

This packet includes two samples of SEO-optimized blog posts, as well as an excerpt of my Bachelor Honors Thesis, to showcase my range of writing skills.

## I. SEO Writing Samples

### From Stylish.com, an Antiques Marketplace Start-Up

#### A Life of Antique Furniture: Stylish Founder Silke Berlinghof

Although the Stylish catalogue features a wide variety of interior design objects, it all began with antique furniture. And there is good reason for that. Our founder Silke Berlinghof comes from a long line of antiques dealers and auctioneers in Germany. Her story is the story of Stylish.

The philosophy at the heart of Stylish, to find unique artisan pieces to incorporate into modern living spaces, is inspired by Silke's own experiences dealing antiques in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Her experience has brought her across borders and continents, into homes and onto television, and deep into the stories of her unique products.

#### **A Legacy of Antiques**

Silke was born in Heidelberg, Germany, into a family of antiques dealers. Her father ran an auction house inherited from his own mother. As early as she can remember, she has been surrounded by antique furniture. "They've been in my life for as long as I can remember," she says.

It was then and there that she fell in love with antiques and art. The auction house was a true family business. Her father was a self-taught antiques expert who started Silke on her path. Her mother, too, was an integral part of the company. Much of Silke's childhood was shaped by her family's commitment to the antiques market.

"Even now, when you visit my father's house," she notes, "you are surrounded by antique furniture. Every nook and cranny is filled with it. Those pieces are part of who we are. They are a part of our life."

Berlinghof Kunstauktionshaus GmbH, her family's company, became her own project in adulthood. For many years, before moving abroad, Silke co-owned the auction house, ran exhibitions and handled antiques transactions.

But before taking on the business, she wanted to learn more about art and antiques.

#### **A Thirst for Knowledge**

Silke completed her master's degree in art history, Archaeology, and Romance Languages at the University of Heidelberg, the oldest university in Germany. She spent time studying in Bologna, as well, falling in love with Italian Art and the Renaissance.

"My heart is never far from Italy," she notes. "I think I really fell in love with my practice while immersed in those golden cities." She particularly loves Renaissance frescoes, architecture, and painting.

Her business interests, however, remained with antique furniture and porcelain. "Those are the kinds of products that meet you half-way," she explains.

"They are not necessarily important enough to be in a museum – but they really could be. Private art dealing can be a beautiful thing, because it exhumes the objects and treasures that defined the popular culture of an era. Rather than forget them, we can center them in our own homes and keep them alive."

### **Art Appraising – on TV**

Silke joined the cast of art appraisers of a new German TV show, similar to Antiques Roadshow, in 2007. *Echt antik!* (Really antique!) launched on the German public network SWR and established Silke as a recognized expert, particularly in ceramics, porcelain, and antique furniture.

"It was an utterly surreal time," she remembers. "I had gotten this call, and suddenly, I spent my weekends traveling to different cities throughout Germany to meet people and their objects."

She recalls her family visiting her on set for an episode taped close to home. "It was a more extreme version of my everyday: juggling the kids and work. I rarely found moments of real introspection in those days beyond telling myself 'Wow, I'm on TV!' It was a lot of fun."

Surrounded by antique furniture both at home and on TV, she found a new appreciation for connecting people with objects. She encouraged individuals she met for *Echt Antik!* to breathe new life into their relationships with forgotten furnishings.

"Too often, people are sitting on treasures they think are old and outdated. I tell them, put that chair in the middle of the room! Make that table your dinner table! Let the history speak for itself. I promise it will make your space feel more alive, more refined!"

### **A New World**

It was that mindset that inspired Silke to start her own business upon moving to the United States with her family. "I've always lived by my own code: antique furniture is part of how my

family designs our living spaces. And I thought: what if I could expand that into an opportunity to share with people?”

The US presented Silke with a unique opportunity. “There is a huge hunger for history and authenticity, here. And we can offer people that. Real objects from the Old World, real artists from around the globe.”

Ever since expanding Stylish to incorporate contemporary artists and design pieces as well, Silke has found her own interior design philosophy expanding. “It’s not just about age, it’s about craftsmanship. Placing a unique, artisan object at the center of your design guarantees that your room will never feel boring.”

Antique furniture remains her passion, however. “There is just such beauty there. So much of it overlooked. I really, truly fall in love with some of the pieces I come across.”

### **Applying a Design Philosophy**

Silke’s love for antique furniture is heightened in combination with modern living spaces. To explore the relationship between unique antiques and modern homes, Silke chose some of her favorite pieces available on Stylish. After introducing each piece, she gave suggestions for how to fit it into a home.

### **Painterly Wood: A Masterpiece of Cabinetmaking**

“My favorite piece of antique furniture we have in the catalogue right now is the [18<sup>th</sup> century cabinet secretaire](#). It’s a true masterpiece. From the woodwork to the details – it would feel right at home in an exhibition of groundbreaking furniture.”

Of particular note to Silke is that the cabinet was created to be a unique piece. Oftentimes, cabinet makers would create a series of the same design to be distributed to consumers. Not in this case.

“It’s unique because it was made for one patron. And that’s fascinating from an art historical perspective because the images in the wood... they likely had personal significance to the patron, not just the artist.”

She lingers particularly on the wood marquetry, the inlaid wood pictures in the veneer. “The cabinet maker painted without a paintbrush. He used the grain and coloration of different wood chips to assemble scenes and to simulate depth. It’s a mosaic. It’s a work of art.”

Thematically, the cabinet blends themes of time, religion, and nature. “It’s almost overwhelming. You could talk for hours about the significance of certain artistic decisions. It’s absolutely my favorite.”

Silke suggests placing this cabinet in a location where it could be admired from all sides. “It will catch the eye from any angle – it just has that effect. I would put it in an otherwise understated room. A modern seating arrangement with straight, clear angles would be a wonderful contrast to the organic curves in the cabinet.”

Silke notes the practical purpose of the piece. “As long as you choose the right environment, the piece should be an organic part of your household, not an isolated museum object. Use it to store things, to write things. Make it feel its purpose. That’s why I do what I do.”

Read up on the [Baroque Period on our blog](#).

### **From Italy, With Love – A Neoclassical Dresser**

Once again, it is the details that draw Silke to [this piece](#). “The musical instruments in the veneer, the playing cards – could they give us a hint about who ordered this dresser? Was he a composer? Or just someone who loved music?” She would ask you to posit your own interpretation.

It should come as no surprise that Silke loves this piece of antique furniture because of its Italian roots. As noted above, her time in Bologna had a significant impact on her aesthetic tastes and passions. “It’s influenced by Maggiolini, that much is clear.”

[Giuseppe Maggiolini](#) was the pre-eminent cabinetmaker in late 18<sup>th</sup> century Milan. He was particularly renowned for his painterly marquetry, particularly in a neoclassical context. The boxy, imposing geometry of Neoclassical furniture was a masterful canvas for his refined, almost ethereal wood paintings.

“Part of the beauty of this piece,” thinks Silke, “is that you can draw your own connection to detailed marquetry. It’s like picking a painting to hang on your wall. If it speaks to you, it belongs to you. And unlike a painting, you can store socks in it!”

For a refresher on Neoclassical antique furniture and how it fits into our art historical context, refer back to our [blog post on the history of antique desk styles](#). Or refresh your [knowledge of wood veneer technology here](#).

### **Mirror, Mirror – A Swedish Find**

“I purchased the [Gustavian Giltwood Mirror](#) in Stockholm,” recalls Silke. “I’ve always had a fascination with Swedish history, and how it connected to the rest of Europe, particularly France.”

In her childhood, Silke had read *Desiree* by Annemarie Selinko, a romance novel about Napoleon’s Swedish love. “Years later, I saw this mirror and I said: that’s what it feels like to be a princess. Seeing yourself in this mirror – it’s like getting a glimpse at a fairytale.”

[Gustav III](#), who reigned in Sweden from 1771 to 1792, visited France and fell in love with Neoclassicism. This giltwood mirror embodies the stately principles of that period, just as the dresser above. “It’s a gorgeous movement. There’s so much theatricality and pride in it. It’s really beautiful.”

Silke suggests hanging this mirror in a larger entryway, or as a unique piece for your bedroom. “There’s something both welcoming and intimate about this piece. Don’t be intimidated by the gold. It’s a comforting shade on a mirror. It makes everything in it seem brighter.”

### **Biedermeier Delights**

“The period of antique furniture that has had the biggest impact on my life, and my family’s business, is Biedermeier. I have a soft spot for it. It’s all over my own house.”

What makes Biedermeier such a great fit for Stylish is how well it adapts to modern interiors. “It’s sleek, it has a beautiful focus on natural veneer, and, above all, it’s romantic.”

Silke grew up loving German Romanticism in all its forms. The great authors E.T.A. Hoffman and Joseph von Eichendorff made her fall in love with the fairytale landscapes around her native Heidelberg.

“Heidelberg is the definition of a fairytale town,” says Silke. “The Old Town, the castle ruins, the cozy restaurants and historic pubs – everything feels anchored in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in a way that makes any buff of history and romance swoon.”

Picking a favorite out of our romantic collection of antique furniture in the Biedermeier style is nigh on impossible for Silke. She finally settles on [this set of six Biedermeier chairs](#). “They are so elegant and sophisticated, but not at all overblown. I picked the fabric for their restoration, and I think they are so wonderfully combinable with any interior.”

It’s in their romantic seatback swirls that the spirit of Heidelberg lives on. To read more about Biedermeier and Romanticism, [check out this blog post](#) from a few weeks ago.

### **Art Deco Magic**

“Anyone who has been following Stylish for a little while knows how important Art Deco is to us. For me, it’s one of the most exciting periods in recent art history,” Silke notes. “Antique furniture does not have to be from the Age of Kings.”

[This bar cabinet](#) thrills with the verticality of Art Deco style, while being a completely unique piece of furniture. “I can’t take my eyes off of it. It’s such a classy, fun addition to a living or dining room. And so much more interesting than a simple bar cart!”

Silke had been in love with New York City long before moving to the US. “I visited when I was a young adult, and it was a dream come true. The skyscrapers, the aesthetic of it – that’s what Art Deco is about for me. Urban Dreams, nouveau riches, Modernism. It’s such a beautiful period of change.”

For more on Art Deco [History](#), [Style](#), and [Artists](#), read up on some of our blogs from earlier this year.

### **Putting it Together**

Silke hopes that by walking you through some of her favorite pieces of antique furniture, you will be inspired to follow your own taste and imagination. “It’s such an exciting prospect. Looking for treasures that can surprise your guests and revitalize your home.”

Above all, it has always been about story for the owner of Stylish. “I want people to develop relationships to art, not just from a distance, but up close and personally. It has been the joy of my life, and my family’s mission for generations.”

There’s a twinkle in her eye as she adds: “Do yourself a favor and jump on these pieces while you can. Because I know once they’ve found new homes, they’ll become family heirlooms. Once you’ve gone the way of antique furniture, you will never look back.”

From Emrit.io, a Cryptocurrency start-up:

### The History of Money: From Seashells to the Crypto World

The history of money is the history of our society. For as long as humans have been building fires, they've been exchanging goods with one another. From the Ancient world to the present moment, money is at the heart of most social dynamics: both as a metric of power and ownership, and as one of inequality.

In today's blog, we want to take a deep dive into the history of money – how it evolved and continues to evolve, how it impacted social dynamics, and how it's really always been about the same thing: finding a rulebook by which to organize the world.

*We will cover:*

- The origins of Money in systems of barter
- The development of physical currencies
- The evolution and financial logic of paper currencies
- The limits of fiat currency
- The new frontier of cryptocurrencies and how they fit into the canon of financial history

#### **Origins of Money**

It all started with products. As soon as human beings began creating things, an incentive for trade arose. For much of the beginnings of human history, those trades were direct exchanges. One human specialized in fishing, the other in making arrowheads. Both stood to gain from giving up some of what they gathered or made for themselves to someone else in return for a different product.

That much is clear and obvious. But why did we stop trading things directly? Well, say you have no need for fish because you don't like its taste. Why would you give the fish specialist any of your things? It's not like he has anything to give you that you need.

That simplifies the limits of the [barter system](#), of course. But it does expose the need for currency quite clearly. If we, as consumers, want to acquire certain goods, we must have something to trade that anyone could find useful.

#### **Physical Currencies**

Endowing certain materials with great value certainly marked the first step towards institutionalizing physical currencies. Indeed, such materials became the **medium of exchange** in transactions around the globe.

What was considered valuable differed by culture and geographical area. Whereas precious metals, like gold and silver, remain valuable to this day, some cultures endowed other

resources, like seashells or animal skins, with special value. Importantly, actual value still depended on individual negotiation, of course.

The first coins developed in China in the first millennium BCE. If someone wanted to trade in weapons or other metal goods, for instance, they might not have had the weapon with them at the time of the transaction.

Instead, [in around 770 BCE](#), people began leaving small cast-metal icons of the goods they promised the other person in return. Those small tokens were direct antecedents of the first Chinese coins. Importantly, they had little intrinsic value and were subject to the same system of trust as promissory notes much later in monetary history.

### **The Supremacy of Coin**

In around 600 BCE, the king of a region called Lydia, in modern-day Turkey, issued the first official currency in the world by minting his own coins and setting the value of exchange. He found an easy way to control the money supply: create money of his own and impose it on his kingdom.

The system proved so effective that it facilitated an enormous economic boom in the region. Lydia quickly became a trading hub, and soon inspired kingdoms and empires in its general vicinity to follow suit. These early coins were made from the precious metal electrum, a natural alloy of gold and silver.

It may be surprising to some that major historical forces, like the Roman Republic, did not begin minting metal coins [until almost 300 years later](#), in around 300 BCE. Up until then, various metal bullions had been used as vague mediums of exchange.

Gold and silver coins dominated European history well into the 16th century. Whereas some other areas of the world found the rarity of metal needed to make coins to be a hindrance to a growing economy, most European nations were able to sustain metal money thanks to colonial exploits from South America, especially.

### **Valuing Paper**

The next major transition that proved to be essential to the development of the modern financial world was the organized valuation of paper money. By removing any valuable material from the making of physical money, currencies became easier to make and manage.

It also made transactions more efficient and effective (a trend that cryptocurrencies would later reinforce as well). By being able to handle valuable transactions with paper notes, individuals were no longer forced to carry heavy collections of metal around whenever wanting to make a purchase.

Leaving silver and gold coins for the paper must seem like a big step – but it happened surprisingly early in certain areas of the globe.

When Marco Polo arrived in China in the 13th century, the Chinese Emperor already controlled an effective printed currency system around his vast empire. That system had begun to emerge only shortly after the first coins were developed in China. As early as 700 BCE, the Chinese were using an antique form of promissory notes to execute trade and transactions.

Polo was shocked by the efficiency and trust involved in the system. He wrote:

“With these pieces of paper, they can buy anything and pay for anything. And I can tell you that the papers that reckon as ten bezants do not weigh one.” (Quoted in [Medium](#))

The Chinese Emperor kept control of his paper system by prohibiting outsiders from trading their valuables to any domestic client. Only the Emperor himself was to buy valuables from foreign traders, a rule which had to be followed on pain of death.

Though those kinds of rules now seem antiquated, they actually form the basis of modern monetary policy.

By institutionalizing a centralized banking system, governments around the world, the young United States significantly among them, were able to develop powerful paper currencies. And much of the legal system in countries like the US is designed to protect the financial system from being impacted or exploited.

### **Banking and Metal Standards**

On December 15th, 1790, Alexander Hamilton [proposed](#) a central bank system to the US Congress. President Washington signed it into law on February 25th, 1791. And though the Federal Reserve system as we know it today did not come into being until 1914, the foundations for the United States’ impending global economic might (and modern monetary systems) were laid then and there.

Indeed, the proposal to have a government-backed banking system proved essential in establishing the US dollar as the most important fiat currency in the modern world.

Initially, currencies like the dollar were backed by a gold standard, meaning that the full value of the currency had to exist in the government’s hands in physical gold ([\\$20.67 got you an ounce of gold](#)). That system was abandoned during the Great Depression, which many credits with saving the US economy.

### **Money as a Political Tool**

The establishment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1944 facilitated a process that had already begun to unfold: countries setting the values of their currencies against the value of other global currencies.

The dollar was used to provide economic stability to various nascent postcolonial economies. To this day, 14 currencies are pegged to the US dollar, meaning they have their value set and stabilized by the American currency.

In the history of money, the dawn of a more interconnected world meant a new role for money internationally, too.

Once currencies stopped using a metal standard, exchange rates and values could be tampered with for political opportunities. So-called “Currency Wars” refers to economic altercations between nations, in which a country devalues its currency to make its own exports more attractive.

That brings us to the present day. Most of the world’s economy is based on government-regulated currencies that interact in a global financial market. We’ve seen the potential downside of a global system as recently as 2008 (or even these past few years): in this day and age, when one major market is in trouble, everyone’s in trouble.

But a global economy has created infinitely greater opportunities for wealth and investment. Because of the increasing abstraction of money, more wealth exists in the world today than ever before. Indeed, total global wealth is [close to \\$500 trillion](#), or half a quadrillion as of June 2021.

### **The Digital Frontier**

With the dawn of a new era of information exchange came the possibility of digitalizing money. Banks began moving some of their features online over 20 years ago. Applications developed that allowed a fast transfer of currency entirely in the digital space. PayPal, an online payments system was founded in 1998.

As the world began discovering the possibilities of the internet, so it began to discover its flaws and downsides. In its earliest years, the digital world was a place of exploration and growth, but it was also subject to security breaches of all kinds.

Those who wanted to store or exchange sensitive information throughout the web learned to rely on heavily fortified central servers – but even those were never impermeable to hackers. It did not seem that the internet would ever be a place where anything could be truly safe, let alone be the vessel of an entirely non-physical, virtual currency.

### **Cryptocurrencies and the Future**

But then, of course, came Bitcoin. Backed by avant-garde blockchain technology, bitcoin became the first widespread all-digital currency. Rather than the value in physical objects (be it seashells, gold, or paper; a fiat currency), its value was based on the trustless immutability of blockchain technology. A new era dawned on the financial sector.

Blockchain arrived at a turning point in global technological development. As the first system to guarantee the safety and security of digital transactions, it has already proven itself to be more than just a smart currency-backing system.

Indeed, blockchain promises a whole new kind of access to the wealth of the coming decades. Based on a model of decentralized power and control, blockchain relies on the contributions of individuals to maintain its anonymous security, whether to guarantee the validity of a smart contract or anonymously transmit sensor data over the internet.

That kind of redistribution of financial power is a necessary part of the next phase of financial growth. And that's exactly what companies like Emrit want to facilitate. As a distributed blockchain infrastructure company, we are not only laying the physical groundwork for blockchain networks around the globe but creating economic opportunities based on newly developing cryptocurrencies.

There is a certain kind of fairness built into the way cryptocurrencies are designed. In order to create and earn them, you have to mine them, as you might have mined gold in the West 200 years ago.

But this time, the system isn't just for wild dreamers and death-daring adventurers. You can become part of valuing a currency by contributing to a blockchain network at little cost to yourself. You can become part of the next chapter of the history of money, by simply joining the Emrit community.

### **Summary: Only the Beginning?**

Money runs through every facet of our daily life. From your first cup of coffee in the morning to the device you're reading this on: everything in our society is defined and enabled by money. That's not always a good thing. There is a dark side to a world in which money is supreme, one of defined and imposed inequality.

And yet, at the same time, few of the comforts we do get to enjoy in today's world would exist without money. It's the lifeblood of a creative, inventive economy, encouraging progress as much as it can hinder it.

*In today's blog we covered:*

- Systems of Barter and the origins of money
- The evolution of coin and physical currencies
- The development of paper currency
- The political impact of money
- How digital currencies fit into the history of money

What makes the digital frontier so special is that it's largely untapped as of yet. And by building the infrastructure of digital currencies ourselves, we can have a hand in distributing the power of money more equitably. Learn more about that mission and the work of Emrit as a whole by heading to our homepage. And be sure to follow our blog for more deep dives into the world of crypto.

ii. Excerpt from Bachelor Honors Thesis in International Studies (Northwestern University, 2021)

*Devil's Bargain: Subsidizing Corporations in the Fight for the Climate* (Inaugural Winner of the Jeff Rice Prize for Original Thinking in International Studies)

**Devil's Bargain: Subsidizing Corporations in the Fight for the Climate**

By Lennart Nielsen  
An International Studies Honors Thesis  
Advisor: Professor Kim Suiseeya  
Northwestern University, 2021

## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION: A NEW PERSPECTIVE .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: OUR CLIMATE CRISIS .....</b>	<b>22</b>
ANATOMY OF AN APOCALYPSE.....	22
PARIS DIPLOMACY.....	24
<b>CHAPTER 2: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>27</b>
CODA: THE DANGEROUS LIE OF CONSUMER CHOICE.....	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: THE RISE OF THE CORPORATION.....</b>	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
THE ROOTS OF COMPETITION.....	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
i. <i>The Market of Ideas.....</i>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
ii. <i>The End of History: Francis Fukuyama and Capitalist Ascendancy.....</i>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
TRIANGULATIONS I: THE WORLD-SYSTEM AND CORPORATIONS .....	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
i. <i>Development.....</i>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
ii. <i>Dependent Development: Brazil .....</i>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
iii. <i>The Other Form of Corporate Ascendancy: South Korea .....</i>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
iv. <i>Conclusion: The Development Triangle and the Climate Crisis .....</i>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
CODA: THE QUESTION OF ECOLOGICAL DEBT .....	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: THE SUBSIDY BRIDGE.....</b>	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
BAD POLICIES: TAXATION WITHOUT PROFITIZATION .....	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
i. <i>Carbon Tax.....</i>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
ii. <i>Cap and Trade.....</i>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
iii. <i>Outsourcing Carbon: The Geography Loophole .....</i>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
GOOD POLICIES: THE BENEFIT OF STAYING (GREEN) .....	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
CODA: STATE-OWNERSHIP AND AUTHORITARIANISM .....	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
<b>CONCLUSION: WHO WE SHOULD BE .....</b>	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
SUMMARY .....	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
TRIANGULATIONS II: THE FINAL STAND AGAINST CORPOCRACY .....	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>

## INTRODUCTION: A New Perspective

In the early days of what would become a contentious Democratic primary, flush with close to 30 politicians arguing the minutiae of their American Dream, Governor Jay Inslee of Washington sought to reframe the political battle of the 2020 election into one not just about defeating a polarizing incumbent, but one about the very future of the world: “For millions of Americans, climate change is no longer just a chart or a graph. It’s the smoke on our tongues from massive wildfires. It’s the floodwater invading our homes, and record-breaking hurricanes and heat waves,” he wrote in a Washington Post opinion piece a few months before launching his own brief, unsuccessful campaign.<sup>1</sup> As Governor of Washington, Inslee has used unprecedented executive action to reform the transportation sector, cap carbon pollution, and set his state on the path of climate-neutral energy production by 2030. He calls this “full-mobilization” and urges the same kind of action on a federal level. At his two debate appearances, no other candidate attacked his position on the climate.<sup>2</sup> “I have proposed, following Governor Inslee...” began Elizabeth Warren in a debate later that fall when introducing her climate plan, long after Inslee himself had left the race.<sup>3</sup> He had left an impact because his stance was irrefutably wise and effective. And yet he had lost. As did Senator Warren and Senator Bernie Sanders, both supporters of a progressive “Green New Deal.” Joe

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<sup>1</sup> Jay Inslee, “The next President Must Make Climate Change the Top Priority,” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 17 Jan. 2019, [www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/01/17/next-president-must-make-climate-change-top-priority/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/01/17/next-president-must-make-climate-change-top-priority/).

<sup>2</sup> “Energy & Environment,” *Governor Jay Inslee*, [www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/energy-environment](http://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/energy-environment).

<sup>3</sup> “September Houston Democratic Debate Transcript - Third Debate,” *Rev*, 11 Feb. 2020, [www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/democratic-debate-transcript-houston-september-12-2019](http://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/democratic-debate-transcript-houston-september-12-2019).

Biden, the candidate who won the primary, and later the presidency, asserted throughout his general election campaign that he would not oppose fracking.<sup>4</sup>

Not all looks to be bleak. In his first address as the President-Elect, Biden acknowledged the climate crisis in clearer terms than any of his predecessors, claiming a “mandate” to wage the “battle to save the climate”.<sup>5</sup> That position, and his comparatively progressive climate plan, were no doubt influenced by the failed primary campaigns of his progressive rivals. That is good news. “Biden's plan, if implemented, would be orders of magnitude more significant than anything the Obama administration did,” writes commentator Ryan Cooper. Then he adds a critical caveat: “There is still little sign that Biden or the rest of the Democratic establishment have fully grasped the colossal scale of the challenge that climate change poses. They are moving in the right direction, but they still have a long way to go.” No full-mobilization in sight.<sup>6</sup> Though only time will show the actual impact of the Biden Administration on climate action, one thing seems amply clear: whatever will be done will not be enough, especially when the partisan debate about the Climate Crisis in the US still revolves around its very existence. That is no longer a failure of imagination and foresight. It is a failure of acknowledgement, a failure of fact.

But the even more dangerous debate, perhaps, is the debate about what constitutes appropriate and effective climate action: Is it a Green New Deal, with a focus on stringent top-down government-imposed regulations and a refurbished social safety net? Or a more moderate approach that is tempered in its expression of government regulation? What if it is neither? What

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<sup>4</sup> Calvin Woodward, “Trump Falsifies Biden Stance on Fracking,” *AP NEWS*, Associated Press, 14 Oct. 2020, [apnews.com/article/election-2020-ap-fact-check-joe-biden-donald-trump-pennsylvania-fa798602a357d0f4a765739e36f4f82b](https://apnews.com/article/election-2020-ap-fact-check-joe-biden-donald-trump-pennsylvania-fa798602a357d0f4a765739e36f4f82b).

<sup>5</sup> Joe Biden, “Joe Biden's President-Elect Acceptance Speech: Full Transcript,” ed. Matt Stevens, *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 8 Nov. 2020, [www.nytimes.com/article/biden-speech-transcript.html](https://www.nytimes.com/article/biden-speech-transcript.html).

<sup>6</sup> Ryan Cooper, “Is Joe Biden Taking Climate Change Seriously?” *The Week*, The Week, 14 July 2020, [theweek.com/articles/925394/joe-biden-taking-climate-change-seriously](https://theweek.com/articles/925394/joe-biden-taking-climate-change-seriously).

if the focus on government regulation ignores the bigger picture, both in the US domestically and in the international forums of the United Nations? What if the regulatory perspective, by now familiarly partisan, is wrong?

In this thesis, I will explore why our current political perspective on climate policy has been unable to generate sufficient action. I will seek to understand why promises borne out of international political forums like the UN have been and continue to be inadequate, and why any policy that centers regulatory measures (what I will call a “top-down” approach) has no hope of having sufficient impact. I will demonstrate that that approach to policy works against the way power is held and organized in our current social covenant. By centering the impact and potential of multi-national corporations (MNCs) as vessels for climate action, I intend to reframe the conversation around curbing carbon pollution into one about subsidizing a transition to a post-carbon economy. I will argue that the timeline of global warming not only necessitates a solution rooted in the principles of capitalism that govern the world’s economy, but that a profit-oriented solution is the only effective way to counteract a problem stemming from two centuries of uninhibited economic growth. To identify the historical precedent for corporate involvement in global political action, I will engage with the roots of competition and the development patterns of post-colonial nations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the heart of this thesis lies a fundamental assumption: That the Climate Crisis is real, caused by human action, more urgent than any other issue facing society today, and that there is hope if action is taken swiftly.

Much of contemporary writing about the Climate Crisis agrees on one thing: that the world has passed a point of no return; that unless an unthinkable significant correction occurs the current course will send us off the cliff.<sup>7</sup> At the core of the world’s market-based capital system

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<sup>7</sup> Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything*, (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2014), 6.

is an endless drive towards profit. Since 2020, a year of historic social upheaval, the moral weaknesses, racial ironies, and social evils of that system were exposed perhaps more so than ever before. Social Activist Naomi Klein shared a grand dream in her 2014 climate book *This Changes Everything*: seeing capitalism fall and an equitable society rise, one that could address not only those structural weaknesses but the Climate Crisis in broad policy directives. The ideological ideas contained in that dream, based on a healthy dose of Marxist historical materialism and a deep desire for Scandinavian-style social welfare systems are wonderful to some and nightmarish to others. And that is the very problem with an ideological solution to a universal problem: as any climate scientist would tell you, there simply isn't time to debate the how and why of societal upheaval, nor go back and forth between polar opposites. This thesis will not seek to take a political stance on what may or may not be the ideal form of government to address global warming. Instead, I stipulate that we must base our survival in our current social order, in the often cruel machinery of global capitalism, in the hopes that avoiding apocalyptic fallout will allow us to debate the reform of society for millennia to come.

For that reason, I will conceive of the Climate Crisis as first and foremost an economic issue: global warming will destroy large swaths of profitable sectors within the next century by attacking resources, infrastructure, and consumers. Eventually, every sector in the world economy will be forced to acknowledge that: when the physical damage done by climate upheaval is no longer refutable, when pollution ceases to be an externality and starts becoming an active influence on the polluting sector. By then, it will be too late. But an immediate acknowledgment of that horrible truth will allow our product and profit-driven society to act; in fact, I will argue that capitalism and economic competition hold the key to radical climate action.

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I will introduce the Climate Crisis as covered in contemporary writing and culture. In Chapter 2, I will outline my analytical framework and primary interlocutors. In Chapter 3, I will trace the history of competitive development and the growing role of corporations in the development of economies, in order to both establish a historiographical precedent for corporate involvement in diplomatic and political problems and prove that history points to the corporation as the natural executor of climate action. In Chapter 4, I will identify how and why current approaches to climate policy have failed in order to highlight why a new perspective is needed in the fight for our lives. In the conclusion, beyond tying together the various interdisciplinary fields of my argument, I will briefly consider what an approach of corporate subsidy means for individual consumers, in hopes of stimulating further discussion about the way individuals are protected and represented in the macroscopic power structure of contemporary society.

I will be referring to the concept of externalities throughout this thesis. An externality is a “side effect or consequence of an industrial or commercial activity that affects other parties without this being reflected in the cost of the goods or services involved.”<sup>8</sup> Carbon pollution is one of the most widespread externalities in an economy reliant on carbon for power and fuel: nearly every sector of the economy pollutes in some way, small or large. The problem with the economic impulse to consider carbon pollution an externality is that its impact is not reflected in any meaningful way in the supply and demand curves of any market – there is no cost associated with pollution, and therefore it is not disadvantageous from an economic perspective, to continue doing it. That is what most contemporary climate actions seek to change: a carbon tax or cap and trade scheme, two examples of widely touted policies in the climate conversation, both seek to

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<sup>8</sup> *Definition of Externality*, Oxford English Dictionary, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/externality>.

attach a cost to carbon. Their intended effect is to artificially reflect the side effects of pollution in the margins of a polluting company. As part of this thesis, I will demonstrate why those policies, and the thinking behind them, is not only ineffective, but distracts from more meaningful action.

I want to immediately differentiate between my ideas and what is considered a “market-based solution” in climate governance. As I will explain later, the climate policies that are considered market-based today (such as a cap-and-trade system) commodify carbon as a resource. As I will lay out over the course of this thesis, that is a mindset that cannot result in effective climate action. Think of my solution as one that relies on a transformation of the market and the *decommodification* of carbon as opposed to one based on carbon commodification.

My argument is a global one – part of it lies in the failure of international diplomacy, though I will demonstrate that the ineffectiveness of the forums like the UN is symptomatic of a larger issue. The majority of my thesis is written from the perspective of the United States and other democratic capitalist economies, where I will localize the problem of the flawed perspective. For purposes of macroeconomic influence, the United States continues to dominate – a new approach for the United States economy in this case is nearly synonymous with a new approach for the world economy, for reasons that will become apparent. Two factors are important to keep in mind: the US continues to have the largest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the world by a longshot, with a value of over \$21 trillion dollars in 2019,<sup>9</sup> and continues to be home to the most Fortune 500 corporations in the world.<sup>10</sup>

For any student of contemporary political economy, the rise of China is inextricable from conversations about global markets. For my purposes, I will consider China as a case study for

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<sup>9</sup> "United States GDP 1960-2019," United States GDP, <https://tradingeconomics.com/united-states/gdp>.

<sup>10</sup> "Global 500," (Fortune August 18, 2020), <https://fortune.com/global500/2020/>.

non-democratic players in climate action; the US remains my primary lens because of the supremacy of the American economic system in global interactions, from the EU to South America. As I will establish in this thesis, American corporations are model power structures for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with a long history of domineering influence in developing countries. As such, it is only right to consider the burden of climate action primarily from the perspective of the United States.

My thesis is about a *new* perspective. Neither seeking to propose a specific economic plan or piece of legislation, I am endeavoring to combine perspectives from multiple disciplines (historical, economic, and political) to decisively expose why climate action continues to stall in global forums and why the current way of thinking about climate policy is limiting our society's ability to act. I intend to reframe the way we confront and interact with the Climate Crisis. To some, my proposed solution will seem Faustian. On some level it is. I argue that our hope lies in a devil's bargain with the very forces that have brought us to the brink of apocalypse.

## CHAPTER 1: Our Climate Crisis

### Anatomy of an Apocalypse

To call the Climate Crisis a defining part of this generation’s lifetime is a humongous understatement. “If the next thirty years of industrial activity trace the same arc upward as the last thirty years have, whole regions will become unlivable by any standard we have today as soon as the end of the century,” writes David Wallace-Wells in his alarming 2017 summary of the crisis, *The Uninhabitable Earth*. Not only are we approaching disaster, he says, we are approaching “a human dusk.”<sup>11</sup> The Climate Crisis has the potential to be apocalyptic.

Environmentalist Elizabeth Kolbert thinks of it in less religious terms. She has deemed the Climate Crisis the beginning of the sixth process of mass extinction in the history of our planet; an extinction because of the plummeting biodiversity in the age of carbon, fueled by rising sea levels, the acidification of those seas, and the burning of the world’s forests, among other factors; the sixth because it has happened before.<sup>12</sup> Before humans even evolved, life on Earth had been practically extinguished on five separate occasions; in all cases, greenhouse gases played a decisive role.<sup>13</sup> This time around, writes Kolbert, the emissions are much steeper and not the result of natural activity, like random geologic events releasing millions of tons of methane stored in the Earth’s crust. Human industrial processes release as much as 9 *billion* tons of carbon into the atmosphere each year; if that trend continues, carbon-dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere will cause temperature increases of between 3.5 and 7 degrees Celsius globally,

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<sup>11</sup> David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*. New York: Tim Duggan, 2019, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*. New York: Picador, 2014, 3, 123

<sup>13</sup> Kolbert, *Sixth Extinction*, 77.

the upper-end of which would almost certainly kill most life on Earth.<sup>14</sup> A man-made extinction, extinguishing man.

The underlying facts of global warming tell a straight-forward story: carbon-dioxide emissions have clogged the atmosphere to such an extent that heat radiating off of the Earth no longer escapes into space, causing the global average temperature to rise, which in turn threatens the stability of entire ecosystems, melts the sheets of polar ice that adorn the Earth's coldest corners, and drastically impacts weather patterns.<sup>15</sup> The widely accepted upper limit of carbon-dioxide in the atmosphere (350 parts per million in the atmosphere) was shattered back in the 1990s. In 2016, the world passed 400ppm, a figure long considered a "red-line" for climate scientists.<sup>16</sup> In essence, the world's exhaust vent is clogged, and the kitchen is filling with smoke.

Now, as the number of climate disasters rises year-by-year, the impact of the crisis is being felt in ways that make its likely irreversible effects much less abstract. The Red Cross estimates that 51 million people died as a result of natural disasters in the first 9 months of 2020, even as the COVID-19 pandemic, a much less abstract killer, claimed around 1.7 million lives in the same timeframe (Appendix A).<sup>17</sup> To phrase all this in terms more urgently accessible to the economic argument of this thesis: 3.7 degrees of global warming would produce around \$551 trillion in damages, "almost double the amount of wealth that exists in the world today."<sup>18</sup> Yet, the climate crisis has not resulted in measures anywhere near as urgent as those adopted around

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<sup>14</sup> Kolbert, *Sixth Extinction*, 113.

<sup>15</sup> Amanda MacMillan, "Global Warming 101," (NRDC. March 11, 2016), <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/global-warming-101>.

<sup>16</sup> Nicola Jones, Jim Robbins, Beth Gardiner, and Paul Hockenos, "How the World Passed a Carbon Threshold and Why It Matters," Yale E360, <https://e360.yale.edu/features/how-the-world-passed-a-carbon-threshold-400ppm-and-why-it-matters>.

<sup>17</sup> Kate Doyle, "Disaster, Climate Change and Coronavirus: 2020 Has Been a Hell of a Year," ABC News, September 25, 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-26/coronavirus-climate-change-disasters-2020-hell-of-a-year/12696260>.

<sup>18</sup> Wallace-Wells, *Uninhabitable Earth*, 30.

the world (to varying degrees) in response to the coronavirus. Climate-related deaths are certainly easier to dismiss as freakish outliers because of their versatility and their scale. It is easier to conjure up the image of a lethal microbe than a natural revolt on a macroscopic, planetary scale. So perhaps the concept is best understood in the lingo of a post-2020 world. The Earth is fighting its own virus: humankind. Our goal, as a species, must be to make ourselves less lethal or risk being irradiated by a long-dormant immune system of biblical means.

One additional idea warrants attention: the Climate Crisis is multi-faceted. It is not *only* caused by carbon pollution. A green, sustainable future is one in which trash no longer clogs the Pacific Ocean, one in which forests are conserved and replanted, one in which we reevaluate the way we share the world with other animals. But for purposes of magnitude, everything is rooted in the burning of fossil fuels for purposes of energy production, consumer product manufacturing, and transportation. When referring to a “solution” in this thesis, then, I mean a solution to the fossil fuel problem. The goal must be to design a world order in which the transition away from fossil fuels is not only necessary but profitable, not a punishment, but an economically favorable move. And that is where traditional diplomacy and government has failed.

### Paris Diplomacy

In 2016, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a group of 154 nations, passed the Paris Agreement, outlining a pledge of efforts by member states to counteract the effects of climate change. The agreement is the most far-reaching position paper on climate change in UN history, ratified by over 125 nations, setting a global goal of

keeping warming under 1.5 degrees Celsius.<sup>19</sup> “While the beginning of this period of human history has been indelibly and painfully marked, the full story has not been written. We still hold the pen,” wrote the chief architects of the agreement in their reflective book *The Future We Choose*.<sup>20</sup> The pen, indeed, was placed into the hands of national governments once more. There is real hope in *The Future We Choose*: Perhaps the UN could curate enough peer-pressure to enact change, as it did in the 1980s in response to chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) tearing a hole in the Ozone Layer, an unprecedented success story.<sup>21</sup>

The shortcomings of the agreement, however, are just as numerous as the symbolic achievements: “Nationally Determined Contributions” (or NDCs) define a country’s required “contributions” to lowering their carbon outputs. Those contributions are determined by the nations themselves based on their “circumstances, resources, and abilities,” without actual accountability or oversight.<sup>22</sup> That system allows the world’s largest national polluter, China, to aim hitting its “peak output” within the next ten years; in other words, continue increasing carbon emissions for years to come before charting a reverse course.<sup>23</sup> That simply is not radical enough of a position for China, nor for the rest of the world. Not for where we find ourselves in 2021.

The United States left the Paris Agreement in November 2020. While it rejoined on the day of President Biden’s inauguration, the US may take years to refocus its efforts towards its

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<sup>19</sup> “What Is the Paris Agreement?” *UNFCCC*, United Nations, [www4.unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement](http://www4.unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement).

<sup>20</sup> Christiana Figueras and Tom Rivett-Carnac. *The Future We Choose*. New York: Knopf, 2020, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Brian Handwerk. “Whatever Happened to the Ozone Hole?” *National Geographic News*, 21 May 2016, [www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2010/5/100505-science-environment-ozone-hole-25-years/](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2010/5/100505-science-environment-ozone-hole-25-years/).

<sup>22</sup> UN Development Programme. “What Are NDCs and Why Are They Important?” *Medium*, Medium, 19 Nov. 2019, [undp.medium.com/what-are-ndcs-and-why-are-they-important-ee80ebb6ec2f](https://undp.medium.com/what-are-ndcs-and-why-are-they-important-ee80ebb6ec2f).

<sup>23</sup> Josh Gabbatiss, “China’s Emissions ‘Could Peak 10 Years Earlier than Paris Climate Pledge’,” *Carbon Brief*, 5 Oct. 2020, [www.carbonbrief.org/chinas-emissions-could-peak-10-years-earlier-than-paris-climate-pledge](http://www.carbonbrief.org/chinas-emissions-could-peak-10-years-earlier-than-paris-climate-pledge).

own NDC, “an economy-wide target of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 26%-28% below its 2005 level in 2025.”<sup>24</sup> According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), total U.S. energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions fell by only 12% between 2005 and 2018, many points off the Paris target, largely because of the Trump Administration’s environmental policy reversals in the years since 2016.<sup>25</sup> If climate policy can indeed be so radically altered by a switch in administrations that a long-term goal is completely derailed in a matter of years, then the US-government is a key example of why the top-down approach has become obsolete in the fight against climate change: the globe cannot wait for a perennial game of politics to determine policy. And there is a second difficulty in the NDC metric: while it is easy to connect Chinese carbon-responsibility to state-owned corporations in China, the lines of responsibility blur for private, multi-national corporations that may be based in one country but pollute elsewhere.

Regardless of their form of government, all nations that participate in the world economy rely on corporations, whether state-owned or private, to produce goods and services. And those corporations do have something to lose in this fight: their resources, their infrastructure, and their consumers. The way the current economic system is set-up prevents them from accurately adjusting for that future impact. In essence, our short-term goal must be to trick corporations into investing in green technology and environmentally-conscious policies by making it their most profitable choice, before that evidently, *economically* becomes the case (by which point it will be too late). It’s a matter of pre-empting an inevitable market-shift based on unacknowledged externalities before those externalities are actively felt.

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<sup>24</sup>United Nations, “The United States Is Pleased to Communicate Its Intended Contribution,” *UNFCCC*, United Nations, [www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/United States of America First/U.S.A. First NDC Submission.pdf](http://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/United%20States%20of%20America%20First/U.S.A.%20First%20NDC%20Submission.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> Environmental Protection Agency, “Latest Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks Shows Long-Term Reductions, with Annual Variation,” *EPA*, Environmental Protection Agency, 13 Apr. 2020, [www.epa.gov/newsreleases/latest-inventory-us-greenhouse-gas-emissions-and-sinks-shows-long-term-reductions-0](http://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/latest-inventory-us-greenhouse-gas-emissions-and-sinks-shows-long-term-reductions-0).

## CHAPTER 2: Analytical Framework

In her book *Mindmade Politics*, political scientist Manjana Milkoreit argues that the very complexity of the Climate Crisis, from abstract impact to long-term policy problems, causes the entrenchment and diversification of opposing ideas when it comes to solving it. She analyzes six frames of thinking about solving the climate, from multilateralism and UN-skepticism, to individualistic, justice-oriented, and market-based approaches. The big take away from her study is that competing ideas are hindered from breaking out of the pack as the best solution by the very complexities from which they arise. A climate justice advocate and a market-champion may have nothing in common politically besides an abstract, looming threat.<sup>26</sup> In other words, we lack common ground on climate action because it does not feel real enough yet. A major theme of this thesis will be finding the common ground between ideas that seem at odds and ideologies that do not seem compatible. It will require an affirmation of the goal: that what needs to be accomplished is a fast, effective change in our carbon output. I will take a look at some of these divergent ideas and position my argument within and around them.

The basis of my argument lies in political scientist David Victor's excellent analysis of what he calls the "gridlock on global warming". In his 2011 book *Global Warming Gridlock*, Victor paints a clear picture of the failings of international diplomacy in the Climate Debate. "Governments have adopted the wrong models to guide their diplomatic efforts," having "relied too much on the history of international environmental accords," around clear-cut, easily identifiable problems like the Aerosol-Ozone Hole relationship.<sup>27</sup> The problem with CO2 specifically, says Victor, is that an effective response to excess emissions "require[s]

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<sup>26</sup> Manjana Milkoreit, *Mindmade Politics: The Cognitive Roots of International Climate Governance*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2017) 154, 214.

<sup>27</sup> David G. Victor, *Global Warming Gridlock: Creating More Effective Strategies for Protecting the Planet*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 263.

complicated coordination of policies that are costly and thus affect national economic competitiveness.”<sup>28</sup> Political scientist Kelly Levin calls those types of problems “super wicked problems”, namely because of a combination of four factors: “time is running out; those who cause the problem also seek to provide a solution; the central authority needed to address them is weak or non-existent; and irrational [profit-driven] discounting occurs that pushes responses into the future.”<sup>29</sup>

Victor suggests that policy conversations have become *too* global. Look not to the United Nations for leadership, he says, precisely because its forums on climate change (the UNFCCC or the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)) combine too many voices without capable enforcement powers, which results in situations where “governments set ambitious goals while real national policies drift far off course.”<sup>30</sup> To Victor, the solution is a “club approach” in which only major carbon players come to the table to “craft more complex deals” than a UN panel ever could, largely because the development interests of developing countries are not part of the conversation. He is envisioning something akin to a G7 Summit, a compact government forum, solely dedicated to solving the Crisis through mutual policy directives.

Victor identifies the policy goals of his imagined clubs as being based around the need to drive technological innovation towards green technologies, which is “extremely important in rewiring the politics of climate change.”<sup>31</sup> I agree with him on that. But I disagree with one of the key assumptions of his argument. Victor only questions the number of negotiators, not their political approach to climate action, as the cause for the gridlock. He affirms the power of

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<sup>28</sup> Victor, *Gridlock*, 263.

<sup>29</sup> Kelly Levin and Benjamin Cashore, "Overcoming the Tragedy of Super Wicked Problems: Constraining Our Future Selves to Ameliorate Global Climate Change," (*Policy Sciences* 45, no. 2 (June 2012)), 124.

<sup>30</sup> Victor, *Gridlock*, 234.

<sup>31</sup> Victor, *Gridlock*, 163.

regulatory governments. As does every sensible student of politics; after all, governments are in place to work for their people, to make decisions and enforce them with the power granted them by citizens and authority. That power, I will argue, has shifted in the last few decades. It has moved away from governments to such a degree that top-down policy proposals cannot have the impact they once did.

Victor lays out useful arguments about the pull of market forces and the need for technological innovation: those ideas are integral to my argument. Nor is his idea about focused diplomacy wrong; in the conclusion of this thesis, I will consider the future of political forums. But in order to truly understand the gridlock, we have to reject the nation-state forums that have been vaguely unsuccessful in addressing the Climate Crisis over the last few decades. What Victor fails to grasp is that the problem is not only that too many nations are at the table, but that the *only* voices posturing decision-making at a global level *are* nations. All the while, power has been gradually slipping away from them over the last few decades.

Dr. Jonathan Kuyper sees the failure of the UN embodied in the Copenhagen Conference of 2009, at which the “universal top-down” approach of the Kyoto Protocol, which included strict deadlines and global goals on curbing carbon emissions, was abandoned, marking the end of the UNFCCC’s role as an effective political facilitator. Kuyper describes the contemporary world order as one of “hybrid multilateralism”, a term that seeks to “capture [the] intensified interplay between state and non-state actors in the new landscape of international climate cooperation.”<sup>32</sup> Kuyper’s terminology is an astute analysis of the current state of the global system: it is unthinkable to separate business interests from inter-governmental conversations,

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<sup>32</sup> Jonathan W. Kuyper, Björn-Ola Linnér, and Heike Schroeder, "Non-state Actors in Hybrid Global Climate Governance: Justice, Legitimacy, and Effectiveness in a Post-Paris Era," (*Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*9, no. 1 (2017)), 562.

and the resulting system of global governance may well be defined as hybrid, combining various interests on a scale of global compromise. Of note is that national governments remain the only voting members of the largest international forums (say, the UN, the WTO, etc...). Corporate interests and NGOs, though ever more frequently party to discussion at global meetings, are relegated to a lower tier than governments. That is essential to remember in the context of the gridlock.

What the definition of “hybrid multilateralism” allows us to acknowledge is that corporate interests have become part of the global power structure. In the coming chapters, I will go so far as to argue that, without considering the power that multi-national corporations (MNCs) now hold in global decision-making, we cannot even begin to actually solve the Climate Crisis.

There are two reasons I do not reserve trust for a purely top-down approach. First, the failure of the UNFCCC as an effective forum exposes the exact problem that would also mar a “club approach”: it rubs up against the political flavors of individual countries, against ideologies and power dynamics that could potentially reject the Climate Crisis based on populist whim or be more concerned with self-empowerment. Those flavors, in turn, are so prone to shifting in domestic societies, that no government-regulated effort is guaranteed to last. We need look no further than the US for an example of why the club-based approach has the exact same issues as the UNFCCC: a Republican government in the US, as evidenced by the years 2017-2021, wants no part in a global political approach. And I agree vehemently with Victor and Kuyper: a global approach is indeed what we need.

But secondly, and most importantly, governments, and the way they have approached environmental policy, fail to understand how much the power structure of global society has

shifted since the end of World War II. The top-down regulations that continue to be posited as the only solutions to the Climate Crisis are to blame for the gridlock in the first place.

I want to argue that the gridlock Victor sees at the heart of diplomatic solutions to climate change is symptomatic of a much larger problem, a problem that extends not just to international diplomacy but to political power in individual nations: a gridlock between political and economic systems. A refusal to acknowledge the underlying capital structure of modern society, one defined by ascendant multi-national corporations, is the real reason popular climate policies like a carbon tax cannot make a big enough difference (nor get made into law in any meaningful national or international sense). Those top-down policies are designed for a world in which political power is absolute, a world in which governments run the gambit when it comes to decision making. But that is no longer the reality of our world.