### Plan

#### Plan: The Arab Republic of Egypt should recognize an unconditional right for workers to strike.

#### Constitutional amendment is normal means.

Brudney 20 Brudney, J. J. (2020). The Right to Strike is Recognised as Customary International Law. *Yale Law*, 10–11. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781509933587.ch-011/SJKS

Recognition of the right to strike as fundamental by two key ILO supervisory bodies is reinforced by affirmation of the right within a broad framework of international covenants, transnational conventions and judicial decisions, and national constitutions. The right to strike is recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations (ICESCR).47 It has been incorporated into the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) by that Covenant’s Human Rights Committee, which supervises the Covenant’s implementation.48 Although these two treaties are more familiar starting points for international human rights analysis than the ILO Conventions, the Article focuses primarily on the Convention 87 applications because of their extensive in-depth nature. In this regard, it is notable that the two U.N. Covenants declare a specific commitment to Convention 87, which is the only other international convention they even mention, and the two treaty bodies regularly apply their relevant articles in terms that are consistent with ILO application of that convention.49

#### The government is cracking down on strikes to deter worker mobilization and is planning to further restrict labor rights which violates IHL.

Amnesty International ’17 [Amnesty International, an international non-governmental organization focused on human rights, with its headquarters in the United Kingdom, “Egypt: Relentless assault on rights of workers and trade unionists”, 04-30-2017, [https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2017/04/egypt-relentless-assault-on-rights-of-workers-and-trade-unionists/]//pranav](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2017/04/egypt-relentless-assault-on-rights-of-workers-and-trade-unionists/%5d//pranav)

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Dozens of workers and trade unionists in Egypt have faced arrest, detention, dismissal from work or trials in military courts, merely for exercizing their freedom of expression, association and assembly, Amnesty International said in a statement published to mark Labour Day on 1 May. Amid rising economic hardship in Egypt and a wave labour strikes in the private and public sector, as well as military-owned industries, the government is using a series of disciplinary measures and criminal sanctions to crack down on workers and trade unionists. It is also seeking to amend existing laws to further restrict labour rights. “The Egyptian authorities have waged a punitive campaign against workers and trade unionists to deter and punish them from mobilizing or going on strike. Demanding your labour rights and expressing your grievances should not be a criminal offence. The right to strike and peaceful assembly are enshrined, both, in Egypt’s Constitution and international human rights law. Egyptian authorities must stop punishing people for exercising and demanding their rights,” said Najia Bounaim, Campaigns Director for North Africa at Amnesty International. Many workers have been arrested simply for taking part in a strike or a peaceful protest. Some have been held in pre-trial detention for prolonged periods or subject to restrictive probation measures. Just last week, 16 workers from the Telecom Egypt Company in Cairo and Giza were arrested for participating in a peaceful demonstration under Egypt’s anti-protest law. They were released after solidarity protests. In some cases disciplinary measures including pay cuts, suspension or dismissal from work are used to punish workers. At the state-run Zagazig University Hospital, 12 nurses were suspended after participating in a week-long strike in February 2017 during which the hospital provided only emergency services. Workers in military-owned factories face additional risks as they can be subject to unfair trials at military courts,. Twenty five workers from the military-run Alexandria Shipyard Company are currently on trial before a military court. They have been charged with “inciting workers to strike”, and could face up to two years in prison. The authorities have also interfered with the functioning of independent workers unions, by targeting members with disciplinary action and by hampering their activities. The government has also proposed amendments to the Labour Law and Trade Unions Law that will make organizing strikes even more difficult and will make it virtually impossible to establish or join an independent trade union.

#### Unconditionality is key – conditional strikes cause circumvention and allow for state crackdowns which destroys efficacy

Crépon ‘19 [Marc Crépon, Professor of Philosophy at the Ecole Normale Superieure and director of research at the Archives Husserl, National Center for Scientific Research, “The Right to Strike and Legal War in Walter Benjamin’s ‘Toward the Critique of Violence’.” Translation by Micol Bez. Critical Times (2019) 2 (2): 252–260, https://read.dukeupress.edu/critical times/article/2/2/252/141479/The Right to Strike and Legal War in Walter]//pranav

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Let us return to the place that the right to strike occupies within class struggle. To begin with, the very idea of such a struggle implies certain forms of violence. The strike could then be understood as one of the recognizable forms that this violence can take. However, this analytical framework is undermined as soon as this form of violence becomes regulated by a “right to strike,” such as the one recognized by law in France in 1864. What this recognition engages is, in fact, the will of the state to control the possible “violence” of the strike. Thus, the “right” of the right to strike appears as the best, if not the only, way for the state to circumscribe within (and via) the law the relative violence of class struggles. We might consider this to be the perfect illustration of the aforementioned hypothesis. Yet, there are two lines of questioning that destabilize this hypothesis that we would do well to consider. First, is it legitimate to present the strike as a form of violence? Who has a vested inter‑ est in such a representation? In other words, how can we trace a clear and unequivo‑ cal demarcation between violence and nonviolence? Are we not always bound to find residues of violence, even in those actions that we would be tempted to consider non‑ violent? The second line of questioning is just as important and is rooted in the distinc‑ tion established by Georges Sorel, in his Reflections on Violence, between the “political strike” and the “proletarian general strike,” to which Benjamin dedicates a set of com‑ plementary analyses in §13 of his essay. Here, again, we are faced with a question of limits. What is at stake is the possibility for a certain type of strike (the proletarian gen‑ eral strike) to exceed the limits of the right to strike— turning, in other words, the right to strike against the law itself. The phenomenon is that of an autoimmune process, in which the right to strike that is meant to protect the law against the possible violence of class struggles is transformed into a means for the destruction of the law. The difference between the two types of strikes is nevertheless introduced with a condition: “The valid‑ ity of this statement, however, is not unrestricted because it is not unconditional,” notes Benjamin in §7. We would be mistaken in believing that the right to strike is granted and guaranteed unconditionally. Rather, it is structurally subjected to a conflict of in‑ terpretations, those of the workers, on the one hand, and of the state on the other. From the point of view of the state, the partial strike cannot under any circumstance be un‑ derstood as a right to exercise violence, but rather as the right to extract oneself from a preexisting (and verifiable) violence: that of the employer. In this sense, the partial strike should be considered a nonviolent action, what Benjamin named a “pure means.” The interpretations diverge on two main points. The first clearly depends on the al‑ leged “violence of the employer,” a predicate that begs the question: Who might have the authority to recognize such violence? Evidently it is not the employer. The danger is that the state would similarly lack the incentive to make such a judgment call. It is nearly impossible, in fact, to find a single instance of a strike in which this recognition of violence was not subject to considerable controversy. The political game is thus the following: the state legislated the right to strike in order to contain class struggles, with the condition that workers must have “good reason” to strike. However, it is unlikely that a state systematically allied with (and accomplice to) employers will ever recog‑ nize reasons as good, and, as a consequence, it will deem any invocation of the right to strike as illegitimate. Workers will therefore be seen as abusing a right granted by the state, and in so doing transforming it into a violent means. On this point, Benjamin’s analyses remain extremely pertinent and profoundly contemporary. They unveil the enduring strategy of governments confronted with a strike (in education, transporta‑ tion, or healthcare, for example) who, after claiming to understand the reasons for the protest and the grievances of the workers, deny that the arguments constitute sufficient reason for a strike that will likely paralyze this or that sector of the economy. They deny, in other words, that the conditions denounced by the workers display an intrinsic vio‑ lence that justifies the strike. Let us note here a point that Benjamin does not mention, but that is part of Sorel’s reflections: this denial inevitably contaminates the (socialist) left once it gains power. What might previously have seemed a good reason to strike when it was the opposition is deemed an insufficient one once it is the ruling party. In the face of popular protest, it always invokes a lack of sufficient rationale, allowing it to avoid recognizing the intrinsic violence of a given social or economic situation, or of a new policy. And it is because it refuses to see this violence and to take responsibility for it that the left regularly loses workers’ support.

### 1AC -- Advantage 1 – Civil War

**New Egyptian laws are set in place to *silence* and *punish* workers for striking**

**Boukhari 10/11**[Jamal Boukhari is an Egyptian journalist. Equal Times “A dangerous new law in Egypt allows for the dismissal of any public employee who opposes the regime” Oct 11 2021 <https://www.equaltimes.org/a-dangerous-new-law-in-egypt?lang=en#.YZVH3mDMJEY>] //aaditg

On 1 August, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi approved a law, previously approved by parliament, allowing for the non-disciplinary dismissal of public employees. Referred to in the media as the ‘Law on the Dismissal of Employees Belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood’, the **new legislation allows public administrations to dismiss any civil servant suspected of belonging to groups classified as ‘terrorist’ in Egypt, as well as those who ‘harm public services or the economic interests of the state’.** It began with a series of fatal railway accidents. On 26 March 2021, a train collision in the Sohag Governorate in Upper Egypt killed 20 people and injured 165. Twenty-two days later, another accident occurred in the north of the country, killing 11 and injuring 98. Faced with criticism of his management following the accidents, the minister of transport and former army general Kamel al-Wazir accused “extremist and rebel elements” allegedly belonging to terrorist groups including the Muslim Brotherhood, banned in the country since 2013, of being behind the “sabotage.” As proof of his charges, the Minister announced that he had identified 268 Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated “elements” within the transport sector, whom he could not sack as Egyptian law did not allow the dismissal of civil servants or employees of state-owned companies except for disciplinary reasons. On 5 May 2021, a member of parliament from the pro-regime Mostaqbal Watan party introduced the new law before parliament. While characterised in the media as primarily aimed at the dismissal of employees with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, the law’s ambiguous and wide-ranging provisions are raising fears that any slightly critical voice within the public sector could be targeted. “The dismissal of employees belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood is just the tip of the iceberg. This law targets any public employee who opposes the regime, regardless of their affiliation. The government is well aware that most of the Muslim Brotherhood are either in prison or in exile,” Kamal Abu Aita, the former minister of manpower, tells Equal Times. He argues that the law is being presented as anti-Muslim Brotherhood in order to gain public approval. According to Abu Aita: “The current regime always labels anyone who is not pro-regime as a member or sympathiser of the Muslim Brotherhood so that it can easily hunt down and punish them.” While the text of the law does not explicitly mention the Muslim Brotherhood, its second article authorises the dismissal of any public servant whose name appears on the terrorist list. But as Abu Aita argues, in a country where any opponent or trade unionist who is arrested can be charged without hesitation with belonging to a terrorist group or sharing the objectives of a terrorist group, “the circle of public employees targeted by the legislation exceeds those who belong to the Muslim Brotherhood. “I know several trade unionists and liberal labour activists who appear on the list of terrorist organisations due to their political affiliation, including the architect Mamdouh Hamza who was placed on the list for criticising the regime’s policies on social networks, and Yehia Hussein Abdel Hadi, who has been detained without trial since January 2019 for participating in an event commemorating the 8th anniversary of the 25 January Revolution. They could be targeted by this law,” adds the former minister. More than 60,000 political prisoners are currently behind bars in Egypt, including 30,000 in pre-trial detention, according to NGOs. According to Ahmed al-Naggar, former editor-in-chief of the government-owned daily Al-Ahram, the law aims to dismiss any official whom the regime finds undesirable, as it judges employees by “their political intentions and positions, not by their actions”. As al-Naggar warned in statements made to the local news website Daaarb: “The law constitutes a return of the inquisition in the public sector and will have very dangerous social consequences.” The new law could further increase workplace monitoring of employees’ political affiliations. “The law would turn employees of public authorities and administrations into informers who help the security apparatus to hunt down any opponent, as well as any honest employee who criticises corruption in the institution where he or she works,” Ammar Ali Hassan, professor of political science at Helwan University, tells Equal Times. “The regime wants employees who remain silent, who don’t complain about their working conditions and who don’t criticise power,” he says. After the law came into effect on 1 August, the government sent a copy to all state institutions in order to begin reviewing employee profiles, an unnamed official source told Sky News Arabia on 10 August. On 22 August, the ministry of transport announced that it had transferred 190 public servants allegedly belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood to positions unrelated to the operation of the railways, pending an investigation into their political affiliation, with a view to dismissing them. In a statement issued the same day the law came into force, the supreme council of universities announced that it had begun to draw up a list of university professors and staff who “belong to terrorist groups and who try in various ways to prevent universities from carrying out their educational mission”. **Targeting workers who call for strikes** But according to activists and members of opposition parties, article 1 of the law presents even greater danger. It stipulates that all public employees who have “failed to meet their duties, as part of a bid to harm public services or the economic interests of the state” will be dismissed. “This article represents a trap for employees. It paves the way for any public servant to be punished for calling for or participating in a strike or in any independent trade union activities. According to this law, they would be failing in their duties and hindering production or the functioning of state services,” warns Wael Tawfik, a member of the workers’ committee at the Socialist Popular Alliance Party (SPAP). While the law provides the state with a means for keeping in check the highly politicised working class, which has always been a key player in and even the driving force behind most of the uprisings in modern Egypt, it will also be a significant instrument for reducing the number of employees in the public sector, which the regime and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) consider to be bloated. According to official figures, the public sector and related services employ around six million people (not including the armed forces). “This new legislation gives the state new reasons to reduce the number of public sector employees. This is in line with the demands of the IMF, which granted Egypt a US$12 billion loan at the end of 2016,” adds Elhami al-Merghani, vice president of SPAP. Since 2020, thousands of employees have organised sit-ins in protest of the government’s policy of closing large companies and factories that it deems to be in debt. Seven thousand workers and employees of the Egyptian Iron & Steel Co took part in the most recent sit-in in January 2021 following the government’s decision to close the company and turn its six million square metre site into a residential development. According to certain analyses, this policy is also aimed at paving the way for the economic ambitions of the army, which is increasingly expanding its presence in civilian production. **“The regime has adopted a policy that is hostile to the working class. It has closed several companies and dismissed thousands of workers in recent years on the pretext that these companies are not profitable**,” says al-Merghani. While the government may be pleased with its hostile policy towards opponents and redundant public sector employees, this policy could have disastrous long-term effects as it risks increasing unemployment and unrest in a country where a large part of the population has long depended on the public sector for its income. As al-Merghani warns: “**The government can use the machinery of repressive laws to silence employees**, but this oppression always leads to disaster.”

#### Lack of right to strike kills al-Sisi’s popularity and devastates state legitimacy AND shuts down protests that confront injustice – the plan materializes that sentiment into movements.

Galal ’15 [Rami, contributor for Al-Monitor’s Egypt Pulse and works as an investigative reporter for the Rosa el-Youssef website, “Egypt outlaws workers’ right to strike”, 05-12-2015, [https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2015/05/egypt-court-ruling-strike-right-sharia-law-sisi-badawi-labor.html]//pranav](https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2015/05/egypt-court-ruling-strike-right-sharia-law-sisi-badawi-labor.html%5d//pranav) \*BRACEKTS IN ORIGINAL\*

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CAIRO, Egypt — The ruling issued April 28 by the Supreme Administrative Court headed by Judge Labib Halim to criminalize strikes and penalize striking public workers by forcing them into retirement caused an uproar in legal circles and provoked the anger of those interested in labor and human rights. Labor and human rights activists considered the decision to be a violation of Egypt’s commitment to the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1967; in October 1981, Egypt signed the convention, which allows for the right to strike. Moreover, the ruling violates the Egyptian Constitution of 2014, which granted the right to peaceful strikes. The Supreme Administrative Court decision forces three officials in the local unit in Qarous, in al-Monufia governorate, into retirement. It also postponed the promotion of 14 others for a period of two years, after investigations carried out by the administrative prosecution showed that they went on strike and disrupted the facility’s ability to fulfill the interest of citizens. The three officials had participated in the strike and locked the door to the unit, barring the head of the unit from entering. The local unit handles the establishment and management of all public facilities in its constituency. The ruling noted that there were conditions on the implementation of the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which was signed by President Anwar Sadat. These conditions were put in place by Presidential Decree No. 537 of 1981, which requires taking into account the provisions of Islamic Sharia law when implementing the covenant and ensuring that it does not contradict Sharia law. The court added that the provisions of Sharia law confirm that if a strike leads to those benefiting from public services incurring damages, Islamic law does not permit striking because of the harm it causes citizens. This is considered erroneous jurisprudence of Sharia law. The gravity of this ruling lies in the fact that it is not merely a judgment concerning an individual incident. Rather, it has become a judicial principle that the prosecution will rely on in similar cases. This will deprive workers of the right to strike, which is generally recognized throughout the world. In this regard, Tharwat al-Badawi, a professor of constitutional law at Cairo University, told Al-Monitor, “The ruling violates Article 73 of the 2014 Egyptian Constitution that grants workers the right to strike.” Badawi pointed out that whenever the constitution grants a particular right, the administrative court is allowed to put in place mechanisms to regulate this right. However, according to Badawi, the court, by criminalizing the right to strike, has violated the right itself, which is not within its purview. Regarding the absence of a law governing the right to strike, Badawi said that since the constitution is the main source of all laws, if it grants a particular right, then this right must be allowed. Al-Monitor spoke with Karima al-Hafnawi, a leader in the Kefaya Movement — one of the largest protest movements that contributed to the ouster of the Mubarak regime — and a founder of the Hemaya Movement, which is concerned with the rights of workers and the public sector. “All the rights workers have obtained throughout the world have come through demonstrations and strikes. This ruling prevents Egypt’s workers from their right to peaceful expression in confronting the injustice, oppression and poverty inflicted upon them,” she said. Hafnawi warned that this obstinacy and restriction on workers, and robbing them of their right to peacefully strike, could set off waves of anger that may have dire consequences. Hafnawi attacked the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF), which presented a “Labor Honor Code” to President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on the occasion of Labor Day on May 1. The code emphasized the importance of working in the ushering in of Egypt’s future. The document said, “Egypt’s workers reject striking and confirm their commitment to social dialogue with the government and business owners as a mechanism to achieve social justice and stability and to entrench their concepts, and work to overcome the obstacles that prevent their implementation.” The honor code also stressed the importance of dialogue on all issues and levels, to ensure the stability of labor relations, security and social peace. “The ETUF does not express [the views] of Egyptian workers; rather it is loyal to the government. It follows the same path of hypocrisy and praise of the ruling regime that it did during the era of ousted President Hosni Mubarak, without acting in the interest of workers,” said Hafnawi. The deputy head of the ETUF, Magdy al-Badawi, told Al-Monitor that the federation is in a real predicament following this ruling. He said that while the ETUF believes that striking is a right for workers and a means of balance in negotiating workers’ rights, the initiative the ETUF presented to the state via the labor honor code — which rejected striking at the current time — came in light of the fact that the Egyptian state is in a stage of reconstruction, and strikes cause major losses to the economy. “Striking is a means, not an end; thus the ETUF has taken a first step toward achieving the stability required to build the nation. Now it is up to business owners and the state to take similar steps to create a mechanism for negotiating and maintaining workers’ rights, without losses being incurred by either side,” he said. Badawi called on Sisi, in his capacity as the one who currently holds legislative authority, to issue laws governing the right to strike. Negad al-Borai, a lawyer, human rights activist and chairman of the Group for Democratic Development, told Al-Monitor that “this ruling highlights the use of the judiciary for political purposes.” He added that there are a group of judges who use their personal ideas and beliefs in issuing rulings that violate the law and the constitution, which has led to the current confusion. He said that these rulings also adversely impact the image of the Egyptian state, as was evident in the rulings for mass execution and severe punishment for youths who participated in the revolution. Borai added, “President Sisi still enjoys a degree of popularity, and Egyptians accept some of these things on the basis that they are paving the way for improvement. However, if [citizens] don’t perceive any improvement, the situation could flip. Such rulings take away from [Sisi’s] popularity to a great extent, and if the situation persists in Egypt in the same manner, he will have no noticeable popularity six months from now.” Meanwhile, labor leader and former MP Abdul Rahman Khair told Al-Monitor, “This ruling is just the latest episode of terrorism against public employees, following the new civil service law that includes no provisions for negotiating or complaining. Even resorting to the judiciary must now be done through the competent entity. Thus, state employees cannot complain or strike, and must accept the status quo regardless of the injustice they face.” A violation of the constitution lays the foundation for a lack of rights in society, and constitutes a flagrant violation of rights and freedoms, providing a possible signal of impending popular anger.

#### That’s good – sustained Egyptian repression and brutal ‘counter-terror’ strategies *fuel* terrorism, conflict escalation, and will cause civil war – alternative readings get it *wrong*.

Saferworld ’17 [Saferworld is an international non-governmental organisation with conflict prevention and peacebuilding programmes in over 20 countries and territories in the Horn of Africa, the African Great Lakes region, Asia, the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus, “We need to talk about Egypt: how brutal ‘counter-terrorism’ is failing Egypt and its allies”, October 2017, Saferworld, https://saferworld-indepth.squarespace.com/we-need-to-talk-about-egypt/]//pranav

On 24 July 2013, three weeks after Egypt’s army removed Muslim Brotherhood (MB) member Mohammed Morsi from the presidency, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, then defence minister, called on the Egyptian people to back the army and the police to fight terrorism across the country.[1] Seen as a way to create a mandate for continued military rule after the coup, this call to fight terror has defined Egypt ever since. Four years on, widespread repressive tactics by the Egyptian government are more severe than even during President Mubarak’s most desperate years in charge. President Sisi, who has ruled since 2014, has used the terror threat to justify intense repression: sweeping counter-terror (CT) laws to clamp down on dissent, a Stalin-style programme of mass incarceration overseen by military tribunals, widespread ‘assembly-line’ use of torture and extra-judicial killing. Egged on by state-controlled media, the strategy targets not only violent individuals but also journalists and dissenting citizens. In Sinai, Egypt’s hidden war has escalated, in part due to the collective punishment of local communities who have faced aerial bombardment, forced displacement and deprivation of essential services. Such repression typically foments further conflict and terror attacks.[2] In Egypt, the situation has unquestionably worsened: since 2013, violence by the state and non-state groups has caused the deaths of thousands of Egyptians, including civilians, members of armed groups, police and army personnel. The US, Britain and several other European governments have nevertheless cheered the regime on. For them, the mistaken idea that Egypt’s approach is an effective way to counter ‘terrorism’ is too convenient to challenge openly. For now it remains highly profitable to sell arms to Egypt and easier to avoid sending signals that could lead to Egypt playing a spoiler role on Western priorities such as Libya, Israel and Palestine, and maritime trade. Yet the regime’s behaviour is as cruel and counter-productive as Yemen’s and Syria’s were in the run-up to their devastating civil wars. It will likely fuel further terror, and could well provoke a deep, intractable crisis in the long term rather than stave off the threat posed by violent groups.

#### Egyptian civil war kills Israeli safety, causes middle eastern instability and devastates relationships with the US.

Digital First Media and the Contra Costa Times ’13 (updated in 2016 though) [Digital First Media and the Contra Costa times, “Egyptian civil war would be a catastrophe”, 08-16-2013, The Denver Post, https://www.denverpost.com/2013/08/16/egyptian-civil-war-would-be-a-catastrophe/]//pranav

Once again, Egypt roils from a brutal crackdown by the interim military government and the turmoil renews our fear that the most populous country in the Arab world is poised for a disastrous civil war that would have worldwide implications. The violence that has already claimed more than 525 lives isn’t likely to subside as long as military leaders continue their crackdown on anti-government protesters who had been staging a weeks-long demonstration against last month’s military ouster of elected President Mohamed Morsi. The violence prompted President Barack Obama on Thursday to cancel joint military exercises planned for next month as a tangible protest to the military’s treatment of the people. For the time being, however, Obama did not revoke the $1.3 billion in aid the U.S. has committed to Egypt. But he did say, “Our traditional cooperation cannot continue as usual.” We think Obama was right to cancel the exercises and to send a message to the apparently tone deaf Gen. Abdul-Fattah el-Sisi, Egypt’s de facto leader, that U.S. aid is at risk if the military continues its repression. An Egyptian civil war would be catastrophic for a country that only a few short months ago had been on a path to end decades of brutal dictatorial rule of ousted former President Hosni Mubarak as it moved, however haltingly, toward democracy. Aside from the obvious internal strife that a civil war would create, it is also important to note that Egypt is Israel’s most strategically important neighbor and that while not exactly cordial, the two nations have managed to coexist. Any change in that relationship should worry anyone who desires peace in the Middle East. We don’t mean to imply that Morsi was any bargain himself. He was not. But he was, after all, elected by the voters. He was the darling of the Muslim Brotherhood and as such he had hardly spent his year in office dedicated to the principles of democratic reform. In fact, he wasn’t very tolerant of differing viewpoints, either, which had cost him substantial support. It was that dwindling of support that created a leadership void that was filled — for better or for worse — by the military. Egypt is not just another country “over there” in the Mideast; it plays a vital stabilizing role in a very unstable region. What happens there will have impact throughout the globe.

#### Egypt specifically is key to negotiating treaties between Iran & Israel

France24 News ’21 [France24 News, “Gaza ceasefire takes effect after Egypt-brokered deal between Israel and Hamas”, 05-20-2021, France 24 News, https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210520-israel-confirms-unconditional-gaza-ceasefire-agreed-with-hamas]//pranav

In the countdown to the 2am (23:00 GMT Thursday) ceasefire, whose timing Hamas had confirmed but Israel did not, Palestinian rocket salvoes continued and Israel carried out at least one air strike. Each side said it stood ready to retaliate for any truce violations by the other. Cairo said it would send two delegations to monitor the ceasefire. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office confirmed the “mutual and unconditional” ceasefire after a late-night meeting of the Security Cabinet, saying it had unanimously accepted an Egyptian proposal but that the two sides were still determining exactly when it was to take effect. A Hamas official told Reuters the ceasefire would be “mutual and simultaneous”. In a televised address on Thursday, Biden welcomed the ceasefire as “a genuine opportunity to make progress” towards lasting peace in the Middle East, and hailed Egypt’s role in brokering the agreement. He extended condolences to bereaved Israelis and Palestinians and said Washington would work with the United Nations “and other international stakeholders to provide rapid humanitarian assistance” for Gaza and its reconstruction.

#### That goes nuclear.

Silverstein 4/23 “Iran-Israel tensions: The threat of nuclear disaster looms large,” Richard Silverstein [writes the Tikun Olam blog, devoted to exposing the excesses of the Israeli national security state], 23 April 2021 <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/iran-israel-tensions-threat-nuclear-war-looms-large> SM

Israel had a near-miss of potentially catastrophic proportions on Thursday. As it has done hundreds of times in the past decade, the Israeli air force attacked Iranian bases inside Syria. In response, Syrian forces fired anti-aircraft missiles of a rather primitive Soviet model, one of which overflew its target and landed some 30 kilometres from Israel’s Dimona nuclear reactor. Israel said recently that it was bolstering its defences around Dimona for just such an eventuality. Although an Iranian general taunted Israel, implying that Iran had some responsibility for the attack, that doesn’t appear to be the case. But the missile landing inside Israel does show that if Iran wanted to attack Dimona, it has the capacity. And despite Israel’s best efforts, an Iranian missile could hit its target. With that, one of the worst nuclear disasters in the region’s history could unfold, including a Chernobyl-type radioactive leak that could endanger not only all of Israel, but also many of its neighbours.A US general has assured a Senate committee that the Syrians weren’t intending to attack Israel. Rather, a misguided missile meant to target an Israeli warplane overshot its target. He blamed it on “incompetence”, as if that was supposed to be somehow reassuring; rather, it only reinforces how easy it is even for a mistake to cause a nuclear disaster.Campaign of terror Certainly, if either Israel or Iran wanted to bomb each other’s nuclear facilities, they could do so successfully. An Israeli attack would probably cause less catastrophic damage, but only because Iran’s nuclear programme is not nearly as developed as Israel’s. An Iranian direct hit on Dimona would cause incalculable damage due to the plutonium reactor at the facility. Nor does this happen in a vacuum: Israel has maintained a decade-long campaign of terror attacks on Iranian military bases and nuclear scientists. Most recently, it bombed the Natanz nuclear facility, destroying the power generation source and damaging older-generation centrifuges. It also attacked an Iranian Revolutionary Guard spy ship off the Yemeni coast this month. Iran has responded in its own limited way, restrained by its need to maintain good relations with nuclear-deal signatories. For Israel, the attacks are a low-risk proposition. It defies US opposition (if there is any) with a wink and a nod, and the attacks look good on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s résumé. To weather his corruption trial and retain public support, he needs external enemies (and internal enemies, but that’s a different story). Iran provides these in spades.Eliminating Israeli leverage The US could exert control over this scenario by eliminating Israeli leverage. If it agreed to lift sanctions in exchange for Iran’s return to low levels of uranium enrichment, as designated in the nuclear deal negotiated by the Obama administration, Israel’s rejectionist approach would become moot. The problem is that US President Joe Biden is running scared from Republican opposition to any nuclear deal with Iran. Besides, he has designated the Middle East a low priority for his administration. There is some faint hope in the US announcement that it is ready to lift a partial set of sanctions. However, the list on offer is quite limited, and will certainly not satisfy the Iranians. Such half-measures present an example of the limitations of the Biden approach. He should instead make a full-throated commitment to end this dithering once and for all. Israel is mounting a full-court press this coming week as it sends its Mossad and military intelligence chiefs, along with its army chief of staff, to Washington in an attempt to influence nuclear negotiations as they enter what may be a final stage. According to Haaretz, army chief of staff Aviv Kochavi “will also raise other issues, including Iran’s military expansion in Syria and the instability of Lebanon. Israel is concerned about the possibility that Hezbollah will try to … [foment] conflict with Israel.” The hypocrisy of Israel’s refusal to acknowledge its own massive military interventions in Lebanon, Syria, Gaza and even Iraq, while decrying Iran’s involvement in Syria, is almost breathtaking. There is next to no chance that any of this will enter into the considerations of negotiators in Vienna. Unlike Israel, they are interested in doing a nuclear deal, not engaging in wishful thinking. Combustible Middle East mix Returning to the Biden administration’s global goals, the Middle East doesn’t care about presidential priorities. It contains a combustible mix of corrupt elites and overbearing dictators who do not shirk from causing mayhem in their domains. And one of them, perhaps a desperate Israeli prime minister or an ageing ayatollah eager to preserve his honour and legacy, could inadvertently (or intentionally) set the entire region aflame. If Biden doesn’t act quickly and decisively, there is a sizeable risk that another missile from one country or the other will hit a target and cause devastation. That would mark a point of no return, like the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, which led to World War One. The difference is that in 1914, armies fought with guns, bayonets and artillery. Today, they will fight with F-35s, ballistic missiles and possibly nuclear weapons.

#### It’s uniquely likely now – sliding oil prices and COVID.

Wright ’20 [Robin, distinguished fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. She has been a fellow at the Brookings Institution and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, as well as at Yale, Duke, Dartmouth, and the University of California, Santa Barbara, “Can the Middle East Recover from the Coronavirus and Collapsing Oil Prices?”, 05-08-2020, The New Yorker, https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/can-the-middle-east-recover-from-the-coronavirus-and-collapsing-oil-prices]//pranav

The twin crises of sickness and sliding oil prices coincided with rumbling instability: three ongoing civil wars—lasting for five years in Yemen, six years in Libya, and nine years in Syria—plus months of deadly protests in Iraq; the implosion of Lebanon’s monetary system; the third Israeli election in a year; the presence of millions of refugees and displaced people in rudimentary camps in Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon; and the resurgence of suicide attacks and assassinations by isis. With the exception of Israel, most Middle Eastern countries don’t have the medical staff, hospitals, and equipment necessary to provide adequate care during a pandemic, nor the financial resources to bail out their economies. The crises have set the stage for the Middle East to become even more volatile. Roughly sixty per cent of the region’s population is under thirty, which may impact the number who survive the pandemic. But the young have also spearheaded the region’s protests—and may now express renewed fury because they will be the generation most impacted by soaring unemployment. In many countries, roughly a third of young people were jobless before the pandemic. In Lebanon, demonstrators violated quarantine in the northern city of Tripoli and burned down banks to protest the collapse of the national currency—and its impact on their lives. A twenty-six-year-old, Fawwaz al-Samman, died in a confrontation with the Lebanese Army. He was quickly dubbed the “Martyr of the Hunger Revolution.” “This is a critical turning point,” Maloney told me. “It’s going to have a long-standing political impact, fuelling populism and rage against governments by their own people.”

#### Nuke war causes extinction – Ice Age, famines, and war won’t stay limited

Edwards 17 [Paul N. Edwards, CISAC’s William J. Perry Fellow in International Security at Stanford’s Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies. Being interviewed by EarthSky. How nuclear war would affect Earth’s climate. September 8, 2017. earthsky.org/human-world/how-nuclear-war-would-affect-earths-climate] Note, we are only reading parts of the interview that are directly from Paul Edwards -- MMG

In the nuclear conversation, what are we not talking about that we should be? We are not talking enough about the climatic effects of nuclear war. The “nuclear winter” theory of the mid-1980s played a significant role in the arms reductions of that period. But with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the reduction of U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals, this aspect of nuclear war has faded from view. That’s not good. In the mid-2000s, climate scientists such as Alan Robock (Rutgers) took another look at nuclear winter theory. This time around, they used much-improved and much more detailed climate models than those available 20 years earlier. They also tested the potential effects of smaller nuclear exchanges. The result: an exchange involving just 50 nuclear weapons — the kind of thing we might see in an India-Pakistan war, for example — could loft 5 billion kilograms of smoke, soot and dust high into the stratosphere. That’s enough to cool the entire planet by about 2 degrees Fahrenheit (1.25 degrees Celsius) — about where we were during the Little Ice Age of the 17th century. Growing seasons could be shortened enough to create really significant food shortages. So the climatic effects of even a relatively small nuclear war would be planet-wide. What about a larger-scale conflict? A U.S.-Russia war currently seems unlikely, but if it were to occur, hundreds or even thousands of nuclear weapons might be launched. The climatic consequences would be catastrophic: global average temperatures would drop as much as 12 degrees Fahrenheit (7 degrees Celsius) for up to several years — temperatures last seen during the great ice ages. Meanwhile, smoke and dust circulating in the stratosphere would darken the atmosphere enough to inhibit photosynthesis, causing disastrous crop failures, widespread famine and massive ecological disruption. The effect would be similar to that of the giant meteor believed to be responsible for the extinction of the dinosaurs. This time, we would be the dinosaurs. Many people are concerned about North Korea’s advancing missile capabilities. Is nuclear war likely in your opinion? At this writing, I think we are closer to a nuclear war than we have been since the early 1960s. In the North Korea case, both Kim Jong-un and President Trump are bullies inclined to escalate confrontations. President Trump lacks impulse control, and there are precious few checks on his ability to initiate a nuclear strike. We have to hope that our generals, both inside and outside the White House, can rein him in. North Korea would most certainly “lose” a nuclear war with the United States. But many millions would die, including hundreds of thousands of Americans currently living in South Korea and Japan (probable North Korean targets). Such vast damage would be wrought in Korea, Japan and Pacific island territories (such as Guam) that any “victory” wouldn’t deserve the name. Not only would that region be left with horrible suffering amongst the survivors; it would also immediately face famine and rampant disease. Radioactive fallout from such a war would spread around the world, including to the U.S. It has been more than 70 years since the last time a nuclear bomb was used in warfare. What would be the effects on the environment and on human health today? To my knowledge, most of the changes in nuclear weapons technology since the 1950s have focused on making them smaller and lighter, and making delivery systems more accurate, rather than on changing their effects on the environment or on human health. So-called “battlefield” weapons with lower explosive yields are part of some arsenals now — but it’s quite unlikely that any exchange between two nuclear powers would stay limited to these smaller, less destructive bombs.

### 1AC – Advantage 2 - USAid

**Status quo USAid is *declining* because of human rights violations *exacerbating* US– Egypt tensions**

**Pamuk 9/15** [ Humeyra Pamuk is a senior correspondent and a writer for Reuters, currently covering U.S. foreign policy and the State Department. Reuters “U.S. to hold $130 mln of Egypt's military aid over human rights -State Dept” 9/.15/2021(article was published 9/14 but updated 9/15) <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/us-hold-130m-egypts-military-aid-over-human-rights-sources-2021-09-14/> ] //aaditg

WASHINGTON, Sept 14 (Reuters) - **The Biden administration will withhold $130 million worth of military aid to Egypt until Cairo takes specific steps related to human rights,** a State Department spokesperson said on Tuesday. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's move is a break with his predecessors' policy of overriding a congressional check on military aid to Egypt. In the past, an exception was granted to free up Foreign Military Financing for Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's government, worth $300 million this fiscal year, on the basis that it was in the interest of U.S. national security. But rights groups, which had called on the administration to block the entire $300 million aid, expressed disappointment at the decision, saying it was a "betrayal" of the U.S. commitment to promote human rights. The State Department spokesperson said in an emailed statement: **"We are continuing to discuss our serious concerns about human rights in Egypt".** Blinken "will move forward with the use of $130 million if the Government of Egypt affirmatively addresses specific human-rights related conditions," the statement added. **There was no immediate response** to a request for comment from Egypt's state press centre. Earlier, a U.S. official speaking on the condition of anonymity said the administration would approve $170 million but would put a hold on the remaining $130 million, making that available in future fiscal years **if Egypt improves its record.** "What the Biden administration has really done is waive the minimal human rights conditions imposed by Congress on a fraction of U.S. aid, while keeping a small portion of $130 million blocked on even more watered down conditions," said Sarah Leah Witson, executive director of advocacy group Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN). **The United States has provided around $1.3 billion in foreign assistance to Egypt annually since the 2017 fiscal year, according to a congressional research report.** Sisi, who ousted the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013, has overseen a crackdown on dissent that has tightened in recent years. **Rights groups say tens of thousands have been detained**, including Brotherhood leaders and secular activists.

**Aid void causes Russia pivot**

**Wood 18** [ David Wood is a professor of practice at Seton Hall University's School of Diplomacy and International Relations.8/28/2018 “Egypt Loves China’s Deep Pockets

Cairo is an old hand at playing the East and West off each other—for its own profit.” <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/08/28/egypt-loves-chinas-deep-pockets/> ]//aaditg

Gamal Abdel Nasser, former president of Egypt and Cold War schemer, was not averse to playing hardball with powerful countries. In 1955, Nasser grew tired of dallying from Washington on a long-stalled arms deal. He shocked the West by approaching the Soviet Union, buying military equipment through Czechoslovakia, and igniting fears of a Middle Eastern arms race. Six decades later, Cairo is looking for the best political bargain it can get once again, making diplomatic overtures to Moscow and Beijing while maintaining its crucial U.S. and Persian Gulf backers As under Nasser, the Egyptian leadership has become frustrated with the United States. The relationship grew frosty during the presidency of Barack Obama, who refused to invite President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to Washington amid accusations of human rights violations. Sisi has since made a state visit to Donald Trump’s White House, but the administration’s long-term Egypt strategy remains unclear. **Congress has complained about a perceived lack of benefit for the United States** from the billions it has provided to Cairo over decades. It denied almost $100 million in military aid last August, citing concerns about a repressive new law restricting nongovernmental organizations’ work. These **tensions have created new openings for both Russia and China**. Moscow responded to the Sisi-Obama impasse by entering into eyebrow-raising military cooperation accords and large-scale arms deals with Cairo. With less fanfare, **Chinese money is increasingly pouring into the Egyptian economy**, suggesting that the “comprehensive strategic partnership” agreed between the countries in 2014 could now develop some real teeth. **Egyptian-Russian relations have developed a stronger military tint under Sisi,** the former field marshal who led the July 2013 overthrow of Egypt’s first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi. The **two started holding joint naval and military exercises in June 2015.** Reports circulated **in late 2017 that the two countries were negotiating an agreement for reciprocal use of each other’s air force bases.** Sisi has also lent a welcome source of Arab support to some of Putin’s dicier foreign-policy exploits in the Middle East. Cairo has given diplomatic cover to Russia’s backing of the beleaguered dictator Bashar al-Assad in Syria and allegedly provided a base for Russian troops to reinforce the maverick, anti-Islamist commander Khalifa Haftar in Libya. At times, the Sisi regime has actively snubbed its long-standing allies in pursuing closer ties with the Russian military establishment. Egypt infuriated Saudi Arabia in October 2016 by voting in favor of draft United Nations Security Council resolution on Syria that was drafted by Moscow and opposed by Riyadh. This May, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov praised Egypt for rebuffing a U.S. request to deploy soldiers to Syria. **Egypt’s reward has been the series of Russian arms sales**, which Mordechai Chaziza, a political science specialist at Israel’s Ashkelon Academic College, argues have become crucial to Cairo’s Moscow strategy. **As the United States has shown a greater reluctance to provide military aid, the Kremlin has stepped into the void**. **Russia signed a $3.5 billion weapons deal with Egypt back in 2014, and it delivered more than $1 billion worth of military equipment last year alone**. Economic ties have also grown. Russia and Egypt pledged to develop a “Russian industrial zone” at the Suez Canal, where the plan is for a glut of investment from Russia on favorable terms. During Putin’s state visit to Cairo last year, Russia agreed to finance and oversee the construction of a $21 billion nuclear power plant near El Alamein. The project remains at a very early stage, but the Egyptian government predicts that the facility will begin operating from 2026. Despite these grand designs, Russia’s strained finances limit its ability to wield decisive economic influence in Egypt. Timothy Kaldas, a nonresident fellow at the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, argues that any attempt to chasten the United States by reaching out to Putin has failed.

**Increased Russian Sales creates multipolar competition in the Middle East and expands Russian influence throughout the region**

**Borshchevskaya**, Ira Weiner Fellow at The Washington Institute, focusing on Russia’s policy toward the Middle East, **2017** (Anna, “The Tactical Side of Russia’s Arms Sales to the Middle East.” The Jamestown Foundation, 12/20/17, <https://jamestown.org/program/tactical-side-russias-arms-sales-middle-east/>, Accessed 5/30/19, JMoore) recut aaditg

Russia is one of the world’s top arms exporters, second only to the United States since at least 1999.[i] In recent years, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region emerged as Russia’s second most important arms market after Asia. From 2000 to 2016, almost a fifth of Russia’s arms exports went to the MENA region.[ii] To put this in perspective, in 2009, Moscow sold approximately $9 billion worth of arms to this region. In 2016, it sold $21.4 billion.[iii] Many of these sales are upgrades to existing packages.[iv] Since 2000, Moscow also diversified from traditional Soviet-era regional clients. Since officially coming to power in May 2000, if not before, Russian President Vladimir Putin sought to restore Russia’s image as a Great Power in the context of zero-sum anti-Westernism— for Russia to win, the West had to lose. His approach to the Middle East is the extension of former Russian prime minister Evgeniy Primakov’s vision of a “multipolar world,” driven by desire to prevent the West from dominating any region, and curb Western support for democratization efforts in other countries. For the last 17 years, Putin worked to regain political influence and raise Russia to the status of a competitor to the United States by increasing emphasis on Russia’s business interests—primarily arms, energy and high-tech goods such as nuclear reactors.[v] Russia’s economy remains over-reliant on raw materials and natural resources, but the defense industry is one technology-intensive sector where Russia holds an international leadership position. Domestically, Russia’s defense industry is a major source of employment. Russian President Vladimir Putin renewed his emphasis on modernizing the armed forces, especially the navy, on May 7, 2012, on the same day as he took office as president for a third time.[vi] Internationally, the Russian defense industry is a source of important revenue. Thus, Putin lamented in February 2012 about Iraq and countries undergoing the Arab Spring, “Russian companies are losing their decades-long positions in local commercial markets and are being deprived of large commercial contracts.”[vii] As Sergei Chemezov, chief of the powerful state industrial holding Rostec, said in February 2015, “As for the conflict situation in the Middle East, I do not conceal it, and everyone understands this, the more conflicts there are, the more they [clients] buy weapons from us. Volumes are continuing to grow despite sanctions. Mainly, it is in Latin America and the Middle East.”[viii] Yet, arms sales entail far more to the Kremlin than mere financial gains. They are also Moscow’s tactical foreign policy tool for wielding political influence and changing power balance dynamics. Indeed, in July 2012, Putin said that arms exports are “an effective instrument for advancing [Moscow’s] national interests, both political and economic.”[ix] In December 2013, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said that Russia’s arms sales are the most important element of Moscow’s relations with other countries.[x] And Moscow’s chief goal—regime survival, which it hopes to achieve through reduction of Western influence—runs counter to Western interests and values. Thus, in the MENA region, Moscow courts virtually everyone, and competes with the West whenever an opportunity arises. Arms exports are a major component of these efforts.

**A multipolar system and increased Russian influence escalate to nuclear great power war**

**Brands**, Henry Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs in the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, **AND Edel**, senior fellow at the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, **2019** (Hal Brands and Charles Edel, “The End of Great Power Peace.” The National Interest, 3/6/19, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/end-great-power-peace-46282>, Accessed 5/31/19, JMoore) //recut aaditg

Each of these geopolitical challenges is different, and each reflects the distinctive interests, ambitions, and history of the country undertaking it. Yet there is growing cooperation between the countries that are challenging the regional pillars of the U.S.-led order. Russia and China have collaborated on issues such as energy, sales and development of military technology, opposition to additional U.S. military deployments on the Korean peninsula, and naval exercises from the South China Sea to the Baltic. In Syria, Iran provided the shock troops that helped keep Russia’s ally, Bashar al-Assad, in power, as Moscow provided the air power and the diplomatic cover. “Our cooperation can isolate America,” supreme leader Ali Khamenei told Putin in 2017. More broadly, what links these challenges together is their opposition to the constellation of power, norms, and relationships that the U.S.-led order entails, and in their propensity to use violence, coercion, and intimidation as means of making that opposition effective. Taken collectively, these challenges constitute a geopolitical sea change from the post-Cold War era. The revival of great-power competition entails higher international tensions than the world has known for decades, and the revival of arms races, security dilemmas, and other artifacts of a more dangerous past. It entails sharper conflicts over the international rules of the road on issues ranging from freedom of navigation to the illegitimacy of altering borders by force, and intensifying competitions over states that reside at the intersection of rival powers’ areas of interest. It requires confronting the prospect that rival powers could overturn the favorable regional balances that have underpinned the U.S.-led order for decades, and that they might construct rival spheres of influence from which America and the liberal ideas it has long promoted would be excluded. Finally, it necessitates recognizing that great-power rivalry could lead to great-power war, a prospect that seemed to have followed the Soviet empire onto the ash heap of history. Both Beijing and Moscow are, after all, optimizing their forces and exercising aggressively in preparation for potential conflicts with the United States and its allies; Russian doctrine explicitly emphasizes the limited use of nuclear weapons to achieve escalation dominance in a war with Washington. In Syria, U.S. and Russian forces even came into deadly contact in early 2018. American airpower decimated a contingent of government-sponsored Russian mercenaries that was attacking a base at which U.S. troops were present, an incident demonstrating the increasing boldness of Russian operations and the corresponding potential for escalation. The world has not yet returned to the epic clashes for global dominance that characterized the twentieth century, but it has returned to the historical norm of great-power struggle, with all the associated dangers.

#### Strikes are key to correcting Egyptian governance – set the groundwork, open humanitarian discussions, and increase publicity – Mubarak’s usurpation proves.

Janice Jayes 18 [Dr. Jayes writes on current security and humanitarian challenges in the Middle East and Latin America., The Real War in Egypt: the Labor Struggle. The Public (May 2018 ) http://publici.ucimc.org/2018/05/the-real-war-in-egypt-the-labor-struggle/]//anop

If you missed the exciting Presidential election news out of Egypt this past March, don’t be too hard on yourself: also missing it were 96 million Egyptians. Yes, a few Egyptians showed up at the polls for an exercise that faintly resembled an election, but the event was lacking a few key ingredients–like actual opposition candidates. Incumbent General-turned-President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi drove five contenders out of the race by arresting or threatening them, then allowed one opposition candidate (a member of al-Sisi’s campaign staff) to register just hours before the deadline. As expected, al-Sisi claimed a “landslide” victory with a Mubarak-esque 97% of the vote. This election is one of the many things about post-Arab Spring Egypt that look remarkably like pre-Arab Spring Egypt. Egypt is again governed by a military-dominated clique that runs the state like a private investors’ club, elections are staged for international consumption, and any hint of political independence in NGOs, media or labor is ruthlessly silenced. It isn’t just opposition candidates that have been jailed: the 2018 Human Rights Watch Report notes that tens of thousands of Egyptians have been detained, arrested, tortured and disappeared since al-Sisi came to power in 2013. The only notable change from the Mubarak years is that al-Sisi no longer relies on the Communist menace to justify repression and solidify his relationship with Washington; instead, he deploys the newest smokescreen, the War on Terror, to justify mass repression. It’s the old Mubarak machine in new counterterrorism clothing. Counterterrorism may not be winning the war against terror in Egypt (in November, 310 Egyptians were killed by extremists during an armed assault on a mosque in el Arish), but it is doing a pretty good job of distracting attention from the crackdown on civil rights. For example, in February 2018 the Egyptian Army rolled out a major anti-terrorism operation in the Sinai that flooded the news with tales of troop convoys, bombing operations and weapon seizures. Of course, the media blackout meant that the news available came only from government sources, leaving open the question of who exactly was being targeted and how. Still, the images of Egyptian troops fighting extremism achieved the regime’s information goals at home and abroad. Many Egyptians, cognizant of the civil war hell that has engulfed Libya and Syria, watched the military assault on the Sinai and calculated that now was not the moment to press for freedoms of speech and assembly—even if they might be nice things to have in the month before a presidential election. The military operation also reminded the U.S. of Egypt’s partnership in the War on Terror, silencing some congressional critics of al-Sisi who had been debating tying part of the $1.6 billion U.S. aid package to political reform. U.S. military aid has helped Egypt equip counterterrorism units that are also used to break up strikes and protests. The real war for Egypt isn’t going to be waged in the Sinai, however. It will be waged in the textile mills, railroad yards and teacher’s lounges across the nation. Egyptian unions led the nation into the Arab Spring by creating a space for public protest in the years before 2011, and they are the only civil society sector challenging the government today. The Labor Spring of 2008 In 2008 videos of workers defacing a poster of then-President Mubarak shocked the nation. While the tech-savvy youth of Cairo captured the world’s imagination in the Arab Spring of 2011, it was actually the Egyptian labor movement that ousted the thirty-year regime of Hosni Mubarak in 2011. Between 2004 and 2010 there were more than 4000 unauthorized strikes across Egypt. Working conditions were abysmal and worsening. The official monthly wage was $6 a month (34 Egyptian pounds, set in 1984), and the majority of the population subsisted on less than $1 a day. Some workers earned more ($45–$117 a month), but living conditions were increasingly unstable as the government scrambled to attract foreign investment and loans in the wild west of neoliberal capitalism. Temporary contracts ended traditional labor protections, and the state backed off from commitments to subsidies on basic consumption items. Striking Workers at el Mahalla, 2006. The strikes that undid Mubarak’s Egypt centered on the textile industry in el Mahalla al Kubra. More than 20,000 workers shut down production multiple times and, while the demands were focused on workplace issues (wage increases, benefits, work protections and the right to establish unions independent from state control), the day-to-day cooperation required to manage community life during strikes inevitably politicized discussions. Since the 1950s the Egyptian state had controlled the syndicates that organized everyone from lawyers to street sweepers, trading benefits for political support. But by the 2000s the state had abandoned the compact, and replaced bargaining with violent repression. In 2008 strikers in Mahalla moved from an attitude of petitioning to confronting the state. It was the labor movement that laid the groundwork for the Arab Spring in Egypt, and despite harsh repression since 2013, unions remain the most active civil society sector challenging the regime. The strikes in Mahalla were largely invisible to most Egyptians due to state media controls, but in April 2008 phone videos showing strikers defacing a poster of President Mubarak went viral, stunning the government (which quickly negotiated a resolution to the strike) and fascinating the few Egyptians with access to social media. The unplanned act foreshadowed a new era of Egyptian politics. Three years later urban youth received the credit for expelling Mubarak, but it was the unions—lawyers, teachers, transportation workers, textile workers, etc.—who led the way. Unfortunately, workers found that little changed after 2011. Each administration since 2011 has waged a campaign of harassment against labor leaders, criminalizing protests, strikes and independent unions. Repressive laws designed to combat terrorist militias have been used against labor; unlucky activists have been detained in the middle of the night and held for years without charges or tried in military courts for destabilizing the nation. Egyptian Special Forces raid in central Cairo, Sept. 2017. Hundreds of Egyptians have disappeared since 2013, but in 2016 the kidnapping and murder of Giulio Regeni, an Italian graduate student studying unions in Cairo, created an international scandal that exposed the brutality of the regime. The signs of torture on his body, consistent with Egyptian security practices, sent a chilling message to international journalists, academics and human rights activists who might once have expected their passport to protect them: in Egypt, no one is safe from the state. A New Global Chapter in the Labor Struggle The labor crisis in Egypt isn’t a remote struggle showcasing the horrors of distant countries. It raises the same issues that increasingly confront workers everywhere: how do vulnerable groups achieve a life with dignity in an era when states are abandoning commitments to the public good in favor of serving elites? When capital can travel easily across borders to seek out the weakest regulatory markets? There isn’t really any road back from globalization—changes in technology and production chains have made that impossible—but we can resurrect an alternative vision of globalization that recognizes the shared concerns we all have with addressing economic and political rights. The U.S. government, blinded by its fixation on Islamist radicals, has given the Egyptian government a free hand to abuse state power, using weapons paid for with American taxpayer money. At a minimum, the U.S. could condemn the harassment of journalists, the midnight detention of human rights activists, the criminalization of strikes and protests, or even the sham of an election that just passed. Egypt today is more violently repressive than it was during the Mubarak years, but workers continue to challenge a state that is more interested in capturing the approval and investments of international capital than in serving the public they purport to represent. Egyptian labor deserves our attention and support.

### Framing

#### The standard is minimizing material violence.

Prefer:

**[1] Pleasure and pain are intrinsic value and disvalue**

**Blum et al. 18**

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**Pleasure** is not only one of the three primary reward functions but it also **defines reward.** As homeostasis explains the functions of only a limited number of rewards, the principal reason why particular stimuli, objects, events, situations, and activities are rewarding may be due to pleasure. This applies first of all to sex and to the primary homeostatic rewards of food and liquid and extends to money, taste, beauty, social encounters and nonmaterial, internally set, and intrinsic rewards. Pleasure, as the primary effect of rewards, drives the prime reward functions of learning, approach behavior, and decision making and provides the **basis for hedonic theories** of reward function. We are attracted by most rewards and exert intense efforts to obtain them, just because they are enjoyable [10]. Pleasure is a passive reaction that derives from the experience or prediction of reward and may lead to a long-lasting state of happiness. The word happiness is difficult to define. In fact, just obtaining physical pleasure may not be enough. One key to happiness involves a network of good friends. However, it is not obvious how the higher forms of satisfaction and pleasure are related to an ice cream cone, or to your team winning a sporting event. Recent multidisciplinary research, using both humans and detailed invasive brain analysis of animals has discovered some critical ways that the brain processes pleasure [14]. Pleasure as a hallmark of reward is sufficient for defining a reward, but it may not be necessary. A reward may generate positive learning and approach behavior simply because it contains substances that are essential for body function. When we are hungry, we may eat bad and unpleasant meals. A monkey who receives hundreds of small drops of water every morning in the laboratory is unlikely to feel a rush of pleasure every time it gets the 0.1 ml. Nevertheless, with these precautions in mind, we may define any stimulus, object, event, activity, or situation that has the potential to produce pleasure as a reward. In the context of reward deficiency or for disorders of addiction, homeostasis pursues pharmacological treatments: drugs to treat drug addiction, obesity, and other compulsive behaviors. The theory of allostasis suggests broader approaches - such as re-expanding the range of possible pleasures and providing opportunities to expend effort in their pursuit. [15]. It is noteworthy, the first animal studies eliciting approach behavior by electrical brain stimulation interpreted their findings as a discovery of the brain’s pleasure centers [16] which were later partly associated with midbrain dopamine neurons [17–19] despite the notorious difficulties of identifying emotions in animals. Evolutionary theories of pleasure: The love connection BO:D Charles Darwin and other biological scientists that have examined the biological evolution and its basic principles found various mechanisms that steer behavior and biological development. Besides their theory on natural selection, it was particularly the sexual selection process that gained significance in the latter context over the last century, especially when it comes to the question of what makes us “what we are,” i.e., human. However, the capacity to sexually select and evolve is not at all a human accomplishment alone or a sign of our uniqueness; yet, we humans, as it seems, are ingenious in fooling ourselves and others–when we are in love or desperately search for it. It is well established that modern biological theory conjectures that **organisms are** the **result of evolutionary competition.** In fact, Richard Dawkins stresses gene survival and propagation as the basic mechanism of life [20]. Only genes that lead to the fittest phenotype will make it. It is noteworthy that the phenotype is selected based on behavior that maximizes gene propagation. To do so, the phenotype must survive and generate offspring, and be better at it than its competitors. Thus, the ultimate, distal function of rewards is to increase evolutionary fitness by ensuring the survival of the organism and reproduction. It is agreed that learning, approach, economic decisions, and positive emotions are the proximal functions through which phenotypes obtain other necessary nutrients for survival, mating, and care for offspring. Behavioral reward functions have evolved to help individuals to survive and propagate their genes. Apparently, people need to live well and long enough to reproduce. Most would agree that homo-sapiens do so by ingesting the substances that make their bodies function properly. For this reason, foods and drinks are rewards. Additional rewards, including those used for economic exchanges, ensure sufficient palatable food and drink supply. Mating and gene propagation is supported by powerful sexual attraction. Additional properties, like body form, augment the chance to mate and nourish and defend offspring and are therefore also rewards. Care for offspring until they can reproduce themselves helps gene propagation and is rewarding; otherwise, many believe mating is useless. According to David E Comings, as any small edge will ultimately result in evolutionary advantage [21], additional reward mechanisms like novelty seeking and exploration widen the spectrum of available rewards and thus enhance the chance for survival, reproduction, and ultimate gene propagation. These functions may help us to obtain the benefits of distant rewards that are determined by our own interests and not immediately available in the environment. Thus the distal reward function in gene propagation and evolutionary fitness defines the proximal reward functions that we see in everyday behavior. That is why foods, drinks, mates, and offspring are rewarding. There have been theories linking pleasure as a required component of health benefits salutogenesis, (salugenesis). In essence, under these terms, pleasure is described as a state or feeling of happiness and satisfaction resulting from an experience that one enjoys. Regarding pleasure, it is a double-edged sword, on the one hand, it promotes positive feelings (like mindfulness) and even better cognition, possibly through the release of dopamine [22]. But on the other hand, pleasure simultaneously encourages addiction and other negative behaviors, i.e., motivational toxicity. It is a complex neurobiological phenomenon, relying on reward circuitry or limbic activity. It is important to realize that through the “Brain Reward Cascade” (BRC) endorphin and endogenous morphinergic mechanisms may play a role [23]. While natural rewards are essential for survival and appetitive motivation leading to beneficial biological behaviors like eating, sex, and reproduction, crucial social interactions seem to further facilitate the positive effects exerted by pleasurable experiences. Indeed, experimentation with addictive drugs is capable of directly acting on reward pathways and causing deterioration of these systems promoting hypodopaminergia [24]. Most would agree that pleasurable activities can stimulate personal growth and may help to induce healthy behavioral changes, including stress management [25]. The work of Esch and Stefano [26] concerning the link between compassion and love implicate the brain reward system, and pleasure induction suggests that social contact in general, i.e., love, attachment, and compassion, can be highly effective in stress reduction, survival, and overall health. Understanding the role of neurotransmission and pleasurable states both positive and negative have been adequately studied over many decades [26–37], but comparative anatomical and neurobiological function between animals and homo sapiens appear to be required and seem to be in an infancy stage. Finding happiness is different between apes and humans As stated earlier in this expert opinion one key to happiness involves a network of good friends [38]. However, it is not entirely clear exactly how the higher forms of satisfaction and pleasure are related to a sugar rush, winning a sports event or even sky diving, all of which augment dopamine release at the reward brain site. Recent multidisciplinary research, using both humans and detailed invasive brain analysis of animals has discovered some critical ways that the brain processes pleasure. Remarkably, there are pathways for ordinary liking and pleasure, which are limited in scope as described above in this commentary. However, there are **many brain regions**, often termed hot and cold spots, that significantly **modulate** (increase or decrease) our **pleasure or** even **produce the opposite** of pleasure— that is disgust and fear [39]. One specific region of the nucleus accumbens is organized like a computer keyboard, with particular stimulus triggers in rows— producing an increase and decrease of pleasure and disgust. Moreover, the cortex has unique roles in the cognitive evaluation of our feelings of pleasure [40]. Importantly, the interplay of these multiple triggers and the higher brain centers in the prefrontal cortex are very intricate and are just being uncovered. Desire and reward centers It is surprising that many different sources of pleasure activate the same circuits between the mesocorticolimbic regions (Figure 1). Reward and desire are two aspects pleasure induction and have a very widespread, large circuit. Some part of this circuit distinguishes between desire and dread. The so-called pleasure circuitry called “REWARD” involves a well-known dopamine pathway in the mesolimbic system that can influence both pleasure and motivation. In simplest terms, the well-established mesolimbic system is a dopamine circuit for reward. It starts in the ventral tegmental area (VTA) of the midbrain and travels to the nucleus accumbens (Figure 2). It is the cornerstone target to all addictions. The VTA is encompassed with neurons using glutamate, GABA, and dopamine. The nucleus accumbens (NAc) is located within the ventral striatum and is divided into two sub-regions—the motor and limbic regions associated with its core and shell, respectively. The NAc has spiny neurons that receive dopamine from the VTA and glutamate (a dopamine driver) from the hippocampus, amygdala and medial prefrontal cortex. Subsequently, the NAc projects GABA signals to an area termed the ventral pallidum (VP). The region is a relay station in the limbic loop of the basal ganglia, critical for motivation, behavior, emotions and the “Feel Good” response. This defined system of the brain is involved in all addictions –substance, and non –substance related. In 1995, our laboratory coined the term “Reward Deficiency Syndrome” (RDS) to describe genetic and epigenetic induced hypodopaminergia in the “Brain Reward Cascade” that contribute to addiction and compulsive behaviors [3,6,41]. Furthermore, ordinary “liking” of something, or pure pleasure, is represented by small regions mainly in the limbic system (old reptilian part of the brain). These may be part of larger neural circuits. In Latin, hedus is the term for “sweet”; and in Greek, hodone is the term for “pleasure.” Thus, the word Hedonic is now referring to various subcomponents of pleasure: some associated with purely sensory and others with more complex emotions involving morals, aesthetics, and social interactions. The capacity to have pleasure is part of being healthy and may even extend life, especially if linked to optimism as a dopaminergic response [42]. Psychiatric illness often includes symptoms of an abnormal inability to experience pleasure, referred to as anhedonia. A negative feeling state is called dysphoria, which can consist of many emotions such as pain, depression, anxiety, fear, and disgust. Previously many scientists used animal research to uncover the complex mechanisms of pleasure, liking, motivation and even emotions like panic and fear, as discussed above [43]. However, as a significant amount of related research about the specific brain regions of pleasure/reward circuitry has been derived from invasive studies of animals, these cannot be directly compared with subjective states experienced by humans. In an attempt to resolve the controversy regarding the causal contributions of mesolimbic dopamine systems to reward, we have previously evaluated the three-main competing explanatory categories: “liking,” “learning,” and “wanting” [3]. That is, dopamine may mediate (a) liking: the hedonic impact of reward, (b) learning: learned predictions about rewarding effects, or (c) wanting: the pursuit of rewards by attributing incentive salience to reward-related stimuli [44]. We have evaluated these hypotheses, especially as they relate to the RDS, and we find that the incentive salience or “wanting” hypothesis of dopaminergic functioning is supported by a majority of the scientific evidence. Various neuroimaging studies have shown that anticipated behaviors such as sex and gaming, delicious foods and drugs of abuse all affect brain regions associated with reward networks, and may not be unidirectional. Drugs of abuse enhance dopamine signaling which sensitizes mesolimbic brain mechanisms that apparently evolved explicitly to attribute incentive salience to various rewards [45]. Addictive substances are voluntarily self-administered, and they enhance (directly or indirectly) dopaminergic synaptic function in the NAc. This activation of the brain reward networks (producing the ecstatic “high” that users seek). Although these circuits were initially thought to encode a set point of hedonic tone, it is now being considered to be far more complicated in function, also encoding attention, reward expectancy, disconfirmation of reward expectancy, and incentive motivation [46]. The argument about addiction as a disease may be confused with a predisposition to substance and nonsubstance rewards relative to the extreme effect of drugs of abuse on brain neurochemistry. The former sets up an individual to be at high risk through both genetic polymorphisms in reward genes as well as harmful epigenetic insult. Some Psychologists, even with all the data, still infer that addiction is not a disease [47]. Elevated stress levels, together with polymorphisms (genetic variations) of various dopaminergic genes and the genes related to other neurotransmitters (and their genetic variants), and may have an additive effect on vulnerability to various addictions [48]. In this regard, Vanyukov, et al. [48] suggested based on review that whereas the gateway hypothesis does not specify mechanistic connections between “stages,” and does not extend to the risks for addictions the concept of common liability to addictions may be more parsimonious. The latter theory is grounded in genetic theory and supported by data identifying common sources of variation in the risk for specific addictions (e.g., RDS). This commonality has identifiable neurobiological substrate and plausible evolutionary explanations. Over many years the controversy of dopamine involvement in especially “pleasure” has led to confusion concerning separating motivation from actual pleasure (wanting versus liking) [49]. We take the position that animal studies cannot provide real clinical information as described by self-reports in humans. As mentioned earlier and in the abstract, on November 23rd, 2017, evidence for our concerns was discovered [50] In essence, although nonhuman primate brains are similar to our own, the disparity between other primates and those of human cognitive abilities tells us that surface similarity is not the whole story. Sousa et al. [50] small case found various differentially expressed genes, to associate with pleasure related systems. Furthermore, the dopaminergic interneurons located in the human neocortex were absent from the neocortex of nonhuman African apes. Such differences in neuronal transcriptional programs may underlie a variety of neurodevelopmental disorders. In simpler terms, the system controls the production of dopamine, a chemical messenger that plays a significant role in pleasure and rewards. The senior author, Dr. Nenad Sestan from Yale, stated: “Humans have evolved a dopamine system that is different than the one in chimpanzees.” This may explain why the behavior of humans is so unique from that of non-human primates, even though our brains are so surprisingly similar, Sestan said: “It might also shed light on why people are vulnerable to mental disorders such as autism (possibly even addiction).” Remarkably, this research finding emerged from an extensive, multicenter collaboration to compare the brains across several species. These researchers examined 247 specimens of neural tissue from six humans, five chimpanzees, and five macaque monkeys. Moreover, these investigators analyzed which genes were turned on or off in 16 regions of the brain. While the differences among species were subtle, **there was** a **remarkable contrast in** the **neocortices**, specifically in an area of the brain that is much more developed in humans than in chimpanzees. In fact, these researchers found that a gene called tyrosine hydroxylase (TH) for the enzyme, responsible for the production of dopamine, was expressed in the neocortex of humans, but not chimpanzees. As discussed earlier, dopamine is best known for its essential role within the brain’s reward system; the very system that responds to everything from sex, to gambling, to food, and to addictive drugs. However, dopamine also assists in regulating emotional responses, memory, and movement. Notably, abnormal dopamine levels have been linked to disorders including Parkinson’s, schizophrenia and spectrum disorders such as autism and addiction or RDS. Nora Volkow, the director of NIDA, pointed out that one alluring possibility is that the neurotransmitter dopamine plays a substantial role in humans’ ability to pursue various rewards that are perhaps months or even years away in the future. This same idea has been suggested by Dr. Robert Sapolsky, a professor of biology and neurology at Stanford University. Dr. Sapolsky cited evidence that dopamine levels rise dramatically in humans when we anticipate potential rewards that are uncertain and even far off in our futures, such as retirement or even the possible alterlife. This may explain what often motivates people to work for things that have no apparent short-term benefit [51]. In similar work, Volkow and Bale [52] proposed a model in which dopamine can favor NOW processes through phasic signaling in reward circuits or LATER processes through tonic signaling in control circuits. Specifically, they suggest that through its modulation of the orbitofrontal cortex, which processes salience attribution, dopamine also enables shilting from NOW to LATER, while its modulation of the insula, which processes interoceptive information, influences the probability of selecting NOW versus LATER actions based on an individual’s physiological state. This hypothesis further supports the concept that disruptions along these circuits contribute to diverse pathologies, including obesity and addiction or RDS.

**[2] Actor Spec— States must use util. Any other standard dooms the moral theory**

**Goodin 90.** Robert Goodin 90, [professor of philosophy at the Australian National University college of arts and social sciences], “The Utilitarian Response,” pgs 141-142 //RS

My larger argument turns on the proposition that there is something special about the situation of public officials that makes utilitarianism more probable for them than private individuals. Before proceeding with the large argument, I must therefore say what it is that makes it so special about public officials and their situations that make it both more necessary and more desirable for them to adopt a more credible form of utilitarianism. Consider, first, the argument from necessity. Public officials are obliged to make their choices under uncertainty, and uncertainty of a very special sort at that. All choices – public and private alike – are made under some degree of uncertainty, of course. But in the nature of things, private individuals will usually have more complete information on the peculiarities of their own circumstances and on the ramifications that alternative possible choices might have for them. Public officials, in contrast, are relatively poorly informed as to the effects that their choices will have on individuals, one by one. What they typically do know are generalities: averages and aggregates. They know what will happen most often to most people as a result of their various possible choices, but that is all. That is enough to allow public policy-makers to use the utilitarian calculus – assuming they want to use it at all – to choose general rules or conduct.

#### [3] Focus on large scale catastrophes is good and they outweigh – appeals to social costs, moral rules, and securitization play into cognitive bias and flawed risk calculus – 2020 is living proof

Weber 20 (ELKE U. WEBER is Gerhard R. Andlinger Professor in Energy and the Environment and Professor of Psychology and Public Affairs at Princeton University.), November-December 2020 Issue, "Heads in the Sand," Foreign Affairs, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2020-10-13/heads-sand> mvp

We are living in a time of crisis. From the immediate challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic to the looming existential threat of climate change, the world is grappling with massive global dangers—to say nothing of countless problems within countries, such as inequality, cyberattacks, unemployment, systemic racism, and obesity. In any given crisis, the right response is often clear. Wear a mask and keep away from other people. Burn less fossil fuel. Redistribute income. Protect digital infrastructure. The answers are out there. What’s lacking are governments that can translate them into actual policy. As a result, the crises continue. The death toll from the pandemic skyrockets, and the world makes dangerously slow progress on climate change, and so on.

It’s no secret how governments should react in times of crisis. First, they need to be nimble. Nimble means moving quickly, because problems often grow at exponential rates: a contagious virus, for example, or greenhouse gas emissions. That makes early action crucial and procrastination disastrous. Nimble also means adaptive. Policymakers need to continuously adjust their responses to crises as they learn from their own experience and from the work of scientists. Second, governments need to act wisely. That means incorporating the full range of scientific knowledge available about the problem at hand. It means embracing uncertainty, rather than willfully ignoring it. And it means thinking in terms of a long time horizon, rather than merely until the next election. But so often, policymakers are anything but nimble and wise. They are slow, inflexible, uninformed, overconfident, and myopic.

Why is everyone doing so badly? Part of the explanation lies in the inherent qualities of crises. Crises typically require navigating between risks. In the COVID-19 pandemic, policymakers want to save lives and jobs. With climate change, they seek a balance between avoiding extreme weather and allowing economic growth. Such tradeoffs are hard as it is, and they are further complicated by the fact that costs and benefits are not evenly distributed among stakeholders, making conflict a seemingly unavoidable part of any policy choice. Vested interests attempt to forestall needed action, using their money to influence decision-makers and the media. To make matters worse, policymakers must pay sustained attention to multiple issues and multiple constituencies over time. They must accept large amounts of uncertainty. Often, then, the easiest response is to stick with the status quo. But that can be a singularly dangerous response to many new hazards. After all, with the pandemic, business as usual would mean no social distancing. With climate change, it would mean continuing to burn fossil fuels.

But the explanation for humanity’s woeful response to crises goes beyond politics and incentives. To truly understand the failure to act, one must turn to human psychology. It is there that one can grasp the full impediments to proper decision-making—the cognitive biases, emotional reactions, and suboptimal shortcuts that hold policymakers back—and the tools to overcome them.

AVOIDING THE UNCOMFORTABLE

People are singularly bad at predicting and preparing for catastrophes. Many of these events are “black swans,” rare and unpredictable occurrences that most people find difficult to imagine, seemingly falling into the realm of science fiction. Others are “gray rhinos,” large and not uncommon threats that are still neglected until they stare you in the face (such as a coronavirus outbreak). Then there are “invisible gorillas,” threats in full view that should be noticed but aren’t—so named for a psychological experiment in which subjects watching a clip of a basketball game were so fixated on the players that they missed a person in a gorilla costume walking through the frame. Even professional forecasters, including security analysts, have a poor track record when it comes to accurately anticipating events. The COVID-19 crisis, in which a dystopic science-fiction narrative came to life and took everyone by surprise, serves as a cautionary tale about humans’ inability to foresee important events.

Not only do humans fail to anticipate crises; they also fail to respond rationally to them. At best, people display “bounded rationality,” the idea that instead of carefully considering their options and making perfectly rational decisions that optimize their preferences, humans in the real world act quickly and imperfectly, limited as they are by time and cognitive capacity. Add in the stress generated by crises, and their performance gets even worse.

Because humans don’t have enough time, information, or processing power to deliberate rationally, they have evolved easier ways of making decisions. They rely on their emotions, which serve as an early warning system of sorts: alerting people that they are in a positive context that can be explored and exploited or in a negative context where fight or flight is the appropriate response. They also rely on rules. To simplify decision-making, they might follow standard operating procedures or abide by some sort of moral code. They might decide to imitate the action taken by other people whom they trust or admire. They might follow what they perceive to be widespread norms. Out of habit, they might continue to do what they have been doing unless there is overwhelming evidence against it.

Not only do humans fail to anticipate crises; they also fail to respond rationally to them.

Humans evolved these shortcuts because they require little effort and work well in a broad range of situations. Without access to a real-time map of prey in different hunting grounds, for example, a prehistoric hunter might have resorted to a simple rule of thumb: look for animals where his fellow tribesmen found them yesterday. But in times of crisis, emotions and rules are not always helpful drivers of decision-making. High stakes, uncertainty, tradeoffs, and conflict—all elicit negative emotions, which can impede wise responses. Uncertainty is scary, as it signals an inability to predict what will happen, and what cannot be predicted might be deadly. The vast majority of people are already risk averse under normal circumstances. Under stress, they become even more so, and they retreat to the familiar comfort of the status quo. From gun laws to fossil fuel subsidies, once a piece of legislation is in place, it is hard to dislodge it, even when cost-benefit analysis argues for change.