

# **Institutional Venues for Governing Deployment of Solar Geoengineering**

**David G. Victor**

Harvard Kennedy School Seminar

“Governance for the Deployment of Solar Geoengineering”

**BROOKINGS**

**UC San Diego**

# My Charge

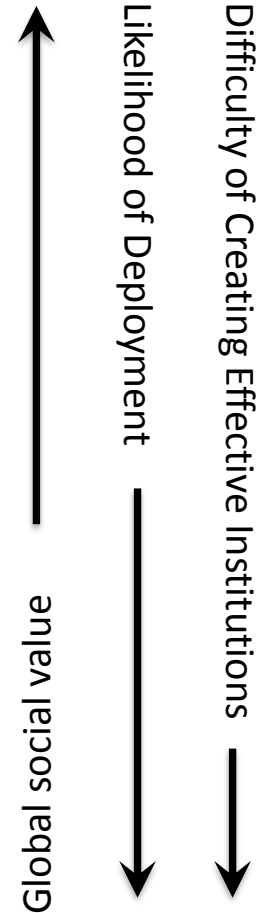
(4) *What institutions*, either existing or new, are appropriate as decision-making venues? What will or should be the legal framework of such institutions?

(5) How might SG complement and/or undermine national, regional, and multilateral institutions and policy to mitigate or adapt to climate change – and, more broadly, to manage climate risks?

# The answers depend on deployment scenarios

(Major Scenarios and institutional needs)

- **Widely known global climate emergency**
  - Cost sharing
  - Implementing complementary projects (e.g., liming)
- **Acute regional climate emergency**
  - Regional cost sharing
  - Restraint & risk assessment
  - Implementing complementary projects
- **Imagined local climate emergency**
  - Restraint and risk assessment
  - Implementing complementary projects
  - Dispute resolution
  - Avoiding termination shock



# Decision-making venues

- Most relevant decision-making will be within societies (mainly nations) and occur through existing political institutions that assign authority and allocate resources
- These institutions tend to follow a “logic of political survival” calculus
  - Least likely to do reckless things: consolidated autocracies and party-dominated stable democracies
  - Most likely to do reckless things: fragile governments facing loss run by inexperienced leaders

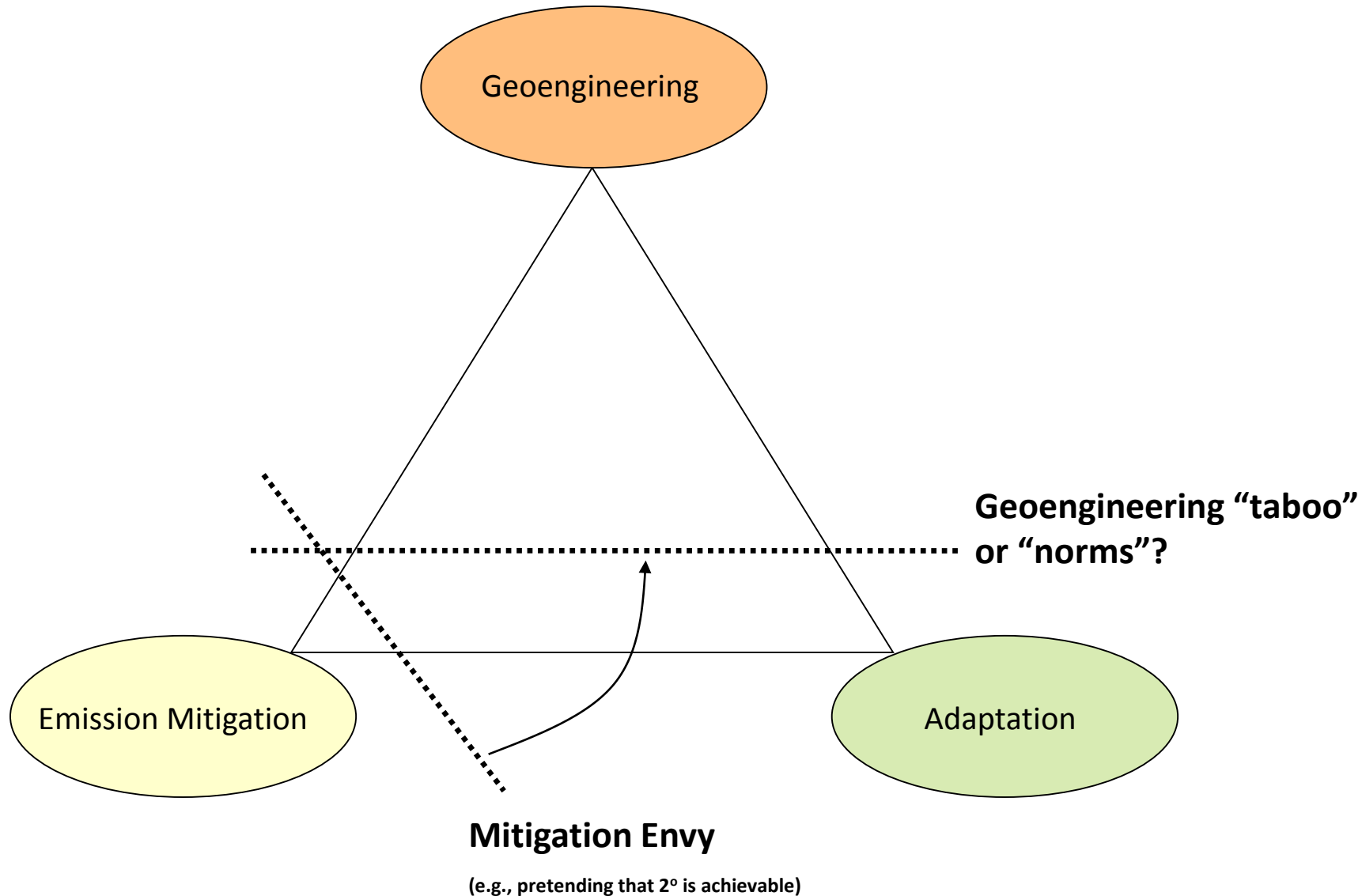
# Two Theories for How International Institutions Work

- **Theory 1: institutions help states craft contracts**
  - Legal form: precise binding treaties that allocate roles and responsibilities
  - For geoengineering: obligations of restraint and release of information
- **Theory 2: Institutions help establish norms**
  - Legal form: non-binding norms of practice and confidence building
  - For geoengineering: aspirational agreements with joint programs for research and information sharing
- **My view: theory 2 is more accurate most of the time**
  - But still weak in the face of strong national desire

# The Breakout Problem

- Analogy: secret weapons program that will confer strategic advantage when revealed to the world
  - E.g., Japanese & German Navies
  - E.g., hyper-MIRVed nuclear weapons
- Geoengineering scenarios
  - Crude geoengineering schemes launched by fragile leaders
  - Wacky, evangelical greenfinger scenarios
- Institutional Implications
  - Early warning and detection systems
  - Calculus of counter-force and first strike

# An Idealistic View of Climate Policy Strategy



# My Charge

(4) *What institutions*, either existing or new, are appropriate as decision-making venues? What will or should be the legal framework of such institutions?

(5) How might SG complement and/or undermine national, regional, and multilateral institutions and policy to mitigate or adapt to climate change – and, more broadly, to manage climate risks?



Thank You