

Superpower struggles & US-China Trade War

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# VISION

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The Silent  
Struggle

*The front cover was designed by Elizabeth Metzger.*

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# Foreword

Anyone reading the news these days will find a litany of woes, a litany of woes which desperately needs to be distilled to yield clarity. *Vision* strives to do just this: to appreciate the complex and volatile nature of current world events.

We do not shy away from tackling the most pressing topics of today's world: economics, environment, security, law and institutions, politics and society, and the national policies of many countries. More than ever, we need to have perceptive analyses and explain not just the causes and effects but also the local, regional, and international implications.

For centuries, the world has experienced the inexorable march of globalization, a globalization which has been welcomed as a means of lifting millions out of poverty by the invisible hand of Adam Smith, a globalization which has spurred on speeches charged with vitriolic and populist rhetoric and exposed the tension not only within countries but also amongst them.

In 2018, we have seen the increased geopolitical tension between China and the United States over issues such as North Korea and trade. While it is recognised that China is a rising power, the United States is presently a beacon of the world economy, and with this status, it seems poised to be more assertive with China and other countries — even its own allies — on long-standing, contentious issues, like trade and bilateral imbalances. This revisionist approach is counterproductive for the maintenance of the post-war liberal international order and may not last as long as President Trump may like it to, as we explore in this issue.

Within the United States itself, we have witnessed the spectacle that has been made of Facebook and its role in protecting the data of users (or lack thereof). The Cambridge Analytica scandal has unleashed a wave of increased scrutiny on data protection and privacy, not only by the general populace but also by both sides of the aisle in Congress. The General Data Protection Regulation implemented by the European Union in May 2018 demonstrates the growing popularity and need for privacy.

Social media is not only at a pivotal stage of its development in the way data is protected and stored,

it also has to grapple with the rise of fake news, which has now become an established reality. One of our essayists explores this and, from a personal perspective, answers the question, “How do we live with the intrusion and consequences of fake news?”

While technology introduces new complications, it can also open up promising solutions. This issue takes a look at the problem of food insecurity and possible solutions which leverage the advancement of technology. 5 principles which developing countries should adopt to tackle the problem are evaluated. Food insecurity typically manifests itself in unstable regions with ongoing wars. So, we discuss the political, social, and humanitarian situations in Yemen and South Sudan as well and propose promising solutions to achieve the currently elusive objectives of reintegration and post-conflict resolution in the region.

The challenges the world is facing is numerous, varied, and dynamic. Even in the solutions our contributors propose for institutions of the world, that impetus, ideology, and ignorance are formidable obstacles to any workable solution is recognized. Nevertheless, we seek to provoke thought and debate by pointing out the unsettling realities of where our international efforts fall short. This magazine does much more than inform readers.

Here, in the next few pages, is a collection of essays we have written. Within each essay lies profound insights strengthened by research and astute observations. With great breadth and depth, is this not reassuring? These pages serve to grant clarity to international affairs.

Welcome to *Vision*.

— Fredric Kong, Editor

# Superpower struggle

## De-escalation of nuclear tension on the Korean peninsula

**Yanhe Xuan**

In 1952, early development of nuclear energy in North Korea first began with the establishment of the Atomic Energy Research Institute together with the first Academy of Sciences. The program soon took off as the DPRK gained the support of the Soviet Union and both nations agreed to develop peaceful atomic energy with the construction of the Yongbyon Nuclear research centre. However, then Korean leader Kim-Il Sung took over control of the nuclear program and shifted its focus towards nuclear weapon development.

Over several decades, North Korea developed on their nuclear weapons with its newfound facilities and some Soviet support. The nation signed its first treaty on the development of nuclear weapons in 1985 with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Following the withdrawal of American nuclear weapons from South Korea (1991), both Koreas agreed to sign the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula which banned the creation and possession of nuclear weaponry. Despite the many denuclearization mechanisms in place, the DPRK's nuclear development continued through the 1990s with unsuccessful attempts of the IAEA (UN International Atomic Energy Agency) and UN to properly assess and verify their nuclear activities.

Later on, despite the establishment Agreed Framework with help from the US, all efforts ultimately failed to permanently halt North Korea's plutonium program. Following attempts (including trade sanctions and attempts of aid) to force North Korea to follow appropriate protocol also failed as the nation began reprocessing and extracting nuclear fuel rods for nuclear testing. In fact, it was reported that by late 2011, construction had been completed for a uranium enrichment facility in in Yongbyon. With

Kim Jong Un's ascension to power, the DPRK's nuclear program was again accelerated. By 2016, the regime had announced its first successful test of a thermonuclear device. Despite the recent Singapore summit this year where American President Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un agreed to work towards "complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula", satellite imagery of North Korea seems to suggest that there has been continued expansion of the Yongbyon Nuclear facility to improve their nuclear arsenal with no end in sight.

If looking at the impact of the crisis on North Korea itself, we can see that countless international sanctions have been placed upon the regime due to its expansion of its nuclear capabilities as well as its army and artillery forces. Furthermore, almost of a third of the national GDP is concentrated in military expenditure. As a result, it has put huge economic distress on an already stagnant economy leading to regular food shortages and famine reminiscent of those in the 1940s where over 3.5 million North Koreans were starved to death.

In addition, the implications of the DPRK's nuclear arsenal have been very significant not just in its surrounding territory but has also become an international issue in recent decades. From the point of view of the US, North Korea's nuclear crisis is a critical security issue that poses a threat to surrounding nations in Asia and even the Middle East. The regime's decision to pursue nuclear diplomacy could potentially trigger other nations such as Japan or South Korea to establish their own nuclear programs. In this sense, it puts into question the safety and stability of nations within this region. It could kickstart a regional nuclear arms race with the involvement of already nuclear nations like Russia, India and Pakistan.

Overall, this ripple effect would serve to increase the proliferation of nuclear weapons around the world. Ultimately, the successful de-escalation of nuclear tension on the Korean Peninsula is of paramount importance to prevent numerous economic, social and political issues that would ensue.

## Trump's deal with North Korea: feasible – or a scam?

**Larrissa Leung**

Although history is dotted with attempts to de-escalate North Korea through the efforts of the United Nations, the United National Security Council has seen another effort spearheaded by United States Ambassador Nikki Haley of words reflecting a more volatile tension between the Supreme Leader of DPRK Kim Jong-Un and President Trump. The implications extend not only to the personal chemistry between both leaders but also to the geopolitical balance in the Pacific region, where allies of U.S. are increasingly feeling powerless. It should be no wonder that delegates in the United Nations have been intensely following developments in the stuttering negotiations.

Supporters of Donald Trump may see the Summit as an acceptable way to see that a foreign policy would work with Trump's 'tough-man' strategy. Yet, his sceptics hold a diametrically opposite perspective: such an unprecedented summit is more a horrifying gamble than can be afforded by the fragile nature of the situation. The president preceded by many years of cautious, fragile diplomacy and the 'strategic patience' of the Obama administration, Trump has completely overturned the continuity of the diplomatic bureaucracy's workings. With many years of sanctions and bribes, for every single deal that was reached with the North Koreans pocketing aid, at its best, this strategy has managed to slow down North Korea's quest to a bomb by a few years.

However, Kim remains ambiguous about the way in which he will deliver his promise of getting rid of his nuclear armaments and continues to do so to this day. Trump continues to display this attitude, but the loose, free-wheeling format appeared to render the pact signed by Trump and Kim as a prescription for short-changing South Korea's national security.

In conclusion, in spite of the fact that Trump's deal with North Korea is in fact 'promising of de-nuclearization', on the other hand, we should definitely be aware of the fact that years of strategic planning has in fact delayed a potential release of a nuclear bomb.

## The Arms Race in the Arctic Circle

**Yanhe Xuan**

In recent decades, the thawing of the Arctic shelf has led to increased economic political opportunities present within the Arctic circle, attracting the attention of numerous arctic nations. It has become especially apparent to current members of the now-established arctic council including: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. Almost all of said nations have made territorial claims within this zone resulting in greater tension between said parties. In particular, Russia's militarisation of its share of the arctic circle has aroused uncertainty between other involved nations. The Arctic council itself has facilitated several agreements to foster collaboration between nations, including agreements concerning cooperation in aeronautical and maritime search/rescue, cooperation on marine oil pollution preparedness and response, as well as enhancing international arctic cooperation. Furthermore, the UNCLOS (UN Convention of the Law of the Sea) established in 1982 aimed to set international standards on each country's EEZs (Exclusive Economic Zones) and continental shelf. This clearer delineation would in turn reduce the number of territorial disputes over water territories and prevent potential conflict.

However, it has ultimately been unsuccessful in curbing tensions, as nations continue with territorial claims, some of which are overlapping. Furthermore, further unregulated action within the Arctic could lead to serious environmental and social damages such as further destruction of the Arctic icecap, pollution of surrounding habitats, and displacement of indigenous peoples. The AEPS (Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy), though, which was established as a subsidiary of the Council could reduce the extent of these issues.

These challenges faced in the Arctic circle share certain similarities with the Proposed Prevention of an Arms Race in Space Treaty (PAROS Treaty - Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space). The Treaty has adopted measures to prevent the weaponisation of outer space including banning the testing of nuclear weapons (Partial Test Ban Treaty). The establishment of CLCS (Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf), like what has been

done for outer space, which allows any signatory state of UNCLOS to ratify their continental shelf and efforts by the DISEC (Disarmament and International Security Committee) which include the passing of the Antarctic Treaty are possible solutions. In both cases, the topic concerns a zone which should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

Members of the Arctic Council and the international community should seek to aid in resolving the ongoing geopolitical conflict. Promoting disarmament and non-proliferation within the Arctic Circle (possible establishment as a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone) and strengthen existing international law (and their enforcement) concerning the extent of arctic borders and regulations of both economic and military activity maintaining sustainable development. In addition, the fostering of scientific cooperation between Arctic nations in polar research is also vital in maintaining closer ties between nations with highly conflicting interests.

The most worrying aspect of the Arctic Council currently is its lack of focussed efforts regulating militarisation and the non-binding nature of their decisions. However, it is still seen as the most important forum for international cooperation on Arctic issues. It is vital that no Arctic nations be excluded from this process of discussion to prevent decision-making becoming dominated by a select few nations to serve their own interests. Measures should also be put in place to secure the compliance of nations on decisions made in the council (through possible penalties or incentives imposed). Strengthening of the existing CLCS or provision of new international regulations should be established to maintain permanent, non-disputable EEZs and continental shelves of each arctic nation and disincentivise the need for territorial disputes. It is also vital to work towards establishing the Arctic Circle as NWFZ (Nuclear Weapon Free Zone) and pass regulations prohibiting the development or implementation of nuclear weaponry in said zone and resorting to less destructive military measures to deter outward aggression from neighbouring nations.

# Focus: US - China Trade War

**Fredric Kong**

*This is an exploratory article laying out and applying some of the perspectives of international political economy to a case study of the current US – China Trade War.*

## Summary

- Free trade delivers more than just economic efficiency
- Nations view the actions of others through a relativistic perspective, and perception is key to negotiations
- Trade results in redistribution, which is a formidable political force
- The US – Chinese trade war is not just about bilateral trade imbalances but also about China's industrial policies and state capitalism
- With strong fundamentals, the US can afford to use this economic leverage, but the slowing world economy will eventually close this window of opportunity
- Great assiduity by both sides is needed to prevent further escalation

## Free trade – only good?

Free trade – surely, the absolute gains from such an international arrangement should be enough to convince nation states to co-operate. Such an arrangement would maximise economic efficiency and allow the pursuit of wealth, which, unlike power, is an end to itself. With an increase in welfare for its citizens, nation states would derive greater political legitimacy and support too. Then, why is the US levying tariffs on China despite the obvious benefits trade holds for both sides?

## Power politics and relativistic worldviews

Hans J. Morgenthau argued for a “power politics” position in which state actors must think and act in terms of power and must do whatever it takes to achieve the national interests of the state. To achieve these national interests, the state would

need to possess national sovereignty, meaning that the state can, given the circumstances, make the final decision, and the state would need to consider the capabilities of other countries as well. This relativistic worldview, which states may possess, makes the absolute gains of free trade questionable. If the absolute gains were distributed unequally, meaning if some states had higher gains, this would itself skew the power dynamics amongst states; some states would benefit, but this would be at the dear expense of others. Indeed, the absolute gains of free trade can come in many forms, including resources, technologies, and wealth. Wealth directly influences power, because the economic resources of a state very much determine its military force through, most evidently, funding. A state which has an abundance of wealth will not only enjoy greater military power but also, even without investment in its military capabilities, be able to have greater soft power, as opposed to hard power, through economic allure.

## Redistributive effects of trade

Just as there is the creation or expansion of relative differences between nation states in terms of wealth, and thus power, through trade, there is also the inevitability of redistribution within the population of a state engaged in free trade. Particularly in states with plurality rule, where seats are determined by electoral districts, as opposed to states with proportional representation, in which legislative seats are apportioned among parties according to the proportion of votes they receive, local and regional interests have a greater influence (Hiscox 76-93). This means that even if both countries are benefitting from trade, as China and the US are, if the redistribution effects of trade are large enough, it may be the case that the views of the disadvantaged group of people manifest themselves in protectionist measures. The country in which this happens will likely be under plurality rule, as it is in the case of the trade war.

The two principle theories to describe these distributional effects are the Heckscher-Ohlin model and the specific factors model. In the Heckscher-Ohlin model, states with a comparative advantage in producing a good due to endowment will tend to export goods which are intensive in the endowment. If a state possesses a lot of capital but little labour, it will be the case that they export capital-intensive goods, such as automobiles and machines, while importing



labour-intensive goods, like textiles. This type of specialization is what makes states benefit when they engage in trade. The specific factors model was built on the Stolper-Samuelson theory, which modelled the likely effects of trade on the real incomes of different sets of individuals within any economy. For states which tended to export capital-intensive goods, we should find that the real incomes of owners of capital to increase, as there is more demand. In contrast, if the same state imported labour-intensive goods, then owners of labour will have their profits depressed. Adding the politics into the mix, it follows that owners of capital will herald free trade, while owners of labour will rail against trade and instead advocate protectionism. However, the observation that workers and owners of the same industry sometimes both advocated for the same trade policy – either free trade or protectionism – cast the Stolper-Samuelson theory into doubt, as workers together constituted labour, while owners collectively constituted the owners of capital, and so the export of goods intensive in one factor of production would favour one set of individuals at the expense of the other. This led to the specific factors model, where there was less mobility of labour, land, or capital. The fates of the individuals were tied to the fate of their industries, and so some people may look to trade as a threat to their employment. More importantly, people also look to others to judge their wellbeing; as income inequality rises, and while some regions are economically stagnating, these perceptions become more acute. Through the mechanism of politics, we could then reasonably expect both the owners and workers of industries to lobby the government over the issue of trade. Which direction the foreign economic policy finally takes can be expected to reflect the internal forces within the state and/or within the government.

When we compare the United States with China, we can reasonably assert that China has more labour-intensive goods, while the United States produces more capital-intensive goods. This should not be surprising, as the rapid economic growth China experienced was very much driven by the cheap cost of labour and thus the great volumes of exports. Following from this, the industries which produce the same labour-intensive goods China exports will be affected and more likely to advocate protectionist measures. As China is bent on moving towards more capital-intensive approaches in manufacturing (Wübbecke 6), there will be a stronger protectionist wave. Indeed, this protectionist force is also largely

responsible for the election of Trump himself, as Trump gained the most support from the Rust Belt region, where manufacturing has been declining (Longworth). That Trump should be enacting policies which seem bent on winding the clock back on the redistributive effects of trade suggests that his electoral core is urging him on in that direction.

To illustrate the magnitude of the redistribution which comes with free trade, it is necessary to return to the economist's toolbox of empirics and data. It has been found that "in an economy like the United States, where average tariffs are below 5 percent at 1.7% ("Tariff Rate"), a move to complete free trade would "reshuffle more than \$50 of income among different groups for each dollar of efficiency" (Rodrik 57). Rodrik goes on to explain that the "major reason the redistribution-to-efficiency-gains ratio is so high is that tariffs are so low to begin with in today's economy. Even for China, the trade-weighted average tariff rate has been decreasing and is at 3.5% ("Tariff Rate"). While this suggests that as there are few benefits to be gained by increasing or decreasing tariffs a little, the threat of the tariffs Trump is imposing on China is significant, as the tariffs cover approximately 40% of US imports from China, using numbers from 2017 (U.S. Census Bureau), and the tariffs are quite high. The diplomatic and political possibility of retaliation, which has been realized, makes the tariffs more threatening.

### **Trade war not just about trade**

The trade war between China and the US is not just a political eruption, however. It is also about long-standing issues with China about surplus, technology superiority, and the greater distribution of power between the two states. The surplus China has been running in its trade with the United States is unsurprising. Not only is the US not exporting much in general (it runs a deficit of \$54 billion with the world), China is a thriving exporter of manufactures. As Chinese exports need to be bought with money, China accumulates US dollars as a result of its trade surplus. What many Chinese corporations have been doing is engaging in foreign direct investment with these US dollars. This investment gives Chinese firms ownership of US assets on US soil. Interestingly, one should note that the US is the largest destination for Chinese FDI in the world at \$171.04 billion (China Power Team), and this is despite the fact that as US possesses a lot of capital, its

returns on capital are relatively low and the fact that the US has broken up many potential mergers in the name of national security. These actions in the name of national security have prevented the takeover bid by Broadcom of the chip-making company Qualcomm, which would have been the largest in tech history at \$130 billion, and the acquisition of Xcerra, a provider of equipment for testing computer chips and circuit boards, by a Chinese company. These controls cannot be motivated by economic inefficiency. Instead, a common theme in these decisions is the threat to “national security” (“Presidential Order”). Why should this be the case?

It seems likely that the US is concerned about the possibility of China’s technological ascendancy through not only its own domestic initiatives but also its acquisition of technology and intellectual property through merging with these firms in high-tech industries. The contribution of China’s industrial policy and system of state capitalism to this formidable combination is worrying the US for two reasons: 1) the close collaboration between the state and state-owned enterprises, which made up some 70% of FDI outflows from China, could mean that these commercial investments are driven by Beijing, and 2) the subsidies given to the firms gives them an unfair advantage over US firms. The protection of national interests, like maintaining the exclusivity of US technologies and protesting unfair advantages given to the competitors of US firms, is a brilliant manifestation of the relativity inherent in foreign policy calculations. If China were to be entirely superior in terms of technology, it would be at the expense of America. The national strategy “Made in China 2025 is shaping up to be the central villain, the real existential threat to U.S. technological leadership” (Laskai). With the ascendancy of China in motions, Layne argues that America’s hegemonic powers are diminishing (Layne 89-91). By waging a trade war, Trump wants to put many of these Chinese actions and policies on the negotiating table. Once on the table, the US can try to establish an agreement in which China concedes some of its successful policies.

At the same time, by disrupting, or making more difficult, China’s race to technological superiority, any concession reached between the US and China will temporarily set back China’s migration up the value chain. The Made in China 2025 initiative is especially necessary when the cost of labour in China is increasing and when countries such as Vietnam and

Indonesia are increasingly sites of production for labour-intensive goods. This policy is justified in terms of trying to mitigate any risk of the social and political problems which arise from unemployment. Should China concede to some of the US’ demands, China will be less effective in its pursuit of the Made in China 2025 initiative. This will potentially create structural unemployment, as the migration up the value chain is stalled, and economic growth slows. In essence, it is possible that domestic pressures increase as a result of slower economic growth and higher unemployment, but this rests on the assumption that China compromises on terms unfavourable to itself.

### **Perception**

This possibility is extremely unlikely, however, due to the nature of the trade war and the likely response of China. America is viewed as the initiators of the tariffs. There is diminishing sympathy for such unilateral US actions, as they have harmed and divided the US’ allies. The initial decision to impose steel and aluminium tariffs included key US allies, such as Australia, Japan, and Germany. This sent signals detrimental to the objectives of punishing the unfair trade practices of China (Goodman and Ratner). That there is little explicit international support for the tariffs allows the event to be harnessed and weaponized so that America is portrayed as trying to contain a rightfully rising China. Despite whatever views the middle class in China may have of the leadership, this portrayal may result in greater support for the leadership and malice towards the US (Li). This type of political support would encourage the leadership to embrace a more non-compromising and hard-line approach to negotiations. Even without this increased political support, it is unlikely that China will sacrifice its strategic direction. Given the confident declaration of the Made in China 2025 initiative, the political ambition of the nation has been established. To meet these ambitious goals where domestic technical ability is most lacking requires a large extent of technology transfer, which “include technology spill-overs from inward-directed investments into China by foreign companies, cooperation with foreign companies and recruitment of foreign R&D personnel” as well as technology-seeking outbound investment and the construction of R&D centres (Wübbecke et al. 41). Conceding in a significant manner would signal to the world that one of

China's weaknesses is economic, but more importantly, it would be a diplomatic humiliation for one state to bow to another's demands at the expense of its own future direction. This simply could not be stomached by the Chinese leadership nor by any other country exogenously given same capacity as China, because the perception and reputation of the nation would be fundamentally altered.

How a diplomat portrays the capabilities of their respective states is the art of diplomacy. Regardless of the deliberateness in his actions, Trump has demonstrated, through his actions, a willingness to accept small political concessions in order to claim a victory. Many times, he has retreated into the background before lunging at another target as part of his foreign policy. In the case of North Korea, with its ballistic missiles theoretically capable of targeting most of continental US, Trump was quick and sharp with his rhetoric. After the Singapore summit, though, America no longer pursued the question of North Korea as vigorously and instead accepted the pledge to conduct an internationally verified shutdown of nuclear activities at Yongbyon if the United States takes unspecified "corresponding measures," the dismantling of a missile launch site, and the detonation of some entrances at Punggye-ri (Snyder). The lull in diplomatic negotiations has led to the abrupt cancellation of negotiations (Brewer) and a signal that North Korea is returning to the simultaneous development of its economic and nuclear objectives (Carlin). Increasingly, the diplomatic sprint towards North Korean denuclearization has turned into a crawl (Brewer). Yet, "by earning symbolic and politically salient concessions, Trump could minimize short-term risks to U.S. markets while claiming that he alone finally stood up..." (Ratner). While this may point to an inability to maintain its achievements in the long run, it certainly provides states with the impression that the US is willing to throw its weight around in order to extract concessions to its favour. China has been keenly observing the behaviour of Trump in order to inform the responses to his actions. As Trump is perceived as seeking foreign policy victories for domestic political support, then China needs only to promise big and vague to buy time and wait out the (temporary) increased economic leverage of which America has found itself in possession.

### **(Temporary) economic leverage of the US**

With an economy that is growing while the rest of the world's economy has made smaller progress, the US can afford to use its economic leverage to achieve its national interests in the short run. When it imposes tariffs on China, it is thus doing so with stronger economic fundamentals. It is expected that the tariffs will slow the economic growth of China by 0.6%, according to an estimate by JP Morgan, and that of the US by 0.1-0.2% (Domm). Particularly as China imports and exports a lot, it is relatively more vulnerable to disruptions in its imports and exports. In addition, China's economy is has taken on a lot of debt, which some estimate to be at 250% (Lee), and this will not allow government spending to prop up the economy, not to mention the added uncertainty is reducing investment too. The demographic trends of ageing in China are also taking its toll on the economy, as much as 0.5-1.0% over the next few decades (International Monetary Fund). In a time when the US is doing particularly well, the impacts of these tariffs will be lost in the numbers. It should not come as a surprise, then, that given his propensity to back off from further pursuit after receiving a concession, China will offer such a concession in due time – as it did in the G20 conference recently. The concession was the promise of "a not yet agreed upon, but very substantial, amount of agricultural, energy, industrial, and other product from the United States to reduce the trade imbalance between our two countries" and the designation of fentanyl as a controlled substance in a "humanitarian gesture" in exchange for a delay of the tariffs before which China and the US have 90 days to reach a broader agreement ("Statement from the Press Secretary"). Are these agreements enforceable? The ambiguity surrounding China's commitments gives it a lot of leeway to delay the tariffs. As long as there is the perception of progress towards trade imbalance, to the satisfaction of Trump, the tariffs will not be used as a weapon.

Because there are very few, if any, higher powers which could force either side to commit, especially in the anarchic nature of international politics, so it may be that these negotiations break down. Nevertheless, it is not to the interest of the US at all to continually threaten tariffs, as it will not only cast the reliability of the US as a negotiating partner into great doubt and taint its reputation in the wider international community but also allow China time to develop strategies in the form of partnerships with other countries in an attempt to diversify its exports

and imports or in the form of domestic policy. Already, attitudes are moving in the direction of establishing workaround approaches for the Iran approach. As the US pulled out against the wishes of all parties and implemented sanctions on Iran and all third parties dealing with Iran, the EU, which is still a participant in the deal, is affected. "Washington's closest European allies, such as France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, are now working directly with the Iranian government to find ways of diverting business away from the dollar-based financial system in order to avoid U.S. sanctions and keep the existing deal in place. In July, the remaining participants in the nuclear deal released a joint statement that included a lengthy list of efforts to block the enforcement of U.S. sanctions, such as maintaining financial channels with Iran, promoting trade and export credits, and encouraging European investment in the country" (Lew). Having the groundworks of bypassing US sanctions by the US' own allies is ironic because it erodes the effects of US sanctions. On the topic of trade, it is likely that more bilateral or multilateral agreements will be struck without the participation of the US.

At the same time, the threat, or at least effects, of tariffs will subside as soon as at least one of the following three conditions are satisfied: 1) China can strengthen its economy sufficiently and insulate itself further from the volatility of the US 2) the US loses the momentum of its economic growth and loses much of the leverage it possesses currently 3) the US loses its current primacy in the financial system. The incentives for Chinese leadership strategists to diversify trade relations is very high, as it dampens the impact of potential future tariffs and, in general, makes the economy more efficient, which achieves one of their main objectives. As the pace of world economic growth slows, too, it will become increasingly difficult for the US economy to sustain its domestic-driven gains; and as "emerging market stresses from Argentina to Turkey, political uncertainty in the U.K. and Italy, and rising oil prices are among the other threats" are materializing (Goodman), it will increasingly weigh down on the "bright moment," as Jerome Powell, the chair of the US Federal Reserve put it, the US is enjoying. Within the next year, if the global economic forecasts by the IMF and HSBC prove true, the US will no longer afford to be able to sacrifice the extent of economic losses associated with tariffs as before and will therefore de-escalate the threat of trade war – assuming

that the trade war does not escalate within the golden window which is still open at the moment.

### **Escalation of trade war?**

At the present moment, China and the US do not seem on a path destined for a carving of economic blocs which are sympathetic to their respective national interests. In other words, the present situation does not hint at an all-out economic war. Again, Trump seems too focused on small concessionary actions and protectionism to have any interest in economic blocs. The foundations, however, have been set for this stark possibility. The One Belt, One Road initiative which establishes and strengthens trade routes between states and also the links between the states through Chinese investment has been leading to greater influence and power in the regions through which the routes pass. The returns from infrastructural investment in these other states also provide a source of economic growth for China. Indeed, the initiative is a strategically important one for China.

The one-sidedness should concern the US. Ratner makes the case that China and the US have entered a geopolitical competition due to fundamentally different visions on topics such as China's industrial policies and state-led economic model, investment export controls, and the "larger contest over the norms, rules, and institutions that govern relations in Asia" (Ratner). While he stresses that competition does not necessarily entail confrontation, it is necessary to see that not only may geopolitical interests propel greater international polarization, domestic pressures may, too, seek exclusivity of economic blocs.

The political system of both China and the US give plentiful opportunities for the voices seeking economic exclusivity. Galbraith observed that corporate management, not the general citizenry, was determining what gets produced, where it gets produced, and who gets the benefits. It was no longer "the individual consumers nor workers as imagined by the market model nor the individual voters of a pluralistic democracy" (Miller 109). While John Kenneth Galbraith proposes a system of "technostructure" in which large companies control the essentials of the government, that may not be a fully accurate representation of the complex political sys-

tems existing in China and the US, although big corporations have indeed increased their control over the political arena through their financing of political campaigns. Increasingly, government departments are headed by individuals who come from the businesses they are supposed to be regulating. In the Office of the US Trade Representative, for example, 93% of the nearly 750 individuals on the 26 advisory committees represent corporations or business associations, despite a requirement by law that the membership be “balanced”. In China, Lake posits that given the “the expansive role of the state in the Chinese economy, especially its backing of outward foreign investments by its state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and the close ties between business elites and its authoritarian political leaders, however, it will be even harder for China to resist biasing any future economic zone to benefit its own firms” (Lake 4). The influence of these rent-seeking groups through the elections, lobbying, and personal relations do bias future decisions towards the fulfilment of these demands, particularly as doing so would also yield extremely strong political support, although this support is likely to be short-term, as greater extents of integration can be achieved especially as certain blocs are being formed. A particularly insidious force, these types of domestic pressure, when coupled with a particularly bad recessionary event which results in social unrest, may come to the fore. In such a case, economic nationalism will be in the driver’s seat of foreign policy. Even worse, the fear of exclusion can, like the security dilemma, lead to an economic war, as states do not want to be disadvantaged in such a “race”. It should not be fallacious to argue that the trade war, thus, should be treated by both sides with great assiduity, lest the trade war acts as a catalyst for an irreconcilable imbalance with rent-seeking interests gaining the upper hand.

## Conclusion

The current US – China trade war is a desperate attempt to prevent further Chinese advancement at the expense of America. It is the dominance of a relativistic worldview as opposed to the absolute worldview typically used to view freer trade. It is a manifestation of the damaging unilateral actions Trump has been taking. Not only are the benefits of trade smaller, the domestic pressures they have resulted in are one of the factors towards the eruption of this trade war. As long as China is able to deliver its concessions and hold Trump accountable for the

truce agreed during the G20 meeting, its grander strategy of Made in China 2025 will not be affected significantly. As the golden window of tariffs draws to a close towards the end of his presidential term, Trump’s volatile behaviour still promises little in terms of the direction where this confrontation over trade, which reflects the larger disagreement over industrial policies and China’s economic model, will lead – this uncertainty calls for greater assiduity and the diplomatic involvement of other states. The outcome of this showdown will likely alter our perception of the US-China relationship for years to come.

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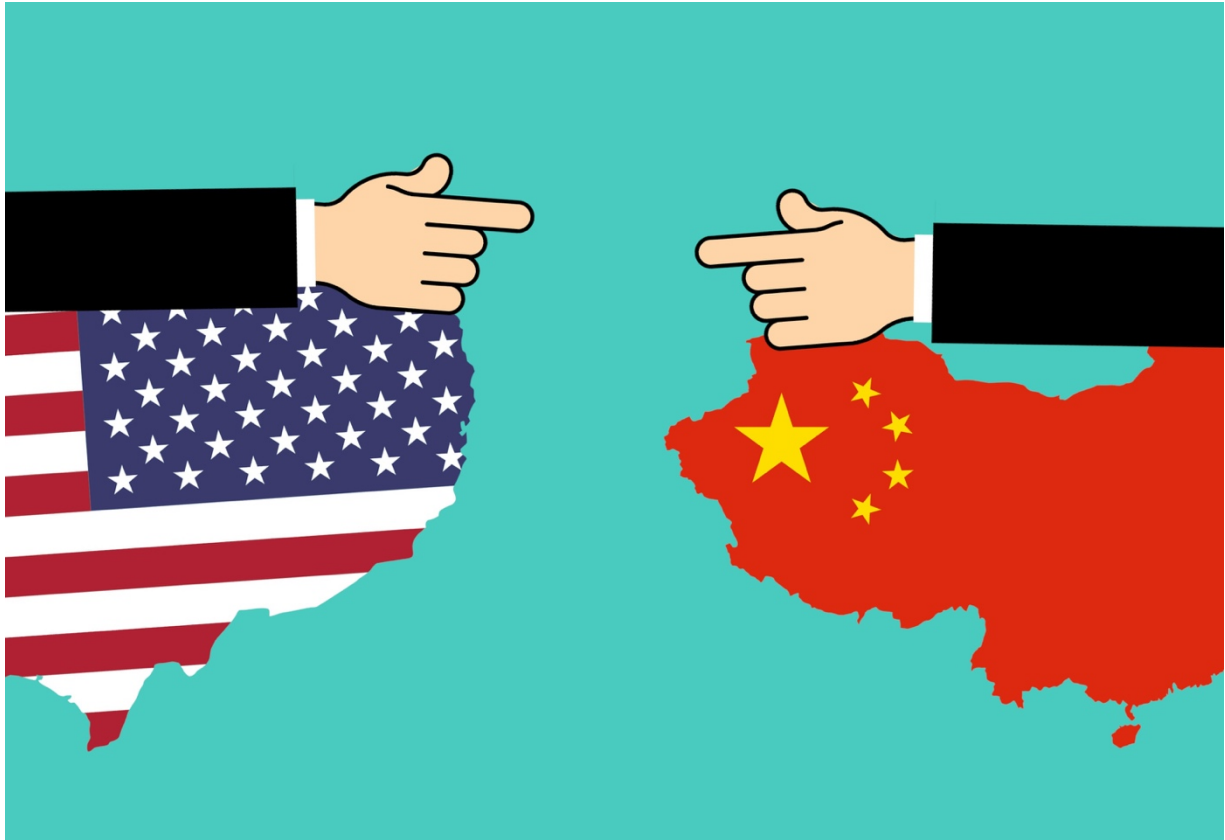
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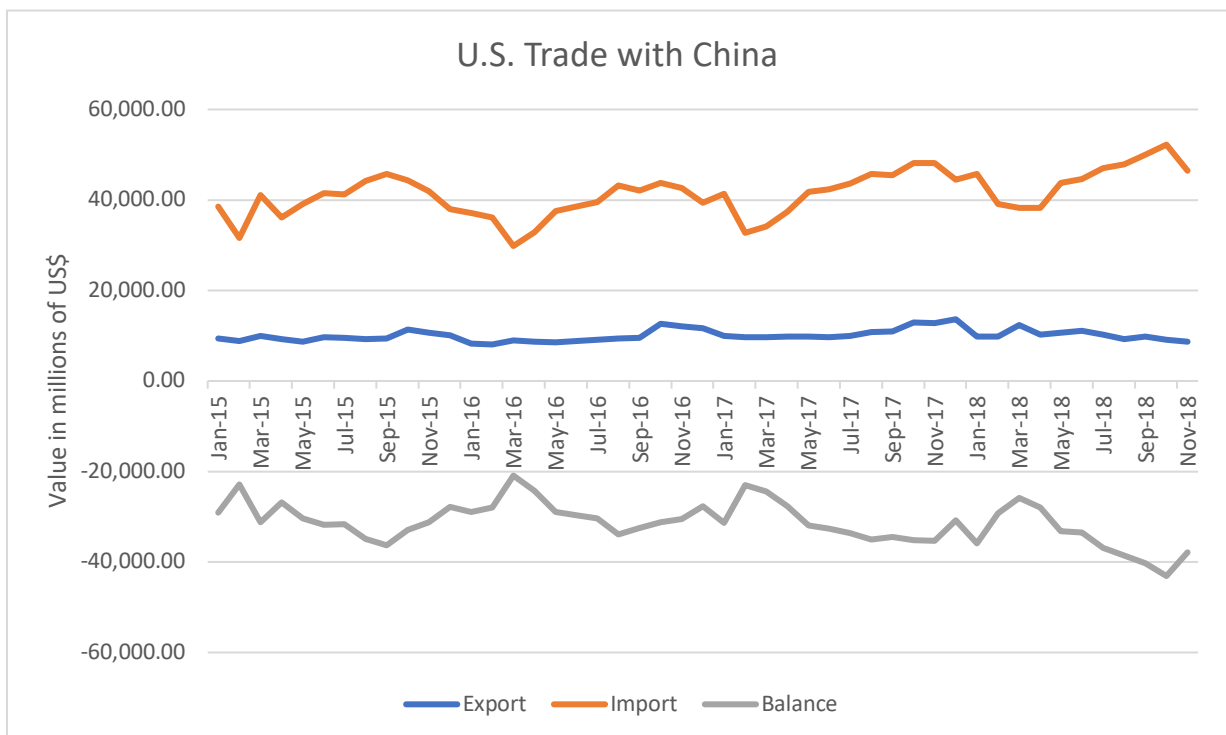
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*Upper image:* The relationship between U.S. and China has been marked more by tension in the last couple of years due to conflicts arising from trade, industrial espionage, and geopolitics.

*Lower image:* The graph visualising data from the United States Census Bureau ([www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5700.html](http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5700.html)) illustrates the evolution of the trade balance with China. Little improvement has been achieved.





# Trade

## The economic and geopolitical impacts of the US-China trade war

**Joseph Glasson**

On July 6th, 2018, the Trump administration charged sweeping tariffs on a total of \$34 billion worth of Chinese goods, ranging from flat-screen televisions to medical devices. These tariffs entail a severe 25 percent border tax when they are being imported into the US. The purpose of doing so is to punish China by making Chinese goods more expensive for American consumers and businesses to purchase. If Chinese goods suddenly become more expensive, American consumers and producers will substitute towards other producers, and Chinese businesses will lose money. Out of frustration and anger, China instantly held the US accountable for sparking what is claimed to be “the largest trade war in economic history to date” and thus, launched a counter attack by imposing 25 percent tariffs on a total of \$35 billion worth of US goods, ranging from soybeans to automobiles, attacking the centre of political support of the Trump administration.

In terms of its geopolitical influence, the US-China Trade War opens up the possibility for other winners in South East Asia. The trade war is also a direct cause for the diversion of investments and major companies to other countries besides China. This diversion would likely reduce investment in China, as firms seek to bypass US import tariff hikes. The degree to which investments may relocate towards other countries would partly depend on not only each country’s ability of producing the same set of affected products for the relevant market but also the firms’ perceptions about the duration of the trade war. This protectionist tit-for-tat can have drastic impacts, which are mostly negative, for the economies of the opposing parties. During this conflict between the warring parties, it can also affect other countries, especially those more economically linked to the US and China, like South Korea and Japan. To the contrary, emerging markets will likely benefit when China turns to diversify trade by increasing the volume of goods flowing with it and neighbouring countries in South-East Asia.

To conclude, the US-China Trade War will have a significant impact on the economic and geopolitical landscape. The trade war opens up the possibility that South-East Asia wins from such a trade war in the short run. In the long run, there is no doubt that tariffs will negatively result in lesser economic growth and greater unemployment.

## NAFTA

**Joseph Glasson**

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is a treaty signed by Canada, Mexico, and the United States. NAFTA is the world’s largest free trade agreement and the gross domestic product of its three members reaching more than \$20 trillion. NAFTA is the first time two highly developed nations signed a trade agreement along with an emerging market country. The agreement came into effect on the 1st of January 1994, surpassing and replacing the 1988 Canada – United States Free Trade Agreement along with the additional North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) and the North American Agreement on Labour Cooperation (NAALC). However, NAFTA is set to be succeeded by the 2018 United States – Mexico – Canada Agreement (USMCA).

Currently, European Union (EU) leaders are seeing how the US changes NAFTA, renegotiates it in an aggressive way. The EU can draw conclusions from the process of renegotiation. The volatile political behaviour, but superimposed on the strong interdependence across the Atlantic, displayed by the current US administration should prompt the EU to do no more than frustratedly view the US as a worrisome trade partner, and in doing so, the EU will only go so far as prepare for a potential revisit to the negotiating table and not undermine the role of security the US plays in the region, especially with occasional Russian interference. The NAFTA deal will set an important precedent in terms of the US’ reliability as a partner and how other nation states deal with the US.

Had it still been effective, the previous NAFTA deal would mean that the United States would have been able to send an increasingly larger portion of its agricultural harvests across the border to its southern

neighbour. Based on an estimation, approximately two million farmers were left without a choice and were forced to leave the countryside. In general, cheaper imports from the United States also adversely affect Mexican growers – especially those who grow corn. However, some rural workers choose to migrate to the US in search of work in growing fields there. Furthermore, because NAFTA made it easier to sell land, presently large transnational companies such as Maseca and others could control the bulk of Mexico's farmable lands.

On the other hand, NAFTA was, potentially, the cause of job loss in the US, and thus, causing resentment by poorly educated, low-income US citizens toward Mexicans, for example. Many scholarly articles conclude that the net economic effect of NAFTA on the US is limited. However, NAFTA was assisting Mexico to become a larger source of manufacturing goods for the US, and while that helps Mexico to an extent, it also keeps them lower down the supply chain, building up its comparative advantage in a more labour-intensive industry. We also know that migration from Mexico has been a great source of discontent in the US, especially non-legal forms.

Canada experienced a more modest increase in trade with the U.S. than Mexico did as a result of NAFTA. It's a \$1.4 trillion relationship, with Canada relying heavily on US demand. Almost 80 percent of all Canadian exports bound for the US market in 2016, and Canada's import flows coming two-thirds from the US. Canada's top export is mineral fuels, including oil while the second largest is vehicles. Although the exports are relatively along the same lines regarding exports into Mexico, meat and cereal products represent two of the largest categories in the top ten. Canada has not seen a boost in manufacturing jobs under NAFTA, as manufacturing jobs are down 20% since the late 1980's.

# Digital technology

## Are we being robbed of our privacy?

**Anastasia Lukic**

Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. They have allowed us to communicate with our friends and family living across the world from us. With the sheer volume of communications passing through these channels, it would be unsurprising that compromised security would be a source of public scrutiny and outrage, as was the recent Facebook scandal. It is also widely believed that the US election was rigged due to Russian disinformation and targeted infiltration through stealing the profiles of users. Digital data plays a big part in all of our lives and we just assume that every single text photograph and video will stay private forever, but we all have a digital foot print that can be hacked and everything you once thought was private will be seen by the whole world.

On October 6, 2015, the CJEU (Court of Justice of the European Union) made a statement about the safe harbour agreement between the US and the 28 members of the EU. The agreement said that there was a 15-year accord which allowed the transfer of personal data between the US and EU for commercial purposes. US data privacy did not guarantee a sufficient level of protection for European citizens' personal data. The Safe Harbour Agreement let many businesses and organizations hold and store personal data of European citizens. After this scandal the US and EU agreed to have stronger privacy laws, but many citizens don't entirely believe that this scandal will not happen again. The DPPA which is the data and privacy and protection agreement which is aimed to have better protection services for local citizens.

As I mentioned throughout this report there was a Facebook scandal that was recently unveiled which involved a great deal of data privacy talks. In March, the 17 of 2018 The Guardian and The New York times released a powerful statement saying that 50 million Facebook user's digital data were being taken for Cambridge Analytical data. This number was changed to 87 million after further research. On

March 20 of 2018 the FTC (Federal Trade Commission) launched an investigation on whether Facebook had breached the digital data laws in the US. It was later prosecuted that Facebook had breached the data privacy laws. Facebook responded to all of this backlash by banning the Cambridge analytical program. Facebook told the public that they will work to make sure to make sure the privacy of their users is well protected. Even though they have done all this Facebook's stocks have plummeted and there is a lot of distrust between them and their users.

Unfortunately, the US does not have a unified framework for data privacy, be it the enforcement of data security or the regulation of data storage. On 17 March 2018, leading news outlets New York Times and The Guardian released a report claiming that the data of 50 million Facebook users had been extracted by Cambridge Analytica. After more extensive investigation, this was increased to 87 million. 3 days later, the Federal Trade Commission launched an investigation on whether Facebook had breached the digital data laws in the US. In response, the company assured the public of its focus on privacy and protection. Nevertheless, its shares fell drastically, and public relations worsened.

The safe harbour agreement has now been revised. Companies using people's private data have to ask and other information. As well as this data integrity has been placed to make sure that businesses and organizations are taking personal information for a valid reason. Even though this has been put in place there are many other things that our governments can do to ensure safety. As there are still cases where addresses get leaked pictures get leaked any many other things happen because of the data privacy laws and regulations.

As said, there are many things that could be improved and are being worked on to improve the privacy of countries citizens. The US is working hard to install a proper framework for digital data privacy as well as setting up a new office and state department specially for data privacy. There are letters of agreement and commitment being made by the US and EU to follow the new safe harbour agreement rules. There are many other departments and organizations that have been put in place such as the DPD which said that the EU could only deliver private data outside of the country if they provide a high level of data protection. The DPD has added many

other strict rules on how the EU can transfer private data outside the country.

One, therefore, wonders: will we ever have privacy?

## How can we stop the proliferation of fake news?

**Larrissa Leung**

Undoubtedly, the explosion and rapid growth of the wide use of the internet and social media over the past decades has definitely caused many new digital platforms to unleash innovative journalistic practices of reporting in order to capture attention. Social media has also been used to spread awareness of an important cause, allowing for a greater global reach than any other point in human history, from reporting and spreading awareness of the 'March for Our Lives' campaign, to the recent fabricated story of Pope Francis endorsing US President Donald Trump.

Social media has caused the accelerating popularity of 'fake news' also known as disinformation, which severely impacts and misleads the point of view taken on an issue for many people. But instead of simply avoiding reading the news – how can we teach ourselves and the people around us to be wiser and to not be fooled?

Especially for democratic systems, the increase in sophisticated, deliberate disinformation campaigns has become a massive issue, with growing debate on how to resolve these issues while maintaining the many benefits digital media has.

As members of the tightknit school community, we should think about this novel phenomenon in the context of our own lives. Schools, as well as other educational institutions should make a move in forming people about the importance of being healthily sceptical and being critical with news literacy. The news industry should aim to provide professional journalism in our societies and combat fake news and disinformation without legitimizing them. Ultimately, it's all down to ourselves – we must follow and keep track on a diversity of news sources and to not believe in what others say but ourselves.

Perhaps for many people, and we are all perpetrators and victims at the same time, we need to engage a

more deliberate cognitive process in order to find faults and be critical instead of believing something at face value. We simply can't stop the proliferation of fake or heavily biased news and websites (and even the heavy-handed approaches Facebook has employed have proven futile), but we can educate the people around us to be healthy questioners and sceptics; to not be easily satisfied with an easy and direct answer.

Ironically, we now have to accept 'fake news' as part of our reality. Together, we must debunk fake news and search for the true and right sources, being critical and thinking twice before easily believing what is shown in front of us.

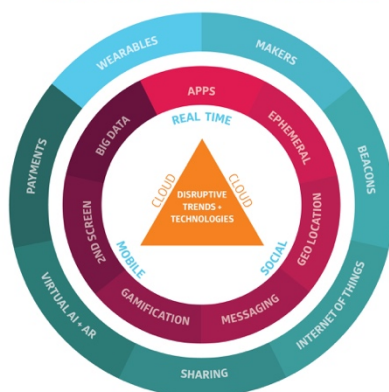


Technology inescapably links together many aspects of our lives and encroaches upon our desk, whether for better or worse.



Can we ask for privacy ever again? Lukic gives countless examples of the government defending our privacy.

### THE WHEEL OF DISRUPTION



Within the Wheel of Disruption, the "Golden Triangle" is encircled by other emergent technologies and sectors affected by mobile, social, and real-time, such as big data, geo-location, cloud, and more.

While Leung argues at the level of the community, her arguments about the disruption of technology also extends to other aspects of society. For example, there has been progress in payments (e.g. Alipay) and wearables, which are increasingly ubiquitous. (Source: Brian Solis)

# Global nutrition

## A historical perspective: food insecurity and the 5 principles

**Anastasia Lukic**

Food insecurity is when a person is in the state where they do not have access to a reliable source of affordable, nutritious food. It affects a disproportionately large proportion of our world's population. With less government support and limited aid, people in developing nations are most susceptible to food insecurity. This is a major problem; the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) has reported that 99% of the households who live in food insecurity have been reported to be stressed/worried about running out of food before their next pay day. Stress may negatively influence financial decisions, and therefore, there is the possibility of poverty cycle.

Throughout history, the world has struggled with food, and one prominent example is the French revolution. There are many causes of the French revolution, but one of the main ones was the famine that was caused in the poor community as the upper classes siphoned the food away for their own use. The French revolution is a great example of how food insecurity can cause great devastation, as the crisis in food gradually led to skyrocketing food prices, which affected even the most insulated elements of society.

Another great example was in 1917 when Russia experienced an acute food shortage due to the collapse of an official bureaucracy overwhelmed by the demands of total war. The middle class was appalled by the ineptitude that the Union of Towns and the Union of Zemstvos tried to mobilise transport, industry, and fuel for the army. By the winter of 1916, the cities were facing a food shortage in a country glutted with food. The public who then turned against the Tsar brutally murdering him and his family.

Many of people in less economically developed countries rely on their own agriculture to provide food – subsistence farming. Unfortunately, people cannot rely on this as a reliable source of food, as

many factors affect the yield of their crops, including the weather, volatile political institutions which legislate, or even the actions of other countries. Climate change this is one of the biggest factors that effects the agriculture. Models predict that, in China, climate change is likely to decrease the yields of rice, wheat, and corn by 36.25%, 18.26%, and 45.10%, respectively, by the end of this century (Zhang et al.).

Additionally, the number of droughts, floods and extreme storms has doubled since the early 1990's. When extreme weather events happen, crops are ruined, the supply of food decreases, and food prices may go up. Not only does this affect the farmers who are forced to eat what little surplus they have, but also those who live in the city and rely on transportation of food from the countryside to the urban areas. This form of urban food insecurity is especially politically pernicious, as the historical examples above illustrate.

Interestingly, the creation of the waste recycling industry has taken a big toll on agriculture in places like Africa. The precious metals in hazardous waste sent to Africa are extracted; however, due to the lax protocols and institutions, disposal is not environmentally oriented, and downstream of the sources of pollution, agriculture is poisoned by the heavy metals, like mercury and cadmium present in the waste.

5 principles have been highlighted by Annan and Dryden to help developing countries find solutions to food insecurity:

1. Value the small holder farmer
2. Empower women
3. Focus on quantity as well as quality of food
4. Create a thriving rural economy
5. Protect the environment

All of these 5 principles form a good framework on which to work. Perhaps, the most fundamental principle is the protection of the environment. Higher yields of agriculture may change the bargaining power of women in households and will help with efforts on focusing on the quantity and quality of food, and it is on this principle of protection of the environment that the other principles become more

feasible. As more than 80% of Africa's agricultural goods come from small shareholders, there is merit to Principle 1. Indeed, having such a framework with the progress that the UN has been making will inexorably solve food insecurity.

In conclusion, the only way the world can eliminate food insecurity is to establish worldwide principles to help make sure there is an enriched farm life, which would not be possible without protecting the environment. If we are able to accomplish this, this may, although not too ambitiously, help us eliminate poverty.

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## Modern technology & food insecurity

**Yanhe Xuan**

The issue of food insecurity has long plagued the citizens of developing nations. According to the UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), '795 million people, or every ninth person, is undernourished.' In fact, this number has increased to 821 million as of last year and has done so since 2014. The prevalence of undernourishment can be seen heavily within the African continent with upwards of 20% of Africans being affected. Moreover, despite a slowdown in undernourishment rates in Asia, up to 5% may still be affected in South America. As a result of lack of proper nutrition, countless health problems have arisen including stunting (improper growth and development of young children), obesity, wasting (disease causing muscle or fat tissue to 'waste' away), and anaemia in young women. Outside of human health and wellbeing, widespread undernourishment also leads to decrease in productivity in an economy.

Young children are also unable to participate in education and contribute to the skilled workforce in the future severely stunting economic growth.

The inability to access safe and healthy foods has become prominent due to the development of a variety of geopolitical, economic and social factors. The 'financialisation' of food came to light after the 2007-8 food price crisis where it became clear that financial investors held an important role in investing in financial products connected to food commodities. This has been a leading factor in driving up food prices as their financial speculation is a huge driver of volatility of food prices. The ones hit the hardest are those that can no longer afford the vital nutrition they need. Multinational corporations in the agri-foods sector also dominate the market. These corporations essentially hold an oligopoly over food commodities so that they may maximise their profits more flexibly at the expense of consumer benefits. This market power they hold leaves smaller, independent farmers and operations with no ability to compete and inevitably discontinue their farming practices. Again, these corporations can also take advantage of unfair trade practices. Larger firms provide more favourable contracts to larger, better resourced farmers whereas small-scale farms can only rely on contracted work on other plantations.

In addition, a combination of land 'grabbing' and lack of farmland availability (where overseas investors acquire previous farmland for resource extraction) means that local communities no longer have the ability to grow their own food or provide a steady income to their families in order to access other food sources. In more developed nations, food wastage has also become a widespread issue where perfectly safe food is thrown away before it is even consumed. According to the FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organisation), 'per capita waste by consumers is between 95-115 kg a year in Europe and North America, while consumers in Sub-Saharan Africa, South and South-Eastern Asia, each throw away only 6-11kg.' This could be attributed to the loss of 40% of food production at retail and consumer stages in industrialised countries due to lack of communication between farmers, distributors and consumers. The increased awareness over climate change in recent years has also meant that more food commodities such as sugar cane and corn are used to produce biofuel (to reduce carbon emissions) rather than feeding those in need. Diverting previous farmland to produce crops for fuel has led

to decreased supply of grains and raised prices to purchase food. Climate change itself also fundamentally affects annual rainfalls, rising sea levels and the frequency of extreme weather events which can vastly decrease annual yields or prevent crop growth all together. Many natural disasters such as floods and typhoons can completely destroy local agriculture meaning farmers are unable to provide food to their communities. Ongoing conflict can also block off food supplies from reaching those in need as food crises can drag on long after a conflict has concluded.

The presence of said oligopolies and monopolistic practices are sometimes carried out at the discretion of governments. This is simply because of the massive stake that they hold in less economically developed countries (LEDCs). Said LEDCs are incentivised to attract large trans-national corporations to boost economic activity, provide employment opportunities and for construction of vital infrastructure. Despite the anti-competitive practices that occur and their effect on consumers and the competitiveness of other firms, these concessions may be seen as a necessary sacrifice to ensure opportunity for growth in the future. During the 2008 food crisis, rising food prices and a global rice shortage meant that tensions drew high in many areas of the world. In particular, food riots broke out in the Middle East and North Africa as citizens could no longer stand for the severe lack of food sources and rising prices. The lack of food security was seen as a major contributing factor to the instigation of the Arab Spring.

However, recent technological advancements in food security hold promise in diminishing these issues by providing increase food availability, access and stability. Biotic stresses (disease and bacteria affecting crops) can be reduced with the development of disease or pest resistant crops. Pesticides, repellents and tilling machines can also be used to increase the frequency of successful yields. Crop productivity can also be boosted with use of advanced genetic engineering and marker-assisted or conventional breeding (where specific desirable traits of one crop can be transferred to another with the identification of markers related to said traits). Increased availability of water is also vital for human consumption and the sustainability of agriculture. This could be increased with water storage technologies (aquifers, low-cost tanks, reservoirs), micro-irrigation technologies (drip/bubbler irrigation), water

lifting (with pumps powered from different sources) and portable sensors for detection of groundwater. For food to be properly accessed, it must be stored in ideal conditions to be available to consumption.

To prevent any post-harvest loss, nanotechnology can be used to detect foodborne pathogens and create nanofilms to prevent oxygen absorption and spoilage. The above solutions can go a great way in reaching Goal 2 as part of Sustainable Development Goals and Food Security (UNCTAD) which is 'aimed at ending hunger and ensuring access by all people.' By effectively targeting issues surrounding food production and preservation, one could conceivably lower international malnourishment rates significantly and provide much greater food security for those in need.





*Upper image:* New technologies such as hydroponics have made sustainable agriculture more attainable. (Source: Aqua Mechanical)

*Lower image:* Terraced terrain maximises useful agricultural land. Adoption of this landscaping also reduces erosion and surface runoff, which is particularly important for semi-arid areas.



# Sustainable development

## Integrating sustainable development into post-conflict reconstruction

**Sreya Sundarrajan**

Since President Donald Trump took his oath, he has implicated drastic changes in American policies, especially in the department of international relations. The American President recently made a speech in front of the General Assembly at the United Nations. He says, “America is governed by Americans. We reject the ideology of globalism and we embrace the doctrine of patriotism.” It is apparent that he is focused on empowering America and bringing his own country forward. However, many people are showing scepticism as to whether or not his actions are beneficial for our global society, generating huge controversy particularly around his foreign policies.

On one hand, there are the people who argue that his approach is unreasonable and immoral. This is because they believe that it is impossible to improve our world and achieve the 17 global goals if MEDCs like the United States embraces an isolationist approach at odds with the spirit of the United Nations. As one of the SDGs proposes, “International investments and support is needed to ensure innovative technological development, fair trade and market access, especially for developing countries. To build a better world, we need to be supportive, empathetic, inventive, passionate, and above all, cooperative.” This is key to improve our global society, as less economically developed countries cannot catch up with the rest of the world if they aren’t offered a helping hand, especially in geopolitically volatile environments which deter investment and economic development. It is important that all countries economically developed in order to better our living environment, and overall make the world a better place.

On the other hand, some people argue that President Trump is doing the right thing. According to

Yadong Liu, CEO of CEFC Global Strategic Holdings Inc, “The fact is that, despite escalating trade tensions, Beijing should still see Trump as the ideal U.S. president for China.” Trump withdrew the Trans-Pacific partnership, strongly presented his country on the matter of trading with Japan and he talked about removing his U.S. troops from South Korea. This is beneficial because America’s influence has declined on Asian countries, therefore giving them an opportunity to further expand and develop their economy, especially for countries like China, which is rapidly growing.

During his recent speech at the United Nations, he criticized the organization and flaunted his own government’s achievements, which only adds to the fact that only a few weeks since he assumed office, he had already planned an executive order to reduce America’s contributions to the U.N., justifying his decision by explaining that he thought that the whole organization’s work itself is “wasteful and counter-productive.” The United Nations took a risk and promised to uphold various commitments such as peacekeeping and democracy. However, (?)

President Trump’s significant influence in the political world is evident and his take on matters to do with international relations have impacted the global economy as well. For example, in June, he met face to face with North Korea’s leader, Chairman Kim Jong Un. As the president states in his speech, they had “highly productive conversations and meetings,” and they agreed that it was in both countries’ interest to pursue the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” which is taking a big step in ensuring safety across the world.

In conclusion, it is highly likely that America’s current foreign policy is “America First” will be here to remain. Not only does it fit his transactional worldview, it also strengthens the fervour of his populist base and enhances his political prospects. With the United States prioritizing itself and rejecting the institutions it has built...

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## The effect of depleting natural resources

**Nicky Wong**

In recent years, rapid globalization and development has taken place, but this has come at a cost, namely the depletion of natural resources. 11% of Switzerland's GDP comes from forestry, and with deforestation and degradation of such resources, issues of utmost importance can arise, such as widespread famine, forced migration (in order for government to extract resources in those areas), global warming, and lack of biodiversity etc. Moreover, countries or regions may be targeted if abundant resources are present, as other areas may have excessive demand to cope with their available resources. All such implications will have a detrimental effect on the environment and people.

One of the greatest establishments to solve this issue is presented in UN resolution 2997, whereby the United Nations Environmental Program was founded in 1972. Although it is also involved in other issues, one of its main aims is environmental governance, linking back to the topic of resource depletion. As demonstrated in 2001, where marshlands loss was highlighted and managed appropriately by many nations, the United Nations Environmental Program acts as an international body that brings together nations to solve pressing issues. Resolution 43/196 of the General Assembly came into

effect in 20 December 1988. It stresses the importance of the balance between development and environmental protection, encourages all nations and NGOs to fund towards relevant projects for such causes and also highlights the rising issues regarding the environment.

As suggested above, the effect of depleting natural resources does indeed have many economic, environmental, and social implications, so the issue needs to be addressed with utmost urgency. However, the exploitation of natural resources as the main driver of larger economic growth should not be encouraged, whereas economic development can be achieved without affecting the environment should be promoted. Many relevant nations have already begun a transition to economic sustainability by moving towards hydroelectric power and to cooperate more comprehensively with private sector organizations about certain rules and regulations. Nevertheless, much improvement is required.

In order to reduce the severity of the issue, a variety of methods should be conducted. In relation to the causes of resource depletion, all member states should promote sustainable lifestyle throughout the general public through media. Furthermore, laws should be established, and main areas of forestry should be regarded as protection zones, in which deforestation in these areas will be penalized. Furthermore, all nations and private sectors should invest in renewable energy sources and to develop further research for these in order to reduce the burden on non-renewable sources and to lower the costs of switching to renewable sources, resulting in greater popularity in renewables. The type of renewable energy sources taken at hand in each nation may vary as there are geographical and economic differences between member states. Desalination plants may also be constructed in areas with excess demand for clean water. Efforts may involve funds and hiring of workers, and as many of these nations facing depletion of natural resources are less economically developed, support for their strategic development should be consulted with relevant organizations and NGOs which possess technical expertise, such as the Center for Environmental Research and Conservation.



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The Sustainable Development Goals are a collection of 17 goals as outlined as a vision for 2030. It was passed in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1. It expands upon the Millennium Development Goals, which was its predecessor.

These goals have been a guiding force in the works of governments, NGOs, and private actors. It has also been emphasised in schools worldwide.

# Yemen and South Sudan

## Situation in South Sudan

**Nicky Wong**

In 2005, the president at the time, John Garang, signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which ended the long civil war between the government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). However, he died shortly after and was replaced by Salva Kiir, a soldier. Within Sudan's People Liberation Movement (SPLM), officials began to doubt the future of Sudan due to the president's lack of knowledge in governmental affairs, especially given his background of...

On December 16th, 2013, the president of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, unveiled that the former vice president of the nation, Riek Machar, and a few other officials of the SPLA had attempted to take over the governmental body. These officials were later arrested, but Riek Machar remained unfound and denied all connections related to the coup. Consequently, there was a divide in the SPLA itself.

The arrests and the coup had resulted in tribal divisions. The current president was a member of the Dinka tribe, whilst Machar was part of the Nuer tribe. Each tribe, vying for power, fought against each other. A meeting for the SPLM commenced soon after, with Machar having boycotted it and Kiir denouncing the Nuer tribe. However, it was later revealed that there was no physical evidence that the arrested officials had actually plotted against the SPLM, so international tensions to release these detainees rose and conflicts between the tribes/within the SPLM arose. Officials began to doubt whether he should be re-elected in 2015, and if not, it would be a pathway for Machar to succeed. However, Salva Kiir brought in people from outside the governmental body to replace the members who opposed Salva, suppressing debate and leading to huge internal disagreements.

Battles are civil wars were then fought between sides either loyal to Machar (such as armed Nuer groups) or supporting the central government (such as the majority of the SPLA and military support from

Uganda). The aim of both sides was to gain control over the Sudanese states of Bor, Bentiu, and Malakal. Oil companies, a source of income for many Sudanese, shut down due to conflicts with an estimated 100,000 innocuous deaths. Residents have been displaced due to forced internal migration too.

A current solution that has been put forth is to open up space for all civilians to share their voices and views in order to prevent reoccurrences of the above events. Groups that have already submitted proposals for action include the Sudan Law Society and the Association for Media Development in South Sudan. This provides an opportunity and platform for citizens to share their public and equally opinions of political actions rather than solving issues in means of violence. However, it may also result in problems as inappropriate/violent expression of dislike may be put forth.

## Saudi Arabia's War in Yemen

**Anastasia Lukic**

The Yemen war is a complex and difficult situation as there are so many different minority groups involved. The background of the conflict is just as complicated. The main cause of this conflict is failure in a political transition which was supposed to bring stability to Yemen. This clearly failed. The political transition was caused by an Arab spring uprising forcing the long-time president Saleh to hand over power to his deputy Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi in 2011. President Hadi struggled with dealing with a variety of problems like attacks from the Al-Qaeda, a separatist movement in the South, concerns over the loyalty of military officers to Mr Saleh, and pervasive food insecurity and. The conflict has also been seen as a regional conflict between Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

A region of Yemen is controlled by the Houthi rebels. They started their rebel group to fight against the Yemen government over several deep disagreements. Increasingly, the attacks in Yemen by the Houthi movement is ideological. However, the Houthis did not act with as much violence as today until the Saudi government declared that they would aid the Yemeni government in eliminating the Houthi rebels.

Saudi Arabia started firing missiles with a blind eye at Houthi targets. In the process, however, they would harm thousands of innocent people. The spreading of “fake news” has become an issue, as the news is trying to cover up what the government is doing by accusing the rebel groups of the air strikes. All of this is stoking more anger, tension, and confusion in the conflict; this is counterproductive to peace efforts.

The Humanitarian organization has tried to aid Yemen as they are on the verge of having the world largest famine. Houthi-Saleh forces only temporarily permit humanitarian aid to reach city residents, and 37 of the city's 40 hospitals and medical institutions are closed. The city has been under siege since April 2015, and the humanitarian situation is dire, with reports of high food prices and starvation. Recently, the U.S. officials said that Iran has increased weapons shipments to Houthi-Saleh forces in Yemen. United Nations estimated that the death toll in the two-year conflict had reached 10,000.

There have been many peace treaties that the UN has tried to make but counterproductive and is unlikely to achieve anything concrete. Perhaps, it is time for concessions to the Houthis and the holding of a democratic election. It is unlikely that the civil war and repressive measures can quash the Houthis, and a proper

To conclude, a big cause of this conflict is the fact that Yemen is that the current environment is not conducive to political reconciliation or compromise. To solve this, the UN should seek political accommodation on top of humanitarian and peacekeeping solutions. Humanitarian organisations should also seek more extensive negotiations to gain access to humanitarian corridors for them to help innocent people suffering from impending famine.

# Human rights

## Preventing violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

**Sreya Sundarrajan**

Violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is a prominent issue across the globe. Over the past couple of decades, women's rights and the pervasive gender-based discrimination has been brought into the fore.

Increasingly, the workplace viewed as where women are discriminated against. The gender pay gap is the difference between the salary of an average man and an average woman for doing the exact same job. A man and a woman could both be doing the same job at the same level of expertise for the same company, but the man would still get paid more money than the woman. This is only one of many examples of gender-based discrimination.

In the 21st century, the LGBTQ community has become more expressive and confident in advocating for equal rights regardless of their sexual orientation in society. While we may rejoice when people "come out," in most places in the world, people are not very welcoming to homosexual people and transgender people. It is apparent that society is at the core of this problem. Some people are not willing to accept LGBTQ people because of their religious beliefs and personal opinions. Unfortunately, the government is also a cause of gender-based discrimination. There are many discriminatory laws all over the world which forbid same-sex relationships and marriage with some extreme punishments in a few countries. There are even death penalties in 5 countries. These ridiculous laws completely violate the human rights of LGBTQ people.

People from all over the world have been identified as being part of the LGBTQ community. Even in as developed a country as America, not only are LGBTQ people, especially the youth, twice as likely as the rest of the world to say they have experienced a form of physical assault, 92% of LGBTQ youth say

they have heard negative comments and messages particularly on the internet, school, and their fellow students. They are attacked both physically and emotionally, beaten, sexually assaulted, and persecuted.

This issue of discrimination against gender identity and sexual orientation is as pressing as it is moral and damaging. People who have been assaulted are more likely to develop mental disorders and psychological issues like depression, anxiety, sleeping disorders, eating disorders, low self-esteem and even tendencies to want to suicide. This is because they have had a traumatic experience and may find it hard to put these memories in the past. According to a case study approved by The Committee for Human Research of the University of California, San Francisco, 50% of the women felt a "little stressful" and 30% of the women felt "stressful/very stressful." Sure, they can receive help from rehabilitation centres and social groups, but a lot of the victims are afraid to speak up for themselves and share their stories in fear of being attacked again if they talk about it. Another problem is that we are only addressing the problem after the victim has been discriminated against or violently assaulted instead of implementing preventative measures.

A famous movement on social media that started in 2017 is the worldwide "#MeToo" campaign. Women who had experienced gender-based violence and discrimination - specifically to do with sexual harassment and abuse - started to speak up and share their stories and experiences. This helped to create an awareness of the injustice that was happening in our world and still is.

Fortunately, this issue is not unsolvable. Firstly, we must eradicate any and all laws that discriminate against the LGBTQ community and women, which may take a long time. For that, we would need cooperation with the government, but it is not quite so easy to change people's beliefs. We also need to spread the word about this issue so that we can raise funds going towards support programs dedicated towards preventing violence and discrimination against the LGBTQ community and women, via the internet, TV commercials, advertisements and other media platforms.

We could strengthen and devote more resources to NGOs which can help those who have been assaulted or discriminated against. Gathering lawyers

and employees to form and establish a strong unit who can help victims will go a long way to help them. In that case, we should also ensure that support programs and women and the LGBTQ community are aware of this company via social media, the internet and advertisements. However, there might be one slight issue. Some people are afraid to go to court because they think that the judge will not believe them, or they will be discriminated against there or the criminal will not be brought to justice. Some of them simply just can't afford lawyers. Therefore, if there is to be a provision of legal support by NGOs or other organisations, they should provide the victims lawyers free of cost or only charge a minimal fee for the services.

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## Preventing the recruitment of children in armed forces in regions of conflict

**Sreya Sundarajan**

First of all, war itself is not the right way to resolve conflict.

It is amoral and only results in death and devastation, besides what would have been similarly achieved through a peaceful compromise than the mutually-costly implications of war. Unfortunately, the extent of devastation can find its way to the use of child soldiers.

Child soldiers have been recruited in wars for a long time and people have recklessly used them as pawns without care as to the safety of children and how immoral it is. What happened to "human rights"? No action has been taken to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers in places like North Korea, U.A.E. and South Sudan. As of February 21st, 2018, 46 states still recruited soldiers who are less than 18 years old into the armed forces in practice and 27 countries operate "military schools," where they compel children - as young as 15 years old - to enlist after graduation and classify them as members of their armed forces. Groups like ISIS and the Pakistani Taliban lure their victims through blackmail, coercion, and ideological inculcation and manipulation them, convincing them that their cause is worthy and that they should join them in their fight.

The Sierra Leone Conflict was a devastating 11 year long civil war fought with extreme brutality and ferocity. There were many violations of human rights against civilians, including using child soldiers. A very famous author and human rights spokesperson, Ishmael Beah, used to be a child soldier. In his story, his parents and brothers were killed in the Sierra Leone conflict and he fought in the civil war at the very young age of 13. He was brainwashed, drugged, and forced to kill. He said himself "after the first shooting, the first killing, the first battle, you are traumatized, you've lost your humanity, this becomes the life you know." In their formative years, children scarred by the brutal scenes of armed conflict are psychologically affected, and these traumatic experiences are likely to accompany them until the end of their lives.

There are two main problems to tackle about the issue child soldiers. The first one is the prevention of children from being recruited by armed forces. The other is how to induce society to integrate child soldiers in the fragile process of nation building. Both prevention of recruitment and rehabilitation & integration are major issues. According to Ishmael Beah, "After you've been removed from the context of war, you're still thinking like you're in the war." Therefore, even if child soldiers are rescued from



their horrible situation, it becomes very difficult for them to transition back into the life of a normal child. They still have the same name, same birth date, same nationality, but they're not the same people they were before the conflict. Due to the distressing nature of warfare, it is imperative that organizations like UNICEF try to ensure that child soldiers get back to safety, undergo integration and rehabilitation processes, and to help them to start a new life.

On the other hand, it's not just the children themselves whom find it difficult to adjust to their new environment. Other people in the community may also have a hard time with welcoming the newly integrated children, as they see them as volatile, dangerous actors. Having been exposed to propagandistic ideology and the savage nature of warfare, communities are generally distrustful of these children, especially as the children no longer display qualities associated with development in an environment of nurture and security. Even if countries are willing, the means to do so may not be available. What needs to be stressed is that these children were forced to fight not of their own volition. If community building can be cleared of the shadow of this misconception, then the issue of social reintegration would become so much more attainable.

However, are we really at the time and place when and where it is possible to eradicate child soldiers, or will children always be involved as an instrument of war? As hard as it is to enforce the elimination of child soldiers from the battlefield on the part of nation states, non-state actors may still undertake these unscrupulous methods to war.

Nonetheless, there is a huge difference between finding a temporary solution and a permanent solution to this pressing issue. Can there be a permanent solution this issue? The answer is no, at least not in the foreseeable future. If a group is trying to recruit child soldiers, they are often pretty effective, and we cannot really do much to prevent these groups from reaching out to their victims.

This brings us to the final question: To what extent is preventing the recruitment of children in armed forces in regions of armed conflict significant in terms of social importance? Ensuring the safety of child soldiers can help to bring down the amount of armed conflict in the world, protecting people from being exposed to extreme danger and violence, help

people to feel more secure in their environment and more comfortable in their surroundings. In conclusion, preventing the recruitment of children in armed forces in regions of conflict is of especial social importance.

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# Non-state actors

## Preventing the acquisition of biohazardous and chemical sources by terrorists

**Nicky Wong**

In recent years, technological and scientific advancements have been continuously developing at a rapid pace. Yet, this also means greater knowledge of existing and potential biohazardous/chemical weapons. Even despite the best intentions of member states to ban such armaments, such biological and chemical weapons could still potentially fall into the hands of non-state actors, like terrorists, posing great harm to the general public.

Biohazardous sources refer to weaponry that manipulates the natural characteristics of biological agents to form harmful disease-causing substances. Historically, biohazardous sources have been hard to obtain knowledge and resources for their development.

Chemical weaponry, with effects rivalling that of biological weaponry, is arguably the more pressing issue, as terrorist groups such as ISIS have already demonstrated that chemical sources can be self-formulated. This reflects the reality of terror groups to gain access to these weapons through indirect pathways. Indeed, the production of biological and chemical weaponry does not require many raw materials, nor does it need much land, so it is relatively easy to develop such programs stealthily. The cost of these weapons is also relatively low and thus have become eyed by terrorists. The severity of this issue could be extremely high if not handled properly by states; hence, both types of sources are under the branch of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs).

Despite having already established a Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), several states such as Libya and Iraq have not signed this treaty. Moreover, non-state actors, like terrorists, are not bound by such treaties. In both the case of state actors which have not signed the treaty and the case of non-state actors, the possibility of chemical attacks is very much open.

The use of biohazardous sources through means of weaponry is known to have already existed in the 14th century. From that time up to the 19th century, biological warfare had mainly only consisted of the usage of animals/plants/microbes in weapons systems, which was said to be ineffective. Biohazardous munition later developed due to the advancement in science/technology, however. An example would be the use of nerve agents by North Korea in an assassination in Malaysia, where toxic chemicals were used to disrupt messages sent to vital organs, resulting in miscommunication and death.

During the 20th century, biohazardous sources began to develop, especially during the period of World War 2. In areas such as United States and Britain, bacterial agents (such as anthrax, Brucella, and tularaemia), viral agents (such as smallpox) and toxins (such as botulinum and ricin) became more prominently used. The most infamous usage of biological warfare was by the Imperial Japanese Army, however. In 1940, they bombed areas in China (Ningbo and Changde) with fleas carrying the bubonic plague, hence killing over 400,000 innocent civilians.

Nations were not left unscathed by their discoveries. On September 18, 2001, several members of the US congress and American media outlets received anonymous letters containing anthrax spores and threatening messages, leading to 27 people becoming infected with anthrax infections, five of which died.

The use of chemical sources for warfare primarily began in the 13th century. At this time, mainly only poisoning of food/drinks were put in place. Germany was one of the earliest users of chemical sources. This dates back to 1914 in World War I. When battling against the British, they fired shells with irritant substances such as pulmonary, lachrymatory, and vesicant sources including chlorine and mustard gas. Chlorine gas dissolves into the epithelial lining fluid of the lungs to form acids, dissolving the organ. Mustard gas quickly damages the genetic material of cells, and its quick effect on the skin is explained by its solubility in fat. Their notable effects are captured very vividly in the poem "Dolce et Decorum Est" by Wilfred Owen. What he describes for the front-line troops attacked by the gases ultimately resulted in the deaths of 1.3 million. Nazi Germany continued to develop these weapons during the World War II. In this period, they primarily used hydrogen cyanide, which is potentially the

most dangerous chemical source used to this date. It works by being absorbed by the blood stream and then halting cellular respiration in the mitochondria.

In 1984, a terrorist group that followed religious terrorism adopted the usage of biohazardous weaponry. Followers of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh group had used a type of bacteria called *Salmonella typhimurium*. This biohazardous source was rubbed on public doorknobs and grocery stores in Orgeon, causing severe food poisoning everywhere (751 affected). Their main goal of this attack was to influence a local political election through causing fear throughout the general public, a popular tactical strategy amongst terrorists. Not only was this a concern to the government, but the fact that this technology could be advertised in the black market is also worrisome.

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is a solution put forth already. It was opened for signature on 10 April 1972 and came into effect on 26 March 1975. It was the first multilateral disarmament treaty prohibiting an entire category of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). It was later signed by 182 states, with parties from all continents.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) was first established in 1993 and came into effect on April 29, 1997. It is the latest arms control agreement out of all the WMDs but continues to address similar issues regarding the prevention of production, acquisition, and usage of chemical weaponry. It strictly highlights that knowledge of chemistry should only be used in benefit for mankind and emphasizes the strategies to reinforce this policy. It has now been signed by 193 states, with 98% of the global population being protected under the convention.

One potential solution for the future is that knowledge of sensitive information which could be exploited for production of such dangerous weapons could be restricted. The many technological and scientific advanced in recent years has led to greater understanding of key concepts of biochemistry, but it has also resulted in more efficient pathways of spreading information. To be able to prevent such development would indeed resolve the debated topic. Yet, seeing that it would hinder the progress of society as a whole makes this solution not plausible.

Instead, it may be more suitable to increase physical security both within the country and internationally during the transfer and secure storage of dangerous materials. The cybersecurity of facilities which house dangerous material could be strengthened, and security forces should accompany this transport to reduce the risks of terrorists obtaining hazardous materials. Extra security could be deployed to borders to ensure the absence of forbidden materials in the flow of goods to and fro.

Another potential solution would be to encourage international cooperation. Indeed, additional physical security, as highlighted above, could restrict the transfer of dangerous materials, yet the surveillance of sea transport, the maintenance of the facilities, and the disposal of the materials, which would be ideal, rely on the nations. Through more conventions and global meetings to focus on the issue at hand, the production and acquisition of biohazardous and chemical weaponry by terrorists/other non-state actors could be prevented.