# 1AC

### Plan

#### Plan: Private entities should not appropriate outer space via commercial space stations that replace the International Space Station.

#### Private-Public partnerships owned by NASA replace the ISS better and are coming now

Jones ’18 [Karen, a senior project leader with The Aerospace Corporation’s Center for Space Policy and Strategy. She has experience and expertise in the disciplines of technology strategy, program evaluation, and regulatory and policy analysis spanning the public sector, telecommunications, space, aerospace defense, energy, and environmental industries. She is a former management consultant with IBM Global Services and Arthur D. Little and has an M.B.A. from the Yale School of Management, “PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS: STIMULATING INNOVATION IN THE SPACE SECTOR”, April 2018, Center for Space Policy and Strategy, [https://aerospace.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/Partnerships\_Rev\_5-4-18.pdf]//pranav](https://aerospace.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/Partnerships_Rev_5-4-18.pdf%5d//pranav)

1. P3 = public-private partnership

When a public-sector entity considers a P3 arrangement, it should articulate the objectives. Within the space sector this could include:

• Mission Support—to advance science, space exploration, or national security and defense.

• Functional Support—such as communications, Earth observation, space logistics.

• Technology Advancement—such as prototyping or developing new technologies.

• Space Industrial Base—to promote a competitive and robust commercial space sector

Traditional public infrastructure projects are structured across a range of P3 project delivery models to provide functional support—from operation and maintenance to concession agreements (see Figure 1). By contrast, space industry P3 delivery models typically include various arrangements for sharing risk and know how through cooperative research, Space Act Agreements (SAAs), or longer term development agreements. The current emphasis appears to be leveraging commercial sector innovation and agility (see Figure 2). Perhaps over time the space sector will introduce more traditional P3 functional support models such as:

◆ Example: Future Low Earth Orbit (LEO) Modules/

Habitat (“Concession” P3 Model). NASA could potentially apply a concession arrangement to replace the ISS with one or more commercial modules. The space module(s) could be owned by the U.S. government and designed, built and operated by one or more commercial companies for a specific period of time. Several commercial companies, including Axiom Space, Bigelow Aerospace and NanoRacks, have already expressed interest in the provisioning of space modules to replace the existing International Space Station (ISS). Note that if these commercial modules were owned, built, operated and maintained by the commercial sector then this would shift the business model from a P3 model to full privatization.

#### Public control of commercial space stations solves all neg offense – OST proves

Smith ’79 [Delbert D., Legal Advisor for the Space Science and Engineering Center of the University of Wisconsin, “Space Stations International Law and Policy”, October 30, 1979, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Space\_Stations\_International\_Law\_And\_Pol/4U2fDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0&kptab=overview]//pranav

Three potential limitations on these conclusions should be noted. First, the interpretation set forth above would not permit commercial or international organizations from claiming exclusive rights to a particular area of outer space in the absence of actual use. Thus, if such an organization had maintained a space station in a specific orbital slot for a substantial period of time and the station-keeping system subsequently failed, the organization would not be entitled to prevent any other entity from occupying that slot pending the orbiting to a replacement station by the original occupant. Second, if an entity were established that, although commercial in form, was essentially under the control of the government of the country in which it was organized, permanent use would constitute national, as distinguished from nonnational, appropriation. This is especially true in light of the Article VI provision that makes states responsible for acts of their nationals and for international organizations of which they are members. Third, dispute has arisen regarding the minimum standard of universality that would determine whether an international organization of relatively universal membership satisfies the minimum standard. However, some question remains regarding the exemption of an organization composed of a limited number of governments.

### Advantage

#### ISS sunset gets extended to 2028 absent commercial replacement – be suspect of “replacement good” offense

Heilwell 12/03 [Rebecca, reporter for Open Sourced, covering emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, and logistics, “NASA gave Jeff Bezos money to build his office park in space”, Updated 12-03-2021 (I couldn’t find the original publishing date – this is the only one that showed up on the website – if you can please lmk), Vox Recode, https://www.vox.com/recode/2021/10/27/22747509/blue-origin-orbital-reef-office-park-bezos]//pranav

After more than two decades in orbit, NASA is preparing to retire the International Space Station. The habitable satellite only has permission to operate until 2024, and while it’s likely that the space station’s funding could be extended until 2028, NASA plans to decommission the ISS and find a replacement by the end of the decade. Cue Jeff Bezos. The billionaire’s spaceflight company, Blue Origin, has proposed a new commercial space station called Orbital Reef, which would provide a “mixed use business park” in space. This concept now has the support of NASA. The agency announced on Thursday that it would award Blue Origin and its partner companies $130 million to develop the space station, which NASA hopes will launch before 2030. With the help of several other companies, including Sierra Space and Boeing, Blue Origin plans to build a satellite that’s slightly smaller than the ISS and houses up to 10 people. The design includes desk space, computers, laboratories, a garden, and 3D printers. The goal, the company says, is to lease out office space to interested parties, including government agencies, researchers, tourism companies, and even movie production crews. Blue Origin’s plan is predicated on the idea that the end is coming for the ISS, which NASA is still figuring out how exactly to remove from orbit. While space stations have been helpful for space exploration, Blue Origin senior vice president Brent Sherwood argued in an October op-ed that private companies now have the capabilities to take over much of the burgeoning economy in low-Earth orbit, or LEO. Blue Origin is even building a space tug, a transport vehicle that moves cargo between different orbits, that could reportedly be used to salvage parts from the ISS and incorporate them into Orbital Reef’s systems. NASA doesn’t mind the corporate takeover of low-Earth orbit. The agency’s first space station, SkyLab, was only in orbit for a few months before NASA let the vehicle descend and decompose into the atmosphere. The space agency has been weighing defunding the ISS, which is full of aging hardware, for several years, and NASA’s investment in Orbital Reef is part of more than $400 million in funding that the agency has set aside to develop new, privately built and operated space stations through its Commercial LEO Destinations program. Eventually, NASA hopes that it can send its astronauts to these stations instead of paying to maintain the ISS. Overall, the plan could save the government more than $1 billion every year. “This is technology that is over 20 years old at this point. When you expose that infrastructure to radiation, solar weather ... things are going to break down,” Wendy Whitman Cobb, a professor at the US Air Force’s School of Air and Space Studies, told Recode. “Having these commercial space stations will be a way of America keeping their foot in low-Earth orbit while focusing more of their resources on moon and Mars exploration.” In the meantime, NASA is currently focusing on the Artemis program, an ambitious plan to establish a long-term human presence on the moon. The agency intends to send people to the moon for the first time in decades as soon as 2025, and hopes the project will eventually serve as a stepping stone to future exploration of Mars. Private companies, including Blue Origin, have desperately fought for a role in this prestigious mission, and especially a lucrative contract to develop pivotal moon landing technology. SpaceX won that contract earlier this year, prompting Bezos’s company to sue NASA and lobby the Senate to reverse the decision. Those efforts have yet to bear fruit, so Bezos now seems to be turning his attention back to the low-Earth orbit economy, where there are more customers and less competition from Elon Musk. “Most, if not all, of the problems or the challenges that need to be worked to have a commercial LEO destination have already been solved by the International Space Station program,” Sherwood, of Blue Origin, said in a Thursday press conference. “That’s the explanation for why we can develop a commercial space station for so much less than it cost NASA the first time.” But there’s reason to believe that the Orbital Reef project may not succeed in the near future — or at all. Blue Origin still hasn’t launched humans into orbit, a feat SpaceX achieved last month during the Inspiration4 mission. Blue Origin also lists its New Glenn reusable launch system and Boeing’s Starliner crew vehicle as pivotal parts of the Orbital Reef plan, but both vehicles have yet to conduct a problem-free spaceflight.

#### Orbital Reef, StarLab, and Northrup Grumman are developing replacements that they will own – first round grants from NASA

Foust 12/03 [Jeff, Ph.D. in planetary sciences from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a bachelor’s degree with honors in geophysics and planetary science from the California Institute of Technology, “NASA awards funding to three commercial space station concepts”, 12-03-2021, https://spacenews.com/nasa-awards-funding-to-three-commercial-space-station-concepts/]//pranav

The largest award, at $160 million, went to a team led by Nanoracks and includes Voyager Space and Lockheed Martin. Those companies announced a space station concept called Starlab Oct. 21 that could be ready as soon as 2027.

A second award, valued at $130 million, went to a team led by Blue Origin for the Orbital Reef space station announced Oct. 25. That project includes Boeing, Redwire and Sierra Space, among others, with a goal of entering initial operations in the latter half of the 2020s.

The third award, worth $125.6 million, went to a previously undisclosed concept from Northrop Grumman. That proposed station would leverage the company’s work on the Cygnus cargo spacecraft, Mission Extension Vehicle satellite servicing program and the Habitation and Logistics Outpost module it is building for NASA’s lunar Gateway.

Rick Mastracchio, director of business development for human exploration at Northrop Grumman, said in a call with reporters that a single launch could place in orbit a facility able to support four people, with the ability to expand. “This allows for low risk and rapid deployment,” he said. The station, which he said doesn’t yet have a name, is being developed with Dynetics, with others to be announced in the near future.

NASA selected the three concepts from 11 proposals the agency received in August. “Almost all of the proposals represented viable concepts for commercial LEO destinations,” said Phil McAlister, director of commercial spaceflight at NASA Headquarters, in the call.

All the bidders and others will be eligible to compete for the second phase of the program in the middle of the decade, where NASA will issue contracts to certify commercial space stations for use by NASA astronauts and purchase initial services from those stations.

#### Public projects like the ISS are key to global cooperation and create a template for future multilateral space co-op.

Cobb ’20 [Wendy Whitman, received a BA in political science (summa cum laude and university honors) and an MA in political science from the University of Central Florida. I received a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Florida where my research focused on the intersection of political institutions and public policy. I have authored several books including Unbroken Government: Success and Failure in Policymaking (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), The Politics of Cancer: Malignant Indifference (Praeger, 2017), and The CQ Press Career Guide for Political Science Students (CQ Press, 2017). My research has also appeared in journals including Congress and the Presidency, Space Policy, and the Journal of Political Science Education. I am currently professor of strategy and security studies at the US Air Force's School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, a selective graduate program for Air Force officers. Prior to my current position, I was associate professor of political science at Cameron University in Lawton, Oklahoma, “The International Space Station at 20 offers hope and a template for future cooperation”, 11-04-2020, The Conversation, https://theconversation.com/the-international-space-station-at-20-offers-hope-and-a-template-for-future-cooperation-149363]//pranav

On Nov. 2, 2020, the International Space Station celebrated its 20th anniversary of continuous human occupation. With astronauts and cosmonauts from around the world working together, the ISS has demonstrated humankind’s ability to not only live and work in space but cooperate with one another. This remarkable achievement is significant as countries and companies around the world look to expand space exploration beyond Earth orbit. The path to this anniversary was not easy; like most things done in space, the cost and the difficulty were high. Supported by the Reagan administration as part of the Cold War competition with the Soviet Union, the ISS began its life in the 1980s. Following the Challenger disaster in 1986, planning fell by the wayside as costs increased. Facing delays and cost overruns, the space station – then known as Freedom – was nearly canceled by the House of Representatives in the early 1990s. While already bringing international partners aboard to lower costs, the Clinton administration invited Russia to participate, leveraging the station as a tool of foreign policy between former adversaries. What began as competition has turned into fruitful cooperation not just between Russia and the United States but Canada, Japan, Italy, the European Space Agency and over 100 other countries. As a space policy expert, I argue that the achievements of the ISS to date are indeed significant, but they also point the way ahead for cooperation and commercialization in space. By the numbers, the International Space Station is indeed impressive. At 357 feet in length, it is just one yard shy of an American football field. More than 241 individuals from 19 countries have visited, and at least 3,000 research projects have taken place on the ISS. The ISS is the third brightest object in the night sky and can often be spotted worldwide. Even Lego has immortalized the station with its own building set. The ISS has proven that humans can live and work in space. These experiences are key as countries look to longer term exploration. The ISS has led to advances in understanding how the human body reacts to sustained microgravity and increased exposure to radiation. Other experiments have allowed researchers to study materials and chemicals in a microgravity environment. Astronauts have also learned how to grow food on the station, leading to insights on how plants grow on Earth. These accomplishments have not come without criticism. It cost more than US$100 billion to construct; some have questioned the amount and value of the science that has been conducted. More recently, limits on the the number of crew residing on the station have reduced the amount of time available for scientific experiments. However, perhaps one of the most significant legacies of the ISS is the long-term cooperation that has enabled it. While the U.S. and Russia are the countries most closely identified with the program, Canada, Japan and the European Space Agency also take part. While not always easy, sustained cooperation in a place where operations are difficult and costly is impressive. For the U.S. and Russia in particular, this achievement is unique. While there was some cooperation between the two during the Cold War, the ISS is the first major space program in which the two have worked together. Even as relations between Russia and the U.S. have deteriorated over the past several years, the partnership on the ISS has continued. While scientific and space cooperation does not solve all terrestrial issues, it can strengthen other diplomatic relationships. Though turning 20 may not seem like a milestone, for a complicated piece of machinery operating in the dangerous environment of space, the ISS is approaching old age. In recent years, it has suffered several problems, most recently an air leak in the Russian module, Zvezda. However, recent assessments support continued operation of the ISS for at least another 10 years. In that time, the ISS will likely see an increase in commercial activity. Recently, cosmetics company Estee Lauder launched one of its products to the station to be featured in a commercial filmed there. SpaceX is looking to make the ISS a tourist destination following NASA’s 2019 decision making it easier for space tourists to visit. Another space company, Axiom, recently received a contract to build a commercial module to be added to the ISS in 2024. The module would give additional living and working space to astronauts aboard the station as well as serve as the starting point for a future commercial space station. Thinking beyond Earth orbit, international cooperation in the ISS provides a solid example for future cooperation in space. As NASA seeks to return to the Moon, international cooperation will be a way of reducing costs, normalizing behavior in space and increasing national prestige. NASA has made efforts in these areas through the Artemis Accords, an agreement outlining norms and behaviors for lunar exploration. Additionally, NASA is partnering with the European Space Agency and others on its plans for the Gateway, a mini-space station in lunar orbit. The ISS experience has been fundamental to all of these developments as it continues to launch the next generation of space endeavors.

#### Space colonization solves otherwise inevitable extinction.

Zarkadakis 19 [George; December 26; Ph.D. in Artificial Intelligence; George Zardakis, “Abandoning the metropolis: space colonisation as the new imperative,” <https://georgezarkadakis.com/2019/12/26/abandoning-the-metropolis-space-colonisation-as-the-new-imperative/>]

Space colonization is not only the subject of fiction but of serious science too. The late physicist Stephen Hawking argued that unless colonies were established in space the human race would become extinct. There are several natural phenomena beyond our control that could spell our obliteration. Over a long enough period of time our planet is vulnerable to catastrophic meteorite strikes, or getting exposed to the deadly radiation of a nearby supernova explosion. As our Sun burns its fuel it will start to expand and, in a few million years, will scorch Earth. We can also self-destruct by waging nuclear war, or by tilting our planet’s climate towards a runaway greenhouse effect. Space colonization is therefore the ultimate insurance policy of long-term human survival[4].

#### No private space stations good offense – they’re unproven, decades away, and underestimate ISS resiliency

Davenport ’20 [Christian, covers NASA and the space industry for The Washington Post's Financial desk. He joined The Post in 2000 and has served as an editor on the Metro desk and as a reporter covering military affairs. He is the author of "The Space Barons: Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and the Quest to Colonize the Cosmos", “The International Space Station can’t stay up there forever. Will privately run, commercial replacements be ready in time?”, 12-23-2020, The Washington Post, https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/12/23/space-station-replace-biden/?outputType=amp]//pranav

But while those options show promise, they are still unproven and years from hitting the market.

As a result, NASA has been increasingly concerned it could have a gap in low Earth orbit that would be even more consequential than the ignominious period after the space shuttle fleet was retired that left the space agency with no way to launch its astronauts to space from U.S. soil. Instead, NASA was forced to rely on the Russians for rides to space, at a price that grew to as much as $90 million a seat, before Elon Musk’s SpaceX restored human spaceflight for NASA earlier this year.

Even if the station is extended, NASA needs to be working now on its replacement, officials said. It took years to get the ISS up and running. The concept was born in 1984, when President Ronald Reagan announced the United States would put a station, eventually dubbed Freedom, in orbit. But after different administrations and design changes, the first segments weren’t launched until 1998. Since then, NASA has invested more than $100 billion in the facility, which receives more than $3 billion annually from NASA.

Privately run stations would also need time to build their business cases, signing foreign governments as tenants, working with companies and universities that want to do research in space, and wealthy tourists who would pay millions of dollars to visit.

While NASA and the private sector work toward developing commercial habitats, China is building its own space station that it hopes to launch within a couple of years and is recruiting countries around the world as partners. The United States would not be one of them, however, since NASA is effectively barred by law from partnering with China in space.

“I think it would be a tragedy if, after all of this time and all of this effort, we were to abandon low Earth orbit and cede that territory,” NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine told a Senate panel earlier this year.

The ISS still does have some good years left, officials said. “We’re good from an engineering standpoint,” Joel Montalbano, NASA’s space station program manager, said in an interview. “We’re cleared through 2028.”

Boeing, which is paid $225 million per year as the prime contractor supporting space station operations, said it could stay in orbit for even longer.

“The ISS is incredibly healthy, with life capability well beyond 2030,” said John Mulholland, Boeing’s ISS program manager. He said the U.S. and Russia recently completed a life extension study “and all the hardware has been cleared to a minimum of 2030. That’s a real testament to the design and the maintenance that’s been done on it.”

Recently, the station got new lithium-ion batteries that “are less than half the size of the original batteries and produce twice the power,” Mulholland said. The power upgrade also doubled the speed at which the station’s crew can send data from science experiments back to Earth.

Over the years, the station’s water recovery system has improved to the point where today, 95 percent of the water used for drinking and cooking is recycled, Montalbano said. The communications systems have also been upgraded, as have life support systems like carbon dioxide removal.

#### Space multilateralism solves space conflict – brings revisionist powers to the table and increases transparency which solves future militarization

Mason ’21 [Paul, author of several books, and a visiting professor at the University of Wolverhampton, “How to halt the space arms race”, 11-17-2021, New Statesman, https://www.newstatesman.com/comment/2021/11/how-to-halt-the-space-arms-race]//pranav

Could space be demilitarised? Not a chance, say the experts, who point out that – in contrast to the space exploration of the popular imagination, where it is still seen as a benign, trans-national endeavour – the entire history of space technology, from the Nazi V2 rocket to the recent Russian anti-satellite strike, has been driven by the military. Yet military activity in space could be made more orderly and transparent. The two most authoritative annual reports on military space capabilities are both reliant on open-source information and acknowledge that there are huge gaps in what even the experts know. We know how many satellites are up there: we do not know much about what weapons they might carry. This stands in contrast to the way the rival superpowers have managed both nuclear and conventional deterrence since the onset of the Cold War, with a series of treaties signed by Russia and the West to minimise or regulate aggression – for example, limiting the possession of nuclear weapons or the deployment of armoured vehicles. But there is almost no such framework for regulating the space arms race, or for achieving basic transparency about who’s doing what, still less for avoiding conflict. US and Russian space commanders convened in Vienna last July, agreeing to “enhance communications between the two countries about space-related operational issues in order to reduce the risks of misunderstanding, help prevent or manage space-related incidents, and prevent inadvertent escalation”. This did not stop Russia’s surprise launch of an anti-satellite missile on 15 November, nor did it avert the war of words that followed it. In truth the US-Russia space dialogue, a hangover from the Cold War, is a long way from the multilateral and comprehensive framework needed to bring China, India, Israel and Iran around the table. Lacking any formal international treaty beyond the anti-nuclear one, space has, in effect, become a demonstration zone for geopolitical realism. Those who have real power on Earth have untrammelled power in space. They will zap their own satellites at will, buzz the satellites of others, launch “projectiles” from existing satellites – as Russia allegedly did last year – and unleash spoofing attacks to disorient civilian shipping, all without acknowledgement or explanation. The emerging field of space war looks, in other words, exactly like terrestrial conflict would if there were no treaties and deployment patterns, or journalists and NGOs to observe them. This year the UK launched its own space command, with military chiefs acknowledging space as a domain of conflict co-equal with air, land, sea and cyber. Britain is late to the space war game and, after years of offshoring and outsourcing, lacks the expertise and resources to compete with the big four space powers: it doesn’t figure in either of the monitoring reports on space militarisation documenting significant offensive capabilities. As a medium-sized power, self-excluded from large parts of the EU’s space programmes, it is in Britain’s interest to promote order, multilateralism and transparency in space, and to resist its further militarisation. And, to an extent, haltingly, it has done so, promoting the first real debate at the UN over a new space treaty.

#### Weaponization of space and dual-use tech results in unsustainable arms races and causes a laundry list of impacts – alternative measures to check weaponization are NOT mutually exclusive with the aff

Ortega et al. ’21 [ALMUDENA AZCÁRATE ORTEGA - associate researcher, John Borrie - senior research fellow, James Revill - program lead of the Weapons of Mass Destruction and Other Strategic Weapons Programme of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, “Star Wars: the not-so-phantom menace”, 05-12-2021, [https://english.elpais.com/opinion/2021-05-12/star-wars-the-not-so-phantom-menace.html]//pranav](https://english.elpais.com/opinion/2021-05-12/star-wars-the-not-so-phantom-menace.html%5d//pranav) \*modified for ableist language\*

The picture isn’t all rosy, however. Due to the critical importance of space, several countries have, in recent years, formed “space forces” and are developing national doctrines for fighting in space. A handful of nations have even tested offensive capabilities of various kinds. These countries have some legitimate security concerns. The problem is this pattern of responses to the actions and activities of space competitors is fuelling an arms race. If the international community doesn’t act to turn down the dial on space’s quickening weaponization, humankind risks suffering the devastating consequences of a space-based conflict, such as mass disruption of services like GPS and denial of internet access. Debris from the destruction of space objects could also prevent space users from using orbits, possibly for years. States have long sought to ensure that outer space is used only for peaceful purposes. Even at the height of the Cold War, they reached international agreements such as the 1967 Outer Space Treaty that, among other things, indicates that states shall not “place nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in orbit or on celestial bodies or station them in outer space.” These treaties have contributed to safety and security in space and on Earth, but as technology advances so does the risk of conflict in space. Counterspace capabilities have the capacity to interfere, incapacitate or destroy adversaries’ space assets, and some of them are commonly used nowadays, such as cyberattacks and electronic interference with satellites. Others, such as interceptor missiles launched from Earth to attack space objects, could be used during a conflict on Earth, and would have a [devastating]~~crippling~~ effect on militaries and civilians alike. Even if specific space technologies were not invented with a counterspace purpose in mind, their characteristics nevertheless could make them a threat in the eyes of others. An example of this is the so-called space harpoon, a barbed projectile fired from a satellite to collect space junk, which could be exploited for hostile purposes. In the face of such strategic unpredictability, trust deficit grows and tensions escalate more easily. For decades governments have argued about “preventing an arms race in outer space” in multilateral forums like the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament. Now the space arms race is here – and given what is at stake – governments need to focus afresh on practical steps to provide each other meaningful reassurance about their capabilities and intentions in space. There are already several proposals. China and Russia have proposed a treaty to prevent weapons from being placed in space and threats against space objects. Other, predominantly Western governments, have proposed “reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviors.” These approaches are not mutually exclusive. Arms control history suggests legal and normative measures can be combined and sequenced in ways that are mutually reinforcing. Even then, it’s unlikely these measures will be sufficient to ensure the safe and secure use of space in the future. Measures to increase transparency and confidence in space-related activities to minimize misunderstandings are also required. This could be augmented by the publication of national policies on counterspace capabilities and by encouraging dialogue between space users – including commercial stakeholders – about the impacts of and risks introduced by new strategic technologies. Greater mutual understanding of these issues among space users could help to avoid escalatory situations. Space is critical for sustaining and enhancing life on Earth. It actively contributes to sustainable development in a myriad of ways. To ensure space’s continued contribution to humankind’s wellbeing, spacefaring nations must work to arrest their weaponization of outer space and develop safeguards to prevent current tensions blowing out into full-blown conflict, thus keeping Star Wars firmly in the realm of science fiction.

#### Goes nuclear – great powers are developing nukes for new territorial conflicts in space

Tisdall ’20 [Simon, foreign affairs commentator. He has been a foreign leader writer, foreign editor and US editor for the Guardian, “A nuclear arms race in space? It seems we've learned nothing from Hiroshima”, 08-02-2020, The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/aug/02/a-nuclear-arms-race-in-space-it-seems-weve-learned-nothing-from-hiroshima]//pranav

The battle for outer space is only getting going – yet deserves immediate attention. Russia’s alleged development of anti-satellite weapons is almost certainly matched by the US and China, and undermines past undertakings about the peaceful use of space. Christopher Ford, US assistant secretary of state for international security and non-proliferation, warned last week that Russia and China had already turned space into a “war-fighting domain”. “What [the Russians] are doing is signalling to the world that they’re able to destroy satellites in orbit with other satellites,” Ford said. “This is the sort of thing that could get out of hand and go very badly rather quickly.” The UK called the alleged test “a threat to space systems on which the world depends” – meaning use of such weapons could, in theory, produce an instant global security and communications blackout. Yet in relaunching US space command last year, Donald Trump also pointed to space as the next great-power battlefield. Nato secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg says the alliance will not deploy weapons in space but is obliged to defend its interests, which include 2,000 orbiting satellites. For Nato, too, space is now an “operational domain”. New and “improved” nuclear weapons are proliferating in parallel with the race for space. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri), nine states – the US, Russia, China, Israel, the UK, France, India, Pakistan and North Korea – together possess about 13,400 weapons. While the overall total is falling, “retired” warheads and bombs are being replaced by more powerful, versatile devices, such as smaller, “use-able” US battlefield nukes. “All these states are either developing or deploying new weapon systems or have announced their intention to do so,” Sipri’s annual report said. The US and Russia each possessed about 1,550 deployed, long-range weapons, while China had about 300. Both the US and Russia were spending more and placing greater reliance on nuclear weapons in future military planning, it said, while China was rushing to catch up. “China is in the middle of a significant modernisation of its nuclear arsenal. It is developing a so-called nuclear triad for the first time, made up of new land- and sea-based missiles and nuclear-capable aircraft. India and Pakistan are slowly increasing the size and diversity of their nuclear forces,” Sipri reported. Meanwhile, North Korea continued to prioritise its military nuclear programme, while conducting “multiple” ballistic missile tests. “Instead of planning for nuclear disarmament, the nuclear-armed states appear to plan to retain large arsenals for the indefinite future, are adding new nuclear weapons, and are increasing the role such weapons play in their national strategies,” a Federation of American Scientists survey said. It estimated about 1,800 warheads were kept on high alert, ready for use at short notice. Russia claims to lead the world in developing hi-tech weaponry. Speaking in July, Putin boasted that Russia’s navy was being equipped with nuclear-powered hypersonic cruise missiles, which supposedly have unlimited range, and submarine-launched underwater nuclear drones. Despite celebrated speeches supporting a nuclear-free world, Barack Obama authorised a $1.2tn plan to upgrade America’s nuclear triad while pursuing strategic arms reductions via the 2010 New Start treaty with Russia. Trump has doubled down, at the same time abandoning arms control pacts. His 2018 nuclear posture review proposed an extra $500bn in spending, including $17bn for low-yield, battlefield weapons. Trump looks set to scupper New Start, which expires in February, on the spurious ground that it does not reduce China’s much smaller arsenal (which it was never intended to do). He has previously reneged on the 2015 Iran nuclear treaty, the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces treaty, and is said to favour resumed nuclear testing in Nevada in defiance of the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban treaty. Like Britain and other signatories, the US continues to fail to fulfil its obligation under the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty “to pursue nuclear disarmament aimed at the ultimate elimination of nuclear arsenals”. Despite its acute financial situation, Britain remains committed to replacing its Trident missile system at an estimated cost of £205bn over 30 years. While nuclear weapons have not been used since 1945, great-power military flashpoints are increasing the risk that they might be. These potential triggers include the South China Sea, Taiwan, the India-Pakistan and India-China borders, the US-Israel-Iran conflict, North Korea and Ukraine. Heightened international tensions and collapsing arms-control regimes only partly explain the accelerating pace of nuclear rearmament. Resurgent nationalism, authoritarian rightwing populism, revived or new territorial rivalries (as in space), the bypassing of the UN and multilateral institutions, and a shifting economic and geopolitical power balance are all aggravating factors.

**Causes extinction** through winter, firestorms, EMP blasts, ozone damage, and meltdowns

-Immediate death -Climate destruction spurring an ice age (Nuclear winter) via nuclear firestorms and smoke -Ozone collapses -2 Billion insta-die in famine -kills biodiversity -Meltdowns and grid collapse via EMPs -Remaining fallout

**Starr 14** {Steven, Senior Scientist for Physicians for Social Responsibility, Director of the Clinical Laboratory Science Program (Missouri), commentator in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists and the Strategic Arms Reduction, Associate member of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, “The Lethality of Nuclear Weapons: Nuclear War has No Winner,” Global Research: Centre for Research on Globalization, 6/5, http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-lethality-of-nuclear-weapons-nuclear-war-has-no-winner/5385611}

Nuclear war **has no winner**. Beginning in 2006, several of the world’s **leading climatologists** (at Rutgers, UCLA, John Hopkins University, and the University of Colorado-Boulder) published a series of studies that evaluated the long-term environmental consequences of a nuclear war, including baseline scenarios fought with **merely 1%** of the explosive power in the US and/or Russian launch-ready nuclear arsenals. They concluded that the consequences of even a “small” nuclear war would include **catastrophic disruptions** of global climate[i] and **massive destruction** of Earth’s protective ozone layer[ii]. These **and more recent studies** predict that global agriculture would be so negatively affected by such a war, a global famine would result, which would cause up to **2 billion people to starve to death**. [iii]¶ These **peer-reviewed** studies – which were analyzed by the **best scientists in the world** and found to be without error – also predict that a war fought with less than half of US or Russian strategic nuclear weapons would **destroy the human race**.[iv] In other words, a US-Russian nuclear war would create such extreme long-term damage to the global environment that it would leave the Earth **uninhabitable** for humans and most animal forms of life.¶ A recent article in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, “Self-assured destruction: The climate impacts of nuclear war”,[v] begins by stating:¶ “A nuclear war between Russia and the United States, **even after the arsenal reductions** planned under New START, could produce a nuclear winter. Hence, an attack by either side could be **suicidal**, resulting in self-assured **destruction**.”¶ In 2009, I wrote an article[vi] for the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament that summarizes the findings of these studies. It explains that nuclear firestorms would produce millions of tons of smoke, which would rise above cloud level and form a global stratospheric smoke layer that would **rapidly encircle the Earth**. The smoke layer would remain for at least a **decade**, and it would act to destroy the protective ozone layer (vastly increasing the UV-B reaching Earth[vii]) as well as block warming sunlight, thus creating Ice Age weather conditions that would last **10 years** or longer.¶ Following a US-Russian nuclear war, temperatures in the central US and Eurasia would fall below freezing every day for one to three years; the intense cold would **completely eliminate growing seasons for a decade** or longer. No crops could be grown, leading to a famine that would **kill most humans and large animal populations**.¶ Electromagnetic pulse from high-altitude nuclear detonations would destroy the integrated circuits in all modern electronic devices[viii], including those in commercial nuclear power plants. Every nuclear reactor would almost **instantly** meltdown; every nuclear spent fuel pool (which contain many times more radioactivity than found in the reactors) would boil-off, releasing vast amounts of **long-lived** radioactivity. The fallout would make most of the US and Europe **uninhabitable**. Of course, the survivors of the nuclear war would be **starving to death anyway.** Once nuclear weapons were introduced into a US-Russian conflict, there would be little chance that a **nuclear holocaust** could be avoided. Theories of “limited nuclear war” and “nuclear de-escalation” are **unrealistic**.[ix] In 2002 the Bush administration modified US strategic doctrine from a retaliatory role to permit preemptive nuclear attack; in 2010, the Obama administration made only incremental and miniscule changes to this doctrine, leaving it essentially unchanged. Furthermore, Counterforce doctrine – used by both the US and Russian military – emphasizes the need for preemptive strikes once nuclear war begins. Both sides would be under immense pressure to launch a preemptive nuclear first-strike once military hostilities had commenced, especially if nuclear weapons had already been used on the battlefield.

### Framing

#### The standard is minimizing existential risk

#### Even the most conservative estimates prove reducing existential risk outweighs all other impacts, regardless of probability – actively prioritize our calculus since you are cognitively biased against it

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The number of people alive today pales in comparison to the number who could exist in the future. It may therefore be extremely important to ensure that human civilization flourishes far into the future, enjoying fulfilling lives free of suffering.

There are a number of ways we might work to ensure a positive future for humanity. We could work to better understand and prevent extinction risks - catastrophic events that have the potential to destroy all life on this planet.[1] We may want to focus on the broader category of existential risks- events that could dramatically and irreversibly curtail humanity’s potential.[2] Or we might focus on increasing the chance that the lives of our descendants are positive in other ways: for example, improving democracy or the ability of institutions to make good decisions.

Attempts to shape the long-term future seem highly neglected relative to the problems we face today. There are fewer incentives to address longer-term problems, and they can also be harder for us to take seriously.

It is, of course, hard to be certain about the impact of our actions on the very long-term future. However, it does seem that there are things we can do - and given the vast scale we are talking about, these actions could therefore have an enormous impact in expectation.

This profile sets out why you might want to focus your altruistic efforts on the long-term future - and why you might not. You may be particularly inclined to focus on this if you think we face serious existential threats in the next century, and if you’re comfortable accepting a reasonable amount of uncertainty about the impact you are having, especially in the short-term.

The case for the long-term future as a target of altruism

The case for focusing on the long-term future can be summarised as follows:

The long-term future has enormous potential for good or evil: our descendants could live for billions or trillions of years, and have very high-quality lives;

It seems likely there are things we can do today that will affect the long-term future in non-negligible ways;

Possible ways of shaping the long-term future are currently highly neglected by individuals and society;

Given points 1 to 3 above, actions aimed at shaping the long-term future seem to have extremely high expected value, higher than any actions aiming for more near-term benefits.

Below we discuss each part of this argument in more detail.

The long-term future has enormous potential

Civilisation could continue for a billion years, until the Earth becomes uninhabitable.[3] It’s hard to say how likely this is, but it certainly seems plausible - and putting less than, say, a 1% chance on this possibility seems overconfident.[4] You may disagree that 1% is a reasonable lower bound here, but changing the figure by an order of magnitude or two would still yield an extremely impressive result. And even if civilisation only survives for another million years, that still amounts to another ~50,000 generations of people, i.e. trillions of future lives.[5]

If our descendants survive for long enough, then they are likely to advance in ways we cannot currently imagine - even someone living a few hundred years ago could not possibly have imagined the technological advances we’ve made today. It is possible they might even develop technology enabling them to reach and colonise planets outside our solar system, and survive well beyond a billion years.[6]

Let’s say that if we survive until the end of the Earth’s lifespan, there is a 1% chance of space colonisation. This would make the overall probability of survival beyond Earth 1 in 10,000 (1% chance of surviving to a billion years, multiplied by a 1% chance of surviving further given that). This sounds incredibly low, but suppose that space colonisation could allow our descendants to survive up to 100 trillion years[7]. This suggests we could have up to 1/10,000 x 100 trillion years = 10 billion expected years of civilisation ahead of us.

If we expect life in the future to be, on average, about as good as the present, then this would make the whole of the future about 100 million times more important than everything that has happened in the last 100 years. In fact, it seems like there could be more people in the future with better lives than those living today: economic, social, and technological progress could enable us to cure diseases, lift people out of poverty, and better solve other problems. It also seems possible that people in the future will be more altruistic than people alive today[8] - which also makes it more likely that they will be motivated to create a happy and valuable world.

However, it’s precisely because of this enormous potential that it’s so important to ensure that things go as well as possible. The loss of potential would be enormous if we end up on a negative trajectory. It could result in a great deal of suffering or the end of life.[9] And just as the potential to solve many of the world’s problems is growing, threats seem to be growing too. In particular, advanced technologies and increasing interconnectedness pose great risks.[10]

There are things we can do today that could affect the long-term future

There are a number of things we could work on today that seem likely to influence the long-term future:

Reducing extinction risks: We could reduce the risk of catastrophic climate change by putting in place laws and regulations to cut carbon emissions. We could reduce the risks from new technologies by investing in research to ensure their safety. Alternatively, we could work to improve global cooperation so that we are better able to deal with unforeseen risks that might arise.

Changing the values of a civilisation: Values tend to be stable in societies,[11] so attempts to shift values, whilst difficult, could have long-lasting effects. Some forms of value change, like increasing altruism, seem robustly good, and may be a way of realizing the very best possible futures. However, spreading poorly considered values could be harmful.

Reducing suffering risks: Historically, technological advances have enabled great welfare improvements (e.g. through modern agriculture and medicine), but also some of the greatest sources of present-day suffering (e.g. factory farming). To prevent the worst risks from new technologies, we could improve global cooperation and work on specific problems like preventing worst-case outcomes from artificial intelligence.

“Speeding up” development: Boosting technological innovation or scientific progress could have a lasting “speed up” effect on the entire future, making all future benefits happen slightly earlier than they otherwise would have. Curing a disease just a few years earlier could save millions of lives, for example. (That said, it’s not clear whether speeding up development is good or bad for existential risk - developing new technologies faster might help us to mitigate certain threats, but pose new risks of their own.)

Ripple effects of our ordinary actions: Improvements in health not only benefit individuals directly but allow them to be more economically successful, meaning that society and other individuals have to invest less in supporting them. In aggregate, this could easily have substantial knock-on effects on the productivity of society, which could affect the future.

Other ways we might create positive trajectory changes: These include improving education, science, and political systems.

Paul Christiano also points out that even if opportunities to shape the long-term future with any degree of certainty do not exist today, they may well exist in the future. Investing in our own current capacity could have an indirect but large impact by improving our ability to take such opportunities when they do arise. Similarly, we can do research today to learn more about how we might be able to impact the long-term future.

The long-term future is neglected, especially relative to its importance

Attempts to shape the long-term future are neglected by individuals, organisations and governments.

One reason is that there is little incentive to focus on far-off, uncertain issues compared to more certain, immediate ones. As 80,000 Hours put it, “Future generations matter, but they can’t vote, they can’t buy things, they can’t stand up for their interests.”

Problems faced by future generations are also more uncertain and more abstract, making it harder for us to care about them. There is a well-established phenomenon called temporal discounting, which means that we tend to give less weight to outcomes that are far in the future. This may explain our tendency to neglect long-term risks and problems. For example, it’s a large part of why we seem to have such difficulty tackling climate change.

Generally, there are diminishing returns to additional work in an area. This means that the neglectedness of the long-term future makes it more likely to be high impact.

Efforts to shape the long-term future could be extremely high in expected value

Even if the chance of our actions influencing the long-term trajectory of humanity is relatively low, there are extremely large potential benefits, which mean that these actions could still have a very high expected value. For example, decreasing the probability of human extinction by just one in a million could result in an additional 1,000 to 10,000 expected years of civilisation (using earlier assumptions).[12]

Compare this to actions we could take to improve the lives of people alive today, without looking at longer-run effects. A dramatic victory such as curing the most common and deadly diseases, or ending all war, might only make the current time period (~100 years) about twice as good as otherwise.[13] Though this seems like an enormous success, given the calculations above, decreasing the probability of human extinction would be 10 or 100 times better in expectation.

We might want to adjust this naive estimate downwards slightly, however, given uncertainty about some of the assumptions that go into it - we could be wrong about the probability of humanity surviving far into the future, or about the value of the future (if we think that future flourishing might have diminishing value, for example.) However, even if we think these estimates should be adjusted downwards substantially, we might very conservatively imagine that reducing the likelihood of existential risk by one in a million only equates to 100 expected years of civilization. This still suggests that the value of working to reduce existential risk is comparable to the value of the biggest victories we could imagine in the current time period - and so well worth taking seriously.

#### Extinction outweighs---it’s the upmost moral evil and disavowal of the risk makes it more likely.

Burns 2017 (Elizabeth Finneron-Burns is a Teaching Fellow at the University of Warwick and an Affiliated Researcher at the Institute for Futures Studies in Stockholm, What’s wrong with human extinction?, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00455091.2016.1278150?needAccess=true>, Canadian Journal of Philosophy, 2017)

Many, though certainly not all, people might believe that it would be wrong to bring about the end of the human species, and the reasons given for this belief are various. I begin by considering four reasons that could be given against the moral permissibility of human extinction. I will argue that only those reasons that impact the people who exist at the time that the extinction or the knowledge of the upcoming extinction occurs, can explain its wrongness. I use this conclusion to then consider in which cases human extinction would be morally permissible or impermissible, arguing that there is only a small class of cases in which it would not be wrong to cause the extinction of the human race or allow it to happen. 2.1. It would prevent the existence of very many happy people One reason of human extinction might be considered to be wrong lies in the value of human life itself. The thought here might be that it is a good thing for people to exist and enjoy happy lives and extinction would deprive more people of enjoying this good. The ‘good’ in this case could be understood in at least two ways. According to the first, one might believe that you benefit a person by bringing them into existence, or at least, that it is good for that person that they come to exist. The second view might hold that if humans were to go extinct, the utility foregone by the billions (or more) of people who could have lived but will now never get that opportunity, renders allowing human extinction to take place an incidence of wrongdoing. An example of this view can be found in two quotes from an Effective Altruism blog post by Peter Singer, Nick Beckstead and Matt Wage: One very bad thing about human extinction would be that billions of people would likely die painful deaths. But in our view, this is by far not the worst thing about human extinction. The worst thing about human extinction is that there would be no future generations. Since there could be so many generations in our future, the value of all those generations together greatly exceeds the value of the current generation. (Beckstead, Singer, and Wage 2013) The authors are making two claims. The first is that there is value in human life and also something valuable about creating future people which gives us a reason to do so; furthermore, it would be a very bad thing if we did not do so. The second is that, not only would it be a bad thing for there to be no future people, but it would actually be the worst thing about extinction. Since happy human lives have value, and the number of potential people who could ever exist is far greater than the number of people who exist at any one time, even if the extinction were brought about through the painful deaths of currently existing people, the former’s loss would be greater than the latter’s. Both claims are assuming that there is an intrinsic value in the existence of potential human life. The second claim makes the further assumption that the forgone value of the potential lives that could be lived is greater than the disvalue that would be accrued by people existing at the time of the extinction through suffering from painful and/or premature deaths. The best-known author of the post, Peter Singer is a prominent utilitarian, so it is not surprising that he would lament the potential lack of future human lives per se. However, it is not just utilitarians who share this view, even if implicitly. Indeed, other philosophers also seem to imply that they share the intuition that there is just something wrong with causing or failing to prevent the extinction of the human species such that we prevent more ‘people’ from having the ‘opportunity to exist’. Stephen Gardiner (2009) and Martin O’Neill (personal correspondence), both sympathetic to contract theory, for example, also find it intuitive that we should want more generations to have the opportunity to exist, assuming that they have worth-living lives, and I find it plausible to think that many other people (philosophers and non-philosophers alike) probably share this intuition. When we talk about future lives being ‘prevented’, we are saying that a possible person or a set of possible people who could potentially have existed will now never actually come to exist. To say that it is wrong to prevent people from existing could either mean that a possible person could reasonably reject a principle that permitted us not to create them, or that the foregone value of their lives provides a reason for rejecting any principle that permits extinction. To make the first claim we would have to argue that a possible person could reasonably reject any principle that prevented their existence on the grounds that it prevented them in particular from existing. However, this is implausible for two reasons. First, we can only wrong someone who did, does or will actually exist because wronging involves failing to take a person’s interests into account. When considering the permissibility of a principle allowing us not to create Person X, we cannot take X’s interest in being created into account because X will not exist if we follow the principle. By considering the standpoint of a person in our deliberations we consider the burdens they will have to bear as a result of the principle. In this case, there is no one who will bear any burdens since if the principle is followed (that is, if we do not create X), X will not exist to bear any burdens. So, only people who do/will actually exist can bear the brunt of a principle, and therefore occupy a standpoint that is owed justification. Second, existence is not an interest at all and a possible person is not disadvantaged by not being caused to exist. Rather than being an interest, it is a necessary requirement in order to have interests. Rivka Weinberg describes it as ‘neutral’ because causing a person to exist is to create a subject who can have interests; existence is not an interest itself.3 In order to be disadvantaged, there must be some detrimental effect on your interests. However, without existence, a person does not have any interests so they cannot be disadvantaged by being kept out of existence. But, as Weinberg points out, ‘never having interests itself could not be contrary to people’s interests since without interest bearers, there can be no ‘they’ for it to be bad for’ (Weinberg 2008, 13). So, a principle that results in some possible people never becoming actual does not impose any costs on those ‘people’ because nobody is disadvantaged by not coming into existence.4 It therefore seems that it cannot be wrong to fail to bring particular people into existence. This would mean that no one acts wrongly when they fail to create another person. Writ large, it would also not be wrong if everybody decided to exercise their prerogative not to create new people and potentially, by consequence, allow human extinction. One might respond here by saying that although it may be permissible for one person to fail to create a new person, it is not permissible if everyone chooses to do so because human lives have value and allowing human extinction would be to forgo a huge amount of value in the world. This takes us to the second way of understanding the potential wrongness of preventing people from existing — the foregone value of a life provides a reason for rejecting any principle that prevents it. One possible reply to this claim turns on the fact that many philosophers acknowledge that the only, or at least the best, way to think about the value of (individual or groups of) possible people’s lives is in impersonal terms (Parfit 1984; Reiman 2007; McMahan 2009). Jeff McMahan, for example, writes ‘at the time of one’s choice there is no one who exists or will exist independently of that choice for whose sake one could be acting in causing him or her to exist … it seems therefore that any reason to cause or not to cause an individual to exist … is best considered an impersonal rather than individual-affecting reason’ (McMahan 2009, 52). Another reply along similar lines would be to appeal to the value that is lost or at least foregone when we fail to bring into existence a next (or several next) generations of people with worth-living lives. Since ex hypothesi worth-living lives have positive value, it is better to create more such lives and worse to create fewer. Human extinction by definition is the creation of no future lives and would ‘deprive’ billions of ‘people’ of the opportunity to live worth-living lives. This might reduce the amount of value in the world at the time of the extinction (by killing already existing people), but it would also prevent a much vaster amount of value in the future (by failing to create more people). Both replies depend on the impersonal value of human life. However, recall that in contractualism impersonal values are not on their own grounds for reasonably rejecting principles. Scanlon himself says that although we have a strong reason not to destroy existing human lives, this reason ‘does not flow from the thought that it is a good thing for there to be more human life rather than less’ (104). In contractualism, something cannot be wrong unless there is an impact on a person. Thus, neither the impersonal value of creating a particular person nor the impersonal value of human life writ large could on its own provide a reason for rejecting a principle permitting human extinction. It seems therefore that the fact that extinction would deprive future people of the opportunity to live worth-living lives (either by failing to create either particular future people or future people in general) cannot provide us with a reason to consider human extinction to be wrong. Although the lost value of these ‘lives’ itself cannot be the reason explaining the wrongness of extinction, it is possible the knowledge of this loss might create a personal reason for some existing people. I will consider this possibility later on in section (d). But first I move to the second reason human extinction might be wrong per se. 2.2. It would mean the loss of the only known form of intelligent life and all civilization and intellectual progress would be lost A second reason we might think it would be wrong to cause human extinction is the loss that would occur of the only (known) form of rational life and the knowledge and civilization that that form of life has created. One thought here could be that just as some might consider it wrong to destroy an individual human heritage monument like the Sphinx, it would also be wrong if the advances made by humans over the past few millennia were lost or prevented from progressing. A related argument is made by those who feel that there is something special about humans’ capacity for rationality which is valuable in itself. Since humans are the only intelligent life that we know of, it would be a loss, in itself, to the world for that to end. I admit that I struggle to fully appreciate this thought. It seems to me that Henry Sidgwick was correct in thinking that these things are only important insofar as they are important to humans (Sidgwick 1874, I.IX.4).5 If there is no form of intelligent life in the future, who would there be to lament its loss since intelligent life is the only form of life capable of appreciating intelligence? Similarly, if there is no one with the rational capacity to appreciate historic monuments and civil progress, who would there be to be negatively affected or even notice the loss?6 However, even if there is nothing special about human rationality, just as some people try to prevent the extinction of nonhuman animal species, we might think that we ought also to prevent human extinction for the sake of biodiversity. The thought in this, as well as the earlier examples, must be that it would somehow be bad for the world if there were no more humans even though there would be no one for whom it is bad. This may be so but the only way to understand this reason is impersonally. Since we are concerned with wrongness rather than badness, we must ask whether something that impacts no one’s well-being, status or claims can be wrong. As we saw earlier, in the contractualist framework reasons must be personal rather than impersonal in order to provide grounds for reasonable rejection (Scanlon 1998, 218–223). Since the loss of civilization, intelligent life or biodiversity are per se impersonal reasons, there is no standpoint from which these reasons could be used to reasonably reject a principle that permitted extinction. Therefore, causing human extinction on the grounds of the loss of civilization, rational life or biodiversity would not be wrong. 2.3. Existing people would endure physical pain and/or painful and/or premature deaths Thinking about the ways in which human extinction might come about brings to the fore two more reasons it might be wrong. It could, for example, occur if all humans (or at least the critical number needed to be unable to replenish the population, leading to eventual extinction) underwent a sterilization procedure. Or perhaps it could come about due to anthropogenic climate change or a massive asteroid hitting the Earth and wiping out the species in the same way it did the dinosaurs millions of years ago. Each of these scenarios would involve significant physical and/or non-physical harms to existing people and their interests. Physically, people might suffer premature and possibly also painful deaths, for example. It is not hard to imagine examples in which the process of extinction could cause premature death. A nuclear winter that killed everyone or even just every woman under the age of 50 is a clear example of such a case. Obviously, some types of premature death themselves cannot be reasons to reject a principle. Every person dies eventually, sometimes earlier than the standard expected lifespan due to accidents or causes like spontaneously occurring incurable cancers. A cause such as disease is not a moral agent and therefore it cannot be wrong if it unavoidably kills a person prematurely. Scanlon says that the fact that a principle would reduce a person’s well-being gives that person a reason to reject the principle: ‘components of well-being figure prominently as grounds for reasonable rejection’ (Scanlon 1998, 214). However, it is not settled yet whether premature death is a setback to well-being. Some philosophers hold that death is a harm to the person who dies, whilst others argue that it is not.7 I will argue, however, that regardless of who is correct in that debate, being caused to die prematurely can be reason to reject a principle when it fails to show respect to the person as a rational agent. Scanlon says that recognizing others as rational beings with interests involves seeing reason to preserve life and prevent death: ‘appreciating the value of human life is primarily a matter of seeing human lives as something to be respected, where this involves seeing reasons not to destroy them, reasons to protect them, and reasons to want them to go well’ (Scanlon 1998, 104). The ‘respect for life’ in this case is a respect for the person living, not respect for human life in the abstract. This means that we can sometimes fail to protect human life without acting wrongfully if we still respect the person living. Scanlon gives the example of a person who faces a life of unending and extreme pain such that she wishes to end it by committing suicide. Scanlon does not think that the suicidal person shows a lack of respect for her own life by seeking to end it because the person whose life it is has no reason to want it to go on. This is important to note because it emphasizes the fact that the respect for human life is person-affecting. It is not wrong to murder because of the impersonal disvalue of death in general, but because taking someone’s life without their permission shows disrespect to that person. This supports its inclusion as a reason in the contractualist formula, regardless of what side ends up winning the ‘is death a harm?’ debate because even if death turns out not to harm the person who died, ending their life without their consent shows disrespect to that person. A person who could reject a principle permitting another to cause his or her premature death presumably does not wish to die at that time, or in that manner. Thus, if they are killed without their consent, their interests have not been taken into account, and they have a reason to reject the principle that allowed their premature death.8 This is as true in the case of death due to extinction as it is for death due to murder. However, physical pain may also be caused to existing people without killing them, but still resulting in human extinction. Imagine, for example, surgically removing everyone’s reproductive organs in order to prevent the creation of any future people. Another example could be a nuclear bomb that did not kill anyone, but did painfully render them infertile through illness or injury. These would be cases in which physical pain (through surgery or bombs) was inflicted on existing people and the extinction came about as a result of the painful incident rather than through death. Furthermore, one could imagine a situation in which a bomb (for example) killed enough people to cause extinction, but some people remained alive, but in terrible pain from injuries. It seems uncontroversial that the infliction of physical pain could be a reason to reject a principle. Although Scanlon says that an impact on well-being is not the only reason to reject principles, it plays a significant role, and indeed, most principles are likely to be rejected due to a negative impact on a person’s well-being, physical or otherwise. It may be queried here whether it is actually the involuntariness of the pain that is grounds for reasonable rejection rather than the physical pain itself because not all pain that a person suffers is involuntary. One can imagine acts that can cause physical pain that are not rejectable — base jumping or life-saving or improving surgery, for example. On the other hand, pushing someone off a cliff or cutting him with a scalpel against his will are clearly rejectable acts. The difference between the two cases is that in the former, the person having the pain inflicted has consented to that pain or risk of pain. My view is that they cannot be separated in these cases and it is involuntary physical pain that is the grounds for reasonable rejection. Thus, the fact that a principle would allow unwanted physical harm gives a person who would be subjected to that harm a reason to reject the principle. Of course the mere fact that a principle causes involuntary physical harm or premature death is not sufficient to declare that the principle is rejectable — there might be countervailing reasons. In the case of extinction, what countervailing reasons might be offered in favour of the involuntary physical pain/ death-inducing harm? One such reason that might be offered is that humans are a harm to the natural environment and that the world might be a better place if there were no humans in it. It could be that humans might rightfully be considered an all-things-considered hindrance to the world rather than a benefit to it given the fact that we have been largely responsible for the extinction of many species, pollution and, most recently, climate change which have all negatively affected the natural environment in ways we are only just beginning to understand. Thus, the fact that human extinction would improve the natural environment (or at least prevent it from degrading further), is a countervailing reason in favour of extinction to be weighed against the reasons held by humans who would experience physical pain or premature death. However, the good of the environment as described above is by definition not a personal reason. Just like the loss of rational life and civilization, therefore, it cannot be a reason on its own when determining what is wrong and countervail the strong personal reasons to avoid pain/death that is held by the people who would suffer from it.9 Every person existing at the time of the extinction would have a reason to reject that principle on the grounds of the physical pain they are being forced to endure against their will that could not be countervailed by impersonal considerations such as the negative impact humans may have on the earth. Therefore, a principle that permitted extinction to be accomplished in a way that caused involuntary physical pain or premature death could quite clearly be rejectable by existing people with no relevant countervailing reasons. This means that human extinction that came about in this way would be wrong. There are of course also additional reasons they could reject a similar principle which I now turn to address in the next section. 2.4. Existing people could endure non-physical harms I said earlier than the fact in itself that there would not be any future people is an impersonal reason and can therefore not be a reason to reject a principle permitting extinction. However, this impersonal reason could give rise to a personal reason that is admissible. So, the final important reason people might think that human extinction would be wrong is that there could be various deleterious psychological effects that would be endured by existing people having the knowledge that there would be no future generations. There are two main sources of this trauma, both arising from the knowledge that there will be no more people. The first relates to individual people and the undesired negative effect on well-being that would be experienced by those who would have wanted to have children. Whilst this is by no means universal, it is fair to say that a good proportion of people feel a strong pull towards reproduction and having their lineage continue in some way. Samuel Scheffler describes the pull towards reproduction as a ‘desire for a personalized relationship with the future’ (Scheffler 2012, 31). Reproducing is a widely held desire and the joys of parenthood are ones that many people wish to experience. For these people knowing that they would not have descendants (or that their descendants will endure painful and/or premature deaths) could create a sense of despair and pointlessness of life. Furthermore, the inability to reproduce and have your own children because of a principle/policy that prevents you (either through bans or physical interventions) would be a significant infringement of what we consider to be a basic right to control what happens to your body. For these reasons, knowing that you will have no descendants could cause significant psychological traumas or harms even if there were no associated physical harm. The second is a more general, higher level sense of hopelessness or despair that there will be no more humans and that your projects will end with you. Even those who did not feel a strong desire to procreate themselves might feel a sense of hopelessness that any projects or goals they have for the future would not be fulfilled. Many of the projects and goals we work towards during our lifetime are also at least partly future-oriented. Why bother continuing the search for a cure for cancer if either it will not be found within humans’ lifetime, and/or there will be no future people to benefit from it once it is found? Similar projects and goals that might lose their meaning when confronted with extinction include politics, artistic pursuits and even the type of philosophical work with which this paper is concerned. Even more extreme, through the words of the character Theo Faron, P.D. James says in his novel The Children of Men that ‘without the hope of posterity for our race if not for ourselves, without the assurance that we being dead yet live, all pleasures of the mind and senses sometimes seem to me no more than pathetic and crumbling defences shored up against our ruins’ (James 2006, 9). Even if James’ claim is a bit hyperbolic and all pleasures would not actually be lost, I agree with Scheffler in finding it not implausible that the knowledge that extinction was coming and that there would be no more people would have at least a general depressive effect on people’s motivation and confidence in the value of and joy in their activities (Scheffler 2012, 43). Both sources of psychological harm are personal reasons to reject a principle that permitted human extinction. Existing people could therefore reasonably reject the principle for either of these reasons. Psychological pain and the inability to pursue your personal projects, goals, and aims, are all acceptable reasons for rejecting principles in the contractualist framework. So too are infringements of rights and entitlements that we accept as important for people’s lives. These psychological reasons, then, are also valid reasons to reject principles that permitted or required human extinction.

#### Complacency goes aff – academics and the wider public actively discount the probability AND magnitude of existential risks – only giving them extra attention in debate solves – that means our impact outweighs even in we lose the rest of framing

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Experts at Oxford University and elsewhere have estimated that the risk of a global human extinction event this century—or at least of an event that wipes out 10 percent or more of the world’s population— is around 1 in 10. The most probable culprits sending us the way of the dinosaur are mostly anthropogenic risks, meaning those created by humans. These include climate change, nuclear disaster, and more emerging risks such as artificial intelligence gone wrong (by accident or nefarious intent) and bioterrorism. A recent search of the scientific literature through ScienceDirect for “human extinction” returned a demoralizing 157 results, compared to the 1,627 for “dung beetle.” I don’t know about you, but this concerns me. Why is there so little research and action on existential risks (risks capable of rendering humanity extinct)?

A big part of the problem is a lack of awareness about the real threats we face and what can be done about them. When asked to estimate the chance of an extinction event in the next 50 years, U.S. adults in surveys reported chances ranging from 1 in 10 million to 1 in 100, certainly not 10 percent. The awareness and engagement issues extend to the academic community as well, where a key bottleneck is a lack of talented people studying existential risks. Developing viable risk mitigation strategies will require widespread civic engagement and concerted research efforts. Consequently, there is an urgent need to improve the communication of the magnitude and importance of existential risks. The first step is getting an audience to pay attention to this issue.

#### Realism provides key insights for IR---abandoning it fails and recreates the very dichotomies they attempt to break down

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Some global IR scholars have observed that new realist variants such as NCR have become “more relevant to the non-Western world” because they draw insights from it (Acharya, 2014: 650). As such, realist insights continue to matter for the study of international relations (Schmidt, 2014: 468). Through colonialism as well as through globalization, sustained interaction, and associated processes of (forced and voluntary) socialization, similar patterns of state behavior have spread across the globe. There is then, at a basic conceptual level, a case to be made for the continued inquiry into notions such as power, anarchy, and balance of power from a realist perspective. How realists describe patterns of state behavior originated in a Western canon, but these patterns are not exclusively Western anymore (Schmidt, 2014: 468). Realism provides appropriate and generalizable first-cut theories into dynamics of global international relations, because concepts such as anarchy matter beyond the West. The experience of anarchy is shared across the globe in the contemporary system of states, if to differing degrees (see also: Acharya and Buzan, 2007: 288, 293; 2019: 303; Waltz, 1979). Anarchy is here understood as the absence of a “higher ruling body in the international system” (Mearsheimer, 2003/2014: 30). If the system of states is structured by anarchy and characterized by power and uncertainty regarding other states’ behavior, it provides states’ principal interest in survival and welfare. Of course, states differ in their capabilities and some states may be unable to “at any time use force” (Waltz, 1954/ 2001: 160). And yet, neoclassical realists argue that the anarchical environment is less strictly determinative than neorealism suggests: it provides leeway even for smaller states to enact policy independently. The experience of anarchy is also modified by system-level factors, and differently for differently placed states. For example, geographic location, new military technology, and the presence and absence of regional alliances influence the way the international environment affects state behavior (Ripsman et al., 2016; Snyder, 1996). Finally, the experience of anarchy is mediated through domestic intervening variables such as decision-makers’ perceptions, domestic lobby groups, and resource extractive capacity (Dueck, 2009: 139; Taliaferro, 2006). When neoclassical realists complement neorealist concepts such as anarchy with domestic intervening variables, they borrow from a tradition that analyzes domestic variables to explain the production of foreign policy, grand strategy, and international relations. Earlier authors analyze, for example, decision-making dynamics, resource extractive capacity, and policy preferences of domestic socioeconomic groups (Frieden and Rogowksi, 1996; Gourevitch, 1986; Gowa, 1983; Haskel, 1980; Krasner, 1977). Some authors writing in this tradition have long interrogated non-Western cases. For example, Skocpol argues that former colonial relationships insufficiently explain why intrastate social revolutions occur (Skocpol, 1979). Domestic variables are also employed in classical realism. Classical realists write that state behavior is affected by domestic politics and public support (Carr, 1939/2001: 85–87, 132–145), history and ideology (Kirshner, 2012), domestic institutions’ legitimacy (Niebuhr, 1959: 49–66), decision-makers’ ability to mobilize resources (Aron, 1966/2009: 52–57), or the quality of diplomatic staff (Morgenthau, 1948/1993: 155–158). NCR differs from this tradition in its paradigmatic assumptions and therefore in its causal mechanism. NCR prioritizes changes in the systemic distribution of relative material capabilities to explain state behavior. It then considers intervening variables to explain anomalous foreign policy, grand strategy, or macro-patterns of behavior. In so doing, neoclassical realists “explain political behavior that a sparer structural realist theory cannot” (Ripsman et al., 2016: 114). Further, unlike some earlier domestic politics approaches, NCR has largely ignored global IR. NCR has also, as elaborated below, mostly been developed as an American (and increasingly also European) body of knowledge. And yet, NCR may anticipate three potential flaws of non-Western theorizing. If non-Western scholarship is perceived and perceives itself as local, decentered knowledge, it risks becoming trapped in an exceptionalist account of international relations. Such an account limits itself to ideas and orientations unique to particular non-Western states (Biersteker, 2009: 311; Hurrell, 2016: 6; Shahi, 2019a: 251). Certainly, there is ample reason to scope theoretical and empirical research around a particular non-Western state; in fact, such research may appropriately counteract IR’s “fetishization of abstraction” (Krishna, 2001: 401). However, when scholars scope their research around a particular state, they may overlook potential for comparison and generalization, and even risk losing the critical distance to local practice and power necessary for good scholarship. This in turn reifies difference within the cases between carefully collected and contextualized evidence on the one side positioned against a one-dimensional view of the West or Western theory on the other. It essentializes Western as well as non-Western IR and hinders the development of global IR (Shahi, 2019a: 254). When we posit nonWestern experiences and scholarship as valuable only where they differ from their Western equivalents, we reproduce the dichotomies that global IR challenges. What allows NCR to address these potential shortcomings of non-Western theorizing is that it attempts to theorize progressively and bridge materialism and idealism as well as structure and agency (Brown, 2013: 488–489; Foulon, 2015; Sears, 2017; Zhang, 2017: 291). NCR offers a way to operationalize non-Western knowledge and scholars within a realist framework that places causal primacy in the material structure of the international environment. If global IR subsumes existing knowledge from realism, it can include patterns of geopolitical competition, security threats, and anarchic conditions. This allows scholars to retain some of the theoretical and methodological advantages of realism all the while they can explore contextual and local factors (Hurrell, 2016: 8). This allows NCR to maintain a systemic, realist framework and complement it with unit-level variables. These unit-level variables differentiate states, historicize and contextualize behavior, and lend agency to decision-makers. These decision-makers are tasked with deciphering structural incentives that influence their strategic choices. This has required neoclassical realists to move away from neorealism’s parsimony and generality. NCR analyzes explicitly how agents translate systemic stimuli into state behavior, rather than treating this translation process as a theoretically separate domain of analysis. Neoclassical realists interpret the limitations that systemic incentives impose on state action less strictly when compared to neorealism. They argue that unit-level variables intervene in the transmission belt between systemic incentives and state behavior, because systemic incentives provide states with “considerable latitude” to articulate their interests: systemic incentives “merely [set] parameters” for state behavior (Lobell et al., 2009: 7). In so doing, neoclassical realists appreciate that decision-makers’ response to systemic incentives is problematized in three ways. First, decision-makers “may not necessarily track objective material power trends closely or continuously” (Rose, 1998: 147). Next, decision-makers may be uncertain how to respond to structural incentives (Kitchen, 2010; Wivel, 2005: 361). Finally, decision-makers are constrained by “domestic political incentives and constraints,” which affect the resources that governments can extract from society (quoted from Dueck, 2009: 139; also see: Christensen, 1996: 11–13, Lobell et al., 2009: 37; Rose, 1998: 162; Zakaria, 1998: 35–39). While NCR developed a rich literature on this basis, it has created its knowledge mainly in and on North America. To illustrate this point, consider the 96 scholars who published 149 works on NCR until mid-2019. We mapped this body of theory’s temporal and geographical distribution based on the authors’ institutional affiliation and empirical case studies (Figure 1; Tables 1–3).5 NCR’s knowledge originates predominantly from scholars based in North America and Europe. Of the 96 NCR scholars during 1990–2019, 83 are currently affiliated with or employed by North American and European institutions (Figure 1; Tables 1–3). In the 1990s, neoclassical realist scholarship emerged in the United States and was developed by a handful of North American scholars. This trend continued during 2000–2009 when American scholars dominated knowledge production, although Europeans started to contribute (Table 1). During 1990–2009, most case studies in NCR publications were on Western states (Table 3). Of the NCR scholars who published NCR works between 2010 and 2019, the portion affiliated in the United States decreased to around 30%. Here, the main shift occurred from North America toward Europe: the number of NCR scholars who published NCR works between 2010 and 2019 and were affiliated with or employed by European institutions increased over fivefold. While this intra-Western shift is notable, it underpins the criticism that NCR knowledge production is Western-biased (Table 1). Perhaps more telling is the slow shift that takes place toward the non-West. During 2010–2019, an increasing number of NCR scholars are affiliated with or employed by non-Western institutions, especially in Asia (Table 1). More noticeably, the number increased for case studies in NCR publications that analyzed non-Western cases. These non-Western cases comprise especially Asian, and, to a lesser extent, African and Oceanian ones (Table 3). This likely mirrors an increasing preoccupation with the rise of China and the possibility of renewed superpower competition. It offers a starting point to consider how NCR’s use of intervening variables may contribute to—and has already started extending research on—global international relations. Specifically, we argue that NCR can contribute to global IR by providing a generalizable framework within which to order the relative causal impact of systemic stimuli and unit-level intervening variables. NCR can contribute to global IR because it attempts “to explain variations in foreign policy over time and space by supplementing the structural assumptions of neorealism” (Wivel, 2005: 360). NCR’s intervening variables are not causally independent but affect state behavior’s timing and shape. Neoclassical realists employ intervening variables to examine the influence of culture; identity; perceptions; regime type; domestic constituencies; resource extractive capacity; ideas and beliefs; alliances and strategic interaction; and public opinion and media pressures.7

#### A failure to acknowledge realism as the guiding philosophy causes Russia, China war – crimea proves

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One of the ironies of contemporary U.S. thinking about foreign policy is the odd status of realism. On the one hand, realist theory remains a staple of college teaching on international relations (along with many other approaches), and government officials [often claim](https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/hr-mcmaster-trump-national-security-strategy-to-be-based-on-principled-realism) that their actions are based on some sort of “realist” approach. But Washington remains for the most part a realism-free zone, with few genuine realists in positions of influence. Moreover, the realist perspective is almost entirely absent from the commanding heights of U.S. punditry. This column, and the consistently insightful writings of people such as Paul Pillar or Jacob Heilbrunn, does not make up for realism’s exclusion from the New York Times, Washington Post, or Wall Street Journal. Instead of relying on realism, both Republicans and Democrats tend to view foreign policy through the lens of liberal idealism. Rather than see world politics as an arena where security is scarce and major powers are forced to contend whether they wish to or not, America’s foreign-policy mavens are quick to divide the world into virtuous allies (usually democracies) and evil adversaries (always some sort of dictatorship) and to assume that when things go badly, it is because a wicked foreign leader (Saddam Hussein, Ali Khamenei, Vladimir Putin, Muammar al-Qaddafi, etc.) is greedy, aggressive, or irrational. When friendly states object to something the (virtuous) United States is doing, U.S. leaders tend to assume that critics just don’t understand their noble aims or are jealous of America’s success. I’ll concede that the Trump presidency presents a particular challenge for realists. It’s not easy to reconcile Donald Trump’s incoherent and bumbling approach to foreign affairs with the idea that states pursue national interests in a more or less rational or strategic fashion. Trump has shown himself to be many things thus far — willful, vain, dishonest, impulsive, narcissistic, ignorant, etc. — but “rational” and “strategic” aren’t words that leap to mind when contemplating his foreign policy. Realism also emphasizes external factors, such as balances of power and geography, and downplays the role of individual leaders. But the Trump presidency is an eloquent and worrisome reminder of the damage that individual leaders can do and especially when they are convinced that they are “[the only one that matters](https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/11/03/561797675/im-the-only-one-that-matters-trump-says-of-state-dept-job-vacancies).” Nonetheless, Trump’s singular incompetence isn’t sufficient reason to toss realism aside completely. For one thing, realism still helps us understand how Trump can get away with all this meshugas: The United States is still so powerful and secure that it can do a lot of dumb things and suffer only modest losses. More importantly, realism remains an extremely useful guide to a lot of things that have happened in the recent past or that are happening today. And as Trump is proving weekly, leaders who ignore these insights inevitably make lots of dumb mistakes. In short, it is still highly useful to think like a realist. Let me explain why. Realism has a long history and many variants, but its core rests on a straightforward set of ideas. As the name implies, realism tries to explain world politics as they really are, rather than describe how they ought to be. For realists, power is the centerpiece of political life: Although other factors sometimes play a role, the key to understanding politics lies in focusing on who has power and what they are doing with it. The Athenians’ infamous warning to the Melians captures this perfectly: “The strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must.” [Quentin Tarantino](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8u8ahInQY8) couldn’t have put it any better. For realists, states are the key actors in the international system. There is no central authority that can protect states from one another, so each state must rely upon its own resources and strategies to survive. Security is a perennial concern — even for powerful states — and states tend to worry a lot about who is weaker or stronger and what power trends appear to be. Cooperation is far from impossible in such a world — indeed, at times cooperating with others is essential to survival — but it is always somewhat fragile. Realists maintain that states will react to threats first by trying to “[pass the buck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Offensive_realism#Balancing_v._buck-passing)” (i.e., getting someone else to deal with the emerging danger), and if that fails, they will try to [balance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balance_of_threat) against the threat, either by seeking allies or by building up their own capabilities. Realism isn’t the only way to think about international affairs, of course, and there are a number of [alternative perspectives and theories](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1149275) that can help us understand different aspects of the modern world. But if you do **think like a realist** — at least part of the time — many confusing aspects of world politics become easier to understand. If you think like a realist, for example, you’ll understand why China’s rise is a critical event and likely to be a source of conflict with the United States (and others). In a world where states have to protect themselves, the two most powerful states will eye each other warily and compete to make sure that they don’t fall behind or become dangerously vulnerable to the other. Even when war is avoided, intense security competition is likely to result. And by the way, thinking like a realist helps you understand why China is no longer committed to Deng Xiaoping’s policy of “peaceful rise.” That approach made sense when China was weaker, and it fooled plenty of Westerners into thinking China could be inveigled into being a responsible stakeholder that would meekly embrace various institutions and arrangements created by others back when China was weak. But realists understand that a more powerful China would eventually want to modify any features that were not in China’s interest, as Beijing has begun to do in recent years. Bottom line: Thinking like a realist is essential if you want to understand Sino-American relations. If you think like a realist, you wouldn’t be surprised that the United States has repeatedly used military force in distant lands over the past 25 years and especially after 9/11. Why? For one simple reason: Nobody could prevent it. Americans were also convinced their global role was indispensable and that they had the right, the responsibility, and the wisdom to interfere all over the world. But America’s dominant position was the permissive condition that made this overweening ambition seem feasible, at least for a while. As Kenneth Waltz [warned](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2539097?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents) way back in 1993: “One may hope that America’s internal preoccupations will produce not an isolationist policy, which has become impossible, but a forbearance that will give other countries at long last the chance to deal with their own problems and make their own mistakes. But I would not bet on it.” Good realist that he was, Waltz [understood](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/sipa/U6800/readings-sm/Waltz_Structural%20Realism.pdf) that the “vice to which great powers easily succumb in a multipolar world is inattention; in a bipolar world, overreaction; in a unipolar world, overextension.” And that’s precisely what happened. If you think like a realist, the crisis in Ukraine looks rather different than the typical Western version of events. Western accounts typically blame Putin for most of the trouble, but realists understand that major powers are always sensitive about their borders and are likely to react defensively if other great powers start encroaching on these regions. Ever heard of the Monroe Doctrine? In the case of Ukraine, the United States and its European allies had been expanding NATO steadily eastward ([violating pledges](https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early) made to Soviet leaders when Germany reunified) and ignoring repeated warnings from Moscow. By 2013, the United States and European Union were making a concerted effort to pull Ukraine into closer alignment with the West and openly interfering in Ukraine’s domestic political processes. Because the Obama administration did not think like realists, however, it was blindsided when Putin seized Crimea and derailed the EU/U.S. effort. Putin’s response was neither legal nor legitimate nor admirable, but it wasn’t surprising either. It is equally unsurprising that these events alarmed the Europeans and prompted NATO to shore up its defenses in Eastern Europe, precisely as a realist would expect. Thinking like a realist can also help you understand why the EU is in trouble. The entire EU project was designed to transcend nationalism and subordinate state interests within broader supranational institutions. Its architects hoped the separate national identities and interests that had torn Europe apart repeatedly would fade over time and a broad pan-European identity would supplant them. European unity was facilitated by the Cold War because the Soviet threat gave Western Europe ample incentive to cooperate, gave the Soviets’ Eastern European satellites an ideal to aspire to, and kept the “[American pacifier](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1148355)” on the continent. But once the Cold War was over, nationalism returned with a vengeance and especially after the euro crisis hit. Suddenly, populations wanted their elected officials not to save Europe but to save them. Despite herculean efforts by a number of European leaders and EU officials, these centrifugal tendencies seem to be getting worse, as the Brexit decision, the recent elections in Italy, and the resurgent nationalism in Poland and Hungary all attest. Those who hoped that European integration would prove irreversible have trouble understanding how their noble experiment went awry, but realists don’t. If you think like a realist, you might not be quite so outraged by the support that Iran and Syria gave the anti-American insurgency in Iraq after 2003. You might not like it, but you wouldn’t find their conduct surprising. Their response was classic balance of power behavior because the United States had just overthrown Saddam Hussein and the Bush administration had made it clear that Syria and Iran were next on its hit list. It made good strategic sense for Damascus and Tehran to do whatever they could to keep the United States bogged down in Iraq so that Washington couldn’t reload the shotgun and come after them. Americans have every reason to be upset by what these states did, but if more U.S. officials thought like realists, they would have expected it from the get-go. And if you think like a realist, it is obvious why North Korea has gone to enormous lengths to acquire a nuclear deterrent

and obvious why a country such as Iran was interested in becoming a latent nuclear weapons state as well. These states were deeply at odds with the world’s most powerful country, and prominent U.S. officials kept saying that the only solution was to topple these regimes and replace them with leaders more to their liking. Never mind that regime change [rarely works](https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/14/regime-change-for-dummies/) as intended; the more important point is that any government facing a threat like that is going to try to protect itself. Nuclear weapons [aren’t good for blackmail](https://www.amazon.com/Nuclear-Weapons-Coercive-Diplomacy-Sechser/dp/1107514517) or conquest, but they are a very effective way to deter more powerful states from trying to overthrow you with military force. And you’d think Americans would understand this, given that the U.S. government thinks it needs thousands of nuclear weapons in order to be secure, despite its favorable geographic position and overwhelming conventional superiority. If U.S. leaders think like that, is it any wonder that some weaker and more vulnerable powers conclude that having a few nukes might make them more secure? And is it so surprising that they might be reluctant to give them up in exchange for assurances or promises that might easily be reversed or withdrawn? Someone really should explain this logic to John Bolton. Thinking like a realist also helps you understand why states with radically different political systems often act in surprisingly similar ways. To take an obvious example, the United States and Soviet Union could not have been more different in terms of their domestic orders, but their international behavior was much the same. Each led vast alliance networks, toppled governments they didn’t like, assassinated a number of foreign leaders, built tens of thousand of nuclear weapons (deployed on missiles, bombers, and submarines), intervened in far-flung lands, tried to convert other societies to their preferred ideology, and did what they could to bring the other down without blowing up the world. Why did they behave in such similar fashion? Because in an anarchic world, each had little choice but to compete with the other, lest it fall behind and become vulnerable to the other’s predations. Last but not least, if you think like a realist, you’re likely to be skeptical about the ambitious schemes that idealists keep dreaming up to bring an end to conflict, injustice, inequality, and other bad things. Striving to build a safer and more peaceful world is admirable, but realism reminds us that the ambitious efforts to remake world politics always create unintended consequences and rarely deliver the promised results. It also reminds that even allies fear unchecked power and will have misgivings whenever the United States tries to run the world. If you think like a realist, in short, you are more likely to act with a degree of prudence, and you’ll be less likely to see opponents as purely evil (or see one’s own country as wholly virtuous) and less likely to embark on open-ended moral crusades. Ironically, if more people thought like realists, the prospects for peace would go up.