## Offcase

**DA – 1NC - Federalism**

Federalism DA

**Progressive federalism is mounting under Trump now. Solves the aff but state capacity is key.**

Stephen **Jordan 22**, Co-Founder of IO Sustainability, CEO of Institute for Sustainable Development, Co-Managing Partner of Return on Resilience, "Are States Ready for the New Federalism?," Institute for Sustainable Development, 08/21/2022, https://www.isdus.org/post/are-states-ready-for-the-new-federalism

Secondly, a confluence of ideologies and political interests may continue to drive the new federalism onward. Red states like Texas have long championed local control, while blue states like California and New York now seek autonomy for climate mandates and healthcare reforms. Texas’s school choice contrasts with California’s emissions standards, but both reflect a bipartisan push to wrest power from Washington. This rare red-blue consensus, locked in by the looming debt crisis, suggests this restructuring of state and federal government roles and responsibilities will have legs.

To get out ahead of this, state policy makers need to strengthen their capabilities and get their own fiscal houses in order, if only for competitive reasons. Citizens are already voting with their feet and running away from states like Illinois and New Jersey. However, state-level federalism will demand more than capacity building —it will require innovation and intelligent policy development. No matter what level of political jurisdiction, we cannot just spend our way out of our problems. States must overhaul outdated operations, and embrace technologies like AI and automation to stretch budgets while maintaining services.

Smart strategy beats dumb money every time. States will have to learn how to be more productive, create market incentives to achieve goals they cannot directly fund, and figure out how to stretch budgets and build capacity at the same time. State policy innovation isn’t optional; it’s survival.

The new federalism is a high-stakes bet that the country will be able to survive and thrive with less concentration of power in Washington. The proposed super block grants that the Trump Administration is considering will empower states to tailor solutions, but without fiscal stability, strategic muscle, and technological savvy, there will be hiccups, if not outright disasters. As the federal government steps back, states must step up—not just because of Trump’s agenda, but for their own economic safety and future prosperity. The success of continued positive U.S. domestic development, depends on state and local policy makers rising to the occasion and acting with wisdom and foresight in the months and years ahead.

**The plan prevents states from capturing fired federal workers. That’s key to capacitate states as a Democratic counterweight.**

Talya **Minsberg 25**, New York Times reporter covering breaking and developing news around the world, "Rejected by Washington, Federal Workers Find Open Arms in State Governments," New York Times, 3/15/2025, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/15/us/politics/states-hiring-fired-federal-workers.html

Where the federal government sees waste, states see opportunity — both to serve as a counterweight to the Trump administration and to recruit some much-needed talent.

In the weeks since the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, began eliminating jobs, state and local governments have been actively recruiting federal workers impacted by the Trump administration’s effort to dramatically reduce the federal work force.

Hawaii is fast-tracking job applications. Virginia started a website advertising its job market. Gov. Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania signed an executive order aimed at attracting federal employees to the state’s 5,600 “critical vacancies” in the state government. Both New Mexico and Maryland announced expanded resources and agencies to help federal workers shift into new careers in the state, and Gov. Kathy Hochul of New York is encouraging people to “come work in the greatest state in the nation.”

There has been interest. The New York governor’s office said roughly 150 people have signed up to attend information sessions hosted by the state’s Department of Labor.

But it’s too soon to say how many federal employees are applying for state-level roles and how exactly demographics could shift as a result, according to William H. Frey, a demographer at the Brookings Institution.

There were about 2.3 million civilians employed by the federal government’s executive branch when President Trump was sworn into office on Jan. 20. Thousands of government jobs have been cut as part of DOGE’s cost-cutting efforts across a range of agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration and the National Institutes of Health.

Some of those fired employees have since been rehired, and courts have temporarily stopped some of the administration’s efforts. Many federal employees, including those who have highly specific government skills, are suspended in the unknown and looking for new roles pre-emptively.

State governments have begun competing to attract those federal employees to unfilled state roles. The effort also has political overtones, with states run by Democrats leading the charge.

“If the Trump administration turned you away, Minnesota wants you,” Gov. Tim Walz of Minnesota said.

Walz, the Democratic vice-presidential candidate during last year’s election, announced efforts to help federal employees find jobs in Minnesota on March 6, the day after the Trump administration said it planned to cut over 80,000 employees from Veterans Affairs.

Gov. Kathy Hochul of New York launched an ad campaign targeted at federal employees last week. “We won’t denigrate you. We will treat you with dignity and respect that you deserve because, in New York, we know it’s not the demagogues and the technocrats who make America great, it’s public servants,” she said in a statement.

On Feb. 18, Gov. Josh Green of Hawaii signed an executive order designed to attract federal workers and fast-track the state’s hiring process.

“We’ve already had 1,239 applications for technology jobs, investigator positions and corrections officers, to name a few categories,” Mr. Green said in an email. “We’ve needed a lot of these positions to be filled.”

Maryland, which has the second-highest concentration of federal employees outside of Washington, set up a variety of initiatives for former federal workers, including a way to help those interested in starting a second career with Maryland’s public schools. Senator Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, in announcing the state’s efforts, called the federal government cuts an “illegal purge.”

“This is not about efficiency. This is about rigging the government for the already rich and powerful, like Elon Musk,” he said in a statement.

**Progressive federalism solves climate change.**

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Case Studies in Collaborative Federalism:

How States Led the Way on Air Quality and Climate Change

Over the past 40 years, some of the best examples of progressive federalism have been in environmental policy.

Individual state and local governments have led the nation time and again in pushing for cleaner air, and those efforts have produced significant national benefits.

Consider the extraordinary impact of California’s tougher restrictions on automobile emissions. With cities like Los Angeles suffering from acute smog, California received an exemption under the 1976 Clean Air Act that allowed it to impose stricter rules than those of the federal government. As it happened, more than a dozen other states eventually adopted the California standards as their own. By 2016, the federal Environmental Protection Agency had extended California’s rules to apply to all cars made in 2016 or later. Despite relentless opposition from car-makers, the industry survived handily.

Even more remarkable was California’s seemingly quirky insistence that refrigerators be more energy efficient.

In 1976, the state imposed the nation’s first ever efficiency standards on refrigerators. Other states, such as Massachusetts and New York, soon followed suit. Appliance manufacturers not only complied with new rules but managed to save consumers big money in the process. Eventually, the industry actually collaborated with consumer groups and Congress on legislation to make California’s rules nationwide requirements. President Ronald Reagan, who has never been called a regulatory zealot, signed that bill into law in 1987.

The energy-efficiency results have been enormous. According to the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy, adjusted for inflation, the average annual energy cost of a new refrigerator has plunged from $1,556 in 1976 to $550 in 2010. In other words, the energy savings for a single year are almost equal to the cost of a new refrigerator.

States have also led the way on climate change and on reducing carbon emissions. In 2006, 12 states sued the Environmental Protection Agency under President George W. Bush over its refusal to classify greenhouse gases as dangerous pollutants. The Supreme Court ruled 5-4 in favor of the states, a verdict that forced the EPA to come out of hiding. In 2009, under President Obama, the EPA concluded that certain greenhouse gases did indeed endanger public welfare. That finding provided a basis for the Obama administration’s new auto-emissions s tandards and its Clean Power Plan for reducing power-plant emissions.

President Donald Trump is now rushing to reverse course, signing executive orders to roll back the Clean Power Plan and pull out of the Paris Climate Accord.

Here is where the rhetoric around federalism can get distorted. President Trump claims that one of his goals in abandoning the Paris Accord is to return power to the states. But many of the biggest states and cities are defying the president and pressing ahead on their own.

More than a dozen states, representing one third of the U.S. population, have joined the U.S. Climate Alliance and have vowed to meet the Paris commitments. So have more than 200 cities. Under Governor Jerry Brown, California is forging its own foreign policy. He helped launch the Under2 Coalition, a global pact of cities, states and even nations pledging to pursue sharp reductions in carbon emissions. As of early 2017, the coalition included more than 170 jurisdictions—including Canada and Mexico—with combined populations of more than 1 billion people.

Between 2000 and 2014, even without mandates from Washington, D.C., 33 states implemented a broad array of climate action plans to reduce carbon emissions. Despite the warnings of naysayers that such plans would reduce economic growth, the economies of these states expanded at healthy rates at the same time. Several states have introduced their own cap-and-trade systems to put a price on carbon, and many are still on track to meet President Obama’s targets under the Clean Power Plan. California’s cap and trade system was recently renewed with bipartisan legislative support, and will generate substantial funds to support other government investment programs.

“Yes, I know President Trump is trying to get out of the Paris agreement, but he doesn’t speak for the 6 rest of America,” Governor Brown declared in a video to the Global Citizens Festival in Hamburg in July 2017. “We in California and in states all across America believe it’s time to act.”

Many American cities are also standing firm. Michael Bloomberg, the former New York City mayor and billionaire philanthropist, has launched a cross-sector coalition called “We Are Still In,” which already includes more than 1,200 leaders from cities, states, corporations and universities. The goal, Bloomberg says, is to create a “parallel” government that can bypass the Trump administration and preserve the Paris accords. Just as California and other states drove national standards on automobile emissions and appliance efficiency, the new coalitions can bring their own market clout in the years ahead. As Bloomberg noted in a letter to United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, “The bulk of the decisions which drive U.S. climate action in the aggregate are made by cities, states, businesses, and civil society.”

**Climate change causes extinction through cascading, complex system failure. Mitigation is key – adaptation causes existential termination shock.**

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1. Introduction

Despite recent social protests and climate emergency declarations, efforts to mitigate climate change to date are insufficient.1 Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions continue to rise and global warming above 3 °C is increasingly likely this century.2 There is emerging evidence of amplifying feedbacks accelerating3 and dampening feedbacks decelerating.4 These feedbacks exacerbate the possibility of runaway global warming,5 estimated at 8 °C or greater by 2100.6 Such temperature increases translate to a range of real dangers,7 shifting the narrow climate niche within which humans have resided for millennia.8

Looking beyond the framing of “global warming”, there is concern that the effects of ﻿ climate change may pose an ﻿ existential risk to humanity, one that threatens “societal collapse” or even extinction.9 Understanding these worst-case scenarios is essential for good risk management.10 Improving awareness of potential pathways through which ﻿ climate change poses such a risk can help inform decision- making about interventions.11 Considering societal impacts that are more tangible for individuals, businesses and governments,12 and better ﻿ aligned with conventional risk priorities,13 may facilitate more effective action to mitigate ﻿ climate change.14

A number of pathways through which ﻿ climate change could cause societal collapse have been identified, one being via food insecurity.15 Climate change is predicted to undermine agricultural systems and disrupt food supply,16 which may lead to economic shocks, socio- political instability as well as starvation, migration and conflict at local through to global scale.17 While the climate science underpinning global warming estimates is well established,18 albeit subject to sensitivities, the uncertainties increase significantly when we start to consider these tangible societal impacts given the complex relationships involved.19 Our understanding of worst-case scenarios, and particularly of empirical evidence addressing the causal pathways through which ﻿ climate change may cause societal collapse, is underdeveloped.20

In this chapter we aim to identify and structure an empirical evidence base of the relationships between ﻿ climate change, food insecurity and societal collapse. We do this using Causal Loop Diagrams (CLD), a system dynamics approach that is useful for visualising the relationships between variables in a complex system.21 This chapter is organised as follows. In Section 2, we review the societal collapse and ﻿ existential risk literature to refine the aim introduced above. In Section 3, we develop an original methodology to establish a new empirical evidence base and create a novel-format CLD of causal pathways between ﻿ climate change and societal collapse. In Section 4, we present and discuss the results from the application of this methodology to the ﻿ climate change, food insecurity and societal collapse causal pathway of interest. We conclude, in Section 5, by identifying avenues of future work that may build upon this chapter.

2. Literature Review

To refine the aim of this chapter, introduced in Section 1, our review examines whether there is historical evidence of ﻿ climate change as a mechanism of societal collapse and to what extent have causal pathways been documented to inform our understanding of ﻿ climate change as an existential threat to contemporary society.

We first define the terms “﻿ existential risk” and “societal collapse” as used in this chapter. Adopting ﻿ Ord’s definition, “an ﻿ existential risk is a risk that threatens the destruction of humanity’s long-term potential” be it incomplete destruction, such as societal collapse, or complete destruction, such as extinction.22 Adopting Kemp’s definition, societal collapse is an “enduring loss of ﻿ population, identity [and/or institutional] complexity”;23 it may be abrupt or gradual, but is typically rapid because it is notably transformative, and may be experienced by a local, national or the global community of people. Fig. 1 presents a conceptual model of societal collapse, synthesised from the broader literature, to provide further contextual definition.

[FIGURE 1 OMITTED]

The rise and fall of civilisations has been documented since the earliest recordings of history and is increasingly studied to inform our understanding of societal collapse.24 We consider two types of historical studies that provide insight into ﻿ climate change as a mechanism of societal collapse in the past. We note that other mechanisms are also discussed in the literature, and there is debate about the role of different mechanisms in particular societal collapse events.

The first type of historical study empirically investigates an individual societal collapse event using primary sources, including anthropological, archaeological and paleontological data. Based on such data analysis, natural ﻿ climate change has been asserted as a mechanism of societal collapse in many of these case studies, as established by de Menocal25 and Weiss and Bradley.26 For example, Hodell et al.,27 Haug et al.,28 and Medina-Elizalde and Rohling29 analyse paleoclimate data alongside the archaeological record to show that drought conditions, driven by ﻿ climate change likely due to solar forcing, contributed to the collapse of the Classic Maya civilisation of Mesoamerica in ~8–10th century CE. Weiss et al.,30 Cullen et al.,31 and Cookson et al.32 show that regional aridity, driven by ﻿ climate change likely due to ﻿ volcanic forcing, contributed to the collapse of multiple societies across Mesopotamia, including the Akkadian Empire in ~22nd century BCE. Similarly, natural ﻿ climate change has been implicated in the collapse of multiple Late Bronze Age societies around the Mediterranean,33 including Mycenaean Kingdoms in ~12th century BCE,34 the Harappan Civilization of South Asia in ~19th century BCE,35 the Angkor Empire of Southeast Asia in ~15th century CE,36 multiple Chinese Dynasties37 and civilisations along the Silk Road38 during the previous millennium, the Norse Vikings of Greenland in ~16th century AD,39 and the Tiwanaku Empire of Pre- Columbian South America in ~10th century CE40 amongst others.

This first type of studies establishes precedence of natural ﻿ climate change as a mechanism of societal collapse throughout history, demonstrating the risk that anthropogenic ﻿ climate change similarly poses to contemporary society. However, the events examined occurred more than 100 years ago, with most dating back to ancient history, when societies were relatively isolated. Because these case studies pre- date contemporary society, they do not provide empirical evidence of anthropogenic ﻿ climate change in context of today’s highly interconnected society.41

Statistical evaluation of the frequency and significance of natural ﻿ climate change relative to other mechanisms of societal collapse identified across these case studies has not yet been established within the literature. However, the second type of historical study does qualitatively examine collections of these case studies to develop theories of predominant modes of societal collapse. Three major modes are observed, as follows.

Fagan42 and McMichael43 focus on natural impact on the human system across multiple civilisations, concluding that natural ﻿ climate change is predominant having significantly influenced human existence throughout history. Over the past 12,000 years, the natural and human systems developed within the stable climate niche of the Holocene Epoch.44 The associated geographic endowments governed human transition from band societies based on foraging to complex societies based on agriculture. Unfavourable subtle (e.g. weather variations) and drastic (e.g. natural disasters) shifts in climate influenced the collapse of complex societies either by direct loss of life or indirectly via resource insecurity. In particular, in this mode, typically, the loss of agriculture led to de-﻿ population via famine, migration or conflict due to food insecurity.

Ponting,45 Wright,46 and Diamond47 focus on human impact on the natural system across multiple civilisations, concluding that human overpopulation and overexploitation relative to the carrying capacity of the environment is predominant. Societal collapse via environmental degradation often involved unsustainable agriculture, exacerbated by natural ﻿ climate change, leading to de-﻿ population as well as institutional breakdown via loss of economic stability and socio-political dysfunction due to magnified inequality. This mode aligns with early “Malthusian ﻿ catastrophe”,48 ”tragedy of the commons”,49 and “overshoot-and- collapse”50 theories.

In their 12-volume magnum opus exploring the rise and fall of 28 civilizations, Toynbee concludes that “great civilizations are not murdered [but rather] they take their own lives.”51 Building on this, Tainter,52 Acemoglu and Robinson,53 and Johnson54 focus on human impact on the human system across multiple civilisations, concluding that societal complexity in relation to problem-solving inability (e.g. environmental degradation) and institutional dysfunction (e.g. inequality and oligarchy internally, trade ally and hostile neighbour relations externally) is predominant. As a society becomes more complex, it reaches a point beyond which “continued investment in complexity as a problem-solving strategy yields a declining marginal return” and it will be at risk of collapsing under its own weight via institutional breakdown and de-﻿ population.55 This mode aligns with ”energy returned on energy invested” theory,56 applied to explore societal collapse by Homer-Dixon.57

Diamond,58 Turchin,59 and Schwartz and Nichols60 examine why some civilisations have been able to thrive or recover, rather than collapse. They similarly conclude that societies have flourished due to combinations of favourable geographic endowment, managing their existence within the carrying capacity of the natural system, and co-operative action in problem-solving.

This second type of studies highlights that societal collapse involves a complex nexus of factors and dynamically interlinked events. For instance, Gibbon details how all three of the modes, described in the preceding five paragraphs, contributed to the collapse of the ﻿ Roman Empire.61 These modes of societal collapse, although based on empirical evidence pre-dating contemporary society, describe key aspects of the anthropogenic ﻿ climate change problem faced today. While these studies describe causal pathways of relevance, to the best of our knowledge, no study has used CLDs to untangle the complexity and give structure to the dense information in this evidence base.

Across these historical studies, we observe no apparent temporal or spatial influence on the occurrence of societal collapse. Rather, societal collapse has been described as occurring in various forms, whether it be by known “white-swan” or surprise “black swan” events,62 in different geographic locations and times throughout history. Additionally, a quantitative statistical analysis by Arbesman shows that societal collapse has occurred randomly and independent of civilisation life- spans.63 These qualitative and quantitative observations highlight that any society may be susceptible to collapse, much in-line with the Red Queen Hypothesis of the Law of Extinction.

From these historical studies, we observe sets of secondary determinants for each of the primary determinants introduced in Fig. 1, which are defined in Fig. 2. Considering a geographically bounded society, emigration refers to any permanent departure of ﻿ population including both voluntary or forced migration, conflict mortality accounts for deaths directly arising from any form of domestic or international conflict (e.g. due to ﻿ war), and natural mortality accounts for deaths related to domestic environmental conditions (e.g. due to famine). The loss of socio-cultural norms, political structures or economic value accounts for that which notably transforms the identity and institutions of the society.

[FIGURE 2 OMITTED]

In addition to these historical studies, we consider the relatively nascent studies of existential risks (X-risks) that provide insight into how ﻿ climate change may trigger societal collapse in the future.

Comprehensive surveys of X-risks reveal mechanisms that could cause the collapse of contemporary society. Bostrom and Ćirković,65 ﻿ Rees,66 and Ord67 provide eminent scholarly treatment of the field, drawing from the academic literature. The World Economic Forum68 and Global Challenges Foundation69 produce global risk reports drawing from decision-makers and experts across intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations. These surveys establish that many historically observed mechanisms of societal collapse, including natural ﻿ climate change, remain applicable as X-risks today. However, the ﻿ state of existence of contemporary society has led to a different landscape in which these mechanisms apply, and to a number of unprecedented mechanisms, including anthropogenic ﻿ climate change. ﻿ Ehrlich and ﻿ Ehrlich70 and Häggström71 note that although increased complexity, such as globalisation and ﻿ technological advancement, can increase a society’s resilience and adaptability, it can also increase ﻿ vulnerability. For example, globalisation increases resilience to local agricultural production shocks through access to global markets; however, it also increases ﻿ vulnerability through ﻿ exposure to sudden reversal in connectivity, such as trade restrictions.72 Some geoengineering technologies, for example, may enable society to mitigate and adapt to ﻿ climate change; however, they may also increase ﻿ vulnerability to ﻿ termination shocks, where failure of the technology exposes society to sudden temperature increases.73 In this highly interconnected landscape, “synchronous”74 and ”cascading”75 failures create the potential for mechanisms and outcomes of societal collapse, once contained to a single localised civilisation, to rapidly spread across multiple nations and impact humanity on a global scale.

Works by Lynas,76 Wallace-Wells77 and Gowdy78 draw on the scientific ﻿ climate change literature to explore hypothetical futures under best- to worst-case scenarios. The scenarios consider the feedbacks within the natural system that could worsen, as well as the potential for humans to mitigate, anthropogenic ﻿ climate change. Shifts in average weather (e.g. temperature) and natural disasters (e.g. floods) affected by ﻿ climate change could impact human mortality directly. These two effects, coupled with sea level rise due to melting of ice caps, could indirectly impact human mortality via degradation of the natural world system (e.g. land quality) and the human world system (e.g. ﻿ infrastructure failures) resulting in resource and service insecurity. This insecurity could impact institutional stability, resulting in economic loss, political dysfunction and social unrest, as well as migration and conflict. The hypothetical outcomes for contemporary society against the threat of anthropogenic ﻿ climate change range from dystopian (collapse) to utopian (recovery).

These futures studies identify endpoints of different causal pathways between anthropogenic ﻿ climate change effects and potential impacts on the human world system, with the latter reflecting key determinants of societal collapse observed in the historical studies. Scholars have made limited in-roads to empirically investigating the top-level relationships between some of these endpoints using recent datasets. The direct links between ﻿ climate change and the endpoint impacts of mortality, conflict and migration are, respectively, examined by Mora et al.,79 Hsiang et al.80 and Hauer et al.81 The feedback between migration and conflict driven by climate change is examined by Abel et al.82 The direct links between ﻿ climate change and the endpoint impacts of economic loss, political instability and shifts in cultural norms are examined by Burke et al.,83 Sofuoğlu and Ay,84 and Adger et al.85 respectively. However, the complex bottom-level links between and surrounding these endpoints are generally ill understood,86 and the strength of empirical evidence is poorly documented from a systems science perspective.87 To the best of our knowledge, no study has empirically examined how the impacts of ﻿ climate change could explicitly translate into societal collapse for contemporary society. We do not have a clear picture of ﻿ climate change as a ﻿ systemic risk to our globalised society, particularly at spatial scales accounting for the heterogeneity of individual identity, business governance and policymaking across nations, and international exchanges. This limits our ability to understand feedbacks, identify intervention points, develop quantitative models and inform strategies to minimise the risk of societal collapse occurring in the future.88

Given the insights from this review, we refine the aim of this chapter as follows. Firstly, the empirical evidence base should specifically address contemporary society. Secondly, the CLD should be constructed at a scale and granularity that addresses the heterogenous characteristics of nations and international interactions. The refined aim of this chapter is thus to identify an empirical evidence base of ﻿ climate change, food insecurity and societal collapse in contemporary society and structure the evidence base with a CLD defined at global scale and national granularity.

3. Methodology

A two-stage framework, consisting of five steps, was developed to achieve the aim of this chapter. For each step, below, we first introduce it generically and then describe its application to our specific analysis of the ﻿ climate change, food insecurity and societal collapse causal pathway.

3.1. Stage 1: Establishing an empirical evidence base of societal collapse in contemporary society

Step I deploys societal collapse proxies via a key word search to identify “evidence points”, which in this instance may be considered data points, in the form of publications that empirically examine the causal pathway of interest in contemporary society.

The determinants defined in Fig. 2 provide these societal collapse proxies to establish the new empirical evidence base in lieu of historical societal collapse events pre-dating contemporary society. The ﻿ population loss set are straightforward to isolate, consistent to measure across nations and describe tangible consequences. The institutional breakdown set are relatively less so. Thus, the societal collapse proxies adopted in this study were natural mortality (i.e. starvation, with respect to food insecurity), conflict mortality and emigration; subsequent studies could use the institutional breakdown set. Key words were selected based on terminology of ﻿ climate change, food insecurity and the societal collapse proxies. Peer-reviewed journal articles were chosen as the form of evidence point in this study; subsequent studies could use other publications, such as books and reports.

The keyword search was performed in Scopus. A record of the search is contained in the Supplementary Information (A.). Approximately 3,000 publications were reviewed by reading the title, abstract and main body as needed. Evidence points were selected based on satisfaction of the following criteria: the publication (a) is a peer-reviewed, English- language, journal article; (b) uses empirical, data driven methods; (c) examines the period from 1990 to present (2019), representative of contemporary society; and (d) primarily examines the causal pathway of interest. We made an exception to (a) to include the most recent Limits to Growth book,89 which was not itself a search result but documents the World3 model that was identified in the search results. We note that (b) precluded selection of review or essay-style publications; however, we found that these were often discussed in the literature review of selected evidence points, so were, nonetheless, accounted for indirectly.

This step resulted in a new empirical evidence base consisting of 41 evidence points, which are summarised in Fig. 4.

Step II defines a custom colour-coded typology for the new empirical evidence base. This typology is used in Stage 2, to construct a final CLD (f-CLD) in a novel format showing the spread of the evidence base across the system.

In this study, we were interested in the methodological spread as this provides information on data that may be useful for future studies. Four methodological categories were identified in the new empirical evidence base. Each evidence point was classified into one of these categories and assigned a colour coding, namely: quantitative ﻿ complex systems model — red; statistical analysis of quantitative dataset — blue; collection / analysis of qualitative interview / survey data — green; quantitative data-led case study / scenario — yellow.

The resulting typology of the new empirical evidence base is shown in Fig. 4.

3.2. Stage 2: Constructing a novel-format causal loop diagram from the empirical evidence base

Step III involves creating an individual CLD (i-CLD) for each evidence point to clearly structure the complex causal relationships examined. These i-CLDs provide the building blocks from which to construct the f-CLD in Step IV.

[FIGURE 3 REMOVED]

The process to create an i-CLD is as follows. The corresponding evidence point was examined in its entirety to identify and record key information in the form of variables (nodes), links (arrowed lines) and relationship notation (positive or negative). Key information derived from the original data-driven content, i.e. the main analysis, of the evidence point was colour coded in the i-CLD according to the typology classification established in Step II. Any relationships hypothesised but not supported by the main analysis were coloured grey. Key information derived from other content, i.e. the literature review, of the evidence point was coloured black. The scale and granularity of the i-CLD was recorded as detailed in the evidence point. This process was repeated for each evidence point in isolation until a complete set of i-CLDs was produced for the new empirical evidence base.

All 41 i-CLDs created in this study are contained in the Supplementary Information (B.). One of the i-CLDs is shown in Fig. 3 as an example. Step IV reconciles the set of i-CLDs into a standardised format in order to construct the f-CLD of the system of interest at the desired scale and granularity.

The standardisation process has two aspects. One aspect is related to component (variables and links) definition, necessary to maximise clarity of the f-CLD while covering all information contained in the evidence base. This addresses the typical challenge of CLDs becoming dense and overcomplicated, which decreases their ﻿ utility. The other aspect is related to level of aggregation, necessary to ensure the f-CLD conveys information at the intended scale and granularity. The standardisation is an iterative process, as follows.

The ~950 variables from the set of 41 i-CLDs were recorded on a blank worksheet for the f-CLD, without links between them. A clustering approach was used to reconcile these variables into like groups. For each group, an overarching major node was isolated and the i-CLD variables in the group were virtually deposited into a matrix for that major node. For example, drought, sea level rise and crop disease were some of the i-CLD variables clustered into an environmental risk factors f-CLD major node matrix. The f-CLD major nodes were defined at a level of aggregation representative of a nation. Doing so effectively scaled down any global or regional aggregation, and scaled up any sub-national or local aggregation, in the i-CLD variables. For example, household food imports was an i-CLD variable of local aggregation that was scaled up to national food imports (trade) in the f-CLD.

The ~1150 links from the set of 41 i-CLDs were reconciled into arrowed lines between the major nodes in the f-CLD. This sometimes- required interpretation of implied causality in the i-CLD relationships in order to route them across the major nodes in the f-CLD. For example, where an i-CLD showed a direct link from international food price to conflict variables, this was routed using arrowed lines from international food price to national food price to food ﻿ accessibility to food insecurity and finally to conflict major nodes defined in the f-CLD. Where there was a discrepancy between relationship descriptions, the relationship with the most supporting i-CLDs was adopted.

The interim f-CLD produced at the end of each standardisation iteration was examined to determine whether the major node definition could be refined to maximise clarity. For example, in one iteration water and land were defined as separate major nodes, but examination determined that each had the same arrowed lines to other major nodes; therefore, another iteration was undertaken with water and land now clustered under a single natural resources major node in order to minimise redundant arrowed lines. This process was iterated several times until an f-CLD had been constructed at an appropriate level of detail for this study. Additionally, relevant literature reviewed in Section 290 was cross- referenced, but not included as evidence points, to ensure comprehensive coverage of key relationships in the f-CLD.

The standard-format f-CLD, consisting of uncoloured and unweighted components, resulting at the end of this step is contained in the Supplementary Information (C.).

Step V maps each i-CLD to the f-CLD using a weighted (line thickness) typology (colour-coded) approach. This visually documents the spread of the evidence base across the system described by the f-CLD.

The process to map an i-CLD to the f-CLD is as follows. Each variable (node) of the i-CLD was assigned to its corresponding major node(s) in the f-CLD. Each link (arrowed line) of the i-CLD was assigned to a corresponding route along the arrowed lines in the f-CLD. Each time an arrowed line in the f-CLD had an i-CLD link assigned to it, an incremental weighting of one-unit line thickness in the corresponding typology colour-coding of the i-CLD link was added to the f-CLD arrowed line. This process was repeated for each of the 41 i-CLDs until all had been mapped to the f-CLD. A record of this process for each of the 41 i-CLDs is contained in the Supplementary Information (D.).

The novel-format f-CLD, consisting of colour-coded and weighted components, resulting at the end of this final step is presented in Fig. 5.

4. Results and Discussion

The new empirical evidence base and novel-format CLD of ﻿ climate change, food insecurity and societal collapse in contemporary society resulting from the application of our original methodology (Section 3) are discussed in turn below.

4.1. Empirical evidence base of climate change, food insecurity and societal collapse in contemporary society

The new empirical evidence base (Section 3, Step I), along with its colour-coded typology (Section 3, Step II), is presented in Fig. 4. It consists of 41 evidence points, of which 9 examine the natural mortality (i.e. starvation, with respect to food insecurity), 20 the conflict mortality and 12 the emigration societal collapse proxy, alongside other human and natural world system factors. We discuss three key aspects of the evidence base, namely temporal and spatial distribution, data-driven method distribution, and advantages of each data-driven methods, below.

The temporal scale and granularity of study varies across the evidence base; however, our methodology limited the possible scale of study to the period from 1990 to present, representative of contemporary society. Within this period, approximately half of the evidence points cover a scale of less than one decade and the other half a scale of greater than one decade. Approximately half of the evidence points conduct analyses at yearly granularity and the other half conduct analyses at granularity greater than one year, with only a few studies conducting analyses at monthly granularity. The spatial scale and granularity of study varies across the evidence base. Approximately one third of the evidence points investigate the system at a global scale, with the remaining two thirds focusing on regional or national scales, primarily in Africa as well as the Middle East and Asia. Approximately half of the evidence points analyse the causal pathway at sub-national granularity, with the other half primarily focusing on national-level granularity. This variation provided different coverage of the complex relationships within the system, which was informative for constructing our CLD.

The distribution of data-driven methods used across the evidence base is notably different for each societal collapse proxy. Evidence points for natural mortality mostly use collection/analysis of interview/ survey data. This is likely because the minimum daily food intake for human survival is well established;91 as such, statistical analysis of food and mortality data sets would not yield significantly new insights into thresholds whereas interviews/surveys can provide insight into an individual’s circumstances influencing this relationship. Evidence points for conflict mortality mostly use statistical analysis of existing datasets. This likely reflects the interest in rigorously curated conflict datasets, such as UCDP/PRIO,92 across the conflict and peace fields. Evidence points for emigration mostly use collection/analysis of interview/survey data, likely because this provides nuanced insight into an individual’s decision to migrate. It may also be due to data availability and quality challenges that limit quantitative statistical analyses, which are being addressed by groups such as the International Organization for Migration’s Global Migration Data Analysis Centre.93 Amongst these data challenges, it is important to recognise the issue of reconciling different types of voluntary and forced migration with causal drivers, given the complex social, economic and political factors at play; this challenge similarly applies to the other societal collapse proxies but is particularly noted in the migration studies. We observe from these studies that a food insecurity threshold for natural mortality is well established but thresholds for conflict mortality and emigration are not. Indeed, distinguishing causal drivers within datasets and defining quantitative thresholds for these determinants remains a ”grand challenge”.94

[FIGURE 4 REMOVED]

Each data-driven method offers different advantages. The ﻿ complex ﻿ systems models each describe “chunks” of the system at different scale and granularity. The models provide mathematical definition, are ﻿ calibrated to real-world data and enable quantitative simulation of key relationships in the system. The statistical analyses quantitatively examine relationships between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables within the system, which can be used as a mathematical basis for extending ﻿ modelling capabilities. The collection/ analysis of interview/survey data provides insight into qualitative aspects of human perspective and decision-making that quantitative data sets cannot provide directly. The data-led case study/scenarios combine quantitative data with qualitative expert interpretation to better understand global trends and ﻿ forecasts. These latter two methods can also be used to inform the development of ﻿ modelling capabilities, the scenarios analysed by such models and their application in decision- making processes. Collectively, these different data-driven methods can yield useful insights into the nuances of relationships in the system of interest.

4.2. Causal loop diagram of the climate change, food insecurity and societal collapse in contemporary society at global scale and national granularity

The main result of this chapter is the CLD (the f-CLD from Section 3, Step V), presented in Fig. 5. It structures the relationships between ﻿ climate change, food insecurity and societal collapse as described in our new empirical evidence base (presented in Fig. 4 and discussed in Section 4.1). We discuss three key aspects of the CLD, namely insights related to the spread of empirical evidence, the qualitative ﻿ complex system depicted, and quantitative ﻿ complex system ﻿ modelling, below, alongside consideration of well-established benefits and limitations of CLDs.

Our CLD is presented in a novel format that documents the spread of our empirical evidence base. We use line thickness and colour, respectively, to depict the density and type of the data-driven methods used by the empirical evidence points to analyse a given link between two variables.

Doing this aids comprehension of where existing work has been focused with respect to the ﻿ climate change, food insecurity and societal collapse causal pathway. It may also help with the identification of gaps in existing analyses. For example, we can see that the link between food insecurity and conflict has been investigated mostly by evidence points using statistical analyses (blue), whereas the links between food insecurity and migration, and food insecurity and natural mortality, have been investigated mostly by evidence points using interviews/surveys (green). This hints that it may be useful to investigate the former using quantitative statistics, and the latter using qualitative interviews/surveys, to gain further insights offered by the different data-driven methods as described in Section 4.1.

It is important to recognise that our CLD may show negligible density for important links or even be missing important variables and/or links, either because they have not yet been studied or because our key word search failed to identify evidence points that have studied them. For example, our study focused on the ﻿ climate change, food insecurity and societal collapse causal pathway, so the density of our empirical evidence is concentrated along links central to this pathway, whereas the links between peripheral variables in the system, such as between fertility and births, show a lower density of empirical evidence. Similarly, our use of the ﻿ population loss set of societal collapse proxies means that the evidence base details natural mortality, conflict mortality and emigration, whereas the institutional breakdown set are not detailed. In considering this issue, our methodology attempted to maximise the ﻿ rigour and transparency of our study by documenting the spread of our empirical evidence base to help make the reader aware of exactly how much and what type of evidence was supporting the CLD presented here.

Further, we can see that while empirical studies have linked ﻿ climate change via food insecurity to our societal collapse proxies of natural mortality, conflict mortality and emigration, we found no empirical studies linking these proxies to the explicit term of societal collapse. This was expected given the motivation of this study (Section 1) and is due to the fact that there are no contemporary events of societal collapse, under the same definition as those in the historical studies pre-dating contemporary society, that enable these links to be empirically studied.95

Having considered the spread of empirical evidence, we now consider the ﻿ complex system documented. A key benefit of CLDs is that they simply present a myriad of information in a single diagram; in doing so, CLDs enable comprehension of the structure and behaviour of ﻿ complex systems, including feedbacks, intervention points and far- reaching interdependencies.96 Our CLD visually depicts a system of 39 variables, 105 links and 32,000 feedback loops,97 integrating information from different fields including climate science, ﻿ food security, conflict, migration and health research.

Walking through the CLD at a high-level, we can see how ﻿ population growth and lifestyle emissions, influenced by institutional/demographic factors (e.g. emission reduction incentives), combine to directly drive ﻿ climate change. Similarly, they indirectly drive ﻿ climate change via consumer demand on food production, which produces emissions directly (e.g. ruminant livestock) and indirectly via industrial capital/ output (e.g. processing factories). The environmental risk factors (e.g. extreme weather events) of ﻿ climate change may cause losses of food production either directly (e.g. plant disease) or indirectly via agricultural input availability (e.g. loss of water source for irrigation). A country’s food availability is influenced by domestic food production and international food trade. Food ﻿ accessibility is influenced by its food price, which responds to domestic (e.g. cost of food production and distribution) and international (e.g. international food price) markets, and institutional/demographic factors (e.g. food subsidies). Food utilisation is influenced by ﻿ infrastructure/services (e.g. ﻿ education) and institutional/demographic factors (e.g. cultural traditions). Food insecurity is underpinned by these three pillars of food availability, food ﻿ accessibility and food utilisation. For a given country, food insecurity can drive natural mortality (i.e. starvation), conflict and migration, contributing to ﻿ population loss, as well as economic shocks and socio- political instability, contributing to institutional breakdown, which exacerbates the risk of societal collapse.

Beyond a given country suffering increased natural mortality, famines (i.e. food insecurity) can place pressure on international humanitarian efforts (i.e. institutional risk factors). Conflict may occur domestically or internationally and can feedback to exacerbate food insecurity and institutional fragility (i.e. institutional risk factors). Potential mass emigration can increase pressure on food availability, natural resources and ﻿ infrastructure/services in the destination nation, which can lead to socio- cultural tensions (i.e. institutional risk factors) that fuel conflict. Food insecurity can also directly contribute to institutional risk factors such as social unrest, political instability and economic inequality, which increase the risk of societal collapse due to institutional breakdown, that may also ﻿ cascade internationally. While already fragile ﻿ states are expected to be hit the worst directly, these insights reveal the indirect ramifications of ﻿ climate change on our globalised society,98 with serious consequences for humanity’s ”existential security”.99

While some of these relationships may appear obvious, it is the act of bringing this information, which may otherwise be siloed and thus preventing consideration of the full story, together in one place that is of value.100 In doing so, our CLD attempts to provide readers with the opportunity to explore the ﻿ climate change, food insecurity and societal collapse causal pathway, consider worst-case scenarios that we want to avoid, develop transformative narratives of “where we want to go” and think about interventions that may help us attain this desired future.101

It is important to appreciate that CLDs are only as good as their information inputs; our CLD documents relationships based on information portrayed in our empirical evidence base as well as our interpretation of that information. As such, there exist challenges and limitations.102 For instance, CLDs may mask variability of relationships in different contexts and locations, because they can only depict a single scale and granularity. The portrayal of explicit causality between variables in a CLD is a challenge as this can often work in both directions rather than one. CLDs can often become either too complicated or too simplified, which undermines their usefulness. In considering each of these issues, our original methodology attempted to maximise the ﻿ rigour and transparency of our study by first documenting the information in each evidence point with an i-CLD and then consistently applying, and recording, the iterative process of reconciling the variables and links from each i-CLD to construct the f-CLD at the selected global scale and national granularity. In doing so, we sought to enable the reader to be aware of the nuances of the different scales and granularity of information underpinning our CLD, as well as our process of carefully reconciling causality, over 950 variables to 39 variables and 1150 links to 105 links to maximise the information conveyed while balancing readability.

It is also important to note that, due to their qualitative and static ﻿ nature, CLDs do not enable us to comprehend the dynamics of the system, including nonlinear and emergent behaviour, non-intuitive quantitative results and time delays.103 Complex systems models, although with their own challenges and limitations,104 provide the opportunity to quantitatively analyse the dynamics of a system and gain insights into the potentially far-reaching impacts of our decisions.105 However, ﻿ complex ﻿ systems models that explicitly examine societal collapse in contemporary society are underdeveloped. The World3 system dynamics model106 — an evidence point in this study (refer to Supplementary Information D).107 — is the eminent model of relevance, with only a limited number of studies building on it. World3 examines the potential for “overshoot-and-collapse” given ﻿ population and industrial growth within the finite carrying capacity of the natural world system, implicitly accounting for ﻿ climate change and explicitly accounting for food availability.

The information contained in our CLD and empirical evidence base may be useful in identifying and informing opportunities to improve these existing ﻿ complex systems ﻿ modelling capabilities for ﻿ climate change, food insecurity and societal collapse scenarios. For example, our CLD highlights important factors at global scale and national granularity that World3 does not incorporate because it is defined at global scale and granularity.108 World3 does not distinguish heterogenous characteristics of nations, such as distribution of ﻿ population or geographic endowment of natural resources. It also does not account for international interactions, such as food trade, conflict and migration. Relatedly, World3 evaluates societal collapse only by natural mortality (defined by food availability, age and pollution) and does not include the other two ﻿ population loss secondary determinants, as noted in the previous sentence, nor the three institutional breakdown secondary determinants. While our empirical evidence base may provide useful direction to datasets, it is important to note that quantitatively defining these relationships, particularly thresholds as discussed in Section 4.1, remains a key challenge of developing ﻿ complex ﻿ systems models. Nonetheless, given that individuals associate with national identity, business governance and policy-making are concentrated at national level, and international interactions underpin the functioning of contemporary society it could be valuable to model societal collapse risk profiles of different nations to inform the prioritisation and development of intervention strategies.

[FIGURE 5 REMOVED]

5. Conclusions and Future Work

This chapter identified an empirical evidence base of ﻿ climate change, food insecurity and societal collapse in contemporary society and structured the evidence base using a novel-format CLD defined at global scale and national granularity.

Two types of future work could extend from the results of this chapter. Identification of gaps in the spread of evidence across the CLD may guide future data-driven efforts to examine these causal relationships and define thresholds. The CLD and evidence base may be used to develop quantitative ﻿ modelling capabilities, particularly by transforming the structure of World3 to account for heterogenous national characteristics and international interactions. Three types of future work could extend from the methodology and literature synthesis. The causal pathway examined in this chapter could be further detailed by re-applying the methodology using the institutional breakdown set of societal collapse proxies instead of the ﻿ population loss set. The methodology, using either set of societal collapse proxies, could be applied to detail other causal pathways between ﻿ climate change and societal collapse. The methodology, excluding the contemporary time- period limitation, could be applied to document the information in the historical studies identified in the literature review. Similarly, the methodology could be applied to construct CLDs at different scales and granularities.

It is hoped that this chapter has contributed to developing our understanding of the causal pathways through which ﻿ climate change poses an ﻿ existential risk to humanity and facilitates opportunities for future work.

[REFERENCES OMITTED]

[CHAPTER 14 BEGINS]

Highlights:

• In this short chapter the authors draw on several research strands and papers within CSER to offer a theoretical reflection on how to think about catastrophic climate change and what Existential Risk Studies can learn from climate change research.

• This is intended to build on the previous chapter, in which Catherine Richards, Richard Lupton, and Julian Allwood provide an empirical assessment of one highly concerning risk cascade involving climate change and highlight its potential contribution to global catastrophic and existential risk.

• Climate change is one of the most empirically well-studied risks and has deep links to pre-existing bodies of literature, such as disaster risk management, environmental studies, and food security.

• Drawing on these studies and more, the chapter reflects on how to frame research questions in existential risk, what causes catastrophic climate change to be neglected by climate and existential risk researchers alike, and how to incorporate assessments of response risk and co-benefits into thinking about catastrophic climate change.

This short chapter brings together a number of important ideas and draws readers attention to other extant bodies of literature. The relative value of ﻿ co-benefits approaches is discussed in other chapters in this volume, including Chapter 4, in more detail. The dangers of ﻿ response risks are further discussed in Chapter 2.

1. Asking the Wrong Questions for the Right Reasons

Within Existential Risk Studies it is common to hear people ask the question “is ﻿ climate change an ﻿ existential risk?”, and many who ask this question answer negatively, arguing that as a result ﻿ climate change is not an important topic of research within the field. However, whether it is answered affirmatively or not, this question is misguided. There are three reasons for thinking this. Firstly, it makes little sense on a probabilistic level; whether something will be a threat to our collective existence is not a binary matter, it is a question of likelihood. However, many researchers within Existential Risk Studies mistakenly conflict ﻿ existential risk with events that could be existential ﻿ catastrophes. Secondly, ﻿ climate change is not a single uniform process that will affect everyone in the same way; it is a set of diffuse impacts to different ﻿ exposed populations, interacting with different ﻿ vulnerabilities and ﻿ exposures, and activating different risk ﻿ cascades. As Richards et al. show, it will inevitably interact with a host of other threats (not only ﻿ food security and societal collapse, but even factors such as the explosivity of ﻿ volcanic eruptions or the emergence of zoonotic pathogens),1 and these can interact with one another to create reinforcing feedback loops or “global systems death spirals”.2 Finally, “﻿ existential risk” is too vague and arbitrary a concept for the question to ever be answered. All the definitions of ﻿ existential risk that have received the greatest public attention thus far, such as Toby ﻿ Ord’s, focused not in terms of an impact on humanity at any point in time but rather in terms of “the loss of long-term future value”;3 either referring to the author(s) particular vision of a high-tech intergalactic utopia, or a fuzzy undefined idea of “our potential”.4

Other authors have practised attribution substitution and sought to answer an easier question such as “will the direct impacts of ﻿ climate change make the Earth uninhabitable?” as a proxy for existential risk,5 or suggested agricultural impossibility as a proxy for ﻿ civilisational collapse at a given level of temperature rise.6 These are certainly more tractable questions, but they are also entirely different questions, and there is a danger in thinking that answering them is sufficient to assess the overall level of ﻿ climate risk.

We are better off reverting back to the common-sense definition of ﻿ existential risk as the risk to the existence of a given object, and specifying whether the object under threat is humanity as a whole (﻿ extinction risk), global industrial society (collapse risk), or something else entirely. We should be thinking of an overall level of risk emergent from a particular socio-ecological system, and how much ﻿ climate change influences this level.7 And the question we should be asking about this risk is what contribution, under certain scenarios, ﻿ climate change will make, bearing in mind that it will almost certainly be operating in tandem with many other drivers of risk.

Considering this revised question can also help to rectify a recurring problem in the ﻿ climate risk literature: using mean global temperature rise as the sole threat indicator. Authors and ﻿ activists alike have frequently made a direct link between the level of warming and the likelihood of global ﻿ catastrophe, with 4–6 °C being most frequently used as this terrible threshold.8 However, global surface temperature is only one of the ﻿ climate change induced factors we need to worry about. 3 °C of warming above pre-industrial levels could be entirely manageable if it occurs in a world of adaptive technologies, high levels of multilateral cooperation, wealth equality, trust in institutions, and the safe management of other ﻿ planetary boundaries. It could also be catastrophic in a world where other ﻿ planetary boundaries are transgressed, the international order is riven with conflict, lethal autonomous weapons are in mass production, and societies are scarred by inequality, low trust, and polarisation. Understanding the contribution of ﻿ climate change to Global Catastrophic Risk requires a more sophisticated approach which looks beyond the direct impacts of a given level of warming to think through fully formed climate scenarios. We believe that, when conceived of in this way, the risks associated with ﻿ climate change are more appreciable and it is far harder to argue that understanding them is unimportant; however, even if others disagree with this assessment, we still maintain that this is the right way to think about the problem.

2. Catastrophic Neglect

Given how poorly questions about catastrophic ﻿ climate change are often framed, it is hardly surprising that it has been a highly neglected subject of study, not only among ﻿ existential risk researchers but also among ﻿ climate change researchers. Even at the basic level of temperature rise scenarios, we give far more attention to studying the impacts of lower- end warming rather than high-end warming. Text-mining of IPCC reports shows that mentions of 3 °C and above is underrepresented relative to its likelihood (and impact),9 a finding that has been verified by both literature sampling and the reports of popular authors trying to summarise the climate risk science.10 If anything, this trend appears to have worsened over time with subsequent IPCC reports.111 The use of complex risk assessments to study climate scenarios has also been neglected: looking at compound hazards is already rare,12 let alone considering risk ﻿ cascades and integrated climate ﻿ catastrophe assessments. Yet catastrophic ﻿ climate change remains high on the public and political agenda, creating both a perception that this is a risk receiving far more attention than it is, and also an intellectual vacuum that is easily filled by poor quality research, ranging from speculative doom-mongering13 to overly simplistic neoclassical economic models.14

There are four key reasons for this oversight of extreme global ﻿ climate risk. First is international climate policy. The 2015 Paris Climate Agreement on Climate Change has channelled scientific attention toward the agreement’s goal of limiting warming to 2 °C above pre- industrial levels and pursuing efforts to stabilise it below 1.5 °C, as these are now the publicly stated goals of climate ﻿ negotiations (even if they are highly unlikely to actually be realised). Second, analysis of high-end warming scenarios and complex risk assessments are simply harder to do. The higher the warming gets, the more difficult it becomes to study, as these scenarios are more displaced for the current climatic niche. Moreover, complex ﻿ climate risk assessments involving multiple factors are far more challenging than a ﻿ hazard-centric analysis focusing on only the direct impacts of mean global temperature rise. Third, climate scholarship has had a strong incentive to “err on the side of least drama”.15 Climate change has long been the target of fossil-fuel industry campaigns to sow doubt, not just on attempts to assess ﻿ climate change’s catastrophic potential but even the fundamental science, and this creates incentives for conservative science that builds consensus and does not risk exploring divergent hypotheses.16 Finally, many fear that discussing extreme risk could cause people to dwell too much on worst case scenarios, breeding fatalism and paralysis. However, this concern is misplaced; meta-analyses over hopeful vs. fearful messaging are mixed,17 and in any case this is a false dichotomy. One of the most referenced pieces for those concerned about the paralytic effect of fear does show that hopeful messaging is more poignant than fear but also that “worry” is even more effective than hope.18 The difference between worry and fear is one of degrees; the latter could even dissipate into the former over time. Furthermore, research should not be a PR exercise aimed to sway the public, in open democracies we have a duty to do honest risk assessments combined with clear recommendations for what can be done.19

Of course, these factors are only compounded by the consensus procedures of the IPCC, which seeks to synthesise scientific evidence for political purposes but is still often held up as a neutral arbiter of climate science. While useful, these procedures tend to produce lowest common-denominator outcome, which is precisely what is not needed when exploring extreme risks.20 This is an important point of reflection for any future efforts to build similar bodies aimed at bringing scientific research to bear on the governance of other global risks.

3. The Risks and Rewards of Responding

Climate change is inherently tractable and we already have the technologies we need to stop creating it, albeit without the institutions to fairly distribute them with a sufficient level of urgency. However, responding to risks like ﻿ climate change can incur risks of its own. Indeed, the IPCC, in its risk concept notes to the sixth assessment report, does not just discuss the usual three determinants of risk, ﻿ hazard, ﻿ vulnerability, and exposure, but also identifies “﻿ response risks”.21 Others have suggested that response should be added to the classic list of determinants.22 In some cases, responses may be far worse than the initial perceived risk, that is, they are iatrogenic: the treatment is worse than the disease.

Existential risk is especially prone to ﻿ response risks due to its scale, severity, and often speculative ﻿ nature. For instance, at the extreme a speculative fear of dispersed ﻿ weapons of mass destruction could justify a mass surveillance state.23 In general, there is always the potential for concerns over global risk to justify a Stomp Reflex — the abuse of emergency powers which inappropriately empower those atop a hierarchy and shield them from scrutiny. 24 This is also true for climate change

Reacting to ﻿ climate change could lead to emergency responses, such as ﻿ stratospheric aerosol injection (﻿ SAI), in an attempt to manipulate the quantity of solar radiation hitting the earth and thus counter some of the impacts of ﻿ climate change. Existing data on the direct impacts of ﻿ SAI and its contribution to ﻿ systemic risk or triggering other ﻿ hazards is sparse. Preliminary analysis suggests that the greatest problem is the ﻿ latent risks of “﻿ termination shock”. If a calamity such as a nuclear ﻿ war deactivates the system for a prolonged time, then this could significantly accelerate warming. Hence ﻿ SAI shifts the ﻿ risk distribution by likely lowering the level of risk in an average scenario but fattening the tail or “worst-case” scenarios depending on how ﻿ SAI is deployed, to what degree it is used, and what geopolitical and ecological world it is dispersed into.25 On the other hand, there are also frequently neglected ﻿ co-benefits of climate mitigation policies, such as the public health benefits of eliminating coal smoke and other pollutants from our air.26

Such problems of ﻿ response risk are perhaps the most neglected. Yet they are precisely what the study of ﻿ existential risk needs to grapple with. This could include by using robust decision-making procedures, such as the minimax principle, to aid in selecting policy options under ﻿ uncertainty or using ﻿ deliberative democratic processes to combine ﻿ diverse perspectives and co-create effective policy responses.

### CP – 1NC - Adv

#### The United States federal government should establish the following civil service protections:

#### 1. establish ironclad prohibitions on reassigning, coercing, defunding, or dismissing federal workers for political reasons;

#### 2. establish anti-discrimination and whistleblower protections, including banning retaliation and providing legal and financial support for disclosures;

#### 3. streamline hiring, firing, and promotion for federal workers based on merit and offer to reinstate terminated high-performing and high-value workers;

#### 4. offer world-class, merit-based pay, benefits, and job security;

#### 5. reverse and prohibit Trump’s administrative budget cuts and deregulatory efforts;

#### 6. reaffirm Humphrey’s Executor;

#### 7. via Congressional foreign policy oversight committees, enact organizational reforms to address overlapping missions and obsolete programmatic constraints, briefing Congress routinely on covert actions and soliciting recommendations for improvement with immediate executive compliance;

#### 8. and adopt a scientific integrity policy across all federal agencies enforced by an independent investigation and review board, empowered to issue financial and injunctive remedies.

#### The United States should impeach and remove President Donald J. Trump for the high crime of violating the separation of powers through bad faith, unlawful civil service terminations and dedicate an inspector general office to internally investigating claims of state secret privilege abuse.

#### Planks 1-4 solve. The thesis of the CP is that they have read a 1AC that says we need particular employment law outcomes for workers but have no defense of the CBR process to achieve that. The CP solves by fiating those directly without avoiding the extra steps. That also avoids the deference net benefit by avoiding judicial review.

Raymond **Limon 25**, Former Board Member at U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, J.D. from Indiana University Maurer School of Law, Former Chief Human Capital Officer at U.S. Department of the Interior, 30 years of federal service, Peace Corps volunteer, "In today's chaos, is it too early to discuss civil service reform?," Federal News Network, 6/2/25, https://federalnewsnetwork.com/commentary/2025/06/in-todays-chaos-is-it-too-early-to-discuss-civil-service-reform/

However, starting on Jan. 20, that promise to form a more perfect union began to unravel. Independent agencies and leaders congressionally charged with oversight and due process protections were instantaneously under presidential assault. From the ouster of inspectors general to illegal firings of members of multi-party independent boards and commissions, we’ve seen the devastating effects on our citizens. Now, as before these actions, the board has lost its quorum.

Thus, this moment demands more than just reflection; it is a call to action because that is what America does best. With that said, I am not planning to take on a constitutional crisis alone, but I can take on part of it — how to protect the public by strengthening the civil service. When you have the right people at the table, almost any crisis can turn into an opportunity!

Understanding the constitutional crisis

First, let us fully appreciate what a hole we dug for ourselves. Thoughtful voices have already dissected how we arrived at this juncture. Timothy Snyder’s On Tyranny and Anne Applebaum’s Autocracy, Inc. offer sobering analyses. Former Court of Appeals’ Judge Michael Luttig’s piece in The Atlantic, “The End of Rule of Law in America,” lays bare the administration’s legal freefall. Even retired Army General Stanley McChrystal, who is a strong supporter for national service, in “On Character: Choices that Define a Life,” invites us to reevaluate who we are and what kind of nation we want to be.

The warnings were always there. We saw the storm approaching and somehow allowed it to break over us.

Where can I go from here?

Instead of despair, this moment demands action. Here are my two priorities:

Take care of those around us — supporting colleagues, allies and public servants trying to navigate the chaos.

Begin the work of rebuilding — strengthening the civil service that has suffered from neglect.

In my own expertise — civil service laws, human capital policies and federal employment protections — I’ve taken on pro bono projects to support federal employees to help them navigate options and the appeal’s processes. I’ve engaged with key stakeholders — government accountability groups, law firms, unions and media organizations — to help educate, inform and issue spot challenges and opportunities. This is triage. But triage alone is not enough.

Learning from the past: Watergate and reform

History tells us that reform often follows crisis. In the aftermath of Watergate, an overwhelming majority of Congress — 95% — rallied to pass the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. That legislation birthed the Merit Systems Protection Board, the Federal Labor Relations Authority and the Office of Personnel Management, while strengthening federal employment laws in the process.

Could today’s unraveling lead to another era of renewal? It must.

A roadmap for civil service renewal

The federal workforce has operated under outdated frameworks for decades. Layer upon layer of legislation, scattered across agency-specific statutes and national defense authorizations, have created a labyrinth of obstacles since 1978. For example, today there are 120 hiring authorities, 28 separate pay systems and a fractured approach to training and human resources technologies that supervisors and HR professionals must navigate to hire one employee. At times, hiring within the federal government feels closer to miracle than process. The constant scaffolding of recruiting, hiring, performance management, accountability and HR IT systems have been crumbling around us for decades. Rather than taking an honest and strategic approach to reform, the current administration has exploited these challenges to drag us back to the spoils’ system to enable an unitarian President to eventually hire and fire all federal employees at will.

The solution is clear. Reform must be led by those who know the system best: former career CHCOs, employment attorneys, hiring officials, union leaders and experts in federal HR IT systems. An independent review panel, much like the one assembled in 1978, could put forward a serious set of legislative proposals for Congress and the next administration to build upon and strengthen the 1978 law.

Plank 5 reverses budget cuts and deregulation, which solves Trump’spolicy agenda.

Plank 6 reaffirms Humprey’s Executor, which is a court case ensuring agency independence from Presidential coercion.

Plank 7 solves any reason why executive flexibility bad by establishing Congressional oversight committees.

Plank 8 adopts a scientific integrity policy across all agencies, which solves their expertise key arguments.

The last plank ensure checks on the Executive by impeaching Trump, which removes the most proximate cause of polycrisis, AND eliminates abuses of exec power through DOJ oversight.

### DA – 1NC – Capacity

**Strong bureaucracy doesn’t ‘check Trump.’ Gutting the bureaucracy does by destroying capacity for reactionary policymaking.**

Nicholas **Handler 25**, Associate Professor of Law at Texas A&M University School of Law, "Federal Labor Unions Strengthen the Administrative State," LPE Project, 5/5/2025, https://lpeproject.org/blog/federal-labor-unions-strengthen-the-administrative-state/

As a matter of constitutional law, federal labor law does not undermine presidential authority in the way its opponents contend. First, labor protections are narrow in scope. Under the CSRA, only federal “employees” can organize and bargain collectively. “Employee,” as that term is defined, excludes the President’s political appointees, as well as members of the Senior Executive Service, who make up most of the federal government’s managerial core. In fact, anyone who exercises “supervisory” authority over other workers is excluded from bargaining protections. The protections thus don’t reach the categories of workers that participate regularly in the formulation of high-level agency policies. Instead, they cover primarily front-line workers—everyone from scientists, economists, and litigation attorneys to prison guards and park rangers. These positions are key to ensuring that the laws Congress has written are faithfully executed by competent staffs, but don’t formulate the types of policies that we usually think of as presidential prerogatives.

Second, to the extent that specific contractual provisions do impact policy, federal law has built in robust protections for presidential discretion. The CSRA contains provisions that prohibit collective bargaining agreements from infringing on the President’s “management rights,” including the right to determine the agency’s “mission, budget, organization, number of employees, and internal security practices.” When the workplace rights of civil servants conflict with the policy initiatives of the President, the CSRA provides a comprehensive adjudicatory structure for hashing out the dispute—ensuring that the rights of labor and the need to preserve state capacity are balanced against the political prerogatives of the Chief Executive. Moreover, the CSRA gives the President additional discretion to exempt otherwise protected workers from collective bargaining when doing so is necessary to protecting vital interests like “national security.”

Rather, and contrary to the arguments of many unitary executive proponents, unions further the legal and democratic accountability of the executive branch.

TRADEOFFS IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE STATE

First, it is simplistic to suggest that federal labor rights limit presidential power, while eliminating unions expands it. Bargaining might limit the President’s ability to micromanage (and manipulate) the lower reaches of the federal bureaucracy. But in exchange, the protections and autonomy provided by enforceable labor agreements allow the President to recruit skilled workers in a variety of fields (scientists, doctors, attorneys, economists, and experts in dozens more areas) to work for the executive branch, providing valuable skills for much lower pay than they would earn in the private sector. This expanded recruitment pool gives the President power to deliver on key campaign promises in areas ranging from environmental protection to national security. Labor rights thus represent not a diminution of presidential power, but a tradeoff of one form of presidential power (managerial) for another (expanded state capacity). Conversely, undermining labor agreements doesn’t really expand presidential power—it simply swaps out one form of policy-implementing presidential power for another.

Such loyalty-competence tradeoffs (or control-capacity tradeoffs) have been documented in other areas of executive branch policy. And at least in the area of civil service unions, historical evidence suggests that presidents prefer the expanded capacity of a robust civil service to the narrower power to micromanage lower-level workers. Indeed, one surprising aspect of the history of federal sector bargaining is that it was begun largely on the initiative of presidents themselves, the unions’ ultimate counterparty. President Kennedy first authorized civil servants to join unions and bargain by executive order in 1962, rights subsequently expanded by other presidents until being formalized by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 at the urging of President Carter.

Presidents repeatedly explained that these expansions of bargaining rights were necessary to recruit skilled workers (especially knowledge workers) to the executive branch, and thus to meet the increasingly labor- and skill-intensive demands of the modern presidency. As a major government reform commission explained in 1955, “[t]he Federal Government ha[d] lagged behind other organizations in recognizing the value of providing formal means for employee management consultation,” and as a result had failed to attract the white-collar workers it needed for more knowledge-intensive public administration. In short, the unitarist argument that labor rights undermine presidential power is both simplistic and short-sighted: labor rights offer the executive a different, more valuable form of power that is arguably necessary for modern presidents to deliver on their campaign promises.

Second, labor rights also provide presidential-bureaucratic relations a more transparent, legally accountable structure than they would otherwise have. Absent an absolutely catastrophic loss of state capacity, the executive branch needs to employ millions of people across a wide range of fields to implement public policy. A bureaucracy of that size and complexity will inevitably pose difficulties in terms of oversight and political control: There is only one president, and he has only a limited ability to monitor and control individual civil servants at any given point in time. Thus, regardless of how much formal power the president has, oversight breakdowns and tensions between the desires of the President and the interests of the bureaucracy are bound to arise. This is not an issue of constitutional law, but a reality of large-scale organizational management.

The question is what form these tensions and breakdowns will take. In poorly regulated systems without well-defined worker rights, bureaucrats might express displeasure with the president through various forms of quasi-legal “resistance” (for example, shirking duties, leaking to the press, or performing their job functions in manner designed to hinder presidential objectives). Presidents might assert managerial authority through threats, abuses, and preferential treatment of political allies. In short, the ordinary disputes that arise between labor and management would work themselves out through opaque, inefficient, and often counter-productive conflicts that would be impossible for democratic institutions to effectively monitor.

In a bureaucracy with well-defined labor rights, by contrast, agency heads and workers bargain over points of contention, reduce agreements to written contracts, and litigate disputes before formal arbitral bodies. The President and his agency heads can negotiate and litigate conflicts openly; administrative judges and Article III courts can supervise disputes; and Congress can amend statutes to alter the balance of labor and management rights to address any perceived imbalances. In other words, bureaucratic disputes that would otherwise be opaque and unregulated are instead managed and overseen by all three branches of federal government, with ample room for the President to vindicate his managerial rights and press his policy objectives.

In short, labor rights expand, rather than limit, the President’s ability to deliver on his political priorities. And they do so in a manner that is much more legally structured and democratically accountable than any of the likely alternatives.

**Competent Trump locks in MAGA power and policy for a generation.**

Fred **Bauer 8/29**, Writer at National Review, Author of upcoming book on reimagining freedom, "Trump cannot govern without the bureaucrats he despises," UnHerd, 08/29/2025, https://unherd.com/newsroom/trump-cannot-govern-without-the-bureaucrats-he-despises/

A series of high-profile terminations — at the Federal Reserve, intelligence agencies, the Treasury Department and elsewhere — has sent Washington spinning. Fed governor Lisa Cook is now suing President Donald Trump over his “illegal attempt” to fire her, while the defenestration of the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — a Trump nominee who was confirmed only last month — has helped paralyse that organisation. While providing fodder for journalists, this frantic turnover also lays bare a bigger strategic imperative for the White House: to find some détente between a charismatic and a technocratic style of politics.

With his decades running the Trump Organization and dominating the tabloids, the President follows a personality-driven leadership style. Instead of being shackled by procedure, he opts to lead with his gut, viewing politics less as a clash of ideological visions and more as two or more power players striking a deal. He prefers bilateral negotiations to highly orchestrated summits for international affairs.

However, building the next paradigm almost certainly requires using, rather than simply detonating, bureaucracies. The US federal government is a globe-spanning leviathan, employing close to three million civilians and over two million in the armed services. Achieving any kind of major policy change demands phalanxes of nimble bureaucrats. Without those employees to formulate policy and enforce directives from the top, a chief executive will be left flailing. These bureaucracies provide the granular data crucial for helping policymakers understand the world in which they act.

Despite its scepticism of the expert class, the President’s populist realignment will require bureaucratic leverage to achieve any real success. For instance, a re-industrialisation programme would benefit from an encyclopaedic knowledge of supply chains — information that the federal government may not currently have. In public remarks earlier this summer, Vice President JD Vance lamented that federal experts could not tell him which products the United States was “completely reliant on some other entity” to manufacture. It will take at least a few Green Eyeshades to fill in those gaps.

The Trump administration’s global rebalancing ambitions make in-depth bureaucratic knowledge even more important. In face-to-face negotiations with world leaders, you need to know what cards each party is holding: how many missiles, fighter jets, and artillery shells. Certain key geopolitical variables cannot be reduced to a clash of personalities. For instance, a pivotal variable for the President’s deliberations about bombing Iranian nuclear facilities was whether those bombs would actually destroy those facilities. Those are technical — not charismatic — questions.

While some level of bureaucratic conflict might be an expected side effect of the President’s disruptive vision, too much chaos could actually undermine his agenda. Continuing melodrama at the Pentagon could, for instance, distract from his foreign policy reset. Also, sometimes bureaucrats can be politically useful early-warning mechanisms. Some DOGE-imposed changes to Social Security — such as cutting phone services for disability claims — generated ferocious bureaucratic pushback and were eventually withdrawn because of the intense popular opposition they generated. Likewise, the ongoing meltdown at the CDC suggests the grave political dangers of a sweeping move to limit childhood vaccinations. Such bans could easily alienate American families and split the Republican coalition.

The President’s second term, even more flamboyant and iconoclastic than the first, offers a good lesson in the importance of technical skill for a populist realignment. So far, Trump’s executive orders have had an outsized effect because he has located staffers who can dot the i’s and cross the t’s. For his biggest policy ambitions, he’ll need a bureaucracy — and he’ll need to know how to use it.

**EPA deregulation efforts are capacity-constrained. Plan unblocks them by restoring the workforce.**

Sara **Samora 25**, Reporter at Manufacturing Dive, M.S. from Columbia Journalism School, B.A. in Journalism and English Literature, U.S. Marine Corps Veteran, Military Veterans in Journalism Advisory Council Member, "EPA Deregulation Efforts Could Take Months or Years, Experts Say," Manufacturing Dive, 3/24/2025, https://www.manufacturingdive.com/news/epa-environment-regulations-neshap-reconsider-process-months-years/743094/

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency launched an extensive deregulation effort March 12, involving 31 actions meant to alleviate federal government oversight of climate-related rules.

The actions affect various industries, including manufacturing, and are part of EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin’s “Powering the Great American Comeback” initiative that aims to create more jobs and grow the U.S. economy.

Manufacturing trade groups such as the National Association of Manufacturers and the American Chemistry Council lauded the efforts, as they have previously urged Congress to curtail oversight, arguing it prevents innovation.

However, many of these deregulations won’t happen overnight, according to experts. The rules finalized under President Joe Biden will stay put as the EPA prepares to launch a comment period for each of the 31 reconsidered statutes, which could take months or even years.

The process could also be stalled by possible job cuts at the EPA, as well as potential legal battles from citizens and states that challenge the deregulations.

How long it will actually take for the changes to take effect is anyone’s guess, said Robert Helminiak, VP of legal and government relations at the Society of Chemical Manufacturers & Affiliates.

“Time is always a challenge,” Helminiak said. “If you have to go through an actual regulatory process, you’re talking about years; nothing is instant with the federal government.”

A long regulatory process

The overarching focus of these actions is to encourage reshoring and bring manufacturing back to the U.S., Helminiak said.

“It’s really to secure the supply chain, especially when we’re looking at things like in the pharmaceutical space or the defense space,” he said. “It’s to make it better and easier to manufacture in the United States. And of course, obviously, we want to do that in the safest fashion possible.”

The EPA will have to go through a rigorous process under the Administrative Procedure Act to roll back these regulations, said Robert Glicksman, an environmental law professor at George Washington University. The process involves proposing a rule, soliciting and considering public comments, responding to those comments and then issuing a final rule, which can take up to two years to accomplish, he added.

“Once we can dive deeper into these actions that the administrators outlined, we’ll have to see what the strategy is and how they’re really going to implement, if they’re looking for input on that implementation, what we can do to sort of help with that implementation,” Helminiak said.

If Congress mandates the rule’s issuance, Glicksman said he expects the Trump administration to weaken the regulations instead of just repealing them.

Many of the regulations the EPA implemented were congressionally mandated, such as the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) under the Clean Air Act.

For NESHAP, the Trump administration is considering a two-year presidential exemption under the Clean Air Act, which would allow facilities to be exempt from the regulation while the agency reviews it, according to a March 12 EPA press release.

However, using this exemption will require a demonstration to prove pollution control technologies used to reduce toxic emissions from facilities are not available and that the move is in the interest of national security, said Nicole Waxman, an attorney at environmental law firm Beveridge & Diamond.

“We can foresee that the administration might ask or might try and collect some information relating to those two factors,” she said.

An uncertain geopolitical climate

One thing the EPA and manufacturing trade groups have in common is a reliance on scientists to research and collect data used to back regulations and industry changes.

However, the flurry of job cuts across many federal agencies could stall some of the revamps the Trump administration is trying to implement, and the EPA is no exception. Scientists at the agency could fall prey to the layoffs.

For example, documents reviewed by the House Science Committee Democratic staff unveiled plans to cut 1,540 positions at the agency’s Office of Research and Development, the New York Times reported.

If the job cuts happen, it could make the reconsideration process longer if there is less staff to address comments and review scientific research submissions, Waxman said. Still, she added, it’s hard to say at this point how long the process will take.

“EPA has to show that they’ve done their homework, too,” Waxman said. “They at least need to show that, in addition to reviewing data that they have themselves, they are reviewing all of the data that will be submitted in these upcoming comment periods.”

Glicksman said there’s also a chance the rollbacks won’t survive possible legal battles if the curtailment or cancelation of existing regulations is challenged.

“[If] the Trump administration wants to repeal or weaken that regulation, it’s got to justify why it’s changing the rules of the game,” Glicksman said. “Unless it’s got strong scientific evidence that counteracts or contradicts the science behind the existing regulation, there’s a good chance a court could conclude that it was arbitrary of an agency like EPA to ignore existing science and nevertheless repeal or weaken regulation.”

What manufacturers can do as they wait

Until these regulations are officially modified or dismantled, manufacturers must still follow the current laws.

**Specifically, the endangerment finding – extinction.**

Joe **Dodson 23**, staff writer at the Courthouse News Service, "Climate Change Skeptics Argue Against Federal Authority to Limit Emissions," Courthouse News Service, 4/14/23, https://www.courthousenews.com/climate-change-skeptics-argue-against-federal-authority-to-limit-emissions/

The Concerned Household Electricity Consumers Council seeks a review of the EPA's decision not to reconsider or revise its 2009 finding that elevated concentrations of six well-mixed greenhouse gases in the atmosphere may reasonably be anticipated to endanger the public health and welfare of current and future generations.

"Evidence of the impact of warming global average temperatures and other associated climatic changes on public health and welfare has only grown stronger in the intervening years," the EPA's brief to the D.C. Circuit states, "as has the scientific basis for attributing these changes to greenhouse gas emissions from human activity."

The agency's determination, commonly called the 2009 endangerment finding, found that the concentration of carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulfur hexafluoride in the atmosphere posed a health threats to humans.

The Concerned Household Electricity Consumers Council is comprised of five individuals, including retired meteorologist Joseph D'Aleo, attorney Scott Univer and the former president of the Women's National Republican Club, Robin Weaver.

"With our petition and supporting material, we've demonstrated that the 2009 endangerment finding is based on a house of cards," attorney Harry MacDougald of Caldwell & Watson, representing the plaintiffs, argued Friday before a three-judge panel.

MacDougald told the judges that the injury his clients suffer is from regulations established following the finding that have hiked home energy prices. They argue that the EPA needs Congress's approval and a robust scientific foundation to authorize emissions limits.

"CO2 emissions are ubiquitous to human activity and are irrefutably indispensable to the daily survival of billions of people against the hazards of nature untamed," the group's brief states. "Fossil fuels have contributed more to improving human health and welfare and the material quality of human life than any other substance in human history."

The brief further states that decarbonizing the United States is technically and economically impossible, and that "climate policy is a far greater threat to human health and welfare than human-caused climate change."

MacDougald argued that regulations predicated by the 2009 finding have constrained the supply of fossil fuels, leading consumers to pay more for energy.

"Most of the electricity in the United States is generated by fossil fuels," MacDougald said. "The effect is manifested through the entire scope of regulation that ultimately rests on the 2009 endangerment finding."

U.S. Circuit Judge Florence Pan, appointed by President Joe Biden, seemed frustrated with MacDougald for failing to bring direct evidence of his clients' suffering an injury at the hands of the EPA's finding. The attorney again pointed to vague allegations that energy prices rise in areas where emissions of greenhouse gases are limited.

U.S. Circuit Judge Gregory Katsas, a Donald Trump appointee, agreed with Pan that the plaintiffs have the burden to show standing, especially considering they are not the power utility companies affected by emission limits.

Justice Department attorney Brian Lynk, representing the EPA, relied on the lack of standing argument for why the court should rule in the government's favor.

"The petitioners have not shown any concrete and particularized injury, in fact, traceable through the EPA act as they were required to do in their opening," Lynk said.

U.S. Circuit Judge Karen Henderson, a George H.W. Bush appointee, also sat on the panel. The judges did not indicate when they would issue a ruling.

Lynk and MacDougald did not respond to requests for comment.

Last year, the U.S. Supreme Court's conservative supermajority found the power to regulate carbon dioxide emissions lies with Congress, not the EPA.

Intervenors on behalf of the EPA in the D.C. Circuit case include the American Lung Association, American Public Health Association and the Clean Air Council.

Alex Bomstein, legal director for the Clean Air Council, said in a phone interview Friday that he disagreed with the notion that climate policy poses a more significant threat to life than climate change.

"The climate catastrophe that we are embarking on now is an existential risk to society as we know it," he said. "The harms have already begun."

According to NASA, human activities have raised atmospheric carbon dioxide by 50% since the beginning of industrial times in the 1800s. The rise is more significant than what naturally happened at the end of the last Ice Age about 20,000 years ago.

Bomstein said Americans already feel the effects of a warmer planet through extreme weather events like droughts and floods. According to NASA, the loss of sea ice, melting glaciers and ice sheets, sea level rise and more intense heat waves are some of the current effects of climate change.

Bomstein said the 2009 endangerment finding is crucial for nonprofits like the Clear Air Council that seek to combat the trajectory of climate change.

"It is an absolute prerequisite for EPA to be able to do anything significant about climate change to have initially that acknowledgment that greenhouse gases are endangering the public," he said.

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**Trump’s systemic dismantling of collective bargaining rights spurs unprecedented federal worker militancy now. That’s key to solve the case and revive militant labor broadly. The plan demobilizes it.**

Joseph A. **McCartin 25**, director of Georgetown University's Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor, author of Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers and the Strike that Changed America, and president of the Labor and Working-Class History Association, "Will Federal Workers Rediscover Their Militancy?," Dissent Magazine, 4/1/2025, https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online\_articles/will-federal-workers-rediscover-their-militancy/

On March 27, President Donald Trump summarily overturned decades of federal labor relations policy and stripped more than 700,000 government workers of their union rights with a stroke of his sharpie. His executive order Exclusions from Federal Labor-Management Relations Programs, which effectively voided union contracts at dozens of departments and agencies, constitutes by far the largest and most aggressive single act of union-busting in U.S. history.

The stated rationale for Trump’s order—that the targeted workers are in agencies that affect national security and they therefore are ineligible for union representation—is flimsily transparent. Even the White House can’t sustain the lie. The administration’s own fact sheet points to the president’s real motivation. His order targets agencies whose unions “have declared war on President Trump’s agenda.” sHow have these unions “declared war”? Apparently, simply by attempting to enforce labor contracts and represent members in grievance proceedings. As the fact sheet notes, Veterans Affairs (VA) workers are losing their rights because their unions had the temerity to file “70 national and local grievances over President Trump’s policies since the inauguration.”

It is obvious that Trump is exacting revenge on unions that are challenging the draconian cuts and closures inflicted by Elon Musk’s renegade Department of Government Efficiency. Tellingly, unions believed to be sympathetic to the Trump agenda, such as those that represent federal law enforcement workers (whose work is more closely related to national security than that of, say, VA nurses or employees of the General Services Administration), have been exempted from his sweeping action.

The Radicalism of Trump’s Union-Busting

With his radical and blatantly political order, Trump, like a deranged Samson, is straining to pull down the solid pillars that have undergirded a remarkably stable system of federal labor relations for decades. If he succeeds, his action threatens many millions more than the federal employees directly affected by his executive order. As the nation’s largest employer, what the government does to labor inevitably ripples through the entire economy.

The only event in U.S. history comparable to Trump’s action is Ronald Reagan’s firing of some 11,500 striking air traffic controllers in 1981. Reagan’s crushing of the controllers’ union, PATCO, brought to a screeching halt the rapid expansion of public-sector unionization in the 1970s and catalyzed a wave of strikebreaking by private employers that set back the entire labor movement. In some ways, labor still struggles with the fallout of that fateful conflict. If Trump’s current action stands, its destructive force promises to be many orders of magnitude larger than the PATCO affair.

To grasp the enormous implications of Trump’s order, consider the elements of the time-tested structure that he is busy pulling down. The first pillar of the system was put in place in 1883 with the Pendleton Act, which created the federal civil service to professionalize those who worked in government and to end the spoils system that allowed the party in power to oust the personnel of federal agencies and install its supporters no matter their qualifications. Under the U.S. Civil Service Commission, federal workers freed themselves not only from fealty to corrupt political bosses but also from the status of at-will employees who can be fired for any lawful reason, or no reason—the condition under which most American workers, who lack union representation, operate to this day. As the civil service emerged, one of its central ideas was that its competent workers could not be fired without cause.

The second pillar of the system was put in place by the executive actions of a bipartisan line of presidents—Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and Richard Nixon—each of whom played a role in expanding federal workers’ collective bargaining rights with the government. The first step was taken by Roosevelt. In addition to signing the Wagner Act, which finally guaranteed most private-sector workers the right to unionize in 1935, he allowed a few federal agencies such as the Tennessee Valley Authority to bargain collectively with unions representing their tradesmen. Roosevelt’s experiment was seized upon and expanded by Kennedy. As Cold War imperatives made it unseemly for a government that claimed to lead the free world to deny its own employees any voice over the terms and conditions of their labor, Kennedy institutionalized collective bargaining for most federal workers by executive order in 1962. Seven years later, Nixon signed an executive order that further strengthened federal union rights and simplified the process through which workers chose union representatives.

In 1978, these two pillars were strengthened by a connecting arch, the Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA). Passed by bipartisan majorities and signed into law by Jimmy Carter, the CSRA created a solid structure connecting civil service and collective bargaining that has endured for almost a half-century. The CSRA defined and updated the rules of the federal civil service, while placing on solid legislative footing the collective bargaining rights that were first outlined in Kennedy and Nixon’s executive orders. The act also created two new enforcement agencies: the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA), whose purpose was to adjudicate disputes between the government and the unions representing its employees, and the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), which was created to guarantee workers due process if they were wrongly fired, demoted, or disciplined.

The system of federal labor relations that took final form in 1978 was founded on three basic principles: First, federal workers, as civil servants, were not to be treated as at-will employees who could be fired without cause. They had the protections of a civil service regime in which they were guaranteed due process. Second, excepting employees of the FBI, the CIA, and select others involved in “primarily performing intelligence, investigative, or security functions” (in the language of Kennedy’s order), federal workers had a right to organize and bargain collectively. Third, federal workers’ union rights were limited: they were not authorized to bargain with agencies over their pay and benefits, because these matters were set by Congress, nor could they engage in strikes or other job actions like slowdown or sickouts.

The system proved remarkably durable, surviving multiple crises and controversies. It was first put to the test in 1981, when frustrated air traffic controllers who believed that Reagan had promised them big pay increases in return for their endorsement of his presidential campaign defied the strike ban and walked off the job. When the strikers ignored Reagan’s ultimatum and refused to return to work, they were fired and permanently replaced. Many activists called for other federal workers to walk out in sympathy with their PATCO colleagues. But the unions representing other federal workers had no interest in challenging a system they thought was basically fair in order to support a union that had blatantly defied its rules. Labor’s failure to challenge the PATCO firings made it possible for Reagan to break that union, and to enjoy significant public support in doing so.

The system was again tested in the aftermath of 9/11. When the Department of Homeland Security was created under George W. Bush, it merged several existing agencies into a mammoth bureaucracy of 177,000, including 56,000 screeners working for the Transportation Security Administration. The Bush administration declared that all DHS workers, including those at TSA, were excluded from the union rights guaranteed by the CSRA. Fighting terror, they claimed, demanded a “flexible workforce” that was “not compatible with the duty to bargain with trade unions.” John Sweeney, then president of the AFL-CIO, alleged that the Bush administration was “using war as a weapon to deny rights to the very workers it relies on to win the war.” But labor’s opposition to Bush’s decision did not rise above the level of scorching rhetoric. Instead, leaders waited patiently for a new administration, and after his election, Barack Obama removed the ban on unions at TSA. By 2012, TSA screeners had won their first union contract.

The importance of the TSA workers’ victory became clear during the federal government shutdown of 2018–19, when a host of federal workers, including TSA screeners, worked without pay for thirty-five days. As the shutdown dragged on, many observers worried that screeners might stage a coordinated sickout in protest of their lack of pay. While their absentee rates did rise, no concerted job action crystallized during the shutdown in part because the TSA screeners’ union, the American Federation of Government Employees, actively discouraged any talk of a job action that might trigger union decertification.

Ironically, it was a small number of strategically placed air traffic controllers who finally brought the shutdown to an end when they called in sick, causing a ground stop at LaGuardia Airport on the morning of January 25, 2019, which led the Trump administration to fold by that afternoon. The union that represented those workers, the National Air Traffic Controllers Association—PATCO’s successor—utterly disavowed any responsibility for their action. I had found out a week before that episode just how afraid NATCA was of any suggestion that its members might stage a job action. When I mused in the American Prospect that a controllers’ sickout would end the shutdown in short order, one NATCA official furiously criticized me for even having uttered that thought in public.

In each of these instances, the seeming stability of the federal system of labor relations and federal unions’ deep investment in preserving that system functioned to contain conflicts that otherwise might have spiraled. Now that system is all but destroyed. After mere months in office, Trump has systematically subverted a robust structure that took decades to build. He fired FLRA chair Susan Tsui Grundmann and MSPB chair Cathy Harris, ensuring that henceforth those adjudicating agencies will do his bidding. He effectively shuttered agencies like USAID and turned whole categories of workers—such as those engaged in DEI work—into at-will employees to be fired without due process. And now he has apparently delivered his coup de grâce, demolishing the union rights federal workers have enjoyed for decades.

What Next?

While the Trump order threatens to produce a veritable nuclear winter in U.S. labor relations, its very radicalism makes its long-term impact more unpredictable. The past is full of cautionary tales reminding us that the more an ambitious actor tries to bend history to their will, the more likely the unintended consequences of their actions will undo their grand plans.

One unintended consequence of Trump’s move is that it could very well rouse the union movement and its allies to a more confrontational opposition to his agenda than anyone could have foreseen. Up to this point, federal unions have confined their resistance to filing lawsuits and contract grievances, circulating petitions, holding rallies, and lobbying legislators. Unions have not contemplated job actions to date in large part because they are forbidden by law; engaging in them could lead workers to lose their jobs and cost unions their certifications as bargaining agents, as happened in the PATCO case. But will calculations change in a world where workers no longer feel protected by civil service regulations and their unions have already been decertified for all intents and purposes?

As the sociologist C. Wright Mills observed long ago, where they are firmly established unions tend to act as “managers of discontent.” They seek to direct their members’ grievances into channels that might produce significant—if usually incremental—gains, and to restrain their members from actions that might threaten the union’s survival or damage its credibility as a reliable negotiating partner in the eyes of management. Yet what happens to workers’ discontent when unions are no longer able to play that role? And what happens to union behavior when the system in which they have invested and from which they derived their own stability is shattered?

Up to this point, most federal workers have operated as though the old assumptions still hold true, believing that the terms and conditions under which they work cannot be revoked by one man’s politically motivated order. Most federal unions believed that a presidential fiat could not override the protections they had under the CSRA as long as their organizations abided by its rules.

As the old order crumbles, however, faith in the courts’ ability or willingness to stand up to Trump’s aggression is waning. On the day after he announced his union-busting executive order, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled 2–1 that Trump had the authority to fire Cathy Harris of the MSPB and Gwynne Wilcox of the National Labor Relations Board in the middle of their Senate-confirmed terms. In his concurring opinion, Judge Justin Walker, a Trump appointee, argued that the Constitution’s framers vested in the president “full responsibility for the executive power.” It seems likely that a majority of justices on the current Supreme Court will arrive at the same conclusion when Trump’s wholesale restructuring of federal labor relations reaches their docket—unless something changes the present dynamic.

Can unions bring about that change? The day after Trump’s order was announced, the AFL-CIO acknowledged the existential threat it posed. “No union contract is safe after last night,” it said. Yet whether unions feel incentivized to resist Trump’s attack with more than rhetoric, lobbying, and redoubled lawsuits is an open question. Union leaders realize that the sudden conversion of federal workers to what is effectively at-will employment status and the simultaneous termination of their bargaining rights merely puts them in the same position as the vast majority of private-sector workers, who lack both union representation and employment security. Could the public be stirred to support government workers in a confrontation with the Trump administration? Uncertain of the answer, union leaders are likely to continue to take a cautious approach to this crisis—at least in the near term. Yet even if union leaders do not seek it, an escalating confrontation is more likely now than it has been in generations.

It is worth remembering that federal labor relations were not always as pacific as they have been in recent decades. One reason that Kennedy signed his 1962 executive order was to head off growing unrest among federal employees. Although it has long been illegal for federal workers to engage in strikes, such actions were not uncommon during the years when the system of federal labor relations was under construction. (Between 1956 and 1961, there were ninety-two work stoppages at Cape Canaveral, where America’s space program was based.) Nor did the Kennedy and Nixon executive orders eliminate such activity. Between 1962 and 1981 federal workers engaged in thirty-nine illegal work stoppages.

Unrest among federal workers peaked in March 1970—after the executive orders were promulgated. In that month, hundreds of thousands of postal workers defied the federal ban on striking and staged an eight-day wildcat walkout, frustrated by their inability to negotiate over pay under the government’s limited form of collective bargaining. When Nixon called out the National Guard to deliver the mail, postal workers held firm and only returned to work after they were promised a wage increase. Just as they returned to work, several thousand air traffic controllers staged a seventeen-day sickout to protest the Federal Aviation Administration’s refusal to negotiate with their union. Both job actions produced results. The walkout made it possible for postal workers to win the creation of the U.S. Postal Service, a semi-autonomous federal agency that was allowed to bargain with them over their pay. For their part, air traffic controllers were able to speed up the official recognition of PATCO as their exclusive bargaining agent. It was only after PATCO’s ill-fated 1981 strike that job actions by federal workers became exceedingly rare.

Trump’s radical executive order could reawaken this long-dormant tradition of collective action among otherwise seemingly docile federal workers. Such actions, should they arise, will likely not take the form of a strike. There is a long history of slowdowns, sickouts, and work-to-rule actions by federal workers. Such actions are often difficult for the government to detect, let alone defuse. And they do not require official union sanction. Indeed, like the postal workers’ 1970 wildcat strike, these activities tend to be more effective and harder to defeat when they are unofficial.

Prior to Trump’s executive order, federal unions were experiencing a surge in membership. Moribund locals were springing to life and new ones were in the process of formation. A new group, the Federal Unionists Network, emerged to coordinate activity at the grassroots level across many agencies and unions. This energy will undoubtedly seek an outlet. If there are no longer structures in place to direct that energy into orderly channels, then it could take surprising forms in the months ahead.

There is at least one piece of evidence that the Trump administration is worried about the prospect of a debilitating job action. The one group of federal employees whose work is clearly intertwined with national security—but who also happen to boast a history of job actions—was conspicuously exempted from the union-stripping provisions of Trump’s executive order: air traffic controllers. Apparently, the administration is reluctant to antagonize workers who have the power to snarl air traffic if a small, strategically placed group of them simply call in sick.

Will federal workers rediscover the militancy that was once not uncommon in their ranks and resist Trump’s union-busting with collective action? Will the broader union movement and its allies stand with them, putting their own organizations on the line to defend workers’ basic rights? On the answers to those questions will turn not only the fate of the union movement for decades to come, but of a multiracial American democracy in which the right to collective bargaining has served as an essential pillar for almost a century.

**The alternative is mass, illegal militancy. Only that solves existential US fascism.**

**IWA-RFC 25**, International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, "Mobilize the working class against Trump's attack on federal workers!," 02/14/2025, https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/02/17/pers-f17.html

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) calls on the working class in the United States to prepare mass action to stop the Trump administration’s rampage against federal jobs.

Rank-and-file committees—excluding union officials and representatives of either corporate party—should be built to unite federal workers, postal workers and private-sector workers, to organize mass demonstrations and other forms of collective action to defend jobs and social programs.

Less than a month into the new administration, tens of thousands of federal workers have already been forced out of their jobs. On Friday, the Department of Health and Human Services announced it would fire over 5,000 employees. Over the weekend, reports emerged that nearly 1,300 jobs will be cut at the Food and Drug Administration.

This is only the beginning. Hundreds of thousands of jobs out of a federal workforce of over two million are under threat. While around 30 percent of these workers live and work in the Washington, D.C. area, the vast majority are spread across every part of the United States.

These cuts are flagrantly illegal, violating protections against politically motivated layoffs in the civil service. Trump has also given billionaire and fellow fascist Elon Musk the power of the purse through the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), allowing him to dismantle entire agencies at the press of a key.

The attack on federal workers is only the spearhead of a broader assault on the working class. The social programs in danger of being slashed—including Medicaid, food stamps and public education—are lifelines for millions. Trump has placed figures in charge of federal agencies whose explicit mission is to destroy the departments they nominally lead, including anti-vaxxer Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. at Health and Human Services and billionaire wrestling magnate Linda McMahon at the Department of Education.

A parallel attack is underway against the US Postal Service, which Trump has indicated his intent to privatize. Whatever remains of the post office—whose existence is enshrined in the Constitution—will be sold off to oligarchs like Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, turning it into a for-profit enterprise.

The claim that these cuts are about “efficiency” is absurd coming from Musk, whose nearly $500 billion fortune, amassed from US military contracts and Wall Street speculation, is the very definition of waste and parasitism. The real aim is to dismantle environmental protections, workplace safety regulations, public health initiatives and consumer safeguards—removing any restrictions on the complete and unrestricted exploitation of the working class. Musk and the oligarchy’s looting of public resources amounts to the biggest heist in human history.

Trump himself made clear the dictatorial character of his administration in an X/Twitter post over the weekend: “He who saves his Country does not violate any Law.” In other words, Trump is declaring himself above the law, modeling his rule on the Führer principle.

Under the new regime Trump is trying to establish, workers will have no rights. His attacks on immigrants serve not only to scapegoat “foreign” workers for the poverty created by US corporations, but also to redefine citizenship as contingent on personal loyalty to the leader, ripping up fundamental constitutional protections for the entire working class.

The presence of Musk proves that the administration is the most naked and open form of government of, by and for the oligarchy.

The only areas where Trump is pouring in money are the military and police, reducing the government to what Friedrich Engels defined as “bodies of armed men” and “prisons of all kinds.” The cuts to social programs serve only to free up resources for massive new wars—not only against official enemies like China but even against countries that were labeled “allies” yesterday, such as Canada and the European powers.

Trump’s threats to annex Canada, Greenland and the Panama Canal, along with his “America First” militarization, aim to convert North America into an armed fortress in preparation for global war.

In the face of what is acknowledged in the press to be the most serious Constitutional crisis in US history, the Democratic Party is completely feckless. It refuses to even clearly state what is happening to the public. This is because the Democrats are also a party of corporate America and are terrified of opposition from below.

The trade union apparatus, for its part, varies between cowardice and outright collaboration. The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and other government unions tell workers to rely on the courts, even as Trump’s co-conspirators run the Supreme Court and the National Labor Relations Board, which has been rendered inoperative by Trump’s mass firings. They insist on cringing obedience to anti-strike labor laws, while Trump blatantly violates every law that he can to carry out mass firings.

Other unions, including the Teamsters, the International Longshoremen’s Association, and the United Auto Workers, openly support Trump’s racist nationalism, lying to workers that his economic policies will somehow save their jobs.

These speeches provide a Marxist analysis of the relentless escalation of imperialist militarism over the past decade.

Forty-four years ago, President Ronald Reagan fired and blacklisted 11,000 striking members of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO), marking a turning point towards all-out class war by the American ruling class. What followed were decades of job cuts and factory closures that continue to this day.

At the time, there was mass support in the working class for a general strike to defend PATCO—evidenced by the September 19, 1981 Solidarity Day demonstration, where half a million workers marched in Washington, D.C., one of the largest protests in American history.

This potential was betrayed by the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, which abandoned PATCO to its fate even before the strike began. The AFL-CIO’s response marked a shift of the union bureaucrats into open agents of management, colluding in the government campaign to break the militant resistance of workers and carry out a historic reduction in living standards.

Trump’s attacks dwarf the scale of PATCO, and mass opposition will inevitably emerge. The tariff war policies being pursued by Trump will wreak havoc on the economy, leading to mass layoffs and unemployment, while his attacks on immigrants and democratic rights will provoke a social explosion.

In the scale of history, Trump and his relative handful of oligarchs and fascist conspirators amount to nothing next to 200 million workers in the US and billions more worldwide. But the critical issue is that the working class be mobilized as an independent force and as the social basis for the fight against the Trump administration.

Above all, workers in the US must appeal for international support, rejecting Trump’s “America First” lies. Workers around the world must oppose what is happening in America in order to fight similar far-right conspiracies in their own countries, which are also being openly promoted by the White House. At the same time, global unity is necessary because a fascist dictatorship in America threatens every person on the planet.

The development of committees to oppose the assault on federal workers must be connected to the defense of democratic rights against dictatorship, including through neighborhood and workplace committees to defend immigrants. The wealth of the oligarchy, which stands behind Trump’s threats to democratic rights, must be expropriated and America’s war machine dismantled to vastly improve public health, education, infrastructure and key social programs on which tens of millions rely.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, which includes committees around the world fighting for the independence of the working class in the face of corporate attacks, can serve as a global nerve center for a broad counter-offensive to force an end to the threat of dictatorship in the United States.

**DA – 1NC – Deference**

Executive Deference DA

**Plan breaks a trend of court deference to the executive on national security issues.**

Nicholas **Handler 25**, Associate Professor of Law at Texas A&M School of Law, "Unpacking Trump's Attack on Federal Sector Unions," Lawfare, 4/29/25, https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/unpacking-trump-s-attack-on-federal-sector-unions

What Law Governs Exemptions From Labor Rights?

The president’s power to exclude certain employees from labor protections is not open ended. Rather, specific criteria need to be satisfied under the relevant section of the CSRA, 5 U.S.C. § 7013(b). The statute provides that the president may exclude “any agency or subdivision thereof” from labor protections only if the following two criteria are met: (a) “the agency or subdivision has as a primary function intelligence, counterintelligence, investigative, or national security work” and (b) “the provisions of this chapter cannot be applied to that agency or subdivision in a manner consistent with national security requirements and considerations.”

The power to exclude civil servants under this provision has not been invoked often. President Carter issued Executive Order 12171 shortly after the CSRA was enacted in 1979, denying bargaining rights to the Secret Service, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and a number of subdivisions within the Department of Defense. Shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13252, exempting U.S. attorneys and certain law enforcement-related subdivisions of the Department of Justice from labor protections. And presidents have exempted small groups of employees in other contexts. But the power has never been invoked on such a sweeping scale before.

Presidents have other, more targeted ways of pushing back on union demands beyond the nuclear option of denying representation altogether. For example, they can challenge specific union demands as infringing on their protected management rights; they can refuse to bargain over certain issues; and they can staff FLRA positions with loyalists. In fact, many of the most prominent agencies involved in national security and intelligence, such as the FBI, the CIA, and the National Security Agency, are already prohibited from unionizing under a separate provision of the CSRA, Section 7103(a)(3).

Case law interpreting this provision is limited, but precedent suggests that the president has fairly wide (yet not unlimited) discretion to exclude unions on national security grounds. The leading case is AFGE v. Reagan. In Executive Order 12559, President Reagan invoked Section 7103(b) to exempt certain subdivisions of the U.S. Marshals Service from labor protections, including the Office of Special Operations, the Threat Analysis Group, the Court Security Division, and the Witness Security Division, among others. The district court initially invalidated the order, holding that the president had not included sufficient findings of fact to justify his exclusion of the marshals. The D.C. Circuit, however, reversed the lower court’s ruling. It held that the president could not be required to find specific facts to justify his order and that his decision exempting the marshals from labor protections was entitled to a “presumption of regularity.” The court’s review of the president’s decision was thus less demanding than, for example, a review of agency action under the Administrative Procedure Act.

But, while the court’s review was deferential, it did not suggest that such exemptions were immune from scrutiny. Instead, it concluded that the appellate record provided no basis for questioning the president’s decision. The executive order had “cited accurately the statutory source of authority” for exempting the targeted divisions (which did appear to serve genuine “investigative” and “intelligence” functions). Moreover, the union in its filings had not “suggested any actual irregularity in the President's factfinding process or activity.” Given the apparent applicability of the statute, and the lack of any irregular conduct by the president, the court found the “presumption of regularity” justified.

Implications for the Current Order

President Trump’s order raises two legal questions: first, whether the issue will ever be litigated before a federal court, and second, whether unions are likely to win on the merits.

Procedurally, the case could face bottlenecks. While both the NTEU and the administration have filed lawsuits seeking declaratory judgments on the legality of the administration’s orders, those lawsuits could hit a jurisdictional snag. Technically, any dispute over the construction of the labor provisions of the CSRA is required to proceed before the FLRA before it can be heard by a federal court. If a labor suit is filed in federal court before the parties have exhausted their administrative remedies, it should be dismissed for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. Indeed, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit dismissed challenges to executive orders interpreting the labor provisions of the CSRA for lack of jurisdiction during the first Trump administration (e.g., American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO v. Trump). And other lawsuits challenging the administration’s attacks on the civil service have likewise been dismissed for lack of standing by federal district courts in recent weeks.

Here, both parties appear to have ignored that requirement and gone straight to federal court. One reason might be because any litigation before the FLRA is likely to stall indefinitely. Under normal circumstances, the case would proceed as follows: The president issues an executive order stripping the unions of their collective bargaining rights; the agencies, acting on OPM’s guidance, then unilaterally cancel those CBAs. The unions protest, because it is a violation of federal law for an agency to unilaterally cancel a CBA, and file an unfair labor practice (ULP) complaint before the authority’s general counsel. The general counsel investigates and, if she finds the ULP meritorious, brings a complaint before an administrative law judge. Any decision by the judge would then be appealable to the FLRA, and from there to federal court.

But that procedural pathway for litigating the dispute is closed at the moment. The general counsel post at the FLRA is currently vacant. And because only the general counsel can prosecute unfair labor practice complaints, such complaints will be stuck in limbo until someone occupies the post. That can lead to delays of months or years. Theoretically, that means that the parties here might need to wait to litigate the legality of this order, leaving the unionization status of hundreds of thousands of workers up in the air indefinitely. That may explain why both parties have sought immediate resolution in federal court: Neither wants to wait that long to resolve such a high-stakes issue. Nonetheless, the grounds for making an end run around agency exhaustion requirements are very narrow. Where, as here, the parties’ claims are “of the type Congress intended to be reviewed” by the FLRA, courts often hold that they cannot hear the case before the agency does. So far, at least, neither court appears to have questioned its jurisdiction to hear these cases. But whether a court can hear a particular type of case (that is, whether it has “subject matter jurisdiction”) is an issue that can be revisited at any point in the case.

Assuming a federal court does reach the merits of the suits, the unions face a tough battle given the discretion usually afforded to the president. Nonetheless, they have plausible arguments that the two requirements under Section 7103(b)—that the exempted agency have a “primary” national security mission and that collective bargaining rights cannot be applied without unduly compromising national security—have not been satisfied for many of the agencies and workers targeted by the order.

**Deference is key to protect sensitive military info from excessive discovery.**

George W. **Croner 22**, senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI) in its national security program and a member of CERL's Advisory Council, "A reply in defense of the state secrets privilege," CERL, 5/31/2022, https://www.penncerl.org/the-rule-of-law-post/a-reply-in-defense-of-the-state-secrets-privilege/

Two articles, one by Mark Fallon and the other by Professor Claire Finkelstein, who are, respectively, the interim executive director and the faculty director of the Center for Ethics and the Rule of Law (CERL) at the University of Pennsylvania, have criticized the recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in United States v. Zubaydah. The Court concluded that the state secrets privilege had been properly invoked by the government to protect against the disclosure of information regarding a foreign site that was allegedly used in the CIA’s “enhanced interrogation” program—a program broadly condemned by critics and the U.S. Congress as employing torture. I disagree with their criticisms of the Zubaydah decision while acknowledging that, whether described as “torture” or, in the CIA’s more euphemistic patois, as “enhanced interrogation,” the program represents one of the darker moments in the history of the U.S. intelligence community.

Some background will assist. Abu Zubaydah, who remains incarcerated at the Guantánamo Bay detention facility, has sought legal redress in Poland for his treatment in 2002 and 2003 at a CIA detention facility that has been publicly identified, although never officially confirmed by the U.S. government, as being located in Poland. As recounted in the Supreme Court’s opinion, Zubaydah initiated legal action in U.S. federal court seeking to gain access to information that he contends will assist in the case he is pursuing in Poland. Believing that the information sought by Zubaydah (which included a request to depose two CIA contractors) would reveal sensitive details about CIA activities and the U.S. government’s relationship with Poland, the government intervened in Zubaydah’s U.S. court proceeding and asserted the state secrets privilege. A declaration from the director of the CIA asserted that permitting the CIA contractors to testify would disclose operational details about CIA activities and confirm or deny whether Poland had cooperated with the CIA—a fact of considerable sensitivity to the Polish government.

As the Supreme Court’s opinion notes, the lower federal courts largely accepted the government’s assertion of the state secrets privilege, but the Ninth Circuit concluded that the privilege did not cover information about the location of the detention site based on its belief that the site’s location had already been publicly disclosed and that the state secrets privilege did not bar disclosure of information that was no longer secret. The government appealed that ruling.

On March 3, 2022, the Supreme Court determined that the Ninth Circuit had erred and that the government had properly asserted the privilege. In contrast to the views expressed by Mr. Fallon and Professor Finkelstein, I believe that the court’s ruling in the Zubaydah case is the correct one.

It is a shibboleth of the legal profession that bad facts can produce bad law, and the facts surrounding Zubaydah’s treatment at the hands of the CIA are abhorrent. Those facts have led many critics of the CIA’s activities to condemn the Supreme Court’s decision as condoning the use of the state secrets privilege to cover for what they view as unlawful and immoral conduct. Candidly, however, sustaining the state secrets privilege to protect against the potential harm to national security that would result from a damaging disclosure of information that might disrupt the U.S. diplomatic and clandestine intelligence relationship with an important foreign ally does not, in my view, pose any “long term implications for the rule of law and today’s battle between the forces of democracy and autocracy.” Rather than allowing the repugnant facts of Zubaydah’s treatment to dictate the outcome of an important decision affecting a critical evidentiary privilege, the Supreme Court’s decision represents the logical application of a privilege that serves a fundamental role in preserving an appropriate balance in the constitutionally created separation of powers between the three branches of government.

The courts have long recognized the importance of the state secrets privilege

Each branch of government must interpret the Constitution in the performance of its assigned constitutional duties, and the interpretation of its powers by any co-equal branch must be accorded great respect. In particular, the Supreme Court has observed that “utmost deference” should be accorded to a president’s exercise of his Article II duties in the areas of “military or diplomatic secrets” because:

The President, both as Commander-in-Chief and as the Nation’s organ for foreign affairs, has available intelligence services whose reports are not and ought not to be published to the world. It would be intolerable that courts, without the relevant information, should review and perhaps nullify actions of the Executive taken on information properly held secret.

Where litigation affects national security, the state secrets privilege properly invoked by the executive branch has permitted the government to bar, as the Supreme Court first described in a decision rendered in 1953, the disclosure of information if “there is a reasonable danger” that disclosure will “expose military matters which, in the interest of national security, should not be divulged.” Far from constituting a threat to representative democracy, the importance of this privilege is best captured in this excerpt from a 1978 decision (Halkin v. Helms) by the District of Columbia’s federal court of appeals:

A ranking of the various privileges recognized in our courts would be a delicate undertaking at best, but it is quite clear that the privilege to protect state secrets must head the list. The state secrets privilege is absolute. However helpful to the court the informed advocacy of the plaintiffs’ counsel may be, we must be especially careful not to order any dissemination of information asserted to be privileged state secrets. ‘It is not to slight judges, lawyers, or anyone else to suggest that any such disclosure carries with it serious risk that highly sensitive information may be compromised.’

**Specifically, it threatens the states secrets privilege,** (SSP) **which safeguards foreign intelligence gathering now.**

Amy **Howe 22**, "Government can invoke state secrets privilege in lawsuit alleging unlawful surveillance," SCOTUSblog, 03/04/2022, 12:00 AM, https://www.scotusblog.com/2022/03/government-can-invoke-state-secrets-privilege-in-lawsuit-alleging-unlawful-surveillance/

But even under the men’s theory, Alito explained, FISA does not trump the state secrets privilege, and the 9th Circuit’s ruling cannot stand. First, the text of FISA does not mention, much less repeal, the state secrets privilege – which, Alito wrote, is “strong evidence” that the privilege is still available.

Second, Alito reasoned, there is no reason why FISA and the state secrets privilege cannot coexist. Although the privilege will rarely be invoked in FISA cases, courts must make two very different inquiries when FISA and state secrets are involved. For the former, the important question is whether the surveillance was lawfully authorized and conducted, while for the latter the question is whether the disclosure of the evidence would harm national security.

**Foreign intel-gathering mitigates a convergence of existential risks.**

Rumtin **Sepasspour 23**, cofounder and director of Policy of Global Shield, an international organization advocating for policy action on reducing global catastrophic risk, research affiliate with the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk at the University of Cambridge and a visiting fellow of School of Regulation and Global Governance (Regnet) at the Australian National University, "Existential espionage: How intelligence gathering can protect humanity," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 4/21/2023, https://thebulletin.org/2023/04/existential-espionage-how-intelligence-gathering-can-protect-humanity/

Every four years, the National Intelligence Council’s Global Trends report generally catalogs the global issues that the United States and its incoming presidential administration ought to be most concerned about. It’s not pleasant bedtime reading. But the most recent report, which projects out to 2040, went beyond the typical assessments around internal instability, interstate tensions, and international competition.

In a section on technology, the report contained a short but remarkable description of “existential risks” or “threats that could damage life on a global scale” and lead to human extinction and civilizational collapse. The report specifically cites runaway artificial intelligence, engineered pandemics, nanotechnology weapons, and nuclear war. Other threats include extreme climate change, geoengineering, ecological collapse, supervolcanoes, and near-Earth objects.

By bringing attention to this issue, the US intelligence community is doing what it’s designed to do—provide strategic insight to their leadership on trends, events, and risks in the global landscape. However, intelligence communities have until now paid almost no attention to existential risks. Their primary focus, justifiably, remains on conventional national security issues such as defense, counterterrorism, and counterespionage. But the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that other, potentially calamitous, threats are just as important—and the intelligence community should play heed.

Given the scale and uncertainty of existential threats, intelligence is key. This is a view that the Global Trends report itself makes: “Such low-probability, high-impact events are difficult to forecast and expensive to prepare for, but identifying potential risks and developing mitigation strategies in advance can provide some resilience to exogenous shocks.”

Intelligence communities are certainly not the only sectors of governments that could or should analyze existential threats. Nor would they be responsible for preventing the risks or building resilience to them. They can, however, play a critical role. Intelligence collection and analysis capability would help lead government efforts to detect, understand, and warn senior policymakers of these threats.

A new extreme. Until recently, end-of-the-world scenarios have been the domain of Hollywood films and centuries-old mythologies. In the past decade, however, the study of human extinction scenarios has taken a decidedly more contemporary and academic perspective, with a small but integrated field of researchers—such as those from the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk (CSER) at the University of Cambridge, the Future of Humanity Institute at the University of Oxford, and the US-based Future of Life Institute that have formed around this issue.

As Martin Rees, the United Kingdom’s Astronomer Royal and co-founder of the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk, stated: “Our Earth has existed for 45 million centuries. But this [century] is special. It’s the first when one species has the planet’s future in its hands.” The test of the first nuclear bomb on July 16, 1945, ushered in a new epoch of risk. But humanity’s impact on the world has only continued to grow and has reached a moment in time when the human species threatens itself.

An existential intelligence problem. Existential risk is a particularly challenging intelligence problem that requires special attention. The first challenge is scale: Existential risks impact human civilization and its future. At worst, they can lead to human extinction.

Nuclear winter is a prime example. The direct casualties from nuclear war would be extraordinary, potentially in the hundreds of millions. However, it is the aftermath that could be an existential threat. For example, a so-called “small” nuclear exchange of 100 weapons could send extraordinary amounts of aerosols into the stratosphere and lead to global cooling. Global temperatures could drop up to 8 degrees Celsius, disrupting crop growth and causing mass starvation and billions of deaths, including possibly human extinction.

Effects of extreme climate change could wreak similar havoc. If average global temperatures rise more than expected—for example, above 6 degrees Celsius this century—it could trigger feedback loops and cascade effects such as the thawing of permafrost that would release catastrophic amounts of trapped carbon, further accelerating the planet’s warming.

Despite this, academic debate continues around whether extreme climate change technically poses an extinction risk. It is difficult to wipe out all of humanity this way. But global impacts such as crop failures, heat stress, and desertification that make parts of the world unlivable, cannot be ruled out. Even if the climate catastrophe does not result in extinction, the scale of death and suffering would be incredibly high, and ultimately a threat to national security and prosperity.

The second challenge is uncertainty around how these risks unfold, how likely the scenarios are, and when the risks could occur. Such ambiguity makes these problems hard to analyze and devote policy resources towards. Intelligence communities, however, can help policy makers navigate this uncertainty. Using extreme climate change as an example again, there is a high amount of uncertainty around the tail risk—those rare events with potentially calamitous downsides. For example, despite being one of the most well-studied risks, scientists have little clarity on the likelihood or impact of very high global temperature increases. Three separate studies have concluded that the chance of catastrophic climate change is between 5 and 20 percent, depending on different emissions pathways.

What the world looks like with such increases in temperatures is equally uncertain. It is extremely difficult to assess humanity’s resilience to climate disruption, the dynamics of global ecological and social systems, and when and how feedback loops kick in. Climate change may be a reasonably well-understood risk. Extreme climate change, however, is not.

The final challenge is risk novelty: Many of these risks are only now emerging on the horizon. Although the risks of nuclear winter and climate change have been known for decades, the risks of catastrophic technology-based threats—artificial intelligence, synthetic biology, nanotechnology, geoengineering, and their interconnection with weapons of mass destruction—are yet to have fully arisen.

For example, advances in synthetic biology could eventually make the modification of dangerous pathogens more accessible. This could mean that malicious actors could increasingly develop bioweapons due to the reduced education, training, cost, time, and equipment thresholds required to modify and employ pathogens.

Artificial intelligence also brings its own risks. Current AI systems pose risks of accidents, malicious use by terrorists and rogue states, and systemic risks, such as unstable escalation in a “flash war,” or a sudden military offensive.

The limits and speed of AI progress remain highly uncertain. Advanced forms of AI, which would be near or beyond the level of human intelligence, could pose even more severe risks of accident or misuse. Before even reaching that point, however, artificial intelligence integrated into nuclear weapons systems could destabilize nuclear stability and deterrence arrangements.

These risks will only continue to emerge and grow. So, policy makers must start thinking about them now. Intelligence can help assess the likelihood and impacts of the various risks. It can backcast potential pathways and scenarios. Backcast refers to an analytical technique that outlines a potential future event and works backwards to identify drivers, milestones, and decisions that would lead to that outcome. Based on this analysis, intelligence can support innovative approaches to reducing the risks.

**DA – 1NC – Privatization**

Privatization DA

**Powerful TSA unions block privatization through the Screening Partnership Program---that restores aviation security AND frees resources for TSA threat response in other areas.**

David **Inserra 15**, Former Policy Analyst for Homeland Security and Cyber Policy, David Inserra specialized in homeland security issues, including cyber and immigration policy as well as critical infrastructure, "Congress Should Expand Trusted Traveler Programs and Private Airport Screeners," Heritage Foundation, 03/03/2015, https://www.heritage.org/homeland-security/report/congress-should-expand-trusted-traveler-programs-and-private-airport

Several months ago, President Obama announced that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) would provide work authorization and protection from deportation to as many as 5 million unlawful immigrants. A serious side effect of this action is the harmful redirection of attention and resources away from other pressing homeland security issues ranging from terrorism to institutional reform at the DHS. The demands of implementing the President’s sweeping order are such that Secretary Jeh Johnson and other leaders at the DHS will not have the time, money, manpower, or trust of Congress to make needed reforms to these other critically important areas. It falls to Congress to correct these misplaced priorities.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) could benefit from significant changes and reforms. Continuing to expand and strengthen trusted traveler programs, such as PreCheck, will increase the focus that TSA screeners spend on travelers of higher or unknown risk. Additionally, the TSA should be forced to expand the Screening Partnership Program (SPP) that saves the government money and enhances productivity by allowing airports to use private screeners with TSA oversight in place of TSA screeners.

Trusted Travelers

DHS has several trusted traveler programs that provide participating low-risk travelers with access to streamlined security, customs, and immigration screening. These programs, including TSA PreCheck and Customs and Border Protection’s (CBP) Global Entry and NEXUS, are all predicated on the concept of risk-based security. The U.S. could treat every individual who enters the U.S. as an equal potential threat to U.S. security, or it could differentiate between lower-risk individuals and those who are greater risks or simply unknown. This risk-based security allows the U.S. to use its limited security resources more efficiently, focusing security on individuals who are higher risks or unknown risks.

TSA PreCheck ensures participants usually receive an expedited screening process, including the ability to keep on shoes, belts, and light jackets and to keep computers and liquids in their bags at around 124 participating airports. To join PreCheck, individuals must apply at a TSA application center and undergo a background check, be part of other trusted traveler programs, or be a member of the military or military academies. Additionally, PreCheck occasionally includes frequent travelers as well as randomly included individuals through a process known as managed inclusion.[1] TSA PreCheck has grown from around 4,000 travelers in December 2013 to just over 800,000 as of December 2014.[2] While TSA is continuing to seek to grow TSA PreCheck, concerns regarding security have been raised by the Inspector General, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and others.[3] Security assessments should be undertaken and heeded if PreCheck is to remain a beneficial tool to the TSA.

The other trusted traveler programs run by CBP also require a background check and include PreCheck benefits for U.S. citizens and permanent residents but also provide expedited immigration and customs processing at airports or land borders depending on the specific program.[4] Global Entry is open to U.S. citizens and permanent residents as well as citizens from several other nations including Germany and South Korea, which allow U.S. citizens to join an equivalent program. The NEXUS program provides U.S. and Canadian citizens and residents with expedited processing when travelling between the two countries, while the SENTRI program expedites processing through land ports of entry on the U.S. southern border.[5] Reciprocal agreements, such as those through the Global Entry program, should be expanded to provide both the U.S. and other allies with the security and convenience benefits of trusted traveler programs.[6]

Congress and the DHS should:

Improve security assessments. In order to continue the judicious growth of TSA PreCheck and risk-based security, the TSA must conduct proper security assessments and refine the screening and vetting process to minimize security risks.

Expand Global Entry reciprocity agreements. The U.S. should look to build on existing partnerships, not only among nations already participating in Global Entry, but also with Visa Waiver Program member countries, thus creating a trusted travel superhighway that enhances security and facilitates travel.

Private Screeners

While the DHS has advanced trusted traveler programs, the same cannot be said of the Screening Partnership Program (SPP) that substitutes private screeners with TSA oversight in place of TSA screeners. Created as a result of the Aviation and Transportation Security Act of 2001, SPP allows airports to opt out of federal screening so long as they can show that private screening will not be more costly, compromise security, or harm the effectiveness of screening.[7]

Despite its potential benefits, SPP has had a rocky implementation, being suspended by the Obama Administration before Congress restored it.[8] As of January 2015, 21 airports were participating in SPP.[9] There are multiple reasons that an increasing number of U.S. airports are using SPP, including productivity, cost, and security. In terms of productivity, a case study undertaken by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in 2011 found that SPP screening was as much as 65 percent more efficient than federal screeners.[10] One reason for this productivity gap could be the higher level of attrition in the TSA than private screening. A related factor in productivity could be better staffing measures ranging from day-to-day scheduling to more efficient hiring and union practices. Beyond just pure efficiency, SPP airports also report improved customer service from their private-sector screeners.

Productivity also bleeds over into considerations of cost. A more productive workforce with less attrition is less expensive to maintain and operate. Although TSA studies found SPP programs to be more costly than government screening, they were widely criticized, including by the GAO, for flawed methodologies. When some of these flaws were corrected, the TSA found SPP and government screening to be nearly equal in cost.[11] Furthermore, the Transportation Committee study found that when considerations such as increases in productivity were accounted for, the cost of the program fell dramatically. Together with smaller overhead costs and lower levels of attrition, the SPP program is likely a financial boon for most airports.

Importantly, cost and productivity is not harming security. Nearly every study undertaken, whether by the TSA or others, has found that private screening is at least as good as, if not better than, government screeners in finding security threats.[12]

It is for all these reasons that the vast majority of European countries allow airports to provide their own screening force or have a contractor provide it.[13] Sadly, the process to join and renew an SPP contract remains mired in bureaucracy, taking as long as four years.[14] Rather than allow an airport to determine the best way to provide screening, the SPP program is micromanaged by the TSA, with the TSA selecting a screening contractor for each SPP airport. Furthermore, the TSA has given its workforce collective bargaining rights, pitting security and cost-effectiveness against labor demands.[15]

Rather than allow the TSA to continue to make bureaucratic and union-focused decisions, Congress should:

Simplify the SPP approval and contracting process. The process for joining SPP should be streamlined to make it easier for airports to apply and TSA adjudication faster, fairer, and more consistent. Airports joining SPP should also be allowed to select and manage their own screening contractors from a list of TSA-approved companies rather than continue the TSA’s micromanaging of the program.

Limit collective bargaining. Collective bargaining in the screening line is harming security and costing taxpayers and travelers. Congress should expressly forbid the TSA from collective bargaining.

Restoring Transportation Security

The TSA’s near complete control of transportation security, from top-level regulations to everyday screening, is an overly bureaucratic mistake that increases airport screening costs and harms efficiency and even security. The SPP program answers this problem by unravelling government inefficiencies and substituting private-sector productivity and cost-effectiveness. In combination with judiciously expanding risk-based trusted traveler programs that also promote security, Congress and the TSA can improve airport screening and security.

**Determines responses to WMD aviation terror.**

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Half of the U.S. public believes the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) makes flying safer—and half don’t. There’s plenty of evidence that TSA airport screeners are not effective, but worse still, the agency is rigging the system to make sure it is the only option for airport security. It doesn’t have to be this way.

My fellow Security Debrief contributor Gary Becker made the point in a recent post that the Screening Partnership Program (SPP) could enhance aviation security while also supporting increased commercial activity, which are both good for the country. I agree; however, there’s a more fundamental reason to encourage this program, and it comes down to fair competition.

SPP is a program for privatized passenger screening, where airports can “opt out” of TSA screening by contracting with a company to provide passenger and baggage screening commensurate with TSA standards and under the oversight of the federal government. The legal foundation for this was laid down in the very legislation that established TSA, the Aviation and Transportation Security Act. The act authorized a pilot program to test the idea of privatized screening, and in 2004, the program was formally established.

To date, there are 21 airports operating under SPP; there are more than 700 commercial airports in the United States. Does that ratio seem odd to you? It should.

In November last year, SPP Director Carolyn Dorgham testified on the origin of the SPP pilot program…and then her testimony neglected to mention the next decade of SPP operation and instead jumped all the way to the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012, which demanded that TSA change its cost-estimating methodology for determining whether TSA is cheaper than switching to private sector screeners. TSA’s calculus on whether to grant an SPP application is based in part on costs, and the agency does this by comparing proposed costs from contractors against TSA’s estimated costs for the same service.

When it comes to cost, there is reason to question TSA’s cost-benefit analyses because of the incentives that drive each of the stakeholders in the equation. Private companies are incentivized to determine real costs, as those costs become an operating budget. Propose too little and the company will not make money; propose too much and the company is uncompetitive. Meanwhile, TSA is incentivized to determine costs that outcompete a private company (to protect budget and staff), and given a slew of Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports, TSA’s method for estimating its costs is not good.

The decade of SPP operation that Director Dorgham failed to mention during her November testimony included a lot of suspicious number-fudging and bureaucratic delays that in effect, if not in intention, prevented a wide embrace of SPP. It got so bad that by 2011, TSA was rejecting all requests from airports to engage SPP. What is more, as GAO states:

“While multiple congressional committees have sought improved information on the cost effectiveness of the SPP to oversee the program, TSA has not reported cost comparisons between federal and private screening at SPP airports to policy makers. Since 2013, TSA has prepared comprehensive annual reports that include, among other things, a comparison of actual private costs with estimated federal costs. According to TSA officials, they have not shared these reports with Congress because they are developed for internal use.”

Are you starting to get the picture of what’s going on here? TSA is doing an end-run around the free market, leveraging their unique role as competitor and application reviewer to ensure the private sector cannot participate, and the agency then shields itself from oversight by ignoring congressional demands for more information. And who comes to TSA’s side to defend this approach? A union, incentivized to reject SPP so as to protect the jobs of its members. (Note: Dorgham said TSA’s cost comparison information will be shared with Congress in the agency’s “Semi-Annual Screening Partnership Program Report.” We’ll see.)

This would be troubling enough if it all boiled down to costs and authority, but there is another factor to consider: TSA airport screeners are in many ways failing in their mission. The list of TSA’s screening issues is long. In June 2015, it was revealed that TSA screeners failed 95% of the time during Red Team tests that secreted illicit items through security. It would seem airport screening is nothing but security theater. And when it comes to SPP, TSA cannot even meet the security standards that private companies must meet under SPP. Arguably, if TSA were a private company bidding for an SPP contract, they would be rejected in terms of costs and effectiveness.

The truth is that SPP yields cheaper and more flexible security operations and, as arguably the biggest benefit to the disgruntled traveling public, if the private sector screeners insult someone, infringe on their rights, or treat them less than fairly (as an endless amount of TSA horror stories reveal), they can be fired, immediately. It is extremely difficult to fire a government employee, and the process for doing so is mired in bureaucracy. It leaves the traveling public with no recourse and no alternatives.

Now, TSA isn’t all bad, because TSA’s mission isn’t all about airport screening. It is a counterterrorism agency, and while there is arguably not sufficient attention to other U.S. transportation systems, TSA has done important work helping to protect the country. One instance where TSA collaborated with industry was the Certified Cargo Screening Program (CCSP), a thoughtful approach to meeting a terrible federal law, “100% air cargo screening.” TSA was motivated to develop and implement this public-private program because the costs and effort associated with TSA going it alone were so insurmountable it would have brought domestic and international commerce to a near halt. Perhaps TSA should use a similar cost-benefit approach to airport screening.

TSA has an important role to play. We face very real, persistent threats from adaptive adversaries who would use planes as weapons of mass destruction if they could. But TSA is failing in its airport screening mission while also prohibiting competition that could deliver better security and lower costs. It’s time to let private sector screeners take a shot at it.

**WMD terrorism catalyzes nuclear war.**

Dr. Louis Rene **Beres 21**, Emeritus Professor of Political Science and International Law at Purdue University, PhD from Princeton University, “Preventing Nuclear War: Legal Obligations for an Imperiled Planet”, Jurist, 7/29/2021, jurist.org/commentary/2021/07/louis-beres-nuclear-war/

Sub-national or Terrorist Threats

Strategic policies will have to deal with a variegated assortment of sub-national threats of WMD terrorism. Until now, insurgent enemies were sometimes able to confront states with serious perils and in Uassorted theatres of conflict, but they were never really capable of posing any catastrophic hazard to a nation’s homeland. Now, however, with the steadily expanding prospect of WMD-equipped terrorist enemies – possibly, in the future, even well-armed nuclear terrorists– humankind could have to face a strategic situation that is prospectively dire and historically sui generis.

To face any such unprecedented and portentous situation, America’s president will need to “arm” themselves with antecedent nuclear doctrine and policies. By definition, such doctrine and policies should never represent “seat of the pants” reactions to ad hoc threats. Rather, because generality is a trait of all serious meaning in science, such doctrine and policies will have to be shaped according to broad categories of strategic threat. In the absence of such previously worked-out conceptual categories, human responses are almost certain to be inadequate or worse.

Rationality and Non-Rationality

From the start, all strategic policies have been founded upon some underlying assumption of rationality. We humans have always presumed that our enemies, states and terrorists, will inevitably value their own continued survival more highly than any other preference or combination of preferences. But this core assumption can no longer be taken for granted.

Expressions of decisional irrationality could take various different and overlapping forms. These forms include a disorderly or inconsistent value system; computational errors in calculation; an incapacity to communicate efficiently; random or haphazard influences in the making or transmittal of particular decisions; and the internal dissonance generated by any structure of collective decision-making (i.e., assemblies of individuals who lack identical value systems and/or whose organizational arrangements impact their willing capacity to act as a single or unitary national decision maker).

Confronted with Jihadist enemies, states and terrorists, world leaders must quickly understand that our primary threats to retaliate for first-strike aggressions could sometime fall on deaf ears. This holds true whether we would threaten massive retaliation (MAD), or instead, the more graduated and measured forms of reprisal termed nuclear utilization theory (NUT).

Ultimately, sensible. nuclear doctrine must recognize certain critical connections between law and strategy. From the formal standpoint of international law, certain expressions of preemption or defensive first strikes are known as anticipatory self-defense. Expecting possible enemy irrationality, when would such protective military actions be required to safeguard the human homeland from diverse forms of WMD attack?

This is an all-important question to be considered.

There is more. Recalling that international law is part of the law of the United States, most notably at Article 6 of the Constitution (the “Supremacy Clause”) and at a 1900 Supreme Court case (the Pacquete Habana), how could anticipatory military defense actions be rendered compatible with both conventional and customary obligations? This is a critical question to be raised.

From the standpoint of international law, it is necessary to distinguish preemptive attacks from “preventive ones.” Preemption is a military strategy of striking first in the expectation that the only foreseeable alternative would be to be struck first oneself. A preemptive attack is launched by a state that believes enemy forces are about to attack. A preventive attack, on the other hand, is not launched out of any genuine concern about “imminent” hostilities, but rather for fear of some longer-term deterioration in a prevailing military balance.

In a preemptive attack, the length of time by which the enemy’s action is anticipated is presumptively very short; in a preventive strike, the anticipated interval is considerably longer. A related problem here for the United States and allies is not only the practical difficulty of accurately determining “imminence,” but also the problems of postponement. To the point, delaying a defensive strike until an imminent threat would be tangibly ascertainable could invite existential harms. A state’s resort to “anticipatory self-defense” could be nuclear or non-nuclear, and be directed at either a nuclear or non-nuclear adversary.

Any such resort involving nuclear weapons on one or several sides could prove catastrophic.

Nuclear Targeting Issues

There is more. World leaders must understand that any proposed national strategic doctrine will need to consider and reconsider key issues of nuclear targeting. Relevant operational concerns here would concern vital differences between the targeting of enemy civilians and cities (so-called “counter value” targeting) and targeting of enemy military assets/infrastructures (so-called “counterforce” targeting). Most national leaders still don’t realize that the actual essence of “massive retaliation” and MAD was always an unhidden plan for counter value targeting.

At first glance, any such partially-resurrected doctrine could sound barbarous or at least inhumane, but if the alternative were less credible systems of nuclear deterrence, certain explicit codifications of counter value posture might still become the best way to prevent millions of civilian deaths – i.e., deaths from nuclear war and/or nuclear terrorism. Neither preemption nor counter value targeting could ever guarantee absolute security for Planet Earth, but it is nonetheless imperative that we put serious strategic thinkers to work on these and other critically-related nuclear warfare issues. Under no circumstances should these policies ever be fashioned by “trained specialists” in marketing and public relations.

Quo Vadis

The first time that a world leader will have to face an authentic nuclear crisis, his or her national response should flow seamlessly from broad and previously calibrated strategic doctrine. It follows that national leaders should already be thinking carefully about how this complex doctrine could best be shaped and articulated. Whatever the particulars, these leaders should acknowledge at the outset the broadly systemic nature of the global security problem.

There is one final summarizing aspect of nuclear war avoidance. This is the continuously-intersecting subject matter of law. Whatever strategic imperatives can be identified, national leaders with nuclear weapons access or authority must be continuously constrained by binding principles of international law. These compelling principles concern all elements of the law of armed conflict or humanitarian international law, and various peremptory anti-genocide norms of the international law of human rights. At the same time, treaty law among sovereign states will never be suitably self-enforcing, and expectations of pacta sunt servanda will likely still fall upon largely deaf ears.

Going forward, a planetary system of law and power management that seeks to avoid nuclear war must recognize another significantly underlying axiom: As egregious crimes under international law, war and genocide need not be mutually exclusive. On the contrary, war could sometimes be undertaken as an especially “efficient” manner of national, ethnical, racial or religious annihilation. When the war in question is a nuclear one, the argument becomes self-evident and unassailable.

A final thought dawns. Our planet displays the same fragility an individual human life. Just as a person can perish because of a single miscalculation, misjudgment or accident, so too can the world as a whole be subject to singular error. In the final analysis, microcosm and macrocosm are both made of ashes, and ashes signify elements of incomparable importance. Most important here is that neither the individual person nor the individual state can ever achieve safety at the deliberate expense of designated others.

In world politics and world law, Realpolitik is inevitably a prescription for despair. Left to its traditional endpoints of conflict, war, terrorism and genocide, this time-dishonored dynamic, worsened by ongoing transition from anarchy to chaos, could propel entire continents toward irrecoverable nuclear war. There is likely still time for rescue, but only if humankind can first finally acknowledge the global survival obligations of intellect or mind.

**TSA privatization unlocks focus, resources, and expertise to stop critical infrastructure cyberattacks---otherwise they’ll destroy readiness.**

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A new report from the Cyberspace Solarium Commission reveals that U.S. adversaries are aware that targeting critical infrastructure through cyber and physical attacks could significantly hinder America’s capacity to deploy, supply, and sustain large military forces. It also takes into account that a direct military engagement with a near-peer adversary would necessitate the rapid mobilization and deployment of a large U.S. military force. The efficient movement of troops and equipment across land, sea, and air is crucial for projecting power and supporting allies.

While U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) manages logistics, civilian-owned infrastructure, including rail networks, commercial ports, and airports, will primarily facilitate the transportation of servicemembers and materials during a swift mobilization. The FDD report also offers policy recommendations to strengthen cybersecurity for maritime, railroad, and aviation sectors.

“The cybersecurity of the critical air, rail, and maritime infrastructure that underpins U.S. military mobility is insufficient,” Annie Fixler, director of the Center on Cyber and Technology Innovation at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) and Mark Montgomery, senior director at CCTI and senior fellow, wrote in a post last week. “To improve resilience, the United States needs significant investment by the government and private sector as well as improved public-private collaboration. The nation can no longer afford to waste time debating the immediacy of the threat. Washington must identify and resource solutions now.”

Citing the U.S. intelligence community’s 2024 annual threat assessment report that warned that China would ‘consider aggressive cyber operations against U.S. critical infrastructure and military assets’ in the event of an imminent conflict with the United States. Beijing would seek to use these operations not only as a deterrent against further U.S. military action but also specifically to ‘interfere with the deployment of U.S. forces.’

Fixler and Montgomery noted that over the past year, the intelligence community has revealed how deeply Chinese hackers, known as Volt Typhoon, penetrated U.S. transportation, energy, and water systems. “Volt Typhoon demonstrated China’s capability to gain and maintain persistent access to closed systems and preposition malicious payloads to cause disruption and destruction. Meanwhile, other Chinese Communist Party (CCP) malicious cyber operations, including Flax Typhoon, hijacked cameras and routers, and Salt Typhoon burrowed deep into U.S. telecommunications networks.”

Apart from enabling potential disruption, they added that “compromising critical infrastructure allows Beijing to amass information about the movement of goods, surreptitiously watching as the United States moves its military equipment across the country. Given these threats, the U.S. military has a vested interest in the security of the nation’s critical transportation infrastructure.”

The FDD said that the Department of Defense (DoD) recognizes 10 defense infrastructure sectors. DoD first defined them in 2005 and designated a Defense Infrastructure Sector Lead Agent (DISLA) to interact with each, as the U.S. government recognizes 16 critical infrastructure sectors and assigns each a federal agency partner, known as a sector risk management agency (SRMA).

“While the lead-agent designation has since been retired with the incorporation of defense critical infrastructure protection into DoD’s Mission Assurance Strategy, the term DISLA is still useful for describing agencies’ roles, responsibilities, and authorities related to different types of critical infrastructure,” Fixler and Montgomery highlighted.

“TRANSCOM was the DISLA responsible for identifying and safeguarding defense critical infrastructure within the transportation sector. Within TRANSCOM, Air Mobility Command is the Air Force component responsible for conducting aerial transportation and airlift. Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command is the Army component charged with managing the intermodal connections to the nation’s strategic seaports and facilitating surface transportation via road and rail. Military Sealift Command is the Navy component that conducts sealift, the transportation of materiel in the maritime domain.”

They added that across all defense critical infrastructure sectors, the DISLAs work directly with military commands and mission owners to identify the task-critical assets required to maintain mission-essential functions, the most important of which are designated as defense critical assets. The destruction or disruption of a defense critical asset would seriously impact DoD missions. DoD’s Defense Critical Infrastructure Program has, therefore, sought to identify, label, and mitigate risks to such infrastructure.

Fixler and Montgomery pointed out that the April 2024 national security memorandum on critical infrastructure security expressly acknowledged this gap and took a long-overdue first step to address it. The NSM-22 tasked SRMAs with incorporating defense critical infrastructure (and other national priorities) into their existing sector risk management responsibilities.

The FDD also addressed the relationship between U.S. military capabilities and critical infrastructure as not a one-way street. “The Pentagon owns and operates the Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite network. While initially created as a military system, it has since become a public good and is thus governed by an interagency committee led jointly by DoD and the DOT.”

They added that GPS provides positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT) services — that is, precise location and timing information by triangulating signals from multiple satellites. While consumers are most familiar with GPS as a tool for navigation — essential in the transportation sector — many other critical infrastructure sectors also rely on GPS. The financial sector, for example, uses GPS for precision timing for global transactions. The electricity subsector similarly uses GPS timing to synchronize power plants.

Noting that GPS systems are vulnerable because of L1 frequency, Fixler and Montgomery wrote in their report that the foundational signal used by both civilian and military systems lacks modern encryption and anti-jamming features, making it an easy target for interference by malicious actors and environmental factors. “The L2 frequency, used alongside L1, improves GPS accuracy, particularly for military applications, by offering advanced error correction that compensates for atmospheric distortions that can affect L1 signals. The L2 frequency, however, is vulnerable to certain types of interference,” they added.

“The L5 frequency, specifically designed for safety-of-life applications, offers more accurate and reliable data for precision navigation. It features a larger bandwidth, advanced error correction, and significantly improved resistance to jamming and Spoofing,” FDD said. “However, only the more advanced GPS IIF and GPS III satellites currently broadcast L5. DoD has been years late in launching these satellites, only recently launching the 18th of 21 planned satellites. Additionally, Raytheon’s GPS Next Generation Operational Control System (GPS OCX) is years behind schedule. In the absence of these two programs, most existing receivers are not equipped to use L5.”

For transportation systems, the FDD called upon Congress, the executive branch, and independent federal and state regulators to work together to harmonize cybersecurity regulations. Also, Congress should authorize and appropriate funding for cybersecurity grant programs across all transportation critical infrastructure subsectors vital to military mobility.

Furthermore, the DoD should review interagency coordination and its implementation of responsibilities for defense critical infrastructure protection. Additionally, DoD should conduct national and local exercises with private-sector partners, simulating the mobilization of military forces while critical infrastructure sustains cyberattacks. The White House should revise the GPS governance strategy and accelerate the transition to the GPS III architecture and the less vulnerable L5 frequency while also exploring the feasibility of terrestrial PNT.

In the case of maritime transportation systems, Fixler and Montgomery listed that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) should conduct an audit of U.S. Coast Guard requirements to effectively exercise its SRMA responsibilities. Congress should provide additional appropriations to support cyber initiatives conducted by U.S. Coast Guard captains of the port. Furthermore, the U.S. Coast Guard and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) should provide guidance on trusted vendors for maritime operational technology.

When it comes to national airspace systems, there were two recommendations. First, Congress should provide oversight and appropriations to ensure that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Transportation Security Administration (TSA) collaboration with the private sector is fully resourced. Second, the FAA should produce a cybersecurity roadmap report to be delivered to Congress alongside the FAA NextGen Annual Report.

For the U.S. freight rail sector, the FDD mentioned that the TSA should continue investing in building collaboration and trust with rail operators. The White House should direct an interagency supply chain risk assessment for the U.S. freight rail industry. Lastly, the DoD should produce an annex on cybersecurity and resiliency alongside its five-year STRACNET assessments.

In conclusion, Fixler and Montgomery said that “during a conflict, America’s adversaries are likely to attack U.S. critical infrastructure in an attempt to constrain Washington’s policy options, including its capacity to mobilize the armed forces. Inhibiting the U.S. military’s ability to move troops and materiel from “fort to port” takes a significant capability off America’s chessboard. Ensuring the resilience of U.S. critical infrastructure must be a top priority for the nation as a whole and for DoD in particular.”

**Rapid military deployment capacity contains global hotspots.**

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The United States is a heartbeat away from a world war that it could lose. There are serious conflicts requiring U.S. attention in two of the world’s three most strategically important regions. Should China decide to launch an attack on Taiwan, the situation could quickly escalate into a global war on three fronts, directly or indirectly involving the United States. The hour is late, and while there are options for improving the U.S. position, they all require serious effort and inevitable trade-offs. It’s time to move with real urgency to mobilize the United States, its defenses, and its allies for what could become the world crisis of our time.

Describing the United States’ predicament in such stark terms may strike many readers as alarmist. The United States has long been the most powerful nation on earth. It won two world wars, defeated the Soviet Union, and still possesses the world’s top military. For the past year and a half, the United States has been imposing gigantic costs on Russia by supporting Ukraine—so much so that it seemed conceivable to this author that the United States might be able to sequence its contests by inflicting a decisive defeat-by-proxy on Russia before turning its primary attention to strengthening the U.S. military posture in the Indo-Pacific.

But that strategy is becoming less viable by the day. As Russia mobilizes for a long war in Ukraine and a new front opens in the Levant, the temptation will grow for a rapidly arming China to make a move on Taiwan. Already, Beijing is testing Washington in East Asia, knowing full well that the United States would struggle to deal with a third geopolitical crisis. If war does come, the United States would find some very important factors suddenly working against it.

One of those factors is geography. As the last two U.S. National Defense Strategies made clear and the latest congressional strategic posture commission confirmed, today’s U.S. military is not designed to fight wars against two major rivals simultaneously. In the event of a Chinese attack on Taiwan, the United States would be hard-pressed to rebuff the attack while keeping up the flow of support to Ukraine and Israel.

This isn’t because the United States is in decline. It’s because unlike the United States, which needs to be strong in all three of these places, each of its adversaries—China, Russia, and Iran—only has to be strong in its own home region to achieve its objectives.

The worst-case scenario is an escalating war in at least three far-flung theaters, fought by a thinly stretched U.S. military alongside ill-equipped allies that are mostly unable to defend themselves against large industrial powers with the resolve, resources, and ruthlessness to sustain a long conflict. Waging this fight would require a scale of national unity, resource mobilization, and willingness to sacrifice that Americans and their allies have not seen in generations.

The United States has fought multifront wars before. But in past conflicts, it was always able to outproduce its opponents. That’s no longer the case: China’s navy is already bigger than the United States’ in terms of sheer number of ships, and it’s growing by the equivalent of the entire French Navy (about 130 vessels, according to the French naval chief of staff) every four years. By comparison, the U.S. Navy plans an expansion by 75 ships over the next decade.

A related disadvantage is money. In past conflicts, Washington could easily outspend adversaries. During World War II, the U.S. national debt-to-GDP ratio almost doubled, from 61 percent of GDP to 113 percent. By contrast, the United States would enter a conflict today with debt already in excess of 100 percent of GDP.

Assuming a rate of expansion similar to that of World War II, it’s not unreasonable to expect that the debt could swell to 200 percent of GDP or higher. As the Congressional Budget Office and other sources have noted, debt loads on that scale would risk catastrophic consequences for the U.S. economy and financial system.

A global conflict would bring on other perils. Two U.S. rivals—Russia and Iran—are major oil producers. One recent report found that a prolonged closure of the Hormuz Strait amid a broader Middle Eastern conflict could push oil prices beyond $100 per barrel, substantially increasing inflationary pressures. China is a major holder of U.S. debt, and a sustained sell-off by Beijing could drive up yields in U.S. bonds and place further strains on the economy. It’s reasonable to assume that Americans would face shortages in everything from electronics to home-building materials.

All of that pales alongside the human costs that the United States could suffer in a global conflict. Large numbers of U.S. service members would likely die. Some of the United States’ adversaries have conventional and nuclear capabilities that can reach the U.S. homeland; others have the ability to inspire or direct Hamas-style terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, which may be easier to carry out given the porous state of the U.S. southern border.

If all of this sounds dreadful, well, that’s the point. As the biblical proverb says, fear is the beginning of wisdom. Global war is no longer a theoretical contingency debated by policy wonks, nor is it a fever dream of supposed hawks and militarists. It is a real and foreseeable, if not imminent, possibility.

The United States should be straining every nerve to prepare for this scenario in hopes of deterring conflict but ensuring that Americans are ready for it if it comes. Effective preparation is the path to improved deterrence; steps to increase readiness for war send a clear signal to adversaries that aggression is riskier to themselves than stability and peace.

The immediate priority for the United States has to be to ensure that Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan have the weapons they need to defend themselves. These are the players with the most skin in the game at present. The best hope for avoiding a general conflict is that these frontier states will be so plucky and prickly that aggression is stopped or deterred before it can spread.

That won’t be possible unless the United States gets its defense-industrial base in order. Since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war, total U.S. defense production has increased by a mere 10 percent—even as the war demonstrates the staggeringly high consumption of military ammunition in a major conflict between industrial powers compared to the limited counterinsurgency operations of the recent past.

The situation is serious enough that Washington may need to invoke the Defense Production Act and begin converting some civilian industry to military purposes. Even then, the U.S. government may have to take draconian steps—including the rerouting of materials intended for the consumer economy, expanding production facilities, and revising environmental regulations that complicate the production of war materials—in order to get the U.S. industrial base prepared for mobilization.

It’s obvious that Washington will have to increase defense spending. The Biden administration’s flatlining of defense outlays, loading defense bills with domestic pork-barrel spending, and insistence on matching every dollar spent on the military with a dollar for climate policy or social spending is the wrong approach. To prepare for war without exploding the debt, Washington will have to pare back expenditures on social programs that enjoy broad popular support.

No one in the U.S. Congress wants to tell elderly constituents their benefits are being cut. But the alternative is to someday tell constituents why their children or grandchildren are being deployed to dangerous places without adequate weapons when war breaks out.

U.S. allies will also have to step up in significant new ways. The Ukraine war has prompted European NATO members, most notably Germany, to get more serious about security. Yet even now, fewer than one-third of them are fulfilling their commitment to spend at least 2 percent of GDP on defense. Major Western European members have yet to follow through on the promise they made more than a year ago at the bloc’s summit in Madrid to deploy brigade-sized units on NATO’s eastern flank.

Across the West, governments and citizens will have to reevaluate priorities that put their countries at a disadvantage in the coming struggle. It makes no sense for Americans to tie themselves to hasty and exceedingly expensive climate policies that sap economic growth at a moment when China is building coal-fired power plants at the rate of two per week. Europeans will have to rethink their aversion to nuclear energy; American progressives will have to rethink self-imposed restrictions that limit the United States’ ability to ramp up energy production.

Nothing on this list is easy. But the United States and its allies are entering a time of hard decisions. What’s happening in Ukraine and Israel would have seemed unimaginable even a few years ago, and more shoes are likely to drop in the days ahead. Americans and their allies need to start getting their affairs in order now so that they do not find themselves unprepared for a global conflict if it comes.

## Expertise

**Top – Circumvention – 1NC**

#### Circumvention. Trump FLRA makes CBR meaningless.

AFGE 1/12, American Federation of Government Employees, the largest union representing over 750,000 civilian federal and D.C. government employees, "FLRA Reaches Quorum as Congress Confirms Trump Nominee," 1/12/2026, https://www.afge.org/article/flra-reaches-quorum-as-congress-confirms-trump-nominee/

The Federal Labor Relations Authority now has a quorum and can begin issuing decisions and undertaking rulemakings that have been delayed.

On Dec. 18, the U.S. Senate confirmed Charles Arrington as a member of the FLRA along with nearly 100 other nominees. The vote was 53 in favor and 43 opposed.

Ahead of the vote, AFGE National Veterans Council President M.J. Burke urged lawmakers to reject Arrington’s nomination. During President Trump’s first term, Arrington worked in the Department of Veterans Affairs’ human resources office and represented management during negotiations with AFGE on a new labor contract in which the VA was found to have engaged in bad faith bargaining.

“Based on his record as a Department of Veterans Affairs management negotiator and prior legislative positions, NVAC has serious concerns about Mr. Arrington’s demonstrated hostility toward collective bargaining and union rights,” Burke wrote in a letter to U.S senators. “Union representatives documented repeated instances of bad-faith bargaining, including misrepresentations at the table, dismissing legitimate union inquiries as mere ‘tactics,’ and efforts to curtail grievance procedures covering removals, leave, training, and awards—core protections for federal employees.”

Arrington supports proposals that would weaken union membership, restrict the use of official time to resolve workplace disputes, and make it easier for managers to discipline employees for minor infractions.

“Weakening employee protections and whistleblower safeguards threatens not only VA workers, but also the quality of care provided to veterans by chilling the reporting of waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement,” Burke said.

With Arrington’s confirmation, the FLRA has a 2-1 majority of Trump appointees. AFGE is warning its councils and locals that the FLRA may begin issuing adverse rulings on exceptions, negotiability appeals, and other matters.

**Zero leverage because federal workers can’t strike.**

**Top – AT: Expertise – 1NC**

**Trump doesn’t listen to experts when they don’t agree with him.**

Mary Louise **Kelly 25**, Kelly is an American Broadcaster & Author who Reports on Health Policy for NPR and is NPR's Senior Political Editor/Correspondent, "How a Distrust of Experts Is Shaping Government Policy Under Trump," NPR, 08/08/2025, https://www.npr.org/2025/08/08/nx-s1-5494569/how-a-distrust-of-experts-is-shaping-governme nt-policy-under-trump

MARY LOUISE KELLY, HOST:

Last week, the Trump administration canceled approximately $500 million in contracts to develop mRNA vaccines that protect the nation against future viral threats. The move alarmed public health experts. That was big news. But disregarding the advice of experts is nothing new for this administration, whether it's about health policy or other areas of government work like, say, the economy or foreign aid, just to name two. We want to hear more about the broader implications of that distrust of science and expertise, so for the next few minutes, we're going to turn the microphone over to two NPR reporters who have been following this closely - health policy correspondent Selena Simmons-Duffin and senior political editor and correspondent Domenico Montanaro.

DOMENICO MONTANARO, BYLINE: This decision at HHS canceling all this money for mRNA vaccines is kind of wild to me because it feels like a reversal from Trump's first term. He pushed to develop these vaccines in the first place.

SELENA SIMMONS-DUFFIN, BYLINE: Yeah, you know, it is, in some ways, a dramatic U-turn from the first Trump administration, which was in place when the COVID-19 pandemic began. So under Trump, the National Institutes for Health and private pharmaceutical companies collaborated to create vaccines incredibly fast. And you remember that effort was called Operation Warp Speed. And the speed was possible because the vaccines were built using this relatively new mRNA platform. The vaccines weren't perfect. There were a lot of breakthrough infections, but they are credited with saving many, many lives and preventing hospitalizations. And since that success, many scientists have been excited to figure out what else mRNA technology can do.

However, mRNA vaccines have also been a longtime target of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who is now the U.S. health secretary. He built his reputation and fortune by disparaging vaccines and suing drugmakers and regulators. He once tweeted that the COVID vaccines were, quote, "a crime against humanity." And even though he reassured senators during his confirmation hearing he wasn't going to bring his anti-vaccine activism to this new, very powerful role, that's exactly what he has done, and this is the latest example of that. And President Trump seems to be happy with this development, even though he used to call Operation Warp Speed and the vaccines it produced a miracle.

MONTANARO: Yeah. I mean, he's not going to put his neck out there, you know, to stand up for them anymore as a miracle, as he did describe them. But, you know, the fact is COVID was a huge political problem for Trump. He was trying to find anything that would help solve the problem and help him politically. But his handling overall of that is arguably why he lost in 2020. You know, many in his base turned on the vaccines. So Trump had to wind up walking this very fine line.

There was a huge overlap with RFK Jr.'s base of people who'd long, you know, been seen as on the fringe, and Trump needed them in 2024. But Trump really doesn't have very strongly held beliefs on this topic. You know, remember, he's also expressed his own skepticism about vaccines, so now Trump's allowing RFK Jr. the room to run, regardless of the best science because his movement and that of so many right-wing populist movements around the world, by the way, are dependent on this distrust of expertise.

SIMMONS-DUFFIN: Yeah. And, you know, Secretary Kennedy has really disparaged the Department of Health and Human Services, which he now oversees. He's laid the blame for American population - the American population's relatively poor health on rank-and-file HHS employees. He says they failed to improve America's health for decades. He's pointed to that as justification for abruptly firing approximately 10,000 workers, shutting down federal labs, canceling billions in funding for public health departments and researchers. And he doesn't just say these experts are ineffective. He told Lara Trump on Fox News that they're deliberately manipulating the truth.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

ROBERT F KENNEDY JR: There's all kinds of biases, and we need to have a system in place that will account for those biases and that will produce the best gold-standard science for Americans and evidence-based medicine.

SIMMONS-DUFFIN: Kennedy talks about gold-standard science constantly, but he doesn't really define what he means. He said in his confirmation hearings this isn't just a label he uses for research whose results fit with his preconceived beliefs. He says it's more objective than that. But gold-standard science is not a term that's used among scientists, and he seems to be using it as a filter for what research gets funding and credibility and what can be brushed aside.

MONTANARO: Yeah. And Kennedy isn't the only member of this administration with a deep distrust of experts. You know, there's this anti-elitism, anti-intellectualism, this distrust in the experts. It's really something that's fueled Trump's politics. That was made explicit in the October vice presidential debate. Listen to now-Vice President JD Vance then strongly disagreeing with the idea that it's important to listen to the experts - in this case - about health.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

VICE PRESIDENT JD VANCE: So many of the drugs, the pharmaceuticals that we put in the bodies of our children are manufactured by nations that hate us. This has to stop, and we're not going to stop it by listening to experts. We're going to stop it by listening to common sense wisdom, which is what Donald Trump governed on.

MONTANARO: Yeah. In other words, don't believe the experts. Believe Donald Trump. And look, they told us. They've been telling us. Think about trade, which was the first part of JD Vance's answer, as well as health care - what we're talking about here. And the strategy here is undermine institutions and experts and believe in that one person, then they can sell you anything.

SIMMONS-DUFFIN: You know, it is striking to me how Secretary Kennedy seems to assume bad intent among experts, as if expert consensus is a kind of collusion, and only outsiders without expertise in certain fields have the bravery to see things clearly. You know, think about how he fired the outside panel of vaccine experts and replaced them with his own handpicked roster, including people who have spread misinformation about vaccines.

You know, he points to historical examples of when scientists got things wrong to imply that all science that experts stand behind - especially if it contradicts his ideological beliefs - is also maybe wrong. And that's really a misrepresentation of how science works and a dark view of what motivates the experts in health and science. You know, he's leading from a place of distrust. And even though the public doesn't have high trust in public health experts or federal agencies like CDC and FDA, Kennedy has extreme views on things like vaccines that don't reflect popular opinion.

MONTANARO: And they used to have very high opinions of those institutions but...

SIMMONS-DUFFIN: Yeah.

MONTANARO: ...Leadership matters. And this is what happens when leaders undermine expertise. And that's, frankly, one of the biggest problems in our society, that we can't agree on a shared set of facts and then be able to argue about which policies are the right ones to lead the country. It makes it extraordinarily hard to find any degree of unity when everything is viewed through a partisan political lens.

**True loyalism is impossible.**

Bálint **Madlovics &** Dr. Bálint **Magyar 25**. \*MA Political Science, Research Fellow at the Democracy Institute of Central European University in Budapest and Visiting Professor at Bard College. \*\*Doctorate Political Economy, former Minister of Education of Hungary, Senior Research Fellow at the Democracy Institute of Central European University in Budapest. "Why America Won’t Become Hungary." https://www.foreignaffairs.com/hungary/why-america-wont-become-hungary-trump-musk

In contrast, the kinds of dependent relationships that Trump has been able to build in the United States remain heterogeneous and fragmented. Although he demands unflinching personal loyalty from political allies, he has been unable to achieve the kind of systematic, existential dependence that has emerged in Orban’s Hungary. Despite his strengthening grip on the branches of power and civil service, many autonomous actors and independent alternatives in economy and society remain out of his reach. These external forces limit the vulnerability of those both inside and outside Trump’s network. American democracy still remains a game of multiple players: Democrats can reorganize themselves for the midterms, the ambitions of Musk-type oligarchs can and very likely will conflict with Trump’s agenda, and Trump’s own core supporters may lose their enthusiasm when they begin to absorb the economic effects of some of his policies, such as planned tariffs, or suffer from the disruption of services because of Trump’s efforts to take apart the administrative state.

**DOGE cuts are an alt-cause – that’s external from CBR.**

Luke **1AC Schleusener 10-29**, MA, President and Co-founder, Out in National Security. Former Director, Public Policy, QOMPLX. Former National Security Associate, Office of Presidential Personnel, White House, "The U.S. Government's Repair Bills Are Coming Due," Foreign Policy, 10/29/2025, https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/10/29/trump-outsourcing-austerity-shutdown-united-states-government/. [OCR error retained & marked by brackets – Jordan; language edited]

By mid-2025, that brittleness was impossible to hide. President Donald Trump’s February executive order on domestic government efficiency imposed rapid staffing cuts across civilian agencies. Nearly 150,000 federal employees departed through layoffs, buyouts, or early retirements, and another roughly 150,000 workers were placed on paid leave pending reorganization.

The intention was modernization. The effect was [stagnation] ~~paralysis~~. Grant disbursements slowed, audits were suspended, and critical permitting backlogs doubled. Trump’s so-called Department of Government Efficiency did not break a functioning machine; it exposed one already in deficit.

These failures have international consequences. Allies now confront a United States that can fund commitments more easily than it can implement them. NATO coordination meetings proceed without U.S. representation at working levels. Defense cooperation agreements lapse as legal offices miss renewal deadlines. In a global system that depends on reliable U.S. execution, administrative fragility becomes a strategic risk. State capacity is credibility.

Administrative fragility also undermines the country’s credibility abroad. Foreign ministries and international organizations depend on predictable American follow-through. When agencies cannot execute, commitments fracture, and allies hedge. The gap between U.S. funding promises and implementation timelines shapes how other governments plan their defense and economic policies. Bureaucratic capacity, in this sense, is not only a domestic concern but also a core instrument of power. The ability to fulfill commitments abroad begins with competence at home.

Other powers have recognized this dynamic. The European Union’s regulatory apparatus and China’s sprawling development bureaucracy both convert administrative coherence into geopolitical influence. When the United States struggles to coordinate its own agencies, it forfeits leverage in settings where procedural reliability is power. Competence, not just capability, has become a metric of global standing. Rebuilding state capacity is therefore not nostalgia for mid-century bureaucracy; it is a strategic necessity in an era when governance itself is a contest of systems.

Reform cannot start everywhere at once, but repair begins where consensus still exists. Congress can act on visible service failures that cut across ideology. The Internal Revenue Service’s [] shows that targeted funding, iterative updates, and transparent performance metrics can restore trust while improving efficiency. Similar pilots could stabilize agencies whose breakdowns the public notices most, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Social Security Administration, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. When competence is visible, legitimacy follows.

Cybersecurity investment offers another near-term opportunity. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency already coordinates state and local partnerships, but on a scale disproportionate to the risks that it manages. Treating cybersecurity as national security would justify predictable multiyear funding, standardized cyber hygiene protocols, and exchange programs between federal and private-sector professionals. These measures are technocratic, not ideological, yet they generate political returns through reliability.

The deeper challenge is human infrastructure. Pay compression and limited advancement have driven talent toward the private sector for decades. Rebuilding career ladders within the civil service would reverse that migration. Indexing pay to market equivalents, creating apprenticeship pipelines, and restoring mid-career training would make government once again a place where expertise accumulates instead of evaporates. The Office of Personnel Management could publish open data on retirement risk and skill shortages, aligning incentives for long-term planning.

In the same spirit, the balance between in-house expertise and contracted labor must change. Outsourcing should supplement, not replace, institutional knowledge. The government’s own audits show that insourcing core technical functions, procurement, IT, and analytics results in higher quality and lower cost over time. Maintenance should be understood as a strategic function, not a discretionary one.

Repair also depends on governance. Expanding collective bargaining within the federal workforce would stabilize retention and create feedback channels between management and staff. The decline of organized labor has deprived the government of both interlocutors and institutional conscience. Restoring inspector general budgets would strengthen accountability.

And enforcing the [] would prevent presidents from withholding funds that Congress has appropriated, protecting administrative continuity from partisan interference. Designed after Watergate to preserve the separation of powers, the act ensures that presidents execute rather than suspend Congress’s will. Enforcing it today would reaffirm that bureaucratic discipline is constitutional discipline—the habit of carrying out commitments once made.

Administrative repair at home would also reinforce democratic credibility abroad. Allies and adversaries alike judge the strength of U.S. leadership by its capacity to govern itself. Rebuilding that capacity is therefore not only an act of domestic reform but also a reaffirmation of constitutional democracy as a system capable of self-correction. When Congress functions as a coequal branch and the civil service performs with reliability, it strengthens the foundations of U.S. diplomacy. The renewal of state capacity is, ultimately, the renewal of U.S. legitimacy.

Restoring capacity is therefore a civic project as much as a bureaucratic one. Citizens cannot sustain confidence in institutions that they rarely encounter or do not understand. Visible competence, the timely arrival of a benefit, the smooth operation of a public website, and the consistent enforcement of a rule, are the most persuasive arguments for democratic government. Each successful act of administration becomes an act of persuasion, reminding citizens that the state is neither distant nor hostile but capable and fair. Legitimacy accrues not from rhetoric but from reliability.

Rebuilding legitimacy will require more than competence. Policy advocate Heather McGhee has shown how racialized zero-sum thinking erodes public support for shared goods. A credible renewal of administrative capacity must make equity a matter of design. Reliability must be even across constituencies so that citizens experience the state as consistent rather than conditional. Equity, in this sense, is an engineering principle: Systems that deliver unevenly are systems that fail under stress.

Governance, like infrastructure, decays when maintenance is deferred. The metaphor of technical debt clarifies what austerity obscured: Neglect incurs obligations, and those obligations compound. The United States cannot innovate its way out of decay; it must restore the capacity to maintain.

History shows that such renewal is possible. The civil service reforms of the 1940s, the “Great Society” buildout of the 1960s, and the digital transition of the 1990s all expanded administrative capability when legitimacy and investment aligned. Whether the United States pays that debt will determine not only the health of its government but also the credibility of its leadership abroad.

**And structural administrative weakness.**

Luke **1AC Schleusener 10-29**, MA, President and Co-founder, Out in National Security. Former Director, Public Policy, QOMPLX. Former National Security Associate, Office of Presidential Personnel, White House, "The U.S. Government's Repair Bills Are Coming Due," Foreign Policy, 10/29/2025, https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/10/29/trump-outsourcing-austerity-shutdown-united-states-government/. [OCR error retained & marked by brackets – Jordan; language edited]

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**US foreign policy is irrecoverably uncredible, but no impact.**

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In the decades following World War II, United States foreign policy remained consistent. Allied nations depended on predictable American actions, while adversaries recognized established boundaries. Despite occasional challenges to American leadership, its approach was largely stable. In contrast, contemporary U.S. foreign policy is characterized by diminished predictability. The United States, once a stabilizing force in the international system, now frequently contributes to global uncertainty.

Shifting Goals, Shifting Trust

In the last few years, the US has changed its diplomatic strategy from working with other countries to working alone and from working with many countries to working with just one. Allied countries are having a hard time figuring out what the U.S. wants because policies about helping Ukraine, trade tariffs, and alliances in the Middle East are changing quickly. This lack of clarity about policy has made states that rely on American security guarantees nervous. So, a lot of allies don’t think Washington’s promises are trustworthy or long-lasting anymore. A recent study from Oxford shows that these changes in policy have directly hurt the allies’ trust and made U.S. deterrence less credible.

Beyond One Administration

This trend isn’t just happening in one presidential administration. Over the last ten years, the United States’ foreign policy has changed quickly from being interventionist to being isolationist. The withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 and the changing levels of military involvement in the Indo-Pacific region show a bigger problem: the lack of stable and credible institutional frameworks. The United States’ shows of power have not been consistent.

The Dynamics of Change in U.S. Foreign Policy (MDPI) says that new administrations make changes happen much faster than global allies can keep up with, which makes it harder to predict what will happen strategically.

Opportunity for Rivals

Such unpredictability provides adversaries with a strategic advantage. When the United States delays decisive action, states such as Russia and China increase their influence in regions including Eastern Europe, Africa, and the South China Sea. Competitors test boundaries when U.S. policy fluctuates between assertiveness and caution. Diplomatic ambiguity and inconsistent policy decisions from Washington create opportunities for these actors. Analysts at the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI) argue that diminished U.S. credibility enables rivals to exploit areas of uncertainty, thereby undermining deterrence to a degree not observed since the Cold War.

Allies Look Elsewhere

Allied states are adapting to evolving geopolitical circumstances. European governments are increasing investment in strategic autonomy to decrease dependence on United States defense support. In Asia, states such as South Korea and the Philippines are managing diplomatic relations with both the United States and China. Israel and Saudi Arabia, previously closely aligned with the United States, are also pursuing broader international partnerships. This gradual transformation aligns with findings from Credibility in Crises: How Patrons Reassure Their Allies (Oxford Academic), which demonstrates that when major powers communicate inconsistent commitments, smaller states seek security assurances from multiple sources.

Credibility as a Strategic Asset

Power alone is not enough to sustain leadership; credibility is what turns power into influence. The world’s confidence in U.S. commitments was once its greatest diplomatic asset. Today, that confidence is eroding. Foreign governments plan around U.S. election cycles, expecting that a change in administration could overturn entire strategies. Political scientists Robert Jervis and Keren Yarhi-Milo have long argued that credibility, once damaged, is far harder to restore than material power, a truth now evident in America’s strained alliances.

**No deterrence breakdown.** Adversaries are limited AND lack will.

Dr. Timothy R. **Heath 24**, PhD, PhD, Senior Researcher, International Defense, RAND, "Conflict in The Age of Fractured Publics," National Interest, 03/03/2024, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/conflict-age-fractured-publics-209826.

As the United States finds itself sliding into conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine, commentators have invoked the specter of a “Third World War.” The confrontation between the United States and its rivals China, Russia, and Iran has undoubtedly intensified, and the possibility of a broader conflagration cannot be discounted. Nevertheless, real great power conflict is unlikely to resemble the world wars of the twentieth century. The weakness of the participating states stands out as perhaps the defining feature of the current contest. Incapable of carrying out large-scale popular and economic mobilizations, the principal rivals may have little choice but to rely primarily on proxy, information, political, and economic warfare while avoiding large-scale conventional combat.

Although the U.S. economic advantage over all other countries remains undisputed, its political weaknesses have worsened. Polls show that trust in the federal government remains at historic lows, with about 15 percent expressing confidence in the government to “do what is right most of the time.” Acute partisanship has further eroded the president’s ability to act. No crisis in the past two decades has rallied public opinion around the president. Instead, each crisis has merely provided fodder for political factions to rally supporters and lambaste their rivals. The COVID-19 virus killed over a million Americans, for example, yet the pandemic did not draw the country together. Instead, it became another occasion for mutual recrimination and partisan bickering.

China, Russia, and Iran also exhibit equally severe signs of domestic weakness. To bolster flagging support, China’s government relies on relentless repression and indoctrination. Despite these efforts, public support hovers around 50-70 percent and is likely falling as the economy decelerates, prospects dim, and problems of corruption and malfeasance persist. With a shrinking population and mismanaged economy, Russia faces a grim future. Many have voted with their feet, with a million people having fled the country since the war against Ukraine began. Iran’s government remains deeply unpopular and has resorted to brutal violence to suppress waves of popular protests.

The fragile level of public support renders mass mobilization strategies, which leaders at the height of the industrial age practiced, nearly impossible. In World War II, for example, the United States and its allies, including the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom, maintained defense budgets equal to 40 percent of GDP or higher. These expenses were paid for with massive tax increases, especially for those with large incomes. National conscription involving 10-20 percent of the male population swelled armies and enabled them to fight for years on end despite incurring staggering casualties. By contrast, U.S. defense spending peaked at just over 6 percent of GDP during the “global war on terror” following the devastating attacks of September 11. Russian military spending has also peaked at around 6 percent of GDP. Neither country conscripted its citizens in their respective wars. The U.S. military rotated troops back to the Iraq and Afghan theaters after brief respites at home. And despite claiming that the current war in Ukraine is a fight for “Russia’s survival,” Moscow has replenished military losses with convicts as well as poor foreigners drawn by the promise of lavish payouts in the event of a soldier’s death. Aware of the fragility of public support, contemporary countries at war have generally kept taxes low, ensured a steady flow of consumer goods, and placed the burden of warfighting on a tiny minority.

Escalation to major war accordingly looks less and less likely. Geopolitical struggle will likely take a form different from recent world wars. Key differences could include the following:

First, only a small minority of the population may be involved in the contests. The vast majority of the population in each country will remain disengaged or offer, at most, passive support. They may support a military operation, but only so long as they do not have to sacrifice anything for it. About 80 percent of the U.S. public initially backed the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, opposition to conscription or higher taxes to fund the war remained so strong that the U.S. government never brought them up.

Similarly, the Russian public has expressed strong support for the war in Ukraine, but so long as it costs them little. Aware of the fragility of the support, Moscow has carried out limited conscription, mainly drawing from poorer minority regions, while largely sparing the politically important ethnic Russian population. Nor has Putin risked a general war tax on the public. The tenuousness of the public’s support places hard constraints on the ability of governments to scale up competitive efforts or sustain high-intensity war.

Second, weak and divided public support could become a persistent feature of the contest. In the United States, political opposition to support for Israel has soared as Palestinian casualties mounted in the face of bloody Israeli offensives. In Congress, Democrats have been deeply divided over the conflict, with some demanding more support for Palestine while others insist on longstanding obligations to Israel. Political opposition to U.S. support for Ukraine has increased as well. Some lawmakers have balked at the cost of U.S. defense support, which has exceeded $43 billion. Others have demanded more resources be spent on domestic security needs, such as the nation’s southern border.

Nor is the problem confined to the United States. Although harder to see because of their authoritarian politics, America’s rivals face their own problems of divided and weak support for war. All have overseen extensive repression to control expressions of discontent, but signs of opposition still appear. Russian extremist militia groups have attacked their own military, and the neo-Nazi Freedom of Russia militia group openly advocates the overthrow of Vladimir Putin’s government. Opposition to Iran’s foreign policies has grown in ethnic minority regions that sympathize with the targets of Iran’s proxy wars. In December 2023, for example, a group of Iranian Jewish hackers shut down 70 percent of Iran’s petrol stations.

Outside of occasional terror attacks in ethnic minority regions like Xinjiang, China has experienced lower levels of opposition to its foreign policy, but that is mainly due to the fact that the country is not involved in any war. However, support for militarily aggressive policies remains low. Despite the popularity of Taiwan’s unification, for example, the overwhelming majority of surveyed citizens oppose war to achieve that goal. Ambivalence to the state’s policies can be seen in the country’s intensifying tensions with the West. Despite the state’s robust backing of Putin, a small online population openly sympathizes with Ukraine. A handful of Chinese citizens have even enlisted in Ukraine’s military to fight against Russia.

Third, governments will face a strong incentive to fight wars on the cheap. Due to their inability to mobilize the nation’s resources and populations, states may find sustaining high-intensity war especially difficult. After extensive preparation, Russia launched a major invasion of Ukraine. Still, its inability to mobilize resources has left it dependent on conscripted minorities, convicts, and foreigners for recruits and gas sales to fund operations. Incapable of transitioning to a war economy, Moscow has had to purchase arms and ammunition from former clients such as North Korea and Iran. Similarly, the United States withdrew from Iraq and Afghanistan in part due to political controversies over the costs of the operations.

Instead of high-intensity wars, countries may find proxy, information, cyber, and economic warfare more attractive ways to sustain pressure on their adversaries. Proxy wars offer the potential advantage of bleeding a rival without risking high casualties of one’s own military. The use of contractors, state and non-state allies and partners, and unmanned systems will also likely appeal to governments sensitive to the political perils of military casualties and for their relative cost-effectiveness, as contracts can be terminated as soon as the war ends.

Cyber and information operations could become especially important as well due to both the lower cost and potentially higher payoff of targeting disaffected enemy populations. Conversely, the U.S. government may need to commit more resources to counter adversary information operations. Measures that impose economic hardship could be another way to provoke unrest. Resources that address urgent governance concerns will also be essential to mitigate disaffection and thereby undercut the appeals of enemy governments.

The need to ensure domestic security and reduce popular discontent while waging conflict with the involvement of only a tiny minority of the population suggests a new mental framework will be required for the United States to manage the challenges posed by rival states. It is not too early to begin planning and thinking about how to ensure U.S. security in an era of fragile public support.

**Top – AT: Disease – 1NC**

**CDC is structurally doomed. Poor decision making, lack of legitimacy. Also, pre-Trump.**

Brian J. **Miller &** M. Anthony **Mills 23**. practicing physician, is an assistant professor of medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and a nonresident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. senior fellow at AEI. “Why the CDC Failed Its Covid-19 Test.” National Review. 11/05/2023. https://www.nationalreview.com/2023/11/why-the-cdc-failed-its-covid-19-test/.

The Covid-19 pandemic was a disaster. Over a million Americans died — many in isolation in hospitals and nursing homes, far from their friends and family — and millions more became seriously sick, lost their jobs, or felt the effects of widespread economic and social disruption. Students suffered irreversible learning losses, with many exiting the public-school system altogether. Patients delayed or were denied health care unrelated to Covid-19, from cancer treatment to routine vaccination. Mental-health issues and domestic abuse spiked.

Federal, state, and local authorities frequently made confusing or contradictory policy decisions, leaving Americans bewildered and frustrated. In many places, churches and schools shuttered while bars and liquor stores remained open. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was among the most prominent federal institutions at the center of this maelstrom. One of the agency’s key functions during the pandemic — and a source of much controversy — was to provide public-health guidance: advice to institutions and individuals about how to behave in response to the threat of a novel coronavirus.

CDC guidance itself isn’t new — the agency has been issuing public-health guidelines and warnings for years — but it took on a new and outsized role during the pandemic. Americans learned the hard way that the CDC is not just a public-health agency; it is part of the administrative state, embedded in a powerful federal bureaucracy with considerable influence over economic and social life. Yet the CDC’s policy guidance is peculiar, neither strictly regulatory nor simply advisory. And the processes and evidence the CDC uses to make such consequential decisions are, compared with those of other administrative agencies, unusually opaque.

Recent survey data from the American Enterprise Institute’s Survey Center on American Life show a dramatic decline in public trust in scientific and medical expertise from before the pandemic to today. It may take years for the public-health community — and the CDC, in particular — to recover. As a first step toward regaining its legitimacy, the CDC should consider reforming its public-health guidance — not only to help it make better decisions, but also to increase the transparency and accountability of its decision-making process.

To be trustworthy, an institution must be capable of reliably delivering the services the public demands from it. Moreover, the process by which public demand is met must be recognized as legitimate — the institution must carry out its functions in ways that are perceived as fair and reasonable. In the case of the CDC, that means not only promoting information and policies that protect public health, but also making policy decisions in accordance with agreed upon and publicly recognizable procedures, with the possibility of recourse when things go awry.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the CDC often failed on both counts, hampering its own ability to implement effective policies and contributing to the erosion of public trust in scientific and medical expertise.

Where, exactly, did the CDC go astray? In some cases, especially very early in the pandemic, the CDC — like all public authorities — simply had to make judgment calls under conditions of radical uncertainty with no good options. In other instances, the agency made fateful mistakes — such as its botched rollout of diagnostic tests — which hampered our initial pandemic response. In still other cases, the agency arguably exceeded its statutory authority, as when it unilaterally issued an eviction-moratorium order after Congress failed to reach an agreement on the issue. (The order was later struck down by the Supreme Court.)

Many of the CDC’s most controversial decisions concerned the agency’s public-health guidelines. Making policy recommendations to protect public health is a core part of the CDC’s mission. During the pandemic, such recommendations — concerning whether and how to reopen schools or when to vaccinate which groups against Covid-19 — became a central feature of our public and private lives. Too often, these guidelines were ambiguous, confusing, or altogether wrong-headed.

Criticism came from various quarters. For instance, experts now agree that the CDC was far too slow in accepting the role of aerosols in transmitting the virus. And of course there was the infamous flip-flopping on masks, not to mention the obfuscatory justifications that followed. During the Omicron wave, critics from the left accused the agency of caving to practical and political pressures to return to business as usual when it abruptly halved isolation and quarantine times. More recently, congressional Republicans have charged that CDC guidance on school re-openings was unduly influenced by teachers’ unions.

These mistakes weren’t all equally misguided, but they contributed to the public perception that the CDC’s decision-making process was in some way unreliable, ineffective, or improper — in other words, influenced by non-scientific factors. In the extreme, the CDC stands accused of issuing diktats without the input of a broad enough array of stakeholders or public accountability. This is a problem of legitimacy, not just policy.

Yet it is a peculiar kind of legitimacy crisis. On one level, CDC guidelines are just that: guidelines, which institutions or individuals are encouraged but not required to follow. In principle, this allows for flexibility and adaptation — virtues when it comes to translating rapidly changing policy advice into action in such a large and diverse country as ours. It also means that the CDC is not entrusted with coercive power over the vast array of issues its guidance touches on.

Indeed, many controversial pandemic policies, such as school closures and mask mandates, were implemented by state, local, and municipal authorities — not the CDC. The fact that CDC guidelines are technically voluntary is partly why there was so much variation in whether, when, and how they were adopted. It is also why the CDC’s defenders are not entirely wrong when they remind its critics on Capitol Hill that school closures, for instance, were in the hands of state and local authorities. At the same time, to characterize CDC public-health guidance during the pandemic as mere advice is highly misleading.

Unlike a lot of expert advice given to government authorities, CDC guidelines are public-facing but not obviously publicly accountable. Especially under pandemic conditions, the recommendations are — and are meant to be — considered and adopted, frequently without modification or even second thought, by a wide array of local, national, public, and private institutions, from Army bases and Amazon warehouses to your local school board and youth swim team. During the pandemic, CDC guidelines also came to shape and constrain individual behavior in a way and to a degree that most regulatory agencies could only dream of, influencing everything from whether to wear what kind of masks under what circumstances to how many feet to stand apart from strangers to how long to isolate at home after infection or exposure.

In effect, the CDC’s policy recommendations — though they do not carry the force of law — were often treated as binding in practice. To flout them in certain circles was almost tantamount to transgression — the violation of a taboo. The nebulous but nevertheless real effect of the CDC’s guidance is a reminder that political power is not always reducible to the coercive power of the law. What does democratic accountability mean under such circumstances?

**No disease impact.**

**Vermeer ’25** [Michael J.D., Emily Lathrop, and Alvin Moon; May 6; PhD Chemistry, senior physical scientist at RAND; PhD Mechanical Engineering, associate engineer at RAND; PhD Mathematics, associate mathematician at RAND; RAND, “On the Extinction Risk from Artificial Intelligence,” p. 18-21, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\_reports/RRA3000/RRA3034-1/RAND\_RRA3034-1.pdf]

Requirement 1. Multiple Pathogens Are Likely Required Because a Single Pathogen Would Be Unlikely to Kill a Sufficient Percentage of the Population to Be an Extinction Threat

To support this assertion, we look first to historical pandemics. Natural biological threats have existed for millennia. The 14th-century bubonic plague—the Black Death—wiped out 30–50 percent of Europe’s population, and the 1918 influenza pandemic resulted in 50 million deaths worldwide (Shipman, 2014). The combination of drought and pathogens introduced during the European conquest of Mexico in the 16th century led to more than a 90-percent reduction in the native population (Acuna-Soto et al., 2002). However, although these examples led to drastic human population declines, they did not fully extinguish the human population. Indeed, with one known exception—the extinction of the Christmas Island rat, preceded by the emergence of a deadly pathogen in the population—there are no well-corroborated instances of pathogens causing the complete extinction of a mammalian species (Wyatt et al., 2008).

A greater threat would likely come from novel pathogens, including both modified natural pathogens or completely de novo pathogens, designed for high transmissibility and high lethality. However, even pathogens designed to cause these effects might be limited by human heterogeneity. Human genetic diversity plays a key role in limiting the effectiveness of pathogens across populations. Within a population, pathogens affect individuals differently depending on factors related to the specific genetic characteristics of each host (Jones, 2021). Some individuals or subpopulations might possess genetic traits that confer resistance or immunity to certain pathogens. For example, differences in viral receptors between individuals can affect the ability of the hepatitis C virus to enter a host’s cells (Huang et al., 2019).

The strength of immune response can vary among individuals, influencing their ability to fight off infections. The likelihood that a pathogen will cause death is influenced by the immune response that an individual is able to put up against the pathogen (Rouse and Sehrawat, 2010), meaning that outcomes will vary between individuals, even when controlling for pathogen dose.

Relatedly, the infection dose—the amount of a pathogen that an individual is exposed to—can significantly alter the course of a disease (Rouse and Sehrawat, 2010). Individuals who only receive a small infection dose have a higher chance of successfully mounting an immune response, and infection dose is a factor that cannot easily be controlled for. This is the case not only for transmissible pathogens that spread person-to-person but also for nontransmissible pathogens, such as Bacillus anthracis, the causative agent of anthrax. As a result, it is unlikely that even a carefully engineered pathogen would be 100 percent lethal for all humans, as certain individuals or populations might possess traits that allow them to fight the disease or receive a nonlethal dose of the pathogen that causes the disease. Case studies have suggested that exposure to even highly lethal viruses, such as rabies, is not always fatal (Gold et al., 2020).

The postinfection survival of some individuals leads to several important consequences. First, some populations will emerge with immunity; survivors might develop immunological memory, thereby reducing the severity of disease on reinfection. Second, over generations, natural selection will dictate that hosts with immune systems that are better equipped to fight off a pathogen will survive and pass along those traits to offspring. Third, subpopulations with increased immunity within a larger population can alter disease dynamics, thereby lowering the pool of susceptible individuals and reducing the continued spread of a pathogen in the population (Grassly and Fraser, 2008).

Finally, even if a single pathogen could be designed to be consistently highly lethal after many replications, we assert that sufficient numbers of humans would likely survive to avoid extinction. A virus that was 99.99 percent lethal and reached the entire human population, for example, might leave at least 800,000 individuals alive. As previously noted, the minimum viable population for human beings is unknown, but it is likely well below 800,000 people.

Requirement 2. Widespread Dissemination in Multiple Places Is Likely Required Because Initial Infections of a Small Population in One Location Could Allow a Pathogen to Mutate to Become Less Lethal over Time

For transmissible pathogens, evolutionary pressures and host-pathogen interactions result in altered pathogen characteristics as the pathogen reproduces within a host and spreads host to host (Geoghegan and Holmes, 2018; Gerstein, Espinosa, and Leidy, 2024). This results in modifications to pathogen characteristics, leading to variants with modified lethality and transmissibility. In addition to host-pathogen interactions altering pathogen characteristics, viruses are prone to transcription and translation errors, resulting in random mutations over time and unpredictable changes in pathogen characteristics (Sanjuán et al., 2010).

In one well-cited evolutionary biology study, researchers traced the evolution of the myxoma virus, which was introduced to Australia in 1950 to control the invasive rabbit population (Kerr et al., 2012). The original virus was highly lethal with a 99.8 percent fatality rate. However, once released, the virus quickly mutated, and, within two years, the landscape was dominated by less lethal strains, even with the continued release of very virulent strains into the local population (Kerr et al., 2012). Although these less lethal strains still had fatality rates of between 70 percent and 95 percent, this allowed for the survival of some rabbits; this natural selection resulted in the emergence of rabbit resistance to myxomatosis (Marshall and Douglas, 1961). Ultimately, the virus failed to exterminate the invasive rabbit population, and invasive rabbits persist in Australia as of this writing. Interestingly, this experiment was independently repeated in France in 1952 with similar results: the emergence of attenuated (i.e., less virulent) strains and natural selection for resistant rabbits (Kerr et al., 2012). We note, however, that the different generational periods for humans and rabbits might indicate the need for caution in applying this example to an equivalent scenario affecting humans. Rabbits reach reproductive age on much shorter timescales than humans do and have many more offspring per pregnancy. Therefore, it might be much more challenging for a human population to recover and sustain itself in the face of a similarly lethal transmissible virus.

Both theory and historical examples of virus evolution indicate that highly lethal viruses will often evolve to decreased virulence over time, resulting in lower mortality (Geoghegan and Holmes, 2018). This makes intuitive sense because very lethal pathogens will quickly sicken and kill their hosts, thereby limiting their own transmission opportunities. Conversely, less virulent strains that allow hosts to survive longer have more chances of spreading among a population, leading to increased presence in a population. If a pathogen retains alternative nonhuman hosts—a reservoir species—it might be less self-limiting because the pathogen could conceivably maintain high lethality in human hosts concurrently with transmissibility from the reservoir species. Others have found, however, that low-virulence infections have a greater chance of establishing transmission in human hosts, which might diminish the ability of pathogens to completely wipe out a human population, even where a reservoir species exists (Geoghegan and Holmes, 2018; Geoghegan et al., 2016).

Requirement 3. Follow-Up Actions Are Likely Required After an Initial Dissemination of a Pathogen Because Natural and Artificial Isolation Might Shield Human Communities from Infection

The path of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic illustrates that a highly transmissible pathogen can readily infect every region of the world despite efforts to contain it (e.g., lockdowns) (Onyeaka et al., 2021; Jeanne et al., 2023); it was a pandemic with truly global diffusion. Although the relatively low lethality of COVID-19—relative to the extremely high lethality assumed in our scenario—and the prevalence of asymptomatic cases likely aided in the diffusion of the virus, the pandemic showed that a pathogen could realistically have global diffusion. However, global diffusion is not sufficient for a pathogen to create an extinction risk—it must reach nearly every human community on earth, even those that are naturally or artificially isolated.

There still exist uncontacted tribes, and many regions and communities remain relatively isolated. As a highly lethal pandemic spreads, it is likely that human communities would take steps to isolate themselves to whatever extent they could to prevent infection; island nations have even been suggested as potential refuges from pandemics with extinction potential (Boyd and Wilson, 2020; Turchin and Green, 2019). Where human communities are successful in isolating themselves from contact with the pathogen, follow-up actions would be required to either intentionally disseminate the pathogen among them or to find other means to exterminate surviving humans.

### Economy War Defense---Short Walt 20---1NC

#### Economic decline doesn’t cause war

Dr. Stephen M. Walt 20, Robert and Renée Belfer Professor of International Relations at Harvard University, PhD in International Relations (with Distinction) from Stanford University, MA in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley, “Will a Global Depression Trigger Another World War?”, Foreign Policy, 5/13/2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/13/coronavirus-pandemic-depression-economy-world-war/

On balance, however, I do not think that even the extraordinary economic conditions we are witnessing today are going to have much impact on the likelihood of war. Why? First of all, if depressions were a powerful cause of war, there would be a lot more of the latter. To take one example, the United States has suffered 40 or more recessions since the country was founded, yet it has fought perhaps 20 interstate wars, most of them unrelated to the state of the economy. To paraphrase the economist Paul Samuelson’s famous quip about the stock market, if recessions were a powerful cause of war, they would have predicted “nine out of the last five (or fewer).”

Second, states do not start wars unless they believe they will win a quick and relatively cheap victory. As John Mearsheimer showed in his classic book Conventional Deterrence, national leaders avoid war when they are convinced it will be long, bloody, costly, and uncertain. To choose war, political leaders have to convince themselves they can either win a quick, cheap, and decisive victory or achieve some limited objective at low cost. Europe went to war in 1914 with each side believing it would win a rapid and easy victory, and Nazi Germany developed the strategy of blitzkrieg in order to subdue its foes as quickly and cheaply as possible. Iraq attacked Iran in 1980 because Saddam believed the Islamic Republic was in disarray and would be easy to defeat, and George W. Bush invaded Iraq in 2003 convinced the war would be short, successful, and pay for itself.

The fact that each of these leaders miscalculated badly does not alter the main point: No matter what a country’s economic condition might be, its leaders will not go to war unless they think they can do so quickly, cheaply, and with a reasonable probability of success.

Third, and most important, the primary motivation for most wars is the desire for security, not economic gain. For this reason, the odds of war increase when states believe the long-term balance of power may be shifting against them, when they are convinced that adversaries are unalterably hostile and cannot be accommodated, and when they are confident they can reverse the unfavorable trends and establish a secure position if they act now. The historian A.J.P. Taylor once observed that “every war between Great Powers [between 1848 and 1918] … started as a preventive war, not as a war of conquest,” and that remains true of most wars fought since then.

The bottom line: Economic conditions (i.e., a depression) may affect the broader political environment in which decisions for war or peace are made, but they are only one factor among many and rarely the most significant. Even if the COVID-19 pandemic has large, lasting, and negative effects on the world economy—as seems quite likely—it is not likely to affect the probability of war very much, especially in the short term.

## Overreach

**Top – Foreign Policy – 1NC**

**Trump foreign policy doesn’t cause conflict.**

Seth J. **Frantzman 25**, PhD, Adjunct Fellow, Foundation for Defense of Democracies, “Why Donald Trump’s Diplomacy Appears to be Working,” FDD, https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2025/10/10/why-donald-trumps-diplomacy-appears-to-be-working/

President Trump’s signature transactionalism and emphasis on personal relationships with foreign leaders are helping not hindering US foreign policy.

President Donald Trump’s push for a peace deal in Gaza appeared to pay off in the late hours of October 8 as Israel and Hamas indicated they had agreed to the first phase of a deal. Trump has been pushing for peace in Gaza since a ceasefire deal was secured before he took office in January. However, the push for peace has still taken time. There may be lessons to be learned from what appeared to work in late September and early October.

The White House has focused throughout 2025 on ending the war in Gaza and bringing home the hostages that Hamas holds in Gaza. Towards that end, it played a key role in a ceasefire from January through March. When the ceasefire broke down, US envoy Steve Witkoff attempted to revive it, and the Trump administration secured the release of the last living American hostage in Gaza, Edan Alexander, in May.

In July, Trump again pushed for peace and continued to try to revive efforts for a Gaza deal in late August and then in September. What has brought success in October is the ability to bring together Qatar, Turkey, Egypt, Israel, and the United States in Egypt for discussions with Hamas. There may be a lesson in this for the Trump administration’s search for a global doctrine. It brings together US partners and allies with Trump’s personal approach.

During his first term in office and the first ten months of his second term, Trump developed a distinctive approach to foreign policy. This doctrine is not always clearly articulated, but it has several unique elements. One of the main themes is a desire to end conflicts abroad and avoid entangling the US in further conflicts.

A second theme is a transactional approach to foreign ties, which typically, if commonsensically, means assessing whether foreign countries are fulfilling their obligations. What that has meant in the past is pressuring NATO to increase spending, or ensuring that countries in the Middle East continue to spend heavily on US defense platforms and aircraft.

The process that led to the Gaza deal was emblematic of both themes in Trump’s approach. First, he sought to bring together several Middle East countries to promote peace. This included talks with Arab and Muslim states, including close US allies and partners such as Qatar, Turkey, and Egypt. Turkey is seeking numerous deals in the US that could total billions in potential purchases from Boeing and Lockheed Martin, according to reports from September.

The Turkey aircraft deals follow purchases by Qatar announced in May. The White House said in May, during a visit by Trump to Qatar, that “today in Qatar, President Donald Trump signed an agreement with Qatar to generate an economic exchange worth at least $1.2 trillion. President Trump also announced economic deals totaling more than $243.5 billion between the United States and Qatar, including a historic sale of Boeing aircraft and GE Aerospace engines to Qatar Airways.”

These trade ties also provide an incentive for long-term peace in the region. Turkey has already seen how this can become a roller coaster. After Ankara acquired S-400s from Russia in 2019, it was given the cold shoulder in the F-35 program. Now Ankara wants to be back on better terms with Washington. Turkey’s president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has enjoyed warm ties with Trump over the years.

A key feature of Trump’s foreign policy doctrine is to approach US foreign ties through the prism of personal relationships with leaders abroad. In the lead-up to the Gaza peace deal proposal, which was announced on September 29, Trump met with Arab and Muslim leaders on the sidelines of the UNGA. This face-to-face meeting appears to have paved the way for the deal that took place in Egypt on October 8.

Several key tactics helped push the deal forward. Trump frequently announced progress before the two sides had fully agreed. He was also willing to appear to pressure Israel, demanding an end to bombing in Gaza, for instance. This appearance of being willing to pressure everyone involved has succeeded because the pressure is combined with win-win promises for all the countries.

The president thanked Turkey, Qatar, and Egypt on October 8 as the deal was concluded. Israel also feels it has secured most of what it wanted in Gaza. Trump has appealed directly to Israelis and spoken with freed hostages and families of hostages to show he is in tune with what the Israeli public wants.

There is a sense that the White House believes this deal can reset strategy in the Middle East. One part of this policy portrays Trump as helping Israel get out of a conflict that was increasingly unpopular around the world.

“Israel cannot fight the world,” Trump said in a phone call with Netanyahu. He also believes that this deal will pave the way for future progress on peace in the region, much like the Abraham Accords, which were secured during the first term between Israel, the UAE, and Bahrain. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has also praised this “historic moment.”

The question now is whether a successful doctrine will emerge from these first steps in ending the Gaza war. First, all parties must uphold the ceasefire. There is also a question as to whether the peace plan moves to its second phase. Last January’s ceasefire never reached the next stage of its planned sequence.

If the deal can be finalized, then the White House might try to apply this model for success to Ukraine and other conflicts. In any case, the United States has long sought to focus on Asia and near-peer rivalries with countries such as Russia and China.

Beijing and Moscow aim to establish a new world order, one that challenges the US-led order that emerged after the Cold War. They have been working to achieve this goal diplomatically, militarily, and economically. That means that after success in the Middle East, Washington will find its credibility increasing in other areas. Trump has claimed to have helped end seven conflicts in his first year in office. The Gaza deal will be the largest test yet for his doctrine.

**Systemic buffers contain the ‘polycrisis.’**

Noah **Smith 22**, former Bloomberg Opinion columnist, was an assistant professor of finance at Stony Brook University, “Against "polycrisis",” Noahpinion, 11/13/22, https://www.noahpinion.blog/p/against-polycrisis

One term I see used increasingly often in the econ opinion-sphere is “polycrisis”. This term was invented by some French folks in decades past, but it has recently been popularized by Adam Tooze. Tooze, a historian at Columbia and a popular blogger, is also the author of some of my favorite history books, including The Deluge (about WW1), Wages of Destruction (about WW2), and Crashed. The latter is the best history of the early 2010s Euro crisis that I’ve ever read (or am ever likely to read), and it does a great job of explaining how problems in various different countries exacerbated each other.

So perhaps it’s not surprising that Tooze sees the world of the 2020s as a system of even larger interrelated crises. In a recent blog post, he pulls a definition of “polycrisis” from a report by the Cascade Institute:

We define a global polycrisis as any combination of three or more interacting systemic risks with the potential to cause a cascading, runaway failure of Earth’s natural and social systems that irreversibly and catastrophically degrades humanity’s prospects…A global polycrisis, should it occur, will inherit the four core properties of systemic risks—extreme complexity, high nonlinearity, transboundary causality, and deep uncertainty—while also exhibiting causal synchronization among risks.

This basically seems like a way of saying that all the bad things you read about in the news — inflation, climate change, war, political turmoil in the U.S., economic turmoil in China — are all of a piece, with the individual crises reverberating back and forth and causing a general system failure. In an earlier post, Tooze attempted to draw a picture of this system of interrelated crises and risks:

I generally enjoy big-think like this. (If I didn’t, I would be somewhat of a hypocrite, given that my recent post about decoupling was entitled “The end of the system of the world”!) But I’m just not sure if the challenges and risks the world faces today are as mutually reinforcing as Tooze and the other “polycrisis” enthusiasts believe.

The polycrisis illusion

For one thing, it’s always very easy to think that we live in an era uniquely chock-full of risks, disasters, and problems. This is because of something called the availability heuristic — we tend to think the things we read about are typical of the world at large. And both the news media and the social media shouters who crave our eyeballs have long ago realized that “no news is good news” — i.e., negative news is uniquely good at grabbing our attention. So the more we’re engaged with current events, the more we’re likely to see the world as defined by things that alarm us — this is the subject of the song “We Didn’t Start the Fire”, quoted at the top of this post.

This is not to say the world is free of crises and risks; there are plenty out there. Nor is it to say that our current era has less than others; this is very hard to judge. But the idea that these crises are all related may be a case of apophenia — our natural human tendency to perceive connections that don’t actually exist, or are far weaker than we think.

Just because we can draw arrows between news items does not mean that the items are strongly coupled. For example, Tooze’s diagram draws an arrow from China to the Russian gas boycott, but China didn’t join the boycott. He draws an arrow between “Biden administration & GOP risk” and the Lend-Lease bill, but there’s no reason to think Lend-Lease was motivated by U.S. domestic politics, and the support for Ukraine has so far remained bipartisan. He draws an arrow from oil prices to the climate crisis, but — as I’ll talk about in a bit — the former actually helps address the latter.

When crises aren’t really strongly coupled, they can act as low-correlation assets in a diversified financial portfolio — when one problem is getting worse, another problem somewhere else is likely to be getting better.

In fact, though, I think there’s an even more important reason to be skeptical of “polycrisis”: buffer mechanisms. The global economy and political system are full of mechanisms that push back against shocks. Supply-and-demand is a great example — when supply falls, elastic demand cushions the short-term impact on prices (this is a little like Lenz’s Law in physics). Political backlashes are another mechanism — people don’t like it when you try to deny elections or invade your neighbors, and they get mad and push back. Policy responses are a third buffer — when central banks see inflation, they restrain it with higher interest rates. And so on.

The reason this makes a polycrisis less likely is that the buffer mechanisms often push back against problems in addition to the ones they were designed to push back against. There are plenty of historical examples of this. The New Deal didn’t just fight the Depression; it finally implemented a long-needed social insurance system that has served us well to this day. The victory over the Axis in WW2 also prompted decolonization and the creation of a global economic system that has allowed most of the world to flourish in the century since. More recently, the 2008 financial crisis led to needed infrastructure spending, Obamacare, and the intellectual revival of industrial policy.

In other words, sometimes instead of a polycrisis we get a polysolution.

Today, I can see a number of examples where the various crises that newsreaders worry about are leading to responses that will help address the others.

Buffer mechanisms in the global political economy of the 2020s

As I mentioned before, one very simple example of a buffer mechanism is supply and demand. In the past year, China’s economy has slowed dramatically due to a combination of a real estate bust, the Zero Covid policy, and various regulatory crackdowns. Normally, a recession in the world’s biggest trading nation would be a cause for global alarm, but in this one it’s more likely a source of relief. A collapse in Chinese demand is helping to restrain oil prices, keeping them at around the same level as the early 2010s:

That in turn is blunting the impact of the Ukraine war and Russia sanctions on Europe’s economy (and America’s, and Japan’s, etc.).

A combination of China’s economic slowdown and Russia’s military fiasco in Ukraine also seem to have reduced the chance of U.S.-China conflict, at least in the short term. Seeing Russia fail to conquer a smaller country must have given even Xi Jinping pause about launching a similar military adventure to conquer Taiwan, while economic struggles distract policymakers’ attention.

Though it’s too early to tell, the results of last week’s midterm elections in the U.S. — which were a victory for stability and bipartisanship and a loss for election-denialists — might also have been prompted in some minor way by the Ukraine war and the threat of geopolitical competition with China, which should remind Americans that there are enemies in the world more dangerous than other Americans.

Meanwhile, the war in Ukraine will spur the fight against climate change. Disruptions to Russian energy supplies, especially in Europe, create incentives for the rapid deployment of renewable energy. This is from May:

The Commission proposed that 45% of the EU’s energy mix should come from renewables by 2030, an advance on the current 40% target suggested less than a year ago. Officials also want to cut energy consumption by 13% by 2030…

“It is clear we need to put an end to this dependence and a lot faster before we had foreseen before this war,” said Frans Timmermans, the EU official in charge of the green deal.

Just a few days ago, the European Commission followed through with a temporary emergency regulation to speed the adoption of renewables. (The war is leading to minor outbreak of sanity on energy in general; Germany is keeping its nuclear plants open, at least for a while.)

The rapid adoption of renewables will, in turn, drive down their price, through a mechanism known as learning curves — the more you build, the more cost goes down, creating an incentive to build even more. So the increased adoption of renewables in Europe and other Russia-sanctioning countries in response to the Ukraine war will also make renewables more attractive in China, India, and other countries that aren’t joining in the sanctions.

All this will help the fight against climate change. But it will also help address another longstanding economic problem in the rich world: slow growth. Due to massive continuing cost drops, renewable energy increasingly isn’t just green energy — it’s cheap energy. The forecasters who study learning curves believe that technologies like solar, batteries, and hydrogen are much more susceptible to learning effects than fossil fuel technologies or even nuclear. That means that renewables are going to give us cheaper energy than we’ve ever had in our history as a species. And that in turn will help the developed world shake off the creeping stagnation in productivity and wages that it has endured for most of the time since the oil shocks of the 70s. Cheap energy is highly complementary to human labor — armed with cheap energy, we can rebuild much of our world.

This is not to say that there are no cases in the world where one problem is exacerbating another. Higher interest rates, for example, are sure to cause capital flight and currency depreciation in some developing countries, making it harder for them to buy food and energy. But the global free-market system built in the last three decades is looking more resilient than many expected; most developing countries are doing OK.

Dark Brandon vs. polycrisis

In other words, I look out in the world and I don’t see a polycrisis; I see an emerging polysolution. The looming threats of climate change and authoritarian revanchism, combined with the shocks of Covid and inflation, have stirred both policymakers and businesses to action. And many of those actions will end up addressing multiple crises rather than just one. Nor am I alone in my feeling that the narrative of the world suddenly seems to be improving:

I want to venture out on a limb here and say that this is not a coincidence. A lot of the buffer mechanisms I described above are political in nature, and they share the basic description of “human beings coming together in a crisis to address their collective problems”. During good times, human beings tend to seem irresolute and divided as pursue our individual goals and fight over the pie. External shocks can bring the entire system crashing down, but they can also spur humans to get serious and start working together.

**Union “protests” and suits are lukewarm and ineffective.**

Nick **Brancaccio 25**, IMT organizer in Phoenix, "Federal Workers Need Class Militancy to Defeat Trump's Cuts," Revolutionary Communists of America, 5/14/2025, https://communistusa.org/federal-workers-need-class-militancy-to-defeat-trumps-cuts/

AFGE and other federal employee unions have turned to the courts in a lukewarm attempt to reinstate their members. Some lower courts have ruled in favor of federal workers, only to have their decisions overturned or paused by the appeals circuit and the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, Trump trained his sights on the unions, issuing an executive order on March 27 to end collective bargaining for federal agencies where so-called “national security” was supposedly at risk. Not only did this include the Department of Defense and Homeland Security, but others we might not associate with “security,” like the Justice Department and Health and Human Services. The scope of “national security” is so expansive that it apparently includes the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Science Foundation, and the Federal Communications Commission! This is a bald-faced attack on workers’ rights, in anticipation of an even broader sweep of layoffs to come.

The executive order bars the AFGE or any other federal union from suing the Oval Office to reverse layoffs. Workers need to fight back against this attack, but to win, the union’s primary tactic can’t be appealing to the courts.

The American “justice” system is an institution built by and for the capitalist class. The 2018 ruling of Janus v. AFSCME, which imposed so-called “right to work” anti-union laws on the public sector, shows as much. In a failed attempt to “pressure” the courts, unions called a sclerotic “day of action,” one-day demonstrations that did not shut down workplaces or threaten the normal functioning of the government. These weak tactics won’t be any more effective in 2025.

PATCO TURNED UP TO 11

What we are witnessing is akin to the 1981 PATCO strike—when Ronald Reagan declared an air-traffic controllers’ strike illegal and fired 11,000 workers. Rather than mounting a militant struggle against the president, the AFL-CIO wrote a “strongly worded letter.”

Union membership had been on the decline since the 1950s, when one-third of the American workforce was unionized. The busting of PATCO accelerated this process. Now only 11.1% of workers are union members. However, 32.2% of public-sector workers are unionized. The very unions under attack today are, in theory, the strongest in the country and should be able to lead the most effective fight.

But AFGE is only holding small protests, informational pickets, and sending letters to congressional representatives to cosponsor the “Protect America’s Workforce Act,” which would repeal Trump’s executive order against public-sector collective bargaining. To repeat, neither the courts nor Congress represent the interests of the working class.

**AT: Allies – 1NC**

**Trump has strengthened alliances – expert studies.**

Kelly A. **Grieco &** Hunter **Slingbaum 25**. \*PhD political science, Senior Fellow with the Reimagining US Grand Strategy Program at the Stimson Center. \*\*Research Assistant with the Reimagining US Grand Strategy Program. "The Allies Are (Mostly) Alright – But Is That a Good Thing?" Stimson Center. 8-12-2025. https://www.stimson.org/2025/the-allies-are-mostly-alright-but-is-that-a-good-thing/

Six months into Donald Trump’s return to the White House, much of Washington’s foreign policy establishment has sounded the alarm. Editorial pages warn of escalating tensions with allies and renewed doubts about the credibility of American security guarantees. Most of the concern has focused on Europe and NATO. But what about U.S. allies in the Indo-Pacific, where the stakes are arguably highest? How are they viewing their relationship with Washington?

In late June 2025, we traveled to Japan and the Philippines—two allies standing on the frontlines of the China challenge—and interviewed nearly 30 government officials, active and retired senior military leaders, and various experts with backgrounds in security, defense policy, and U.S. alliance relations. Given Trump’s rhetoric, tariffs, and the potential stakes of China’s growing power and assertiveness, we expected to encounter deep anxiety about American reliability. Instead, we found a striking degree of continuity and calm. The allies may not be entirely at ease, but they are far from panicked.

The perception among U.S. allies in Asia that Washington is largely conducting “business as usual” may provide short-term reassurance, but it also risks creating complacency and slowing efforts to address urgent issues like burden sharing. Three themes emerged from our conversations that help explain why the region remains relatively unfazed—and what that reveals about the trajectory of America’s Indo-Pacific alliances.

Continuity in Actions and Rhetoric

Despite initial anxiety, Japanese and Philippine officials were reassured by a surprising degree of continuity in both rhetoric and practical military cooperation. Many of those we interviewed acknowledged that, in the months leading up to and following the start of the administration, there was widespread trepidation about their respective alliances’ uncertain future. In March, for example, Trump complained, “We have an interesting deal with Japan that we have to protect them, but they don’t have to protect us … Who makes these deals?”

Combined with demands for greater burden sharing, an amorphous “America First” doctrine, and the widely circulated footage of Ukrainian President Zelenskyy being berated in the Oval Office, such rhetoric raised fears that Trump would adopt a far more confrontational approach to Asian allies. Yet, as weeks turned to months, officials in Tokyo and Manila found reassurance in key areas of continuity. The most frequently cited sources of confidence were consistent policy signals and sustained high-level engagement, particularly U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth’s early visits to both countries and his remarks at the Shangri-La Dialogue. In contrast to Trump’s past public questioning of NATO’s Article 5 commitments in Europe, Hegseth affirmed that, “America is proud to be back in the Indo-Pacific—and we’re here to stay.” Officials and experts also found reassurance in Washington’s announcement that it would proceed with—and even accelerate—plans to upgrade the U.S. command-and-control structure in Japan and expand both U.S. capabilities and joint scenario-based trainings in the Philippines.

While those we spoke with in Tokyo and Manila expressed frustration over the administration’s tariff policies, they drew a clear line between trade tensions and U.S. defense commitments. The core security promise of the alliance remained, in their view, safe, even as economic ties had grown fraught.

Officials and experts we spoke with frequently cited the uninterrupted routine of allied activities as another key signal of U.S. commitment. They highlighted the continuation of scheduled military exercises and combined training events, noting that none had been canceled or scaled back by the administration. Most notably, Balikatan marked its 40th anniversary as the premier annual exercise between the U.S. and Philippines armed forces, with this year’s iteration featuring a “full battle test.” These activities reassured Tokyo and Manila that longstanding U.S. defense commitments endure.

Trump’s pressure on NATO governments to spend more on defense made the alliance stronger.