# 1AC---UK RR---Race 3

## 1AC

### Manufacturing ADV---1AC

#### Advantage one is MANUFACTURING:

#### Manufacturing is on the brink---revitalization key to restoring US innovation and competitive edge.

William B. Bonvillian 25, Lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, teaching courses on innovation and on science and technology policy, Senior Director at MIT’s Office of Open Learning, JD from Columbia, M.A.R from Yale, “Restoring U.S. Leadership In Manufacturing”, January 3rd, 2025, https://fas.org/publication/restoring-u-s-leadership-in-manufacturing/, DOA: 3/7/25, Rslish

Manufacturing is a critical sector for American economic well-being. The value chains in the American economy that rely on manufactured goods account for 25% of employment, over 40% of gross domestic product (GDP), and almost 80% of research and development (R&D) spending in the United States. Yet U.S. leadership in manufacturing is eroding. U.S. manufacturing employment plummeted by one-third—and 60,000 U.S. factories were closed—between 2000 and 2010 (Bonvillian and Singer, Advanced Manufacturing: The New American Innovation Policies, MIT Press, 2018, 52, 265.) Only some 18% of the production jobs lost in the United States during the Great Recession were recovered in the following decade, and production output only returned to its pre–Great Recession levels in 2018. This hollowing out of U.S. manufacturing has been largely driven by international competition, particularly from China. China passed the United States in 2011 as the largest global manufacturing power in both output and value added. The nations have literally traded places: China now has 31% of world manufacturing output while the U.S. has dropped to 16%. The U.S. has not just lost leadership in low-price commodity goods: As part of its massive trade deficit in 2023 of $733 billion in overall manufactured goods, the U.S. ran a deficit of $218 billion in advanced technology goods.

Declining U.S. manufacturing has sharply curtailed a key path to the middle class for those with high school educations or less, thereby exacerbating income inequality nationwide. As a country, we are increasingly leaving a large part of our working class behind an ever-advancing upper middle class. The problems plaguing the domestic manufacturing sector are multifold: American manufacturing productivity is historically low; the supporting ecosystem for small and midsized manufacturers has thinned out so they are slow to adopt process and technology innovations; manufacturing firms lack access to financing when they seek to scale up production for new innovations; manufacturing is poorly supported by our workforce-education system; and we have disconnected our innovation system from our production systems.

The United States can address many of these problems through concerted efforts in advanced manufacturing. Advanced manufacturing means introducing new production technologies and processes to significantly lower production costs and raise efficiency. This would reposition the United States to better compete internationally. Advanced manufacturing also requires that we reconnect innovation with production. A milestone in advanced manufacturing came in 2012, when the federal government established the first of 17 Advanced Manufacturing Institutes with two more planned. Each institute in this network is organized around developing new advanced technologies, from 3D printing to digital production to biofabrication. Each also represents a collaboration among industry, government, and academic institutions. Three federal agencies invest a total of approximately $200 million per year in the institutes—an amount matched by industry and states.

#### Manufacturing is the lynchpin for readiness and deterrence, decline sparks regional conflicts.

Patrick O’Brien et al. 25, Ph.D., former Marine Corps infantry officer; Chip E. Miller, PhD, Distinguished Professor of Marketing, Drake University; George Duchak, Ph.D., Senior Advisor, The Roosevelt Group; Col. Brian Cook, M.S. in National Security Studies from the Naval War College, Director of Theater Strategy, US Army War College; Col. Jay Miseli, M.S. in Operations Research; John Flanagan, M.S. in National Security Studies from Naval War College, “Logistics Gray Swan: History Mocks U.S. Readiness,” Marine Corps University Press, 07/18/2025, <https://doi.org/10.36304/ExpwMCUP.2025.07>. HB [DoIB = dynamic domestic industrial base]

In addition to the logistics inventory approaches mentioned above, the United States today faces the broadest range of conflicts by type, temporal, technological, and geographic scope—outside of an active world war—in its history. The 2024 Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community, published by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, identifies additional perils.14 These include the rise of China as a global military and economic power; Russia’s ties with China, Iran, and North Korea and its goal of reducing U.S. influence globally by applying military intimidation and leveraging its energy reserves; India’s rise as a major secondary player seemingly aligned with both the United States and Russia as well as its challenges with neighboring Pakistan; a dangerously unstable nuclear power in North Korea; Iran’s nuclear and regional hegemonic desires in the Middle East; widespread terrorism; invisible cyber attackers; and crime syndicates able to coerce or topple governments.15 Individually, these perils strain the United States’ military preparedness, and a simultaneous realization of multiple threats would arguably overwhelm the nation’s warmaking and defensive capabilities.

U.S. statecraft exerts influence by applying diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME) levers to protect vital interests. While the use of conventional weapons by the United States has generally had a deterrent effect on its adversaries, during the past three years more than 40 articles have illuminated the substantial logistical challenges within the U.S. military and the DIB that undermine this ability to prevent conflict. Some DOD officials argue that the United States should have a military deterrent presence across all warfighting domains and the full spectrum of conflict.16 This deterrent effort puts the United States and its allies in a position to avoid economic insecurity or even armed conflict. National security and economic security are two sides of the same coin. The United States requires both a military and the defense infrastructure that supports it to function together as a successful deterrent to aggressors, prevent interdictions of world trade, and supply friendly nations with the means to repel attackers with or without the direct involvement of U.S. troops. The two goals of maintaining a strong economy and strong military are mutually supporting.

While the current administration of U.S. president Donald J. Trump is enhancing the readiness of the military, the larger DoIB must also be strong, productive, and highly innovative to develop a variety of multiuse hightechnology capabilities to support the DIB and DOD. Indeed, multiple authors argue that current administration initiatives are very helpful. The United States needs to repair its military infrastructure to regain “great power” supremacy. Christian Brose suggests in The Kill Chain that key changes for future military readiness are necessary.17 Authors such as Jerry Hendrix, A. Wess Mitchell, and Ionut C. Pop have also written about great power challenges.18 Currently, personnel shortages, heavily used or outdated equipment, and increased operational tempos all contribute to a lower readiness posture that affects the U.S. military’s great power capabilities.

One critical reason to maintain the readiness of the U.S. military with a JIC model is the global interconnectedness of the modern world. For example, a major suspension of the flow of petroleum or a refusal to sell vital raw materials could severely damage economies around the globe. Stable energy supplies and critical REE and other key metals are vital for modern manufacturing, modern economies, continued innovation, and skilled workforces. For these reasons alone, business deals may not be sufficient to maintain stability. The power to protect the nation and the flow of goods is essential for the continued economic growth of the United States and the world. Most recently, this was evidenced by the U.S. Navy deploying forces to the Red Sea to maintain free passage of shipping, benefiting Europe and Asia. This is also, however, an example of a conflict that is contributing to the strain on the supply of U.S. munitions.

For the United States to maintain its great power status, to remain at the forefront of technology, and to be self-reliant, many industries are essential for ensuring a strong military. These industries include shipbuilding, aviation, space technology, computer technology, artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, quantum computing and communications, cybersecurity, and superior dual-use consumer goods. Being a leader in these and other critical industries requires a heightened sense of national urgency. In the past, research demands by the military have often been at the center of advances in these areas, but this has lagged in recent decades. U.S. capacity in many areas is also challenged and strained. Examples include shipbuilding and repairs (particularly for the U.S. Navy), low-cost long-range missiles, antiship cruise missiles, and advanced manufacturing of artillery munitions. A significant facet of the United States’ postwar strategy for peace and economic growth following the end of the Cold War was to build up other countries’ industrial capabilities and capacity, often at the expense of U.S. selfreliance. An unintended consequence for the U.S. military has been a slow, steadily upward trend in reliance on imports for key materials and production capability

#### Rebuilding the domestic industrial commons is necessary to counteract multiple existential risks.

Dr. Richard Haass 20, Master’s and Doctorate of Philosophy Degrees from Oxford University, Former Director of Policy Planning for the Department of State, Veteran Diplomat Under 4 Presidential Administrations, Awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal, Rhodes Scholar, “International Relations In The COVID-19 Era: Richard Haass On What Comes After A Pandemic”, Interview with Meghna Chakrabarti and Jack Beatty on NPR’s On Point, 4/22/2020, <https://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2020/04/22/international-relations-coronavirus-richard-haass> [Transcribed by Otter.ai, Grammatical transcription edits by Casey Harrigan]

So suddenly, the world is being left on its own. And what we're seeing is the world is not on autopilot. It doesn't self-organize. And that's the most worrisome thing going forward that this pandemic is both a reflection, but also an accelerant of that because the United States has not rallied the world to meet the challenge posed by this pandemic. And instead, we've pulled back we become much more national, kind of an island power, the rest of the world, it's on its own, it's not doing very well. And this is this is the reason I'm so worried that a lot of the trends that were in place, including them on America, much less involved in the world, nationalism, populism, the breakdown of international collaboration, all those things were in train before this pandemic, and now we're seeing them double down.

MEGHNA: So is the you're saying the world is not self-organizing right now, perhaps, at this moment? And at the same time, it doesn't? Is it feeling the loss of the centrality of American leadership? Because, I think we could argue that the way that, for example, international leaders do talk about the United States right now, at times, they're not necessarily feeling the loss of American influence.

HAASS: Well should I think they're feeling the loss of American leadership in the American example, that they had grown accustomed to your foreign policies about what our diplomats say and do what our military does, but it's also the example we set at home, the quality of our democracy, the strength of our economy, the response say to a pandemic, so they're looking at this United States and a lot of leaders and I speak to them all the time are essentially saying we don't recognize this America. This is not the America we thought we knew. So, they're in a very difficult position where now they have to essentially get on without us. But they don't really have the capability. There's no one who has the power that we have, the influence they we have. So no one can fill our shoes. So everybody's on their own, and no one does better on his or her own than they do, again, in a collective effort where the United States leads, so they're not happy about the situation. They're increasingly reconciled to it. But they very much miss the United States that for decades had help organize the world to meet a whole range of challenges.

MEGHNA: Jack, do you want to respond to that?

BEATTY: Well, I think that's very well said. And sometimes that did lead to overreach I mean, Vietnam, Iraq. But on the other hand, it also led to, you know, arms control treaties and efforts to combat threats to the environment that that stretched across, administration's I, you know, I'm struck with this, and I put it to you, Richard, it's as if, you know, the, the greatest generation ratified their experience, they looked at their experience, and they accepted America's new role in the world. Were a different people today. And it's inconceivable that in the post war, someone like Donald Trump could have gotten within, you know, hailing distance of the presidency just wouldn't have happened. For one thing, he wasn't a veteran. And I was just gonna say, the people that voted for Trump or no, go vote for him again, and then not voting for anything like the foreign policy, the security policy, that the times demand, and that our past has mandated. They're the people who feel left behind from the post-Cold War world of globalization and so on. And they're still there. They're a different people from those after World War Two

MEGHNA: Jack, if I just can just dovetail what you're saying. And then Richard I’ll, off back to you. I would actually say that that is not limited to the supporters of the President, that there is, in a sense amongst people a bipartisan agreement about feeling left behind, it's just that perhaps their preferred policy angles on how to solve that problem might be different. But your point is, is well taken, jack and, Richard, you want to respond to that? So go ahead.

HAASS: No, absolutely. I think it's exactly right. And it's really interesting to ask, why is this the case? And I think you're right Meghna, it is bipartisan, it crosses party lines. I think there's a sense that foreign policy has costs more than its benefited us people look at Iraq, they look at the World War, also in Afghanistan. And they simply, correctly I would say, don't think in any way either was worth it. These issues are not taught in our schools, or if they are taught, they're not required. So, you can graduate from Harvard, or Stanford or Princeton, and have no background whatsoever in international relations or in history. Our media, for the most part doesn't cover these issues. Over the last 20-30 years, there's been a real reduction in the degree of international coverage. So, most Americans simply don't see the connection between what goes on in the world and what goes on here in the United States.

So, you know, here was this place called Wuhan where a virus broke out. And what we've learned in an extraordinarily expensive way, is that nothing stays local for long. What happens in Wuhan doesn't stay in Wuhan, but it travels. And this has cost us trillions of dollars. And already what more than 40,000 lives and the toll keeps mounting by the hour. This is an expensive lesson in why isolationism is not an option in a global world. And the real question is, will we learn that lesson? Will we learn the right lesson? Will we basically say we have got to get more involved in the world to prepare for the next pandemic? To do something about climate change? To do something about structuring the world, the digital world so it's positive and not negative? Are we still going to deal say with the threat of terrorism or proliferation? The real question, for me, is coming out of this, do we have the bandwidth Do we have the resources to have we learned the lesson that we can't isolate ourselves from what goes on in the world and to do that safely?

MEGHNA: I think that's a good question, Richard, because it seems to me that for there's a generation of Americans out there who most often see the effects of US foreign policy through the instruments of failed wars. I'm just going to put it like that. There have not been enough examples of the positive benefits of American foreign policy or American leaders and that is part of what is causing people to doubt right now. And on that point, I would like to actually take a caller who has something to say about this. So let's go to Jeremy, who's calling from Racine, Wisconsin. Jeremy, what's your thoughts?

JEREMY: Alright, thanks for taking my call. I believe that we're coming into a point in our history. That is it's more of like an institutional crisis within our government and its inability to function with each other to have a clear intent, and to come together with all the resources to accomplish that. That intent clearly and to our desirable outcomes, given the fact what we did in Afghanistan and Iraq. We went in Iraq, we hosted Saddam Hussein, and then we kind of sat around and said, “now what”?. We just wasted incredible amount of lives, resources and money to to exert our foreign policy in an inefficient way. We just we have to restructure how we go about our foreign policy, how do we interact with other nations, instead of sending the big stick every time something goes wrong, we need to start working on better diplomacy and things like that. And Donald Trump is probably what I would consider, he is like, the fox in the henhouse. The American people just sent him into the henhouse, and he's just wreaking havoc all over the federal government. And that's pretty much what a lot of people feel right now. They just are tired with inability to come together and actually fix something and make it coherent, that everybody can understand. Yeah.

MEGHNA: Well, Jeremy, thank you for that thought. Richard Haass, did you want to respond to him?

HAASS: Sure. Let me react to Jeremy. I think he's right, that we've overused the military tool, and we've underused other tools, including diplomacy, foreign aid, and so forth. He points to the dangers of overreach in Iraq, Afghanistan, Jack before mentioned Vietnam, but I also think there's a real danger of underreach of the United States does too little. And you said Meghna, that people don't see the benefits. Well, think about it, the first half of the century, we had two enormous world wars, when the United States was detached from the world. We've avoided a world war between or among the great powers for the last 75 years, in large part because the United States has been involved. We've seen an enormous growth in the number of people who live in democracies and the degree of freedom. We've seen enormous improvements in the standard of living and the extension of lifespans. So, the last 70-75 years have actually been the most successful era of human history ever. Ever.

MEGHNA: Some would say it's anomalous. Yeah. Someone say it's an anomalous 70 years.

HAASS: Well, that's, to me, that's the big question. Were the last 70-75 years? Or are they the Can we make them the new normal? Can we extend them? Or did they become something of an aberration? And do we go back to the kind of world that for centuries before were we you know, that was the norm, World War One, World War Two constant wars in Europe? And that's where we are I actually think we're at one of those crossroads in history. And the issue for us. Another way to think about it: are we the United States, after World War One that's going to retreat from the world and let it and let it unravel? Or are we the United States after World War Two, that's going to have a creative surge, and try to restructure the world to deal with the challenges of this generation? And I think that is the fundamental question.

MEGHNA: And it is a very compelling one. Jack, did you do you have some I know, you have some thoughts on that?

BEATTY: Well, I mean, that frames it will weigh and, and, you know, to be more specific will the election, even touch on this, you know, in in 2016, we had a Secretary of State running for president and she lost to a man who said, I know more about war than the generals and I alone can fix it. And I get my ideas about foreign policy from the Sunday shows. That showed what at least, you know, a decisive Electoral College majority thought about foreign policy. And Trump isn't going to run as the leader of the free world. He's going to run as ‘America First’, ‘America alone’, ‘America, The Wall’ is his metaphor. And I don't see how it keeps out. dizzy, but nevermind. In other words, that's going to be on the ballot and America's role in the world and his will Joe Biden who you know, can seem like yesterday's man in so many ways. Will Joe Biden rise to that and say no, even though it's difficult for Americans in theu may have to spend money in foreign places to deal with threats. We have to do it. Will he argue that it will he just simply let Trump American first carry that.

MEGHNA: Well, when we come back, we're going to talk about what the possibilities are in this moment. So Richard Haass and Jack Beatty standby for just a moment. This is On Point.

MEGHNA: This is On Point. I'm Meghna Chakrabarti, we're talking with Richard Haass. He's President of the Council on Foreign Relations. He's also a veteran diplomat who served under four presidents. His recent essay in Foreign Affairs magazine is headlined, The Pandemic Will Accelerate History, Rather Than Reshape It. And we have a link to it at onpointradio.org. He has a forthcoming book due out in May called *The World A Brief Introduction*. And Jack Beatty On Point news analyst joins us as well. Richard, I wanted to talk with you and Jack about, you know about specific possibilities also that present themselves in this moment, and let's get very granular. I mean, let's talk about North Korea right now. Because even in the midst of this pandemic, we could be at a turning point there with, you know, questions around the health of Kim Jong Un. I mean, is the US positioned right now to take advantage of whatever possibility might be emerging on the Korean peninsula?

HAASS: Well, you're right. Anytime there's a crisis there, there are inevitably possibilities. One obvious one is in the area of improving global health governance. How do we increase the odds that the next outbreak of a disease does not lead to a global pandemic. In the case of North Korea, it's a little bit hard to read, it's in some ways the most closed country in the world. But, this could lead to a degree of instability, which on one hand, would be threatening, given their dozens of nuclear weapons could lead to significant refugee flows. But it could also, possibly, set in motion trends that would end the division of the Korean Peninsula. This is one of last holdout of the post World War Two situation, you still have a divided peninsula between a closed communist north and a democratic open south. It's the most armed border in the world. So it's just possible that this could set in motion trends. So I would very much hope the United States was talking to the government in Seoul and South Korea, and to Chinese about how we will manage a situation if there is a instability in North Korea. This could become a moment to at a minimum deal with the nuclear challenge in the North, and possibly even the, again, the fundamental division of the Peninsula.

MEGHNA: In fact, you tweeted just yesterday that it's in fact essential for the US, China and South Korea to stay in close contact right now about this?

HAASS: Oh, absolutely. Because you can imagine you have a situation where you suddenly have hundreds of thousands of refugees, going from North Korea, either into South Korea, or into China. China might be tempted to intervene well, so might South Korea, so might the United States. Well, we don't want to have a situation where suddenly you have a chaos and various armies moving forward. So, we've got to manage this at a minimum to avoid a bad situation becoming something incomparably worse. But also to see if we can steer the situation to a lasting outcome that would also be better. This really requires intimate choreography among Beijing, Seoul and Washington.

MEGHNA: But let me ask you, though, honestly, given the trend that you write about in your, in your Foreign Affairs article that we've been watching over the past 15 years or so. Do you have any faith that that cooperation would actually happen?

HAASS: I have very little faith, though, on the ground, the military they are is quite significant. And it's a US/UN force and they are in close touch with the South Koreans. We have some connections to the Chinese, but I worry about it, quite honestly, I'm not gonna sugarcoat it. People are so distracted for good reason. By the COVID-19. The US/Chinese relationship was in bad shape before this crisis, is now in worse shape. The US South Korean relationship hasn't been great. The President has been attacking the alliance trying to get the South Koreans to pay much more. So, I am not sure that we are up to the challenge. And again, North Korea is an extraordinarily difficult country to try to act in simply again, because it's the most shut off from the rest of the world. You know, we're sitting here talking about this and quite honestly, we do not know, either what the health reality is facing the North Korean leader or what, if anything, planning might be in place for succession.

MEGHNA: Right. I also feel like it's a very good example about the choice that you and Jack have been talking about that the United States is on the cusp of having to make about what kind of nation it's going to be because the issue of North Korea and the Korean Peninsula cannot be solved without the direct involvement of the United States and China. So that brings me back to this underlying question. Richard, can you can you imagine, imagine a new model of American national security, a new paradigm of American national security, that doesn't have American primacy on the world stage at its heart?

HAASS: Primacy can be understood as a fact of life or a goal. I don't think our goal ought to be one of primacy. We can't control that, because primacy is about relative strength. Right now, that the United States is still the world's most powerful military, we are the world's largest single economy. But the fact is, for all of our strength, we can't tackle the emerging problems in the world on our own. We can't maintain global health unilaterally, we obviously can't deal with climate change by ourselves. We can't control proliferation or terrorism, or set the rules for cyberspace on our own. So unilateralism, no matter how strong we are, is simply not a viable foreign policy strategy. We have got to partner with others. And the challenge with a country like China is: how do we selectively partner with China, given our profound disagreements, the difference between our systems and the fact that we, for example, have real foreign policy differences, say over the fate of Taiwan. And that that to me, is going to be one of the real foreign policy challenges going forward.

MEGHNA: Jack, did you want to respond to that?

BEATTY: Undoubtedly, it is going to be but you know, look at it. I mean, one of the one of the faults, I think of the of the current administration is the President sees things in a zero sum way, you know, we win, they lose even his view of trade, which is, you know, since Adam Smith, we accept that it's, you know, when comparative advantage and all that he sees that as No, I win, you lose, he was talking about the trade deficit with China just yesterday, and he said, Look, they ripped us off. They didn't rip us off. We got all that cheap goods that we wanted from China. That's, that's called trick, he doesn't seem to understand that basic fundamental of, of international economy. And he doesn't seem to, to look at foreign relations that way, either. Although you have to give him a lot of credit for trying to warm relations with North Korea at the top.

MEGHNA: Well, Richard, I wonder: it sounds like you are lamenting the death of a sort of liberal world order that, as you pointed out, the United States has been the beneficiary of and the leader of for the past 75 years. But if you had a magic wand, and you could you could wave it over Planet Earth right now, what would you change? I guess what I'm asking you is what would you do to, to set up the United States of the global community for success, as we come through this pandemic?

HAASS: I would look in two directions. Domestically, I would try to make the case to Americans about why foreign policy was in our national interest, why our involvement in the world would improve the quality of life here at home. At the same time, we would also need to attend to our many challenges and shortcomings here at home. I once wrote a book called Foreign Policy Begins At Home. And the whole idea was we needed to establish a greater domestic base if we were going to be capable of acting in the world and Americans were going to be willing to support it. I also made clear something the President might have missed in the book was the argument that foreign policy doesn't end at home, we've got to stay involved in the world. It's we now circling back to where we began the conversation. We've got to take into account this new global agenda and we've got to we've got to figure out how to narrow the gap between these emerging global challenges, like global health, like climate change, like terrorism, like proliferation, and global arrangements. One of the phrases you constantly hear from people in my businesses international community. Well, the fact is, there isn't one. And our goal should be to better build one where we take into account this newest security agenda. So that's what I would focus on, I wouldn't let go of the old agenda. I'm still worried about Russia, what they're doing in Europe. I'm worried about Iran. I'm worried about North Korea, worried to some extent about China. But I would put much greater emphasis on building global arrangements to deal with this new set of challenges that, as we've seen over the last few months, has the ability to fundamentally turn life here upside down.

MEGHNA: Okay, so that makes me wonder you had said earlier that what has changed is the United States and that the sheen, or the shine of America's example to the world is no longer there. And I would think that Americans admit many Americans themselves also feel it because their lives are difficult. So could we achieve is a central part of achieving the vision you just laid out. Richard is actually focusing here at home that if we if we rebuild the American example of democracy, then it shows that perhaps these the more authoritarian leaders who are who are on the rise now, it once again shows them as the example that you don't want to follow.

HAASS: The answer is yes, but. Yes, we need to improve the functioning of our political system, particularly in Washington. It works better at the state and local level in many cases. We’ve obviously got to provide more of a safety net for more of our citizens. Infrastructure has to be better. The kind of response we’ve had to this pandemic shows so many of our shortfalls. So, yes, there are lots of things we have to do at home.

#### BUT the AFF solves by strengthening unions and collective bargaining rights, unleashing the innovation and competitiveness needed to reinvigorate manufacturing.

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Despite the hold-up hypothesis, Bhuller et al. (2022) argue that firms' investment decisions may be determined by the degree of centralization of collective bargaining. Centralise bargaining processes seem to favour innovative firms by setting labour costs common to all firms, benefiting those that manage to increase productivity. On the other hand, local bargaining allows unions greater ability to negotiate wages according to the value added of firms, increasing labour costs and reducing the incentive to innovate. ‘Collective industry bargaining is expected to lead to a modernized industry with high average productivity and an egalitarian wage distribution across firms. Local bargaining should lead to a less modernized industry with a somewhat lower average productivity and with a more inegalitarian wage distribution’ (Bhuller et al., 2022: 40).

Nevertheless, this result changes if both parties behave like the McDonald and Solow (1981) ‘efficient innovation’ model and the ‘companies' strategic investment’ games models (Bond & Van Reenen, 2002), in which companies invest to maintain or gain market shares, faced with the threat of entry by new competitors and a potential loss of market power and profits (efficiency effect). These models of strategic games of company behaviour highlight the importance of the market structure in the investment decision, particularly in R&D (Menezes-Filho & Van Reenen, 2003). In these models, the effect of the unions on investment depends on its preference between employment and wages. **A risk-averse union will prefer employment to wages and, in such a situation, the effect of an increase in union power is to increase employment and, therefore, company investment. This gain in market share encourages investment, including in R&D, due to the threat of new entries.** Empirical literature has found support for this prediction (Menezes-Filho et al., 1998).

Moreover, considering that (i) innovative companies are those showing higher productivity and (ii) **collective bargaining could increase productivity and investment in new technology** (Brandl & Braakmann, 2021; Cahuc et al., 2014), by promoting voice and participation, unions can also stimulate companies to invest in TI- and firm-specific human capital (Bryson et al., 2005; Freeman & Medoff, 1984). Unions can also play an essential role in the effects of the introduction of innovative practices in companies. This effect will depend on the bargaining capacity of the unions and also on their ability to negotiate. Following the analysis taken by Bryson et al. (2005), a strong union can bargain the nature of investment and innovation in the workplace, blocking those attempts that may have the most negative effects for its members or may even make them more acceptable to both the company and its affiliates. **They can bargain, for example initiatives like job security guarantors and high wages in return for productivity-enhancing innovation** (Freeman & Medoff, 1984).

In this way, Freeman and Medoff (1984) show that the search for benefits for workers by unions also benefits companies and, therefore, stimulates their growth, investment and competitiveness. In the process of generating benefits for workers, they favour job retention, reducing search and training costs. On the contrary, they also provide incentives for employers to invest in the company and in the workers (company-specific human capital).

Bhuller et al. (2022) and Haucap and Wey (2004) show theoretically that **top-level bargaining favours investment in innovative firms by generating lower relative production costs compared to non-innovative firms;** on the contrary, individual bargaining eliminates this relative cost advantage by setting wages according to the value added of firms (as the wage differential between firms increases, the profit of the innovative firm decreases). **In other words: ‘Industry bargaining,** in contrast, **works as a tax on the least productive units and as a subsidy on the most productive.** In this case, firms have incentives to invest more in modern technologies and in scrapping the old ones at an earlier stage’ (Bhuller et al., 2022: 40).

Brandl (2022) refers to it as a cartelizing effect, where the homogenisation of wages and working conditions prevents companies from using wage reduction or working conditions as a competitive strategy. Therefore, higher level collective agreements and coordination encourage companies to increase their competitiveness through innovation or adoption of new technologies, rather than reducing labour costs. This argument matches in part with that of duopoly models. Duopoly models generally conclude that centralization of collective bargaining favours innovation by more innovative, or more competitive, firms; as opposed to individual bargaining (Basak & Mukherjee, 2018). The innovation decision of the collectively bargained firm is related to market structure. Individual bargaining introduces higher transaction costs (Willman et al., 2004), and confirms the hypothesis of Bhuller et al. (2022). On the other hand, Haucap and Wey (2004) show that the benefits of innovation are higher for a highly productive firm when bargaining is centralised versus individual; both for process innovation and for job creation and employment.

As shown by Willman et al. (2004), following transaction cost theory (Williamson, 1981), unions reduce transaction costs in two ways, by providing an agency role for the employer, enforcing and monitoring contracts and improving information flows; by reducing the transaction costs faced by employers by assisting them in their management functions.

#### Independently, domestic manufacturing is key to supply chain resiliency.

Wimalaratana Wijitapure & Hema Senanayak 24, Ph.D. from Radboud University, Professor Emeritus, University of Colombo; Ph.D. student in economics, University of Colombo, “Revitalizing America's Industrial Heart: A Multi-Pronged Approach to Reindustrialization,” Sri Lanka Economic Journal, Vol. 22, No. 1, June 2025, pg. 64-86, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/392853452\_Revitalizing\_America's\_Industrial\_Heart\_A\_Multi-Pronged\_Approach\_to\_Reindustrialization. HB

A critical lesson from recent global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions, is the vulnerability of global supply chains. A successful reindustrialization strategy must focus on rebuilding domestic supply chains to ensure that key materials and products are sourced locally or from reliable, nearby partners.

Reshoring Production: Encouraging companies to reshore production facilities or source raw materials from domestic suppliers can reduce dependence on global supply chains, particularly for critical industries like semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, and medical equipment. This not only helps in securing national interests but also creates jobs and stimulates economic growth domestically.

Development of Key Industries: Certain industries are essential for national security and economic resilience. These include sectors like electronics, defence, medical equipment, and energy. Government policies, such as tax incentives, research grants, and subsidies, can help spur the growth of these industries domestically, reducing dependence on foreign imports and strengthening supply chain resilience. Regional

Manufacturing Hubs: Creating regional manufacturing hubs or clusters, where related industries are co-located, can help streamline supply chains. These hubs encourage collaboration between companies, reduce transportation costs, and foster innovation. Examples like Silicon Valley in technology or Detroit in automotive manufacturing demonstrate the benefits of concentrated industrial activity. By ensuring that critical industries and supply chains are localized, the U.S. can better protect itself from external shocks while promoting job creation and economic stability.

#### Continuous reliance on global supply chains magnifies cascading shocks, amplifying resource disruptions into systemic collapse.

Sean ÓhÉigeartaigh 25, Ph.D. from Trinity College Dublin, Associate Director for AI: Futures & Responsibility programme, Center for the Study of Existential Risk, University of Cambridge, “Extinction of the Human Species: What could cause it and how likely is it to occur?”, 03/07/2025, DOA: 8/21/25, https://doi.org/10.1017/ext.2025.4, Rslish

Multiplicative stresses and civilisational vulnerability

A common theme across many of the risks discussed is that they may cause global catastrophe but are unlikely to wipe out the human species in isolation. However, it is realistic to expect that some catastrophes may trigger further catastrophic consequences across the categories above or otherwise occur in combination. The severity of some past major mass extinctions likely resulted from reinforcing interactions between multiple stresses, some playing out over thousands of years. The Permo-Triassic saw a cascade of global warming, ocean acidification and anoxia, and methane and hydrogen release Bond and Grasby (2017). The Cretaceous-Paleogene saw the catastrophic consequences of the Chixhulub impact devastating a global environment already stressed by the Deccan Traps (Keller, 2012).

Returning to modern times and shorter timescales, Kareiva and Carranza (2018) argue that “it is the interconnections of stresses and the way we respond to environmental shocks that promulgates the greatest existential risk.”. Rees (2003) draws attention to the fragile nature of global supply chains: a catastrophe that resulted in higher order impacts, such as disruption of power and food supply chains, would quickly render cities uninhabitable. A civilisation reeling from one catastrophe might also be less resilient to further threats: a planet reeling from nuclear war may not be able to muster the resources to embark on a project to divert an asteroid. Nonetheless, total human extinction remains a very high bar, even for multiple of these threats in combination.

Analysing overall civilisational vulnerability and higher-order impacts of global-scale catastrophes is challenging. There is growing work in this direction. Baum and Handoh (2014) propose a “Boundary Risk for Humanity and Nature” framework that combines concepts from global catastrophic risk and the planetary boundaries framework. This intersection is further explored in studies addressing the relationship between the sustainable development goals and existential risk (Cernev and Fenner, 2020) and the role of planetary boundary breach in global catastrophe scenarios (Cernev, 2022). Jehn (2023) examines the role of planetary boundary breach in exacerbating or mitigating the cascading impacts of nuclear war.

Liu et al. (2018) present a taxonomy of existential hazards grouped by how global vulnerability and exposure to the hazards plays out. Avin et al. (2018) analyse severe global catastrophic risk mechanisms by critical systems affected, global spread mechanism and prevention and mitigation failure. Cotton-Barratt et al. (2020) propose a three defence layer model against extinction-level catastrophes, focusing on prevention, response and resilience. Kemp et al. (2022) outline a research agenda around climate-triggered catastrophes and societal fragility. Maher and Baum (2013), MacAskill (2022) and Belfield (2023) explore factors that might contribute to either extinction or recovery following a civilisational collapse. Drawing on a range of concepts in systemic risk, Arnscheidt et al. (2024) argue that emergent properties of the global system make important contributions to the risk of global catastrophic outcomes, noting that a focus on hazards in early global catastrophic risk research critically neglects factors such as amplification and vulnerability. Further valuable insights are likely to come from collaboration between existential risk, systemic risk and collapse research. 12

#### The AFF is key---sectoral bargaining is necessary to rebuild the industrial commons, driving growth, and productivity.

Michael Lind 20, professor at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, master's degree in International Relations from Yale, and JD from University of Texas, “Tripartism, American Style: The Past and Future of Sectoral Policy”, American Affairs, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2020, <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2020/02/tripartism-american-style-the-past-and-future-of-sectoral-policy/>, DOA: 8/7/25, Rslish

The objective of these sectoral policies in the dynamic oligopoly sector is not to “pick winners” or bestow subsidies on politically favored national champions. Rather, the goal should be to preserve, expand, and upgrade a permanent U.S.-based “industrial commons” in traditional industries like steel and aerospace and automobiles and new industries like robotics and biotech, while providing good jobs for upwardly mobile U.S. citizens and naturalized immigrants. Well-designed sectoral policies can promote national security, national pro­ductivity growth, and inclusive national prosperity all at once.

Sectoral Policy after Neoliberalism

Sectoral policy makes sense. Natural monopolies should be assigned to the oversight of public utility commissions representing major interest groups and viewpoints. At the same time, federal, state, and local governments should play a large role in R&D, technology exten­sion, and public benefits in the low-productivity, low-profit traditional market sector. And within the dynamic oligopoly sector, where manufacturing is found, a new tripartism should be pioneered in strategic industries of military as well as commercial importance, in the emerging global environment of U.S. rivalry with China and other great powers. In both the traditional market sector and the dynamic oligopoly sector, there is ample scope for the relaxation of antitrust laws to permit multiemployer industrial policy and sector-wide col­lective bargaining among representatives of employers and labor.

Notwithstanding the importance of grassroots labor activism, in mid-twentieth-century America unionization flourished chiefly as a side effect of top-down national industrial policy pursued for other means, including war and recovery from the Great Depression. Tri­partite labor-business-government collaboration during World War I and World War II made possible the massive expansion of organized labor and collective bargaining in the mid-twentieth century and the subsequent social peace and widespread prosperity. If working-class Americans are ever again to enjoy the benefits of mass membership labor organizations of some kind, it will probably not be as a re­sponse to grassroots mobilization from below, employer by employer, state by state. More likely, any revival of worker empowerment in the United States will result from a much larger and more comprehensive program of national development carried out by the federal government in the service of military strength and economic growth, a national industrial policy of which institutionalized employer-worker bargaining would be only one of several elements.

#### Econ turns are wrong---Germany proves the effectiveness of sectoral bargaining.

Anis Chowdhury 18, Professor of Economics, University of Western Sydney and is a Senior Economic Affairs Officer in the Office of the Under Secretary General, UN-DESA, PhD, “Industry-Wide Bargaining Good for Efficiency, as Well as Equity”, December 18th, 2018, <https://futurework.org.au/post/industry-wide-bargaining-good-for-efficiency-as-well-as-equity/>, DOA: 7/7/25, Rslish

Mr. Willox’s claim that the sector-wide wage bargaining would destroy jobs and Australia’s competitiveness has no basis. A powerful example is provided by Germany, Europe’s strongest economy. In Germany, wages, hours, and other aspects of working conditions are decided by unions, work councils (organisations complementing unions by representing workers at the firm level in negotiations), and employers’ associations. Collective wage bargaining takes place not at the company or enterprise level but at the industry and regional levels, between unions and employers’ associations. If a company recognises the trade union, all of its workers are effectively covered by the union contract.

Yet, Germany’s competitiveness did not decline. On the contrary, Germany experiences both strong productivity growth and strong wage growth. Despite ongoing real wage improvements, unit labour costs are stable or even declining – further enhancing Germany’s competitiveness.

How is this possible? The answer was given by more than half a century ago by two leading Australian academics – WEG Salter and Eric Russel. By de-linking productivity-based wage increases at the enterprise level and adhering to the industry-wide average productivity-based wage increases, an industry bargaining system raises relative unit labour costs of firms with below-industry-average productivity, thereby forcing them to improve their productivity or else exit the industry. At the same time, firms with above-industry-average productivity enjoy lower unit labour costs, hence higher profit rates for reinvestment. Singapore also used this approach to restructure its industry in the 1980s towards higher value-added activities, with great success.

Trying to compete on the basis of low wages is a recipe for failure. As a matter of fact, low-wage countries typically demonstrate lower productivity; and research by a leading French economist, Edmond Malinvaud, showed that a reduction in the wage rates has a depressing effect on capital intensity. Salter’s research implies that the availability of a growing pool of low paid workers makes firms complacent with regard to innovation and technological or skill upgrading. Other researchers show that under-paid labour provides a way for inefficient producers and obsolete technologies to survive. Firms become caught in a low-level productivity trap from which they have little incentive to escape – a form of Gresham’s Law’ whereby bad labour standards drive out good. The discipline imposed on all firms as a result of negotiated industry-wide wage increases forces all of them to innovate and become more efficient.

### Plan---1AC

#### The United States Federal Government should substantially strengthen collective bargaining rights for workers in the United States by mandating sectoral bargaining.

### Monopsony ADV---1AC

#### Advantage two is MONOPSONY:

#### Lack of sectoral bargaining allows individual employers to hold disproportionate power over wages and conditions. This concentration of power, also known as a monopsony, erodes workers’ bargaining rights and increases inequality.

Wouter Zwysen 24, Senior Researcher at the European Trade Union Institution, PhD from the Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex, degrees in political science and social policy analysis from the University of Antwerp and the Catholic University of Leuven, “Monopsony and Non-Competitive Labour Markets: Workers' Weakening Bargaining Position”, January 28th, 2025, <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5114634>, DOA: 7/22/25, Rslish

There is growing evidence of workers being in an increasingly vulnerable position relative to their employers. This is evident in different ways such as a decline in the share of income going to labour (Berlingieri et al. 2017; Paternesi Meloni and Stirati 2022; Lombardi et al. 2023) but also in greater inequality between workers. Across many countries, rising wage inequality increasingly reflects differences in pay setting between firms for otherwise similar workers (see e.g. Criscuolo et al. 2020; Tomaskovic-Devey et al. 2020; Zwysen 2022). Workers also face rising uncertainty in the labour market, for different reasons, heightening workers’ dependence and reducing their power to affect or negotiate their working conditions (Flecker 2010; Weil 2014; Rubery 2015). These trends all indicate an increase in employers’ power over workers. While there are several important factors contributing, such as the weakening of labour market institutions protecting workers (see e.g. Tomaskovic-Devey et al. 2020; Zwysen 2024a), and macro-trends such as globalisation and digitalisation, increasing attention is also given to the issue of labour market monopsony power.

More people may be familiar with monopolies, where there is only one seller of a product who can consequently mark-up the product power without losing customers. In a monopsony there is one buyer who can pay less for their factors – for workers in the case of labour market monopsony – and like in a monopoly this is generally economically inefficient (Council of Economic Advisers 2016). In the context of the labour market it is generally no longer the case that there is only one employer, as in the traditional company town, but there are circumstances under which employers can exert monopsony power even when they are not the only one, because there are fewer other options available to workers. Monopsony power can be defined as ‘the situation that arises where firms have the power to set wages unilaterally, leading to inefficiently low levels of employment and wages’ (Araki et al. 2022: 133).

There are different sources of such wage setting or monopsony power for employers. This report focuses on two sources which are most often discussed as well as the main targets of policy interventions: that is, labour market concentration, where few employers hire most workers in a local labour market and thereby have greater pay setting power as workers have fewer outside options (see e.g. Azar et al. 2020; Benmelech et al. 2022; Bassanini et al. 2024; Jarosch et al. 2024); and the use of specific instruments aimed at limiting competition for labour, such as agreements between employers not to poach staff, or non-compete clauses (see e.g. Boeri et al. 2024; Young 2024). These factors contribute to workers being more dependent on one company setting wages either because there are few alternative employers or because they cannot easily move to them.

This higher relative power of employers over their workers results in negative outcomes for the workers themselves – lower wages particularly, but also less job security (Bassanini et al. 2024; Lehner et al. 2024). It also means poorer outcomes for the economy more widely in terms of lower mobility and innovation, resulting in lower growth and lower employment than there would otherwise have been (Manning 2021; Sokolova and Sorensen 2021; Berger et al. 2022).

#### The plan is necessary to reverse those trends by eliminating unilateral employer control over wage setting.

Alí Bustamante 23, deputy director of the worker power and economic security program at the Roosevelt Institute, PhD from the University of Miami, “Balancing Power between Workers and Employers Requires Sectoral Bargaining”, July 13th, 2023, <https://rooseveltinstitute.org/publications/balancing-power-between-workers-and-employers/>, DOA: 7/22/25, Rslish

Sectoral bargaining provides a useful framework for collaboration between workers, employers, and policymakers in which equal bargaining power between workers and employers is achieved (Elrod 2023). Collective bargaining across all firms in a sector directly addresses the problems associated with employer monopsony power by eliminating employers’ unilateral control over wage setting for both current and future workers. According to Elrod (2023), fostering tripartite policy-setting through the creation of sectoral wage boards and sector-level collective bargaining creates the ideal conditions to sustain economic growth and improve labor conditions.

Existing American labor law largely limits collective bargaining to individual worksites or firms, with few exceptions. This disjointed approach to collective bargaining in the United States curtails the ability of workers to improve working conditions and allows economic inequalities to persist (Andrias and Brishen 2018). With the addition of sectoral bargaining to worksite-level bargaining, workers could organize a plurality of both union and nonunion workers to bargain for industry-wide wage levels and standardized working conditions. Additionally, sectoral bargaining could strengthen the American labor movement by complementing the credible threat of switching jobs with the institutionalized threat of sector-wide strikes. Workers’ ability to leverage the threat of quitting is limited by their need to be employed. As a result, an individual’s credible threat of switching jobs is nullified during periods of low growth. Conversely, collective bargaining reduces employment during periods of economic recession, thereby sustaining the power of the bargaining unit to demand higher wages or improved working conditions irrespective of the state of the economy and labor market (Bustamante 2022).

Sectoral bargaining also provides workers in other non–collectively bargained sectors with higher wages. According to Bassier (2022), positive wage spillovers result when firms involved in sectors with sectoral wage setting are present in a local labor market. Furthermore, sectoral bargaining can have a positive impact on the entire wage structure of a local labor market when firms whose wages are determined by sectoral bargaining experience a large labor share. The provision of a credible employment option in local labor markets constrains the ability of employers to unilaterally set wages, triggering the positive wage spillover.

#### Unchecked inequality exacerbates every existential crisis. It magnifies political instability, pandemics, societal divisions, and slows growth.

Schmidt & Juijn 21, Andreas T. Schmidt, Professor of Moral and Political Philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Groningen,DPhil in Philosophy from the University of Oxford; Daan Juijn, Senior Advanced AI Researcher at the Centre for Future Generations, Bachelor’s degree in Mathematics and Philosophy, and a Master’s in Philosophy, Politics and Economics, “Economic inequality and the long-term future”, May 2021, <https://globalprioritiesinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/Inequality-and-the-Long-Term-Future_Andreas-Schmidt-and-Daan-Juijn-reupload.pdf>, DOA: 7/23/25, Rslish

(ii) Institutional quality and conflict

It is often argued that a country’s long-term performance depends to a significant extent on the quality of its institutions, including its political and legal institutions (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2005). Economic research mostly focuses on explaining long-term differences in growth rates. As seen above, some researchers argue that high inequality will reduce growth rates, among other things, because it can worsen institutional quality. However, besides facilitating economic growth, public institutions have other functions that matter from a long-term perspective. For example, disaster preparedness, education, public health, foreign policy, science policy, and many other areas could influence long-term trajectories. If such things go badly, they could increase existential risk. Conversely, good institutions will help reduce existential risk. For many existential risk reduction strategies likely require public goods and collective action, which in turn require good public institutions (among other reasons, because some such public goods are unlikely to be provided by markets). So, it seems reasonable to assume that, with most other societal goals, good institutions can help deliver existential risk reduction. Here is a cheesy analogy: targeted actions like washing your hands regularly or getting a flu shot can reduce your risk of dying from an infection. But you will also do well investing in a strong immune system, as that is an ‘all-purpose goods’ in lowering your risk of dying from any bacterium or virus. Investing in good institutions might similarly be an all-purpose-good: rather than tackling individual sources of existential risk directly, we improve conditions for tackling whatever existential risks may come our way.

There are at least two reasons why higher inequality could decrease institutional capacities for longtermist public goods.

First, there is some direct evidence that, whatever the causal pathway, inequality reduces institutional quality (which in turn typically leads to more inequality) (Chong and Gradstein 2007; Savoia, Easaw, and McKay 2010).

Second, high inequality can lead to elite capture. Empirical work on studying political and de facto legal power is difficult, yet there is a growing consensus that high levels of inequality can lead to elite capture and thereby reduce the long-term quality of legal and political institutions (Acemoglu and Robinson 2008; 2013; Bartels 2018; Bavel 2016; Chong and Gradstein 2007; Cummins and Rodriguez 2010; Savoia, Easaw, and McKay 2010). Further, if institutions are disproportionately geared towards elite interests, then they might be less likely to be geared towards positive long- term trajectories. We might see more rent-seeking and less investment in public goods. Moreover, if elite capture is strong enough, such capture, and the potential inequality that comes with it, can intensify going forward (Chong and Gradstein 2007).

Now, one might object and wonder whether elite interests and longtermist interests will necessarily be misaligned. Could an enlightened elite not even be more longtermist than a more democratic system? Here are two potential arguments. First, wealthy donors fund a significant part of research and direct action on existential risk and longtermism (the Open Philanthropy Project, for example). Indirectly, inequality might thus reduce existential risk through such funding. Second, rich people might have a lower rate of pure time preference than less well-off people, which would make them more naturally aligned with investing in long-term causes.

In response to the first argument, remember we here focus on income inequality reductions. Private funding only requires ‘enough’ wealth inequality going forward, it need not require elite capture. And reducing income inequality is unlikely to eradicate the required wealth inequality and the existence of big donors. In response to the second argument, we are somewhat sceptical that elite capture would translate a lower impatience rate into longtermist strategies in policy. A successful transmission would require influence to be systematic and well-coordinated across time and, probably, across different elite actors. Yet lobbying and elite influence must often capitalise on shorter windows of opportunities, which makes well-coordinated intertemporal, and positive longtermist, policy capture less likely.

Of course, such considerations are speculative. But, in any case, we think that, on balance, there are stronger reasons to believe elite capture would increase – rather than decrease – existential risk. First, elite capture often comes with rent seeking, which lowers institutional quality (Chong and Gradstein 2007). Second, industries like oil, gas, weapons and others are often concentrated and well organised in exerting influence in law and legislation. Their interests and influence overall are likely to be more short-term than longtermist. Third, recent decades have seen a shift towards a stronger shareholder value orientation in corporate governance. A common criticism of this shift is that it incentivises more short-term decisions. Accordingly, corporate influence into public institutions will likely display short-termist bias too. Finally, we can of course imagine that ‘pro- longtermist elite capture’ could happen and gamble on that possibility. However, if strong democratic and legal oversight and the power to check elite influence is lost, we might struggle to reverse our gamble.

Second, high inequality is likely to reduce social capital and trust (Alesina and La Ferrara 2002; Knack and Keefer 1997; Rothstein and Uslaner 2005). Social capital and trust in public institutions in turn are important for effective public goods provision (Knack and Keefer 1997; Beugelsdijk, Groot, and Schaik 2004). Effective public goods provision, in turn, is important for (some) effective measures to reduce existential risk (and, more generally, to coordinate towards more valuable long-term trajectories). Therefore, high inequality could reduce societies’ capacities to effectively respond to large-scale challenges like existential risk.

Finally, some limited direct evidence suggests societies with higher social capital and lower inequality exhibit better preventive and adaptive outcomes for environmental risks and can show greater resilience to external shocks (Bavel and Curtis 2019; Kahn 2005). For example, Matthew Kahn provides some evidence that more equal countries, when controlled for GDP, have significantly lower death rates in natural catastrophes (Kahn 2005). While smaller natural catastrophes are different from global catastrophic risk scenarios, resilience in such events might be somewhat indicative of societies’ resilience to catastrophic risks.

So, good social and institutional conditions could help reduce existential risk. Consider next how, conversely, bad conditions might increase existential risk. A key driver of existential risk is conflict, both between and within nation-states (or what (Ord 2020, 175–79) calls a ‘risk factor’). Conflicts and arms races raise human-induced existential risks such as nuclear war, the outbreak of a bio- engineered virus or the launch of misaligned artificial intelligence. Note that an existential catastrophe could be set in motion either purposefully or accidentally. Both are more likely during conflict. Nuclear warheads, cyberweapons, and bioweapons could all be used purposefully to attack enemy states, leading to potential global escalation. But as past nuclear incidents and close calls during the Cold War show, arms races also increase the probability of accidental catastrophes (Schlosser 2013).

Esteban and Schneider find that formal and empirical evidence suggests that political and social polarization increases the risk of violent conflict, both intra-nationally and internationally (Esteban and Schneider 2008). If income inequality increases polarization, inequality may indirectly drive existential risk. Indeed, recent evidence suggests that income inequality can increase the degree of polarization between groups of citizens. Bonica et al. find that the degree of polarization within the US House of Representatives, for example, is accurately tracked by domestic income inequality, with correlation coefficients rising up to 0.95 depending on the chosen time-period (Bonica et al. 2013, 105–8). Of course, correlation does not imply causation and the correlation is likely at least partially the result of reverse causation or a confounding variable. That said, we should assign a non-negligible credence to inequality partially causing polarization. Moreover, inequality and polarisation might also play some role in getting polarising and populist candidates elected (Piketty 2018). In a preliminary analysis of US election data, Darvas and Efstathiou find that more unequal states were more likely to vote for Donald Trump, after controlling for variables such as income, race and education (Darvas and Efstathiou 2016). Populist politicians – like Trump, Bolsonaro and others – are likely bad news for existential risk reduction. They are less cooperative in delivering regional and global public goods and typically prefer riskier, and more conflictual and nationalistic policy styles.

#### There are no alt causes---monopsonies are the only explaining factor for rising inequality.

Bustamante & Smith 22, Alí Bustamante, deputy director of the worker power and economic security program at the Roosevelt Institute, PhD from the University of Miami; Anna N. Smith, Senior National Policy Coordinator at Jobs to Move America, MA in Labor Studies from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Bachelors in global studies from Temple University, “Reining In Employer Monopsony Must Be a Government Priority”, April 4th, 2022, <https://rooseveltinstitute.org/blog/reining-in-employer-monopsony-must-be-a-government-priority/>, DOA: 7/23/25, Rslish

The US Department of the Treasury recently issued a report on competition in the labor market that found that employer concentration and anticompetitive labor practices lower worker wages while also driving income inequality and slowing economic growth. The Treasury report supports what the Roosevelt Institute and other researchers have found over the past several years: Employer monopsony is undermining the well-being of Americans. However, there are several tools our government can use to rein in corporations and increase the bargaining power of workers.

Monopsony—the disproportionate labor market power exerted by employers over workers—takes many different forms. But it always results in decreased bargaining power for workers, allowing corporations to pay lower wages, provide fewer benefits, and worsen working conditions.

Roosevelt’s research shows that monopsony is pervasive across industries and locations, as corporate concentration has crowded out competitors and suppressed worker power. With sufficient concentration, or through collusion with other firms, employers actively use their market power to impose barriers to job mobility and transfer costs to workers.

Monopsony power has a discriminatory impact on workers of color, and particularly on Black and brown women; it increases the likelihood of discrimination in hiring, funnels people of color into low-wage jobs, and reduces the ability of marginalized workers to move between jobs. Employers can then obscure their anti-worker practices by pointing to changes in technology and credentials as the main culprits behind wage stagnation, rising inequality, and the erosion of working conditions. Yet the record is clear: Our research shows that inequality in the labor market and the decline of worker power are not adequately explained by a “skills gap,” but rather by increasing monopsony in the labor market.

#### Rising inequality triggers a civil war.

Peter Turchin 23, Complexity Scientist, Ph.D. in Zoology from Duke University, B.A. in Biology from New York University; Penguin Press, “End Times: Elites, Counter-Elites, and the Path of Political Disintegration,” p. 176-182

Thus, the heart of the MPF model is the relative wage and the wealth pump that it powers. When the relative wage declines, it leads to both immiseration and elite overproduction. Both, as we now know, are the most important drivers of social and political instability. However, outbreaks of instability—violent anti-government demonstrations and strikes, urban riots, terrorism, rural uprisings, and, if things really go to hell, state collapse and full-blown civil war—are the results of individual people’s actions. How does the model connect the structural drivers to people’s motivations? It assumes that the key role in all such events is played by extremists, those who have been radicalized and primed for aggression. When such radicals are few in relation to the rest of the population, they offer no serious threat to the stability of the regime, because they are easily isolated and suppressed by the police. But if they are many, they start coalescing into extremist organizations, which can credibly challenge the ruling class. The number of radicals in proportion to the total population, therefore, is a key variable that the MPF model needs to track.

The process of radicalization works like a disease that, as it spreads, changes people’s behaviors and makes them act in violent ways. The compartment of the MPF engine connecting structural drivers to unrest thus needs to model this dynamic of social contagion. It is quite similar to equations used by epidemiologists—for example, in forecasting the dynamics of COVID outbreaks.

The model keeps track of three kinds of individuals. The first is the “naive” type, corresponding to the susceptibles in the epidemiological framework. This is the class into which individuals are placed when they become adults. (The model tracks only individuals who are active adults; children and the retired elderly are not modeled, as they are assumed to have no effect on the dynamics.) Naive individuals can become “radicalized” by being exposed to individuals of the radical type (corresponding to infectious individuals in a disease model). The more radicals there are in the population, the higher the chance that a naive individual will catch the “virus of radicalism.”[3]

When a high proportion of the population is radicalized, sociopolitical instability is also high. Riots are easily triggered and readily spread; terrorist and revolutionary groups thrive and receive support from massive numbers of sympathizers; and the society is highly vulnerable to an outbreak of civil war. However, the relationship between the degree of radicalization and the overall level of political violence (measured, for example, by the number of people killed) is nonlinear. As the proportion of radicals in the population grows, it becomes increasingly easy for them to link up and organize, potentially leading to an explosive growth of revolutionary parties. There is also a threshold effect. As long as the power of revolutionary groups is less than the power of the state’s coercive apparatus, the overall level of violence can be suppressed to a low level. But should the balance shift in favor of radicals, the forces of the regime can suddenly implode, as we saw in numerous examples of state collapse in the previous chapter.

So far we’ve been speaking of “radicals” as though they are an interest group. But that’s not the right way to think about it. In reality, radicals usually don’t all belong to a single radical party. During periods of high political instability, there are many issues dividing the population and the elites. (We discussed this fragmentation of the ideological landscape in chapter 4.) Thus, there are many factions of radicals, each motivated by a different ideology and warring with other factions. Some become left-wing extremists, and others join right-wing organizations; still others become ethnic or religious extremists. And even within the right, as well as within the left, radical groups are splintered and may be more focused on internecine fighting than on fighting the opposite end of the ideological spectrum.

Generally speaking, an outbreak of political violence is dynamically similar to a wildfire or an earthquake. A single spark can start a prairie fire, as Mao famously said. But most sparks start little fires that go out before they manage to spread into conflagrations. Others grow to mid-size blazes. Only very few sparks start wildfires that sweep through all of the prairie. Complexity scientists have devoted a lot of attention to such processes in which the statistical distribution of the event size obeys a “power law.” Whether we quantify these processes in square kilometers of prairie burned down or the strength of an earthquake on the Richter scale—or the severity of political violence events as measured in the number of people killed—they all have the same type of dynamics. [4] In a prairie fire, whether the initial fire caused by a spark spreads depends on how much combustible material is in reach, and whether fire can jump from one patch of dried grass to another. In a revolution, whether the initial revolt against the regime spreads depends on the number of radicals (analogous to combustible material) and how well they are connected, or how fast they can expand their networks of rebellion. As a result of such autocatalytic, self-driving dynamics, an initially small event can unexpectedly blow up into a rare, large-scale disaster—a “black swan” or a “dragon king.”

Because the relationship between the radicalization quotient and the resulting scale of political violence is governed by a power law, normal statistics (e.g., the average level of violence) don’t work very well, and the MPF model captures possible outcomes by assessing the probability of really severe events, such as the American Civil War or the Taiping Rebellion. Such extreme events may not be highly probable, but we need to worry about them, simply because they have the potential to cause unimaginable human misery. Is a 10 percent probability of a second American civil war high or low? Put it in personal terms: Would you take a bet that could cause your personal extinction with a probability of 10 percent? I would not, even if offered a huge reward. You need to be alive to enjoy the prize, no matter what size it is.

Let’s get back to the MPF model. An additional element in the model is that a naive individual can become radicalized not only through contacts with other radicals but also through exposure to violence resulting from radical actions. For example, someone whose relative or friend was killed in a terrorist act perpetrated by right-wing extremists might join a left-wing revolutionary group. This second route to radicalization is also a kind of social contagion (but mediated by violence instead of radical ideology).

The third type of individual in the model, in addition to naïfs and radicals, is the “moderate” (corresponding to “recovered” in epidemiological models). This group comprises former radicals who have become disenchanted with radicalism and violence and have concluded that members of the society need to pull together and overcome their differences. The moderates differ from the naïfs in that they value peace and order above all, and they work actively to bring it about. In other words, naive individuals don’t have an active political program, radicals work actively to increase instability, and moderates work actively to dampen things down.

In summary, new radicals are created when naïfs encounter the already radicalized ones or are exposed to violence. The more radicals there are (and therefore the higher the rate of violence), the more likely that a naive individual becomes radicalized. However, moderates also have a role: “infection” by radicalism declines as moderates increase in number and exert their moderating, instability-suppressing influence.

The numbers of radicals, however, don’t grow without limit. As the level of violence increases, some radicals turn away from extremism and convert into moderates. The probability of a radical becoming disgusted with radicalism and turning into a moderate increases with the overall level of violence, but with a time delay, as high levels of political violence do not instantly translate into a social mood of revulsion against violence and a desire for internal peace. Violence acts in a cumulative fashion; several years of high instability, or even outright civil war, have to pass before the majority of the population begins to earnestly yearn for order.

The social contagion module of the MPF engine thus keeps track of the radicalization and moderation processes. Now it needs to connect to the dynamics of structural drivers of instability. This is done through the Political Stress Index (PSI), which combines the strength of immiseration and elite overproduction. [5] Popular immiseration is measured by inverse relative income (median family income divided by GDP per capita). Thus, when typical incomes fail to increase with economic growth, this factor causes the PSI to increase. Intraelite overproduction/competition is measured by the number of elites (including elite aspirants) in relation to the total population. The PSI “tunes” the probability that a naive individual becomes radicalized. When structural conditions result in high social pressures for instability, radical ideas fall on fertile soil and readily take root. Alternatively, if the PSI is low, an encounter between a naïf and a radical (or a naïf experiencing a political violence event) is unlikely to result in radicalization.

Now that we have the MPF engine, let’s use it to investigate the possible trajectories that the American social system could take beyond the 2020s. Keep in mind that this is a model (even a prototype) and its predictions should be taken with some degree of skepticism. The goal is not to predict the future but to use the model to understand how possible actions may shape different futures. The MPF engine is a kind of “morality tale,” like the story of a kind girl and an unkind girl, a narrative motif that is present in hundreds of traditional societies.

We start the engine in 1960 and first run it for the sixty years for which the history is fixed. From the MPF point of view, the most important trend during this time is the decline in the relative wage. The decline in the relative wage turns on the wealth pump, and elite numbers begin to increase in an accelerating manner. By 2020, both immiseration and elite overproduction, and thus the PSI, reach very high levels. The radicalization curve, tracking the number of radicals, which had been staying flat near zero, starts to grow after 2010 and literally explodes during the 2020s. So does political violence. At some point during the 2020s, the model predicts, instability becomes so high that it starts cutting down the elite numbers. Remember that MPF is a model, which means that it abstracts reality into mathematical equations. But in real life, instability causing declines in elite numbers is not abstract at all. Think about what happened in America as a result of the Civil War, when huge numbers of Southern elite men were killed on the battlefield and the rest were deprived of their elite status.

In the model, the cataclysm of the 2020s reduces elite numbers, which results in a decline in the PSI. Additionally, high levels of violence accelerate the transition of most radicals into moderates. The radicalization curve falls as precipitously as it rose and at some point after 2030 hits the minimum. Because radicals are the ones who drive violence, instability also declines. The social system regains its stability. But in this inertial scenario, the root cause of instability—the wealth pump—continues to operate. Gradually, elite numbers begin increasing. Meanwhile, the moderates who suppressed the 2020s peak of violence are slowly retiring and dying off. The uneasy peace holds for the next generation (twenty-five to thirty years), but then there is a repeat of the 2020s fifty years later. [6]

The inertial scenario thus predicts a rather grim future: an outbreak of serious violence during the 2020s and, if nothing is done to shut down the pump, a repeat every fifty to sixty years. What are the alternatives?

#### Civil war ignites global hotspots and locks in extinction.

David French 20, September 22; Visiting Professor Lipscomb University, J.D. from Harvard University; Divided We Fall: America's Secession Threat and How to Restore Our Nation, “A World On Fire,” p. 130-136

A World on Fire

The moment the United States split apart; every world leader knew a single, simple truth: Pax Americana was over. The peace that had been maintained through the overwhelming military and economic might of the United States would not hold. The security guarantees of a confused and broken nation meant nothing. Carrier battle groups that previously had ruled the seas sat in port while the new, opposing nations of the North American continent negotiated their fate.

American squadrons returned home as their pilots and crews chose sides in the Great Divorce. The portion of the North American continent that retained the name “United States of America”—while still economically powerful—was simply incapable of maintaining the military force or the security guarantees of a united nation, especially in the year following the split.

The United States tried to maintain deterrence in hot spots like South Korea, but rival great powers knew that the United States was in no condition to project meaningful force overseas. Even worse, the entire Western alliance had grown utterly dependent on U.S. logistical assets to move any kind of significant force beyond their own borders. Britain’s two carrier battle groups and France’s single aircraft carrier were insufficient to maintain any deterrent posture in the Far East, and they were barely adequate to project any real strength in the Atlantic.

Thus arrived a period that Russian and Chinese military planners quickly dubbed the “golden years.” They knew that the divided American nations would eventually settle on a security strategy. They knew that allied powers would ramp up their own military spending and eventually replace a large portion of the lost American power. But the key word was “eventually.” This would take time.

Modern weapons—including aircraft, main battle tanks, and ships—are extraordinarily complex. They can’t be produced at scale immediately, even if panicked national governments authorize emergency procurement programs. The divided American nations arranged hasty sales of prepositioned equipment, but it would still take time to recruit and train ~~men and women~~ [soldiers] to operate new weapons.

Consequently, China believed it could reclaim Taiwan without triggering a conflict with the United States. Russia knew that it could swallow the Baltic states and the Russian ethnic enclaves in southeastern Ukraine while NATO remained paralyzed. Russia moved first. Latvia and Lithuania fell to an influx of “little green men”—Russian soldiers in unmarked uniforms and vehicles—who took key airports and city centers within seventy-two hours, with hardly a shot fired.

Estonia was different. Estonia resisted fiercely, and so it received the full weight of the 8th Guards Mechanized Corps. The conflict was intense but brief. In one week, the Russians secured every major population center. In three weeks, every element of the Estonian military larger than a company was destroyed. After a month, only small bands of partisan fighters remained, and they could mount only sporadic attacks.

NATO did nothing. It could do nothing, aside from engage in furious denunciations and impose (ultimately short-lived) economic sanctions. The UN was utterly ineffectual, with China joining Russia to veto any meaningful Security Council resolutions. American airpower had largely returned home. American naval assets were in port in North America. And without American support, neither Britain, France, nor Germany could project any meaningful force to Estonia or any other Baltic state. So they stayed put rather than face sure, bloody defeat.

A Russian-engineered coup toppled the Western-allied government of Ukraine, and just like that, NATO withered. The old Eastern Bloc nations realized their vulnerability and—over time—entered into new security and trade agreements with their old Russian “allies.” Russia regained control of its near abroad, the old great power rivalries flared again, and for the first time in nearly a century, the world noticed the stirrings of German militarism as Germany rearmed as fast as possible to face a renewed and immediate Russian threat.

Events in Europe were destabilizing, but with the exception of thousands of dead in Estonia, they were relatively bloodless. The cost was largely strategic and economic, as the disruptions of the Great Divorce gutted Western economies even as they faced substantial new defense obligations.

The Far East wasn’t so fortunate. From the moment Chinese planners saw the United States reneging on its NATO commitments, they knew that Americans would not and could not aid Taiwan. There was not a single American carrier at sea west of Pearl Harbor. Not a single American surface ship was in position even to offer itself up as a “tripwire” to trigger an American response.

And so, China determined to transform its “one China” policy from political fiction to practical fact. It demanded Taiwan’s surrender as it began an immense, open, and obvious military buildup across the Taiwan Strait. The intent was clear—to convince Taiwan that resistance was futile.

But Taiwan had advantages that Estonia did not. First, there was the significant matter of the roughly hundred-mile-wide strait separating the island from the mainland. The second was the fact that Japan was shocked out of its isolation at the prospect of a united, hostile China with no American ally present to guarantee its security.

Japan mobilized its undersized (though technologically advanced) military, warned China against aggression, and then reached a fateful decision—to race to develop a nuclear deterrent. In spite of its unique history as the target of the world’s only atomic attacks, Japan knew that it had to rely on its own power to guarantee its security, and when facing a nuclear-armed China, Japan needed its own deterrent, urgently.

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China believed that Japan was bluffing. Its planners refused to believe that the nation would transition from ingrained pacifism to outright militarism so quickly, and in the absence of any direct threat to Japanese sovereignty. So, China pressed ahead. Taiwan rejected China’s demand for surrender as decisively as possible. Working with the Japanese military it re-created the surprise attacks of 1941 at scale, with the most modern and sophisticated weapons money could buy. China’s open preparations, designed to cow its rivals into submission, turned into the nation’s military Achilles’ heel. Japanese military doctrine, from Port Arthur to Pearl Harbor, emphasized the importance of the first strike, and strike first it did. In part because of Chinese mistakes (after all, it had not fought a major conflict against a first-rate power since the Sino-Soviet border clashes in 1969) and in part because of Japanese tactical brilliance, Japanese and Taiwanese pilots achieved almost complete surprise. Missile and air strikes arrived virtually simultaneously, sinking Chinese naval craft and blanketing Chinese air bases with explosions. In a single day, Japanese and Taiwanese forces rendered an amphibious assault virtually impossible. Humiliated and furious, Chinese leaders refused the immediate offer of peace and launched a massive conventional air and naval counterattack designed to destroy the Japanese and Taiwanese militaries, crush their economies, and make them sue for peace. Thus began the most significant Pacific air and naval conflict since World War II, one that eventually also drew Australia into the fray—while a wary South Korea mobilized its reserves and remained neutral as two old foes fought bitter battles in the seas and skies all around. For months air raid warnings were routine in many of China’s and Japan’s great cities. Commercial shipping ground to a halt. International trade crashed. Chinese forces fully invaded and occupied Hong Kong. The global economic disruption that had been called the “American Recession” after the Great Divorce became the “Pacific Depression” as two of the world’s largest economies ground each other into the dust in the midst of an all-out air and naval war. After maintaining a public posture of ambiguity regarding its nuclear program—an ambiguity designed to deter Chinese escalation—Japan dramatically announced its entry into the nuclear club with an underground test of a substantial 250-kiloton device. South Korea quickly followed suit. Taiwan indicated that it reserved the right to build its own bomb. Australia did not test a weapon, but it formally withdrew from both the Nuclear NonProliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty—two documents that had become all but meaningless in world affairs. The world began a round of runaway nuclear proliferation, as advanced nations in multiple world regions reached for their own arsenal of ultimate weapons. In the meantime, the conventional war raged on. Slowly but surely, the Japanese gained superiority in the sky and on the seas. The Taiwanese air force, lacking either the F-35 or the F-15, struggled to defend its home island, but the Japanese exacted a fearful toll on Chinese aircraft, shooting them down far faster than Chinese industry could replace the losses. One by one, the Japanese sank China’s few aircraft carriers, and after six months of conflict, the Chinese navy was [destroyed] crippled, with its surface ships rarely venturing out from their heavily guarded ports. A land war in China was unthinkable. Neither Taiwan nor Japan wanted to commit an entire generation of young men to large-scale ground combat, so the goal was air and naval superiority, followed by economic strangulation.

<<PARAGRAPH BREAKS RESUME>>

The war reached its end stage just as Japanese and Australian forces launched an ambitious series of amphibious landings designed to seize each and every disputed island in the Spratly and Senkaku island chains. With Chinese aircraft chased from the skies and the Chinese navy largely at the bottom of the sea, a military and economic noose was tightened in the South China Sea and East China Sea. Large sections of China were routinely plunged into blackout conditions by relentless attacks on the nation’s power grid, and economic deprivation was creating internal unrest.

Desperate to stop the fighting, China rattled the nuclear saber. It declared that the continued invasion of Chinese-claimed territory and the continued air strikes on the Chinese mainland represented an existential threat to the nation’s existence. Firebrands inside China urged leadership to use its nuclear arsenal while it still possessed a strategic edge—claiming that while China could absorb terrible losses, Japan would be effectively destroyed by a Chinese attack.

Unwilling to repeat the traumas of 1945, Japan stood down. It agreed first to a cease-fire in place, then to a negotiated withdrawal from seized Chinese territory—based on a Chinese agreement to completely demilitarize its disputed island possessions. China refused to enter into a lasting peace agreement with Taiwan. There was only an armistice. A humiliated China raced to rebuild its decimated navy and air force. In response, Japan built up its own air and naval forces to a size and power not seen since its days of empire.

As for Taiwan, it effectively declared its independence from China by successfully testing its own hydrogen bomb and building its own nuclear arsenal.

Europe and Asia were not the only flash points. With America in full retreat, Iran attempted to sprint to its own nuclear bomb, a move blocked— at least temporarily— by a series of Israeli air strikes that triggered Hezbollah rocket barrages into northern Israel.

With the eyes of the world focused elsewhere, Israel responded with overwhelming military force, unleashing its full arsenal on Hezbollah positions, invading southern Lebanon yet again, crushing Hezbollah, and driving its remnants out of missile range of Israeli civilians.

For the first time since Israel’s war for independence, there was no international outcry. The great powers were panicked by the reality and danger of much larger conflicts much closer to home. Saudi Arabia was quietly pleased at the blow to Iranian power, and after Hezbollah’s initial missile volleys, the militant group proved ineffectual in the face of a fully mobilized IDF.

By the time the reduced United States and the new nations of North America reconstituted truly functioning militaries, reached sustainable security agreements, and began to claw back from economic depression, the world had changed. It was as if the clock had spun back more than a century, to the multi-power world that existed before the First World War— except with more great powers, more potential flash points, and far more terrible weaponry.

In 1914, the great powers had been concentrated in Europe, with Japan rising in the East. Now India, China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan all possessed formidable economies, growing militaries, and nuclear weaponry. China still coveted union with Taiwan (and revenge for its humiliating defeat). South Korea increasingly considered forceful unification with the unstable North. Japan and China nursed their ancient grudge, and Chinese and Indian forces clashed along their disputed boundary.

Back home in the old United States, global instability damaged economic prosperity. Americans who had once decried globalism and scorned American alliances now saw and experienced the high cost of lost international institutions. But even the terrible war in the Pacific seemed distant. A nation in the midst of dissolution had no time for worry about faroff conflicts. It pulled back into itself, dealt with its own upheaval from the great internal migrations, and each new North American division generated its foreign policy only after it fought back to economic stability.

Truth be told, there were Americans who liked the new world. They had always resented international dependence on American arms and American lives. They were glad to pull back to their new borders and had little interest in crises overseas. They saw the new nations as more in keeping with the intentions of the original Founders of the old United States, avoiding foreign entanglements and staying out of foreign wars. Freed from the burden of defending the world, the new nations believed they could pour their resources into their own people. Standing armies diminished. The new navies still sailed the seas, but the fleets were smaller. There were fewer carrier battle groups. There was no need to project overwhelming force, only to deter attacks.

And so the world settled into its new reality. Great-power conflict was no longer unthinkable, shifting alliances played havoc with international travel and international trade, and world economies became more unstable. Militaries abroad planned for future conflicts that Americans hoped and believed would not reach across the oceans to touch their shores. Isolationist and polarized Americans had broken the world their forefathers made, and they could not, ever, put it back together again.

III To Save America, Chart James Madison’s Course

15 Pluralism, a Beginner’s Guide

The scenarios outlined in the preceding three chapters represent a projection of what may happen if the polarizing trends I’ve outlined in this book continue unabated while the nation is subject to foreseeable, even predictable severe stress. The Calexit scenario is based on existing progressive fears that minority rule (empowered by the Senate and the Electoral College) will degrade national legitimacy at the same time that continued right-wing extremism degrades progressive self-governance. The Texit scenario, by contrast, is based on existing conservative fears that majority rule—unmoored from the principles of the founding—will discard the Bill of Rights, fundamentally rewrite the Constitution, and destroy conservative liberty and conservative communities.

#### Institutional decay ensures diseases are extisential.

Noah B. Taylor 23, Guest Lecturer in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Innsbruck, *Existential Risks in Peace and Conflict Studies*, “Peace, Pandemics, and Conflict”, Palgrave Macmillan, May 2023, pg. 87-89

Pandemics should instead be understood as falling between a natural and an anthropogenic risk. Non-engineered pathogens that emerge from nature do not represent the same type of direct natural risk as an event such as an asteroid strike. Understanding a pandemic in terms of a global catastrophic risk is more practical, meaning that it could threaten permanent civilizational collapse (Bostrom and Ćirković 2011). The John Hopkins Center for Health Security has followed this idea in defining pandemics as possible “Global Catastrophic Biological Risks” (GCBRs). Which they define as

biological events—deliberate, accidental, or emerging—that could lead to sudden, extraordinary, widespread disaster beyond the collective capability of national and international governments and the private sector to control [that] if unchecked […] would lead to great suffering, loss of life, and sustained damage to national governments, international relationships, economies, societal stability, or global security. (Schoch-Spana et al. 2017, 323)

Though humanity has lived with diseases since its earliest history, the contemporary possibility of such a risk has increased. The global population recently climbed to over 8 billion, and the overall population density continues to increase (Roser et al. 2013). With more individuals, there are more possible origins of new pandemic diseases. As of 2018, 55% of the world’s population lived in urban areas (UN DESA 2018), and an estimated 65% by 2050 (UN DESA 2019). People living closer to one another will likely increase the transmission rates.

Many facets of modern life further increase a pandemic’s possible severity, scope, and scale (Jones et al. 2008; Morse 1995). Deforestation, industrial farming, and meat production practices combined with climate change increase the likelihood of zoonotic transmission of pathogens from animals to humans. The melting permafrost, increased ultraviolet immunosuppression, changing weather patterns, and arctic thawing that comes with global warming may unleash pathogens frozen long ago (Hofmeister et al. 2021). Alternatively, trigger pathogenic mutations in previously non-pathogenic organisms. The ease of global transportation also dramatically increases the risk of future pandemics (Ord 2020). In addition to these variables, war is a significant factor that results in the spread of pandemic disease, both unintentionally as troops move into foreign lands and intentionally and potentially when used as a weapon (A. T. Price-Smith 2009).

Another often singled but under-recognized future pandemic risk is so-called super bugs, antimicrobial resistant bacteria. Superbugs fall into three categories defined by their susceptibility to antimicrobial agents. Multidrug-resistant pathogens are not susceptible to at least one agent in three or more categories, extensively drug-resistant are not susceptible to at least one agent in all but two or fewer categories, and the most concerning the pandrug-resistant which have no known susceptibility to any antimicrobial agents (Magiorakos et al. 2012).

The potential risk from superbugs is grave. The general director of the WHO described it as being a “fundamental threat to human health, development and security” (Fox 2016). In the USA alone, in 2019 the rate of superbug infections was 2.8 million each year with more than 35,000 deaths (CDC 2019). This rate has likely risen by 15% between 2019 and 2020 (Mishra 2022). Globally the situation is worse. In 2019 an estimated 1.27 million deaths were directly tied to these superbugs, with another 4.95 million associated with such infections. The global burden of these infections is likely higher than HIV or Malaria. Like many other pandemic-related topics, the global burden of these diseases unequally spread with much higher concentrations in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (Antimicrobial Resistance Collaborators 2022).

Biomedical researcher Dr. Brian K. Coombes described the severity of the situation, “antibiotics are the foundation on which all modern medicine rests. Cancer chemotherapy, organ transplants, surgeries, and childbirth all rely on antibiotics to prevent infections. If you can’t treat those, then we lose the medical advances we have made in the last 50 years” (Miller 2015).

Even if bio risks, such as pandemics, are not technically defined as a genuine existential threat and are instead understood as a global catastrophic risk, there is a consensus that they should be an issue of global priority (Connell 2017; Palmer et al. 2017). These evaluations of the destructive potential of pandemics focus on it being the direct cause of an existential or global catastrophic threat. The possibility of pandemics following similar pathways as discussed regarding Great Power Conflicts makes a pandemic’s indirect or compounding risk a topic of concern. Global cooperation is needed to address another existential risk a pandemic could hinder. A pandemic could occur alongside another existential threat, such as a Great Power Conflict or runaway global warming overtaxing the systems that might otherwise make us resilient to such a risk.

#### Independently, diseases ensure termination shocks---extinction.

Seth D. Baum 22, Executive Director of the Global Catastrophic Risk Institute, Ph.D. in Geography from The Pennsylvania State University, “Assessing natural global catastrophic risks,” Natural Hazards, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11069-022-05660-w

One particularly complex and acute pandemic scenario is when a pandemic causes a failure of stratospheric geoengineering. Stratospheric geoengineering involves injecting particles into the stratosphere to counteract the harms of anthropogenic global warming. If particle injection is abruptly halted, temperatures rapidly rise, which could cause acute harm known as termination shock (Parker and Irvine 2018). Under normal circumstances, abrupt cessation of particle injection may be unlikely due to the desire to avoid termination shock. However, Baum et al. (2013) propose that a catastrophe such as a pandemic could cause the cessation of particle injection, resulting in a “double catastrophe” in which the harms of termination shock compound the harms of the initial catastrophe. This may be an especially severe pandemic scenario. It is also a scenario rooted in interactions between the natural hazard and human civilization. Further complicating the picture, prior to termination shock, stratospheric geoengineering could shift climates in a way that shifts disease vector patterns, potentially affecting the risk of “natural” pandemics (Tang and Kemp 2021).

Fan et al. (2016) estimate an annual probability of 1.6 × 10–2 for “severe” pandemics defined as pandemics that cause the death of 0.1% of the global human population. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is estimated to already exceed this threshold.Footnote18 Thus far, fortunately, COVID-19 has not threatened the collapse of civilization or human extinction. Therefore, the annual probability of pandemics that threaten collapse or extinction is likely to be lower than 1.6 × 10–2, with the collapse probability being higher than the extinction probability, though the exact probabilities are difficult to quantify (Manheim 2018). Nonetheless, there is potential for this risk to be significantly higher than the 2 × 10–6 annual probability calculated in Sect. 2.1.

#### Slow growth fuels revisionist conflict initiation.

Sung Chul Jung 24, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science and Diplomacy @ Myongji University, “Economic slowdowns and international conflict,” 2024, *Journal of Peace Research*, 61(2), 180-196, https://ideas.repec.org/a/sae/joupea/v61y2024i2p180-196.html

In sum, this statistical analysis shows that an economic slowdown increases the likelihood of initiating military conflict. Specifically, economically troubled autocracies act more aggressively toward democracies whose economies depend on them. Political unrest also increases conflict initiation, as many studies of diversionary conflict have argued. However, autocracies suffering from political troubles do not seem to target economically dependent democracies. Democracies with smaller economies seem to be attractive targets for economically troubled autocracies whose leaders may blame the politically different partner’s ‘unfair’ trade and currency practices and domestic policies for the deteriorating economy. The autocracies will present their military decisions as inevitable to correct international wrongs and reboot the national economy. Meanwhile, leaders facing political unrest may seek diversionary targets, initiating a conflict through which they can mobilize their support base (and marginalize opposition groups) by exploiting ideological, religious, and/or ethnic identities of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Future studies should seek to unravel the complex relationship between types and levels of domestic unrest and types and combinations of political regimes, in either the presence or absence of diversionary conflict. The findings of this study suggest that an attractive target is not predetermined but is closely related to the domestic and international situation confronted by leaders who are battling for their political survival. Summary and implications Since the 2000s, many pundits and scholars have attributed two rising powers’ instances of aggression to their domestic problems. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea and its deployment of troops to Syria, along with China’s assertive actions in the South China Sea, have been seen as aggressions arising out of domestic weakness (Kaplan, 2016). Some have attributed China’s recent provocative actions against India, Japan, and Taiwan to its struggling economy in the wake of the pandemic (Myers, 2020). In the post-Cold War period, these two great powers, often regarded as revisionist powers, have regained their national capabilities to some extent and have sought higher status in international politics (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010). What made them more aggressive in the 2010s? One promising explanation is their decreasing economic growth rates. Due to their abundance of natural and human resources, the two former communist countries had maintained their increased status relative to their neighboring states since the 2000s or even earlier. However, falling energy prices and the reform-incapable structures of their economies retarded their further growth and increased the burden on their authoritarian leaders, who also had to manage domestic calls for political freedom and maintain the legitimacy of their rule. According to this article’s causal explanation, Russia and China became more revisionist actors in the 2010s at least partly because their economies went downhill, and their aggressions were directed at smaller and more vulnerable economies. A slowing economy and economic dependence have both individual and interactive effects on military conflict in international politics. Slow growth rates contribute positively to conflict initiation, especially when an autocracy suffering from a slowing economy targets a democracy whose economy is dependent on the autocracy. Whereas economic interdependence has been regarded by many liberal scholars as a reason for international cooperation, this study shows why and how asymmetric interdependence contributes to interstate conflict by articulating its interaction with an economic slowdown in a dyadic relationship. Both political unrest and economic problems have destabilizing effects on international politics, but their effects differ when economically dependent democracies are the target. Future research should compare different types of domestic unrest and their effects on international relations with sophisticated logic and strong evidence. This analysis shows that economic growth has two distinct effects. Slower growth makes one state weaker than others and its leaders more vulnerable to domestic challenges. A state’s economic slowdown not only causes a change in the balance of economic power so as to favor its competitor but also increases the troubled state’s foreign aggression, which can harm its adversary. Therefore, it is uncertain whether one state’s economic slowdown benefits its rival’s security. An autocracy’s slowing economy can be a warning, rather than good news, to its democratic opponents if the latter maintain economic relationships with the former. In this regard, economic sanctions may provoke the target leader’s diversionary tactic of blaming its poor economy on the sanctioner. We can see this pattern in Tokyo’s surprise attack on Pearl Harbor at a time of US sanctions against Japan, which had continued since the late 1930s. The current global economic outlook is uncertain in the wake of COVID-19. Although we do not yet know the pandemic’s long-term economic consequences, all states will likely struggle with slower growth and the erosion of democracy and will engage in more protectionist policies to reboot their economies and save major industries. In this context, we should be especially concerned about the risk that troubled economies pose to international security. As this study’s findings suggest, slower growth causes domestic problems, which often lead to the diversionary use of force against foreign states. If we cannot prevent struggling leaders from using diversionary tactics, worsening economies in authoritarian states will likely drive such states into a more confrontational or aggressive stance toward their economic partners, if not toward political and ideological partners. We can all hope world leaders will realize that this is a time to beat a global pandemic and an economic recession, not to beat up on a foreign state.

#### The plan revitalization of unions serves as a necessary counterweight to corporate power, while increasing societal safety nets.

McNicholas et al. 25, Celine McNicholas, director of policy and government affairs/general counsel at the Economic Policy Institute, JD from Villanova University School of Law and BA from Mount Holyoke College; Margaret Poydock, senior policy analyst from EPI, BS in Political Communication from Emerson College; Heidi Shierholz, president of the Economic Policy Institute, PhD in Economics from University of Michigan, MA in Economics from University of Michigan, MS in Statistics from Iowa State University, BA in Mathematics from Grinnell College; Hilary Wething, Economist at the Economic Policy Institute, PhD in public policy and management from the University of Washington, “Unions aren’t just good for workers—they also benefit communities and democracy”, August 20th, 2025, <https://www.epi.org/publication/unions-arent-just-good-for-workers-they-also-benefit-communities-and-democracy/>, DOA: 8/28/25, Rslish

We know that unions promote economic equality and build worker power, helping workers to win increases in pay, better benefits, and safer working conditions. But that’s not all unions do. Unions also have powerful effects on people’s lives outside of work. They help foster solidarity, promote civic and political engagement, provide reliable information to working-class communities about how economic policies impact their lives, and serve as a counterweight to corporate power in our democracy. Throughout history, unions have been engines of resistance to entrenched and undemocratic power—mobilizing working people to challenge inequality, defend civil rights, and push back against authoritarianism in all its forms.

In this report, we document the strong correlation between higher levels of unionization and a range of economic, personal, and democratic well-being measures. In the same way unions give workers a voice at work, with a direct impact on wages and working conditions, the data suggest that unions also give workers a voice in shaping their communities. Where workers have this power, states have more equitable economic, social, and democratic structures.

Background

When workers join together in a union and engage in collective bargaining, their wages, benefits, and working conditions improve. There is a wealth of research documenting the positive effects unions have for workers, both those who are unionized and those who are not.

Higher wages and decreased income inequality

On average, a worker covered by a union contract earns 12.8% more in wages than a peer in a nonunionized workplace in the same industry with a similar education, occupation, and level of experience (EPI 2025a). This wage advantage is known as the “union wage premium.” But unions don’t just help union workers—they help all workers (Bivens et al. 2017). When union density is high, nonunion workers benefit too because unions effectively set broader standards—including higher wages—which nonunion employers must meet to attract and retain the workers they need (Rosenfeld, Denice, and Laird 2016; Mishel 2021). The combination of the direct wage effect for union members and this spillover effect for nonunion workers means unions are crucial to raising wages for working people and reducing income inequality (Card 1996, 2001; Card, Lemieux, and Riddell 2018).

Smaller racial wage gaps

Unions have historically reduced wage gaps between Black and white workers (Farber et al. 2021). For much of the post-WWII period, Black workers were more likely to be in unions and received a larger wage premium for union membership. Today, Black workers represented by a union are paid 12.6% more than their nonunionized Black peers, and Hispanic workers represented by a union are paid 16.4% more than their nonunionized Hispanic peers (EPI 2025b).

Higher wages for women

On average, the wages of women represented by a union are 9.8% higher than those of nonunionized women with comparable characteristics (EPI 2025c). Further, there is suggestive evidence that within workplaces, union bargaining reduces gender wage gaps. For example, Biasi and Sarsons (2020) show that the expiration of teacher collective bargaining agreements led to an increase in the wage gap between men and women with similar credentials, implying that the terms of the collective bargaining agreement had previously helped to minimize such wage gaps.

Increased government revenue and less need for safety net programs

Unionization has a range of positive economic impacts in addition to decreasing wage inequality and raising wages for historically disadvantaged groups. Sojourner and Pacas (2018) find that union membership yields a positive “net fiscal impact”—or, to put it simply, unionized workers have more income and therefore pay more taxes. Unions pave the way for more income and wealth-building for workers and therefore more revenue for the government.

Sojourner and Pacas (2018) also find that unionized workers need fewer public benefits. Higher incomes allow workers and their families to be less dependent on government benefits and unions also help workers win benefits such as health insurance from their employers.

#### Promoting bargaining is key to reducing inequality and increase unionization.

Wells King 20, former research director at American Compass, “Workers of the World”, September 18th, 2020, https://americancompass.org/workers-of-the-world/, DOA: 6/19/25, Rslish

Given the obvious limitations of the American enterprise-based system, some reformers and labor leaders are considering the potential for collective bargaining at the sectoral, regional, and even national level – so-called “broad-based bargaining.” Labor market centralization is strongly correlated with higher union organization, and sectoral bargaining is the most conducive to union growth. The OECD reports that coverage by collective bargaining is only stable and high where some form of broad-based, multi-employer bargaining exists.

Broad-based bargaining improves the performance of unionized industries and firms along a number of different dimensions. It has been shown to reduce employee turnover and to establish better, and also more flexible, safety standards for particular industries. By including all employers within a given industry, it creates new incentives and collaborative forums for worker training; industries covered by sector-level agreements are more likely to invest in workforce development and devote greater resources to firm-sponsored training.

Broad-based bargaining’s benefits also spill over into the broader economy, improving both labor-market and social outcomes. It increases national employment by both reducing unemployment and increasing labor force participation, and also boosts productivity rates for covered industries. Meanwhile, it compresses wage distributions across entire industries, much as enterprise-based bargaining does within unionized firms, reducing economic inequality.

In countries with broad-based bargaining – particularly those were agreements are national in scope – unions are responsive to macroeconomic issues like wage-driven inflation and international competitiveness. They tend to strike a balance that accepts relatively lower wages but promotes healthier firms and rising productivity, which supports higher wage growth in the long run. In Germany, for instance, trade unions have agreed to set wages below marginal productivity in order to increase the competitiveness of export sectors.

#### Unionization and bargaining rights are critical to combat corporate power by forcing competition.

David Kaplan 25, Senior Specialist in the Social Protection and Labor Markets Division of the Inter-American Development Bank, Ph.D. in Economics from Cornell, “What Is Monopsony and How Does It Affect the Labor Market?”, July 18th, 2025, <https://blogs.iadb.org/trabajo/en/what-is-monopsony-and-how-does-it-affect-the-labor-market/>, DOA: 7/22/25, Rslish

The second implication for public policy has to do with the importance of labor unions. According to the U.S. Council of Economic Advisers, unions can serve as a counterweight to employers’ bargaining power and their unilateral use of “monopsonistic power,” promoting higher wages, better working conditions, and even more efficient employment levels. In other words, the presence of monopsony in countries may justify efforts to reverse a long-term trend of declining unionization. In fact, a recent study found that the negative impact of monopsony on wages is smaller where a larger share of workers are represented by unions. This study also found that the link between productivity and wages is stronger when unions have more representation.

The presence of monopsony in countries may justify efforts to reverse a long-term trend of declining unionization.

The third implication is perhaps the most obvious. Just as there are efforts to combat and regulate monopolies, experts are beginning to look at how to regulate monopsony. For example, Alan Krueger and Eric Posner propose strengthening the monitoring and scrutiny of mergers between companies to detect adverse effects on the labor market. Likewise, Krueger and Posner suggest strengthening and increasing the power of workers by prohibiting agreements that prevent low-wage workers from seeking employment in companies that compete with their current employer. They also propose banning agreements between branches of a single company from competing for the same workers.

Nevertheless, it is possible that the best way to combat monopsony is to promote an environment where more high-productivity companies compete for available labor. One study, for example, finds that an economic environment with both high- and low-productivity firms exacerbates the monopsony problem because the few high-productivity companies face no competition in the labor market. In this sense, fighting monopsony involves not only measures traditionally associated with “worker protection,” but also policies typically linked to promoting productivity.

Combating monopsony involves not only measures traditionally associated with “protecting the working class”, but also measures associated with promoting productivity.

Monopsony Versus Perfect Competition

My impression is that the debate on the best public policies in the face of monopsony is beginning. Policies aimed at strengthening the bargaining power of workers or limiting the power of employers are justified by the evidence of the monopsony problem, but we should not forget the warnings of the “classic” model altogether of perfect competition over excessive state intervention. In my opinion, the mistakes of “praising too much the virtues of the free labor market” and “ignoring the unforeseen consequences of intervening too much in a market” are equally common and dangerous.

Given the growing interest in the topic of monopsony we arrive at two conclusions that go hand in hand with the growing empirical evidence of its existence:

First, worker protections designed to give employees a larger share of the pie can also serve as an incentive to create a more productive labor market—that is, they can help grow the pie—provided they are implemented in a measured way. 

Second, a productivity agenda aimed at increasing the size of the pie can also end up giving workers a larger slice. This is how we see opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean to improve working conditions: by giving workers a bigger share of a larger pie for all.

#### Increasing bargaining power through labor law reforms is key. That causes reductions in inequality and promotes growth.

Austin Clemens 25, Former senior fellow at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth and former assistant research scientist at the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University, Equitable Growth, “Slow wage growth is the key to understanding U.S. inequality in the 21st century”, 07/08/25, https://equitablegrowth.org/slow-wage-growth-is-the-key-to-understanding-u-s-inequality-in-the-21st-century/#:~:text=As%20others%20have%20pointed%20out,to%20significant%20drops%20in%20consumption., Accessed: 07/14/25, mcc

This issue brief is primarily focused on the income data, where inequality has been stable over the past two decades, as opposed to wealth inequality, which has increased over the same period. Specifically, this brief looks at the past 23 years of income growth in the United States through the lens of the five streams of income mentioned above. **Understanding how** these **streams of income add up to total income can yield new insight about the U.S. economy.** In particular, analyzing the data shows the following:

* Income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, has changed little and is currently almost exactly at its average level for the 2000–2023 period.
* This single-number summary, however, obscures important dynamics. Income growth has been highest for households in the bottom 50 percent of the distribution and households in the top 10 percent of the distribution. Those in the 50th percentile to the 90th percentile, representing the middle and upper-middle class in the United States, have seen weaker income growth.
* In the 21st century, **wages have grown slower than any other income source**, making these two decades an outlier in recent U.S. economic history. This slowdown in wage growth largely explains why households in the 50th percentile to the 90th percentile have lagged other groups in income growth because this group is the most dependent on wage gains.
* Although the bottom 50 percent of households have kept pace, more and more of their income comes in the form of in-kind transfers, such as from Medicaid and Medicare, which means their economic welfare is advancing slower than their incomes.
* **There is no substitute for a strong U.S. labor market. To reduce income inequality in the United States and increase the share of income that households earn from wages, workers need greater bargaining power.**
* Income inequality will likely increase because of policies pursued by President Donald Trump and the Republican-controlled Congress that erode the power of workers and cut benefits in major government programs, such as nutrition assistance, health care, and housing energy assistance.

Taken together, these findings are disconcerting. Although inequality has largely stopped expanding, the current level of inequality in the United States is high, and an analysis of the components of income suggest that there is significant weakness along the entire income distribution, outside of the top decile. **The primary culprit is a labor market that no longer generates strong wage growth for U.S. households.**

As others have pointed out, **the macroeconomic impact of rising inequality is likely to be slowing growth.** Lower-income households have high propensities to consume. Even modest erosion of their incomes could lead to significant drops in consumption. The likely result is a double whammy of weak and unevenly distributed economic growth.

#### Worker mobilization is inevitable, but only federally enacted sectoral bargaining channels it into union strength that delivers wins.

David Rolf 20, founder and President Emeritus of SEIU 775 and a former International Vice President of SEIU, “Economic and Political Bargaining Both Depend on Trust”, September 24, 2020, https://americancompass.org/economic-and-political-bargaining-both-depend-on-trust/, DOA: 8-30-25, Rslish

Option number three is some version of sectoral bargaining. Support for this option is growing among labor leaders, but is far from universal. I doubt there is any perfect system, but from the perspective of someone who has spent his adult life and career working within the limits and contortions of the current U.S. system, this option has by far more appeal for the reasons we’ve discussed – it covers more workers, creates far-better economic outcomes, creates fewer incentives for a race-to-the-bottom, focuses conflict on periodic macro-level national or regional bargains rather than on the shop floor, and allows greater avenues for labor-management partnership.

How could this actually happen?

In a perfect world, there probably would be a 1500-page federal law scrapping most of the NLRA and instituting a broad new system of sectoral bargaining in one fell swoop, and I’m not willing to give up all hope for that in the long run. But the federal government isn’t famous for domestic policy innovations that haven’t first been prototyped by cities and states, or in specific industries. Even the Wagner framework itself can trace its roots to late 19th century railway legislation, the 1912-15 U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations, the World War I-era War Labor Board, and the 1926 Railway Labor Act.

As you point out, there are several avenues for experimentation, learning, and progress short of a comprehensive federal reform. Your three examples are all apt.

States (or in some cases home-rule cities) could experiment with bi- or tri-partite industrial standard setting. One state might create a sectoral bargaining framework for a specific industry with persistently low wages or dangerous work that lawmakers believe needs addressing. The existing union(s) or alternative worker groups that meet a threshold of legitimacy and the employer-representatives (probably a trade association) might negotiate directly, with a public representative or arbitrator empowered as a “tie-breaker,” and the resulting agreement could be binding at least as a set of minimum standards on the industry.

This path has some limits – it seems unlikely that without a federally-enacted framework the resulting “bargains” could be incredibly prescriptive over some employment terms without running afoul of NLRA preemption. It also seems more likely to succeed in place-based service industries where firms don’t have a credible threat to flee across state lines seeking less stringent labor standards. But this path has already shown promise with state and local wage boards, some based in statute and others politically constructed. And in many cities and states, existing laws for awarding public construction contracts help create de-facto sectoral bargaining in the commercial construction industry (an industry also notable for high levels of labor-management partnership around apprenticeship and training programs, retirement plans, and health insurance).