# 1NC v Justin

### 1NC --- Framing

#### The value is morality since the resolution is phrased as a normative statement based on the word ought

#### The criterion is maximizing expected well-being, or act-utilitarianism –

#### [1] Binding – pain and pleasure are the only things with intrinsic value and disvalue – if I put my hand on a hot stove I will pull away – ethics must be binding bc if they arent then its impossible to generate obligations

#### [2] Death is bad – it’s impossible to pursue pleasure if you are dead, that means that we should always try to prevent death to give subjects the ability to pursue pleasure.

#### [3] Extinction outweighs

MacAskill 14 [William, Oxford Philosopher and youngest tenured philosopher in the world, Normative Uncertainty, 2014]

The human race might go extinct from a number of causes: asteroids, supervolcanoes, runaway climate change, pandemics, nuclear war, and the development and use of dangerous new technologies such as synthetic biology, all pose risks (even if very small) to the continued survival of the human race.184 And different moral views give opposing answers to question of whether this would be a good or a bad thing. It might seem obvious that human extinction would be a very bad thing, both because of the loss of potential future lives, and because of the loss of the scientific and artistic progress that we would make in the future. But the issue is at least unclear. The continuation of the human race would be a mixed bag: inevitably, it would involve both upsides and downsides. And if one regards it as much more important to avoid bad things happening than to promote good things happening then one could plausibly regard human extinction as a good thing.For example, one might regard the prevention of bads as being in general more important that the promotion of goods, as defended historically by G. E. Moore,185 and more recently by Thomas Hurka.186 One could weight the prevention of suffering as being much more important that the promotion of happiness. Or one could weight the prevention of objective bads, such as war and genocide, as being much more important than the promotion of objective goods, such as scientific and artistic progress. If the human race continues its future will inevitably involve suffering as well as happiness, and objective bads as well as objective goods. So, if one weights the bads sufficiently heavily against the goods, or if one is sufficiently pessimistic about humanity’s ability to achieve good outcomes, then one will regard human extinction as a good thing.187 However, even if we believe in a moral view according to which human extinction would be a good thing, we still have strong reason to prevent near-term human extinction. To see this, we must note three points. First, we should note that the extinction of the human race is an extremely high stakes moral issue. Humanity could be around for a very long time: if humans survive as long as the median mammal species, we will last another two million years. On this estimate, the number of humans in existence in the The future, given that we don’t go extinct any time soon, would be 2×10^14. So if it is good to bring new people into existence, then it’s very good to prevent human extinction. Second, human extinction is by its nature an irreversible scenario. If we continue to exist, then we always have the option of letting ourselves go extinct in the future (or, perhaps more realistically, of considerably reducing population size). But if we go extinct, then we can’t magically bring ourselves back into existence at a later date. Third, we should expect ourselves to progress, morally, over the next few centuries, as we have progressed in the past. So we should expect that in a few centuries’ time we will have better evidence about how to evaluate human extinction than we currently have. Given these three factors, it would be better to prevent the near-term extinction of the human race, even if we thought that the extinction of the human race would actually be a very good thing. To make this concrete, I’ll give the following simple but illustrative model. Suppose that we have 0.8 credence that it is a bad thing to produce new people, and 0.2 certain that it’s a good thing to produce new people; and the degree to which it is good to produce new people, if it is good, is the same as the degree to which it is bad to produce new people, if it is bad. That is, I’m supposing, for simplicity, that we know that one new life has one unit of value; we just don’t know whether that unit is positive or negative. And let’s use our estimate of 2×10^14 people who would exist in the future, if we avoid near-term human extinction. Given our stipulated credences, the expected benefit of letting the human race go extinct now would be (.8-.2)×(2×10^14) = 1.2×(10^14). Suppose that, if we let the human race continue and did research for 300 years, we would know for certain whether or not additional people are of positive or negative value. If so, then with the credences above we should think it 80% likely that we will find out that it is a bad thing to produce new people, and 20% likely that we will find out that it’s a good thing to produce new people. So there’s an 80% chance of a loss of 3×(10^10) (because of the delay of letting the human race go extinct), the expected value of which is 2.4×(10^10). But there’s also a 20% chance of a gain of 2×(10^14), the expected value of which is 4×(10^13). That is, in expected value terms, the cost of waiting for a few hundred years is vanishingly small compared with the benefit of keeping one’s options open while one gains new information.

### 1NC --- Climate DA

#### We need climate action NOW

**UN 19** [Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. “Only 11 Years Left to Prevent Irreversible Damage from Climate Change, Speakers Warn during General Assembly High-Level Meeting.” UNITED NATIONS [GENERAL ASSEMBLY](https://www.un.org/press/en/general-assembly), SEVENTY-THIRD SESSION, HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (AM & PM). 28 March 2019. URL: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/ga12131.doc.htm>] JV

Ambition, Urgency Needed to Address Global Emergency, Secretary-General Says Just over a decade is all that remains to stop irreversible damage from climate change, world leaders heard today as the General Assembly opened a high‑level meeting on the relationship between the phenomenon and sustainable development. The meeting — held pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/219 (2017) — will run through 29 March with a focus on protection of the global climate for present and future generations, in the context of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. “We are the last generation that can prevent irreparable damage to our planet,” General Assembly President María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés (Ecuador) warned the gathering in her opening remarks, stressing that 11 years are all that remain to avert catastrophe.  Highlighting the meeting’s theme, Ms. Espinosa called for an intergenerational approach to climate change.  “Climate justice is intergenerational justice,” she said, calling on States to act collectively and responsibly.

#### Regulatory capture and media co-option by the fossil fuel industry manufactures public consent in favor of devastating climate change inaction – media presupposes “objective facts” and reports them as news

MacLean 19 [Jason MacLean, educator at University of Saskatchewan’s College of Law, 12-1-2019, “Manufacturing Consent to Climate Inaction: A Case Study of The Globe and Mail ’s Pipeline Coverage,” DALHOUSIE LAW JOURNAL, https://digitalcommons.schulichlaw.dal.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1450&context=dlj]/Kankee

The normative dimension of the public interest in respect of any given area of regulation remains equally complex and difficult to establish even in statutory regimes where regulators are subject to a legal “public interest” standard. As the Supreme Court of Canada recently observed, the “public interest is a broad concept and what it requires will depend on the particular context.”10 For these reasons, the mainstream news media are attracting increasing scrutiny both as a means and as strategic sites in and of themselves of regulatory reform in the public interest. The media play a significant role in manufacturing public opinion, including public opinion about what constitutes the “public interest,”11 the starting point of regulatory analysis, including regulatory reform. A growing number of studies and commentaries, for example, are paying attention to how—and how often—the news media are covering climate change science and policy for precisely this purpose12: climate policy reform requires a sufficiently informed public motivated to press elected representatives and public decisionmakers to act in the public interest. Growing attention is also being paid to the ways in which powerful industry interests influence the media to shape public discourse and attitudes about climate change and climate change policy options. There is an intersection between the public interest in meaningful and effective climate change action and the mainstream news media as a mechanism of regulatory capture employed by entrenched special interests. Two US climate change commentators have described this intersection in the following terms: To save civilization, most of us would need to supplement our standard daily practices—eating, caring for family and community, faith—with a steady push on the big forces that are restraining progress, the most prominent being the fossil fuel industry’s co-option of government, education, science, and media. 13 To understand what such a “steady push” should consist of, it is necessary not only to identify media co-optation and distortion generally but also to shine a light on specific instances of such distortion with a view to exposing how they contribute to reshaping—and redirecting—the public interest. There has, for example, recently been a proliferation of educational initiatives designed to improve individuals’ evaluation of the quality of information presented by the news media and other information platforms.14 While such longer-term initiatives are laudable, it is also important to better understand how the media influence the construction and perception of the public interest in respect of regulatory issues that are pressing and urgent in the short-term, especially climate change mitigation, given the nature and degree of the threat posed by climate change. Moreover, because even well-educated individuals are susceptible to media bias and tend to default to pre-committed political ideologies, improved media literacy in itself is not a panacea.15 Research on the nature of how the media distort the public interest and that informs how best to respond to and counter such distortions is urgently required. With these broad and challenging considerations in mind, I critically examine how Canada’s leading newspaper, The Globe and Mail, has constructed the “public interest” in respect of the controversial Trans Mountain oil pipeline expansion project. My central argument is that The Globe and Mail’s coverage of the Trans Mountain pipeline serves to legitimize and sustain climate change policy inaction in Canada, to the short-term benefit of Canada’s oil and gas sector, and at the expense of the public and the environment. The article unfolds as follows: In the first section I briefly discuss the political economy of the mainstream news media in democratic societies, and describe the media “propaganda model” as a useful analytical lens to read The Globe and Mail’s coverage of the Trans Mountain project, specifically its editorial characterization of the “national interest” in approving and completing the project as soon as possible. I proceed in the second section by briefly introducing The Globe and Mail as Canada’s newspaper of record along with the history thus far of the Trans Mountain project, and then provide a critical account of The Globe and Mail’s editorial coverage of the project vis-à-vis Canada’s interests and obligations in respect of mitigating climate change. In the third section of the article I discuss the difficulties inherent in seeking to reform the news media as a means of countering this form of regulatory capture. I conclude by discussing the limitations of the analysis and suggesting avenues of future research.

I. Democracy dies in darkness: The political economy of the fourth estate “Democracy dies in darkness” is the motto of the Washington Post newspaper.16 The motto signals the foundational public-interest role that a free and independent press plays in democratic societies by shining a light on the special interests and workings of power. As Edmund Burke reportedly remarked, “there were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters’ Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than them all.”17 And yet, the press and mass communications media more generally have always been bound up in the exercise of political-economic power, so much so that neither can be understood in isolation from the other.18 There is an apparent and abiding tension between the news media as watchdog and the news media as lapdog.19 Arguably the most powerful explanatory model of the media’s role in shaping democratic discussion and debate about public policy is the “propaganda model” developed by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky.20 Propaganda is a provocative term, but in its more nuanced formulation it has considerable explanatory power. Herman and Chomsky argue that the mainstream news media in democratic societies do not play an overtly oppressive function as they do in totalitarian states. The news media in democratic societies “permit—indeed, encourage—spirited debate, criticism, and dissent as long as these remain faithfully within the system of presuppositions and principles that constitute an elite consensus, a system so powerful as to be internalized largely without awareness.”21 In contrast to the popular perception that propaganda is exclusively state-based and operates principally through the use of intimidation and fear-mongering, the news media in democratic societies tend not to explicitly proclaim a particular party line (i.e. the narrow spectrum of debate acceptable to the political-economic elite), but rather they presuppose it, “thus helping to establish it even more deeply as the very precondition of discussion, while also providing the appearance of lively debate.”22 In the United States, for example, the Federal Communications Commission maintained an official policy from 1949 to 1987 requiring broadcast news providers to present controversial public interest topics in a “balanced” manner.23 Known as the “Fairness Doctrine,” this policy had the effect of ensuring that roughly equal time was accorded to each side of controversial subjects, independent of merit.24 The “Fairness Doctrine” has subsequently come to be understood by media and policy scholars as a vehicle of propaganda, one that has been effectively deployed by the tobacco industry and the fossil fuels industry.25 The following factors account for the news media’s distortional propaganda role in otherwise democratic societies: (a) concentrated corporate ownership of the news media; (b) advertising as the primary revenue source for media outlets; (c) political-economic elite perspectives as the predominant sources of news; (d) “flak,” or government efforts to suppress views critical of political-economic elites; and (e) “anticommunism” via the promotion of capitalism as an economic system, including the promotion of market-based governance and regulatory measures.26 Given these prevailing conditions of media ownership, concentration, and composition, perhaps it should not be surprising—let alone controversial—that the mainstream news media “serve to mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity” through the strategic use of “choices, emphases, and omissions”.27 Subsequent empirical work on US news media bias strongly supports the media propaganda model.28 While Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model is based on the US news media, Canadian analyses have, mutatis mutandis, consistently arrived at substantially similar findings. Mainstream news journalism in Canada, according to one study focused on the relationship between the media and the prevailing normative order, “is concerned primarily with communications among elite, authorized knowers.”29 “We can begin to understand how news media circulate and reinforce dominant values and meanings,” another study explains, “by examining ownership of Canadian media, their dependence on advertising revenue and its implications, and some typical patterns of news presentation.”30 According to the Kent Commission, Canada’s Royal Commission on Newspapers, “it was leftwing viewpoints that tended to be under-represented as commercialism increased its hold.”31 And as Globe and Mail columnist Jeffrey Simpson observed in 1996, “more [news media] commentators than ever are ideologues of the right.”32 Given the political and economic importance of the news media generally, a growing number of researchers based in democratic societies are investigating mainstream media representations of climate change, the most pressing public interest issue of our time.33 Of course, climate change is not a discrete public policy issue that can be meaningfully discussed in isolation from other public policy concerns, including issues of economic competitiveness, growth, and inequality. It follows that media representations of a number of important business and economic issues —e.g. domestic and foreign investment, international trade, job growth, natural resources extraction, infrastructure, energy costs, commodity prices, and many more—may have significant climate change implications, even if those implications are not always framed as such. This may help explain the curious finding that scholarly research on Canadian media representations of climate change appears to be declining. 34 While analyses of media representations of climate change are interesting and important in and of themselves,35 such analyses do not always directly connect the form and substance of those representations to the critically important issue of climate policy action (or inaction, as is more often the case) in political and economic context.36 This is particularly problematic in light of recent integrated assessment modeling suggesting that rapid and widespread changes in both individual behaviour and socioeconomic systems are urgently required to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial norm.37 Utilizing Herman and Chomsky’s media propaganda model, I analyze a contextually-important set of media representations in relation to a particular climate policy outcome. In the next section, I provide an account of The Globe and Mail’s editorial coverage of the controversial Trans Mountain oil pipeline expansion project. The analytical aim of this account is to conceptualize and expose mainstream media representations of climate policy as a means of fossil fuels industries’ capture of climate change policymaking, with the regrettable result being the legitimization of climate policy inaction in Canada. Before proceeding, however, a brief discussion of the article’s methodology, including an important methodological caveat, is in order.

#### Journalistic objectivity undermines climate action by framing established science as undecided, evenly balanced debates

Stecula and Merkley 19 [Dominik A. Stecula, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Colorado State University with a PhD from the University of Columbia, and Eric Merkley, Professor of Political Science in the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto, 2-26-2019, "Framing Climate Change: Economics, Ideology, and Uncertainty in American News Media Content From 1988 to 2014," Frontiers, https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fcomm.2019.00006/full]/Kankee

Uncertainty and Risk in Climate Change A final set of important frames in climate news coverage involves the communication of uncertainty and risk in climate change. Scientific uncertainty exists when there is a lack of scientific knowledge or disagreement over the knowledge that exists at a given point in time (Friedman et al., 1999). Researchers understand that all forms of scientific endeavors involve such uncertainty. In the context of climate change, discussion of uncertainty can focus on conflicting claims or a lack of knowledge about the existence or cause of climate change, its present-day effects, and the difficulty with assessing probabilities of specific outcomes and their consequences in the future (Patt and Schrag, 2003; Renn et al., 2011). Journalists covering scientific issues, such as climate change, are also routinely confronted with uncertainty, since controversy and debate are important criteria for the “newsworthiness” of a story (Friedman et al., 1999). As a result, how journalists present and describe scientific uncertainty affects how the public interpret such uncertainty. Communicating this uncertainty, however, is notoriously difficult (Fischhoff and Davis, 2014). Scientific discourse often involves an amount of details that can overwhelm even seasoned experts. It can also leave out crucial uncertainties that are commonly understood by the experts within the field, but need to be communicated to the broader public (Fischhoff and Davis, 2014). Finding the right balance is difficult, yet essential, considering the important role that uncertainty plays in human decision making (Curley et al., 1986; Sword-Daniels et al., 2018). Psychological research shows that uncertainty generally has a negative effect on prosocial behaviors, since it tends to enable people to adopt self-serving narratives about their actions and limit their capacity to cooperate in social dilemma situations (Hine and Gifford, 1991; Dannenberg et al., 2015; for a review of the literature, see Kappes et al., 2018). Experimental work highlights that uncertainty framing also matters for climate change related behaviors, such as decreasing one's energy consumption (Morton et al., 2011). A focus on uncertainty in news coverage can potentially reduce the public's support and engagement in climate action because of the unclear outcomes of such actions. Uncertainty can take several forms in climate change coverage. On a wide range of climate impacts and long-range forecasts of future warming there is uncertainty that is appropriately acknowledged by experts in the media's coverage of climate science. More problematic is if uncertainty is used in a way that casts doubt on the well-established tenants of the climate consensus of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)—that climate change is happening, is predominantly man-made through the production of greenhouse gas emissions, and will result in severe environmental and human harm. The persuasive power of uncertainty in this context is its implicit justification and reification of the status quo, especially as it pertains to fossil-fuel usage and carbon emissions (Feygina et al., 2010). One way in which this type uncertainty enters the media coverage of climate change has been through the journalistic engagement of so-called “false balance.” Reporters frequently treat topics as debates in which they present “both sides” in order to adhere to a journalistic norm of objectivity. This norm exists, in part, because both journalists and the general public prize it (Schudson, 1978; Giannoulis et al., 2010), but also because it acts as a mechanism to protect journalists from attacks on their credibility and to preserve access to sources on both sides of a given political debate (Hallin, 1989; Shoemaker and Reese, 2013). The desire for balance also serves the media's tendency toward drama and conflict in news coverage (Bennett, 2007). In many contexts it is important for journalists to be fair and evenly balanced in their presentation of different sides of a story, but it quickly becomes awkward when discussing the existence or causes of climate change where the credibility of each side does not have equal weight. And, the consequences of this coverage are troubling. Presenting a scientific consensus as a debate confuses the public on the state of the science and, in the case of climate change, possibly reduces support for climate action (Friedman et al., 1999; Corbett and Durfee, 2004; Koehler, 2016; McCright et al., 2016). Newsroom norms of objectivity will only contribute to a balanced presentation of a political debate if another side presents itself. Journalists ultimately rely on easily accessible sources when reporting on the news. And, because of the activism of the fossil fuel industry and conservative movement, there have been no shortage of sources ready and willing to use a platform provided by journalists to cast doubt on climate science—the so-called “Merchants of Doubt” (Oreskes and Conway, 2011). Scholars have noted that these groups have made a concerted effort to mobilize opposition to climate mitigation policy by undermining trust in foundations of climate science for both the public and policy makers (Jacques et al., 2008; Dunlap and McCright, 2011; Dunlap and Jacques, 2013; Farrell, 2016a,b). While these groups are likely not as active in the media as conventional wisdom might suggest (Merkley and Stecula, 2018), it is still possible that the press, and in particular conservative media, pick up on their message of uncertainty in their coverage of climate science even if they don't explicitly cite these actors. As the broader research on misinformation has shown, various myths surrounding climate science, including those pertaining to certainty of different outcomes, tend to be “sticky,” and hence very difficult to correct (Lewandowsky et al., 2012). Efforts to correct such information tend to be ineffective, and, in some circumstances might even result in what is called a backfire effect, when people get more entrenched in their original position (Nyhan and Reifler, 2010; Lewandowsky et al., 2012). Some promising work suggests that exposing people to correct information prior to misinformation might be an effective way to “inoculate” them from the perils of misinformation, at least in some contexts, but the broader point remains that, if the press disseminates uncertainty frames about climate change, such information might play a negative role in people's attitudes about climate change and climate change mitigation policies (Cook et al., 2017; Jolley and Douglas, 2017). The themes of uncertainty have been analyzed in the context of climate change news coverage. Some research has shown that coverage of climate change in the 1990s and early 2000s was characterized by scientific inaccuracy and uncertainty, which was driven by an adherence to balanced reporting and resistance to a growing body of scientific evidence. More recently, however, balance nearly disappeared from the press (Zehr, 2000; Boykoff and Boykoff, 2004, 2007; Boykoff, 2007). The scope of this work, however, has been fairly limited in terms of the time dimension as well as the amount of news coverage examined, as was highlighted in the previous section. However, scholars who have been examining this feature of news coverage of climate change in the comparative context, have highlighted that the U.S. coverage features substantially more climate skeptic voices pushing doubt about climate science, compared to countries like India or France (Painter and Ashe, 2012). Furthermore, contrary to the findings in the U.S.-centric literature, the authors found that skeptics voicing climate increased their media presence between 2007 and 2010 (Painter and Ashe, 2012). In a separate analysis, Painter (2013) also found that uncertainty was the second most common frame used in climate change coverage, appearing in 76 percent of American articles, however it was the salient frame in only 13 percent of the coverage. It is important to note that this analysis, however, was based only on a total of 55 articles. This disparity in findings highlights the need to systematically examine uncertainty in the context of American news coverage and examine degrees of uncertainty, not just whether the frame is present or not.

#### Extinction

Kareiva 18 [Peter,Ph.D. in ecology and applied mathematics from Cornell University, director of the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA, Pritzker Distinguished Professor in Environment & Sustainability at UCLA, et al., September 2018, “Existential risk due to ecosystem collapse: Nature strikes back,” Futures, Vol. 102, p. 39-50

In summary, six of the nine proposed planetary boundaries (phosphorous, nitrogen, biodiversity, land use, atmospheric aerosol loading, and chemical pollution) are unlikely to be associated with existential risks. They all correspond to a degraded environment, but in our assessment do not represent existential risks. However, the three remaining boundaries (climate change, global freshwater cycle, and ocean acidification) do pose existential risks. This is because of intrinsic positive feedback loops, substantial lag times between system change and experiencing the consequences of that change, and the fact these different boundaries interact with one another in ways that yield surprises. In addition, climate, freshwater, and ocean acidification are all directly connected to the provision of food and water, and shortages of food and water can create conflict and social unrest. Climate change has a long history of disrupting civilizations and sometimes precipitating the collapse of cultures or mass emigrations (McMichael, 2017). For example, the 12th century drought in the North American Southwest is held responsible for the collapse of the Anasazi pueblo culture. More recently, the infamous potato famine of 1846–1849 and the large migration of Irish to the U.S. can be traced to a combination of factors, one of which was climate. Specifically, 1846 was an unusually warm and moist year in Ireland, providing the climatic conditions favorable to the fungus that caused the potato blight. As is so often the case, poor government had a role as well—as the British government forbade the import of grains from outside Britain (imports that could have helped to redress the ravaged potato yields). Climate change intersects with freshwater resources because it is expected to exacerbate drought and water scarcity, as well as flooding. Climate change can even impair water quality because it is associated with heavy rains that overwhelm sewage treatment facilities, or because it results in higher concentrations of pollutants in groundwater as a result of enhanced evaporation and reduced groundwater recharge. Ample clean water is not a luxury—it is essential for human survival. Consequently, cities, regions and nations that lack clean freshwater are vulnerable to social disruption and disease. Finally, ocean acidification is linked to climate change because it is driven by CO2 emissions just as global warming is. With close to 20% of the world’s protein coming from oceans (FAO, 2016), the potential for severe impacts due to acidification is obvious. Less obvious, but perhaps more insidious, is the interaction between climate change and the loss of oyster and coral reefs due to acidification. Acidification is known to interfere with oyster reef building and coral reefs. Climate change also increases storm frequency and severity. Coral reefs and oyster reefs provide protection from storm surge because they reduce wave energy (Spalding et al., 2014). If these reefs are lost due to acidification at the same time as storms become more severe and sea level rises, coastal communities will be exposed to unprecedented storm surge—and may be ravaged by recurrent storms. A key feature of the risk associated with climate change is that mean annual temperature and mean annual rainfall are not the variables of interest. Rather it is extreme episodic events that place nations and entire regions of the world at risk. These extreme events are by definition “rare” (once every hundred years), and changes in their likelihood are challenging to detect because of their rarity, but are exactly the manifestations of climate change that we must get better at anticipating (Diffenbaugh et al., 2017). Society will have a hard time responding to shorter intervals between rare extreme events because in the lifespan of an individual human, a person might experience as few as two or three extreme events. How likely is it that you would notice a change in the interval between events that are separated by decades, especially given that the interval is not regular but varies stochastically? A concrete example of this dilemma can be found in the past and expected future changes in storm-related flooding of New York City. The highly disruptive flooding of New York City associated with Hurricane Sandy represented a flood height that occurred once every 500 years in the 18th century, and that occurs now once every 25 years, but is expected to occur once every 5 years by 2050 (Garner et al., 2017). This change in frequency of extreme floods has profound implications for the measures New York City should take to protect its infrastructure and its population, yet because of the stochastic nature of such events, this shift in flood frequency is an elevated risk that will go unnoticed by most people. 4. The combination of positive feedback loops and societal inertia is fertile ground for global environmental catastrophes. Humans are remarkably ingenious, and have adapted to crises throughout their history. Our doom has been repeatedly predicted, only to be averted by innovation (Ridley, 2011). However, the many stories of human ingenuity successfully addressing existential risks such as global famine or extreme air pollution represent environmental challenges that are largely linear, have immediate consequences, and operate without positive feedbacks. For example, the fact that food is in short supply does not increase the rate at which humans consume food—thereby increasing the shortage. Similarly, massive air pollution episodes such as the London fog of 1952 that killed 12,000 people did not make future air pollution events more likely. In fact it was just the opposite—the London fog sent such a clear message that Britain quickly enacted pollution control measures (Stradling, 2016). Food shortages, air pollution, water pollution, etc. send immediate signals to society of harm, which then trigger a negative feedback of society seeking to reduce the harm. In contrast, today’s great environmental crisis of climate change may cause some harm but there are generally long time delays between rising CO2 concentrations and damage to humans. The consequence of these delays are an absence of urgency; thus although 70% of Americans believe global warming is happening, only 40% think it will harm them (http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us-2016/). Secondly, unlike past environmental challenges, the Earth’s climate system is rife with positive feedback loops. In particular, as CO2 increases and the climate warms, that very warming can cause more CO2 release which further increases global warming, and then more CO2, and so on. Table 2 summarizes the best documented positive feedback loops for the Earth’s climate system. These feedbacks can be neatly categorized into carbon cycle, biogeochemical, biogeophysical, cloud, ice-albedo, and water vapor feedbacks. As important as it is to understand these feedbacks individually, it is even more essential to study the interactive nature of these feedbacks. Modeling studies show that when interactions among feedback loops are included, uncertainty increases dramatically and there is a heightened potential for perturbations to be magnified (e.g., Cox, Betts, Jones, Spall, & Totterdell, 2000; Hajima, Tachiiri, Ito, & Kawamiya, 2014; Knutti & Rugenstein, 2015; Rosenfeld, Sherwood, Wood, & Donner, 2014). This produces a wide range of future scenarios. Positive feedbacks in the carbon cycle involves the enhancement of future carbon contributions to the atmosphere due to some initial increase in atmospheric CO2. This happens because as CO2 accumulates, it reduces the efficiency in which oceans and terrestrial ecosystems sequester carbon, which in return feeds back to exacerbate climate change (Friedlingstein et al., 2001). Warming can also increase the rate at which organic matter decays and carbon is released into the atmosphere, thereby causing more warming (Melillo et al., 2017). Increases in food shortages and lack of water is also of major concern when biogeophysical feedback mechanisms perpetuate drought conditions. The underlying mechanism here is that losses in vegetation increases the surface albedo, which suppresses rainfall, and thus enhances future vegetation loss and more suppression of rainfall—thereby initiating or prolonging a drought (Chamey, Stone, & Quirk, 1975). To top it off, overgrazing depletes the soil, leading to augmented vegetation loss (Anderies, Janssen, & Walker, 2002). Climate change often also increases the risk of forest fires, as a result of higher temperatures and persistent drought conditions. The expectation is that forest fires will become more frequent and severe with climate warming and drought (Scholze, Knorr, Arnell, & Prentice, 2006), a trend for which we have already seen evidence (Allen et al., 2010). Tragically, the increased severity and risk of Southern California wildfires recently predicted by climate scientists (Jin et al., 2015), was realized in December 2017, with the largest fire in the history of California (the “Thomas fire” that burned 282,000 acres, https://www.vox.com/2017/12/27/16822180/thomas-fire-california-largest-wildfire). This catastrophic fire embodies the sorts of positive feedbacks and interacting factors that could catch humanity off-guard and produce a true apocalyptic event. Record-breaking rains produced an extraordinary flush of new vegetation, that then dried out as record heat waves and dry conditions took hold, coupled with stronger than normal winds, and ignition. Of course the record-fire released CO2 into the atmosphere, thereby contributing to future warming. Out of all types of feedbacks, water vapor and the ice-albedo feedbacks are the most clearly understood mechanisms. Losses in reflective snow and ice cover drive up surface temperatures, leading to even more melting of snow and ice cover—this is known as the ice-albedo feedback (Curry, Schramm, & Ebert, 1995). As snow and ice continue to melt at a more rapid pace, millions of people may be displaced by flooding risks as a consequence of sea level rise near coastal communities (Biermann & Boas, 2010; Myers, 2002; Nicholls et al., 2011). The water vapor feedback operates when warmer atmospheric conditions strengthen the saturation vapor pressure, which creates a warming effect given water vapor’s strong greenhouse gas properties (Manabe & Wetherald, 1967). Global warming tends to increase cloud formation because warmer temperatures lead to more evaporation of water into the atmosphere, and warmer temperature also allows the atmosphere to hold more water. The key question is whether this increase in clouds associated with global warming will result in a positive feedback loop (more warming) or a negative feedback loop (less warming). For decades, scientists have sought to answer this question and understand the net role clouds play in future climate projections (Schneider et al., 2017). Clouds are complex because they both have a cooling (reflecting incoming solar radiation) and warming (absorbing incoming solar radiation) effect (Lashof, DeAngelo, Saleska, & Harte, 1997). The type of cloud, altitude, and optical properties combine to determine how these countervailing effects balance out. Although still under debate, it appears that in most circumstances the cloud feedback is likely positive (Boucher et al., 2013). For example, models and observations show that increasing greenhouse gas concentrations reduces the low-level cloud fraction in the Northeast Pacific at decadal time scales. This then has a positive feedback effect and enhances climate warming since less solar radiation is reflected by the atmosphere (Clement, Burgman, & Norris, 2009). The key lesson from the long list of potentially positive feedbacks and their interactions is that runaway climate change, and runaway perturbations have to be taken as a serious possibility. Table 2 is just a snapshot of the type of feedbacks that have been identified (see Supplementary material for a more thorough explanation of positive feedback loops). However, this list is not exhaustive and the possibility of undiscovered positive feedbacks portends even greater existential risks. The many environmental crises humankind has previously averted (famine, ozone depletion, London fog, water pollution, etc.) were averted because of political will based on solid scientific understanding. We cannot count on complete scientific understanding when it comes to positive feedback loops and climate change.

# Case

### Countention 1

#### Risk of transmission is overstated—conventional checks solve

Smith 17—former R&D director at MicroPhage and SomaLogic (Drew, “Can A Superbug Cause A Global Pandemic?,” <https://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2017/02/10/can-a-superbug-cause-a-global-pandemic/#3cb04e2c59aa>, dml)

Death rates from bacterial infections dropped over 90% from historic levels before the introduction of penicillin. Sanitation and vaccines are far more effective methods to control bacterial infections than antibiotics ever were or ever will be. Boring old soap and water, filtration, bleach, and alcohol kill superbugs just fine. None of these things are in short supply.

The acquisition of multiple drug resistances generally (but not always) causes bacteria to become a bit less fit and unable to infect otherwise healthy adults. The victim of this particular superbug was in her seventies and had been in and out of hospitals for over a year. This is a fairly typical profile for victims of multi-drug resistant bacteria.

The worst-case scenario, if we continue to abuse and overuse antibiotics in feedlots and hospitals, is that these bugs will pick up compensatory mutations and become more virulent. Many fairly routine procedures - chemotherapy, thoracic and orthopedic surgery - will become much more risky.

But the risk will still be largely confined to hospitalized patients. MDR bacteria are extremely unlikely to cause a global pandemic on the scale of the 1919 influenza or AIDS epidemics, so long as we continue to provide clean food and water to the public.

### Contention 2

#### Nuke war doesn’t cause extinction --- tons of warrants

Ladish 20 [Jeffery Ladish, security researcher and risk consultant focused on global catastrophic threats. 11-6-2020, “Nuclear war is unlikely to cause human extinction” Effective Altruism Forum, Accessed 3-7-2022, <https://jeffreyladish.com/Nuclear_war_is_unlikely_to_cause_human_extinction/> ww

\*figures ommited\*

A number of people have claimed that a full-scale nuclear war is likely to cause human extinction. I have investigated this issue in depth and concluded that even a full scale nuclear exchange is unlikely (<1%) to cause human extinction.∂ By a full-scale war, I mean a nuclear exchange between major world powers, such as the US, Russia, and China, using the complete arsenals of each country. The total number of warheads today (14,000) is significantly smaller than during the height of the cold war (70,000). While extinction from nuclear war is unlikely today, it may become more likely if significantly more warheads are deployed or if designs of weapons change significantly.∂ There are three potential mechanisms of human extinction from nuclear war:∂ 1) Kinetic destruction∂ 2) Radiation∂ 3) Climate alteration∂ Only 3) is remotely plausible with existing weapons, but let’s go through them all.∂ 1) Kinetic destruction∂ There simply aren’t enough nuclear warheads to kill everyone directly with kinetic force, and there likely never will be. There are ~14,000 nuclear weapons in the world, and let’s suppose they have an average yield of something like 1 megaton. This is a conservative guess, the actual average is probably closer to 100 kilotons. With a 1 megaton warhead, you can create a fireball covering 3 km², and a moderate pressure wave that knocks down most residential houses covering 155 km². The former kills nearly everyone and the latter kills a decent percentage of people but not everyone. Let’s be conservative and assume the pressure wave kills everyone in its radius. 14,000 \* 155 = 2.17 million km². The New York Metro area is 8,683 km². So all the nuclear weapons in the world could destroy about 250 New York Metro areas. This is a lot! But not near enough, even if someone intentionally tried to hit all the populations at once. Total land surface of earth is: 510.1 million km². Urban area, by one estimate, is about 2%, or 10.2 million km.² Since the total possible area destroyed from nuclear weapons is ~2.17 million km² is considerably less than a lower bound on the area of human habitation, 10.2 million km², there should be basically no risk of human extinction from kinetic destruction.∂ The even more obvious reason why kinetic damage wouldn’t lead to human extinction is that nuclear states only threaten one or several countries at a time, and never the population centers of the entire world. Even if NATO countries and Russia and China all went to war at the same time, Africa, Australia, South America, and other neutral regions would be spared any kinetic damage.∂ 2) Radiation∂ Radiation won’t kill everyone because there aren’t enough weapons, and radiation from them would be concentrated in some areas and wholly absent from other areas. Even in the worst affected areas, lethal radiation from fallout would drop to survivable levels within weeks. Here it’s worth noting that there is an inherent tradeoff between length of halflife and energy released by radionuclides. The shorter the half life the more energy will be released, and the longer the half life the less energy. The fallout products from modern nuclear weapons are very lethal, but only for days to several weeks.∂ Let’s try the same calculation we used with kinetic damage, and see if an attack aimed at optimizing fallout for killing everyone could succeed. Using Nukemap again, I’ll go with the fallout contour for 100 rads per hour. 400 rads is thought too be enough to kill 50% of people, so 100 rads per hour is likely to kill most all people not in some kind of shelter. We need to switch to using a groundburst detonation rather than an airburst detonation, because groundbursts create far more fallout. A 1mt ground burst would create an area of about 8,000 km² of >100 rads per hour. Okay, multiple that by 14,000 warheads, and we get 112 million km². That’s a lot! It’s still less than the 510.1 million km² of earth’s land mass, but it’s a lot more than the ~10.2 million km² of urban space. Presumably this is enough to cover every human habitation, so in principle, it might be possible to kill everyone with radiation from existing nuclear weapons.∂ In practice, it would be almost impossible to kill every human via radiation with the existing nuclear arsenals, even if they were targeted explicitly for this purpose. The first reason is that fallout patterns are very uneven. After a ground burst, fallout is carried by the wind. Some areas will be hit bad and some areas will be hardly affected by fallout. Even if most human population centers were covered, a few areas would almost certainly escape.∂ Two other things make extinction by radiation unlikely. Many countries, especially in the southern hemisphere, are unlikely to be affected by fallout much at all. Since most of these countries are likely to be neutral in a conflict, and not near combatant countries, they should be relatively safe from fallout. While fallout might travel hundreds of kms, it still won’t reach places separated by greater distances. Fallout that reaches the upper atmosphere will eventually fall back down, but usually after the period of lethal radioactivity. The other mitigating factor is that in typical nuclear war plans, ground bursts are usually restricted to hardened targets, and air bursts are favored for population and industry centers. This is because air bursts maximize the size of the destructive pressure wave. Air burst detonations result in little lethal fallout reaching the ground, so populations not downwind of military targets would likely be safe from the worst of the radiological effects in a war scenario.∂ The final protection from extinction by radiation is simply large amounts of mass between people and the radiation source, in other words, fallout shelters. After several weeks, the radionuclides in fallout from ground burst detonations will have decayed to the point where humans can survive outside of shelters. Many fallout shelters exist in the world, and many more could be made easily in a day or two with a shovel, some ground, and some boards. Even if lethally radioactive fallout from ground bursts covered all population centers, many humans would still survive in shelters.∂ The risks of extinction from nuclear-weapon-induced-radiation wouldn’t be complete without discussing two factors: nuclear power plants and radiological weapons. I’m only going to cover these briefly, but they both don’t change the conclusions much.∂ Nuclear power plants could be targeted by nuclear weapons to create large amounts of fallout with a longer half-life but less energy per unit time. The main concern here is that nuclear power plants and spent fuel sites contain a much greater mass of radioactive material than nuclear missiles can carry. The danger comes primarily from spreading the already very radiative spent or unspent nuclear fuel. The risk this poses requires a longer analysis, but the short version is that while nuking a nuclear power plant or stored fuel site would indeed create some pretty long-lived fallout it would still be concentrated in a relatively small area. Fortunately, even a nuclear detonation wouldn’t spread the nuclear fuel more than several hundred km at most. Having regions of countries covered in spent nuclear fuel would be awful, but it doesn’t much raise the risk of extinction.∂ Radiological weapons are nuclear weapons designed to maximize the spread of lethal fallout rather than destructive yield. The particular concern from the extinction perspective is that they can be designed to create fallout that continues to emit levels of radiation that can make an area uninhabitable for months to years. These kind of radiological weapons kill more slowly, but they still kill. In principle, radiological weapons could be used to kill everyone on earth. However, in practice, the same constraints that apply to standard nuclear weapons apply to weapons optimized for long-lasting fallout, as well as some additional constraints. Radiological weapons wouldn’t produce more fallout than standard warheads, they would just produce fallout with different characteristics. As a result the amount of radiological weapons required to cover every part of earth’s surface would be massively expensive (likely as expensive as the largest existing nuclear arsenals), and serve no military purpose. Their inefficiency in destruction and death compared to standard nuclear weapons is probably why radiological weapons have never been developed or deployed in large numbers. This makes them an ongoing theoretical concern, but not an existential risk in the immediate future. A concerning development is Russia’s claim to have developed a large-yield (100mt) submersible nuclear weapon with the suggestion that it could be used as a radiological weapon, but even if this is true, it’s unlikely to be deployed in large numbers.∂ 3) Climate alteration∂ The bulk of the risk of human extinction from nuclear weapons come from risks of catastrophic climate change, nuclear winter, due to secondary effects from nuclear detonations. However, even in most full-scale nuclear exchange scenarios, the resulting climate effects are unlikely to cause human extinction.∂ Reasons for this:∂ a) Under scenarios where a severe nuclear winter occurs as described by Robock et al, some human populations would likely survive. b) The Robock group’s models are probably overestimating the risk c) Nuclear war planners are aware of nuclear winter risks and can incorporate these risks into their targeting plans∂ Before diving into each subject, it’s worth understanding the background of nuclear winter research. In the 1980s a group of atmospheric scientists proposed the hypothesis that a nuclear war would result in massive firestorms in burning cities, which would loft particles high into the atmosphere and cause catastrophic cooling that would last for years. Many found it alarming that such an effect could be possible and go unnoticed for decades while the risk existed. Some scientists also thought the proposed effect was too strong, or unlikely to occur at all. Until a few years ago, if you looked only at peer reviewed literature you would only find papers forecasting severe nuclear winter effects in the event of a nuclear war. Understandably, many people assumed that this was the scientific consensus. Unfortunately, this misrepresented the scientific community’s state of uncertainty about the risks of nuclear war. There have only ever been a small numbers of papers published about this topic (<15 probably), mostly from one group of researchers, despite the topic being one of existential importance.∂ I’m very glad Robock, Toon, and others have spent much of their careers studying nuclear winter effects, and their models are useful in estimating potential climate change caused by nuclear war. However, I’ve become less convinced over time the Robock model is largely correct. See section B below for why I’ve changed my mind. However, I’m quite uncertain about the probability of strong cooling effects from nuclear war, and am still quite concerned about the potential for severe cooling, even if the risk of extinction from such events is small.∂ A: Under scenarios where a severe nuclear winter occurs as described by Robock et al, some human populations would likely survive.∂ The latest and most detailed model of potential cooling effects from a fullscale nuclear exchange comes from, Robock et al., “Nuclear winter revisited with a modern climate model and current nuclear arsenals: Still catastrophic consequences” found here.∂ The effects from this model are severe. In the 150Tg case, after a year, summer temperatures in the Northern hemisphere are 10-30 degrees C cooler. The effects are less severe at the equator (5 degrees C), but basically all places in the world are affected. The most likely outcome is that most people starve to death. Many would freeze too, but starvation is likely the greatest risk. Even in this model, it appears that in equatorial regions, some farming would still be possible, enough for some populations to survive. After a 10-15 years, agriculture in most of the world would be possible at reduced capacity.∂ Surface air temperature changes for the 150 Tg case averaged for June, July, and August of the year of smoke injection and the next year. Robock et al., 2007∂ Carl Shulman asked one of the authors of this paper, Luke Oman, his probability that the 150Tg nuclear winter scenario discussed in the paper would result in human extinction, the answer he gave was “in the range of 1 in 10,000 to 1 in 100,000.” This strikes me as quite plausible, though one expert opinion is no substitute for a deep analysis. The Q&A with Oman contains his reasoning for this assessment.∂ Two different analyses are required to calculate the chances of human extinction from nuclear winter. The first is the analysis of the climate change that could result from a nuclear war, and the second is the adaptive capacity of human groups to these climate changes. I have not seen an in depth analysis of the former, but I believe such an assessment would be worthwhile.∂ My own guess is that humans are capable of surviving far more severe climate shifts than those projected in nuclear winter scenarios. Humans are more robust than most any other mammal to drastic changes in temperature, as evidenced by our global range, even in pre-historic times. While a loss of most agriculture would likely kill most people on earth, modern technology would enable some populations to survive. Great stores of food currently exist in the world, and it is l likely that some of these would be seized and protected by small groups, providing enough food to last for years. While even such populations with food stores wouldn’t have enough to survive for 10-15 years, such food stores would give groups time to adapt to new food sources. The organization ALLFED has explored a number of alternative food sources that could keep populations alive in the event of a nuclear war or other large solar disruption, and I expect great necessity to drive the discovery of even more in the event of such a disaster.∂ B: The Robock group’s models are probably overestimating the risk∂ The nuclear winter model at its simplest: Nuclear detonations → Fires in cities → Firestorms in cities → Lofted black carbon into the upper atmosphere → black carbon persists in upper atmosphere, reflecting sunlight and causes massive cooling∂ Each step is required in order for the effect to occur. If nuclear war causes massive fires in cities but does not lead to firestorms that loft particles, then no long term cooling is going to occur. Some of these steps are easier to model than others. Based on my reading of the literature, the greatest uncertainties involve the dynamics of cities burning after a nuclear attack, and whether the conditions would produce firestorms sufficient to loft large numbers of particles high enough in the atmosphere to persist for years.∂ We’re finally beginning to see some healthy debate about some of these questions in the scientific literature. Alan Robock’s group published a paper in 2007 that found significant cooling effects even from a relatively limited regional war. A group from Los Alamos, Reisner et al, published a paper in 2018 that reexamined some of the assumptions that went into Robock et al’s model, and concluded that global cooling was unlikely in such a scenario. Robock et al. responded, and Reisner et al responded to the response. Both authors bring up good points, but I find Reisner’s position more compelling. This back and forth is worth reading for those who want to investigate deeper. Unfortunately Reisner’s group has not published an analysis on potential cooling effects from a modern full scale nuclear exchange, rather than a limited regional exchange. Even so, it’s not hard to extrapolate that Reisner’s model would result in far less cooling than Robock’s model in the equivalent situation.∂ C: Nuclear war planners are aware of nuclear winter risks and can incorporate these risks into their targeting plans∂ A very simple way to reduce risks from nuclear winter is to refrain from targeting cities with nuclear weapons. The proposed mechanism behind nuclear winter results from cities burning, not ground bursts on military targets. I’ve spoken with some of the officials in the US defense establishment responsible for nuclear war planning, and they’re well aware of the potential risks from nuclear winter. Of course, being aware of the risks does not guarantee they will have reasoned about the risks well, or have engaged in good risk management practices. However, the fact that this risk is well publicized makes it more likely that nuclear war planners will take steps to minimize blowback risk from climate effects.∂ It’s hard to know to what extent this has been done. Nuclear war plans are classified, and as far as we know current US nuclear war plans do target cities under some circumstances but not under others. However, the defense establishment has access to classified information and models that we civilians do not have, in addition to all the public material. I’m confident that nuclear war planners have thought deeply about the risks of climate change from nuclear war, even though I don’t know their conclusions or bureaucratic constraints. All else being equal, the knowledge of these risks makes military planners less likely to accidentally cause human extinction.∂ Conclusion∂ This post discussed the three plausible mechanisms of human extinction caused by nuclear weapons. The fact that one of these mechanisms, nuclear winter, wasn’t characterized until the 1980s, is a good reminder of the possibility of unknown unknowns. While nuclear tests provided information about the effects of these weapons, the test environments were significantly different than war environments. Large model uncertainties remain. Given that the greatest existential threat from nuclear war appears to be from climate impacts, it would be great to see more researchers study the climate effects from nuclear war and the resilience capacity of different human groups.∂ There appear to be several interventions possible for reducing existential risk from nuclear war. At the policy level, a commitment from the largest nuclear powers to refrain from targeting the majority of cities would reduce risk of accidental omnicide. Improving the maximum resilience capacity of human populations best positioned to survive a nuclear winter would also make humanity less vulnerable to nuclear winter, and could also protect against other existential threats.

### Conention 3

#### Democratic collapse coming now

Olsen 21 [JAN M. OLSEN, Denmark correspondent at The Associated Press, monitoring news in seven countries, 11-22-2021, “Report: Democracy backsliding across the world amid pandemic” ABC News, Accessed 3-6-2022, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/report-democracy-backsliding-world-amid-pandemic-81323824> ww

COPENHAGEN, Denmark -- Democracy is deteriorating across the world, with countries notably taking undemocratic and unnecessary actions to contain the coronavirus pandemic, an intergovernmental body said in its new report Monday.∂ “Many democratic governments are backsliding," the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, or International IDEA, said.∂ The 34-nation organization added that as of August 2021, 64% of countries have taken an action to curb the pandemic that it considers “disproportionate, unnecessary or illegal."∂ The Swedish-based body added that the situation is also getting worse in countries that are not democratic. Autocratic regimes have become “even more brazen in their repression,” free speech has been restricted and the rule of law has been weakened, it said.∂ In its flagship report on the state of democracy, International IDEA said the number of backsliding democracies has doubled in the past decade, and mentioned in particular the United States, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia.∂ “This is the time for democracies to be bold, to innovate and revitalize themselves,” International IDEA Secretary-General Kevin Casas-Zamora said in a statement.∂ The report said that “the two years since our last report have not been good for democracy," and the achievement reached when democracy became the predominant form of governance "now hangs in the balance like never before.”∂ “Overall, the number of countries moving in an authoritarian direction in 2020 outnumbered those going in a democratic direction,” the report said, adding that in the past two years, the world has lost at least four democracies, “either through flawed elections or military coups.”∂ The 80-page report by the intergovernmental organization whose mission is to advance democracy worldwide, noted “the remarkable strength of civic activism."∂ It said more than 80 countries have seen protests and civic action during the pandemic despite often-harsh government restrictions. However, pro-democracy movements have met repression in Belarus; Cuba; Eswatini, previously known as Swaziland; Myanmar; and Sudan.∂ The report comes ahead of U.S. President Joe Biden’s Dec. 9-10 virtual “summit for democracy” aimed at gathering government, civil society and private sector leaders in what Biden has cast as a global faceoff against rising autocratic forces.∂ In Asia, International IDEA said, Afghanistan, Hong Kong and Myanmar have suffered from “a wave of growing authoritarianism.” But democratic erosion has also been found in India, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.∂ “China’s influence, coupled with its own deepening autocratization, also puts the legitimacy of the democratic model at risk,” the report said.∂ In Africa, democracy declines “have undermined remarkable progress made across the continent over the past three decades.” The pandemic has added pressure on governments to respond to concerns regarding governance, rights and social inequality, it said. It also noted military coups in Chad, Guinea, Mali and Sudan.∂ The report also noted that half the democracies in the Americas have suffered democratic erosion, with notable declines in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador and the United States.∂ As for Europe, the pandemic “has placed a strain on democracy” and some countries where democratic principles were already under threat, it provided an excuse for governments to weaken democracy further. Europe’s non-democratic governments — it identified Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia and Turkey — have intensified their already very repressive practices, International IDEA said.∂ “The pandemic broadened the pre-existing rift between high-performing democracies in Western Europe and weaker counterparts in Central and Eastern Europe,” said Sam Van Der Staak, head of Program Regional Europe.∂ "That divide will continue to challenge Europe’s unity, as it also faces greater outside pressure from non-democratic superpowers. But its increased democratic isolation also poses opportunities for greater integration and collaboration, as Europe is forced to consider the value of democracy as its core foundational force.”

#### People are dumb --- makes democracy useless

Dr. Stuart Parker 20, Philosopher and Former Teacher who Lectured on Philosophy and Education at London's Institute of Education, South Bank University, Author of Reflective Teaching in the Postmodern World, “The Problem With Democracy — It's You”, The Article, 10/5/2020, https://www.thearticle.com/the-problem-with-democracy-its-you

So why is our democracy so unfit for purpose? Why is it that we can elect leaders who are little more than self-serving schemers, whose contempt for the electorate renders them incapable of giving straight, honest answers to even the most straightforward, reasonable questions? It’s not as if any of these qualities have been smuggled in under our noses. They are paraded before our eyes every single day. Nobody voting for Johnson or Trump could ~~be blind to the fact~~ [ignore] that they are serial liars. And yet they voted all the same. Why?

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Mencken was on to something when suggesting that the leaders we get, the leaders we deserve, closely represent something dark in the inner soul of the people. There’s no easy way to put this — the problem with democracy is the voters. The voters simply aren’t good enough to support a healthy democracy. They’re not up to the job. Now I know some will think: a snowflake-remainer-lefty-loser will always blame the voters just as a bad workman always blames his tools. But these tools are shot.

Consider this: a poll in 2005 found that 21 per cent of Americans believe in witches and 9 per cent that spirits can take control of a person. In 1999, 18 per cent believed the sun revolves around the earth — so much for “the science” — and in 2000, 31 per cent believed in ghosts, and increase of 20 percentage points since 1978.

By 2019, the year before Trump’s re-election attempt, significant numbers believed in the illuminati, Big-foot and a flat earth. Ghost-belief had risen to 45 per cent, as had the belief in demons. Belief in vampires stood at a fangtastic 13 per cent.

Britain has nothing to be proud of. While 33 per cent of us believe in ghosts and 18 per cent in demonic possession, a whopping 52 per cent of us believe that you can magically make a false claim true simply by writing it on the side of a bus.

In elective dictatorships where small margins have huge consequences we’d better get used to the fact that (possibly small) groups with stupid ideas and a lack of relevant knowledge and skills can have a disproportionate effect on the lives of the rest of us.

#### [1] War --- Democratic peace is statistically disproven---it’s conflict driving

Dr. Daina Chiba 21, Associate Professor of Political Science in the Department of Government and Public Administration at the University of Macau, Ph.D. in Political Science from Rice University, LL.M in Jurisprudence and International Relations from Hitotsubashi University, and Dr. Erik Gartzke, Professor of Political Science at the University of California, San Diego, PhD in Political Science from the University of Iowa, “Make Two Democracies and Call Me in the Morning: Endogenous Regime Type and the Democratic Peace”, 2/19/2021, https://dainachiba.github.io/research/make2dem/Make2Dem.pdf

The democratic peace—the observation that democracies are less likely to fight each other than are other pairings of states—is one of the most widely acknowledged empirical regularities in international relations. Prominent scholars have even characterized the relationship as an empirical law (Levy 1988; Gleditsch 1992). The discovery of a special peace in liberal dyads stimulated enormous scholarly debate and led to, or reinforced, a number of policy initiatives by various governments and international organizations. Although a broad consensus has emerged among researchers regarding the empirical correlation between joint democracy and peace, disagreement remains as to its logical foundations. Numerous theories have been proposed to account for how democracy produces peace, if only dyadically (e.g., Russett 1993; Rummel 1996; Doyle 1997; Schultz 2001).

At the same time, peace appears likely to foster or maintain democracy (Thompson 1996; James, Solberg, andWolfson 1999). A vast swath of research in political science and economics proposes explanations for the origins of liberal government involving variables such as economic development (Lipset 1959; Burkhart and Lewis-Beck 1994; Przeworski et al. 2000; Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Epstein et al. 2006) and inequality (Boix 2003), political interests (Downs 1957; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003), power hierarchies (Moore 1966; Lake 2009), third party inducements (Pevehouse 2005) or impositions (Peceny 1995; Meernik 1996), geography (Gleditsch 2002b), and natural resource endowments (Ross 2001), to list just a few examples. Each of these putative causes of democracy is also associated with various explanations for international conflict. Indeed, some as yet poorly defined set of canonical factors may contribute both to democracy and to peace, making it look as if the two variables are directly related, even if possibly they are not.

We seek to contribute to this literature, not by proposing yet another theory to explain how democracy vanquishes war, but by estimating the causal effect of joint democracy on the probability of militarized disputes using a quasi-experimental research design. We begin by noting that some of the common causes of democracy and peace may be unobservable, generating an endogenous relationship between the two. Theories of democracy and explanations for peace are at a formative state; it is not possible to utilize detailed, validated and widely accepted models of each of these processes to assess their interaction. Indeed, to a remarkable degree democracy and peace each remain poorly understood and weakly accounted for empirically, despite their central roles in international politics. We address the risk of spurious correlation by applying an instrumental variables approach. Having taken into account possible endogeneity between democracy and peace, we find that joint democracy does not have an independent pacifying effect on interstate conflict. Instead, our findings show that democratic countries are more likely to attack other democracies than are non-democracies. Our results call into question the large body of theory that has been proposed to account for the apparent pacifism of democratic dyads.

#### Democracy causes Nigerian state collapse and civil war

Dr. Moses E. Ochonu 19, Cornelius Vanderbilt Chair in History and Professor of African History at Vanderbilt University, PhD and MA in African History from the University of Michigan, BA in History from Bayero University, Graduate Certificate in Conflict Management from Liscomb University, “Why Liberal Democracy is a Threat to Nigeria’s Stability”, Logos: A Journal of Modern Society & Culture, May 2019, http://logosjournal.com/2019/liberal-democracy-is-a-threat-to-nigerias-stability/

In 2015, Nigeria, a country of about 190 million, spent $625 million to conduct federal and local elections. By comparison, India, with a population of 1.2 billion, spent $600 million on its 2015 election, according to figures released by the Electoral Commission of India (ECI).[1]

In 2019, the election budget of Nigeria’s Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) rose to $670 million. This represents about 2.5 percent of Nigeria’s $28.8 billion budget for 2019, a portion of which is being financed through borrowing. To put the electoral spending in context, more than half of the country subsists on about a dollar a day, and the country recently acquired the dubious distinction of being named the poverty capital of the world, with more people living in extreme poverty there than in any other country.[2] Key infrastructures and services such as roads, railway, electricity, water supply, healthcare, and education are severely inadequate, requiring urgent investments and interventions.

Election-related expenditure is expected to rise in the near future as INEC implements a wider slate of digital technologies to combat manipulation and improve the integrity of the electoral process. For comparison, Nigeria typically devotes about 7 percent of its budget to education. And yet Nigeria continues to maintain a four-year election cycle, with smaller by-elections occurring in between. This electoral calendar guarantees that about $1 billion is spent on elections every four years. As the electoral price tag has grown, democratic dividends have plummeted.

Nigeria’s predicament is a microcosm of the phenomenon of rising financial costs of elections in Africa and diminishing returns on democracy. Across the continent, the cost of electoral democracy is increasing and threatens the delivery of social goods. As African countries battle myriad socioeconomic challenges, the question needs to posed: is it wise for these countries to continue to spend a large percentage of their revenue every four or five years on a political ritual with fewer and fewer positive socioeconomic consequences for their populations? Is this expensive, periodic democratic ritual called election worth its price?

It is not only the monetary cost of elections that now threatens to defeat their purpose and engender disillusionment and, along with disillusionment, the erosion of trust in the state and its ability to produce and distribute public goods. The social cost of periodic elections has been arguably greater, depleting, with each election cycle, the residual stability of the state and the credibility of its institutions.

Elections conducted in Nigeria since the return of civilian rule in 1999 have brought with them anxiety, tension, death, violence, and dangerous rhetoric that, taken together, have frayed the national political and social fabric. Elections have widened fissures and intensified preexisting primordial cleavages.

I can recall no electoral cycle since at least 2003 that was not been accompanied by fears of Nigeria’s disintegration or at the very least the acceleration of its demise. In 2007 and 2011, post-election violence claimed hundreds of lives in Northern Nigeria as supporters of then candidate Muhammadu Buhari rioted after his loss. In the 2019 presidential and national assembly elections, at least 46 people were reported to have died from election-related violence. In the state assembly and governorship elections two weeks later on March 9, 2019, another 10 people died across five states in what the Sunday Tribune newspaper described in its headline as “another bloody election.”[3]

Two riders below the same Sunday Tribune headline encapsulate the turbulent character of Nigerian elections. One was “Thugs, vote buyers, arsonists take over on election day”; the other was “Nigerians condemn militarization of elections in Rivers, Bayelsa, Kwara, Akwa Ibom, Benue,” a reference to the government’s deployment of soldiers and other military assets to opposition strongholds before and during the election. The involvement of soldiers and other military personnel in the election was a brazen violation of Nigeria’s Electoral Act, an action which many observers interpreted as the incumbent administration’s effort to use its might to manipulate the election in states held by the opposition.

Every election cycle in Nigeria sees massive, fear-induced demographic mobility as members of different ethnic groups and religions relocate to areas considered dominated by their kinsmen and co-religionists to await the conclusion of elections that often degenerate into communal clashes especially in the volatile north of the country.

Periodic national elections have thus worsened Nigeria’s notoriously frail union and caused apathy and discontent. The Nigerian people, the major stakeholders in Nigeria’s democracy, have grown weary of being periodically endangered and rendered pawns in an elaborate elite ritual with little or no consequence for their lives.

Electoral aftermaths have not improved economic conditions or strengthened the capacity of citizens to hold elected leaders accountable. Moreover, as I shall discuss shortly, the familiar abstract freedoms that democracy, lubricated by periodic elections, can confer on citizens who participate in such exercises, have eluded Nigerians.

The result has been noticeable apathy represented most poignantly by voter turnout, which declined from a peak of 69.1 percent in 2003 to 46.3 percent in 2015 and to about 35 percent in 2019. In the same 2019 election cycle, turnout declined to less than 20 percent in the governorship and state assembly elections, with many Nigerians on social media stating that they had lost faith in the electoral process and that the official results of the presidential elections two weeks earlier had shown that their votes would not count towards the declared outcome.

Voter apathy alone is not an indication of democratic disillusionment but it can portend or indicate something more devastating: diminishing trust in the state, its institutions, and its processes.

Such a trust deficit exists already and it predated the return of civilian rule in 1999 after about two decades of military dictatorship. However, by all theoretical formulations, such a cumulative loss of confidence in the transactional sociopolitical contract between the state and citizens should be corrected by the democratic ideals of voting, representation, and accountability. This has not happened in Nigeria. In fact, the opposite scenario is visible: a negative correlation between successive electoral cycles and citizens’ trust in the Nigerian state. Therein lay the paradoxical consequences of democratic practice in Nigeria.

If elections are increasingly burdensome as they have become in Nigeria, the corrective potential of democracy, broadly speaking, is lost. Citizens consequently lose faith in the state and resort to self-help, including criminal self-help. That is how states collapse. Nigeria is not far off this possibility.

In Nigeria, recent political realities reveal a blind spot of pro-democracy advocacy: without the modulating effect of decentralization, sustained economic growth, a growing, secure middle class, and a literate, hopeful poor, liberal democracy can do and has done more damage than good. Liberal democracy has ironically become both an incubator and protector of mediocrity, corruption, and bad governance. The overarching casualty has been Nigeria’s very stability.

#### Nigerian instability escalates to global great power war

Charles A. Ray 21, Member of the Board of Trustees and Chair of the Africa Program at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, Former U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Republic of Zimbabwe, “Does Africa Matter to the United States?”, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1/11/2021, https://www.fpri.org/article/2021/01/does-africa-matter-to-the-united-states/

Africa matters in terms of size, population, and rate of population growth. It is the continent currently most affected by climate change but is also a continent that can have a devastating impact on climate change globally because of the importance of the Congo Basin rainforest, which is the second-largest absorber of heat after the Amazon rainforest. The destruction of this important ecosystem could further accelerate global warming. As residents of the region come into increasing contact with the animals of the rainforest, this region could be the origin of the world’s next viral pandemic. Violent extremism and terrorism are increasing in Africa, and while now mostly localized, the danger has the potential to spread beyond the continent. Crises—natural and man-made—cause massive relocations of populations, both on the continent and abroad, which can have negative economic, social, and political impacts.

Why Africa Matters

The African continent is the world’s second-largest, with the second-fastest growth rate after Asia. With 54 sovereign countries, four territories, and two de facto independent states with little international recognition, the continent has a current population of 1.3 billion. By 2050, the continent’s population is predicted to rise to 2.4 billion. By 2100, Nigeria, Africa’s most populous country, will have a population of one billion, and half the world’s population growth will be in Africa by then.

The population of African countries is also overwhelmingly young. Approximately 40% of Africans are under 15, and, in some countries, over 50% is under 25. By 2050, two of every five children born in the world will be in Africa, and the continent’s population is expected to triple. These developments have positive and negative potential impacts on the United States and the rest of the world. Young Africans have, for the most part, completely skipped the analog age and gone directly digital. Comfortable with technology, they form a huge potential consumer and labor market. If, on the other hand, the countries of Africa fail to develop economically and do not create gainful employment for this young population, then there is the risk that they will become a huge potential source of recruits to extremist and terrorist movements, which currently target disadvantaged and disenchanted youth.

Lack of economic opportunity, increased urbanization, and climate-fueled disasters will also contribute to movement of people seeking better lives, which will impact economies and security not only on the continent of Africa, but also the economic and security situations around the world. Nations, lacking adequate critical infrastructure, education, and job opportunities are ripe for internal unrest and radicalization. In particular, inadequate health delivery systems, when coupled with natural disasters, such as droughts or floods that limit food production, cause famine and mass movements of populations.

The Challenges for U.S. Policy

Prior to World War II, the U.S. policy towards Africa was not as active as it was toward Europe, Asia, or Latin America. During the Cold War, Africa policy was primarily viewed from a perspective of super-power competition. The end of the Cold War and the rise of international terrorism introduced this as a major component in U.S. Africa policy along with competition with a rising China and increased Chinese engagement in Africa.

Before his first official trip to Kenya, U.S. President Barack Obama said, “Africa had become an idea more than an actual place . . . with the benefit of distance, we engaged Africa in a selective embrace.” This is probably an apt description of U.S. policy towards African nations despite the bipartisan nature of that policy. The United States, with the many domestic and international issues it has to cope with, can ill afford to continue to ignore Africa. Going forward, U.S. policy must include a hard-headed look at where Africa fits in policy priorities.

The incoming Biden administration will face a number of important issues and challenges as it develops its Africa policy. The most pressing issues are the following:

Climate Change: Climate change is an existential problem that affects the entire globe, but Africa has probably suffered more from the effects of climate change than other continents—and the problem will only get worse with time. In an October 2020 article, World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said,

Climate change is having a growing impact on the African continent, hitting the most vulnerable hardest, and contributing to food insecurity, population displacement and stress on water resources. In recent months we have seen devastating floods, an invasion of desert locusts and now face the looming specter of drought because of a La Nina event. The human and economic toll has been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Climate change impacts water quality and availability, and millions in Africa will likely face persistent increased water stress due to these impacts. A multi-year drought in parts of South Africa, for instance, threatened total water failure in several small towns and had livestock farmers facing financial ruin. Another pressing climate-change issue is the need for protection of the Congo Basin rainforest. This 178-million-hectare rainforest is the world’s second largest after the Amazon and is currently threatened by agricultural activities in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. Countries in the Congo Basin need to address the preservation issue, while also enabling sustainable agricultural activities to ensure food security for the region’s population. In addition to the impact on global climate caused by destruction of the rainforest, such destruction also brings human populations into closer contact with the region’s animals, creating the risk of future animal-to-human transmission of new and possibly more virulent viruses similar to COVID-19, which will have a global impact. In a January 2021 CNN report, Dr. Jean-Jacques Muyembe Tamfum, who as a researcher helped discover the Ebola virus in 1976, warned of possible new pathogens that could be as infectious as COVID-19 and as virulent as Ebola.

Rule of Law/Mitigation of Corruption: A key to African development, given the increasing urbanization, population increases, and youthfulness of the continent’s population, will be an increase in domestic and international investment to build the industries that can provide meaningful employment and improved standards of living. In order for this to be successful, African nations will need to address the issues of rule of law and corruption. Investors will not risk money if the business climate comes with a level of political risk that is too high. Government leaders throughout Africa need to establish legislation that provides an acceptable level of security for investments and take action to curb the endemic corruption that currently discourages investment. Corruption in Africa ranges from wholesale political corruption on the scale of General Sani Abachi’s looting of $3-5 billion of state money during his five years as Nigeria’s military ruler to the bribes paid by businessmen to police and customs officials. The “tradition” of having to pay bribes, or “sweeteners,” drives away domestic investment and scares away foreign investment, leaving many countries mired in poverty.

Violent Extremism and Terrorism: A number of African nations are currently plagued with rising extremist movements. While primarily a domestic issue, the mass movement of people fleeing violence and the disruption of economic activity have the potential to negatively impact the rest of the world. African nations need regional responses to curb extremist and terrorist organizations, many of which are supported by international terrorist organizations, such as ISIS and al Qaeda. In addition, the underlying conditions that helped to create these movements must be addressed. Terrorist groups in Africa range from relatively large and dangerous groups, such as Boko Haram, a group in Nigeria that has received support from al Qaeda and that aims to implement sharia law in the country; Al-Shabab, an al Qaeda affiliate aiming to overthrow the government in Somalia and to punish neighboring countries for their support of the Somali regime; and Uganda’s Lord’s Resistance Army, a fundamentalist Christian group. Terrorist groups in the fragile political climate of Libya also pose a threat to sub-Saharan Africa.

Great Power Competition: As the world’s second-largest economy, and with its increasing participation in international activities, China will continue to be a factor in Africa for the foreseeable future. This, however, is more a problem for the nations of Africa than it is for the rest of the world. The West can compete best by outperforming China in areas of strength by providing those goods and services that are unquestionably superior, and let African governments decide how to deal with China and its often-predatory lending practices and the Chinese tendency to import Chinese workers for its projects and investments rather than hiring locals. At the same time, Russia, which did not completely turn away from Africa at the end of the Cold War as many in the West sometimes believe, must still be considered a significant factor on the African landscape. In an effort to compensate for Western sanctions and to counter U.S. and Western influence, Russia is once again increasing its presence on the continent. Russian mercenaries, in exchange for diamond mining rights, have trained military forces in the Central African Republic, raising concerns about human rights abuses. Of particular concern is the presence of the Wagner Group, a private military company associated with Yevgeny Progozhin, a Russian oligarch with close ties to Vladimir Putin, who was indicted in the United States for trying to disrupt the 2016 U.S. elections. To date, Russia has, in addition to seeking basing rights, signed military cooperation agreements with 28 African nations. Russian activity is a combination of military and commercial, with Progozhin at the center of both. From 2010 to 2018, Russia nearly tripled its trade with African countries. While the activities of both Russia and China in Africa are of concern, and should be closely monitored, neither is of critical importance to U.S. national security.

With climate change, disease outbreaks, famine, extremism, and inter-ethnic violence, Africa will still experience crises in the foreseeable future that will be beyond the capacity of most nations on the continent to deal with. Climate change is probably the greatest cause of humanitarian crises in Africa, but mainstream media outside the continent either fail to notice or under-report them. Some of the crises, like Ebola or the next viral infection, can impact the rest of the world. These crises will cause starvation, mass movement of people, and increase internal and regional instability. Africa matters to the United States and the rest of the world. Its impacts can be felt far beyond the continent’s borders, but if approached as a partner rather than as a patron—with a focus on assisting African nations to improve governance, build critical infrastructure, boost domestic economies, and provide essential services to all—then Africa can be a positive contributor on the global stage.

#### [2] Climate --- Existential warming is inevitable AND causes a collapse into extreme authoritarianism---only transitioning from democracy solves

Dr. Chien-Yi Lu 21, PhD and MA in Government from the University of Texas, Austin, Visiting Scholar at Harvard University, Associate Research Fellow at the Institute of European and American Studies of Academia Sinica, Surviving Democracy: Mitigating Climate Change in a Neoliberalized World, Paperback Edition, 12/13/2021, p. 1-2

The fact that the scientific knowledge on the human contribution to climate change entered human society through the most advanced democratic societies should have been a cause for celebration. Given the congruence of climate mitigation and public interests, the problem of climate change should have been considered solved decades ago. Several decades of inaction later, however, arguments are proliferating that democracy is exactly the reason for inaction.

In The Collapse of Western Civilization, historians Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway travel to the future to look back and offer a forensic analysis on the climate-induced Great Collapse of Western Civilization of 2074 (2014: 63). The future historians’ forensic report states that “[a]s the devastating effects of the Great Collapse began to appear, the nation-states with democratic governments… were at first unwilling and then unable” to deal with the crisis. These democratic governments realized that they had no “infrastructure and organizational ability to quarantine and relocate people” as “food shortages and disease outbreaks spread and sea level[s] rose.” In China, where there was centralized government, the crisis was handled much more adequately, leading to survival rates exceeding 80%, a development that “vindicated the necessity of centralized government” (2014: 51–2). The gist of The Collapse of Western Civilization is not about critiquing democracy per se but a warning against the stubborn inaction mandated by market fundamentalism that has hijacked Western democracies.1 In their previous book, Merchants of Doubt, Oreskes and Conway documented the way that climate deniers sowed the seeds of doubt about climate change and successfully staved off implementations of mitigation measures. For the authors, the anticommunist ideology that had kept actors vigilant about government encroachment in the marketplace occupied a central place in climate denial (2014: 69). Ironically, this sort of ideology-informed calculation meant that preventative action was blocked, increasing the risk that disruptive climate disasters would eventually necessitate the suspension of democracy and legitimating the sort of heavy-handed authoritarian interventions that the conservatives most abhorred (2014: 52; 69).

An appeal to suspend democracy for the sake of survival can be found in The Climate Change Challenge and the Failure of Democracy, where Shearman and Smith argue that liberal democracy is incompatible with the urgent necessity to prevent catastrophic climate change. The vested interests of politicians, corporations, and media lie in continuing with business as usual and in keeping the public ignorant. Instead of bottom-up reforms to improve democracy and bring about sensible climate policies, Shearman and Smith see a transformation into authoritarian regimes as the only responsible way forward when faced with the extreme ecological stress of climate change. They point out that, as Plato foresaw, those in power in a democracy are seldom able to resist the demands of the populace for long, but as a mass, the populace is seldom able to focus on complex problems and to perceive threats that lie over the horizon. Hence, those able to see further—scientists, experts, and the knowledgeable— should be entrusted with steering the course while there is still time to avoid disaster. It is only under a benign authoritarian rule of the knowledgeable that a saner, fairer, and more rational means of weighing social goods against evils can be introduced (Shearman and Smith, 2007).

#### [3] Disease --- Democracy makes disease control impossible

Zhifa Zhou 21, Associate Professor at the Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University and Pan Qu, Postgraduate at the Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University, “The Root Cause of the Failure of American COVID-19 Governance Based on the Criticism of Liberal Democracy From Error-Tolerant Democracy”, Philosophy Study, Volume 11, Number 7, July 2021, https://www.davidpublisher.com/Public/uploads/Contribute/60ff9cfb4589c.pdf

Introduction

Whether liberal democracy contributed to the COVID-19 governance was a hot topic in 2020 (“Democracy and Rise of Authoritarianism in COVID-19 World”, 2020). At the end of January, 2020, when COVID-19 witnessed the lockdown of Wuhan City, the West generally agreed that China lacked freedom of speech and the inertia of a rigid bureaucratic structure, and the national censorship system kept the whistle blower Dr. Wenliang Li silent, which led to the disease out of control (Mérieau, 2020). Democracies’ confidence mainly came from Amartya Sen’s research on the famine. Sen (1999) has claimed that no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent and democratic country with a relatively free press and there is no exception to this rule. Citizens in democracies can expect governments to be more candid, transparent, and responsible in dealing with all kinds of crises, which authoritarian countries usually cannot (Berengaut, 2020; Bollyky & Kickbusch, 2020). So Steve Bloomfield (2020) has regarded that if China had a free press and transparent government, the pandemic could be brought under control before the outbreak. In conclusion, freedom plus democracy equals the COVID-19 antidote according to Western standards, although Wilson and Wisongye have found that social media rumors can exploit the right to freedom of speech and erode people’s health benefits (New York Times, 2021; Bollyky & Kickbusch, 2020). However, since March, 2020, with Western democracies seriously affected by COVID-19, their superiority of the political system has begun to expose its untrue and fatal defects. Especially when Wuhan began to lift its blockade on April 8, 2020 (People.cn, 2020), scholars and journalists began to question whether democracies had the ability to deal with the crisis better than China (Mérieau, 2020). Liberal democracy in the United States has not proved that it is more conducive to the COVID-19 governance than authoritarianism since 2020. From a global perspective, not only do most democracies fail to contain the spread of COVID-19, but almost all of the 10 most affected countries are liberal democracies (Coronavirus Resource Center, 2021). Their policy responses have a poor effect in reducing the death toll in early stages of the crisis, as shown that democratic political institutions may be at a disadvantage in responding quickly to COVID-19 (Cepaluni, Dorsch, & Branyiczki, 2020). More surprising is that the COVID-19 pandemic is so serious in the United States, yet no government officials have been removed from office because of their inactivity in fighting against the corona-virus. People doubt whether American accountability mechanism is still working. However, two impeachments against President Trump indicate that it seems to function quite well (Valenta & Valenta, 2017; Herb, Raju, Fox, & Mattingly, 2021). The direct loss to the United States caused by Russiagate and incitement of insurrection is far less than the pain caused by the failure of the COVID-19 governance, but no any official in the United States is responsible for it. If it again faces infectious diseases similar to COVID-19, will it repeat this unprecedented tragedy? Can liberal democracy and the separation and balance of powers push American president to act more aggressively? Error-tolerantism explains that the fundamental reason for the failure of American COVID-19 governance is a serious misunderstanding of the concept of freedom (Zhou, 2018; 2019; Zhou, Tan, & Liu, 2020). Liberalism has witnessed a rare scene: In the context of COVID-19, the president, governors, magistrates, and the public (Emery, Schwebke, & Park, 2020; Sullum, 2020; Behrmann, 2020; Kenton, 2020; Strano, 2020) have severe misunderstanding of freedom that cost more than American 600,000 lives (Coronavirus Resource Center, 2021).

In response to the above phenomenon, error-tolerantism as the development of liberalism defines liberty from a new perspective and shows a stronger explanatory power than liberalism (Zhou et al., 2020). The right paradigm of error-tolerantism, the right to be wrong (right to trial and error) as an original right and mutual empowerment theory, instead of natural rights theory and social contract theory, divides liberty into the right to liberty in innovative fields, right to be wrong as an original right, and the right to be right in non-innovative fields as sub-rights. The lockdown of Wuhan means that Chinese government has excised the power to be wrong as an original power, but the West criticized it with the right to liberty at the level of sub-rights, which is the first error in understanding liberty during American COVID-19 governance; after Wuhan effectively controlled COVID-19, its governance has transformed from an innovative field to a non-innovative one. Then, liberties in non-innovative fields as the sub-rights level, such as wearing face masks, keeping social distancing, showing health codes, are formed definitely (Zhou et al., 2020). However, wearing masks has been regarded as a sign of political oppression rather than a simple hygienic measure by the United States (Kahanel, 2021). Since liberalism has a major misunderstanding of the concept of liberty, liberal democracy based on the philosophy of liberalism should be deeply reflected or even reconstructed, and it is very reasonable for error-tolerant democracy constructed based on error-tolerantism to explore the defects of liberal democracy in American COVID-19 governance. Therefore, we first review scholars’ relevant research on American democracy and the COVID-19 governance, and then based on the theory of error-tolerant democracy, discuss the defects of liberal democracy and American political system that are unable to cope with the crisis of the century.