### 1

#### Text: The United States should publicly renounce its support for any COVID TRIPS waivers.

#### Reconciliation passes now, PC is key.

Jennifer Scholtes et al. 9-2-21, Jennifer Scholtes is editor of the Budget and Appropriations Brief. Heather Caygle is a Congress reporter for POLITICO. Caitlin Emma covers the federal budget and congressional spending bills on Capitol Hill for POLITICO Pro. Prior to that, she spent five years as an education policy reporter for Pro. POLITICO “Democrats race to resolve House-Senate disputes on $3.5T megabill” <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/09/02/democrats-house-senate-dispute-35t-bill-508654> brett

Democrats are hustling to finalize their gigantic social spending plan during the dog days of summer recess, wary they will blow their target date to finish as Congress faces a crush of deadlines later this month.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi has ordered committee leaders to battle it out with their Senate counterparts to resolve all major disputes this week on what will be included in the up-to-$3.5 trillion bill. But wide gulfs remain between the House and Senate on central pieces of the package, including expanding Medicare, shoring up Obamacare, raising taxes and curbing carbon emissions.

That cross-Capitol disagreement is only the first of many headaches ahead for Democrats trying to muscle through the social spending measure in just a few weeks by simultaneously crafting, vetting and whipping it. Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer see such high-velocity multitasking as the only way to ensure the proposal moves alongside the bipartisan Senate-passed infrastructure bill, which is set for a House vote in less than four weeks. But if Democrats fail in their goal to finalize the social spending plan before the infrastructure vote, they risk blowing both key parts of President Joe Biden's agenda.

"It is pushing it. All we can do is try,” House Budget Chair John Yarmuth (D-Ky.) said after the chamber voted last week to lock in the Sept. 27 infrastructure deadline.

“We're trying to kind of pre-conference this to the greatest extent" to minimize House-Senate divergence, he added.

House Democratic leaders have not started preparing their members for the possibility that the social spending bill won’t be finished when the chamber votes on the infrastructure bill by Sept. 27, vowing they will get it all done through sheer force of will.

House committees kick off markups on Thursday to begin churning out the pieces of the final spending package, even as intraparty arguments continue privately over what exactly to include in the legislation. Democratic leaders, senior lawmakers and aides are scrambling behind the scenes to settle the types of major policy disputes that would normally take months or years to be resolved.

Senate Finance Chair Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), who is in charge of drafting the largest piece of the spending plan, described it as “a vastly bigger effort” than enacting the pandemic aid package in March. That Covid relief bill used the same filibuster-proof reconciliation process Democrats are now using to pass their social spending plan without Republican support.

Democrats are still haggling over several major issues, including when to sunset popular provisions in the coming years to fit within the $3.5 trillion cap they have set for themselves. Top Democrats have privately aired worries that a dizzying array of different end dates for various programs in the coming years could come back to haunt the party if Republicans control Congress or the White House and refuse to extend those policies.

For example, Democrats are currently debating when to set the expiration of a popular expansion of the child tax credit they passed in the pandemic aid bill. Some Senate Democrats are pushing for 2024, while their House counterparts argue that robs the party of any leverage it would have when a slew of Trump-era tax provisions expire the next year, in 2025.

Senior Democrats are also tussling over a much bigger issue — Senate Budget Chair Bernie Sanders’ (I-Vt.) push to expand Medicare to include vision, dental and hearing benefits. The dental plan in particular could cost hundreds of billions of dollars and may not be implemented for up to five years, coming at the cost of what some Democrats see as their best chance to permanently strengthen Obamacare and score a political win in the 2022 midterms.

Even once those disputes are resolved, the Senate parliamentarian will shape the endgame by almost certainly forcing Democrats to make further tweaks, a core feature of the reconciliation process they’re using to bypass the Senate filibuster.

“It takes an immense amount of focus on detail and scrubbing,” Wyden said. “It’s a lot of heavy lifting."

To head off some of those potential pitfalls, Democrats have for months been fielding input from the parliamentarian on their plans. The Senate Finance Committee’s top lawyer is being “fed intravenously,” Wyden joked, since he is “camped out” seeking feedback from the parliamentarian at all hours.

All year, Democrats have laid the groundwork for enacting the $3.5 trillion proposal, releasing detailed outlines and marking up bill text for many of the provisions they plan to tie together. That includes the proposal Wyden’s panel approved in May to revamp clean energy incentives and the framework he and other Senate leaders released last week to hike taxes on corporations’ foreign profits.

“Nobody is gonna be surprised at a lot of what we're offering up for consideration,” Wyden said.

Further complicating Democrats’ fast-track plan is the slew of critical deadlines coming at the end of the month, including funding the government, raising the debt ceiling and a promised House vote on the Senate-passed bipartisan infrastructure bill by Sept. 27.

Acknowledging the potential for missing those marks, Democrats in both chambers have already started casting blame on their colleagues across the rotunda.

One senior Democratic aide said the action is really centered in the House now after weeks of breakneck Senate action, stressing that the party can move expeditiously when it needs to. This aide pointed to swift passage of Biden’s $1.9 trillion Covid rescue plan earlier this year as well as last month's multitrillion-dollar budget measure.

#### The plan trades off

M.K. Bhadrakumar 5-8, Retired Ambassador; Columnist for Hindu and Deccan Herald Indian newspapers, Rediff.com, Asia Times and Strategic Culture Foundation, Moscow. NewsClick, 5-8-21. “Biden’s Decision on TRIPS Waiver is Political Theatre” <https://www.newsclick.in/biden-decision-TRIPS-waiver-political-theatre> brett

On the other hand, Biden, whose political life of half a century was largely spent in the US Congress, is well aware of the awesome clout of the pharmaceutical companies in American politics. From that lobby’s perspective, the patent waiver “amounts to the expropriation of the property of the pharmaceutical companies whose innovation and financial investments made the development of Covid-19 vaccines possible in the first place,” as a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, puts it.

The US pharmaceutical industry and congressional Republicans have already gone on the offensive blasting Biden’s announcement saying it undermines incentives for American innovation. Besides, the argument goes, even with the patent waiver, vaccine manufacturing is a complex process and is not like simply flipping a switch.

Sen. Richard Burr, the top Republican on the US Senate Health Committee, has denounced Biden’s decision: “Intellectual property protections are part of the reason we have these life-saving products; stripping these protections only ensures we won’t have the vaccines or treatments we need when the next pandemic occurs.” The Republican senators backed by Republican Study Committee Chairman Jim Banks propose to introduce legislation to block the move.

Clearly, Biden would rather spend his political capital on getting the necessary legislation through the Congress to advance his domestic reform agenda rather than spend time and energy to take on the pharmaceutical industry to burnish his image as a good Samaritan on the world stage.

#### The infrastructure bill underfunded climate measures -- reconciliation is key to solve extinction from warming.

Zack Colman 8-6, holds a master's degree from the University of Illinois and a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University. Politico, 8-6-21. “The world’s top climate scientists have a new warning for Washington” <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/08/06/climate-warning-502726> brett

Congress is preparing to order the biggest U.S. investment in history for fighting climate change — hundreds of billions of dollars to clean up the power grid, fortify ecosystems and wean American drivers off fossil fuels.

But scientists say it won’t be nearly enough.

The latest warning is set to arrive Monday from the United Nation's premier climate science panel, whose findings land as wildfires ravage the West, droughts squeeze U.S. farmers, and heatwaves force power companies to ration supplies — and portend even more calamitous events in the coming decades. The document will be the sixth major report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a group consisting of the world’s leading climate scientists.

Lawmakers pushing for an aggressive climate offensive hope the report will finally jolt some action out of Washington. Democrats have managed to include some climate measures in the Senate’s $550 billion infrastructure compromise bill in the Senate and are calling for more sweeping efforts in their expected $3.5 trillion reconciliation package.

“This is why I’m anxious to see the IPCC report,” Rep. Judy Chu (D-Calif.) said in an interview. "It seems as though it may point to tipping point disasters that could warn that we have far less time than previously thought."

Chu added, “I do not think that Washington, D.C. as a whole understands the implications for not investing in climate change measures right this minute.”

Previous IPCC assessments have eliminated many of the scientific uncertainties that skeptical politicians clung to when rejecting policies that came with high price tags and threatened to disrupted the oil, gas and coal industries. Now, the scientists' focus is on how fast — not if — the disastrous changes to the Earth’s climate will occur, how people will adapt to them and how governments can ease the worst impacts.

Aiding that research is a new field of science that seeks to connect global climate trends to tangible real-world impacts, which is expected to feature in Monday’s IPCC report. Scientists who were once wary of tying specific weather disasters to climate change are growing more confident about linking the growing frequency of events to warming temperatures — offering more precise guidance for the policy makers and legislators.

Both Democratic and Republican lawmakers say they are concerned about climate change. But advocates for strong policy action acknowledge the political window is rapidly closing as the Senate and House gear up for elections in 2022, when campaigning is likely to overshadow any serious legislative work.

Even before electioneering chokes off debate, the Biden administration is hoping to land a signature legislative climate victory to take with it to November’s international climate talks in Glasgow, Scotland, as evidence of U.S. commitment on climate change .

So far, aside from big promises and executive actions, President Joe Biden has little to show to make the case that the U.S. can lead the global efforts. Activists complain the bipartisan infrastructure plan heading for an expected vote in the Senate would spend too little on climate. That would make the envisioned $3.5 trillion Democrats-only reconciliation plan the last, best shot — if the party can persuade skeptical centrists to support it.

“I actually think we're on the verge of a tipping point where we're really jumping in and hopefully, over the course of this month, we set the president up to go to Glasgow and show progress and say, ‘All right, all of us now have to make bigger, more substantive commitments,’” Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) said. “It's the most important chance we have.”

The bipartisan infrastructure plan won’t be anywhere close to enough to counter the climate threat, according to scientists and Democratic lawmakers. And though it represents a major win for Biden on the domestic stage, passing only that legislation without the larger $3.5 trillion package would leave the U.S. in a weak position to cajole other countries like China and India to strengthen their climate efforts.

While the Senate infrastructure bill would devote tens of billions of dollars to coastal resilience, wildfire management, clean hydrogen, carbon capture and battery research, it would provide only a fraction of what Biden initially proposed to spend on installing a network of electric vehicle charging stations. Instead, critics say, it would expand highways that studies show encourage more driving.

Even with the down payment that Congress is making on Biden’s plans to aggressively shrink carbon emissions from power plants and tailpipes, the IPCC report is likely to call for ever-more stringent cuts to keep the planet temperatures from rising 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-Industrial Revolution levels. Such a cap was the most ambitious target of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

The Earth's atmosphere is operating on a carbon budget with very little headroom left before the world would cross that 1.5-degree threshold, a level that’s likely to imperil many low-lying island nations. Doing so would lock in sea-level rises and contribute to feed-back loops that make it harder to stem further temperature increases.

Even leaders who crafted the Paris Climate Agreement acknowledged individual nations will need to speed their efforts to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions if they even want to avoid breaching the deal’s less-stringent 2 degrees target.

Based on current government targets, the world is on pace to see temperatures climb 3 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. The world already has warmed 1.2 degrees Celsius since the Industrial Revolution.

But the chasm between strategies of the progressives and moderates inside the Democratic Party for dealing with the problem is putting its thin majority and the Biden administration in a bind, with Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.) the latest lawmaker to express her opposition to the framework.

Sinema’s resistance to passing a package as large as $3.5 trillion has prompted a backlash from progressives, who worry that the party’s moderates may squander the opportunity if they allow a single lawmaker to dictate the terms of the package.

“I just don't subscribe to a reality where she makes all the decisions,” Rep. Jared Huffman (D-Calif.) said. Sinema's office did not reply to a request for comment.

Though the infrastructure plan drew support from moderate Republicans who have been seen as amenable to modest steps to combat climate action, the more aggressive action under consideration in the much larger bill — like a clean energy standard that squeezes fossil fuels — aren’t expected to win any GOP members.

That type of shove-it-down-your-throats, unilateral climate offensive is less likely to be durable if Republicans return to power, said Corey Schrodt, legislative affairs manager with the nonpartisan think tank Niskanen Center. While he said more aggressive action on climate is needed, Schrodt praised the bipartisan infrastructure deal for its climate provisions.

But progressives derided it as too weak. Trying to appease Democratic moderates while attracting Republican votes has shackled the responses to climate change they’ve called for, leaving the U.S. and world short of necessary steps to rein in emissions, said Lauren Maunus, advocacy director with the youth-led progressive environmental group Sunrise Movement.

“There's still this stick of ‘We need to hold on to bipartisanship in order to govern,’ even though that is completely out of touch with the majority of the American public that voted for Biden and support mostly Democratic policies,” she said. “There's just a sort of gap in the logical scientific understanding of what's actually required to stave off the worst of the climate crisis. And we're talking about the worst — what we're dealing with now is far from the worst.”

But Tony Leiserowitz, director of the Yale Project on Climate Communication, disputed progressives’ notion that Republicans would hesitate to reverse Democratic-only climate legislation if they return to power. Progressives cite broad public support for climate action, but Leiserowitz said that’s not “a sophisticated look at the polling.”

Opposition from conservatives for climate action remains strong, he said, and it’s only the rising support from liberal Democrats and growing interest from independents that almost entirely explains climate change’s ascension among national priorities. Republican sentiment has remained low and flat for more than a decade, Leiserowitz said.

And yet, bipartisanship might also relegate the planet to a losing position in the climate change fight, he said, because the issue is not important to GOP voters, making it virtually impossible to secure buy-in from Republican legislators.

That sentiment is clear to top Republican lawmakers like Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso, the ranking Republican on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

“All the polling that we're doing is showing concerns with the economy, concerns with crime, concerns with the border, and all of those issues are ones that President Biden’s administration is polling poorly,” he told POLITICO, adding that he would “do everything I physically can” to stop Senate Democrats’ $3.5 trillion spending plan.

### 2

#### India is building it’s relations with the West on the bedrock of new economic ties­­­­­---that’s key to counterbalancing China in the region

Mohan 21 C. Raja Mohan [director of the National University of Singapore’s Institute of South Asian Studies.],3-19-2021, "India Romances the West," Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/19/india-modi-west-quad-china-biden-non-aligned/ , accessed 8/8/2021 EH and Brett

In affirming that the “Quad has come of age” at the first-ever summit of the Quadrilateral Dialogue with the United States, Japan, and Australia last week, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sent an unmistakable signal that India is no longer reluctant to work with the West in the global arena, including in the security domain. The country’s new readiness to participate in Western forums marks a decisive turn in independent India’s world view. That view was long defined by the idea of nonalignment and its later avatar, strategic autonomy—both of which were about standing apart from, if not against, post-World-War-II Western alliances. But today—driven by shifting balance of power in Asia, India’s clear-eyed view of its national interest, and the successful efforts of consecutive U.S. presidents—India is taking increasingly significant steps toward the West. The Quad is not the only Western institution with which India might soon be associated. New Delhi is set to engage with a wider range of Western forums in the days ahead, including the G-7 and the Five Eyes. Britain has invited India to participate in the G-7 meeting in London this summer, along with other non-members Australia and South Korea. Although India has been invited to G-7 outreach meetings—a level or two below the summits—for a number of years, the London meeting is widely expected to be a testing ground for the creation of a “Democracy Group of Ten,” or D-10. In Washington today, there are multiple ideas for U.S.-led technology coalitions to reduce the current Western dependence on China. Two initiatives unveiled at the Quad summit—the working group on critical technologies, and the vaccine initiative to supply Southeast Asia—underline the prospects for an Indian role in the trusted technology supply chains of the United States and its partners. Along with Japan, India also joined a meeting of the Five Eyes—the intelligence-sharing alliance between the United States, Canada, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand— in October 2020 to discuss ways to give law enforcement agencies access to encrypted communications on platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram. Five Eyes is a tightly knit alliance, and it is unlikely India will be a member any time soon. But it is very much possible to imagine greater consultations between the Five Eyes and the Indian intelligence establishment.To be sure, India’s engagement with Western institutions is not entirely new. India joined the British-led Commonwealth in 1947, but only after India’s first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, made sure the forum was stripped of any security role in the postwar world. Refusing to join military alliances was a key plank of India’s policy of non-alignment. Nehru turned to the United States when his policy of befriending China and supporting its sensitivities collapsed by the end of the 1950s. Facing reverses in a military conflict with China on the long and contested border in 1962, Nehru sought massive defense assistance from U.S. President John Kennedy. With the deaths of both Kennedy and Nehru soon after, the prospects for strategic cooperation between New Delhi and Washington receded quickly. The 1970s saw India drift away from the West on three levels. On the East-West axis, it drew closer to the Soviet Union. On the North-South axis, it became the champion of the Third World. This was reinforced by the sharply leftward turn of India’s domestic politics and a deliberate severing of commercial cooperation with the West. Many concluded in the 1970s that anti-Americanism was part of India’s genetic code. After all, India voted more often against the United States at the United Nations during the Cold War than even the Soviet Union. The idea that India is irreconcilably opposed to the United States was the dominant assessment in both country’s capitals. Most scholars of Indian foreign policy assumed that come what may—at home or abroad—India would forever be alienated from the West. But the story of India’s international relations over the last three decades has been one of a slow but definite advances in cooperation with the United States and the West. The Quad summit is not only a culmination of that long trajectory, but also a major step up. It was the reform of the Indian economy at the end of the Cold War, along with the collapse of the Soviet Union as India’s superpower partner, that created the basis for the renewal of ties between New Delhi and Washington. But even as expanding commercial ties began to stabilize and deepen the bilateral relationship in the 1990s, Washington’s activism on Kashmir and its eagerness to denuclearize India made matters difficult for New Delhi. Beset with domestic turbulence and an era of weak coalition governments, New Delhi embarked on a hedging strategy by joining the Russian initiative for a so-called strategic triangle with Moscow and Beijing that eventually evolved into the BRICS Forum after Brazil and South Africa joined. U.S. President George W. Bush, however, revolutionized U.S. policy on India in the 2000s by discarding Washington’s mediating impulse on Kashmir, decoupling engagement with New Delhi from that with Islamabad, and resolving the dispute over non-proliferation. Bush recognized that India is critical for the construction of a stable balance of power in Asia as the continent was being transformed by the rapid rise of China. But just when Washington was ready to transform relations with New Delhi, India was paralyzed by self-doubt. If then-Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee boldly called India and the United States “natural allies” in 1998—at a time when no one seemed interested in Washington—his successor, Manmohan Singh, reverted to type. His government began to reinvent non-alignment, keep distance from the United States, and double down on the principle of strategic autonomy. Even as Indian-Chinese tensions multiplied after 2008—when the global financial crisis seemed to have convinced the Chinese leadership that the United States was in terminal decline, with the consequence that Beijing adopted a more assertive posture towards its neighbors—the Singh government continued to hedge against U.S. power. Modi, who became prime minister in 2014, began to reverse New Delhi’s resistance to a deeper partnership with Washington. His affirmation in his 2016 address to the U.S. Congress that India’s “historic hesitations” to engage the United States were over was not just a rhetorical flourish. Modi resolved the remaining issues that had prevented implementation of the historic 2008 Indian-U.S. nuclear deal, renewed the 2005 agreement for defense cooperation, and signed the so-called foundational defense agreements that have facilitated interoperability between the two country’s armed forces. He widened the annual bilateral Malabar exercises to include Japan in 2015 and Australia in 2020, helped revive the dormant Quad in 2017, came up with his own version of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy in 2018, and joined the Quad summit in 2021. Beyond the relationship with the United States, Modi also revived India’s strategic interest in the Commonwealth, strengthened ties with the European Union, and joined the European Alliance for Multilateralism. He sought to make India part of the solution to mitigating climate change, supported “multi-stakeholderism” in global internet governance, initiated the International Solar Alliance and the Indo-Pacific maritime partnership with France, and is poised to lay the foundations for a substantive strategic partnership with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson when they meet in India next month. Every one of these moves was against the predominant instincts of India’s political class, bureaucratic establishment, and foreign-policy community. Two factors have facilitated this. First, Modi carried little of the anti-Western ideological baggage of the nationalists who thrive in his own party or the political left and center that prefer to keep a safe distance from Washington. Modi’s judgement that India needs a more productive relationship with the United States and the West is rooted in the simple calculus of national interest rather than any involved reasoning.

#### The TRIPS waiver sets the stage for India to use forced tech transfer to secure vaccines---that decks relations

Yogesh Pai & Prashant Reddy Thikkavarapu 21, Dr. Yogesh Pai has a PhD from the Inter-University Centre for IPR Studies, CUSAT, Kochi, in the area of Regulation of Standard-Essential Patents in India. Prashant Reddy Thikkavarapu Assistant Professor, National Academy of Legal Studies & Research (NALSAR) University of Law,. Hyderabad. Scrolli.in, Jun 01, 2021. “Even if WTO waives IP on vaccines, India will face challenge translating this into mass production” <https://scroll.in/article/996079/even-if-wto-waives-ip-on-vaccines-india-will-face-challenge-translating-this-into-mass-production> brett

With the United States agreeing to text-based negotiations on the revised Intellectual Property Rights waiver proposal jointly submitted by India and South Africa at the World Trade Organisation, the European Union remains the last major power opposing this proposal.

While we await the results of possibly lengthy text-based negotiations, it is necessary for the government of India to come out with a white paper explaining how exactly it intends to operationalise a possible IP waiver for vaccines, if and when such a waiver comes into effect.

The aim of such an exercise should be to explain to the world the manner in which this waiver will translate into the mass production of vaccines to meet the immediate medical needs of the developing world.

The initial wisdom among the proponents of the waiver is based on an assumption that a waiver will remove the legal barriers to production of vaccines. But as is widely acknowledged by most experts, developing countries will not be able to reverse-engineer these Covid-19 vaccines on their own. They will require active technology transfer from vaccines developers in the West before they can begin manufacture of any vaccines. These challenges are more practical than legal.

Tech-transfer challenge

For starters, even if the IP waiver does come into effect, unless the tech-owning vaccine producers residing abroad (i.e. beyond India’s legal limits) are forced under their respective domestic law to part with critical know-how and physical inputs (for example, cell lines), a waiver in itself will not translate into technology transfer in favour of firms willing to produce vaccines in India.

Thus the Pfizer/BioNtech and Moderna’s mRNA vaccine technologies, which are currently not produced in India, may still remain inaccessible under the waiver, unless countries such as the U.S. where these firms primarily reside engage in forced technology transfer under their domestic laws.

It is very unlikely that the Biden administration will force American companies to transfer their technology to Indian companies for no remuneration. The domestic political costs of such a policy would be too high for the Biden administration.

A domestic policy option for India is to threaten Western vaccine makers in India with punitive action against their existing patents for other products if they fail to voluntary transfer technology to Indian companies. Such a move towards forced technology transfer is the policy equivalent of throwing a grenade at India’s trade relations with the West without solving the problem of access to technology.

Presuming India does enact a legislative measure to force technology transfer, it is still not clear how a legal obligation to transfer technology to new firms willing to produce vaccines will lead to actual vaccine production.

#### US-India economic ties are key to strategic co-operation

Gupta 20, Anubhav Gupta is the associate director of the Asia Society Policy Institute in New York. WPR, March 5, 2020. “Despite the Trump-Modi ‘Love,’ Trade Is Still the Weak Link in U.S.-India Relations” <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/28579/despite-the-trump-modi-love-trade-is-still-the-weak-link-in-us-india-relations> brett

Despite winning a substantial mandate in elections last year, Modi’s inclination has been to double down on a feckless approach to trade and to push a Hindu-nationalist social agenda that endangers internal stability. India’s fast-growing economy helped solidify the U.S.-India partnership after decades of bilateral aloofness during the Cold War. Without a more open, market-oriented economy, India’s growth trajectory will decline, undermining the economic foundation of the relationship as well as India’s future capabilities, and in turn, India’s utility as a partner in the region.

In the aftermath of Trump’s visit, some analysts have dismissed the trade tensions as a minor hurdle and pointed to the strength of defense ties as reassurance, arguing that the cause of paramount importance—a strategic partnership to deal with a rising China—is progressing unabated. But there is no guarantee that trade differences can continue to be compartmentalized when two economic nationalists are in charge. It also remains an open question whether growing defense sales are taking place within a truly strategic framework or simply on a transactional basis for both sides. Most importantly, it assumes that economic relations are not part of the strategic puzzle.

This is evident in the decision by Trump to leave the Trans-Pacific Partnership shortly after winning election, and by Modi to abandon the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. If the U.S.-India strategic imperative is to manage China’s rise and boost their own engagement and presence in the region, these twin actions, driven by economic nationalism, were self-inflected blunders of the highest order.

Without a vibrant commercial relationship and a constructive approach to trade that is anchored in the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy, the United States and India will impede their own strategic endgame for the region. For this reason, the absence of a trade deal last week makes any celebrations of a U.S.-India partnership that is “stronger than ever before” ring a little hollow.

#### Indian ocean goes nuclear---India’s role is key to prevent it.

Gamage 17 (Rajni Gamage is a senior analyst with the Maritime Security Programme at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore., 11/5/17, “Why the Indian Ocean Must Not Become Like the South China Sea”, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-the-indian-ocean-must-not-become-the-south-china-sea-23028?page=0%2C2)

Rising Strategic Uncertainty in the Indian Ocean The pursuit of contesting regional orders by major powers has engendered a strategic environment of uncertainty and mistrust in the Indo-Pacific. As geopolitical developments at land and sea feed off one another, the maritime domain has been marked as the latest theater of war. These dynamics have been most evident in the East and South China Seas, where the complexity of issues at hand is telling. A case in point is China’s construction of military facilities on artificial islands proximate to disputed maritime areas, against a backdrop of contesting interpretations of international law. As regional and extra-regional states face a rising China on all fronts, a climate of strategic anxiety prevails in anticipation of its potential impact on the existing rules-based international order. Such anxieties inevitably spill over into the Indian Ocean Region and manifest in ways unique to that part of the world. A rising India with aspirations to global-power status finds its regional dominance challenged by China’s two-ocean strategy and Belt and Road Initiative. In the maritime realm, India’s response comprises internal naval and port modernization, and increased naval engagements and exercises with neighboring littorals and external powers that have major stakes in the region. This has not, however, had any noticeable effects in tempering regional anxieties. Heavy maritime traffic in increasingly congested regional waters operate alongside this tense backdrop. The risk that various surface vessels could collide—whether naval or commercial—and the risk of submarine accidents is on the rise. A number of regional and extra-regional states have forward-deployed their navies in the Indian Ocean, independently or as part of various task forces. There have already been several maritime accidents involving warships and air crashes in the Persian Gulf and the northern Arabian Sea between regional and extra-regional navies—some of which escalated politically. The Iranian Navy, for instance, has confronted its smaller neighbors and the U.S. Navy by conducting high-speed naval maneuvers and missile firings, and it has used drones to shadow U.S. naval assets. Late last year, an Indian submarine attempted to enter into waters close to Gwadar Port and was reportedly repelled by the Pakistan Navy. Miscommunications and misperceptions are likely to result from such incidents and could escalate very fast to negative political and military expressions. It is against this setting that a code of conduct (COC) for the Indian Ocean was first proposed.

### 3

CP: Member nations of the World Trade Organization should enter into a prior and binding consultation with the World Health Organization over reducing intellectual property protections for medicines. Member nations will support the proposal and adopt the results of consultation.

#### WHO says yes

Kimball 5/7 [(Spencer, news editor with CNBC.com) “WHO chief urges world to follow U.S. lead and support waiving Covid vaccine patent protections,” CNBC, 5/7/2021] JL

World Health Organization Director General-Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Friday urged other countries, particularly the Group of Seven industrialized nations, to follow the U.S. example and support a World Trade Organization motion to temporarily waive Covid-19 vaccine patent protections.

“Wednesday’s announcement by the U.S. that it will support a temporary waiver of intellectual property protections for Covid-19 vaccines is a significant statement of solidarity and support for vaccine equity,” Tedros said at a press briefing. “I know that this is not a politically easy thing to do, so I very much appreciate the leadership of the U.S. and we urge other countries to follow their example.”

#### Consultation displays strong leadership, authority, and cohesion among member states which are key to WTO legitimacy

Gostin et al 15 [(Lawrence O., Linda D. & Timothy J. O’Neill Professor of Global Health Law at Georgetown University, Faculty Director of the O’Neill Institute for National & Global Health Law, Director of the World Health Organization Collaborating Center on Public Health Law & Human Rights, JD from Duke University) “The Normative Authority of the World Health Organization,” Georgetown University Law Center, 5/2/2015] JL

Members want the WHO to exert leadership, harmonize disparate activities, and set priorities. Yet they resist intrusions into their sovereignty, and want to exert control. In other words, ‘everyone desires coordination, but no one wants to be coordinated.’ States often ardently defend their geostrategic interests. As the Indonesian virus-sharing episode illustrates, the WHO is pulled between power blocs, with North America and Europe (the primary funders) on one side and emerging economies such as Brazil, China, and India on the other. An inherent tension exists between richer ‘net contributor’ states and poorer ‘net recipient’ states, with the former seeking smaller WHO budgets and the latter larger budgets.

Overall, national politics drive self-interest, with states resisting externally imposed obligations for funding and action. Some political leaders express antipathy to, even distrust of, UN institutions, viewing them as bureaucratic and inefficient. In this political environment, it is unsurprising that members fail to act as shareholders. Ebola placed into stark relief the failure of the international community to increase capacities as required by the IHR. Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone had some of the world's weakest health systems, with little capacity to either monitor or respond to the Ebola epidemic.20 This caused enormous suffering in West Africa and placed countries throughout the region e and the world e at risk. Member states should recognize that the health of their citizens depends on strengthening others' capacity. The WHO has a central role in creating systems to facilitate and encourage such cooperation.

The WHO cannot succeed unless members act as shareholders, foregoing a measure of sovereignty for the global common good. It is in all states' interests to have a strong global health leader, safeguarding health security, building health systems, and reducing health inequalities. But that will not happen unless members fund the Organization generously, grant it authority and flexibility, and hold it accountable.

#### WHO is critical to disease prevention – it is the only international institution that can disperse information, standardize global public health, and facilitate public-private cooperation

Murtugudde 20 [(Raghu, professor of atmospheric and oceanic science at the University of Maryland, PhD in mechanical engineering from Columbia University) “Why We Need the World Health Organization Now More Than Ever,” Science, 4/19/2020] JL

WHO continues to play an indispensable role during the current COVID-19 outbreak itself. In November 2018, the US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine organised a workshop to explore lessons from past influenza outbreaks and so develop recommendations for pandemic preparedness for 2030. The salient findings serve well to underscore the critical role of WHO for humankind.

The world’s influenza burden has only increased in the last two decades, a period in which there have also been 30 new zoonotic diseases. A warming world with increasing humidity, lost habitats and industrial livestock/poultry farming has many opportunities for pathogens to move from animals and birds to humans. Increasing global connectivity simply catalyses this process, as much as it catalyses economic growth.

WHO coordinates health research, clinical trials, drug safety, vaccine development, surveillance, virus sharing, etc. The importance of WHO’s work on immunisation across the globe, especially with HIV, can hardly be overstated. It has a rich track record of collaborating with private-sector organisations to advance research and development of health solutions and improving their access in the global south.

It discharges its duties while maintaining a dynamic equilibrium between such diverse and powerful forces as national securities, economic interests, human rights and ethics. COVID-19 has highlighted how political calculations can hamper data-sharing and mitigation efforts within and across national borders, and WHO often simply becomes a convenient political scapegoat in such situations.

International Health Regulations, a 2005 agreement between 196 countries to work together for global health security, focuses on detection, assessment and reporting of public health events, and also includes non-pharmaceutical interventions such as travel and trade restrictions. WHO coordinates and helps build capacity to implement IHR.

#### Extinction – defense is wrong

Piers Millett 17, Consultant for the World Health Organization, PhD in International Relations and Affairs, University of Bradford, Andrew Snyder-Beattie, “Existential Risk and Cost-Effective Biosecurity”, Health Security, Vol 15(4), http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1089/hs.2017.0028

Historically, disease events have been responsible for the greatest death tolls on humanity. The 1918 flu was responsible for more than 50 million deaths,1 while smallpox killed perhaps 10 times that many in the 20th century alone.2 The Black Death was responsible for killing over 25% of the European population,3 while other pandemics, such as the plague of Justinian, are thought to have killed 25 million in the 6th century—constituting over 10% of the world’s population at the time.4 It is an open question whether a future pandemic could result in outright human extinction or the irreversible collapse of civilization.

A skeptic would have many good reasons to think that existential risk from disease is unlikely. Such a disease would need to spread worldwide to remote populations, overcome rare genetic resistances, and evade detection, cures, and countermeasures. Even evolution itself may work in humanity’s favor: Virulence and transmission is often a trade-off, and so evolutionary pressures could push against maximally lethal wild-type pathogens.5,6

While these arguments point to a very small risk of human extinction, they do not rule the possibility out entirely. Although rare, there are recorded instances of species going extinct due to disease—primarily in amphibians, but also in 1 mammalian species of rat on Christmas Island.7,8 There are also historical examples of large human populations being almost entirely wiped out by disease, especially when multiple diseases were simultaneously introduced into a population without immunity. The most striking examples of total population collapse include native American tribes exposed to European diseases, such as the Massachusett (86% loss of population), Quiripi-Unquachog (95% loss of population), and theWestern Abenaki (which suffered a staggering 98% loss of population).

In the modern context, no single disease currently exists that combines the worst-case levels of transmissibility, lethality, resistance to countermeasures, and global reach. But many diseases are proof of principle that each worst-case attribute can be realized independently. For example, some diseases exhibit nearly a 100% case fatality ratio in the absence of treatment, such as rabies or septicemic plague. Other diseases have a track record of spreading to virtually every human community worldwide, such as the 1918 flu,10 and seroprevalence studies indicate that other pathogens, such as chickenpox and HSV-1, can successfully reach over 95% of a population.11,12 Under optimal virulence theory, natural evolution would be an unlikely source for pathogens with the highest possible levels of transmissibility, virulence, and global reach. But advances in biotechnology might allow the creation of diseases that combine such traits. Recent controversy has already emerged over a number of scientific experiments that resulted in viruses with enhanced transmissibility, lethality, and/or the ability to overcome therapeutics.13-17 Other experiments demonstrated that mousepox could be modified to have a 100% case fatality rate and render a vaccine ineffective.18 In addition to transmissibility and lethality, studies have shown that other disease traits, such as incubation time, environmental survival, and available vectors, could be modified as well.19-2

### Case

#### The plan leads to counterfeit vaccines.

James M. Roberts 21, Research Fellow for Economic Freedom and Growth in the Center for International Trade and Economics, of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy, at The Heritage Foundation. Gavin Zhao of the Heritage Young Leaders Program assisted in the preparation of this report. The Heritage Foundation, CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND ECONOMICS. No. 3628 | June 9, 2021. “Biden’s Wink at Global Theft of U.S. Vaccine Patents Is Bad for America and the World” <https://www.heritage.org/economic-and-property-rights/report/bidens-wink-global-theft-us-vaccine-patents-bad-america-and-the> brett

The theft by actors in foreign countries of the trade secrets in patented pharmaceutical products made by American companies constitutes a Special 301 violation.

Waiving patent protection also opens the door to the overseas production of counterfeit vaccines that could be ineffective—even deadly. As the authors of a study commissioned by the National Institutes of Health report:

Counterfeit drugs pose a public health hazard, waste consumer income, and reduce the incentive to engage in research and development and innovation.… [C]ounterfeit drugs may raise concerns among consumers about safety and may reduce patient medication adherence.13

#### That turns case.

Erwin A. Blackstone et al. 14, PhD, Professor of Economics, Joseph P. Fuhr, Jr Professor of Economics, PhD, Steve Pociask President, The American Consumer Institute, MA. Am Health Drug Benefits. 2014 Jun; 7(4): 216–224. “The Health and Economic Effects of Counterfeit Drugs” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4105729/> brett

Especially important in terms of innovation are the pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical industries. These industries typically spend an average of 15% to 17% of their revenues on R&D, which is among the highest rates of R&D spending of any industry. For example, in 2006, the US pharmaceutical industry spent 22% of sales on R&D, whereas all manufacturing spent only 3.3% of their sales.45 Counterfeit drugs reduce the incentive to engage in R&D. Indeed, the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy estimated that counterfeit drugs generated $75 billion in revenues in 2010.46 This represents a substantial percentage of lost revenues to the pharmaceutical industry. However, the attraction of counterfeits is their low prices, and the loss to the industry is presumably less than the estimated sales of the counterfeit drugs, because some consumers would likely not have purchased the drugs at the standard price. Nevertheless, the loss is significant and imposes a cost to society in the form of reduced incentives for innovation.

An example of the loss from counterfeit drugs comes from the experience of Pfizer. In 2010, authorities in 53 countries confiscated 8.4 million tablets, capsules, and vials of counterfeit Pfizer products.46 This part of the cost of fighting counterfeit drugs is borne by the companies. Brian Donnelly, PhD, Director of Pfizer's global security team (the unit that battles counterfeiters) is a pharmacologist who had worked as an FBI special agent for 21 years and is now leading the work on counterfeit drugs.46 Resources that could be used for more productive ventures are instead used to deal with the problem of counterfeit or adulterated goods. Such security officers investigate, and then seek cooperation, from public authorities to make arrests.

#### The issue is lack of resources, not IPR.

Brown 21, Delphine Knight Brown is a Partner in the firm’s Litigation Practice Group, and Intellectual Property Litigation Group. With over twenty years of trial experience, Delphine’s practice focuses on complex intellectual property and technology cases, with extensive experience in the life sciences industry. Freeborn Attorneys at Law, Summer 2021. “Will TRIPS Waiver of IP Protection for COVID-19 Vaccines Serve Global Need?” <https://www.freeborn.com/sites/default/files/downloads/Powerhouse%20Points_Newsletter_Summer%202021%20Final.pdf> brett

When the IP waiver concept was first proposed last October, Moderna agreed not to enforce its COVID-19 related patents during the pandemic. But despite Moderna’s voluntary waiver of its IP rights, no other company has stepped up to manufacture the Moderna vaccine. The most significant obstacle to COVID-19 vaccine supply is not just the IP rights that companies have obtained, or are pursuing, but rather the lack of raw materials and manufacturing facilities to produce the vaccines. Currently, there are shortages of raw materials and equipment used to make vaccines and biological products.

Unlike drug manufacturing, vaccine production processes are extremely complex and difficult to develop without support from current manufacturers. Additional manufacturers would need to have or acquire skilled expertise in mRNA technology and create or reconfigure manufacturing sites. Manufacturing vaccines requires additional processing steps and testing to assure quality and consistency. Manufacturing vaccines will also likely use the patented technology of other companies, who have not waived their IP rights. Investment in manufacturing is also an important piece of the solution. Whether existing companies can retool facilities and jump start manufacturing or new facilities need to be created through investment will be outcome determinative.

There is little doubt that the waiver proposals would at the very least up-end the existing incentives, including the prospect of future pharmaceutical innovation and development of products, that resulted in the rapid development and approval of COVID-19 vaccines. Moreover, the TRIPS waiver proposals may not have the desired effect of boosting COVID vaccine production and availability of mRNA vaccines. On the other hand, recent attempts at voluntary licensing and technology transfer agreements related to adenovirus vector technology have resulted in increased vaccine production and availability. A TRIPS waiver may not be as effective for more complex vaccine production.

Scaling up COVID-19 vaccine production is not a one-size-fits -all proposition. Ensuring equitable availability and delivery complicates the matter further.

#### New manufacturers trade off with current ones --- turns case because they won’t make vaccines as effectively.

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Not to be ignored in any discussion of short term effects is the potential impact a waiver would have on current vaccine manufacture. Like any product, the manufacture of vaccines is contingent on the availability of raw materials, which are not unlimited in supply. The waiver of IP rights would in principle substantially increase demand for these raw materials, resulting not only in higher prices but potential interference in the supply chain for established and proven vaccine manufacturers. There is no guarantee that manufacturers entering the market on the back of a TRIPS waiver would have the ability to produce vaccines with the quality and throughput of current suppliers.

#### The waiver is too slow

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In addition, neither are there news reports of any other critical drug used for Covid 19 treatment or their shortage nor about a patent related hurdle in the manufacture of any drug used for Covid 19 treatment. For argument’s sake, let us assume that many other patented drugs are being used for Covid -19, which is in short supply and there is no such voluntary license given by the patent owner. Then will this patent waiver help? The answer is simple, unlikely for a year or more. It will be impossible to reverse engineer and set the entire manufacturing process so quickly. If the present technology owner is not willing to support, it would not be easy to find a parallel process of creating the drug in a short duration. Procurement of the active ingredients and raw materials is another challenge. Getting the required approvals and thereafter manufacturing a drug is a time-consuming process. To launch a new drug requires certain safety protocols and clinical trials. A waiver of IP rights will not waive regulatory requirements for drug approvals. Hence, even if a new Indian manufacturer attempts to make a drug, it invariably may take minimum of two to three years. By a waiver of patents, no one can compel the existing manufacturer to share the know-how. So, a waiver of patents on drugs relating to Covid-19 may not give any immediate effect in sourcing drugs for managing Covid19.

#### Trade multiplies the risk of war---empirics.

Lucas Hahn 16. Bryant University. April, 2016. Global Economic Expansion and the Prevalence of Militarized Interstate Disputes. <https://digitalcommons.bryant.edu/honors_economics/24/> brett \*MIDs = Militarized Interstate Disputes

3. Neo-Marxist Views on Asymmetrical Trade One of the most supported arguments against the notion that economic expansion promotes peace is that trade, brought about by economic expansion, actually increases MIDs. Many authors have in fact argued that increased economic interdependence and increased trade may have, in some ways, “cheapened war”, and thus made it easier to wage war more frequently (Harrison and Nikolaus 2012). Neo-Marxists and Dependency Theorists argue that the notion that trade promotes peace often depends on the balance of trade between two nations with a trading relationship. If the two nations have a symmetrical trading relationship, then both nations benefit from trade equally and may thus, engage in less conflict just as proposed by many liberal theorists. However, more often than not, the trading relationship between two nations may be asymmetrical. In this case, one nation benefits more than the other. Furthermore, one nation is often more dependent on trade with its partner than the partner is with it. These circumstances can breed violent conflicts (Barbieri and Schneider 1999). Barbieri’s (1996, 40) regression analyses have supported these claims. She found that when dyads (pairs of nation-states) are highly interdependent, they are nearly 25 times more likely to engage in armed conflict than when the dyads are not interdependent. Ultimately, she came to the conclusion that there seems to be a “hurdle effect”. Up to a point trade does seem to promote peace. However, after that point, the balance of trade often becomes disproportionate between two nations and as a result trade promotes conflict.

#### The WTO is a central factor in increasing carbon emissions – causes warming

Bello 08Walden, senior analyst at the Bangkok-based research and advocacy institute Focus on the Global South and professor at the University of the Philippines, July 28, “Derail Doha, Save the Climate”, <http://www.commondreams.org/views/2008/07/29/derail-doha-save-climate/> brett

There’s something surreal about the ongoing World Trade Organization talks in Geneva, which aim at coming up with a new agreement to bring down tariffs in order to expand world trade and resuscitate global growth. In the face of the looming specter of climate change, these negotiations amount to arguing over the arrangement of deck chairs while the Titanic is sinking. Indeed, one of the most important steps in the struggle to come up with a viable strategy to deal with climate change would be the derailment of the so-called “Doha Round.” Global trade is carried out with transportation that is heavily dependent on fossil fuels. It’s estimated that about 60% of the world’s use of oil goes to transportation activities which are more than 95% dependent on fossil fuels. An OECD study estimated that the global transport sector accounts for 20-25% of carbon emissions, with some 66% of this figure accounted for by emissions in the industrialized countries. Global Trade: Deeply Dysfunctional From the point of view of environmental sustainability, global trade has become deeply dysfunctional. Take agricultural trade. As the International Forum on Globalization has pointed out, the average plate of food eaten in Western industrial food-importing nations is likely to have traveled 1,500 miles from its source. Long-distance travel contributes to the absurd situation wherein “three times more food is used to produce food in the industrial agricultural model than is derived in consuming it.” The WTO has been a central factor in increasing carbon emissions from transport. A study by the OECD done in the mid-nineties estimated that by 2004, the year marking the full implementation of free-trade commitments under the WTO’s Uruguay Round, there would have been an increase in the transport of internationally traded goods by 70% over 1992 levels. This figure, notes the New Economics Foundation, “would make a mockery” of the Kyoto Protocol’s mandatory emissions reduction targets for the industrialized countries. Transportation: More Fossil Intensive than Ever Ocean shipping accounts for nearly 80% of the world’s international trade in goods. The fuel commonly used by ships is a mixture of diesel and low-quality oil known as “Bunker C,” which has high levels of carbon and sulfur. As Jerry Mander and Simon Retallack point out, “If not consumed by ships, it would otherwise be considered a waste product.” Aviation, which has the highest growth rate as a mode of transport, is also the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions, with its consumption of fuel expected to rise by 65% from 1990 levels by 2010, according to one study cited by the New Economics Foundation. Other estimates are more pessimistic, with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) suggesting that fuel consumption by civil aviation is going up at the rate of three percent a year and could rise by nearly 350% from 1992 levels by 2050. Note Mander and Retallack: “Each ton of freight moved by plane uses forty nine times as much energy per kilometer as when it’s moved by ship….A two-minute takeoff by a 747 is equal to 2.4 million lawn mowers running for twenty minutes.” In support of trade expansion and global economic growth, authorities have by and large not taxed aviation fuel as well as marine bunker fuel, which now account for 20% of all emissions in the transport sector. Along with fossil-fuel-intensive air transport, fossil-fuel-intensive road transport has also been favored by the expansion of world trade, instead of modes with less emission intensities like rail and marine traffic. In the European Union, for instance, the focus on building up a road transport network led an OECD study to comment that “the way in which the EU liberalization policy has been implemented has favored the less environment-friendly modes and accelerated the decline of rail and inland waterways.” Decoupling Growth and Energy: a Panacea There has been talk about decoupling trade and growth from energy or shifting from fossil fuels to other, less carbon-intensive energy sources. The reality is that the other energy sources being seriously considered are either dangerous, like nuclear power; with deleterious side-effects, like biofuels’ negative impact on food production; or science fiction as this stage, like carbon sequestration and storage technology. For the foreseeable future, trade expansion and global growth will fall in line with their historical trajectory of being correlated with increased greenhouse gas emissions. A sharp U-turn in consumption and growth in the developed countries and a significant decrease in global trade are unavoidable if we are to have a viable strategy against climate change. This will set the stage for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, including from the energy-intensive transportation sector. The outcome of the Doha negotiations will determine whether free trade will intensify or lose momentum. A successful conclusion to Doha will bring us closer to uncontrollable climate change. It will continue what the New Economics Foundation describes as “free trade’s free ride on the global climate.” A derailment of Doha won’t be a sufficient condition to formulate a strategy to contain climate change. But given the likely negative ecological consequences of a successful deal, it’s a necessary condition.

#### Extinction.

Torres 16 (Phil, affiliate scholar @ Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies PhD candidate @ Rice University in tropical conservation biology, Op-ed: Climate Change Is the Most Urgent Existential Risk, <http://ieet.org/index.php/IEET/more/Torres20160807>)

Humanity faces a number of formidable challenges this century. Threats to our collective survival stem from asteroids and comets, supervolcanoes, global pandemics, climate change, biodiversity loss, nuclear weapons, biotechnology, synthetic biology, nanotechnology, and artificial superintelligence. With such threats in mind, an informal survey conducted by the Future of Humanity Institute placed the probability of human extinction this century at 19%. To put this in perspective, it means that the average American is more than a thousand times more likely to die in a human extinction event than a plane crash.\* So, given limited resources, which risks should we prioritize? Many intellectual leaders, including Elon Musk, Stephen Hawking, and Bill Gates, have suggested that artificial superintelligence constitutes one of the most significant risks to humanity. And this may be correct in the long-term. But I would argue that two other risks, namely climate change and biodiveristy loss, should take priority right now over every other known threat. Why? Because these ongoing catastrophes in slow-motion will frame our existential predicament on Earth not just for the rest of this century, but for literally thousands of years to come. As such, they have the capacity to raise or lower the probability of other risks scenarios unfolding. Multiplying Threats Ask yourself the following: are wars more or less likely in a world marked by extreme weather events, megadroughts, food supply disruptions, and sea-level rise? Are terrorist attacks more or less likely in a world beset by the collapse of global ecosystems, agricultural failures, economic uncertainty, and political instability? Both government officials and scientists agree that the answer is “more likely.” For example, the current Director of the CIA, John Brennan, recently identified “the impact of climate change” as one of the “deeper causes of this rising instability” in countries like Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, and Ukraine. Similarly, the former Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, has described climate change as a “threat multiplier” with “the potential to exacerbate many of the challenges we are dealing with today — from infectious disease to terrorism.” The Department of Defense has also affirmed a connection. In a 2015 report, it states, “Global climate change will aggravate problems such as poverty, social tensions, environmental degradation, ineffectual leadership and weak political institutions that threaten stability in a number of countries.” Scientific studies have further shown a connection between the environmental crisis and violent conflicts. For example, a 2015 paper in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences argues that climate change was a causal factor behind the record-breaking 2007-2010 drought in Syria. This drought led to a mass migration of farmers into urban centers, which fueled the 2011 Syrian civil war. Some observers, including myself, have suggested that this struggle could be the beginning of World War III, given the complex tangle of international involvement and overlapping interests. The study’s conclusion is also significant because the Syrian civil war was the Petri dish in which the Islamic State consolidated its forces, later emerging as the largest and most powerful terrorist organization in human history. A Perfect Storm The point is that climate change and biodiversity loss could very easily push societies to the brink of collapse. This will exacerbate existing geopolitical tensions and introduce entirely new power struggles between state and nonstate actors. At the same time, advanced technologies will very likely become increasingly powerful and accessible. As I’ve written elsewhere, the malicious agents of the future will have bulldozers rather than shovels to dig mass graves for their enemies. The result is a perfect storm of more conflicts in the world along with unprecedentedly dangerous weapons. If the conversation were to end here, we’d have ample reason for placing climate change and biodiversity loss at the top of our priority lists. But there are other reasons they ought to be considered urgent threats. I would argue that they could make humanity more vulnerable to a catastrophe involving superintelligence and even asteroids. The basic reasoning is the same for both cases. Consider superintelligence first. Programming a superintelligence whose values align with ours is a formidable task even in stable circumstances. As Nick Bostrom argues in his 2014 book, we should recognize the “default outcome” of superintelligence to be “doom.” Now imagine trying to solve these problems amidst a rising tide of interstate wars, civil unrest, terrorist attacks, and other tragedies? The societal stress caused by climate change and biodiversity loss will almost certainly compromise important conditions for creating friendly AI, such as sufficient funding, academic programs to train new scientists, conferences on AI, peer-reviewed journal publications, and communication/collaboration between experts of different fields, such as computer science and ethics. It could even make an “AI arms race” more likely, thereby raising the probability of a malevolent superintelligence being created either on purpose or by mistake. Similarly, imagine that astronomers discover a behemoth asteroid barreling toward Earth. Will designing, building, and launching a spacecraft to divert the assassin past our planet be easier or more difficult in a world preoccupied with other survival issues? In a relatively peaceful world, one could imagine an asteroid actually bringing humanity together by directing our attention toward a common threat. But if the “conflict multipliers” of climate change and biodiversity loss have already catapulted civilization into chaos and turmoil, I strongly suspect that humanity will become more, rather than less, susceptible to dangers of this sort. Context Risks We can describe the dual threats of climate change and biodiversity loss as “context risks.” Neither is likely to directly cause the extinction of our species. But both will define the context in which civilization confronts all the other threats before us. In this way, they could indirectly contribute to the overall danger of annihilation — and this worrisome effect could be significant. For example, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the effects of climate change will be “severe,” “pervasive,” and “irreversible.” Or, as a 2016 study published in Nature and authored by over twenty scientists puts it, the consequences of climate change “will extend longer than the entire history of human civilization thus far.” Furthermore, a recent article in Science Advances confirms that humanity has already escorted the biosphere into the sixth mass extinction event in life’s 3.8 billion year history on Earth. Yet another study suggests that we could be approaching a sudden, irreversible, catastrophic collapse of the global ecosystem. If this were to occur, it could result in “widespread social unrest, economic instability and loss of human life.” Given the potential for environmental degradation to elevate the likelihood of nuclear wars, nuclear terrorism, engineered pandemics, a superintelligence takeover, and perhaps even an impact winter, it ought to take precedence over all other risk concerns — at least in the near-term. Let’s make sure we get our priorities straight.