How are the Dynamics of Great Power Relations Changing?

The Future of the Global Order Colloquium  ▶ Fall 2017
Six Propositions about Great-Power Competition and Revisionism in the 21st Century

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Of all the geopolitical challenges that American policymakers face today, few have the potential to reshape the international system so profoundly as great-power competition. Relations between the great powers are the single biggest make-or-break issue in determining whether the international environment will be characterized by major war or relative peace; they also condition the international community’s response to virtually major other international challenge. To the extent that great-power cooperation prevails, the international system will generally be more effective in addressing transnational challenges or problems requiring multilateral action; to the extent that great-power competition or conflict prevails, effective action to address such challenges will be harder to generate.

Due to limitations of time and space, this paper does not attempt any comprehensive discussion of the present and future of great-power competition or the great-power revisionism we increasingly see today. It simply offers six basic propositions about these subjects, as a way of stimulating further discussion and debate.

The first proposition is fairly obvious—it is simply that great-power competition, often of a violent variety, is more the norm than the exception in the history of international affairs. Clashing interests and clashing ideologies have long driven the leading powers in the system to compete with one another; they have often led to intense conflict and war. The importance of this point is simply that if we see the resurgence of great-power competition that is occurring today as something that is new or unfamiliar, we are simply being ahistorical. It is actually the past 25-30 years—the period since the end of the Cold War, a period that has featured abnormally low levels of explicit great-power rivalry—that have constituted the exception insofar as relations among the major powers are concerned.¹

The second proposition is that great-power frictions and competition never fully went away even during the post-Cold War era; they were simply muted by the two defining features of the post-Cold War international system. The first feature was simply the sheer margin of American dominance, which muted great-power tensions by making it unprofitable for revisionist states—those states that had some grievance with the existing international system—to push back against that system as strongly as they might have liked to do.² The Russians were strongly opposed to NATO expansion from the mid-1990s onward—which they viewed as a form of geopolitical competition being waged against them by the United States—but they were powerless to do much about it. The Chinese never stopped wanting to retake Taiwan or to once again become the leading power in the Asia-Pacific, but they were constrained from pursuing that goal too openly or explicitly at a time when the U.S. military enjoyed a vast preponderance of power in that area.

The second key feature of the international system was the degree of ideological convergence that seemed to be emerging in the early post-Cold War era. There was little great-power competition between the United States and the developed industrial powers of Western Europe and East Asia because those countries were all part of a security community bound together not simply by interests and institutions but also by common liberal democratic values. There was also a widespread sense in the 1990s—which was somewhat although entirely naïve, in retrospect—that Russia and China were moving toward economic liberalism, that sooner or later economic liberalism would lead to political liberalism, and that this process would eventually help make those countries fully satisfied members of the international system and of the democratic security community in the West. So by this logic, ideological transformation would
ultimately make it possible to transcend traditional great-power competition.\(^3\)

But this leads to the third proposition, which is that great-power competition has returned in fuller and sharper form today because the systemic conditions for such competition have become more propitious—and because some of the great hopes of the post-Cold War era have now been dispelled. The United States is still clearly the dominant power in the international system, but the margin of that dominance has slipped since the 1990s and early 2000s, and it has slipped particularly along the periphery of those authoritarian great powers that are now acting in more revisionist fashion—Russia and China. The United States is still clearly the dominant power in the international system, but its margin of dominance vis-à-vis the major authoritarian powers has slipped—militarily with respect to Russia, and economically and militarily with respect to China. The U.S. military still has unrivaled global power-projection capabilities, for instance, but the balance of power is much more contested in the Western Pacific or in Eastern Europe, as a result of both disadvantageous geography and targeted military buildups by Moscow and Beijing.\(^4\) So the military constraints on great-power competition are weaker than they were two decades ago.

At the same time, it has become clear that the Russian and Chinese regimes are not headed inexorably toward greater economic and political liberalism, and that they see America’s promotion of democratic values and human rights as significant threats to their own stability and security. If the great hope of the post-Cold War era was that ideological convergence would lead to great-power peace, today ideological difference has reemerged as a spur to great-power rivalry.\(^5\)

The fourth proposition, accordingly, is that great-power competition and revisionism are sharper today than at any time since the end of the Cold War. We are seeing that competition in the geopolitical realm, in the sense that Russia and China are increasingly seeking to carve out spheres of dominant influence within their respective “near abroads,” to undermine U.S. alliances and partnerships in these areas, and to develop military capabilities needed to achieve regional primacy and project power even further abroad. We are seeing that competition in the ideological realm, in the way that Moscow and Beijing are increasingly pushing back against the spread of liberal political values, seeking to promote authoritarian models of governance, and (particularly in Moscow’s case) working to undermine liberal democracy in the West. We are seeing this competition with respect to global rules and norms, as these and other authoritarian powers increasingly contest the rules and norms that the United States has sought to enshrine, such as freedom of navigation, non-aggression, and peaceful resolution of disputes. And we are seeing it in the way that officials in Moscow, Beijing, and Washington alike are talking fairly explicitly than about the possibility of conflict and even war between the United States and its rivals. Across all these areas, resurgent great-power competition and rivalry are testing the contours of the existing international system more strenuously than at any time since the Cold War.\(^6\)

So all that is the backdrop to great-power competition as we understand it today.

The good news—and this is a fifth proposition—is that intensified great-power competition is certainly going to lead to a more dangerous and disorderly international environment, but it need not necessarily lead to a major crackup of the existing international system. The fact that the major authoritarian great powers are pushing back more strongly against that international order and its defenders—primarily the United States and its allies—means that we are likely to see more diplomatic and military crises and a generally higher level of international tensions in the coming years. It is going to make it harder to achieve meaningful multilateral cooperation among the great powers on common security challenges—just look at how great power rivalry has stymied efforts to resolve the Syrian civil war over the past 6 years.\(^7\)

But it is important to remember that the preponderance of global power is still on the side of those countries that support the international system rather than those trying to revise it. The United States and its allies no longer account for roughly three-quarters of global GDP and world defense spending, but they still account for about 60 percent of the global share in both categories; they are bound together in longstanding associations like NATO and the U.S. alliance system in the Asia-Pacific; and they have dominant influence in many of the major international institutions.\(^8\) Moreover, there are structural features of the current international system—nuclear deterrence and the high degree of economic interdependence between the United States and China—that will likely act as a break on great-power conflict, even if they will surely not guarantee the absence of such conflict. So the international system is in for some rough sledding in the years ahead, but if the
defenders of that system can get their act together—if they can act with purpose and unity—there is no inherent reason they cannot mount a credible defense of the arrangements that have served them so well.

That’s the good news. The bad news—and this is the sixth and final proposition—is that to the extent that the phenomena that are the subject of this conference—nationalism, populism, and retrenchment—grow stronger in the coming years, they will generally make it harder for the United States and its friends to meet the challenge of intensified great-power competition. All of these phenomena are broad and they sometimes pull in opposite directions, so there are a lot of caveats attached to this proposition. But in general, I think these dynamics are bad news for those who hope that the international order can be successfully defended from the sort of revisionist challenges we see today.

Consider the influence of populism. There are many variants of populism, because populism is less of an ideology than a political strategy, and so populism can come in left-wing forms or right-wing forms, democratic forms or illiberal forms. But a significant swath of the populism ferment we are seeing today, particularly in Europe, is likely to have the effect of straining the cohesion of coalitions that are crucial tocountering Russian revisionism. If NATO is indeed an alliance that is rooted in its democratic principles, then the rise of illiberal populism in countries such as Turkey, Hungary, and Poland (to say nothing of France) is likely to somewhat attenuate the ideological bonds that hold the alliance together. The fact that many right-wing populist movements in Europe (and also in the United States) are relatively pro-Russian has the potential to further test the unity of NATO and the European Union in confronting threats from the East.

Finally, insofar as political populism is driving the more general crisis of the European project, it is likely to produce a Europe that is more consumed by its own difficulties and less able to act vigorously vis-à-vis Russian revisionism.9

Two crucial caveats here: So far the EU and NATO have actually held up better than expected in the face of Russian behavior since 2014, and it is possible that the populist wave may have crested in the Dutch and French elections this year and now be receding. But if this is not the case, and populist movements make further gains in the coming years, the geopolitical consequences are likely to be troubling.

Or think about the role of nationalism. Nationalism is obviously one of the forces behind the resurgence of great-power competition; it is also one of the forces motivating countries in Europe and the Asia Pacific to resist Chinese and Russian pressure. But the most geopolitically significant form of nationalism today could be the revival of a strong nationalist streak in U.S. foreign policy. To be clear, if by nationalism we simply mean the desire to put the interests of one’s own nation first, then U.S. strategy has been strongly nationalist for a very long time. In fact, I would argue that U.S. strategy since 1945 has been very assertively nationalist, because it has shaped a world that has been enormously beneficial to the parochial interests of the United States. But what we are seeing signs of today—in the 2016 campaign, most notably—is that nationalism is often being defined in opposition to internationalism.

Trump’s America First rhetoric was based on the idea that America’s internationalist project is a sell-out of American interests, and that it is necessary to revert to a more narrowly nationalistic, zero-sum, your gain is our loss approach to foreign policy. This mindset holds, for instance, that supporting free trade, alliances, and other aspects of the existing international system is a sucker bet because it allows other countries to exploit American largesse. Whether this form of nationalism becomes dominant in U.S. foreign policy in the coming years remains to be seen, because the evidence from public opinion polling and other sources is fairly ambiguous.10 But to the extent that this form of nationalism does exert an influence on U.S. policy, it is likely to weaken America’s commitment to the particular role it has played in foreign affairs since 1945, and thereby open the field to revisionist powers such as Russia and China. One example: the U.S. withdrawal from TPP reflects a narrowly nationalist approach to foreign trade, and it is already having the effect of helping Beijing convert the Asia-Pacific into a Chinese lake in economic terms.

Finally, retrenchment. When we discuss retrenchment it is important to differentiate between the essentially tactical retrenchment we saw under Obama—pulling back from overextended positions as part of a broader, continued commitment to an engaged internationalism—and the retrenchment that Trump often seemed to advocate during the campaign, which was a more aggressive form of strategic retrenchment based on the idea that supporting the existing international system is not in America’s interests. It is still too early to say how much this latter type of retrenchment will characterize U.S. policy under Trump and after, because the evidence
and informed speculation pulls in both directions, and one can make a case that the political pillars of American internationalism are stronger than they may initially appear. But the fact that Trump is, in fact, president at least compels us to consider seriously the prospect that at some point the United States might cease to play such an extraordinarily engaged and energetic role in global affairs.  

Were that to happen, it would remove one of the foremost constraints—indeed, probably the foremost constraint—on the type of great-power revisionism that we have seen in recent years. American retrenchment would likely sap the power and the will of the coalitions that have opposed Russian and Chinese revisionism in Europe and the Asia-Pacific; it would create a far more inviting context in which Moscow and Beijing could seek to reorder the international system to their liking. If, for instance, the United States were to become less involved in opposing Chinese expansion and coercion in the South China Sea, it would be far easier for China to exert its will in that area, and far harder for countries like the Philippines or Vietnam to resist. We may, in fact, be seeing early signs of this already: There were reports in late July that Vietnam capitulated to a Chinese demand that Hanoi terminate an energy exploration project in its own exclusive economic zone because Beijing had threatened to use force if Vietnam did not comply—and Vietnamese leaders were no longer convinced that the United States, under a Trump administration, would react strongly if conflict did break out. Given the opacity of the political systems involved, it is important to take this reporting with a grain of salt. But it does illustrate the sort of dynamic that could easily become more common in an atmosphere of U.S. retrenchment.

So, to sum up, what we have today is an upswing of great-power competition and revisionism on the one hand, and a variety of factors that could plausibly lead to a downswing in the vigor and coherence of the forces opposing that revisionism on the other. And it is that combination that could be particularly dangerous as the 21st century unfolds.

ENDNOTES

Nationalism, Domestic Politics, and China’s Global Leadership Role

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The future U.S. role in the Asia-Pacific and the potential challenge of China’s rise is hotly debated in both the policy and academic communities. Whether China is willing and able to take on a global leadership role in the economic, political and security realms is of particular interest. China’s leadership role has become a proxy for evaluating Chinese intentions—is China a status quo power, willing to accept U.S. leadership or a revisionist power, trying to undermine, replace or compete with U.S. leadership? China’s approach to global leadership has also served as an indicator of Chinese grand strategy —whether China will maintain narrow national interests that only extend into its region or contribute to the global order as a ‘responsible stakeholder.’

How should we understand China’s current global role and its ambitions? On the one hand, China’s increased global activism—establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, or Chinese base in Djibouti to support counter-piracy operations to name a few examples—has caused some to worry China hopes to unseat the United States and supplant the current international order with one better suited to Beijing’s needs.

On the other hand, prominent voices call for an even greater role for China on the global stage, implying that China is currently not taking on the mantle of global leadership. If anything, commentators criticize China for shirking its leadership responsibility, in particular on North Korea and fighting ISIS. For its part Beijing has at times viewed the call for China to shoulder more international responsibilities “as part of an international conspiracy to thwart China’s development.”

But neither argument gives adequate attention to how Chinese domestic public opinion may shape the degree and nature of China’s leadership role. There are empirical and theoretical reasons to believe this may be an important factor to consider. First, Xi Jinping uses nationalism to boost his legitimacy, and this has taken on a definitively global tone through his ‘two guidances.’ This refers to Xi’s call for Beijing to “guide the international community to jointly build a more just and reasonably new world order,” and “guide the international community to jointly maintain international security.” Second, the Chinese government increasingly surveys the Chinese public on a wide array of topics in order to respond to (or manipulate) public concerns. Even authoritarian regimes have incentives to make policy concessions in accordance with public opinion because they can more efficiently govern when the people engage in “quasi-voluntary compliance.” Lastly, research shows that domestic political factors, including nationalism, increasingly impact Chinese foreign policy decisions.

Below, I briefly address some pathways through which the expectations and demands of China’s domestic public may impact China’s future approach to leadership in the economic and security realms. The bottom line is that nationalism supports a greater global role for the prestige and enhanced ability to protect Chinese interests, and also creates limitations on the nature and degree of China’s global involvement.

China’s Economic Role

China is arguably the most forward leaning in its global role in the economic realm. China has created its own institutions to lead, such as the AIIB. China has also invested $40 billion to finance its OBOR initiative to create “the world’s largest platform for economic cooperation,” by improving transportation infrastructure along China’s global land and maritime trade routes. Furthermore, while the U.S. has abandoned Trans Pacific Partnership negotiations, China has also spearheaded the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) free trade agreement that would include countries accounting for 12% of global trade and 29% of global trade.
GDP. Foreign aid programs have been much slower to develop, however, because of domestic factors. With 85 million people living in poverty in China, the view that China should be prioritizing the welfare of its people, not making aid commitments, is prominent. Because of this, foreign aid is categorized as a “state secret,” and China was slow to launch its program.

Now, even though China’s foreign aid has surpassed that of the United Kingdom, domestic political factors continue to shape the nature of that aid. Specifically, while U.S. foreign aid and trade partnerships have arguably been strategically oriented—focused on combating communism in the Cold War and counterterrorism today (Pakistan is a major beneficiary)—China pursues projects that directly benefit China economically. For example, Africa receives about half of Chinese concessional aid, and the vast majority of it goes to infrastructure construction and for industrial development, specifically transport and storage; energy generation and supply; and industry, mining, and construction. In other words, the aid projects are focused on industries in which Chinese companies are deeply involved and stand to profit. Additionally, China is also known for bringing in its own labor for such projects in order to elevate unemployment pressures at home. While ‘global’ in nature, OBOR’s focus is also at home—the rationale is to create markets for Chinese goods and facilitate their transportation across land and maritime routes. Propaganda posters around Beijing are clear—China pursue a larger global economic role insofar as it brings economic benefit to the Chinese people. China has no intention to take on burdens of development in ways that primarily benefit the target state.

CHINA’S SECURITY ROLE

Domestic public opinion also creates incentives for the Chinese military to play a global, albeit limited role. As I have written elsewhere in greater length, domestic public support for the development of expeditionary capabilities is coalescing as more Chinese nationals find themselves in dangerous situations due to a combination of misfortune and political instability in the host nation. In 2016, Chinese nationals recorded 122 million overseas trips and spent a total $109.8 billion on travel/tourism abroad. By 2020, approximately 150 million Chinese citizens will be traveling and living abroad. These overseas Chinese, referred to as haiwai gongmin (海外公民) expect their government to provide certain guarantees for their protection, known as haiwai gongmin baohu (海外公民保护). Netizens often complain that the government relies too heavily on enhancing citizen awareness of dangers and diplomatic mechanisms for citizen protection, rather than using military force. One of the reasons Wolf Warrior 2 has been such a box office success is because it depicts a situation in which a former special forces soldier puts himself at risk to save Chinese medical personnel and factory workers trapped in an unspecified war-torn country.

China’s role in international interventions is likely to be limited, even once it has more capacity to do so, because of domestic sensitivities to ‘hegemonic’ behaviors. Because of its one hundred years of humiliation at the hands of hegemonic foreign powers, China needs to believe that it would be a different type of great power than those which came before it. A popular domestic narrative is that China in a unique position to understand the priorities and needs of developing countries and create a new international order that does not infringe on countries’ ability to govern domestically as they see fit. Western nations, on the other hand, are “fundamentally rapacious, greedy, and aggressive” that “pillage to expand their territories [and] plunder wealth [to] expand their sphere of influence.”

The CCP and the Chinese people have consequently been ideologically averse to alliances and overseas bases that tend to accompany a more global military strategy. However, in recent conversations in Beijing, it was conveyed to the author through authoritative sources that China may pursue overseas ‘access points,’ but that they would be distinct from U.S. bases in that they would house only logistical and defensive equipment and personnel, and therefore not be used for hegemonic purposes of coercion, attack, and interference in the domestic affairs of other countries. This is in line with domestic public opinion on the issue. In a March 2010 newspaper poll, 80% of Chinese respondents responded positively to the question “Do you think China should strive to be the world’s strongest country militarily?” However, less than half of respondents approved of a policy to publicly announce such an objective.
With the election of Donald Trump, whose America First policies often have an isolationist and anti-globalization tone, the issue of Chinese global leadership has been pushed center stage—as one Chinese official remarked in January, while China “doesn’t want” to become a world leader, it could be “forced” to assume that role if others step back from that position. How China plans to approach leadership—where it competes, undermines, follows or leaves unchallenged the U.S. leadership position—has serious implications for the future of U.S. global leadership. If U.S. policymakers understand how expectations of the Chinese public constrain or push the CCP, they can better forecast what kind of global power China will become. Specifically, China seems poised to choose a global role that still caters to narrow domestic interests and will likely be economic, not security, focused. In other words, China is unlikely to mimic U.S. strategy in this regard, and therefore Chinese ambitions cannot be accurate calibrated against the U.S. model. Moreover, China is unlikely to attempt to overthrow the U.S.-led order, but its failure to participate fully in parts of it coupled with establishing some alternative structures that better fit its domestic economic needs may erode U.S. power and influence over time.

ENDNOTES


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12 In 2001 it gave less than 2% of the aid given by major OECD donor countries.

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17 Sarah Lain, “China’s Silk Road in Central Asia: transformative or exploitative?” Financial Times, April 27, 2017, https://www.ft.com/content/55ca0f1e-d6f5-3555-a87b-3bca9f9f6a9a.


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THE FUTURE OF THE GLOBAL ORDER COLLOQUIUM ➤ FALL 2017

What Comes After the End of History?

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The post-Cold War order is under strain. Challenged from without by the rise of authoritarian regimes, and from within by a resurgent populist far right, Western democratic institutions are undergoing a crisis of legitimacy. In Western Europe, far-right parties are syphoning voters from the center-right and center-left. Once marginal politicians, such as Marine Le Pen of France’s National Front, have gained ground on a nationalist anti-EU platform. In Central Eastern Europe, self-styled “illiberal states,” such as Hungary, are rolling back political freedoms and centralizing executive powers. And in the United States, Donald Trump was swept into office on a populist anti-globalist platform.

At the same time as populism, nationalism, and authoritarianism gains traction across the globe, trust in democratic institutions, mainstream media, and centrist political parties is declining in the oldest democracies of Western Europe and the United States. Russia, seeing an opportunity to undermine transatlantic consensus, is actively working to further destabilize Western democracies by propping up far-right populist parties, engaging in disinformation campaigns, and exporting kleptocracy. These pressures mounting pressures on the international system reveal that democracies are not invincible or eternal.

To some, it may seem that the rise of populism within democratic societies, on the one hand, and the resurgence of authoritarian states, on the other, came about suddenly and will come to end just as suddenly. As the adage goes, “authoritarian regimes are stable until they’re not.” The notion that we are in the middle of a cyclical moment, which will come to an end once the international system reasserts itself, is a comforting thought. But what if the current trends propelling democratic regimes toward nationalist populism and driving the appeal of authoritarian leaders are not cyclical? What if we are entering a new era in which such movements will grow to define a new structure of the international order? What if, despite best efforts to shore up Western values, democratic institutions, and liberal ideas, authoritarianism wins the day?

It is possible that with the defeat of Le Pen in France and Angela Merkel’s continued reign in Germany, European populism has hit its peak and is now on the decline. It is also possible that with increased Western sanctions and pressure, Vladimir Putin will change course in Ukraine and will roll back Russian influence operations in Europe. And it is possible that the European Union will emerge post-Brexit economically stronger and more united around common values, while President Trump walks back his populist rhetoric. These events, were they to materialize, would buttress the international system and restore some stability in the international order. But while a move toward restabilization is certainly possible, political and economic trends point in the opposite direction. As the primacy of the international liberal order recedes, the question that we must ask ourselves is not “how should the West reinstate the post-Cold War order,” but rather, “what comes next?”

TEMPORARY CYCLES OR PERMANENT REALIGNMENT?

In his recent book, A World in Disarray, Richard Haass argues that the post-World War II order, ushered in by the U.S. and Europe, has run its course. If the West is to continue to play a role in shaping the new world order that comes next, it must develop institutions and foreign policy approaches that are better equipped to manage an international system defined by uncertainty and chaos. While Haass convincingly lays out the foundational concept of World Order 2.0, in which the United States and its allies can continue to have an important role, he does not address the possibility the West (primarily the United States and Europe) are themselves undergoing a profound transformation that will restructure the politics, values, and guiding principles in these societies for the long term.
With the rise of far-right populism in Western Europe, emergence of illiberal states in Central Eastern Europe, continued economic stagnation, and political oscillation in the post-Soviet states, the European continent may be headed toward a realignment that will allow nationalist movement form where there are none and proliferate where they already have a foothold. This shift, were it to take place, has been long in the making.

The European Union has been in crisis management mode for the last decade: the economic crisis, Brexit, refugee inflows, and multiple terrorist attacks have given fodder to far-right (and far-left) populist political parties. But while these crises have helped the far right’s anti-EU, anti-immigrant, nationalist agenda, these parties did not emerge out of the blue.

**TAKING A LESSON FROM FRANCE**

Europe’s populist turn has been in the making since the 1980s. The National Front (FN) is a prototypical example of the slow rise of the far right over the last four decades. Jean-Marie Le Pen founded the FN in 1972 with the intention of unifying France’s right-wing movement under one umbrella. The party struggled to make headway at the polls until the mid-1980s, when the FN had its first electoral breakthrough and gained 35 seats in the National Assembly. While the party was anti-immigrant from the beginning, this point was underemphasized in favor of a nationalist agenda centered on an ethnic vision of statehood. Its economic policy at the time (unlike today) was somewhat incoherent but generally pro business, deregulation, and market liberalization. More so than the party’s platform, what helped propel Le Pen in those early days was the center left’s embrace of (neo)liberal economic policy and austerity. By 1983, in a dramatic about turn, Francois Mitterand’s socialist government abandoned its ambitious nationalization plan and moved to pursue austerity measures (rigueur). And, as would be the case for other European countries, this shift toward liberal economic policies pushed the traditional constituency of the Left—the working class—into the open arms of the nationalist right. By the 1990s a full “proletarization” of Europe’s far right, which by then adopted an anti-liberal economic protectionist rhetoric, was under way.

By the time Jean-Marie Le Pen’s daughter, Marine Le Pen, took over the party’s leadership in 2011, France was still reeling from the economic crisis of 2008. That crisis left one in four French youth under 25 unemployed for years afterwards. Another socialist president, Francois Hollande, came to power in 2012, but was unable to revitalize France’s economy and left the presidency with single digit approval ratings mocked as France’s most unpopular president. One reason for Hollande’s decline was that he was the product of the Socialists’ neoliberal embrace, which turned the party into a technocracy intent on holding to the socialist ideals but without a progressive vision to recapture an increasingly alienated constituency.

All of Europe breathed a sigh of relief with the surprising win of the centrist and charismatic Emmanuel Macron over Marine Le Pen, but Macron’s victory overshadowed a deeper problem: the complete collapse of the center-left and the center-right, which propelled Le Pen into the second round of the presidential elections where she doubled the support reached by her father in 2002 and made significant gains among youth and first time voters. Macron is a capable and savvy politician, but less than six months into his term, his popularity is sliding. The collapse of the traditional parties provided En Marche, Macron’s centrist movement, a political opportunity, but the sheen is wearing off as he tried to push through liberal labor market reforms. Rather than being Europe’s savior, Macron may be the last one holding the gates.

Elements of France’s experience with the collapse of the center left is manifesting itself across Europe in recent elections. The socialist and labor parties are losing ground in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany. In other countries, like the UK, Spain, and Greece, center-left parties are swinging to the far left—alienating moderate voters in an attempt to hold on to their traditional constituency and attract young voters. The center right, for its part, is forced to compete for voters with the challenge coming from the far right. Some, including the French Republicans, have responded by adopting far right platforms on trade and immigration, thereby legitimizing and mainstreaming what were once fringe policy ideas. The result is a thinning out of the traditional center and an expansion of the extremes across European democracies. These political shifts, in addition to economic stagnation, suggest that Europe is headed toward a nationalist turn defined by the reassertion of state sovereignty in opposition to the EU, political instability, and a more inward looking foreign policy over the long term. And while the EU may not collapse soon, its relevance may continue to recede as its values-based model comes under increasing pressure and doubt. And while Europe’s far right populists are not, for the most part, anti-democrats, if such parties and political leaders have an opportunity to govern, examples in Hungary and
Poland suggest that they would seek to use democratic institutions to limit those very institutions checks on executive power.

**THE CONSEQUENCES OF REALIGNMENT**

If, as this paper has suggested, Europe’s populist turn has not hit its peak but is, in fact, indicative of a broader political realignment in Europe, then the consequences for the international system could be significant. The EU, if it survives, will be a weak institutional framework as more decision making is returned to the states. More exits from the Eurozone would devastate the European economy with detrimental consequences for common European investment in multilateral institutions like NATO. So-called “illiberal states” would no longer be the exception but the norm on the continent as proto-authoritarians roll back political freedoms. Foregoing traditional alliances, individual states would broker deals with resource rich authoritarian regimes, most notably Russia. Countries between the EU and Russia would be left untethered, eventually forced to submit to Moscow’s relentless desire for a sphere of influence in the region. Russia would go on the same course, even after Putin hands the reigns to a chosen successor. Putinism without Putin would become Russia’s new motto. For its part, the United States, also undergoing its own populist shift, would lose the support of its strongest allies, weakening its ability to manage emerging threats, whether that be in North Korea, the Middle East or elsewhere.

**THE RESPONSE**

While none of these events may come to pass, Western policymakers should be prepared for this scenario. The first step in mitigating the challenge posed by a populist turn in Europe and the United States is identifying the underlying societal schisms that have led us here. Far-right populist movements have been a slow-moving threat, but, perhaps out of hubris, centrist political elites dismissed such movements as a flash in the pan that would quickly fade away. This dismissal of the looming challenge has left center left and center right parties struggling to appeal to voters and young people who are losing trust in democratic institutions and looking to more radical solutions. Center left parties must first find their progressive vision that can recapture the hearts and minds of voters. Center right parties will, over time, realize that pandering to the far right will not work. They too, will have to reassess and readjust their strategies.

Second, Western democracies should take a sober look at how foreign malign powers seek to drive wedged in our societies. Russia has not manufactured an identity crisis in Europe or an election in the United States. But its influence operations fan the flames of division and undermine consensus. Blocking Russia’s (or any other state’s) ability to continue to do so would reveal our own vulnerabilities to such operations and, over time, build resilience.
Domestic Political Interference in a Competitive Great-Power Environment

By William C. Wohlforth, Daniel Webster Professor at Dartmouth College

Key Points: (1) There is wide agreement that the great-power setting is getting more competitive, but feasible U.S. strategies to address this challenge have been extensively analyzed; (2) An under-analyzed challenge is great powers’ propensity to meddle in each others’ domestic affairs; (3) What we know of this phenomenon suggests we may be in an era of transition in which the advantage in influencing the internal politics of other great powers has shifted from the United States to its rivals, which will have the means and the motive to conduct such operations; (4) The policy challenges are daunting, and the U.S. response so far has been strategically and intellectually incoherent.

It is a near consensus among scholars who have devoted their lives to the study of international security that the main drivers of great power competition are trending upwards. The preponderance of power buttressing the existing global order is declining, which lowers the relative costs to dissatisfied powers of challenging the status quo. Yet the U.S.-led coalition faces strong incentives to stand firm—so strong that even the putatively disruptive President Trump is actually only disrupting alliances and confidence in U.S. leadership while not actually backing away from any U.S. commitments. The result is increasingly competitive military postures and potential escalation risks in East Asia and Europe. In addition, key major power governments (notably China and Russia) are incorporating nationalism in their domestic political strategies, which can complicate states’ bargaining flexibility and generate competition beyond what might be expected from states’ external interests. Some leaders may be willing to pay increased competition costs, even if they are not strictly optimal for state security or economic interests, because of high payoffs in domestic support. Add to this the rise of populist leaders and the confidence in this pessimistic prediction increases. And I hardly need add the Trump factor. While many academic experts make the case for a careful U.S. strategic pullback, almost none thinks that the current U.S. “strategy” of destabilizing its leadership role while at the same time refusing to concede any specific global position augurs for great power amity.

Most of the strategic challenges this new great power security environment presents have been extensively analyzed. Here I discuss a less examined one: great power meddling in each other’s domestic affairs. In particular, we may be in an era of transition in which the advantage in influencing the internal politics of other great powers has shifted from the United States to its rivals. Russia’s alleged interference in the U.S. 2016 election may thus be just the opening gun. Let me discuss briefly what is known about the phenomenon, what might be new, and what might be done about it. Possessing by far the greatest capacity to make and break global orders, great powers belong in a class by themselves. In an anarchic, self-help world they are the most truly sovereign political actors, and so we would expect the politics surrounding mutual violations of that sovereignty to be different for them than between great powers and weaker states. Scholars don’t have a lot to say about this subject in part because so much of the behavior concerned is shrouded in secrecy and in part because they just haven’t focused on it. But recent years have seen an outpouring of research on overt and covert regime change interventions, and historians have been toiling away to uncover the secret world of great power meddling in other great powers’ internal affairs. Putting these two streams of research together allows a few generalizations.

First, as we would expect, great power influence operations in each others’ domestic affairs is less frequent and significant than the more picayune politics of big power meddling in small powers. Since 1812, there is no strong case of an overt
regime change operation against a great power in peacetime (Downes). There are lots of covert operations, to be sure, but they are much less frequent and consequential (O’Rourke) than in the weaker state setting.

Second, however, influence operations of various sorts ranging from efforts to unseat or replace leaders, undermine figures in the rival power thought to be inimical to the intervener’s interests, to basic harassment, undermining, weakening or “bleeding” measures are ubiquitous (Levin). For example, in the Cold War the Soviets used the CPUSA as an arm of policy attempting to influence U.S. domestic politics and undermine the U.S. global standing, while the KGB’s “Service A” conducted various and sundry active measures for years (Mitrokhin, Andrews, Kalugin), including attempts to thwart the elections of certain candidates (e.g., Nixon), undermine the U.S. by supporting various strains in the civil rights movement; discredit individuals via false information operations (Hoover, ML King, Scoop Jackson, Brzezinski). These featured forgeries, fake letters, fake news stories, bribery, infiltration, material and logistical support for conspiracy theorists, even a bomb set off in Harlem. For its part, the U.S. government collaborated with notorious Nazis to recruit and assist nationalist insurgents in the USSR’s western borderlands in the early Cold War, and conducted systematic information operations throughout the Cold War including ongoing support for nationalist oppositionists in Ukraine and the Baltic states as well as varieties of reform movements within the Soviet elite (Mitrovich; Burds; Kuzio). In the waning days of the Cold War and the post Cold War era, U.S. influence operations took the form of “public-private partnerships.” NGOs and foundations that rose to prominence during this period, particularly those devoted to dispensing democracy assistance, became institutionalized features of U.S. foreign policy (Geohagen). We viewed these as utterly benign; not all political actors in the target states agreed.

Third, the strategic calculations on all sides are clearly dauntingly complex and resistant to generalization but the chief desideratum is expediency not norms or law. That is, what kept great power meddling at relatively low levels was not any reticence about the requisite lying and breaking of putative norms but rather opportunity, incentives, and escalation risks (Carson). In a nutshell, if you think you can advance your interests by intervening in a rival great power’s domestic affairs and you can keep the risks low—either because you are strong enough vis-a-vis the rival to control escalation risks or you can keep the operation so covert as to frustrate the other side’s ability to retaliate—you will do it. For example, the U.S. aid to the anti-Soviet insurgency in the early Cold War never reached greater proportions (despite the fact that it was a serious insurgency) in part because of escalation risks but more because the U.S. quickly learned that Stalin’s USSR was such a formidable counterinsurgent. And once the USSR obtained atomic and nuclear weapons, escalation risk dominated the U.S. decision to scale down the program.

If we accept for purposes of discussion the U.S. IC’s conclusion regarding Russia, this raises a question: What’s new? Compared to the Cold War (and, indeed many earlier examples), the essential nature of the operation is old news. Everything the Russian government is alleged to have done or facilitated has clear analogues in the past. Compared to the post-Cold War world, however, a lot is new—and unsettling from the U.S. perspective. Russia appears not to have feared escalation risk in this case, likely in part because it may feel stronger vis-à-vis the U.S. overall and in part because the technological and information environment allows a larger, potentially higher payoff operation to remain plausibly deniable.

In the bigger picture, authoritarian great powers may be brittle in some ultimate sense (that is,rationally more fearful than established democracies about regime change) while at the same time very robust in the near term. Not only can they rely on the standard authoritarian’s toolkit for keeping domestic actors in line, they have been developing clever new techniques for defanging what they think are the west’s main levers of influence: repressing foreign NGOs operating on their territory (Chaudhry) and controlling information flow and dissemination. Their ultimate sense of brittleness gives them a big incentive to keep democratic great powers on the back foot, while the robust tools at their disposal in the near term make them confident that they can insulate themselves from U.S. responses in kind. This puts the onus on Washington to escalate to the overt domain.

What is to be done? Sanctions imposed by the Obama administration and more recently at Congress’s initiative illustrate the challenge. The signal they send is muddled in part because they are not mainly retaliation for election interference but also for Russian actions in Ukraine and human rights violations—clearly the most punishing sanctions would go away if Ukraine were settled. Defense against meddling of this kind is intrinsically hard in a free and open society.
Symmetrical deterrence—by credibly threatening more damaging covert interference against Russia or any other major power that contemplates doing what Russia is alleged to have done in 2016—confronts the apparent authoritarian advantage. It is just much easier to influence an election than to overthrow an authoritarian regime. As long as plausible deniability is the red line, options may be limited, especially with the authoritarians’ NGO crackdown. Russia (and China) would appear to be more vulnerable to nationalist separatism than the U.S., so the advantage there might lie with Washington. But, again, so far Russia and China have proven to be effective counterinsurgents and the level of aid needed to get above that bar would clearly cross the plausible deniability threshold.

An order-based approach under which tacit or explicit norms of restraint in this area are developed confronts major hurdles. Big powers are not going to stop intervening in small powers’ domestic affairs, so any explicit norms would highlight hypocrisy from the start. Even more tacit norms of restraint among the major powers may be hard to establish. If I’m right that the balance now lies with the authoritarians—what inducement can we offer them to deny themselves this tool? The norms approach, moreover, runs afoul of the essentially murky moral and ethical world of this kind of interventionism. It’s fine to undertake external action aimed at influencing a rival great power’s internal politics (this is very common, as with U.S. containment, especially with Reagan-era policies). It’s accepted that great powers will spy on each other and collect intelligence. It’s fine when whistleblowers release information—even if obtained under dubious circumstances—after all, “the public has a right to know.” The press can “collude” with a leaker like Daniel Ellsberg. But bring all this together—influencing domestic politics, foreign intelligence gathering, and releasing information—and suddenly it is totally illegitimate and shocking.

Given the challenges of defense and deterrence, perhaps the norm-based approach is worth more effort. My recommendation would be for U.S. government experts to get to work on a problem I, at least, can’t solve: a legally and morally consistent argument against great power meddling in another great power’s domestic affairs.
PANEL TWO

Whither the International Economic and Trade Order?

The Future of the Global Order Colloquium  >  Fall 2017

Bown  |  Gawande  |  Goldstein  |  Mutz
Trump’s Attempted Takedown of the Global Trade Regime?

By Chad P. Bown, Senior Fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics

The Trump administration has taken policy positions that signal a U.S. retrenchment from the rules-based international trading system. Overt and aggressive policy actions in some areas combined with strategic disengagement and resource starvation in others put the World Trade Organization (WTO) at increased risk. While cloaking actions as protecting the system from China, the administration has introduced other tensions by simultaneously threatening America’s pre-existing network of alliances. Such an ‘America First’ strategy could lead to dissolution of the 70-year old multilateral order.

THREATEN THE RULES-BASED SYSTEM WITH OFFENSIVE U.S. BEHAVIOR

One way to withdraw leadership from a rules-based system is to simply start breaking those rules. The Trump administration has already pushed up against the boundaries of WTO obligations and acceptable trade policy norms.

In April, the administration self-initiated two separate investigations into whether imports of steel and aluminum were a threat to U.S. national security. Under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, the President could implement a broad set of import restrictions with very little procedural oversight.

While there are national security exceptions embodied in the WTO agreement—in particular, GATT Article XXI—countries have rarely invoked them, mostly out of systemic concerns. Suppose a trading partner with exporters adversely affected by such restrictions were to file a formal WTO challenge. Losing such a dispute would be bad systemically; it provides an aggrieved trading partner license to invoke the exception itself whenever it had a protectionist inclination. America’s invocation of the national security exception on steel invites China to invoke it on soybeans or the European Union to invoke it on digital or Internet services. But winning such a dispute could be worse; such a ruling against the United States could provide the Trump administration with just the political justification it seeks to abandon the agreement altogether.

In August, the administration self-initiated a separate unfair trade investigation under Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act of 1974. This one examines whether China has engaged in forced technology transfer and other state-sponsored theft of intellectual property. While results from this investigation could be taken to the WTO for dispute settlement, what does the administration do if its unfair trade findings are not covered by WTO rules? At that point acting outside of the system would overstep boundaries; the United States’ own actions would be tacit acknowledgment that Beijing had not broken WTO rules.

Finally, the administration has repeatedly used heated rhetoric to disparage other core tenets of the international system. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross has challenged the concepts of nondiscrimination, or most-favored nation (MFN) treatment, as hurting U.S. interests. He has also argued for “reciprocal” tariffs—that whatever the United States imposes on imports of a product from a trading partner, that partner should be expected to impose the same tariff level on the same imported product from America. Forced implementation of such an approach would upset decades of successfully negotiated and sustained tariff cooperation that had coalesced into and open and rules-based global trade regime.

STARVE THE WTO OF LEGITIMACY THROUGH LACK OF USE, RESOURCES, & ENGAGEMENT

There are also signs that the Trump administration is simultaneously adopting a complementary, anti-WTO
approach through both strategic disregard and resource starvation.

First, the administration has created a crisis-like environment for the Dispute Settlement Body in Geneva, withholding support for basic appointment of WTO Appellate Body members. This threatens to slow down an already over-burdened and under-funded Secretariat at precisely the moment when expeditious and unbiased adjudication of disputes is critical to justify the existence of the Organization.

Second, despite a large volume of very vocal complaints about China, Mexico, South Korea and others, the Trump administration has yet to file a single offensive WTO dispute backing up its rhetoric with formal charges. After months of delays, it has finally signaled engagement on two agriculture disputes that the Obama administration had initiated against China and one dispute concerning wine against Canada. But two other systemically important cases—one on Chinese aluminum subsidies and one on raw material export restraints—still languish. The failure to actively pursue WTO disputes in the U.S. offensive interest today would make it easier down-the-line for the administration to complain about defensive rulings against the United States on Trump’s watch—some of which, odds are, will be lost.

Indeed, more than most administrations, the Trump administration has already begun a campaign against prior WTO Appellate Body and Panel decisions and U.S. losses in defensive disputes over issues such as the use of “zeroing” in antidumping investigations. USTR Robert Lighthizer recently confirmed his earlier position of criticism for the WTO with:

“the United States sees numerous examples where the dispute-settlement process over the years has really diminished what we bargained for or imposed obligations that we do not believe we agreed to. There have been a lot of cases in the dumping and countervailing-duty, the trade-remedies laws, where, in my opinion, the decisions are really indefensible.”

Lighthizer also publicly reiterated his fondness for the prior, non-legalistic, dispute settlement model under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in which U.S. intimidation was used to resolve disputes in lieu of the rule of law. This, indeed, is consistent with his 1995 position against the WTO in which he called for Congress to enact “Three-strikes and you’re out” legislation that would have removed the United States from the agreement after the Appellate Body issued three reports that were unfavorable to the American interest. Finally, he has indicated little optimism about the upcoming WTO ministerial meeting in Buenos Aires, and the Trump administration has provided little public support for the ongoing plurilateral negotiations for a new Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) or an Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA).

**MASK THE APPROACH AS PROTECTING THE SYSTEM FROM CHINA**

In his recent speech, Lighthizer also stated emphatically, “Unfortunately, the World Trade Organization is not equipped to deal with this [China] problem... We must find new ways to ensure that a market-based economy prevails.”

The concerns with China’s behavior in the international trading system have become broadly apparent and increasingly accepted across the policy spectrum. The China problem is not a Trump phenomenon. China has failed to transform into a market economy recognizable to the United States, European Union, Japan, and other traditional stalwarts of the system, and this creates problems for the WTO. Even different American leadership—including one with multilateral inclinations—would find challenges and uncertainty in concocting a long-term solution to the China conundrum.

One argument is that the international community has not yet sufficiently stood up to China. The United States has given it more effort of late: the Obama administration filed 14 different WTO disputes against China; this was twice as many as the George W. Bush administration, which was slow to challenge China with only one case before 2006. But this has clearly not been enough. And non-American WTO members has been extremely reticent to challenge any Chinese policy behavior at all. Given its tremendous volume of imports and exports globally, the paucity of WTO disputes lodged against China by countries willing to go it alone and without the United States as a co-complainant is an empirical puzzle.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to argue that the United States or other WTO members have fully exhausted the tools available under dispute settlement to address concerns with China. First, there is not yet a WTO ruling that China should be treated as a “market economy” under national antidumping laws. Second, even if current WTO rules do not fully cover the policy behavior that China is exhibiting, until a member brings
forward and loses a non-violation nullification or impairment case to challenge China, arguably the WTO toolbox has not been emptied. It is premature to conclude that the WTO cannot be harnessed to address the problem.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{TRUMP’S ANTI-CHINA APPROACH: A FALSE AUTHENTICITY?}

Is the Trump administration really protecting the global system from China, or is it simply using China as an excuse to implement a broader program of economic nationalism and isolationism? There is increasing evidence to suggest the latter is a real possibility.

The administration has gone out of its way to traumatize trade relations with the same key allies with which it needs strategic cooperation to protect the international system from China’s state-driven economic system.

Rather than reaching out to partners and the multilateral forum, the administration has adopted a stubborn mandate that it will only negotiate bilateral deals. This makes clear their intent to try to use America’s economic heft to somehow browbeat partners into deal making. Through its actions on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (withdrawal), NAFTA (renegotiation), and KORUS (threats), the administration has put at risk its most economically and strategically important free trade agreements.

Its aggressive use of U.S. trade laws could end up imposing trade restrictions—not on China, which has largely been already covered by prior administrations’ use of antidumping or countervailing duties—but on the same potential allies in Europe, Canada, Mexico, Japan, and South Korea.\textsuperscript{11} It has gotten to the point where even allies must make trade retaliation threats known to the public—and key Congressional leaders—to warn the administration of the costs of its actions.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS}

President Trump’s inaugural address included the unforgettable line, “Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength.”

One important way to combat that is by explaining its consequences—and costs—before implementation of such a policy choice. This includes publicly explaining the rights that the global trading system provides its members—including the right to trade retaliation in the event of WTO violations and noncompliance—and identifying the explicit economic costs to American industries, workers, and Congressional districts if President Trump unilaterally goes back on commitments that the United States has made.

Unfortunately, this approach fails to confront the real challenges facing the WTO. By focusing the world’s attention on Trump’s potential for protectionism, the administration has pulled the world’s energy away from the major underlying threat to the market-economy and rules-based system, which is China. And unfortunately, the international community is unlikely to confront the challenges that China poses to the WTO without the United States.
ENDNOTES

1 See Chad P. Bown “Trump’s threat of steel tariffs heralds big changes in trade policy,” Washington Post (Monkey Cage), 21 April 2017; and Chad P. Bown “Trump is a new kind of protectionist—He operates in stealth mode,” Washington Post (Monkey Cage), 12 June 2017.


6 These and other references are to Robert Lighthizer’s speech at Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC on September 18, 2017.


The China Manufacturing Shock, Politics, and U.S. Productivity

By Kishore Gawande, Professor at the Business, Government & Society Department at the University of Texas at Austin

The force driving higher productivity by firms—else they perish in a competitive world—has implications for the incomes of citizens and therefore their political preference for trade policy. The China productivity shock during 2000-2010 led to 2.5 mn. job losses in manufacturing and realigned political preferences of affected households. Dislocated workers in manufacturing were no match for human capital-intensive jobs being created in the growing export sector. Jobs shifted from (secure) manufacturing to (less secure) construction that paid less. There is an important role for government.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE CHINA SHOCK

Accession to the WTO in 2000 gave China access to advanced country manufacturing markets. While countries like India also had gained access, China grasped this opportunity to penetrate and capture market share, first in labor intensive industries like textiles, apparel and furniture (also taking share from countries like Mexico), and then in capital intensive industries like metal manufacturing, electrical goods, and computer hardware. U.S. manufacturing employment fell from over 17 million in 2000 to just over 11 million in 2010. Some of this loss of 6 million jobs may not be attributable to the China shock—employment in manufacturing sectors had been in decline—but Autor et al. estimate that 2.5 million of these jobs losses were attributable to the shock. I begin with a set of figures depicting the effect of the China productivity shock on U.S. labor markets.

• Scenario at the time of China’s entry: Figure 1 (from Leamer 2004).
  – Two prescient messages: (1) Jobs that are contestable will feel the pain of the large labor force entering the world economy. During 1980-2000 there was no “flattening” of the U.S. wage; but would that also be the case during 2000–2015?
  – (2) Non-contestable jobs and productivity through innovations in non-contestable sectors kept the average U.S. wage high.
  – Question: If innovation is the source of productivity, will future innovations decline if we lose a U.S. manufacturing base? Are we innovating only financial derivatives?

• The China Shock: Figure 2a and 2b (from Nager 2017).
  – Job losses in the 2000s were ten times higher than in the 1990s. Computer hardware jobs were especially hurt. The sector had produced high paying jobs in 1990s. American firms continue to show spectacular sales growth in this sector, these sales to U.S. markets were largely produced offshore and imported to the U.S. within the firm.
  – Offshoring increases profits because it is a labor-saving technology.

• Regional impact in the U.S. Figure 3a and 3b (from Caliendo et al 2015).
  – The largest job losses were felt in the largest states: CA, NY and TX. But after accounting for their scale, the greatest local impact was felt by KY, NC, SC, OH, PA, WI, MI and AL.
  – Question: Were unemployed workers absorbed in sectors that were growing? Export sectors?
  – How mobile are U.S. workers anyway?
  – Question: Political repercussions? What? Where?

II. A THEORETICAL LENS

1. Politics

I take a positive approach to the question of trade policy in the wake of the China shock. Political institutions pose natural constraints. A school of thought holds that institutions deliver policies. What policies might U.S. political institutions deliver? A positive approach

This paper reflects the individual views of the author.
reframes this question as: What policy platforms are politically optimal for political parties to adopt? Austen-Smith (1987), Baron (1994) and Grossman and Helpman (1996, henceforth GH) have addressed policy platforms in models of electoral competition. Consider the GH model adapted to a congressional district. Two parties, A and B, contest an election in the district, whose polity comprises a fraction $\alpha$ of informed and a fraction $1-\alpha$ of uninformed voters. Uninformed voters are easily swayed by a campaign (TV, media) and have no strong allegiance to either party. Informed voters are not swayed, and are knowledgeable about the impact of both policies. A special-interest lobby seeks to move the policy platform of the two parties closer to its own ideal, and makes monetary contributions to (possibly both) parties to influence them to shift their platform. The parties welcome the contributions because they need to fund a campaign to sway uninformed voters. We suppose the lobby only wished to influence policy (not win the election).

Suppose the platform is denoted $t$ (for example $t$ may denote a binary choice between free trade and a 20% import tariff, or $t$ may be a continuous choice variable). GH (p. 274) show that the policy platforms $\{t^A, t^B\}$ chosen by the two parties, respectively, each solves a bargaining game between the lobby and the party separately. Let $W^L(t)$ denote the lobby’s welfare (net of its campaign contributions), and $W(t)$ denote the aggregate welfare of informed voters. Then $t^A$ is the $t$ that maximizes the weighted joint surplus:2

There are four parameters to consider.

- $\alpha$ is the fraction of voters who are uninformed.
  - Buying the support of uninformed voters makes special interests groups important to political candidates, and $\alpha$ determines the magnitude of the importance of special interest contributions. If $\alpha = 1$, then trade policy maximizes the welfare of the informed voter (which may or may not be free trade!).
  - $f > 0$ quantifies how important the divergence between the two parties on their fundamental ideological characteristics (not their $t$ platforms) is to voters. $f$ near zero implies this divergence is very important, and the larger is $f$ the less important it becomes.
  - The more important voters perceive the divergences between parties, the more committed they are to a particular party and the less likely they are to be swayed by policy platform $t$. A polity with voters that consider divergences between the parties to be less important are more likely they are to be swayed by trade policy.
  - $h > 0$ quantifies the ability of campaign spending to move the position of an uninformed voter.
  - A large value of $h$ means the productivity of a dollar of campaign spending in influencing the uninformed voter is high. The source of this money—the lobby—becomes more important to the parties to finance their campaigns.
  - $\phi^A$ is the probability that, once elections are over, the legislature actually adopts party $A$’s policy platform (e.g. a tariff promised by party $A$ before the election).
  - With two parties, $\phi^A + \phi^B = 1$.

2 Three important notes:

i. A similar calculation applies for platform $t^B$ for party $B$.

ii. The “median voter” model is a simple version of this with (i) no lobbies, (ii) policy platforms a specific policy? Hotelling’s lemma solves the problem as both parties become indistinguishable, and policy converges to the preference of the median voter.

iii. The model may usefully represent the politics of a number of policy platforms that parties adopt (one at a time). Some examples are: International: (i) Trade policy: Amount of protection, (ii) Immigration policy: # H1B visas; #Immigrants; #Country quotas, (iii) Environment and Trade: Carbon tax, (iv) decision to go to war: Domestic: Tax policy: Income tax schedule, (ii) Healthcare: Subsidies; Keep Medicaid; Keep Medicare
most productive firms select into exporting, earn larger profits, and have the largest market shares. The single minded pursuit of productivity is responsible for firms doing “good” things: Innovating, becoming more productive, winning large market shares, earning more profit, and growing bigger. Not innovating means becoming less productive, endangering the firm’s survival—it stays domestic and gets beaten down by China’s productivity shock. In the electoral competition model above, we believe the making of trade policy platforms, at least in the recent decades, is strongly influenced by the lobby comprising the most productive firms in the U.S. economy. The single important fact for us is that the most productive firms are exporters, and therefore strongly favor free trade (Figure 4 from Plouffe). In all models of trade theory, old and new, winners from trade (exporters) absorb those who lose jobs in the shrinking import sector. But this has not happened over the decade of the China shock. Job matches for dislocated manufacturing workers discount their prior experience. Job matches for those workers have been in construction and retailing as contract jobs: short-term, arm’s length and with no benefits. From the perspective of the American worker, by being parts of a global supply chain (even if they are coordinating and designing them where they can (iPhone)), these most productive firms are doing some “not good” things: Outsourcing jobs, moving production to foreign destination, and adopting labor-saving technology in domestic manufacturing where possible. All of these are again centered around productivity. How has this affected trade politics?

III. PUTTING IT TOGETHER: TRADE POLICY PLATFORMS SINCE 2000

Table 1: Trade Policy Platforms and its Determinants. \( t^K \) denotes Trade policy platforms of Party \( K, K = \{ A, B \} \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( t^K ) = Openness</th>
<th>( t^K ) = Isolation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High ( \alpha ), High ( h )</td>
<td>Low ( \alpha ), Low ( h )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low ( f ), High ( \phi^K )</td>
<td>High ( f ), Low ( \phi^K )</td>
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Table 1 indicates how the size of the parameters determine policy platforms of the parties. A thought experiment across presidential election cycles starting in 2000 is as follows: Can trade policy platforms be rationalized on the basis of temporal changes in the four parameters \((\alpha, h, f, \phi^K)\)?

- 2000, 2004: Trade policy platform: Pro free trade for both parties
  - 1990s tech productivity hangover: largest producers of computers and laptops; cellular phone businesses taking off. China accession into the WTO largely ignored (unlike NAFTA debate in 1990).
  - Largely uninformed polity regarding impending China shock: \( \alpha \) high.
  - TV is effective (and expensive) media for campaigns: \( h \) high.
  - Agnostic on \( f \). Probably enough importance given by voters to divergence between the two parties that makes \( f \) low.

- 2004, 2008: Trade policy platform: Status quo (Pro free trade for both parties)
  - Wars. World recession. Drives down salience of trade policy (despite China’s destruction of U.S. manufacturing jobs by undervaluing the RMB, a chief mechanism behind productivity shock): \( \alpha \) high.
  - TV effective (and expensive): \( h \) high.
  - \( f \) low: divergence of party views on wars, great recession important to voters.

  - Rise of social media reduces TV’s importance to campaigns: \( h \) drops. Both \( \alpha \) and \( h \) contribute to the new dominance of voters in determining policy platforms, and the decline of the free trade lobby.
  - \( f \) low: divergence of party views on wars, great recession important to voters.

A truer test of this idea may be econometrically established using variation in the parameters across congressional districts and over time. Coding policy platforms across districts and time is the key challenge confronting this task.
IV. CONCLUSION: WHAT IS GOOD POLICY?

Turning to the normative question of what is good policy, given the (positive) politics of the policy-making process, we might consider some facts. Political retrenchment means policy change. Why else would there be political turnover? However, jobs are created not by government but by firms, and the best jobs are with the most productive firms. Isolationism hurts firms’ productivity, and their ability to hire. The most productive firms are the biggest importers as well (e.g. Apple), and the idea that protecting import-competing firms can create high-quality jobs is illusory. Import-competing firms, by definition, are less productive than exporters and have lower survivability. How about subsidizing manufacturing to enhance the sector’s competitiveness? This is politically attractive, since it may work in the short run, but is not good policy in the long run for two reasons. First, it dampens dynamism in labor markets, and second it misallocates resources. Both these ultimately, hurt long term U.S. productivity, across the board, big time.

A good policy is public investment devoted to diversifying economies of districts, so job losses in manufacturing need not translate into low-paying, lower-quality jobs. California, New York and Texas lost the most jobs due to the China shock, but being well-diversified were able to absorb surplus workers in growing sectors (Caliendo et al. 2015). Nondiversified districts like Ohio, Kentucky, North and South Carolina and Alabama fared the worst. These are also districts where political retrenchment was the deepest.

Creating the basis for economic diversification is rooted in the idea of creating state capacity. State capacity combines extractive capacity (collecting taxes) and using these resources into the types of public investments that induce private investments (Barro 1990; Acemoglu 2005; Besley and Persson 2011). For example, Acemoglu (2005) models an individual’s output as:

\[ y_{it} = \frac{1}{(1 - \alpha)} A^\alpha (e_t (1 - \alpha), \]

where, in a specific district, citizen i’s output (i.e. income) \( y_{it} \) is produced with public investment \( A \) undertaken by the government of that district together with private investment \( e_t \) made by the citizen (citizens include firms). Public goods \( A \) and private investment \( e_t \) are complementary: both are needed to produce optimal output. We know about infrastructure and its complementarity with private investment. Here I am suggesting the idea of \( A \) devoted to economic diversification of the district.

REFERENCES


Job losses in the 2000s were 10 times higher than in 1990s. (Source: Nager, 2017)
FIGURE 3A: MANUFACTURING JOB LOSS DUE TO CHINA SHOCK
(Source: Caliendo, Dvorkin, Parro, 2015)

FIGURE 3B: MANUFACTURING JOB LOSS (NORMALIZED BY EMPLOYMENT SHARE)
(Source: Caliendo, Dvorkin, Parro, 2015)

(Source: Plouffe, 2013 The New Political Economy of Trade: Heterogeneous Firms and Trade Policy)
All items are in millions of USD, except for employees (in thousands) and productivity.
Trade, Populism and Public Opinion

By Cameron Ballard-Rosa, Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of North Carolina; Judith Goldstein, Janet M. Peck Professor of International Communication at Stanford University; Nita Rudra, Associate Professor, Department of Government, Georgetown University

MOTIVATION

Myriad explanations have been offered for rising anti-globalization sentiment in the U.S. While not capturing the nuances of the debate, there are two large ‘camps’ of explanation, one economistic and the other cultural. In the former, the culprit ranges from secular stagnation to continuing malaise from the Great Recession. On the cultural side we see explanations rooted in the observation of anti-elitist or anti-cosmopolitan attitudes especially in rural America, socio-tropic views on the effect of global forces on communities and/or recently, a new dimension of racial antipathy. We add to this debate but offer what we argue is a view of attitudes more consistent with a deeper understanding of the history of U.S. trade policy.

Since the early 19th century, debate on trade policy has vacillated between two different frames or explanations for the virtues of open markets. Our data suggests that the most recent period looks a lot like the 1890s in that the source of frustration with trade focusses on what we call an ‘unfairness.’ In this frame, the outside world is viewed as threatening, whether because of terrorists, predatory governments or immigrants with the response being to recoil from international interdependence, assuming only malevolence on the part of our trading partners. Trade with others is asymmetric and inherently unfair to the American people. We argue that a new focus on the winners and losers from trade is evident in both congressional hearings and as indicated below, in trade attitudes.

While an abbreviated version of the larger research project, this memo does three things:

• First, the memo offers a very short history of U.S. trade policy argumentation and introduces the attributes of what we will call the ‘fair trade’ frame.

• Second, we look at public opinion data, both cross sectional and longitudinal, based on a seven wave panel begun in 2007. The data are used to evaluate three different explanations for current trade attitudes:

  1. That attitudes are a reaction to dual economic shocks, first from the rise of Chinese products on the U.S. market and/or second, from the Great Recession;

  2. That attitudes are reflective of diminished hope about how the respondent and/or their community will do in an interdependent world;

  3. That attitudes are not merely a reflection of economic circumstance but instead, reflect a more generalized shift in attitudes about the outside world.

• Third, we offer some preliminary thoughts on the future of the populist anti-trade agenda

Foreshadowing our findings, it appears that the economic shocks of both the Great Recession and a Chinese export surge may be insufficient to explain attitude shift; many groups hurt by these dual shocks have returned to status quo ante levels of support for trade. However, where recovery has been slow, the anti-globalization frame has taken root, fueled by already existing cultural fears. We suggest that the Trump “effect” is the mobilization of those frustrated by low levels of economic growth married to a generalized antipathy for others. When directed at trade policy, it has facilitated the unfair trade frame, whereby the fault for economic losses is placed on the policy of trading partners.

The effect of this shift can be substantial. First, public support for this unfair trade frame in an earlier era created a host of laws that the Trump administration can now use to close the market. Policy may shift more because of the ability to use these commonly called ‘administered protectionism’ laws than from the threat of leaving NAFA and/or the U.S.-Korean FTA. Second, the normalization of a fair trade sentiment in U.S. public opinion will constrain liberal oriented future administrations.

This paper reflects the individual views of the author.
WHY THE UNFAIR TRADE FRAME?

Anyone who thinks that the U.S. has been a long term defender of open trade has not paid attention to U.S. history. It is not that the ideas found in economic text books on the virtues of comparative advantage were not understood but rather, that they were contested and abandoned regularly by Congress and the U.S. public. A closer reading of congressional legislation and public attitudes suggests not a linear and progressive shift toward globalism but rather, the existence of two episodically supported trade “frames.”

One frame is familiar to academics and is rooted in the ideas of Adam Smith and David Ricardo. Here, open borders promote specialization, market efficiency and welfare gains. But there is a second: while the notion of comparative advantage became accepted lore among economists, the idea remained opaque and somewhat confusing to most other Americans. Instead, policy makers and the public remained suspicious about the intent of other nations and worried that they would act in a predatory manner in the U.S. market. Whether the predator was Great Britain in 1820 or China in 2015, the argument in favor of trade flows was repeatedly mired in a fear that these governments were being overly helpful to their domestic producers.

U.S. trade history can be told as the rise and fall of these frames. In the ante-bellum years, the free trade frame dominated; in the in the Gilded Era, fair trade ideas dominated. Post WWII, most presidents defended the open trade frame but even then, the fair trade frame was used to explain congressional concerns about job losses resulting from an American trade partner cheating. The shifting nature of the debate cannot be explained by national interests alone; as often, the domestic debate has turned on a populist response to internationalization and/or regional issues.

In short, we suggest that the current Trump position on trade has a remarkably familiar sound. This is not the first time Congress and the president have focused on the negative aspects of competition and whether or not U.S. producers would be able to compete in international markets. Today, proponents of open markets argue for the benefits of cheap consumer goods; they are met with the counter that these cheap goods were produced unfairly. On the left, the issue is low labor standards; on the right, that the government has unfairly subsidized the production of the good. For both, there is a shared view that international markets are an arena of predation.

Two American trade policies exist in law and in rhetoric. They both have legislative history; they both have well developed intellectual support. In different moments of U.S. history, one or the other dominated. Today, we are seeing a resurgence of the fairness frame—we hypothesize that it is fueled by both economic and cultural variables. We do not think that Trump is an anachronism but rather, his presidency has taken advantage of an underlying notion in U.S. society that trade must be fair, as well as ‘free.”

DATA

Our analysis is based on survey data that tracks a panel of individuals beginning in the summer of 2007, using a UGOV web based polling sample. There have been 7 waves of the survey. These results are from both the panel and cross sectional responses. We begin with the following puzzle, pictured in figure 1. In 2007 and 2016, we asked the same question to the same people about support for trade and organize responses by the respondent’s political position in the 2016 election. What we find is that unsurprisingly, both Trump and Clinton supporters were similarly split in 2007—trade was not an issue on which either group divided. That changed. By 2016, the issue had become associated with each group and had polarized. What happened?

The scholarly literature and the popular press have focused on different reasons for the creation of anti-trade sentiment among the Trump folks and a similarly pro-trade sentiment among the Clinton voters. We organize the extant explanations into three groups and provide some preliminary tests using our data.

Duel Economic Shocks

The first two decades of the 21st century will be remembered as an era of great contrasts. Coming out of the dot.com bust, the economy was set to take off, only to be confronted by a devastating terrorist attack in NYC. Growth returned only to be met by a housing bubble that burst in 2008. As the U.S. dealt with its worst recession since the 1930s, the U.S. temporarily put aside fears of terrorism to deal with the more immediate issue of unemployment and stagnant wages. Issues of wage inequality and unequal growth became an underlying theme of political discourse and with the Trump presidency, the source of the problem was said to be economic globalization.

Much of the attribution of problems to China derives from the work of Autor et al. (2013; 2016). Looking at congressional districts, they find that the entrance of China via the WTO in 2001 led to a vast change in
voting patterns. Those districts that had the greatest imports and largest job losses were those that had moved furthest to the right or the left, depending upon the initial voting patterns. The same pattern was found as a cause of Brexit, that is, where the China trade shock variable led to large import penetration you had voters abandoning the Labor party. Both in the U.S. and Britain, the China shock was the cause of a political backlash against globalization.

Given this very abbreviated economic history, we have two possible explanations for the attraction to the Trump position on trade. First, trade attitudes could have permanently been affected by the Great Recession; Trump pulled into his coalition, those who lost jobs and/or those in regions hurt by housing and/or other economic problems. Second, and not unrelated, attitudes could have shifted in areas hurt by import competition from China. Here we would expect variation in attitudes, based on the degree to which job or other losses are associated with job losses tied to Chinese imports.

We provide a preliminary analysis of both possibilities in Figures 3 and 4. With the help of Autor’s data, we coded respondents by zip code and job displacement due to Chinese imports. We do a simple division of our respondents into areas of high and low Chinese imports. We then look at their trade preferences over time, before, during and after the Great Recession.

A number of things are evident from even a cursory look at the Figure 3.

- First, the Great Recession had a significant effect on preferences. It looks like opinion is trending back to the 2007 level, but some members of the electorate remain less pro-trade than before.

- Second, average trade preferences in areas of higher economic penetration by China appear to be on the whole, more negative about open trade than the areas of less ‘shock’ but the difference is not significant. The high and low penetration zip codes seem to track closely through time.

Looking again at trends, Figure 4, suggests that while shifting back, attitudes on trade for some parts of the electorate remained more anti-trade than others. The difference between those who do and do not return to pre-recession attitudes seems to be associated with not only China trade but individual job prospects. Job prospects, when explained in terms of trade policy, appears to be part of the re-framing of trade policy.

**Declining Economic Prospects**

There are many manifestations of economic fears but one of the strongest predictors is perceptions of the future prospects of respondents. Again, we think that negative perceptions of America in the world make it likely that voters blame other nations for their plight. We offer some preliminary evidence. While not new, the lack of economic mobility has increasingly become part of the public debate.

- First, Figure 5 shows trends to our query about perceptions of future prospects for respondent’s children. Although we see the same shift shape with the recession as above, the trade attitudes of those who assume that their children will be worse off are significantly more protectionist than either those who think their children will have the same economic opportunities or will be better off. In fact, throughout all the waves of the survey, fear about the future is a good predictor of pro-protection attitudes.

- Second, Figure 6 incorporates a measure of upward mobility by zip code of our respondents and then organizes them by income and job confidence. It appears that the protectionism urge is most pronounced in low income, low job confidence and high inequality areas of the nation. In areas of low inequality, the pro-protection response declines as the recession recedes; in the above average inequality zip codes, we see the effect is most pronounced for those with incomes below $30k.

- Third, how is this manifest? Figure 7 looks at a response to a question on whether or not the U.S. should limit imports from China, asked at the trough of the Great Recession and then again in 2016 to the same people. The Trump voters had become much more anti-China, a nation that he portrayed as the biggest ‘cheater.’ The Clinton voters seem to find that frame less appealing and are much less willing to cut off Chinese goods.

**The Cultural Critique of Fair Trade**

What if shifting attitudes are not only about economic circumstance? The data allow us to integrate general attitudes about globalization with specific views on trade. What we find in Tables 1-5, shed light on the relationship between culture and economic circumstance.

- First, those who see the world as a good or somewhat good place in which American culture is not threatened, were drawn to the Clinton camp while
those who see the world as threatening appear to be sympathetic to Trump’s position. The division is stark and significant. Trump supporters do not see the world as a big beautiful place but rather, one that they need protection from.

- Second, this connection between the view of the outside world and trade predates the Great Recession. There remains a significant relationship between global views and trade attitudes in both our 2007 and 2016 survey. People who fear the outside world fear trade.

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

Returning to our original puzzle, that is, the observation that the Clinton and the Trump voters appear to have changed their position, table 6 is the last piece of our puzzle. The table compares trade views of our panel in 2007 with those in 2016. Trade views are quite stable, just as were views of the outside world. Instead of witnessing a change in attitudes in the U.S., it appears that we are seeing a re-sorting of the electorate on trade and anti-globalism issues, with the new dimension being nativism. That meant that about 90% of those in 2007 who expressed that U.S. culture was being threatened and about 60% who feared globalization became Trump supporters; on the other side of the spectrum, only about 44% of the cultural ‘liberals’ stayed with Clinton with the rest moving to a third candidate. Comparatively, 2007 trade attitudes alone had no predictive value for the 2016 vote. What seems to be the Trump effect is the connection between cultural fears and trade policy. This new coalition shared a view that the commercial policy of trading partners is evidence of an unfair and threatening outside world.

In conclusion, we offer three general observations about the origins of anti-trade attitudes and populism:

First, cultural antipathy is not new in America. What has changed, however, is the connection between those who have limited economic mobility with those who hold negative attitudes about the outside world. These the underlying dimensions of support for the anti-globalization coalition; it is a Baptist-bootlegger group with proponents in both political parties.

Second, the Trump nativist movement uses the fair trade frame as a way to provide an explanation for economic hard times, expanding the coalition by expressing economic issues in cultural terms. This has been a successful organizing tool and puts the blame for economic hard times outside the United States.

Third, the administration has begun to institutionalize this frame, and public support, in both rhetoric and use of unfair trade laws to close the U.S. market. While Trump has only argued that the U.S. should pull out of Nafita and the U.S.-Korean Trade Agreements, he has set in motion a set of unfair trade actions that are as or more potent and will influence U.S. trade. The introduction of administered protections is only part of what looks to be the nativist legacy. As or more important is that public opinion is increasingly coalescing around his anti-trade pro-nativist rhetoric and that may be the real legacy of this administration.
FIGURE 1: POLARIZATION OF U.S. TRADE ATTITUDES
(Do you think that increasing/decreasing trade between the U.S. and other countries makes you and your family better or worse off? (Trade is very good—very bad with DK)

FIGURE 2: RELATIVE VALUE OF TRADE TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY
FIGURE 3: AVERAGE TRADE PREFERENCES BY CHINA SHOCK

FIGURE 4: AVERAGE JOB SECURITY BY CHINA SHOCK

FIGURE 5: TRADE PREFERENCES BY PERCEPTIONS OF FUTURE ECONOMIC SUCCESS OF YOUR CHILDREN
FIGURE 6: UPWARD MOBILITY, JOB SECURITY, INCOME AND TRADE ATTITUDES

FIGURE 7: VIEWS ON CHINESE IMPORTS
### TABLE 1: PRESIDENTIAL VOTE INTENTION AND CONNECTEDNESS 2007 AND 2016 PANEL

**Survey A World Connected Combined**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People disagree on whether the world bec...</th>
<th>Hillary Clinton</th>
<th>Donald Trump</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>neither nor</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very bad, Somewhat bad</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat good, Very good</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 2: PRESIDENTIAL VOTE INTENTION AND CULTURAL THREAT

**Survey A American culture threats Combined**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you agree or disagree with the follow...</th>
<th>Hillary Clinton</th>
<th>Donald Trump</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree, Strongly agree</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neither nor</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree, Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 3: 2016 CULTURE THREAT AND PRESIDENTIAL VOTE

**2016 Is American culture threatened?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you agree or disagree with the follow...</th>
<th>Hillary Clinton</th>
<th>Donald Trump</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree, Somewhat agree</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>92.9</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neither nor</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree, Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unweighted N</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>1,129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significance levels: p<0.01, p<0.05, p<0.01, p<0.001*
### TABLE 4: 2007 TRADE AND CULTURE RESPONSES

**2007 Trade and your family**

Do you think that [increasing/decreasing] trade between the U.S. and other countries ma...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey A World Connected Combined</th>
<th>Very good, Somewhat good</th>
<th>Very bad, Somewhat bad</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>neither nor</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very bad, Somewhat bad</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat good, Very good</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unweighted N = 1,866
818
306
2,990

### TABLE 5: 2016 TRADE AND CULTURE RESPONSES

**G - Effect of trade on family - 2 category**

Do you think that increasing trade and business ties between the U.S. and other countries i...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American culture threats 2016</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Bad</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree, Somewhat agree</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neither nor</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unweighted N = 748
192
186
1,126

### TABLE 6: STABILITY OF PROTECTIONIST SENTIMENT

**G - Effect of trade on family - 2 category**

Do you think that increasing trade and business ties between the U.S. and other countries is a g...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2007 Trade and your family</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Bad</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very good, Somewhat good</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>67.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very bad, Somewhat bad</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partisan alignments with respect to free trade have changed many times during the course of our nation’s history. Nonetheless, for decades, up until just a few years ago, Republicans had been known as the party of free trade. As of 2016, this is clearly no longer the case. So when precisely did rank and file Republicans change their minds?

President Trump’s nationalistic slogan, “America First,” combined with his strong anti-trade rhetoric, has led many observers to believe that he is the source of an abrupt Republican flip-flop on international trade. As recently as the previous presidential election in 2012, international trade was part of the official Republican platform. In contrast, public opinion data suggest that while Trump may have accelerated this change in 2016, the trend toward conservative and Republican opposition to globalization started well before Trump arrived on the political scene.

The seeds of discontent with globalization among rank and file Republicans were sown at least a decade before Trump. Many Republicans and conservatives hold a variety of views that make it unsurprising that they would become the protectionist party at the level of mass public opinion. From the perspective of mass opinion, what is notable about this shift is that it suggests the elite pro-trade consensus did not keep Republican party members in line.

Drawing on trend data using cross-sectional samples from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs (CCGA), as well as a panel study gathered by the Institute for the Study of Citizens and Politics (ISCAP) at the University of Pennsylvania, I examine changes in conservative/liberal and Republican/Democratic attitudes toward trade over time. The successive cross-sectional samples from the CCGA show the relation between a person’s political alignment and their attitudes toward trade and globalization. The ISCAP panel data allow me to examine whether this represents a compositional shift; in other words, did the anti-trade public shift into the Republican fold, or did Republicans simply become more anti-trade?

By using people’s initial partisan and ideological self-identifications from the beginning of the ISCAP panel study, it becomes clear that this change in party alignment is not a change in who counts themselves as Republican. In other words, it is not that people who were anti-trade came to support the Republican party, or came to identify more conservatively than before. Instead, those who already identified as Republican and/or conservative changed their minds about globalization. Given the long and well-documented history of elite-driven, top-down opinion change among the American public, particularly when it comes to highly complex issues, this is an unusual occurrence.

Trump’s role in this change was to elevate globalization to the status of a partisan political issue, rather than a consensus elite issue. By moving the perceived position of the Republican candidate in the protectionist direction, where most Republicans already were, Trump capitalized on existing public opposition. He took advantage of opinions that were latent only in the sense that they were not widely publicly identified with the Republican party. As we will see from the opinion trends over time, this opinion shifted predated Trump among rank and file Republicans.

**Changing Attitudes Toward Trade**

Survey questions about trade are notoriously sensitive to variations in question wording. For this reason, whenever possible, one must rely on multiple questions as well as multiple surveys to examine when liberals/Democrats became the party of globalization. In this

This paper reflects the individual views of the author.
summary, I focus on those items explicitly mentioning trade agreements or globalization of the American economy.

When asked whether globalization is mostly good or mostly bad for the United States economy, the Chicago Council surveys suggest that liberals have been more supportive of globalization than conservatives at least as far back as 2002. As shown in Figure 1, in 1998, a larger percent of liberals said trade was mostly good for the country, but these two percentages were statistically indistinguishable. By 2002, however, liberals were significantly more pro-globalization than conservatives. Likewise, Figure 1 also shows a Republican-Democrat divergence on globalization before 2016. Given that pro-globalization was already the more liberal and Democratic issue position by the early 2000s, it is difficult to blame Trump for the conservative shift toward disaffection with globalization. Notably the majority of both liberals and conservatives perceive globalization as good for the country, but this has increasingly become more of a liberal viewpoint than a conservative one.

Figure 1. Favorability toward Globalization, by Ideology & by Party
Note: Percentages refer to the proportion of conservatives/liberals of Republicans/Democrats who said globalization was “mostly good” for the U.S.

In Figure 2, liberal and conservative views on whether trade is good for the U.S. economy depict a similar pattern over time. In this case, the ascendance of trade as a liberal issue position appears to have occurred later, around 2008 to 2010. But from then onward, those identifying as liberal are consistently more pro-trade than those identifying as conservative. The same basic pattern occurs among Republicans and Democrat, with Democrats perceiving trade more favorably than Republicans.

Figure 2. Favorability Toward More Free Trade Agreements, by Ideology and by Party

Using completely independent surveys involving panel data in which people self-identified by party and ideology in 2007, I hold their party allegiances constant and examine individual-level change over time in trade support. Based on a question asking people whether favor or oppose the federal government negotiating more trade agreements like NAFTA, Figure 3 shows the growing rift between conservatives and liberals in support for international trade.

Not surprisingly, Republicans and Democrats show this same pattern of increasing divergence. As shown in Figure 4, Democrats have been more pro-trade than Republicans since 2006. This timing makes it increasingly difficult to pin this change on Trump. Moreover, because these are the same individuals followed over time, we know that conservatives and Republicans changed their views, not their ideological or party preferences.
Using another measure of trade support, these respondents also were asked whether they thought trade helped or hurt the American economy. Again, these differences by party identification and by ideology clearly precede Trump. Figure 5 shows that a significant difference between conservatives and liberals existed at least as early as 2012, and potentially even before then. Likewise, Figure 6 shows that Republicans were more negative about trade even in 2012. Overall, these trends tell us that trade opposition among members of the Republican mass public predated Trump. Although he may have exacerbated this trend, it stems from Republican predispositions that are not altogether new.

The Roots of Republican Discontent

Rising conservative opposition to trade seems unsurprising given what recent research has indicated about several major causes of trade opposition. Republican demographics, personal attitudes and political attitudes all point in this same direction. In terms of demographics, Republicans are, on average,
much older than Democrats, and younger people find globalization far more palatable than older people. Likewise, minorities skew heavily Democratic, and their views on globalization also are significantly more supportive than those of whites (Mutz, Mansfield and Kim). Education levels are likewise key predictors of trade support, and Republicans are currently significantly less educated than Democrats.

The social and political attitudes of Republicans make it even less plausible that they will support economic globalization. First, nationalism is well-established as a predictor of trade opposition (Mayda and Rodrik). The more Americans view their country chauvinistically, that is, as superior to all other countries, the more they oppose trade. Conservatives have long held higher levels of perceived national superiority than liberals, thus making them an unlikely source of mass support for international trade.

In addition, negative racial attitudes also predict of negative attitudes toward trade and globalization. While racial prejudice certainly exists to some degree regardless of party affiliation, the generally higher levels of racial antipathy among Republicans and conservatives relative to Democrats and liberals lead them toward more anti-trade views (Sabet, Mansfield and Mutz).

Republicans are also consistently higher on a central personality trait known as social dominance orientation (Jost). This a preference for hierarchy over equality; high social dominance orientation indicates that people view it as appropriate that some groups (or countries) dominate others. Thus those high in social dominance tend to oppose even “win-win” trade with other countries. Because Republicans are more likely to view trade in zero-sum, winner-loser terms, rather than as mutually beneficial, they oppose trade unless we are the winners and others the losers (Mutz and Kim). Fair trade is simply not enough for those who feel the need to dominate other countries.

In addition to demographics and social attitudes that will make trade support a hard sell for Republicans, their other policy attitudes make this difficult as well. In particular, Republicans dislike programs that involve social welfare safety nets. This predilection makes it difficult for Republican politicians to offer plans to offset the negative effects of trade on workers by implementing programs that help them make the transition to new occupations. Interestingly, even though ordinary Republicans are more likely to believe that workers are hurt by trade, they nonetheless oppose government money being spent on assisting these workers. Thus Republican leaders are in a Catch-22 with respect to trade. Easing the effects of trade dislocation would require government interventions that rank and file Republicans typically would not support.

THE FUTURE OF MASS SUPPORT FOR TRADE

As of the 2016 election, neither party has been willing to champion the cause of international trade and the value of a global economy. To my mind, having neither party take on this leadership role is the worst of all possible options. Elite leadership is needed lest the rank and file of both parties become more negative toward international involvement. Americans of all political stripes will suffer as a consequence of withdrawal from the world economy. Without these ties, the world is likely to be a more dangerous place as well.

The 2016 presidential election marked the emergence of trade as a partisan issue, and this new high profile status seems unlikely to diminish. In the past, both parties have engaged in trade-bashing at election time as a means of whipping up mass support, but elites soon returned to business as usual under a pro-trade elite consensus. As a result, in the past politicians have paid little attention to how the public forms opinions on trade.

As a result of these underlying attitudes and trends, Democrats are in a much better position to become globalization’s advocates than are Republicans. Republicans remain more supportive of free markets in many other domains, such as school choice, for example. But it is not the “trade” part of foreign trade that is problematic for this constituency. It is the “foreign” part. The idea that international trade involves foreigners is obvious. How globalization benefits people and their countries’ economic well being is a far more complex story.

Even after Trump is no longer in office, Democrats will be better positioned to make this case than Republicans. These attitudes did not start with Trump and they are unlikely to go away when he is no longer in office. Moreover, the constituencies making up the Democratic party are increasingly those whose views are systematically more pro-trade. As the United States moves inexorably toward becoming a majority-minority nation, Democrats will be better positioned to make this case than Republicans. Republicans constitute the older, whiter, and less educated party as of 2016. All three of these characteristics—age, non-minority status and less education—lead people toward less trade-supportive views.
To be clear, I am not suggesting that Democratic candidates hit the campaign trail giving lectures on comparative advantage or why trade deficits don’t tell us much about the strength of our national economy. This kind of approach is highly unlikely to succeed because the roots of mass attitudes toward globalization are not rooted in economic considerations. Telling citizens that this will save them money on consumer goods is nowhere near as compelling as the anti-trade argument that American global dominance is at stake if we allow other countries to “steal” from us.

Instead of economics, a simple narrative must be constructed to counter the one suggesting that foreigners are simply stealing our jobs. Such rhetoric fans the flames of racism and xenophobia (Silver and Mutz), creating still more social problems. I am not suggesting that trade would be an easy sell to the mass public by any means. But Republicans are unlikely to lead the charge given the nature of their mass constituencies. Moreover, Democrats have the capacity to do so while simultaneously setting up an appropriate safety net for those negatively affected by international trade.
PANEL THREE

Can the Global Human Rights Regime Survive?

The Future of the Global Order Colloquium ➔ Fall 2017

Goodman | Hale | Powell | Voeten
How exactly does nationalism/retrenchment threaten international human rights? What are the less-than-obvious ways in which these ideologies and their associated policy effects threaten the underlying structure of international organizations and the spread of human rights norms? And with respect to forms of nationalism/populism that are coupled with neo-fascism and xenophobia, how can policymakers and others use research in the academy to try to stop, slow, or reverse these trends?

In this thought paper, I draw from existing research on the transnational diffusion of norms in two ways. First, I examine how empirical research on the global diffusion of human rights norms can help identify the scope and conditions under which nationalism threatens to reverse rights protections. Second, I suggest how scholars and policymakers can look to empirical studies on the transnational diffusion of norms to reverse engineer and better understand the global diffusion of nationalism/populism.

This thought paper focuses primarily on the contemporary conditions in the United States. My effort is to use this opportunity as a pipeline between social science research and the world of policy and practice. I frame my ideas around four areas of application. In each area, I propose practical ways in which people who work to affect policy can counteract the deleterious effects of nationalism.

1. AMERICA IS NOT THIS PRESIDENT

The Office of the President of the United States generally plays a vital role in deciding the fate of U.S. participation in the international human rights system—both in promoting human rights abroad and in institutionalizing global human rights norms domestically. The extent to which President Donald Trump will ultimately reflect and promote a form of nationalism and retrenchment that undermines human rights is unclear. What could be a response on the part of actors who seek to promote human rights, and maintain U.S. participation in the global and regional human rights system?

It could be important to create different centers of power outside of the White House to safeguard against the erosion of basic human rights. In the climate change context, states such as California and New York are filling the void left behind by the White House’s inward turn. In the context of the Travel Ban, nationwide demonstrations by citizens and the creation of sanctuary cities have created a signal that counteracts, to some degree, the message that America stands for Islamophobia and xenophobia. These efforts should be conceived as creating alternate centers of power, and could be more deliberately pursued as platforms for building and preserving the United States’ commitment to human rights norms. Social science research suggests that national-level civil society participation in international organizations fosters the domestic institutionalization of human rights norms. In short, there is reason to think that a more deliberate effort of civil society and governmental actors (from the municipal to state-level) to maintain “U.S.” participation in global and regional human rights systems could help reduce the impact of a radically nationalist/isolationist President.

In the creation of alternate centers of power, a more ambitious project would be to create an informal version of a “Shadow Government”—loosely modeled on the British system which includes a Shadow Foreign Secretary and other positions of authority. Such an effort would be most successful if it was bipartisan—a “shadow government of national unity,” or if it formed in a political environment in which such extraordinary times were more widely understood to require such extraordinary measures. Such an environment would be created, for example, were special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation to produce highly damaging material implicating the president, but impeachment stalled.
Regardless of their precise form, such centers of power can help promote human rights norms on the global plane and guard against American retrenchment from the international community (which would undermine human rights commitments at home). These initiatives also help preserve the idea that a nation’s standing in international community is important. And it is that element of the international system—the concept of reputation and respect in international society—that helps promote human rights compliance. Finally, these centers of power may also be unusually effective in promoting human rights norms because they can be more self-critical about the U.S. government’s own policies and practices. It is more difficult to promote global human rights norms from a position of hypocrisy or double standards.

2. DO SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

Will the United States government remain committed to the largest and more powerful multilateral institutions that are dedicated to promoting human rights? That question—which focuses on the flagship human rights institutions—may fail to appreciate the significance of the “small stuff.” The latter includes U.S. participation in seemingly less powerful multilateral institutions and multilateral institutions that do not address human rights. Human rights policymakers and advocates should focus on both.

Considerable attention has been focused on ensuring the United States remains committed to the most significant human rights institutions. Pressure from outside and inside the U.S. government increased after the Trump administration appeared to back away from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and after media reported that the White House was contemplating abandoning the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Attention to these actions is important. Many social science studies suggest that the greater degree of involvement in intergovernmental organizations helps foster the domestic internalization of global norms. There is also reason to think such effects are nonlinear. For example, once states reach a critical threshold of linkages, they may experience the effects of global cultural norms (including global human rights) more powerfully. Similarly a critical threshold of withdrawals from intergovernmental organizations could have a dramatic effect on the relationship between a country and the global polity.

Empirical research, however, suggest that we should focus not only on participation in international human rights bodies if we are concerned about the promotion of human rights. Studies indicate that respect for human rights norms is spread across States as a result of their participation in international organizations that have no human rights mandate and that may not be as significant in what those organizations try to accomplish. Instead, the structural network of States within multilateral organizations and their average human rights records may be of paramount importance. A leading political scientist in research on inter-State networks, Brian Greenhill concludes: “the specific make up of IGOs [intergovernmental organizations]—in terms of the human rights records of their member states—is much more important than the nature of the IGOs themselves.”

Accordingly, policymakers, advocates, the media, and others should focus on the potential United States’ withdrawal or scaling down of its commitments to international institutions across a range of cases, not only the most salient human rights bodies. And we should also think of the appropriate baseline: How many new institutional arrangements and new memberships would the United States have formed had it not been under the influence of a nationalist/isolationist agenda?

3. SOCIAL MOVEMENT MOBILIZATION

How to build an effective human rights social movement in the face of rising nationalism and retrenchment?

A key question is what spurs the mobilization of rights-based social movements: setbacks in the form of government regression/repression or political victories that build on one another? The answer from social science may be “both”—but under different conditions. The most relevant literature may be scholarship on “political opportunity structure,” which was born out of studies of the civil rights movement in the United States.

According to these studies, government actions to relieve pressure by making a relatively small concession can cue social actors to deepen their commitment to mobilization. Human rights groups may therefore build a campaign that first seeks smaller and easier victories rather than building an effort solely around larger and more distant goals.

The scholarship also suggests that the known existence of allies inside the government is correlated with social mobilization. This makes it important for actors within the administration to signal their commitment to
preserve respect for human rights—such as through leaks, public remarks, or “Alt” social media accounts by civil servants dedicated to the rule of law. Social groups that seek to promote human rights should gather and disseminate communications from these allies to their followers and would-be followers.

4. STUDYING NATIONALISM (AND NEO-FASCISM, WHITE SUPREMACY) AS A FORM OF TRANSSNATIONAL DIFFUSION

Nationalism and populism have spread in recent years through parts of Europe and the United States. Scholars and policymakers should look to empirical studies on the global diffusion of human rights and other norms to understand better the transnational diffusion of contemporary forms of nationalism. Nationalist ideas and normative frameworks are spread in part through transnational advocacy networks; they include “norm entrepreneurs” (like Steve Bannon), and they try to shape new understandings of legitimate government action. Some research along these lines already exists, including Deborah Barrett and Charles Kurzman’s 2004 study of the transnational spread of the eugenics movement in the interwar period. Studies of how global norms travel without the assistance of intergovernmental organizations may also have special relevance here (e.g., Yu-Jie Chen’s dissertation on Taiwan’s incorporation of human rights norms absent membership in intergovernmental organizations). By identifying the conditions that facilitate the transnational diffusion of norms more generally, we may identify ways to stop, slow, or reverse the spread of dangerous ideologies.

Also, by studying nonlinear relationships, we may better understand unanticipated effects and threats. It is important to knowing if small thresholds can generate cascade effects in the spread and acceptance of a new norm. Such insights may alert policymakers to the need for resistance early on, and help them understand that they may not anticipate when a general shift in the direction of nationalist sentiment may come.

In addition to the study of global norm diffusion, the study of domestic political opportunity structure is also relevant. How, for example, does the presence of allies in the administration and government concessions to nationalist forces lead such groups to mobilize? Other social science studies on the institutionalization of global norms into the local level may also be relevant. For example, Sally Engle Merry’s study of the “vernacularization” may help understand how nationalist conceptions of “sovereignty” and populist conceptions of “self-determination” are translated to local communities in the United States and elsewhere.

Moreover, it is possible to conceive of forms of nationalism that do not threaten basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. And certain forms of nationalism have had positive effects, including throwing off the yoke of colonialism. Coupled with neo-fascism and xenophobia in powerful states, the forms of nationalism that have grown in recent years pose a special danger. The available research on the transnational diffusion of norms can help to understand the effects of these movements and how to counteract them.
A judge has issued a nation-wide order, enjoining President Trump’s executive order that would have cut federal funds to “sanctuary jurisdictions.” Another judge has struck down aspects of a Texas state law that punished cities for barring their officials from “enforcement assistance” to federal authorities and prohibited these officials from endorsing the very notion of sanctuary jurisdictions.

Sanctuary jurisdictions take a variety of approaches to immigration. But most share in common a commitment to limit the use of local resources in implementing federal immigration laws, which these jurisdictions say infringes their sovereignty to define local policy and is at odds with building trust between local law enforcement and communities to more effectively reduce crime and improve public safety.

Using this debate over sanctuary cities and federalism as a touchstone, my project explores evolving notions of “We the People,” not only with regard to the idea of national sovereignty, but also related notions of popular sovereignty, self-sovereignty, as well as the rethinking of sovereignty prompted by the expansion of international law, norms, and institutions. Constitutional law scholars have overlooked how international law norms have revolutionized the notion of sovereignty—for example, through the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, end of colonial rule, and rise of trade, immigration, and human rights.

This project will examine ways sanctuary jurisdictions are responding to the national anti-immigrant agenda, by re-asserting human rights locally—and with it, their own visions of sovereignty and who “We The People” are, perhaps even as global citizens, even while embracing local sovereignty. Rather than assert "states’ rights" to undermine civil rights, today’s state and local governments are embracing localism to protect human rights. This project raises novel concerns, examining a new phenomenon that has emerged not only with “America First” policies, but also in Europe with Brexit, where Scotland and Northern Ireland have sought ways to maintain links to the European Union, including the movement of people across borders.
PANEL FOUR

Changing Tides—How Will Global Climate Policy Evolve?

The Future of the Global Order Colloquium  Fall 2017

Carlson | Driesen | Hale | Orts
Climate Change, Trump and Populism

By Ann Carlson, Shirley Shapiro Professor of Environmental Law at the UCLA School of Law

Turn the clock back several months, to June 1, 2017, and imagine a world in which Donald Trump has agreed to keep the United States in the Paris Agreement. Those concerned with climate change—scientists, environmentalists, and, increasingly, ordinary people—would have breathed a collective sigh of relief. Media pundits among the mainstream outlets would have declared that the more moderate Ivanka Trump/Jared Kushner wing of the White House had prevailed, dealing Steve Bannon and company a huge blow. California Governor Jerry Brown would have continued to play a supporting role in Paris as the head of the U.S. state with the most ambitious climate agenda, and not instead have become the de facto leader of U.S. efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. After a few days, attention on the issue would have largely dissipated.

And yet under such a scenario, the U.S. EPA, led by former Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, would continue to dismantle the Obama Administration’s climate change policies, to remove references to climate change from agency websites, and to defund climate research. OMB Director Mick Mulvaney would work to implement his promise that “we’re not spending money on [climate change]. We consider that a waste of your money to go out and do that.” Secretary of State Rex Tillerson would still eliminate the Special Envoy for Climate Change and oversee the effort to defund the U.S. commitment to U.N. climate negotiations and the Green Development Fund that helps developing countries protect themselves against the worst effects of a warming planet. In other words, the U.S. would remain in the Paris Agreement, providing the Administration with cover, while overseeing the most hostile assault on U.S. environmental policy in modern history. Most of the Administration’s assault would occur largely under the radar, provoking outrage only among those of us who follow these developments closely.

Instead, the President’s decision to “tear up the Paris Agreement” has met with widespread and almost universal derision. The withdrawal has focused domestic and global attention on the Trump Administration’s utter hostility to all things climate. It has elevated Jerry Brown almost to the status of head of state, leading to meetings in Beijing with the Chinese President about how to continue the momentum achieved by the signing of the Paris Agreement while Secretary of Energy Rick Perry, in China at the same time as Brown, was ignored. It has led cities and states across the country, in red and blue territory, to commit to reducing their emissions by an amount equivalent to the U.S. commitment under the Paris Agreement. More than a thousand U.S. businesses have made similar pledges. And in the wake of two of the strongest hurricanes ever to make landfall in the U.S., it has helped highlight the perils of U.S. inaction. Indeed, there is now confusion among U.S and European diplomats about whether the U.S will remain a party to the agreement despite Trump’s June announcement.

The Trump Administration's decision to withdraw from Paris may, ironically, have spurred a much more vociferous and much deeper populist reaction against his climate policies than had he affirmed U.S. participation. If by populism one means representative of ordinary people (as opposed to the more sinister association with nationalism the term sometimes suggests), then the reaction to the Trump decision appears to have created a populist backlash. The simple act of withdrawing the U.S. from Paris is far easier to understand—and rally against—than the behind the scenes efforts to withdraw rules, issue notices to initiate new rule making proceedings, file briefs in federal courts reversing the position of the United States on environmental policies, cut staff, and defund obscure international agencies.

Moreover, the Trump Administration has gained virtually nothing substantive for the U.S. in withdrawing, even though its central rationale for doing so is that the U.S. “got a bad deal” and that Trump would attempt to negotiate a new deal. Individual commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under
the agreement are entirely voluntary and require no negotiation. The U.S. could withdraw the commitment made by the Obama Administration and submit a new, weaker one with no penalty. Perhaps this realization is what is leading to the mixed messages coming out of the Administration now, signaling that the U.S. might remain in the agreement after all. I should stress that my point about the withdrawal of the U.S. from the Paris Agreement is not that withdrawal is uniformly a positive move. The failure of the U.S. to lead on climate change is a moral and substantive catastrophe. My point is a narrower one: the damage the Trump Administration is doing to climate policy is happening whether or not the U.S. remains a party to the agreement. The decision to withdraw has highlighted the U.S. failure to lead, not caused it. The result has been much stronger public interest in and reaction to the withdrawal announcement, which may offset some of the damage the Administration is doing to climate policy more generally.

HOW THE PARIS AGREEMENT WORKS

Very basically, under the Paris Agreement, each of the 197 parties to it (virtually every country in the world except Nicaragua and Syria) submitted Nationally Determined Contributions setting forth individual commitments to reduce greenhouse gases. The Agreement contains no parameters for what is expected of any country, large or small emitter, developed or developing. The Obama Administration early on rejected the more traditional top-down treaty format, where the treaty terms set forth what is expected of its signatories, for a number of reasons including a belief that global consensus on treaty terms was virtually impossible. Moreover, as a political matter the U.S. could never get the Senate to ratify a treaty containing binding commitments given that, at the time, most Republican Senators did not even acknowledge the existence of the underlying problem of climate change.

The U.S. in its NDC committed to reduce its emissions by 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025. The commitment included five major components, all of which are currently threatened in whole or in part by a combination of Trump Administration and court action. Below is a description of each component and its current status:

The Clean Power Plan: The centerpiece of the U.S. commitment under the Paris Agreement is the Clean Power Plan (CPP). The CPP cuts emissions from the electricity sector by 32 percent by 2030. The power sector is the second largest source of greenhouse gases in the U.S.—but the cuts in emissions would be greater than from the transportation sector, making the CPP’s contribution to the U.S. commitment of outsize importance. The Trump Administration has withdrawn the rule.

Higher Fuel Economy Standards: The second biggest piece of the U.S. commitment is the strengthening of fuel efficiency standards from cars and trucks. The Trump Administration is currently reviewing the standards for new cars for 2021–2025 model years, with the expectation that it will weaken them. Pruitt’s EPA may also try to rescind California’s waiver to issue its own standards.

Tighter Appliance Efficiency Standards: In order to reduce energy consumption, the Obama Administration issued more stringent efficiency standards for 29 different categories of equipment and appliances. The Trump Administration has frozen the implementation of six of these standards—those that were not yet finalized but were close—by refusing to allow agencies to send the regulations for publication in the Federal Regulation. The standards apply to appliances like air conditioners and compressors.

Methane Reductions from Landfills and Oil and Gas Operations: In addition to adopting a new regulation to reduce methane from landfills, late in its term, the Obama Administration issued regulations to reduce emissions from oil and gas operations on public lands. The Pruitt EPA attempted to stay the regulations for two years but the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected the stay on the grounds that the Administrator failed to follow proper administrative procedures. EPA has yet to determine its next action on the issue but it is hard to imagine that the Administration will allow the rules to go into effect.

High Global Warming Potential Hydrofluorocarbon Reductions: The Obama Administration issued a rule requiring the phase out of some uses of HFCs, which are a particularly potent greenhouse gas. This is the only rule that, to date, the Trump Administration appears to be supporting, perhaps because Dupont Chemical’s spinoff Chemour Company and Honeywell support the rule. The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, however, recently struck down the rule on the grounds that EPA lacked the authority to issue it under the Clean Air Act.

In short, then, the Trump Administration has taken aim at four out of the five major greenhouse gas emissions reduction strategies the U.S. has committed to under the
Paris Agreement and the fifth has been struck down by a federal court. But there's more. Trump has also proposed cutting the entire U.S. contribution to the Global Climate Change Initiative, which provides about 20 percent of the funding for the diplomatic and technical programs that are central to the international climate negotiation process. And he has proposed eliminating all funding for the Green Climate Fund, a central component of international climate programs to help developing countries finance climate change-related projects. The U.S. has pledged $3 billion to the Fund and has to date paid $1 billion of its commitment.

It’s important to emphasize, again, that the decision to roll back the U.S. climate policies would happen whether or not Trump agreed to remain in Paris. The actions to roll back these policies began long before the June announcement. Thus the Administration could have remained in the agreement, continued its assault on the U.S. policies that form the basis of the Obama NDC, submitted a new and weaker NDC, and sustained far less political, media and international opprobrium. Instead, it may have finally succeeded, where so much else has failed, in stoking a sort of populist uprising in favor of climate action.

THE POST-PARIS RESPONSE

The response to the U.S. announcement to withdraw from the Paris Agreement has been swift and loud. International leaders across the globe, including from China and the European Union, have expressed their intention to continue their own commitments. Newspapers across the country, including the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the San Diego Union, the Chicago Tribune, The Tampa Bay Times, Time Magazine, Bloomberg News, the Detroit Free Press, and the Washington Post editorialized against the decision. Less than a third of Americans polled approved of the decision to pull out, with more than half opposing it. Business leaders, including the heads of G.E., Apple, Microsoft, IBM, Intel, Google, and Amazon all expressed their disappointment with the decision, and even Exxon-Mobile and Shell Oil expressed support for continuing U.S. participation. More than a thousand businesses have pledged to cut their own emissions by the 26-28 percent contained in the U.S. pledge.

The most compelling evidence that the withdrawal decision has sparked a populist counter movement, however, comes from state and local governments. Twelve states and Puerto Rico, representing more than a third of U.S. GDP, have pledged to honor the U.S. Paris commitment and cut their own emissions 26 to 28 percent by 2025. 211 mayors have committed that their cities will do the same. And the cities include not only reliable environmental stalwarts like Los Angeles and New York but others like Houston, Columbia, S.C., Salt Lake City, Dubuque, Allentown PA and Anchorage. While it is true that most of these jurisdictions are governed by Democrats, the political calculation by these leaders is that public opinion is behind them. A May, 2017 poll by the Yale Program on Climate Communication revealed that a majority of registered voters favor stronger government action on climate change, including large majorities of liberal, moderate and conservative Democrats and near or actual majorities of liberal to moderate Republicans. Even conservative Republicans favor more corporate and industrial action to reduce emissions.

It is too early to know whether the immediate reaction to Trump’s decision to withdraw from Paris will result in ongoing public support in favor of climate change action. One of the conundrums of the problem of climate change is that solving it requires sustained, comprehensive action across all sectors of the economy even though most of the benefits from such action will accrue to future generations. Public opinion about climate change has proven fickle. Nevertheless, the immediate aftermath of the withdrawal announcement has been to galvanize public opinion and—more importantly—public (and private) action against U.S. inaction. Trump’s greatest achievement on climate change may turn out to be to increase public opinion in favor of doing something about climate change, something that wouldn’t have happened had he committed to stay in the agreement while eviscerating U.S. climate policy.
Climate Disruption, Populism, National, and Retrenchment

By David M. Driesen, University Professor at the College of Law at Syracuse University

Internationally, nationalist populism usually leads to retrenchment on immigration issues and to some extent on trade. Brexit did not feature any rebellion against environmental protection, nor for that matter did the populist candidacy of Bernie Sanders. So, retrenchment on environmental issues does not automatically come from populism and nationalism.

Yet, Donald Trump has clearly led a retrenchment on climate disruption, repudiating the Paris Accords outright. I plan to first say what Trumpism in this broader international context teaches us about the relationship between populism, nationalism, and retrenchment with respect to climate disruption. I will then briefly outline Trump’s effects on climate policy. And finally, I will introduce a forthcoming paper on fighting climate retrenchment in this new populist context.

POPULISM, NATIONAL, AND RETRENCHMENT TRUMP STYLE

Political scientists do not agree upon the meaning of the term, populism. Self-certainly, opposition to addressing global climate disruption does not reflect the kind of grass roots uprising that gave birth to the populist agrarian and worker’s movement from which the term gets its name. On the other hand, most political scientists also use the term “populism” to refer to authoritarian fanning of resentments against elites. Trump’s top-down populist stance on climate disruption relies to a great extent upon rejection of intellectual elite’s thinking. By contrast, Bernie Sanders’ populism attacks business elites and embraces vigorous climate disruption policy.

While nationalism strongly suggests opposition to immigration and perhaps to free trade, Brexit shows that it need not denote opposition to action on global climate disruption. Britain has been a leader on climate disruption policies, imposing carbon taxes to make up for deficiencies in weak EU policies and making massive investments in energy efficiency a cornerstone of its program to recover from the financial crisis of 2008. Those calling for Brexit have not called for a retrenchment on climate disruption policy. For that matter, China has supported the Paris Accords, because it sees an alignment between its global interests and the national need to clean up local air pollution, which it sees as imperative lest bottom-up populism seeking reduced air pollution take hold in China.

Trump’s climate retrenchment stems, in part, from his decision as to how to characterize the national character he’s fighting to defend. For some reason, his definition of nationalism makes a thriving coal industry a defining feature of our nation.

But retrenchment on climate policy is not new. President George W. Bush rejected the Kyoto Protocol outright and the U.S. government as a whole has never fully participated in the international regime. In the U.S. the degree of participation in international institutions reflects domestic politics, which is often ambivalent about international engagement. President Obama won election pledging to address global climate disruption and thereafter advanced the global regime by persuading China and other countries to support the Paris Accord with pledges of greenhouse gas emission reductions. Obama’s own commitment to U.S. action made that possible.

While we might consider Trump’s retrenchment a product of his own distinctive brand of populism and nationalism, Bush’s retrenchment primarily reflected a defense of business elites largely uncomplicated by broad populist appeal. Thus, there is no inevitable link between populism, nationalism, and retrenchment on climate policy. That said, elites tend to value international regimes more than many citizens and a prolonged global resurgence of populism and nationalism may produce retrenchment across a lot of domains.

This paper reflects the individual views of the author.
THE EFFECTS OF TRUMP’S CLIMATE RETRENCHMENT

Trump’s retrenchment has produce a limited impact on the global climate regime so far. In a victory for proponents of path dependence theory over those who see concern about free riding as the key driver of international relations, we have not seen a slackening of commitment to the Paris Accords outside the U.S.

Retrenchment’s effects within the U.S. may also prove less formidable than liberal proponents of government regulation may think. To a large extent, U.S. greenhouse gas emissions have come down because of technological advances permitting price decreases in natural gas, which have led to closure of coal-fired power plants. Furthermore, spurred by targeted policies in Europe and progressive U.S. states, renewable energy prices have become cost competitive and so have cars with little or no tailpipe emissions. Climate disruption needs urgent action of great scope, so weakening federal climate policy causes long term concern, but federal policy is a marginal factor even in the amount of domestic emissions compared to the cumulative effects of technological advancement, state policies, and other countries’ policies at the moment.

The biggest threats to U.S. climate policy involve not so much the weakening of Obama-era policies, many of which were tepid to begin with, but long-term damage to U.S. institutions and international free trade. In true authoritarian fashion, Trump has marshalled populist forces in support of an attack on democratic institutions, including the scientific and standard setting capacity of the federal government. If we retain our democracy in spite of this assault, we may succeed in rebuilding these institutions, but only slowly and with great difficulty. Furthermore, some aspects of the technological revolution that is making lowering greenhouse gas emissions much less costly than predicted involve technologies from abroad. Collapse of free trade could make solar panels form China and other technology more expensive and impede progress.

CLIMATE POLICY IN A POPULIST AGE

The success of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the 2016 election suggests a resurgence of populist sentiment—meaning distrust of elites. This populism may have roots in growing economic equality, making business elites and immigrants its most likely targets. While public opinion polls show that most people do not think climate science a hoax and support addressing global climate disruption, they also show that few consider climate disruption a top priority. Climate disruption policy is likely to be a collateral beneficiary or casualty of efforts by politicians to marshal populist sentiment behind their preferred programs. While the fate of Trump’s broad retrenchment and particular nationalism remains uncertain, the populism so evident across the political spectrum seems likely to endure.

At the same time, strongly ideological Republican leadership and Trump’s divisive approach to governance have made constructive legislative compromise on climate, or any other issue, less likely than ever before. Compromise on climate disruption may prove impossible when the President and prominent members of his party declare a broad international scientific consensus on the issue’s nature and importance a hoax.

Our thinking about climate policy has not yet caught up with populist reality. In particular, thinking about instrument choice—the choice between carbon taxes, emissions trading, and traditional regulation—has been based largely on what I call the “political economy of compromise.” Analysts’ conception of sensible climate policy stems from their perception of what sorts of measures will likely appeal to current federal officeholders across the ideological spectrum. For example, they tend to recommend “revenue neutral” carbon taxes, which use revenues from carbon taxes to pay down the deficit or return a dividend to the taxpayers. By denying the federal government any increase in revenue, they hope to make climate policy palatable to Republicans. Grandfathered emissions trading, where allowances are handed out for free, also conforms to this model. Clinton pursued this policy domestically and internationally in the hope that the use of a market-based instrument would make meaningful climate policy palatable to regulated firms and their Republican allies.

If the political order that made such compromise plausible has disintegrated, however, we may have to think about a new political economy—call it a populist political economy. A populist political economy requires policy proposals designed to excite voters to show up and vote for proponents of the proposal, thereby ousting those blocking progress from office.

Since climate policy does not figure prominently among voters’ priorities, a populist political economy would demand proposals that generate important non-climate benefits. This is not exactly a new idea. Only one European country has succeeded in almost completely eliminating carbon dioxide emissions from the utility sector—the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions...
in most countries. That country, France, accomplished this miracle by building nuclear power plants as part of a nationalist program under Charles De Gaulle. Brazil has lower carbon dioxide emissions in its transport sector than just about any large industrialized country. It achieved this through nationalist efforts to insulate itself from oil price shocks and benefit local farmers by creating a biofuels industry. Around the world, the most successful climate policies achieve important non-climate objectives.

In the U.S., all of the leading Presidential candidates in 2016 agreed that we need to rebuild our infrastructure. Perhaps we should advocate a carbon tax designed to fund a massive infrastructure program. Carbon taxes provide a nice opportunity to fashion populist proposals, because revenue can be directed to whatever most excites voters. Indeed, this approach can be tied to nationalism, as Trump has shown through his rhetoric on infrastructure.

If politicians advance proposals with broad populist appeal and win elections based on those proposals, they will gain the power to enact meaningful climate disruption policies. Once they do that, retrenchment on climate policy will likely die, just as it did when President Obama decided to use the Clean Air Act to make progress on the issue.

Trump’s retrenchment on climate disruption policy stems from his particular brand of nationalism and populism. If populist politicians embrace proposals designed to make climate disruption policy salient to voters and otherwise redirect populist sentiment, retrenchment in this realm may lose its grip. Nevertheless, resurgent nationalism and populism across the globe over a prolonged period time would pose a risk to all sorts of international institutions.

ENDNOTES

1 See LAURA GRATTAN, POPULISM’S POWER: RADICAL GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA, 8 (2016) (noting that the term “populism” has been “notoriously difficult to define”); POPULISM: ITS NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS 1 ( Ghita Ionescu & Ernest Gellher eds. 1969) [hereinafter NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS] 1 (stating that no one is clear about what populism is)


3 See Ben Stanley, The Thin Ideology of Populism, 13 J. POL. IDEOLOGIES 95, 95 (2008) (discussing the “centrality of elite/popular antagonism to populism”); see, e.g., NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS, supra note 1, at 29 (identifying populism with Peron in Argentina and Vargas in Brazil)

4 Cf. MICHAEL KAZIN, THE POPULIST PERSUASION 1 (1995) (noting that “scores of politicians...vow to fight for ‘middle class taxpayers’ and against...‘bureaucrats,’ ‘fat cats,’ and ‘Big Men’).
The Reformation of Global Environmental Governance: Addressing the Challenge of Climate Change

By Eric W. Orts, Guardsmark Professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania; Faculty Director, Initiative for Global Environmental Leadership

Kyoto is dead, and Paris has killed it. This shorthand means that the approach to global environmental problems represented by the Kyoto Protocol to address climate change has been replaced by a more decentralized method represented by the Paris Agreement. Kyoto imagined that nation-states acting together through formal international legal agreements would provide the best way forward to solve large global environmental problems such as climate change. Paris jettisoned Kyoto as unworkable, and the new agreement heralds a conceptual shift in how we as a human society frame problems of global environmental governance. It is a positive shift, and the full implications of this change for law, business, nonprofit organizations, and everyday citizens and consumers are not yet fully grasped.

President Obama often remarked that there are two large-scale existential threats to human society and our contemporary global civilization. One is the risk of thermonuclear war, an issue that remains mostly for traditional governments and statecraft to manage. The other is global climate change, which is a problem moving beyond the reach of nation-states alone to handle. Climate change—or, as David Orr prefers, “global destabilization”—is the most important and largest environmental challenge in the twenty-first century. It is well-known by all but the most economically self-interested and scientifically ignorant that climate change is real and dangerous. Perhaps the recent experiences of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and maybe José—along with rampant forest fires in the American West—may serve as a wake-up call to the American political right, which has become astonishingly and frighteningly “know nothing.” Average global temperatures have been rising, along with average sea levels. Glaciers and polar ice have been shrinking. Extreme weather events such as flooding, drought, and heat waves have become more common and severe. You don’t need a weatherman to see which way the wind blows: just ask almost any climate scientist. If nothing serious is done, catastrophic consequences for civilization are not only likely but virtually certain: mass starvation, huge refugee flows, expansion of the geographical range of diseases, and environmentally motivated wars. Basic assumptions of human rights and democratic government in the world will also come under heavy pressure.

Climate change poses an extraordinarily difficult challenge because of its scope, time-scale, and complexity. As I’ve previously argued, the Kyoto style of organizing nation-states to address climate change by a treaty or other formal “top-down” arrangement foundered on at least six problems. First, the complexity of many countries and many people with conflicting interests and values makes coming to agreement difficult. Second, the economic interests of nation-states are often in direct competition. Third, the ethics of comparative responsibility among nation-states (and among rich and poor) lead to controversies about how much those who gained from climate unfriendly practices historically should compensate those who have not benefited. Some countries are also more vulnerable to climate risks than others. Fourth, the short attention spans of most human beings do not easily engage rationally with long-term climate consequences. Fifth, the administrative means to monitor and enforce global...
standards for greenhouse gas emissions are weak. Sixth, the economic phenomenon of “leakage”—i.e., the displacement of climate unfriendly production to non-regulated jurisdictions—poses a challenge to comprehensive international regulation. In addition, we have seen slow progress, and even reversals of progress in countries such as the United States, because of general scientific ignorance, a cultural divide between scientist and policymakers, the politicization of science (and the advent of “alternative facts”), the organized denial of science, and partisan politics driven by business interests that would be affected negatively by climate mitigation policies.

The Paris Agreement represents a bold new approach because of its “bottom up” rather than “top down” structure. Because each nation-state (including almost every country on the planet) has agreed to submit a plan with self-defined targets of performance, the burden is removed from experts at the “top” to construct a global regime of greenhouse gas control and technical programs for adaptation. This bottom-up approach worries experts because there can be no guarantees about overall collective progress toward effective reductions of climate-affecting emissions. But for the reasons and constraints discussed above, there is no feasible alternative.

President Trump’s ill-advised withdrawal (or, more precisely, his decision to begin legally to withdraw) the United States from the Paris Agreement may, contrary to his intentions, end up demonstrating the wisdom and strength of this bottom-up approach. Because of the decentralized and open structure of the Paris Agreement, twenty-four U.S. States (notably California) and 274 cities (including New York, among many others) have so far declared that they will nevertheless comply with the U.S. commitments to Paris made by President Obama. Many leading businesses are making the same commitment. A group called “We Are Still In” includes business signatories representing businesses and investors accounting for total annual revenues of $1.4 trillion and over twenty of the Fortune 500 companies, such as Apple, eBay, Gap Inc., Google, Intel, Microsoft, and Nike, as well as hundreds of small businesses. More than 300 universities and colleges have also joined. In other words, states, cities, and businesses—as well universities and other nonprofit institutions—are making an end-run around the Trump Administration and a recalcitrant Republican Congress.

The silver lining of Trump’s outrageous action is that it highlights the need for an “all hands on deck” approach to dealing with large-scale global environmental challenges such as climate change. Other global environmental challenges include biodiversity loss, deforestation, loss of arable land, destruction of the ocean’s fisheries, fresh water shortages, and the spread of toxic chemicals. Traditional international law has proven mostly ineffective in dealing with these problems. Paris represents a new way forward. The largest, most intractable problems require new modes of global environmental governance. Although we can only see outlines emerging, what I will call “a reformation of global environmental governance” is underway. It is a social phenomenon deserving of further thought and study, as well as steering and fine-tuning.

Global environmental governance refers to the institutional and individual capacities that affect how human interactions contribute to either causing or alleviating environmental problems, including various kinds of pollution. This definition allows for further debate about what constitutes an environmental problem. For example, one might want a particular kind of pollution to be limited to levels that are consistent only with human health standards or greater controls that would protect environmental features such as non-human animals, plants, and eco-systems. For purposes here, however, we can assume that climate change is a global environmental problem that requires strategies of both mitigation and adaptation.

Two important features of this conceptual reformation are important to note. First, the idea of global environmental governance goes beyond law as the method of intervention. New modes of governance are needed that recognize that “law fails” sometimes and proves inadequate to the social challenge. This does not mean that law is not important: law remains essential as part of the solution to the larger problem. But law is not enough.

Second and relatedly, global environmental governance transcends the traditional focus on the nation-state—as well as international treaties for other agreement among nation-states. Again, failures of international environmental law mean that other social institutions must play an enhanced role to address problems such as climate change.

Social theorists such as Saskia Sassen offer a vision of the emergence of “global assemblages” that include nation-states and other governing bodies (such as cities), combined with associations of firms, nonprofit organizations, and universities. How best to construct these assemblages for global environmental governance
is a topic for further work both in theory and everyday practice.

To begin, consider the different groups and interests that have an influence over global environmental governance: the players on the global stage. First, there are billions of individual human beings on the planet acting in their own individual roles and capacities as citizens, consumers, employees, investors, and parents. People vote and engage in politics. People also act as consumers in markets, and they work as employees in business firms that produce goods and services in markets. People make investments in financial markets for various objectives such as retirement or paying for college for their children. People raise families and engage in religious, educational, and other nonprofit institutions.

In all of these different roles, individual people can make decisions that take the natural environment into account. As citizens, individuals can “vote the environment” and support candidates who are either more or less “pro-environment” or “green.” As consumers, individuals can make decisions that contribute to different environmental outcomes. They can buy products or services that are certified or labelled to be better for the environment or “greener” than alternatives. They can also choose not to consume—or to make purchases with an eye toward environmental impact and consequences. Individuals acting as employees may become more or less active in workplace activities that promote recycling, reuse, or redesign. Individuals may seek to work for firms that pursue a more positive sustainability objective than other firms. Individual investors may choose to invest in an increasing number of institutional funds that are negatively and sometimes positively screen for the environmental performance. (For example, a negative screen may exclude coal companies, and a positive screen may encourage investment in renewable technologies such as solar and wind energy). Parents may even decide to limit the number of children that they beget because of environmental considerations.¹⁶

Although individuals can act in these ways in a manner that will have an aggregate positive effect on global environmental problems, however, their actions are not coordinated. The environmental benefits are therefore uncertain. Environmentally beneficial activities by one person may be offset—or more than offset—by environmentally destructive actions by another. Hence the need for more organized institutional responses.

The second main player is government which, in different forms and at different levels ranging from the local to the national and even the supra-national (e.g., the European Union), instantiates the traditional institution deemed most appropriate to address environmental problems. The classic solution to the “tragedy of the commons,” which results when many individual people act primarily with only their own self-interest in mind, even when such actions conduce to predictable collective damage, is to resort to government. In Garrett Hardin’s classic formulation, we sometimes need “mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon.”¹⁷ Surely, governments and laws promulgated by them remain necessary and are often the most efficient and effective method to address many environmental problems. In addition, the European principle of “subsidiarity” recommends that any particular environmental problem should be addressed at the lowest level possible to resolve it effectively and efficiently.¹⁸ A dispute about what kinds of trees to plant on my block, for example, is likely best resolved at the micro-level of informal governance by my neighbors and fellow homeowners, rather than by a higher level of government at the city, state, or federal level (unless, perhaps, an invasive or endangered species is involved). But disputes involving various kinds of pollution are likely best resolved at higher levels of government. The larger point is that government and law are the best solutions for many kinds of environmental problems, but not all.

“Market failures” are a common and frequent justification for governmental regulation. But “government failures” are also possible. Perhaps they are even increasing in some countries recently, such as the United States, where political dysfunction appears to be freezing effective government action. In these kinds of situations, government is not the best solution to environmental problems. Decentralized approaches have emerged and been recognized too. Elinor Ostrom, for example, won a Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in significant part for her theoretical and empirical work showing that human communities that have come together to solve different kinds of tragedies of the commons without direct government intervention and supervision.¹⁹ Her research holds out the promise also that the global challenge of climate change may prove amenable to broad-based collective and decentralized governance efforts.²⁰

Governmental regulation can support decentralized approaches. Rather than directly prescriptive command-and-control styles of regulation, government can adjust property rules, incentivize environmentally positive behavior through taxes or charges, require or encourage the provision of information, require or encourage insurance, or adopt pro-environmental procurement
policies. What works best in different kinds of situations will depend on assessments of experiments and other measures of effectiveness and efficiency.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are a third major institutional player on the global stage. Organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund, the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, and the Natural Conservancy have global footprints in terms of power and influence. Usually growing from local or national origins, these organizations have grown to become increasingly concerned with global-scale problems, including biodiversity loss (with an impetus especially provided by “charismatic” endangered species such as pandas, tigers, and elephants). They work with governments and local populations seeking solutions, and they often attempt galvanize support for social pressure against business interests too, such as in famous actions against whaling ships. They tie charitable fundraising from individuals to proactive strategies to influence governments and businesses to take actions for environmental preservation or improvements of environmental performance. They may engage in political lobbying and consumer boycotts. Other related nonprofit organizations add to this category, including universities and colleges as well as religious orders. NGOs of many different stripes and colors are an essential and the as yet incompletely theorized and understood set of organizational players active in Sassen’s “global assemblages.”

Business firms constitute a fourth major player. Business has often been seen primarily as a target for either prescriptive regulation or NGO pressure (by social shaming or consumer boycotts). Increasingly in the last several decades, however, calls have been made on business to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. Despite pressure from investors for maximizing returns, traditional fiduciary duties of corporate managers and directors allow for environmental objectives to be taken into account. Family businesses in particular may have generational incentives to take long-term environmental concerns seriously. New legal forms of business enterprise such as benefit corporations and community interest companies in Europe specifically expand their objectives to include environmental sustainability as well as profit-making. Legal strategies may aim to encourage business firm to reflect on their environmental performance and make decisions to enhance it, such as through voluntary or mandatory reporting schemes—or what I’ve previously called “reflexive environmental law.” Businesses themselves have also been proactively adopting internal “private governance” strategies and structures that address environmental performance considerations without direct governmental interventions.

International organizations comprise a fifth major player in the global environmental governance. The United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the World Bank are leading examples of international institutions that are formally organized by treaties among nation-states. A broad conception of global governance displaces these organizations from the central stage to some extent, just as nation-states themselves are also de-centered. They remain important and essential, however, as the negotiation of the Paris Agreement itself illustrates.

The key global governance question is how all of these players can work together to make true progress. I will conclude with a few thoughts about future directions. In thinking about possible future strategies, though, one must become comfortable with the prospect of uncertainty in terms of consequences. Because traditional legal prescription cannot work at a global level, other less direct methods must be employed. I’ve previously developed the metaphor of many different “climate contracts” to describe how many different kinds of human activities and interactions among the players identified above can contribute to long-term solutions. There will be a continuing need for scientists and policymakers to observe and determine what works and what doesn’t. Different players will play different roles. For example, international groups such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Changes will continue to prove indispensable in terms of organizing and interpreting scientific research. Nation-states must continue to engage in legal reviews and reforms, such as to provide new energy networks and to support new energy sources that will allow for long-term mitigation through a phasing out of reliance on fossil fuels. Business must continue to innovate and invent “win-win” solutions that are both profitable and climate friendly (or at least climate neutral). Perhaps most important, individual citizens and consumers must remain active, organized in social movements, and collectively supportive of environmental NGOs. If enough individual people do not understand and care about the threats of climate change, then the current dangerous path toward taking ever greater risks will continue. And human society as a whole will inexorable march over a cliff into a dystopia of one kind or another imagined by climate fiction novelists.

In thinking about creative solutions to the challenge of global environmental governance, we should follow the classical advice of John Dewey. Each instance of creative thinking, according to Dewey, "reveals, more or less
clearly, five logically distinct steps: (i) a felt difficulty; (ii) its location and definition, (iii) suggestion of possible solution; (iv) development by reasoning of the bearings of the solution; and (v) further observance and experimentation leading to its acceptance or rejection.”

With respect to the reformation of global environmental governance with respect to climate change, we should follow Dewey’s advice.

- The science of climate change reveals the “felt difficulty” of both the complex dimensions of the problem and its consequences on human society and our natural environment in terms current damage and expected future damage.

- The “location and definition” of the problem of climate change is regional and specific in terms of its effects and risks (e.g., rising seas and storm surges on the coasts as compared with the risks of forest fires, flash floods, and droughts in interior locations). But it is global in the analysis of its overall systemic dynamics and sources of causes.

- “Suggestions of possible solutions” involves complex governance regimes. No single top-down regulatory solution is feasible, and inaction and blind faith in markets are misguided too. Instead, various individual and institutional players on the global governance stage must play different roles in an aggregated set of solutions. For example, international organizations, nation-states, and universities must continue to sponsor basic scientific as well as practical research focused on climate change. Creative legal regimes must be adopted at different levels, taking into account political feasibility as well as ideal considerations of effectiveness and efficiency. Individual and NGOs must continue engage in mass social movements that will educate and deepen commitment to change both politically as citizens and economically as consumers, employees, and investors. Business firms must orient themselves not only to improve environmental performance in line with profit motives, but also add their institutional weight to political and legal reforms that will provide incentives and a level playing field for positive change. Business must also innovate, invent, and disseminate new sustainable technologies that will drive out and replace climate-polluting ones. In addition to their individual roles, these various players with different incentives and interests must join together into new hybrid “global assemblages” coordinating similar interests. For example, global NGOs must continue to partner with businesses and governments to achieve specific conservation goals and policy outcomes. Cities and regional governments (such as state in the U.S.) must continue to partner together—as well as with forward-thinking business firms and NGOs—to advance climate friendly practices and policies. 

- The solutions of global environmental governance for climate change is messy and complex, but it is the only way forward. The “development by reasoning of the bearings of the solution” should be brought to bear to weed what actually works to “move the needle” in terms of mitigation and adaptation from what is wasteful or relatively ineffective or inefficient compare with alternatives.

- “Further observance and experimentation leading to [the] acceptance or rejection” of various environmental governance methods and practices are required. In other words, there is no easy or static final solution to global climate change. Monitoring of success and failure will be needed. A constant and reflexive pattern of trying out new experiments, and then determining whether they work or not, will characterize an ongoing reformation of the global environmental governance of climate change for the foreseeable future. For global climate change is not a problem that will be solved any time soon.

Finally, even though the challenges of reforming the complex approaches of environmental governance to climate change will be difficult and complex, it is essential also to remain optimistic. Although the future may often appear dark, and though it is quite possible that many more climate-change super-charged events will occur in the near future—from more Category 5 hurricanes to massive forest fires to terrible droughts — humanity will as a whole will likely survive the challenge as a species. As the astrophysicist David Grinspoon observes after a careful and comprehensive study: “Climate disruptions could make the twenty-first century as bad as the twentieth century, with its tragic famines and world wars that uprooted massive regions and cost hundreds of millions of lives, but it will not mean the end of our civilization. It may be the beginning.” For as Martin Seligman, the guru of positive psychology, preaches, optimism is functional.
ENDNOTES

1 This reference comes from a recent off-the-record interview with a person familiar with President Obama’s daily briefings in the Oval Office. Cf. also Thomas L. Friedman, “Trump’s Folly,” N.Y. Times, Sept. 13, 2017, at A27 (describing the risks of nuclear war such as with North Korea and the risks of global climate change suggested by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma as two leading national security threats).

2 David W. Orr, Down to the Wire: Confronting Climate Collapse 2-4 (2009). For a defense of the term “climate change” as opposed to other options such as “global warming,” see Stephen M. Gardiner, “Ethics and Global Climate Change,” 114 Ethics 555, 557-59 (2004).


6 Id. at 205-14.

7 For an examination of these and other obstacles written prior to the most recent illustrations in the Trump campaign and following administration, see Dale Jamieson, Reason in a Dark Time: Why the Struggle Against Climate Change Failed—and What It Means for Our Future 61-104 (2014).

8 As of this writing, it appears that Trump Administration officials are reaching out to find a path back to the Paris Agreement. In a letter to the United Nations, the White House signaled that it only “intends to exercise its right to withdraw from the agreement,” and hinted that finding an “alternative arrangement” was possible. Under the terms of the Paris Agreement, no country can formally withdraw until 2020. Lisa Friedman, “White House Adviser to Discuss Climate Change at U.N.,” N.Y. Times, Sept. 13, 2017, at A7.


10 Id. See also “We Are Still In,” available at http://wearestillin.com/.

11 Id.


14 Clean Air Act regulation in the United States makes this kind of distinction.


23 For a classic appeal for business reform along these lines, see Paul Hawken, The Ecology of Commerce: A Declaration of Sustainability (rev. ed. 2010).


28 Sees supra note 4 and accompanying text.

29 John Dewey, How We Think 72 (1910).

30 Elements (i) or (ii) taken together comprise what I have previously described with a co-author as “the problem context and problem features” of an environmental problem. It includes both a scientific description of the problem as well as a diagnosis of the social consequences and situations that further describe the practical aspects of the problem. Paul R. Klimentorfer and Eric W. Orts, “Informational Regulation of Environmental Risks,” 18 Risk Analysis 155, 167-68 & fig. 4 (1998).

31 For a discussion of geoengineering options (arguing also for different terminology), see Jamieson, supra note 7, at 1219-27.


33 See Martin E.P. Seligman, Learned Optimism: How To Change Your Mind and Your Life (1991); Martin E. P. Seligman, Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being (2011). Cf. also John R. Ehrenfeld and Andrew J. Hoffman, Flourishing: A Frank Conversation About Sustainability 119-36 (2013) (arguing that though the challenges of achieving a social transformation toward true sustainability will be very difficult, one must remain “hopeful”).