POLS/ECON 409 · *Solutions to 21st Century Problems*

Today's discussion prompts synthesize student-provided questions.

Tariffs and the law. Will Trump ultimately find a way around the U.S. Court of International Trade's ruling against the use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to raise tariffs at will? If Trump ultimately loses in court on tariffs, will he ignore the ruling and step further into authoritarianism? How can courts restore their ability to check executive power?

Tariffs and hard times. When will working class people feel the effects of Trump's tariffs and other economic policies? If they lead to hard times, who will get the blame?

Cryptocurrency and financial regulation. Is cryptocurrency headed for a crash? Here to stay? Both? Will Trump's effort to normalize cryptocurrency fundamentally change the answers to these questions? More broadly, how will the Trump administration reshape financial regulation?

Reforming rating agencies. How can we reform the credit rating system so that rating agencies stop giving good ratings to risky securities? Making consumers of ratings pay agencies instead of issuers of securities would just create a public goods problem. Can the market solve this on its own, or do governments need to step in?

Government response to future crises. The 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic showed that effective state response requires strong institutions. What will happen to U.S. democracy and economic stability if leaders, including Trump, continue to weaken those institutions through authoritarian or anti-governance strategies?

AI and the demand for social protection. Will AI prompt new demands for social protection for those who lose jobs or the ability to enter the labor force due to automation? Is there potentially a tradeoff between social protection and other national policies that promote AI innovation in terms of the global race for AI supremacy?

AI and inequality. Will innovations in AI accelerate or slow the concentration of wealth predicted by Piketty?

Effective regulation of AI. How can we approach thinking about balancing the cost-efficiency of AI with human needs? And how can we critically assess proposals to achieve "balanced" AI adoption, or at least make these proposals more concrete? What concepts or metrics might we need in order to develop and rigorously evaluate policies to either protect workers from displacement by AI, or to at least balance worker replacement and innovation?

Inequality, populism, and xenophobia. Has rising inequality — whether caused by globalization, automation, or other forces — shaped the populist backlash against migration? How can democratic societies protect and promote inclusive policies and economic outcomes in the face of these challenges?

Restoring trust in government. How do we rebuild public confidence in government, especially if it isn't enough to just have effective policies?

Rebuilding state capacity. How can we rebuild state capacity in the wake of Trump's assault on the administrative state?

The fall of the liberal capitalist model? Are state-controlled economies now more effective in winning popular support compared to the liberal model? And is Trump pushing the US towards a China-like model of state-led control of the economy?

The end of American hegemony? Does the intentional destruction of American state capacity, perhaps combined with new technological innovations or the rise of China, portend the decline of America's economic and political hegemony? Of the dollar as reserve currency? Of international investment in the United States? Has the volatility of Trump's foreign policy fatally damaged US credibility?

The future of global conflict? What will future interstate conflicts look like in the 21st century? Does nuclear deterrence still matter? Does the rise of populism and authoritarianism increase the risk of conflict? What political and economic consequences would (hypothetical) war have for the US?

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