ACCOMMODATING GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE: A RADICAL WORLD ORDER CHALLENGE
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I. Situating the Challenge

The two great world order challenges of the past 75 years have been, first, nuclear weaponry and, more recently, global climate change. On nuclear weaponry it can be argued that the challenge has been successfully met (so far) because no nuclear weapons have been used since the atomic bombs were dropped in 1945. This seems unconvincing over time as the possession, deployment, development, proliferation, and doctrinal readiness to use these weapons suggests a very precarious firewall protecting humanity from a war fought with nuclear weapons. The basic accommodation of nuclear weapons has been based on containing their spread to the extent possible through a regime that embodies a bargain in which non-nuclear weapons states give us their option to acquire the weaponry in exchange for assurances of beneficial access to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and a pledge by the nuclear weapons states to pursue in good faith nuclear disarmament.

The record of past decades also supports the conclusion that the challenge posed by the existence of nuclear weapons has not been met. [Writings of Jonathan Schell] There has been a slow, yet steady, increase in the number of states that possess nuclear weapons and that have the knowledge and the technological capacity to produce nuclear weapons. The non-proliferation regime has not been able to prevent determined states from crossing the nuclear weapons threshold. Furthermore, the effort to restrict access to the weaponry or impose sanctions on proliferators has been selective, and driven more by geopolitical priorities than by counter-proliferation goals. The silent acquiescence to Israel’s covert acquisition of nuclear weapons was one expression of double standards, while the 2003 invasion of Iraq was illustrative of the use of a counter-proliferation rhetoric to obscure other strategic motivations. Rewarding India with access to nuclear technology after it had crossed the weapons threshold is another regime-eroding expression of selective implementation of a non-proliferation ethos.

There is also a persisting, and many would argue, an increasing risk that the existing restraints on use are fraying. Of particular concern is the announced interests of extremist political networks in acquiring such weaponry. [Bush Doctrine; Bobbitt] An organization such as al-Qaida cannot be deterred, and offers no targets for retaliation. Such a condition has given rise to both preemptive and preventive war claims and practice, but also to the rearticulation of a visionary goal of a world without nuclear weaponry.
Yet the most revealing failure involves the unwillingness of the nuclear weapons states to pursue agreed nuclear disarmament goals. On the contrary, these states, led by the United States, have continuously tested and developed new more sophisticated forms of the weaponry, and have explored a variety of battlefield uses for such weapons, as well as relying on their deterrent and retaliatory roles. In effect, the nuclear weapons states lack the political will to eliminate nuclear weapons from their military arsenals. This suggests non-compliance with Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, but more fundamentally, interprets the challenge of nuclear weapons as not requiring their elimination, or in some versions, as making their elimination imprudent because of the risk of cheating or impossible because the knowledge of how to make the weaponry exists and cannot be eliminated. [Joseph Nye, *Nuclear Ethics*]

What do we learn about world order from this failure to address the challenge of nuclear weaponry in a more convincing manner? There exists on the part of ruling elites an attachment to military power, and a strong reluctance to part with the most powerfully destructive weaponry that ever existed. There is the closely related populist sentiment that having this weaponry is an important status symbol; after all, the first five members of the nuclear weapons club were also the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. Beyond this, in the nuclear weapons states, especially the United States, there are strong pro-nuclear establishments, an integral segment of the ‘military-industrial complex’ that resists moves toward denuclearization from deep within the governmental structures of sovereign states. Also, when it comes to war and the use of force, governments as political actors are essentially amoral, being ready to sacrifice millions of lives or to engage in genocidal, even omnicidal, behavior to achieve their own survival. [See E.P. Thompson]

This assessment is particularly disturbing when it is recognized that ethics, reason, and security mainly reinforce the worry that without nuclear disarmament a humanitarian catastrophe will result at some point. It was this worry that led observers to assume immediately after Hiroshima and Nagasaki that governments would uniformly realize that their survival was dependent on the abolition of this weaponry. There was nothing in the structure of international relations that prevented achieving complete nuclear disarmament. Governments representing states could enter into verifiable agreements, and establish compliance mechanisms. [but see Deudney, last chapter]

When it comes to the other great world order challenge, accommodating global climate change, the prospects seem both better and worse. They are worse because it is harder for the political imagination to comprehend the dangers posed by climate change. The causation is more hidden, and there exists no model of ecological catastrophe that is comparable to the charred urban landscapes of the two Japanese cities hit by atomic bombs. Beyond this, the leading governments will have to act collaboratively to meet the challenge, substituting guidance on the basis of the global public interest for a narrowly conceived national interest. More
difficult, governments accustomed to very short cycles of accountability, often equated with electoral intervals of 3-6 years, will have to base policy and resource allocations on the basis of far long cycles of 10 to 50 or more years. Also, difficult is the investment in future wellbeing in ways that impose considerable financial burdens on present government budgets, requiring added taxes or further borrowing. The extent of the burden will grow as time passes, but at each point short of tangible effects on the health and wellbeing of powerful countries, the likelihood is that costs of adjustment for the sake of the future will not be deemed politically acceptable. This problem of paying now to avoid harm much later is accentuated by the current global economic crisis in which high unemployment and stagnant growth exert pressure on fiscal policy without taking into consideration the costs of reducing rapidly emission rates of greenhouse gasses. This pressure is heightened by the fact that competitiveness in the global marketplace could be adversely affected by placing extra burdens on industrial and consumer activities.

Global climate change seems to have better prospects than nuclear weapons for several reasons. Regulation involves constraints on industrial and societal activities, but it does not intrude directly upon the security domain that has remained resistant to public accountability even in the most democratic of sovereign states. Furthermore, it is possible to calibrate adjustment responsibilities to negotiated levels taking account of differential capabilities, resources, and emission levels, that is, fixing obligations in a flexible manner. There is also the sense that reducing these emissions has no down side, nothing comparable to the alleged fear of cheating in the context of nuclear disarmament. International society has exhibited a strong commitment to act cooperatively in meeting the challenge as evidenced by the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, and by continuous negotiations leading up to the 2009 sessions in Copenhagen that aim to put forward a global climate change framework treaty, which hopefully will set the stage for the unprecedented levels of cooperation needed to deal with such a fundamental threat to the global commons. The world community has in the past displayed such a cooperative capacity, despite differential interests and capabilities, in relation to the public law of the oceans, the administration and safeguarding of Antarctica, and meeting the threat to the ozone shield posed by reliance on chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). [Montreal Protocol; LOS treaty; Ant treaty regime] These are positive and relevant precedents, but with far less at stake in each instance. [also for CWBW]

In each of these two instances, the structure of world order seems incapable of generating a satisfactory solution, at least without the transforming impact of an experienced catastrophe. The failure to address the challenge of nuclear weapons in a satisfactory manner has gone on now since 1945, but because no weapons have been used the challenge is not currently perceived as serious. Also, the absence of intense inter-state rivalry of the sort that existed during the Cold War also appears to reduce the threat, although the possibility that nuclear weapons might be used in an Indo-Pakistan or Middle Eastern war is greater than ever, and the new threat of acquisition and use by an extremist network has given rise to renewed interest in eliminating nuclear weaponry, reinforced by the Obama endorsement.
From a certain perspective, the modern world order system based on sovereign territorial states has demonstrated extraordinary resilience. Until the challenge of nuclear weaponry global problems were either trivial or addressed through the mechanisms of common practice, agreed rules and regimes, and hegemonic discipline. The main deficiencies were war and oppression, but until nuclear weapons neither threatened the system as distinct from its parts. And in relation to oppression, the normative energies associated with human rights, including the right of self-determination scored many impressive victories: decolonization, anti-apartheid, liberation of East Europe. What is distinctive about nuclear weaponry and global climate change is that the system of world order is at risk, and seemingly incapable of generating durable and ethically acceptable solutions. In the remainder of this essay I wish to explore whether this ‘seemingly incapable’

II. Deficiencies of World Order to Address Global Climate Change

There are several structural obstacles to adaptive policies that depend on significant cooperative action on the part of a large number of governments. With respect to climate change there is a firm consensus on the part of the scientific community that global warming is taking place as a result of human activities (especially, the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation) and that ever higher temperatures will have increasingly severe adverse effects, including rising sea levels, extreme weather events, increased incidence of drought and floods. Part of the consensus includes the recognition that the adaptation costs will be significantly lower if paid sooner rather than later, and also that the burden of these costs should be distributed equitably to take account of differential responsibilities for causing global warming and varying capabilities for addressing the challenge due to different stages of development and degrees of wealth. The question then arises why in light of this level of consensus has there been such difficulty in establishing a regime to address the challenge. As mentioned above the international system has demonstrated the capacity to act collectively for the global common good in a number of different settings. It was also argued that the failure with respect to nuclear weaponry can be explained by the degree to which the realist consensus that has controlled governmental thinking of leading states since World War II is skeptical of constraints on military power, and this skepticism is reinforced strongly in most states by a domestic military-industrial complex that would lose status and economic benefits if nuclear disarmament took place. Such resistance to disarmament is strongest in the United States, and is further inhibited by a refusal to embrace the moral argument in light of the American reliance on the weaponry in World War II.

In many respects, despite the absence of the security dimension, there are important similarities in our two test cases of world order capacity.
--United States. In both circumstances it is impossible to contemplate a solution that does not rest upon U.S. leadership. And in both instances the U.S. government, despite espousing lofty rhetorical commitments from time to time, has blocked progress toward more ambitious goals. The United States is not a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol, and even if the Bush presidency had signed the agreement, it is almost certain that it would never have been ratified. Similarly, in the leadup to the Copenhagen conference it seems likely that the U.S. leadership will express itself by opting for the lowest common denominator rather than pressing forward toward the sorts of policies that might give hope that reductions in greenhouse gas emissions will stabilize the global climate over the course of the next two decades. Aside from the usual reluctance to devote major resources to risks that are deemed to fall well beyond the electoral cycle of accountability, there are ideological and normative inhibition that push American leaders toward a regressive posture on climate change.

There exists a strong ideological opposition in the United States to increased government regulation and spending so as to influence market behavior. With respect to climate change there is a legislative effort of questionable value to adopt a ‘cap and trade’ approach, which is insufficient to avoid “the worst impacts of climate change.” According to calculations, parties to the Kyoto Protocol are expected to pledge steps that “are expected to result in aggregate emissions reductions of 16-23% below 1990 by 2020.” The inclusion of the American legislative commitment means “the aggregate reductions would fall to 10-23% in one estimate, and 11-18% in another.” This is not an encouraging prospect as it is widely believed that “[i]f the worst impacts of climate change are to be avoided, stabilization levels of of 450ppm CO₂ eq and a reduction target of 25-45%” need to be adopted by the developed countries. [Lavanya Rajanani, “The ‘Cloud’ over the Climate Negotiations From Bangkok to Copenhagen and Beyond,” CPR Climate Brief, Center for Policy Research, Oct. 2009, 4.] The best that can be hoped for at present is that the U.S. Government can be pulled along to uphold a Copenhagen consensus, but that will only be possible if the consensus scales back its approach to emission reductions to a point where they fall below stabilization requirements, even as defined by 1990 emission levels. And then, assuming the American delegation goes along, there is still a high risk that Congress will resist the obligations, and the public will support such a regressive reaction.

This ideological opposition to managing the market for the public good expresses, in part, a lingering optimism that the alleged risks will be addressed down the line by technological fixes that obviate any need for economic sacrifices. It is an opposite turn of mind to that embodied in ‘the precautionary principle,’ arguing that it is better to defer responses because of faith in technological rescues, and a corresponding distrust of calls for burdensome action now that is based on pessimistic trend analysis. The state of the American economy will also work against a positive role for the United States in the climate change policymaking dynamic—high unemployment, trade and budgetary deficits, a falling dollar, faltering competitiveness all add to the pressure to minimize any kind of regulatory burden on
the American economy. These elements are present in other developed countries but with somewhat less ideological reinforcement, although the rightwards drift in Europe suggests that despite European positive leadership at Kyoto, and generally, there may be a growing readiness to go along with American minimalism.

---Statism: In distinct ways, the persistence of the Westphalian system of sovereign states, greatly complicates the formation of effective responses to global policy challenges requiring large scale adjustments in thought, action, and allocation of resources. An essential feature of this world order arrangement is the dominance of the part in relation to the whole, which gives rise to state-centric attitudes toward problem-solving. Such circumstances are aggravated by an unwillingness to govern external behavior relating to vital security and economic interests by deference to either considerations of law or ethics. That is, there is little confidence in legal constraints and a limited willingness to subordinate national interests to the wider claims of international law or international morality. This posture is exhibited in part by the prevalence of the realist consensus in governmental circles, which is identified by its skepticism about the relevance of ethical and legal perspectives in the formation of foreign policy. This skepticism is heightened in the American case by a tradition of ‘exceptionalism’ that has been extended since 1945, and even more so since 1989, by an imperial or hegemonic role.

The problems associated with seeking a normatively acceptable approach to climate change is rendered far more difficult by the multiple dimensions of unevenness that characterizes the 195 or so states that currently exist. This unevenness relates to both objective conditions and to perceptions, and helps explain a variety of views as to what course of action is rational and equitable. Unevenness inevitably raises problems of both distributive and corrective justice, involving differentiating between present capabilities and emission levels, and vastly unequal past responsibilities for the global buildup of CO₂. How should this unevenness be reflected in global arrangements? Who decides?

This unevenness is probably greatest in relation to the least developed low lying island states that are confronted by near term survival threats. From their perspective, there is an immediate condition of urgency that would justify a far higher level of worldwide reduction of emission levels than seems rational and politically feasible for many of the richer and larger states, including especially the United States and much of Europe. The countries less immediately and seriously threatened, are more tempted to postpone large scale adjustment burdens in the hope that technological innovations will lower the costs of accommodation. If there existed a more centralized form of global governance then adjustments would be made on a priority basis to protect those most vulnerable geographic spaces in the world. The Washington response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 revealed that even centralized national governments fail to protect those harmed by environmental disasters, failures that appear to reflect the class and race identities of the principal victims.
Of course, states do cooperate to promote common interests, and have displayed some willingness to accommodate various aspects of unevenness. The Law of the Seas Treaty made special provisions for landlocked countries to ensure outlets to the ocean. The Montreal Protocol on Ozone subsidized the phasing out of CFCs by developing countries. The Antarctica Treaty overlooked different levels of sovereign occupation to reach an overarching agreement establishing a protective regime. In all of these instances, national interests were compromised to a certain extent to serve wider collective interests, but in each instance there was no encroachment on the security role of the state or any economic burden that would diminish the standard of living in richer countries.

**Presentism**: A predisposition in favor of the present as over against the future in deeply embedded in the cultural outlook of the developed countries. This outlook reflects partly the belief that technology has often in the past emerged to reduce the seemingly menacing prospects projected onto the future. Perhaps the most relevant example is the dire Malthusian predictions associated with the alleged negative interplay of arithmetic growth in food supply as compared to geometric growth in the population. More recently, in the 1970s, a wave of neo-Malthusian alarmism swept across modern industrial society. [Limits to Growth; Commoner; Falk] There remain a variety of climate change skeptics who contend that the challenge is exaggerated, and that accommodation efforts should be moderated. [see fictionalized book by Michael Crichton, *Fear*; ]

This presentist bias is neglectful of the prospects of future generations. [E. B. Weiss, *In Fairness to Future Generations*] It does not with very few exceptions view the present as having responsibilities toward the future. As a result the short time horizons associated with political accountability are not offset in situations such as exist for climate change where periods of 20-100 years should be treated as relevant for the formation of global public policy. In other words, deficient recognition of human solidarity relate to *time* as a result of presentism as well as pertain to *space* due to political fragmentation (that is, statism). [Held, ‘communities of fate’]

---**Ideology**: There are certain reinforcing elements embedded in the dominant ideological outlook, especially associated with market-driven economic globalization and state-centric nationalism. The ascendancy of historically contingent neo-liberal economic policy means that governmental policy is guided by special interest groups and by degrees of profitability rather than by global public interests or by taking into account the perspectives of human solidarity. Only if a very long-run perspective informs policy and decisions would it be possible to take due account of global warming pressures. This is not likely to happen until tangible harm for richer countries occurs on a massive scale. One effect of this type of globalization is to outsource production and investment to minimize costs and maximize profits, which again places a premium on keeping wages low and on avoiding expensive regulation for the public good. That is, other things being equal the primacy of market criteria for policymakers works against serving the global.
public interest in the manner that will address the challenge of global climate change.

Similarly, the strength of nationalism implies a reluctance to bear burdens for the wellbeing of those beyond territorial boundaries. It provides an emotive reinforcement to statism, which could in theory produce a political culture informed by a Buddhist ethos of universal compassion. [Hans Kung’s form of universal ethical minimalism] Statism historically has nurtured nationalism as a basis of loyalty, and has viewed the outsider as an ‘alien,’ if not an ‘enemy.’ The kind of political culture most conducive to meeting global scale challenges of large magnitude would produce a far better balance between the selfish pursuit of nationalist goals and the more empathetic embrace premised on both human solidarity and taking the suffering (present, past, and future) of all humans seriously. [Falk on redress of historic grievances; Baxi on suffering]

III. Reform and Transformation in Response to Global Scale Challenges

Part of the world order dilemma posed by global scale challenges of large magnitude can be expressed as a gap between what is feasible and what is necessary. For reasons set forth in the prior section the limits of feasible reform to take account of regional and global public interests preclude adaptive responses when the adjustments encroach on the militarist domain of national security, on the consumptive habits of society, and on the profit margins of corporations and financial institutions. There are no exceptions to this generalization about reform in the Westphalia era of world order. It might appear that the establishment of the United Nations, and before it the League of Nations, were exceptions, but the lofty goals set for such innovations were never matched by real transfers of power, authority, and resources that might have challenged the control of sovereign states over the use of force as legally mandated by the UN Charter. [the Nuremberg experiment is a further indication, including its extension to weak states; similarly with disarmament gestures. Barnet, Who Wants Disarmament?; Hedley Bull’s critique of the Grotian Tradition is relevant here.] Indeed, the grant of a veto power to the permanent members of the Security Council and the geopolitical insulation of the dominant states from international accountability confirms the substantial continuity of this inability to institute global scale reforms that go beyond the boundaries of feasibility as set by the realist consensus. This inter-governmental inability is a compound of statism, neoliberal capitalism, hegemonic geopolitics, presentism, militarism, and nationalism.

The reformist potentiality that does exist, involves pragmatic and small-scale global adjustments that can be managed, reflecting a genuine, if weak, relevance of global public interests and human solidarity. For instance, the responses to natural disasters caused tsunamis, hurricanes, and earthquakes elicit tangible empathetic responses. Managing the war system by prohibitions on certain weapons systems (biological and chemical weapons) or by restricting the size of nuclear weapons arsenals are illustrative of feasible undertakings. When President Obama recently
articulated a vision of a world without nuclear weapons he signaled its utopian (that is, non-feasible) character by situating the attainment of such goals as beyond his lifetime, but still generated some angry realist backlash who thought, perhaps, that he might be seriously (and in their view dangerously), embracing a transformative political project that was responsive to his understanding of what was necessary (and desirable). [Falk on feasibility, necessity, and desirability] In the environmental area, certain regional anti-pollution and conservation regimes have been effective because the economic costs have been either isolated to specific sectors of the economy without sufficient leverage (e.g. commercial whaling) or not so burdensome as to generate a strong political backlash (e.g. phasing out of CFCs).

Climate change resembles nuclear weaponry to the extent that it is difficult to deny that risks of severe harm to the wellbeing of all peoples and societies, including those that are rich and powerful, are at stake. In this regard, there is a raised consciousness about this challenge that exerts pressure on governments to act. This pressure is augmented by transnational civil society actors that are motivated by considerations of necessity, and to varying degrees, of desire. In this regard, the mobilization of societal pressure is unlikely to push the inter-governmental framework to adopt policies that exceed prevailing ideas as to the limits of feasibility, including what the citizenry in rich countries, especially the United States, is prepared to accept. Sadly, George H.W. Bush was probably accurately reflecting political constraints when he declared on the eve of the Earth Summit in 1992 that ‘the American way of life is not negotiable.’ Politicians are highly unlikely to survive if they ignore these limits, and for this reason, can be expected not to push for emission reductions that are widely perceived as not feasible. Almost certainly, the Copenhagen outcome will fall short of reduction restrictions and funding arrangements that correspond to the scientific consensus that pertains to doing what is necessary to stabilize CO₂ levels by 2030 or so. It is true that there are subjective variations as to the identification of the spectrum of feasible that accounts for debates among reformers, and as to the spectrum of necessity, which explains degrees of disappointment with governmental responses.

What can be anticipated, then, is a certain reformist satisfaction if Copenhagen produces agreements that are inclusively endorsed, and do move toward imposing emission reductions on countries differentiated by wealth and stage of development, by establishing a fund to subsidize efforts to slow the rate of deforestation in developing countries, and a fund to provide the poorest and least developed countries with assistance in their efforts to deal with the challenges associated with climate change. At the same time, depending on whether these reformist efforts are regarded as falling at the upper or lower end of the spectrum of feasibility, there is likely to be expressions of disappointment and anger among civil society actors convinced that what has been agreed upon falls short of what it is necessary to do. Whether this disappointment will turn in the passive directions of despair or the more activist directions of a global movement on behalf of a more robust and equitable set of responses to the challenge of global climate change remains uncertain.
There is also the question of what is desirable, which both merges with the politics of feasibility and necessity, and gives rise to distinct additional issues. The merger results from the need for global or near global participation to achieve the managerial control that feasible reform entails. This was evident in the structuring of emission reduction obligations contained in the Kyoto Protocol, and will again be evident in the arrangements resulting from Copenhagen. Putting this in world order terms, it means that statism and nationalism gives way to considerations of equity so as to secure voluntary participation; without differentiating degrees of burden poorer and less developed countries would not participate. The perspectives of necessity are not directly responsive to considerations of global justice so much as preoccupied with building support for solutions that solve the underlying problem, which may or may not rely on adding incentives for the poorer societies to participate more fully, and could be prepared to adopt coercive or even authoritarian and hegemonic approaches given their priorities. [see Garrett Hardin on ‘Lifeboat Ethics’] Again the nuclear weapons analogy seems illuminating, given the control choice shifting from disarmament to nonproliferation thereby accepting a coercive approach to risk management, although conceding agency to hegemonic governments. This view of necessity in the nuclear weapons context overlaps with considerations of feasibility. For climate change at some future point, the managerial imperatives of feasibility might merge with the transformative claims of necessity, leading to centrally mandated and enforced emission limits that may or may not be sensitive to considerations of equity.

One of the features of adaptive dynamics within a Westphalian framework is the degree to which considerations of equity are understood in statist terms. Whether the particular state allocates burdens equitably is treated as a matter for national policy. Past experience with respect to environmental regulation suggests that the poor and marginal are made to bear disproportionate burdens and risks as for example with respect to the location of toxic waste disposal sites. [see environmental justice literature, especially Jonas Ebbesson and Phoebe Okawa, eds., Environmental Law and Justice in Context (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2009)] The protection of such human security interests will depend mainly on societal vigilance and activism.

IV. A Concluding Comment

The argument of this article has been that the challenge of global climate change will not be effectively addressed by the response of governments seeking to negotiate an agreement that will stabilize the levels of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere at sustainable levels. As a result, human societies around the world will suffer intensifying harmful effects from continuing emissions, and the various consequences of global warming. Inter-governmental efforts to fashion a response have been continuing for more than a decade, and have been abetted by citizen and NGO activism. [e.g. Al Gore, An Inconvenient Truth; Greenpeace] This degree of raised consciousness may induce some extension of the horizon of feasibility with
respect to controlling emissions, subsidizing forest maintenance, and financing climate change initiatives in the poorest countries, but it will not approach the minimal goal as specified by considerations of necessity—stabilization levels of 450ppm CO\textsubscript{2} and reduction targets of between 25-40% for the 37 most developed countries.

In the past, most social adjustment within and between societies has been a result of struggles from below. Reflecting on the period since World War II, decolonization, the anti-apartheid movement, the civil rights movement, and the rise of human rights have succeeded against the odds because of mounting symbolic pressures based on law and morality on governmental actors. I would regard these various struggles as ‘legitimacy wars’ that have shown the limits of coercive dominance, demonstrating that nonviolence and resistance, even if weaker in terms of military capabilities, can often, but not always be defeated. So far, the anti-nuclear movement has won the legitimacy war without being able to reshape policy on the weaponry. Similarly, Tibet has prevailed in its legitimacy war with China, and yet seems unlikely to gain the benefits of self-determination. At present, the Palestinians are winning the legitimacy war being waged against Israel, but it is unclear whether it will yield corresponding political results in terms of Palestinian self-determination in either one state or two.

When it comes to climate change this background is certainly relevant, but there are other issues at stake as well. Other pressing societal problems make it difficult to focus sufficient mass energies on the climate change agenda either from the perspective of necessity or justice. Presentism, statism, and nationalism make it particularly difficult to form a transnational consensus in global civil society as to how best to proceed. Also the forces of market, geopolitical, and class opposition, strengthened by a generally supportive mainstream media, make it seem impossible to overcome current dispositions to limit adjustments to the realm of the feasible.

In short, as far ahead as can be envisaged, it appears impossible to find an acceptable response to the global climate change challenge. Perhaps, reform will lengthen the time interval available for necessary adjustments. One daunting element is ignorance as to the precise location of thresholds of irreversibility, which if once crossed, stabilization of carbon levels is either impossible or radically burdensome. At the same time, the unexpected happy endings of legitimacy wars over the course of the last 75 years makes it rational to align with ‘a politics of impossibility,’ or put differently, to pursue what amounts to ‘a necessary utopia.’ It is necessary for the arguments made earlier as to carbon levels that do not generate global warming of a sort that causes severe harm to human and societal wellbeing. It is utopian because there seems to be no path of action that will lead from the here of the present to the desired outcome in the future. [Falk, essay on ‘necessary utopianism]