested nuclear weapons, genetic engineering or artificial intelligence, since none of these were yet invented. It’s possible we’re in the same situation looking forward to the next century. Future “unknown unknowns” might pose a greater risk than the risks we know today. Each time we discover a new technology, it’s a little like betting against a single number on a roulette wheel. Most of the time we win, and the technology is overall good. But each time there’s also a small chance the technology gives us more destructive power than we can handle, and we lose everything. Each new technology we develop has both unprecedented potential and perils. Image source. What’s the total risk of human extinction if we add everything together? Many experts who study these issues estimate that the total chance of human extinction in the next century is between 1 and 20%. For instance, an informal poll in 2008 at a conference on catastrophic risks found they believe it’s pretty likely we’ll face a catastrophe that kills over a billion people, and estimate a 19% chance of extinction before 2100.25 Risk At least 1 billion dead Human extinction Number killed by molecular nanotech weapons. 10% 5% Total killed by superintelligent AI. 5% 5% Total killed in all wars (including civil wars). 30% 4% Number killed in the single biggest engineered pandemic. 10% 2% Total killed in all nuclear wars. 10% 1% Number killed in the single biggest nanotech accident. 1% 0.5% Number killed in the single biggest natural pandemic. 5% 0.05% Total killed in all acts of nuclear terrorism. 1% 0.03% Overall risk of extinction prior to 2100 n/a 19% These figures are about one million times higher than what people normally think. In our podcast episode with Will MacAskill we discuss why he puts the risk of extinction this century at around 1%. In his his book The Precipice: Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity, Dr Toby Ord gives his guess at our total existential risk this century as 1 in 6 — a roll of the dice. Listen to our episode with Toby. What should we make of these estimates? Presumably, the researchers only work on these issues because they think they’re so important, so we should expect their estimates to be high (“selection bias”). But does that mean we can dismiss their concerns entirely? Given this, what’s our personal best guess? It’s very hard to say, but we find it hard to confidently ignore the risks. Overall, we guess the risk is likely over 3%. Why helping to safeguard the future could be the most important thing you can do with your life How much should we prioritise working to reduce these risks compared to other issues, like global poverty, ending cancer or political change? At 80,000 Hours, we do research to help people find careers with positive social impact. As part of this, we try to find the most urgent problems in the world to work on. We evaluate different global problems using our problem framework, which compares problems in terms of: Scale – how many are affected by the problem Neglectedness -how many people are working on it already Solvability – how easy it is to make progress If you apply this framework, we think that safeguarding the future comes out as the world’s biggest priority. And so, if you want to have a big positive impact with your career, this is the top area to focus on. In the next few sections, we’ll evaluate this issue on scale, neglectedness and solvability, drawing heavily on Existential Risk Prevention as a Global Priority by Nick Bostrom and unpublished work by Toby Ord, as well as our own research. First, let’s start with the scale of the issue. We’ve argued there’s likely over a 3% chance of extinction in the next century. How big an issue is this? One figure we can look at is how many people might die in such a catastrophe. The population of the Earth in the middle of the century will be about 10 billion, so a 3% chance of everyone dying means the expected number of deaths is about 300 million. This is probably more deaths than we can expect over the next century due to the diseases of poverty, like malaria.26 Many of the risks we’ve covered could also cause a “medium” catastrophe rather than one that ends civilisation, and this is presumably significantly more likely. The survey we covered earlier suggested over a 10% chance of a catastrophe that kills over 1 billion people in the next century, which would be at least another 100 million deaths in expectation, along with far more suffering among those who survive. So, even if we only focus on the impact on the present generation, these catastrophic risks are one of the most serious issues facing humanity. But this is a huge underestimate of the scale of the problem, because if civilisation ends, then we give up our entire future too. Most people want to leave a better world for their grandchildren, and most also think we should have some concern for future generations more broadly. There could be many more people having great lives in the future than there are people alive today, and we should have some concern for their interests. There’s a possibility that human civilization could last for millions of years, so when we consider the impact of the risks on future generations, the stakes are millions of times higher — for good or evil. As Carl Sagan wrote on the costs of nuclear war in Foreign Affairs: A nuclear war imperils all of our descendants, for as long as there will be humans. Even if the population remains static, with an average lifetime of the order of 100 years, over a typical time period for the biological evolution of a successful species (roughly ten million years), we are talking about some 500 trillion people yet to come. By this criterion, the stakes are one million times greater for extinction than for the more modest nuclear wars that kill “only” hundreds of millions of people. There are many other possible measures of the potential loss–including culture and science, the evolutionary history of the planet, and the significance of the lives of all of our ancestors who contributed to the future of their descendants. Extinction is the undoing of the human enterprise. We’re glad the Romans didn’t let humanity go extinct, since it means that all of modern civilisation has been able to exist. We think we owe a similar responsibility to the people who will come after us, assuming (as we believe) that they are likely to lead fulfilling lives. It would be reckless and unjust to endanger their existence just to make ourselves better off in the short-term. It’s not just that there might be more people in the future. As Sagan also pointed out, no matter what you think is of value, there is potentially a lot more of it in the future. Future civilisation could create a world without need or want, and make mindblowing intellectual and artistic achievements. We could build a far more just and virtuous society. And there’s no in-principle reason why civilisation couldn’t reach other planets, of which there are some 100 billion in our galaxy.27 If we let civilisation end, then none of this can ever happen. We’re unsure whether this great future will really happen, but that’s all the more reason to keep civilisation going so we have a chance to find out. Failing to pass on the torch to the next generation might be the worst thing we could ever do. So, a couple of percent risk that civilisation ends seems likely to be the biggest issue facing the world today. What’s also striking is just how neglected these risks are. Why these risks are some of the most neglected global issues Here is how much money per year goes into some important causes:28 Cause Annual targeted spending from all sources (highly approximate) Global R&D $1.5 trillion Luxury goods $1.3 trillion US social welfare $900 billion Climate change >$300 billion To the global poor >$250 billion Nuclear security $1-10 billion Extreme pandemic prevention $1 billion AI safety research $10 million As you can see, we spend a vast amount of resources on R&D to develop even more powerful technology. We also expend a lot in a (possibly misguided) attempt to improve our lives by buying luxury goods. Far less is spent mitigating catastrophic risks from climate change. Welfare spending in the US alone dwarfs global spending on climate change. But climate change still receives enormous amounts of money compared to some of these other risks we’ve covered. We roughly estimate that the prevention of extreme global pandemics receives under 300 times less, even though the size of the risk seems about the same. Research to avoid accidents from AI systems is the most neglected of all, perhaps receiving 100-times fewer resources again, at around only $10m per year. You’d find a similar picture if you looked at the number of people working on these risks rather than money spent, but it’s easier to get figures for money. If we look at scientific attention instead, we see a similar picture of neglect (though, some of the individual risks receive significant attention, such as climate change): Existential risk research receives less funding than dung beetle research. Credit: Nick Bostrom Our impression is that if you look at political attention, you’d find a similar picture to the funding figures. An overwhelming amount of political attention goes on concrete issues that help the present generation in the short-term, since that’s what gets votes. Catastrophic risks are far more neglected. Then, among the catastrophic risks, climate change gets the most attention, while issues like pandemics and AI are the most neglected. This neglect in resources, scientific study and political attention is exactly what you’d expect to happen from the underlying economics, and are why the area presents an opportunity for people who want to make the world a better place. First, these risks aren’t the responsibility of any single nation. Suppose the US invested heavily to prevent climate change. This benefits everyone in the world, but only about 5% of the world’s population lives in the US, so US citizens would only receive 5% of the benefits of this spending. This means the US will dramatically underinvest in these efforts compared to how much they’re worth to the world. And the same is true of every other country. This could be solved if we could all coordinate — if every nation agreed to contribute its fair share to reducing climate change, then all nations would benefit by avoiding its worst effects. Unfortunately, from the perspective of each individual nation, it’s better if every other country reduces their emissions, while leaving their own economy unhampered. So, there’s an incentive for each nation to defect from climate agreements, and this is why so little progress gets made (it’s a prisoner’s dilemma). And in fact, this dramatically understates the problem. The greatest beneficiaries of efforts to reduce catastrophic risks are future generations. They have no way to stand up for their interests, whether economically or politically. If future generations could vote in our elections, then they’d vote overwhelmingly in favour of safer policies. Likewise, if future generations could send money back in time, they’d be willing to pay us huge amounts of money to reduce these risks. (Technically, reducing these risks creates a trans-generational, global public good, which should make them among the most neglected ways to do good.) Our current system does a poor job of protecting future generations. We know people who have spoken to top government officials in the UK, and many want to do something about these risks, but they say the pressures of the news and election cycle make it hard to focus on them. In most countries, there is no government agency that naturally has mitigation of these risks in its remit. This is a depressing situation, but it’s also an opportunity. For people who do want to make the world a better place, this lack of attention means there are lots high-impact ways to help. What can be done about these risks? We’ve covered the scale and neglectedness of these issues, but what about the third element of our framework, solvability? It’s less certain that we can make progress on these issues than more conventional areas like global health. It’s much easier to measure our impact on health (at least in the short-run) and we have decades of evidence on what works. This means working to reduce catastrophic risks looks worse on solvability. However, there is still much we can do, and given the huge scale and neglectedness of these risks, they still seem like the most urgent issues. We’ll sketch out some ways to reduce these risks, divided into three broad categories: 1. Targeted efforts to reduce specific risks One approach is to address each risk directly. There are many concrete proposals for dealing with each, such as the following: Many experts agree that better disease surveillance would reduce the risk of pandemics. This could involve improved technology or better collection and aggregation of existing data, to help us spot new pandemics faster. And the faster you can spot a new pandemic, the easier it is to manage. There are many ways to reduce climate change, such as helping to develop better solar panels, or introducing a carbon tax. With AI, we can do research into the “control problem” within computer science, to reduce the chance of unintended damage from powerful AI systems. A recent paper, Concrete problems in AI safety, outlines some specific topics, but only about 20 people work full-time on similar research today. In nuclear security, many experts think that the deterrence benefits of nuclear weapons could be maintained with far smaller stockpiles. But, lower stockpiles would also reduce the risks of accidents, as well as the chance that a nuclear war, if it occurred, would end civilisation. We go into more depth on what you can do to tackle each risk within our problem profiles: AI safety Pandemic prevention Nuclear security Run-away climate change We don’t focus on naturally caused risks in this section, because they’re much less likely and we’re already doing a lot to deal with some of them. Improved wealth and technology makes us more resilient to natural risks, and a huge amount of effort already goes into getting more of these. 2. Broad efforts to reduce risks Rather than try to reduce each risk individually, we can try to make civilisation generally better at managing them. The “broad” efforts help to reduce all the threats at once, even those we haven’t thought of yet. For instance, there are key decision-makers, often in government, who will need to manage these risks as they arise. If we could improve the decision-making ability of these people and institutions, then it would help to make society in general more resilient, and solve many other problems. Recent research has uncovered lots of ways to improve decision-making, but most of it hasn’t yet been implemented. At the same time, few people are working on the issue. We go into more depth in our write-up of improving institutional decision-making. Another example is that we could try to make it easier for civilisation to rebound from a catastrophe. The Global Seed Vault is a frozen vault in the Arctic, which contains the seeds of many important crop varieties, reducing the chance we lose an important species. Melting water recently entered the tunnel leading to the vault due, ironically, to climate change, so could probably use more funding. There are lots of other projects like this we could do to preserve knowledge. Similarly, we could create better disaster shelters, which would reduce the chance of extinction from pandemics, nuclear winter and asteroids (though not AI), while also increasing the chance of a recovery after a disaster. Right now, these measures don’t seem as effective as reducing the risks in the first place, but they still help. A more neglected, and perhaps much cheaper option is to create alternative food sources, such as those that be produced without light, and could be quickly scaled up in a prolonged winter. Since broad efforts help even if we’re not sure about the details of the risks, they’re more attractive the more uncertain you are. As you get closer to the risks, you should gradually reallocate resources from broad to targeted efforts (read more). We expect there are many more promising broad interventions, but it’s an area where little research has been done. For instance, another approach could involve improving international coordination. Since these risks are caused by humanity, they can be prevented by humanity, but what stops us is the difficulty of coordination. For instance, Russia doesn’t want to disarm because it would put it at a disadvantage compared to the US, and vice versa, even though both countries would be better off if there were no possibility of nuclear war. However, it might be possible to improve our ability to coordinate as a civilisation, such as by improving foreign relations or developing better international institutions. We’re keen to see more research into these kinds of proposals. Mainstream efforts to do good like improving education and international development can also help to make society more resilient and wise, and so also contribute to reducing catastrophic risks. For instance, a better educated population would probably elect more enlightened leaders (cough), and richer countries are, all else equal, better able to prevent pandemics — it’s no accident that Ebola took hold in some of the poorest parts of West Africa. But, we don’t see education and health as the best areas to focus on for two reasons. First, these areas are far less neglected than the more unconventional approaches we’ve covered. In fact, improving education is perhaps the most popular cause for people who want to do good, and in the US alone, receives 800 billion dollars of government funding, and another trillion dollars of private funding. Second, these approaches have much more diffuse effects on reducing these risks — you’d have to improve education on a very large scale to have any noticeable effect. We prefer to focus on more targeted and neglected solutions.

#### Foreign policy experts are good – take in more information and clash to create self-correcting outcomes

**Brands** et. al **20** [HAL BRANDS, the Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, served as Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense in 2015-2016. PETER FEAVER, Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at Duke University, served as special adviser for strategic planning and institutional reform at the National Security Council staff in 2005-2007 and as director for defense policy and arms control in 1993-1994. WILLIAM INBODEN, William Powers, Jr., Executive Director of the Clements Center for National Security and an Associate Professor at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, served at the State Department in 2002-2005 and as senior director for strategic planning on the National Security Council staff in 2005-2007, “In Defense of the Blob”, April 29th, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-04-29/defense-blob>]

* Any offense they win is solved by doubling down and committing to status quo foreign policy – rejecting foreign policy expertise makes everything worse so any offense they win against primacy is offense against the alt because expertise solves and rejection makes it worse
* Turns interventions – they’re politically toxic which discourages them, but lack of expertise makes them more common
* Answers general foreign policy Ks --- american foreign policy is not monolithic or closed off to alternative perspectives --- your perspective is just wrong
* Assume the K is wrong because a century of foreign policy expertise has concluded the LIO is best

Blob theorists view the establishment as a club of like-minded elite insiders who control everything, take care of one another, and brush off challenges to conventional wisdom. In reality, the United States actually has a healthy marketplace of foreign policy ideas. Discussion over American foreign policy is loud, contentious, diverse, and generally pragmatic—and as a result, the nation gets the opportunity to learn from its mistakes, build on its successes, and improve its performance over time.

In both absolute and relative terms, the expert community dealing with foreign policy and national security in the United States is remarkably large and heterogeneous. Inside government, cadres of professionals make vast amounts of technocratic knowledge and institutional memory available to policymakers. Every department and agency with an international role has distinctive regional or functional expertise it can bring to bear. This in-house knowledge is complemented by an even larger and more diverse network of experts in the many hundreds of think tanks and contract research institutions that surround the government and offer views ranging from right to left, hawk to dove, free trader to protectionist, technocratic to ideological. Pick any policy issue and you can put together a lively debate with ease. Should the United States engage with China or contain it? Negotiate with Iran or squeeze it? Withdraw from the Middle East or redouble its efforts? Reasoned arguments on all sides are widely available, in any form you want—all supplied from within the supposedly monolithic establishment.

Moreover, unlike such communities in other leading powers, the American foreign policy establishment is connected to society rather than cut off from it, because the top several layers of U.S. national security bureaucracies are staffed by political appointees rather than civil servants. The Blob comprises government officials, outside experts, and many people who go back and forth between the two. Insiders know how government works and what is practical. Outsiders think independently. And in-and-outers bridge the gaps. Other countries simply do not have comparably large, diverse, permeable, expert communities that encourage vigorous debate over national policy—which is why, say, the caliber of U.S. debate about nuclear policy is more nuanced and better informed than in other nuclear powers, and which is why other countries would love to have such a Blob of their own.

The American foreign policy establishment, finally, is generally more pragmatic than ideological. It values prudence and security over novelty and creativity. It knows that thinking outside the box may be useful in testing policy assumptions, but the box is usually there for a reason, and so reflexively embracing the far-out option is dangerous. Its members have made many mistakes, individually and collectively, but several features of the system enforce accountability over time. Foreign policy failures, for example, are politically toxic and often spur positive change. The monumental intelligence failures that allowed the September 11 attacks to happen were followed by policy and institutional reforms that have helped prevent other mass-casualty terrorist attacks on U.S. targets for almost two decades. Early misjudgments in the Iraq war led to the adoption of a new counterinsurgency strategy that restored stability, at least for a while. The international economic imbalances and financial procedures that led to the 2008 global financial crisis were addressed by policies that contributed to a decade-long recovery.

Taken together, these virtues reinforce one another and help the United States tackle the countless national and global challenges that confront a superpower. Blob critics claim there are no meaningful arguments over U.S. foreign policy. But this is just not true. Intense disputes over the Korean War, the Vietnam War, détente and arms control, the opening to China, and policies in Central America and the Middle East were followed by battles over the Gulf War, NATO expansion, military interventions in Haiti, Somalia, and the Balkans, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq—not to mention heated arguments over positions toward China, Iran, North Korea, Russia, and other issues today. It is true that beneath all this controversy lies a relatively stable consensus on the value of power, alliances, and constructive global engagement. Most members of the establishment believe that global problems usually improve when the United States engages responsibly and worsen when the United States retreats. Yet that reflects not some nefarious groupthink but the wisdom of professional crowds, arrived at through painful trial and error over more than a century.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

If the Blob is not a cabal, neither is its record one of dismal failure. Critics argue that the United States entered the 1990s in a position of great power and prestige and squandered that legacy through misguided wars and interventions, geopolitical hubris, and the aggressive pursuit of a global liberal order at the expense of the nation’s economic and security interests. But the story they tell doesn’t match what actually happened. American grand strategy did not change radically after the Cold War, because it was developed not just as a response to the Soviet challenge but to the foreign policy disasters of the 1930s and 1940s. After World War II, U.S. officials decided to maintain the nation’s primacy, thwart dangerous aggressors, and build a secure, prosperous international order in which the United States could thrive. After the Cold War, they decided to keep this strategy going, even in the absence of an immediate peer competitor.

From George H. W. Bush to Barack Obama, post–Cold War presidents worked hard to further the efforts their predecessors started, shaping an environment conducive to American interests and ideas. They promoted free trade and globalization, maintained and even expanded the country’s global network of alliances and military bases, policed the global commons, and tried to stabilize regional conflicts and promote human rights. Unchecked by great-power rivals, Washington did become more willing to use military force in the periphery on behalf of national ideals. But even then, it hardly ran amok in search of monsters to destroy, abstaining from interventions in Rwanda, the African Great Lakes, Sudan, the Caucasus, Ukraine, Myanmar, and other potential cases. The basic outlines of recent American strategy would be recognizable to officials stretching back generations, because its goal has remained constant: fostering a world guided by American leadership, rooted in American values, and protected by American power.

#### Only constructive policy debates nurture information literacy necessary for every model of politics – the process of sifting through evidence and subjecting positions to researched scrutiny is essential to managing emerging crises and information overload

Leek 16 [Danielle R. Leek, professor of communications at Grand Valley State University, “Policy debate pedagogy: a complementary strategy for civic and political engagement through service-learning,” Communication Education, 65:4, 399-405]

Through policy debate, students can develop information literacy and learn how to make critical arguments of fact. This experience is politically empowering for students who will also build confidence for political engagement. Information literacy While there are many definitions of information literacy, the term generally is understood to mean that a student is “able to recognize when information is needed , and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the information needed” for problem- solving and decision-making (Spitzer, Eisenberg, & Lowe, 1998, p. 19). Information exists in a variety of forms, in visual data, computer graphics, sound-recordings, film, and photographs. Information is also constructed and disseminated through a wide range of sources and mediums. Therefore, “information literacy” functions as a blanket term which covers a wide range of more specific literacies. Critiques of service-learning’s knowl- edge-building power, such as those articulated by Eby (1998) and Colby (2008), are chal- lenging both the emphasis the pedagogy places on information gained through experience and the limited scope of political information students are exposed to in the process. Policy debate can augment a student’s civic and political learning by fostering extended information literacies. Snider and Schnurer (2002) identify policy debate as an especially research intensive form of oral discussion which requires extensive time and commitment to learn the dimensions of a topic. Understanding policy issues calls for contemplating a range of materials, from traditional news media publications to court proceedings, research data, and institutional propaganda. Moreover, the nature of policy debate, which involves public presentation of arguments on two competing sides of a question, motivates students to go beyond basic information to achieve a more advanced level of expertise and credibility on a topic (Dybvig & Iverson, n.d.). This type of work differs from traditional research projects where students gather only the materials needed to support their argument while neglecting contrary evidence. Instead, the “debate research process encourages a kind of holistic approach, where students need to pay attention to the critics of their argument because they will have to respond to those attacks” (Snider & Schnurer, 2002, p. 32). In today’s attention economy, cultivating a sensibility for well- rounded information gathering can also aid students in recognizing when and how the knowledge produced in their social environments can be effectively translated to specific contexts. The “cultural shift in the production of data” which has followed the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies means that all students are likely “prosumers”—that is, they consume, produce, and coproduce information online all at the same time (Scoble, 2011). Coupling service- learning with policy debate calls on students to apply information across registers of public engagement, including their own service efforts and their own public argumentation, in and outside of their debates. Information is used in the service experience, which in turn, informs the use of information in debates, where students then produce new information through their argumentation. The process is what Bruce (2008) refers to “informed learning,” or “using information in order to learn.” When individuals move from learning how to gather materials for a task to a cognitive awareness and understanding of how the information-seeking process shapes their learning, they are engaged in informed learning. Through this process, students can come to recognize that information management and credibility is deeply disciplinary and historically con- textual (Bruce & Hughes, 2010). This understanding, combined with practical experience in locating information, is a critical missing element in contemporary political engage- ment. Over 20 years ago, Graber (1994) argued that one of the biggest obstacles to political engagement was not apathy, but a gap between the way news media presents information during elections, and the type of information voters need and will listen to during electoral campaigns. The challenge extends beyond elections into policy-making, especially as younger generations continue to revise their notions of citizenship away from institutional politics towards more social forms of activism (Bennett, Wells, & Freelon, 2011). For stu- dents to effectively practice more expressive forms of citizenship they need experience managing the breadth of information available about issues they care about. As past research indicates a strong correlation between service-learning experience and the motiv- ation and desire for post-graduation service, it seems likely that students who debate about policy issues related to service areas will continue their informed learning practices after they have left the classroom (Soria & Thomas-Card, 2014). Arguing facts In addition to building information literacies, students who combine policy debate with service-learning can practice “politically relevant skills,” which will help them have confidence for political engagement in the future. As Colby (2008) explains, this confidence should be tempered by tolerance for difference and differing opinions. On the surface, debating about institutional politics might seem counterintuitive to this goal. Politicians and the press have a credibility problem among college-aged students, and this leaves younger generations less inclined to feel obligated to the state or to look to traditional modes of policy- making for social change (Bennett et al., 2011; Manning & Edwards, 2014). This lack of faith in government and media outlets also makes political argument more difficult (Klumpp, 2006). Whereas these institutions once served as authoritative and trustworthy sources of information, the credibility of legislators and journalists has decreased over the last 40 years or so. Today, politicians and pundits are viewed as political actors interested in spectacle, power, and profit rather than truth-seeking or the common good. While some political controversies are rooted in competing values, Klumpp (2006) explains that arguments about policy are more often based in fact. Indeed, when engaged in public arguments over questions of policy, people tend to “invoke the authority of facts to support their positions.” Likewise, “the governmental sphere has developed elaborate legal and deliberative processes in recognition of the power of facts as the basis for a decision.” Yet, while shared values are often quickly agreed upon, differences over fact are more difficult to resolve. Without credible institutions of authority that can disseminate facts, public deliberation requires more time, information-gathering, evaluation, and reasoning. The Bush administration’s decision to take military action in Iraq, for example, was presumably based on the “fact” that Saddam Hussein had acquired weapons of mass destruction. This has now become a classic example of poor policy-making grounded in faulty factual evidence. This shortcoming is precisely why policy debate is a valuable complement to service- learning activities. Not only can students use their developing literacies to better understand social problems, they can also learn to access a broader range of knowledge sources, thereby mitigating the absence of fact-finding from traditional institutions. Fur- thermore, policy advocacy gives students experience testing the reasoning underlying claims of fact. Issues of source credibility, analogic comparisons, and data analysis are three examples of the type of critical thinking skills that students may need to apply in order to engage a question of policy (Allen, Berkowitz, Hunt, & Louden, 1999). While the effect may be to undermine government action in some instances, in others students will gain a better understanding of when and where institutional activities can work to make change. As students gain knowledge about the relationship between institutional structures and the communities they serve, they grow confidence in their ability to engage in future conversations about policy issues. Zwarensteyn’s (2012) research high- lights these sorts of effects in high school students who engage in competitive policy debate. Zwarensteyn theorizes that even minimal increases in technical knowledge about politics can translate to significant increases in a student’s sense of self-efficacy. Many students start off feeling very insecure when it comes to their mastery of insti- tutional politics; policy debate helps overcome that insecurity. Moreover, because training in policy debate encourages students to address issues as arguments rather than partisan positions, it encourages them to engage policy-making without the hostility and incivility that often characterizes today’s political scene. Indeed, it is precisely that perceived hostility and incivility that prompts many young people to avoid politics in the first place. I do not mean to imply that students who debate about their service-learning experi- ences will draw homogenous conclusions about policies. Quite the contrary. Students who engage in service-learning still bring their personal visions and history to bear on their debates. As a result, students will often have very different opinions after engaging in a shared debate experience. More importantly, the practice of debating should operate to particularize students’ knowledge of community partners and clients, working against the destructive generalizations and power dynamics that can result when students feel privileged to serve less fortunate “others.” For civic and political engagement through service-learning to be meaningful and productive, it must do more to challenge students’ concepts of the homogenous “we” who helps “them.” Seligman (2013) argues that this civic spirit can be cultivated through the core pedagogical principle of a “shared practice,” which emphasizes the application of knowledge to purpose (p. 60). Policy debate achieves this outcome by calling on students to consider and reconsider their understanding of themselves, institutions, community, and policy every time the question “should” may arise. As Seligman writes: ... the orientation of thought to purpose (having an explanation rest at a place, a purpose) is of extreme importance. We must recognize that the orientation of thought to purpose is to recognize moving from providing a knowledge of, to providing a knowledge for. This means that in the context of encountering difference it is not sufficient to learn about (have an idea of) the other, rather it means to have ideas for certain joint purposes—for a set of “to-does.” A purpose becomes the goal towards which our explanations should be oriented. (p. 61) Put another way, policy debate challenges students “to maintain a sense of doubt and to carry on a systematic and protracted inquiry” in the process of service-learning itself (Seligman, 2013, p. 60). This is precisely the type of complex, ongoing, reflective inquiry that John Dewey had in mind. Political engagement through policy debate This essay began with a discussion of the growing attention to civic engagement programs in higher education. The national trend is to accomplish higher levels of student civic responsibility during and after their time in college through service-learning experiences tied to curricular learning objectives. A challenge for service-learning scholars and teachers is to recognize a distinction between civic activities that are accomplished by helping others and political activities that require engagement with the collective institutional structures and processes that govern social life. Both are necessary for democracy to thrive. Policy debate pedagogy can help service-learning educators accomplish these dual objectives. To call policy debate a pedagogy rather than just a style of debate is purposeful. A pedagogy is a praxis for cultivating learning in others. The pedagogy of service-learning helps students to know and engage social conditions through physical engagement with their environments and communities. Policy debate pedagogy leads students to know and engage these same social conditions while also challenging them to apply their knowledge for the purpose of political advocacy. These pedagogies are natural compliments for cul- tivating student learning. Therefore, future studies should explore how well service-learn- ing combined with policy debate can resolve concerns that policy debate alone does not go far enough to invest students with political agency (Mitchell, 1998). The present analysis suggests the potential for such an outcome is likely. Moreover, research is clear that the civic effects of service-learning as an instructional method are improved simply by increasing the amount of time spent on in-class discus- sion about the service work students do (Levesque-Bristol, Knapp, & Fisher, 2010). Policy debates related to students’ service can accomplish this goal and more. Policy debates can also facilitate the political learning students need to build their political efficacy and capacity for political engagement. Through informed learning about the political process—especially in the context of service practice—students develop literacies that will extend beyond the classroom. Using this knowledge in reasoned public argument about policy challenges invites students to move beyond cynical disengagement towards a productive recognition of their own potential voice in the political world. Policy debate pedagogy brings unique elements to the process of political learning. By emphasizing the conditional and dynamic nature of political arguments and processes, debates can work to relieve students of the misconception that there is a single “right answer” for questions about policy-making and politics, especially during election time. The communication perspective on policy debates also highlights students’ collective involvement in the ever-changing field of political terms, symbols, and meanings that constitute interpretations of our social world. In fact, the historical roots of the term “communication” seem to demand that speech and debate educators call for such emphasis on political learning. “To make common,” the Latin interpretation of communicare, situ- ates our discipline as the heart of public political affairs (Peters, 1999). Connecting policy debate to service-learning helps highlight the common purpose of these approaches in efforts to promote civic engagement in higher education.