

# **Trial Practice Symposium:** Drafting Complaints and Dispositive Motions

Hypothetical

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**Hon. Joan N. Feeney**

U.S. Bankruptcy Court (D. Mass.); Boston

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**Consumer Hypothetical 2012**

The prospective client, Rock Toughguy, has just arrived at the office of successor counsel. He is extremely upset. He is the debtor in a Chapter 13 bankruptcy case, filed for him in October 2011 by Augustus ("Gus") Slapshot of the Slapshot Law Offices P.C. Rock is trying to save his house, and says Slapshot filed a complaint or something in November "against the people who stole our house." The "thieves" filed a bunch of paper in response and the judge told Gus that the complaint was no good and that if a proper filing was not made soon -- by January 20th he thinks -- the lawsuit will be dismissed. Since then, Rock has not been able to reach lawyer Slapshot by phone, the Slapshot Law Offices voice mailbox is full and will no longer accept messages, and only a few days remain before the dismissal deadline. PACER confirms that an order entered in an adversary proceeding on defendants' motion to dismiss providing for dismissal if a proper complaint is not filed by the 20th.

In a chaotic conversation, successor counsel is told what happened. Rock and his wife Belinda live with their two children in bucolic Eastborough by the Sea. Their house, which was given to them by Belinda's parents on their wedding in 1997, has an assessed value of \$515,000. Rock and Belinda have had a difficult time recently. Rock is self employed in construction, and is not making as much as he used to. Belinda was laid off from her job early in 2010. They started falling behind on their bills, and were worried that late payments were affecting their credit rating and would prevent the low rate mortgage refinancing that would give them badly needed relief.

Rock and Belinda knew Dewey Cheathem from church where he was highly respected. Cheathem worked for a local mortgage broker, Closed Yesterday. He had helped many other church members with their mortgages. They met with him in January 2011 and explained that they were having a hard time paying their mortgage, thought their credit rating was probably bad, and were afraid they'd never be able to refinance. Cheathem reassured them, and said that he and his firm had helped lots of people out of such situations. Cheathem proposed what he referred to as his "typical arrangement," in which a friend with good credit would co-sign the refinancing, asking only a small fee to use his name. With the excellent interest rate they would get, after paying the friend, there would be \$25,000 or perhaps more in excess cash to cover other bills. The family spent money and ran up new bills in anticipation of refinancing.

At the April 1, 2011 closing, Cheathem said there had to be a little change. His friend -- Michael H. Sham III -- was happy to lend his name and help out, but it would be necessary to put the property in Sham's name temporarily as loan security. The family would still live there, of course. Rock became furious and shouted at Cheathem, Belinda sobbed, and the lawyer who was the only other person present started trembling and left the room. Cheathem calmed Rock and Belinda, said many of their neighbors had done this, and that things would work out "swell" for them too. The deal was simple. Cheathem would protect them by personally holding the net proceeds, and he would use some of that money to pay the new mortgage until the family had good credit and could refinance on their own. They would get \$10,000 in

cash right away. Feeling they had no choice, Rock and Belinda went forward with the closing. They signed a deed transferring their home to Sham, a promissory note and mortgage in favor of Frontrunner Bank, and "a pile of other documents." They either did not get copies of these papers, or cannot find them. They learned later that of the \$440,000 in proceeds of the refinancing loan, about \$300,000 had gone to pay off the old mortgage, \$100,000 in "earned fees and payment escrow" to Cheathem, and \$30,000 to Sham, plus the \$10,000 they received.

In August, Cheathem left Eastborough in the dead of night. Cheathem's house was foreclosed in September. Three days later the Toughguys received notice that the loan they signed together with Sham was to be foreclosed also. When Rock called Acme Servicing in September, he was told that only three payments had been made on the new mortgage. Rock called Sham, who said he did not know what he was talking about. Yes he sometimes took a stake with Cheathem in distressed properties, but these deals were all going bad and he was mad and had no interest in blocking foreclosure. If Rock had something to pay him, and nothing less than \$10,000 would be acceptable to transfer the property back, maybe he could help, otherwise he was burned bad just like them and "sometimes life is unfair." At this point, the children told Rock and Belinda, for the first time, about a conversation they overheard during the break in the closing in April. They had heard the lawyer leave the room, and then heard him place a phone call. The children were not sure who the lawyer had been speaking with, but he was upset, and was trying to get the other person to understand severe risks they were taking with all the mortgages coming out of Closed Yesterday.

Since September, Rock and Belinda have had many conversations with Acme Servicing, and have repeatedly submitted papers, without result. The only response they got were copies of statements of income and expenses, said to have been signed by Rock and Belinda and delivered at closing, which are incorrect, not signed by them, and which they had never seen before. They have called Frontrunner Bank, which says it sold their note and mortgage and can do nothing for them. They tried to contact Closed Yesterday, but the mortgage company's office is now shut and no representative can be found. The present location of Cheathem and the "escrow fund" he held for the Debtor and his wife are unknown. It has become notorious at church and in Eastborough that many residents were injured by the activities of Closed Yesterday and its brokers. Something like fifty people have already lost their homes to foreclosure, and a greater number are struggling to hold on to their homes. Their problems have been covered in the Eastborough Post Gazette, and on local cable television, in a series entitled "Note and Mortgage Purgatory in Eastborough."

Shortly after the note and mortgage were signed, Frontrunner Bank pooled them with other similar instruments and sold them as a "securitized" package to Successor Bank as trustee. Successor Bank noticed the property for a foreclosure auction on October 12, 2011. Rock filed his Chapter 13 bankruptcy petition and sent a Suggestion of Bankruptcy to Acme Servicing one day before the noticed sale, staying enforcement of the note of which he and Belinda were cosigners. Although Acme Servicing has filed a Proof of Claim with an attached copy of that promissory note, the

copy does not show an endorsement by Frontrunner Bank to Successor Bank or any other entity.

In November, Gus Slapshot filed an adversary proceeding for Rock Toughguy seeking to have the transfer reversed and the note and mortgage nullified on various bases including Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 93A. In a consolidated motion to dismiss filed for all the defendants, the complaint was objected to as rambling and unintelligible, and defendants noted that no demand letter had been sent as required by Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 93A, § 9(3). Rock has a copy of a letter Slapshot sent to Acme Servicing in October, requesting a copy of the original note, and believes that no copy was ever provided. From a review of the land records, there has been no assignment of record by the original holder of the note and mortgage to any other person or entity.

United States Code Annotated  
Federal Rules of Civil Procedure for the United States District Courts (Refs & Annos)  
Title III. Pleadings and Motions

## Federal Rules of Civil Procedure Rule 8

## Rule 8. General Rules of Pleading

## Currentness

(a) **Claim for Relief.** A pleading that states a claim for relief must contain:

- (1) a short and plain statement of the grounds for the court's jurisdiction, unless the court already has jurisdiction and the claim needs no new jurisdictional support;
- (2) a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief; and
- (3) a demand for the relief sought, which may include relief in the alternative or different types of relief.

(b) **Defenses; Admissions and Denials.**

(1) **In General.** In responding to a pleading, a party must:

- (A) state in short and plain terms its defenses to each claim asserted against it; and
- (B) admit or deny the allegations asserted against it by an opposing party.

(2) **Denials--Responding to the Substance.** A denial must fairly respond to the substance of the allegation.

(3) **General and Specific Denials.** A party that intends in good faith to deny all the allegations of a pleading--including the jurisdictional grounds--may do so by a general denial. A party that does not intend to deny all the allegations must either specifically deny designated allegations or generally deny all except those specifically admitted.

(4) **Denying Part of an Allegation.** A party that intends in good faith to deny only part of an allegation must admit the part that is true and deny the rest.

(5) **Lacking Knowledge or Information.** A party that lacks knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief about the truth of an allegation must so state, and the statement has the effect of a denial.

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**(6) *Effect of Failing to Deny.*** An allegation--other than one relating to the amount of damages--is admitted if a responsive pleading is required and the allegation is not denied. If a responsive pleading is not required, an allegation is considered denied or avoided.

**(c) Affirmative Defenses.**

**(1) *In General.*** In responding to a pleading, a party must affirmatively state any avoidance or affirmative defense, including:

- accord and satisfaction;
- arbitration and award;
- assumption of risk;
- contributory negligence;
- duress;
- estoppel;
- failure of consideration;
- fraud;
- illegality;
- injury by fellow servant;
- laches;
- license;
- payment;
- release;
- res judicata;
- statute of frauds;

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- statute of limitations; and
- waiver.

**(2) *Mistaken Designation.*** If a party mistakenly designates a defense as a counterclaim, or a counterclaim as a defense, the court must, if justice requires, treat the pleading as though it were correctly designated, and may impose terms for doing so.

**(d) Pleading to Be Concise and Direct; Alternative Statements; Inconsistency.**

**(1) *In General.*** Each allegation must be simple, concise, and direct. No technical form is required.

**(2) *Alternative Statements of a Claim or Defense.*** A party may set out 2 or more statements of a claim or defense alternatively or hypothetically, either in a single count or defense or in separate ones. If a party makes alternative statements, the pleading is sufficient if any one of them is sufficient.

**(3) *Inconsistent Claims or Defenses.*** A party may state as many separate claims or defenses as it has, regardless of consistency.

**(e) Construing Pleadings.** Pleadings must be construed so as to do justice.

**Credits**

(Amended February 28, 1966, effective July 1, 1966; March 2, 1987, effective August 1, 1987; April 30, 2007, effective December 1, 2007; April 28, 2010, effective December 1, 2010.)

Editors' Notes

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTES**

1937 Adoption

**Note to Subdivision (a).** See [former] Equity Rules 25 (Bill of Complaint--Contents), and 30 (Answer--Contents--Counterclaim). Compare 2 Ind.Stat. Ann. (Burns, 1933) §§ 2-1004, 2-1015; 2 Ohio Gen.Code Ann. (Page, 1926) §§ 11305, 11314; Utah Rev.Stat. Ann. (1933) §§ 104-7-2, 104-9-1.

See Rule 19(c) for the requirement of a statement in a claim for relief of the names of persons who ought to be parties and the reason for their omission.

See Rule 23(b) for particular requirements as to the complaint in a secondary action by shareholders.

**Note to Subdivision (b). 1.** This rule supersedes the methods of pleading prescribed in U.S.C., Title 19, § 508 (Persons making seizures pleading general issue and proving special matter); U.S.C. Title 35, [former] §§ 40d (Proving under general issue, upon notice, that a statement in application for an extended patent is not true), 69 [now 282] (Pleading and proof in

**Rule 8. General Rules of Pleading, FRCP Rule 8**

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actions for infringement) and similar statutes.

**2.** This rule is, in part, [former] Equity Rule 30 (Answer--Contents--Counterclaim), with the matter on denials largely from the Connecticut practice. See Conn. Practice Book (1934) §§ 107, 108, and 122; Conn.Gen.Stat. (1930) §§ 5508 to 5514. Compare the English practice, *English Rules Under the Judicature Act* (The Annual Practice, 1937) O. 19, r.r. 17-20.

**Note to Subdivision (c).** This follows substantially *English Rules Under the Judicature Act* (The Annual Practice, 1937) O. 19, r. 15 and N.Y.C.P.A. (1937) § 242, with “surprise” omitted in this rule.

**Note to Subdivision (d).** The first sentence is similar to former Equity Rule 30 (Answer--Contents--Counterclaim). For the second sentence see former Equity Rule 31 (Reply--When Required--When Cause at Issue). This is similar to *English Rules Under the Judicature Act* (The Annual Practice, 1937) O. 19, r.r. 13, 18; and to the practice of the States.

**Note to Subdivision (e).** This rule is an elaboration upon [former] Equity Rule 30 (Answer--Contents--Counterclaim), plus a statement of the actual practice under some codes. Compare also [former] Equity Rule 18 (Pleadings--Technical Forms Abrogated). See Clark, *Code Pleading* (1928), pp. 171-4, 432-5; Hankin, *Alternative and Hypothetical Pleading* (1924), 33 Yale L.J. 365.

**Note to Subdivision (f).** A provision of like import is of frequent occurrence in the codes. Smith-Hurd Ill.Stats. ch. 110, § 157(3); 2 Minn.Stat. (Mason, 1927) § 9266; N.Y.C.P.A. (1937) § 275; 2 N.D.Comp.Laws Ann. (1913) § 7458.

**1966 Amendment**

The change here is consistent with the broad purposes of unification.

## 1987 Amendment

The amendments are technical. No substantive change is intended.

## 2007 Amendment

The language of Rule 8 has been amended as part of the general restyling of the Civil Rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic only.

The former Rule 8(b) and 8(e) cross-references to Rule 11 are deleted as redundant. Rule 11 applies by its own terms. The force and application of Rule 11 are not diminished by the deletion.

Former Rule 8(b) required a pleader denying part of an averment to “specify so much of it as is true and material and \* \* \* deny only the remainder.” “[A]nd material” is deleted to avoid the implication that it is proper to deny something that the pleader believes to be true but not material.

Deletion of former Rule 8(e)(2)’s “whether based on legal, equitable, or maritime grounds” reflects the parallel deletions in Rule 1 and elsewhere. Merger is now successfully accomplished.

**Rule 8. General Rules of Pleading, FRCP Rule 8**

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**2010 Amendments**

**Subdivision (c)(1).** “[D]ischarge in bankruptcy” is deleted from the list of affirmative defenses. Under 11 U.S.C. § 524(a)(1) and (2) a discharge voids a judgment to the extent that it determines a personal liability of the debtor with respect to a discharged debt. The discharge also operates as an injunction against commencement or continuation of an action to collect, recover, or offset a discharged debt. For these reasons it is confusing to describe discharge as an affirmative defense. But § 524(a) applies only to a claim that was actually discharged. Several categories of debt set out in 11 U.S.C. § 523(a) are excepted from discharge. The issue whether a claim was excepted from discharge may be determined either in the court that entered the discharge or--in most instances--in another court with jurisdiction over the creditor’s claim.

Notes of Decisions (2962)

Amendments received to 11-1-11

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**Rule 10. Form of Pleadings, FRCP Rule 10**

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United States Code Annotated  
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Title III. Pleadings and Motions

## Federal Rules of Civil Procedure Rule 10

## Rule 10. Form of Pleadings

## Currentness

**(a) Caption; Names of Parties.** Every pleading must have a caption with the court's name, a title, a file number, and a Rule 7(a) designation. The title of the complaint must name all the parties; the title of other pleadings, after naming the first party on each side, may refer generally to other parties.

**(b) Paragraphs; Separate Statements.** A party must state its claims or defenses in numbered paragraphs, each limited as far as practicable to a single set of circumstances. A later pleading may refer by number to a paragraph in an earlier pleading. If doing so would promote clarity, each claim founded on a separate transaction or occurrence--and each defense other than a denial--must be stated in a separate count or defense.

**(c) Adoption by Reference; Exhibits.** A statement in a pleading may be adopted by reference elsewhere in the same pleading or in any other pleading or motion. A copy of a written instrument that is an exhibit to a pleading is a part of the pleading for all purposes.

**Credits**

(Amended April 30, 2007, effective December 1, 2007.)

**Editors' Notes****ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTES**

## 1937 Adoption

The first sentence is derived in part from the opening statement of former Equity Rule 25 (Bill of Complaint--Contents). The remainder of the rule is an expansion in conformity with usual state provisions. For numbered paragraphs and separate statements, see Conn.Gen.Stat., 1930, § 5513; Smith-Hurd Ill.Stats. ch. 110, § 157(2); N.Y.R.C.P., (1937) Rule 90. For incorporation by reference, see N.Y.R.C.P., (1937) Rule 90. For written instruments as exhibits, see Smith-Hurd Ill.Stats. ch. 110, § 160.

## 2007 Amendment

The language of Rule 10 has been amended as part of the general restyling of the Civil Rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic only.

**Rule 10. Form of Pleadings, FRCP Rule 10**

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Notes of Decisions (225)

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United States Code Annotated  
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Title III. Pleadings and Motions

Federal Rules of Civil Procedure Rule 12

Rule 12. Defenses and Objections: When and How Presented; Motion for Judgment on the Pleadings;  
Consolidating Motions; Waiving Defenses; Pretrial Hearing

Currentness

**(a) Time to Serve a Responsive Pleading.**

**(1) *In General.*** Unless another time is specified by this rule or a federal statute, the time for serving a responsive pleading is as follows:

**(A)** A defendant must serve an answer:

**(i)** within 21 days after being served with the summons and complaint; or

**(ii)** if it has timely waived service under Rule 4(d), within 60 days after the request for a waiver was sent, or within 90 days after it was sent to the defendant outside any judicial district of the United States.

**(B)** A party must serve an answer to a counterclaim or crossclaim within 21 days after being served with the pleading that states the counterclaim or crossclaim.

**(C)** A party must serve a reply to an answer within 21 days after being served with an order to reply, unless the order specifies a different time.

**(2) *United States and Its Agencies, Officers, or Employees Sued in an Official Capacity.*** The United States, a United States agency, or a United States officer or employee sued only in an official capacity must serve an answer to a complaint, counterclaim, or crossclaim within 60 days after service on the United States attorney.

**(3) *United States Officers or Employees Sued in an Individual Capacity.*** A United States officer or employee sued in an individual capacity for an act or omission occurring in connection with duties performed on the United States' behalf must serve an answer to a complaint, counterclaim, or crossclaim within 60 days after service on the officer or employee or service on the United States attorney, whichever is later.

**(4) *Effect of a Motion.*** Unless the court sets a different time, serving a motion under this rule alters these periods as follows:

Rule 12. Defenses and Objections: When and How Presented;..., FRCP Rule 12

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(A) if the court denies the motion or postpones its disposition until trial, the responsive pleading must be served within 14 days after notice of the court's action; or

(B) if the court grants a motion for a more definite statement, the responsive pleading must be served within 14 days after the more definite statement is served.

**(b) How to Present Defenses.** Every defense to a claim for relief in any pleading must be asserted in the responsive pleading if one is required. But a party may assert the following defenses by motion:

- (1) lack of subject-matter jurisdiction;
- (2) lack of personal jurisdiction;
- (3) improper venue;
- (4) insufficient process;
- (5) insufficient service of process;
- (6) failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted; and
- (7) failure to join a party under Rule 19.

A motion asserting any of these defenses must be made before pleading if a responsive pleading is allowed. If a pleading sets out a claim for relief that does not require a responsive pleading, an opposing party may assert at trial any defense to that claim. No defense or objection is waived by joining it with one or more other defenses or objections in a responsive pleading or in a motion.

**(c) Motion for Judgment on the Pleadings.** After the pleadings are closed--but early enough not to delay trial--a party may move for judgment on the pleadings.

**(d) Result of Presenting Matters Outside the Pleadings.** If, on a motion under Rule 12(b)(6) or 12(c), matters outside the pleadings are presented to and not excluded by the court, the motion must be treated as one for summary judgment under Rule 56. All parties must be given a reasonable opportunity to present all the material that is pertinent to the motion.

**(e) Motion for a More Definite Statement.** A party may move for a more definite statement of a pleading to which a responsive pleading is allowed but which is so vague or ambiguous that the party cannot reasonably prepare a response. The motion must be made before filing a responsive pleading and must point out the defects complained of and the details desired. If the court orders a more definite statement and the order is not obeyed within 14 days after notice of the order or within the time the court sets, the court may strike the pleading or issue any other appropriate order.

**(f) Motion to Strike.** The court may strike from a pleading an insufficient defense or any redundant, immaterial, impertinent, or scandalous matter. The court may act:

**Rule 12. Defenses and Objections: When and How Presented;..., FRCP Rule 12**

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(1) on its own; or

(2) on motion made by a party either before responding to the pleading or, if a response is not allowed, within 21 days after being served with the pleading.

**(g) Joining Motions.**

(1) **Right to Join.** A motion under this rule may be joined with any other motion allowed by this rule.

(2) **Limitation on Further Motions.** Except as provided in Rule 12(h)(2) or (3), a party that makes a motion under this rule must not make another motion under this rule raising a defense or objection that was available to the party but omitted from its earlier motion.

**(h) Waiving and Preserving Certain Defenses.**

(1) **When Some Are Waived.** A party waives any defense listed in Rule 12(b)(2)-(5) by:

(A) omitting it from a motion in the circumstances described in Rule 12(g)(2); or

(B) failing to either:

(i) make it by motion under this rule; or

(ii) include it in a responsive pleading or in an amendment allowed by Rule 15(a)(1) as a matter of course.

(2) **When to Raise Others.** Failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, to join a person required by Rule 19(b), or to state a legal defense to a claim may be raised:

(A) in any pleading allowed or ordered under Rule 7(a);

(B) by a motion under Rule 12(c); or

(C) at trial.

(3) **Lack of Subject-Matter Jurisdiction.** If the court determines at any time that it lacks subject-matter jurisdiction, the court must dismiss the action.

(i) **Hearing Before Trial.** If a party so moves, any defense listed in Rule 12(b)(1)-(7)--whether made in a pleading or by motion--and a motion under Rule 12(c) must be heard and decided before trial unless the court orders a deferral until trial.

**Credits**

## Rule 12. Defenses and Objections: When and How Presented;..., FRCP Rule 12

(Amended December 27, 1946, effective March 19, 1948; January 21, 1963, effective July 1, 1963; February 28, 1966, effective July 1, 1966; March 2, 1987, effective August 1, 1987; April 22, 1993, effective December 1, 1993; April 17, 2000, effective December 1, 2000; April 30, 2007, effective December 1, 2007; March 26, 2009, effective December 1, 2009.)

## Editors' Notes

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTES

1937 Adoption

**Note to Subdivision (a). 1.** Compare [former] Equity Rules 12 (Issue of Subpoena--Time for Answer) and 31 (Reply--When Required--When Cause at Issue); 4 Mont.Rev.Codes Ann. (1935) §§ 9107, 9158; N.Y.C. P.A. (1937) § 263; N.Y.R.C.P. (1937) Rules 109-111.

**2.** U.S.C., Title 28, § 763 (now § 547) (Petition in action against United States; service; appearance by district attorney) provides that the United States as a defendant shall have 60 days within which to answer or otherwise defend. This and other statutes which provide 60 days for the United States or an officer or agency thereof to answer or otherwise defend are continued by this rule. In so far as any statutes not excepted in rule 81 provide a different time for a defendant to defend, such statutes are modified. See U.S.C., Title 28, [former] § 45 (District courts; practice and procedure in certain cases under the interstate commerce laws) (30 days).

**3.** Compare the last sentence of [former] Equity Rule 29 (Defenses--How Presented) and N.Y.C.P.A. (1937) § 283. See Rule 15(a) for time within which to plead to an amended pleading.

**Note to Subdivisions (b) and (d). 1.** See generally [former] Equity Rules 29 (Defenses--How Presented), 33 (Testing Sufficiency of Defense), 43 (Defect of Parties--Resisting Objection), and 44 (Defect of Parties--Tardy Objection); N.Y.C.P.A. (1937) §§ 277-280; N.Y.R.C.P. (1937) Rules 106-112; *English Rules Under the Judicature Act* (The Annual Practice, 1937) O. 25, r.r. 1-4; Clark, *Code Pleading*, 1928, pp. 371-381.

**2.** For provisions authorizing defenses to be made in the answer or reply see *English Rules Under the Judicature Act*, (The Annual Practice, 1937) O. 25, r.r. 1-4; 1 Miss.Code Ann. (1930) §§ 378, 379. Compare Equity Rule 29 (Defenses--How Presented); U.S.C.A., Title 28, [former] § 45 (District Courts; practice and procedure in certain cases under the interstate commerce laws). U.S.C., Title 28, [former] § 45, substantially continued by this rule, provides: "No replication need be filed to the answer, and objections to the sufficiency of the petition or answer as not setting forth a cause of action or defense must be taken at the final hearing or by motion to dismiss the petition based on said grounds, which motion may be made at any time before answer is filed." Compare Calif.Code Civ.Proc., (Deering, 1937) § 433; 4 Nev.Comp.Laws (Hillyer, 1929) § 8600. For provisions that the defendant may demur and answer at the same time, see Calif.Code Civ.Proc. (Deering, 1937) § 431; 4 Nev.Comp.Laws (Hillyer, 1929) § 8598.

**3.** [Former] Equity Rule 29 (Defenses--How Presented) abolished demurrers and provided that defenses in point of law arising on the face of the bill should be made by motion to dismiss or in the answer, with further provision that every such point of law going to the whole or material part of the cause or causes stated might be called up and disposed of before final hearing "at the discretion of the court." Likewise many state practices have abolished the demurrer, or retain it only to attack substantial and not formal defects. See 6 Tenn.Code Ann. (Williams, 1934) § 8784; Ala.Code Ann. (Michie, 1928) § 9479; 2 Mass.Gen.Laws (Ter.Ed., 1932) ch. 231, §§ 15-18; Kansas Gen.Stat. Ann. (1935) §§ 60-705, 60-706.

**Note to Subdivision (c).** Compare [former] Equity Rule 33 (Testing Sufficiency of Defense); N.Y.R.C.P. (1937) Rules 111 and 112.

**Rule 12. Defenses and Objections: When and How Presented;..., FRCP Rule 12**

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**Note to Subdivisions (e) and (f).** Compare [former] Equity Rules 20 (Further and Particular Statement in Pleading May be Required) and 21 (Scandal and Impertinence); *English Rules Under the Judicature Act* (The Annual Practice, 1937) O. 19, r.r. 7, 7a, 7b, 8; 4 Mont.Rev.Codes Ann. (1935) §§ 9166, 9167; N.Y.C.P.A. (1937) § 247; N.Y.C.P.A. (1937) Rules 103, 115, 116, 117; Wyo.Rev.Stat. Ann. (Courtright, 1931) §§ 89-1033, 89-1034.

**Note to Subdivision (g).** Compare Rules of the District Court of the United States for the District of Columbia (1937) Equity Rule 11; N.M. Rules of Pleading, Practice and Procedure, 38 N.M.Rep. vii. [105-408] (1934); Wash.Gen.Rules of the Superior Courts, 1 Wash.Rev.Stat. Ann. (Remington, 1932) p. 160, Rule VI(e) and (f).

**Note to Subdivision (h).** Compare Calif.Code Civ.Proc. (Deering, 1937) § 434; 2 Minn.Stat. (Mason, 1927) § 9252; N.Y.C.P.A. (1937) §§ 278 and 279; Wash.Gen.Rules of the Superior Courts, 1 Wash.Rev.Stat. Ann. (Remington, 1932) p. 160, Rule VI(e). This rule continues U.S.C.A., Title 28, former § 80 [now 1359, 1447, 1919] (Dismissal or remand) (of action over which district court lacks jurisdiction), while U.S.C.A., Title 28, § 399 (Amendments to show diverse citizenship) is continued by Rule 15.

## 1946 Amendment

**Note. Subdivision (a).** Various minor alterations in language have been made to improve the statement of the rule. All references to bills of particulars have been stricken in accordance with changes made in subdivision (e).

**Subdivision (b).** The addition of defense (7), “failure to join an indispensable party”, cures an omission in the rules which are silent as to the mode of raising such failure. See Commentary, *Manner of Raising Objection of Non-Joinder of Indispensable Party*, 1940, 2 Fed.Rules Serv. 658, and, 1942, 5 Fed.Rules Serv. 820. In one case, *United States v. Metropolitan Life Ins. Co.*, E.D.Pa.1941, 36 F.Supp. 399, the failure to join an indispensable party was raised under Rule 12(c).

Rule 12(b)(6), permitting a motion to dismiss for failure of the complaint to state a claim on which relief can be granted, is substantially the same as the old demurrer for failure of a pleading to state a cause of action. Some courts have held that as the rule by its terms refers to statements in the complaint, extraneous matter on affidavits, depositions or otherwise, may not be introduced in support of the motion, or to resist it. On the other hand, in many cases the district courts have permitted the introduction of such material. When these cases have reached circuit courts of appeals in situations where the extraneous material so received shows that there is no genuine issue as to any material question of fact and that on the undisputed facts as disclosed by the affidavits or depositions, one party or the other is entitled to judgment as a matter of law, the circuit courts, properly enough, have been reluctant to dispose of the case merely on the face of the pleading, and in the interest of prompt disposition of the action have made a final disposition of it. In dealing with such situations the Second Circuit has made the sound suggestion that whatever its label or original basis, the motion may be treated as a motion for summary judgment and disposed of as such. *Samara v. United States*, C.C.A.2, 1942, 129 F.2d 594, certiorari denied 63 S.Ct. 258, 317 U.S. 686, 87 L.Ed. 549; *Boro Hall Corp. v. General Motors Corp.*, C.C.A.2, 1942, 124 F.2d 822, certiorari denied 63 S.Ct. 436, 317 U.S. 695, 87 L.Ed. 556. See, also, *Kithcart v. Metropolitan Life Ins. Co.*, C.C.A.8, 1945, 150 F.2d 997.

It has also been suggested that this practice could be justified on the ground that the federal rules permit “speaking” motions. The Committee entertains the view that on motion under Rule 12(b)(6) to dismiss for failure of the complaint to state a good claim, the trial court should have authority to permit the introduction of extraneous matter, such as may be offered on a motion for summary judgment, and if it does not exclude such matter the motion should then be treated as a motion for summary judgment and disposed of in the manner and on the conditions stated in Rule 56 relating to summary judgments, and, of course, in such a situation, when the case reaches the circuit court of appeals, that court should treat the motion in the same way. The Committee believes that such practice, however, should be tied to the summary judgment rule. The term “speaking motion” is not mentioned in the rules, and if there is such a thing its limitations are undefined. Where extraneous matter is received, by tying further proceedings to the summary judgment rule the courts have a definite basis in the rules for disposing of the motion.

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The Committee emphasizes particularly the fact that the summary judgment rule does not permit a case to be disposed of by judgment on the merits on affidavits, which disclose a conflict on a material issue of fact, and unless this practice is tied to the summary judgment, rule, the extent to which a court, on the introduction of such extraneous matter, may resolve questions of fact on conflicting proof would be left uncertain.

The decisions dealing with this general situation may be generally grouped as follows: (1) cases dealing with the use of affidavits and other extraneous material on motions; (2) cases reversing judgments to prevent final determination on mere pleading allegations alone.

Under group (1) are: *Boro Hall Corp. v. General Motors Corp.*, C.C.A.2, 1942, 124 F.2d 822, certiorari denied 1943, 63 S.Ct. 436, 317 U.S. 695, 87 L.Ed. 556; *Gallup v. Caldwell*, C.C.A.3, 1941, 120 F.2d 90; *Central Mexico Light & Power Co. v. Munch*, C.C.A.2, 1940, 116 F.2d 85; *National Labor Relations Board v. Montgomery Ward & Co.*, 1944, 144 F.2d 528, 79 U.S.App.D.C. 200, certiorari denied 1944, 65 S.Ct. 134, 323 U.S. 774, 89 L.Ed. 619; *Urquhart v. American-La France Foamite Corp.*, 1944, 144 F.2d 542, 79 U.S.App.D.C. 219; *Samara v. United States*, C.C.A.2, 1942, 129 F.2d 594; *Cohen v. American Window Glass Co.*, C.C.A.2, 1942, 126 F.2d 111; *Sperry Products Inc. v. Association of American Railroads*, C.C.A.2, 1942, 132 F.2d 408; *Joint Council Dining Car Employees Local 370 v. Delaware, Lackawanna and Western R. Co.*, C.C.A.2, 1946, 157 F.2d 417; *Weeks v. Bareco Oil Co.*, C.C.A.7, 1941, 125 F.2d 84; *Carroll v. Morrison Hotel Corp.*, C.C.A.7, 1945, 149 F.2d 404; *Victory v. Manning*, C.C.A.3, 1942, 128 F.2d 415; *Locals No. 1470, No. 1469, and No. 1512 of International Longshoremen's Association v. Southern Pacific Co.*, C.C.A.5, 1942, 131 F.2d 605; *Lucking v. Delano*, C.C.A.6, 1942, 129 F.2d 283; *San Francisco Lodge No. 68 of International Association of Machinists v. Forrestal*, Cal.1944, 58 F.Supp. 466; *Benson v. Export Equipment Corp.*, 1945, 164 P.2d 380, 49 N.M. 356, construing New Mexico rule identical with Rule 12(b)(6); *F. E. Myers & Bros. Co. v. Gould Pumps, Inc.*, W.D.N.Y.1946, 9 Fed.Rules Serv. 12b.33, Case 2, 5 F.R.D. 132. Cf. *Kohler v. Jacobs*, C.C.A.5, 1943, 138 F.2d 440; *Cohen v. United States*, C.C.A.8, 1942, 129 F.2d 733.

Under group (2) are: *Sparks v. England*, C.C.A.8, 1940, 113 F.2d 579; *Continental Collieries, Inc. v. Shober*, C.C.A.3, 1942, 130 F.2d 631; *Downey v. Palmer*, C.C.A.2, 1940, 114 F.2d 116; *DeLoach v. Crowley's Inc.*, C.C.A.5, 1942, 128 F.2d 378; *Leimer v. State Mutual Life Assurance Co. of Worcester, Mass.*, C.C.A.8, 1940, 108 F.2d 302; *Rossiter v. Vogel*, C.C.A.2, 1943, 134 F.2d 908, compare s.c., C.C.A.2, 1945, 148 F.2d 292; *Karl Kiefer Machine Co. v. United States Bottlers Machinery Co.*, C.C.A.7, 1940, 113 F.2d 356; *Chicago Metallic Mfg. Co. v. Edward Katzinger Co.*, C.C.A.7, 1941, 123 F.2d 518; *Louisiana Farmers' Protective Union, Inc. v. Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co. of America, Inc.*, C.C.A.8, 1942, 131 F.2d 419; *Publicity Bldg. Realty Corp. v. Hannegan*, C.C.A.8, 1943, 139 F.2d 583; *Dioguardi v. Durning*, C.C.A.2, 1944, 139 F.2d 774; *Package Closure Corp. v. Sealright Co., Inc.*, C.C.A.2, 1944, 141 F.2d 972; *Tahir Erk v. Glenn L. Martin Co.*, C.C.A.4, 1941, 116 F.2d 865; *Bell v. Preferred Life Assurance Society of Montgomery, Ala.*, 1943, 64 S.Ct. 5, 320 U.S. 238, 88 L.Ed. 15.

The addition at the end of subdivision (b) makes it clear that on a motion under Rule 12(b)(6) extraneous material may not be considered if the court excludes it, but that if the court does not exclude such material the motion shall be treated as a motion for summary judgment and disposed of as provided in Rule 56. It will also be observed that if a motion under Rule 12(b)(6) is thus converted into a summary judgment motion, the amendment insures that both parties shall be given a reasonable opportunity to submit affidavits and extraneous proofs to avoid taking a party by surprise through the conversion of the motion into a motion for summary judgment. In this manner and to this extent the amendment regularizes the practice above described. As the courts are already dealing with cases in this way, the effect of this amendment is really only to define the practice carefully and apply the requirements of the summary judgment rule in the disposition of the motion.

**Subdivision (c).** The sentence appended to subdivision (c) performs the same function and is grounded on the same reasons as the corresponding sentence added in subdivision (b).

**Subdivision (d).** The change here was made necessary because of the addition of defense (7) in subdivision (b).

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**Subdivision (e).** References in this subdivision to a bill of particulars have been deleted, and the motion provided for is confined to one for more definite statement to be obtained only in cases where the movant cannot reasonably be required to frame an answer or other responsive pleading to the pleading in question. With respect to preparations for trial, the party is properly relegated to the various methods of examination and discovery provided in the rules for that purpose. *Slusher v. Jones*, E.D.Ky.1943, 7 Fed.Rules Serv. 12e.231, Case 5, 3 F.R.D. 168; *Best Foods, Inc. v. General Mills, Inc.*, D.Del.1943, 7 Fed.Rules Serv. 12e.231, Case 7, 3 F.R.D. 275; *Braden v. Callaway*, E.D.Tenn.1943, 8 Fed.Rules Serv. 12e.231, Case 1 (“... most courts . . . conclude that the definiteness required is only such as will be sufficient for the party to prepare responsive pleadings”). Accordingly, the reference to the 20 day time limit has also been eliminated, since the purpose of this present provision is to state a time period where the motion for a bill is made for the purpose of preparing for trial.

Rule 12(e) as originally drawn has been the subject of more judicial rulings than any other part of the rules, and has been much criticized by commentators, judges and members of the bar. See general discussion and cases cited in 1 Moore’s *Federal Practice*, 1938, Cum.Supplement, § 12.07, under “Page 657”; also, Holtzoff, *New Federal Procedure and the Courts*, 1940, 35-41. And compare vote of Second Circuit Conference of Circuit and District Judges, June 1940, recommending the abolition of the bill of particulars; *Sun Valley Mfg. Co. v. Mylish*, E.D.Pa.1944, 8 Fed.Rules Serv. 12e.231, Case 6 (“Our experience . . . has demonstrated not only that ‘the office of the bill of particulars is fast becoming obsolete’ . . . but that in view of the adequate discovery procedure available under the Rules, motions for bills of particulars should be abolished altogether.”); *Walling v. American Steamship Co.*, W.D.N.Y.1945, 4 F.R.D. 355, 8 Fed.Rules Serv. 12e.244, Case 8 (“... the adoption of the rule was ill advised. It has led to confusion, duplication and delay.”) The tendency of some courts freely to grant extended bills of particulars has served to neutralize any helpful benefits derived from rule 8, and has overlooked the intended use of the rules on depositions and discovery. The words “or to prepare for trial”--eliminated by the proposed amendment--have sometimes been seized upon as grounds for compulsory statement in the opposing pleading of all the details which the movant would have to meet at the trial. On the other hand, many courts have in effect read these words out of the rule. See *Walling v. Alabama Pipe Co.*, W.D.Mo.1942, 3 F.R.D. 159, 6 Fed.Rules Serv. 12e.244, Case 7; *Fleming v. Mason & Dixon Lines, Inc.*, E.D.Tenn.1941, 42 F.Supp. 230; *Kellogg Co. v. National Biscuit Co.*, D.N.J.1941, 38 F.Supp. 643; *Brown v. H. L. Green Co.*, S.D.N.Y.1943, 7 Fed.Rules Serv. 12e.231, Case 6; *Pedersen v. Standard Accident Ins. Co.*, W.D.Mo.1945, 8 Fed.Rules Serv. 12e.231, Case 8; *Bowles v. Ohse*, D.Neb.1945, 4 F.R.D. 403, 9 Fed.Rules Serv. 12e.231, Case 1; *Klages v. Cohen*, E.D.N.Y.1945, 9 Fed.Rules Serv. 8a.25, Case 4; *Bowles v. Lawrence*, D.Mass.1945, 8 Fed.Rules Serv. 12e.231, Case 19; *McKinney Tool & Mfg. Co. v. Hoyt*, N.D. Ohio 1945, 9 Fed.Rules Serv. 12e.235, Case 1; *Bowles v. Jack*, D.Minn.1945, 5 F.R.D. 1, 9 Fed.Rules Serv. 12e.244, Case 9. And it has been urged from the bench that the phrase be stricken, *Poole v. White*, N.D.W.Va.1941, 5 Fed.Rules Serv. 12e.231, Case 4, 2 F.R.D. 40. See also *Bowles v. Gabel*, W.D.Mo.1946, 9 Fed.Rules Serv. 12e.244, Case 10. (“The courts have never favored that portion of the rules which undertook to justify a motion of this kind for the purpose of aiding counsel in preparing his case for trial.”).

**Subdivision (f).** This amendment affords a specific method of raising the insufficiency of a defense, a matter which has troubled some courts, although attack has been permitted in one way or another. See *Dysart v. Remington-Rand, Inc.*, D.Conn.1939, 31 F.Supp. 296; *Eastman Kodak Co. v. McAuley*, S.D.N.Y.1941, 4 Fed.Rules Serv., 12f.21, Case 8, 2 F.R.D. 21; *Schenley Distillers Corp. v. Renken*, E.D.S.C.1940, 34 F.Supp. 678; *Yale Transport Corp. v. Yellow Truck & Coach Mfg. Co.*, S.D.N.Y.1944, 3 F.R.D. 440; *United States v. Turner Milk Co.*, N.D.Ill.1941, 4 Fed.Rules Serv. 12b.51, Case 3, 1 F.R.D. 643; *Teiger v. Stephan Oderwald, Inc.*, S.D.N.Y.1940, 31 F.Supp. 626; *Teplitsky v. Pennsylvania R. Co.*, N.D.Ill.1941, 38 F.Supp. 535; *Callagher v. Carroll*, E.D.N.Y.1939, 27 F.Supp. 568; *United States v. Palmer*, S.D.N.Y.1939, 28 F.Supp. 936. And see *Indemnity Ins. Co. of North America v. Pan American Airways, Inc.*, S.D.N.Y.1944, 58 F.Supp. 338; Commentary, *Modes of Attacking Insufficient Defenses in the Answer*, 901, 1939, 1 Fed.Rules Serv. 669, 1940, 2 Fed.Rules Serv. 640.

**Subdivision (g).** The change in title conforms with the companion provision in subdivision (h).

The alteration of the “except” clause requires that other than provided in subdivision (h) a party who resorts to a motion to raise defenses specified in the rule, must include in one motion all that are then available to him. Under the original rule defenses which could be raised by motion were divided into two groups which could be the subjects of two successive motions.

**Subdivision (h).** The addition of the phrase relating to indispensable parties is one of necessity.

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## 1963 Amendment

This amendment conforms to the amendment of Rule 4(e). See also the Advisory Committee's Note to amended Rule 4(b).

## 1966 Amendment

**Subdivision (b)(7).** The terminology of this subdivision is changed to accord with the amendment of Rule 19. See the Advisory Committee's Note to Rule 19, as amended, especially the third paragraph therein before the caption "Subdivision (c)."

**Subdivision (g).** Subdivision (g) has forbidden a defendant who makes a preanswer motion under this rule from making a further motion presenting any defense or objection which was available to him at the time he made the first motion and which he could have included, but did not in fact include therein. Thus if the defendant moves before answer to dismiss the complaint for failure to state a claim, he is barred from making a further motion presenting the defense of improper venue, if that defense was available to him when he made his original motion. Amended subdivision (g) is to the same effect. This required consolidation of defenses and objections in a Rule 12 motion is salutary in that it works against piecemeal consideration of a case. For exceptions to the requirement of consolidation, see the last clause of subdivision (g), referring to new subdivision (h)(2).

**Subdivision (h).** The question has arisen whether an omitted defense which cannot be made the basis of a second motion may nevertheless be pleaded in the answer. Subdivision (h) called for waiver of "\* \* \* defenses and objections which he [defendant] does not present \* \* \* by motion \* \* \* or, if he has made no motion, in his answer \* \* \*." If the clause "if he has made no motion," was read literally, it seemed that the omitted defense was waived and could not be pleaded in the answer. On the other hand, the clause might be read as adding nothing of substance to the preceding words; in that event it appeared that a defense was not waived by reason of being omitted from the motion and might be set up in the answer. The decisions were divided. Favoring waiver, see *Keef v. Derounian*, 6 F.R.D. 11 (N.D.Ill.1946); *Elbinger v. Precision Metal Workers Corp.*, 18 F.R.D. 467 (E.D.Wis.1956); see also *Rensing v. Turner Aviation Corp.*, 166 F.Supp. 790 (N.D.Ill.1958); *P. Beiersdorf & Co. v. Duke Laboratories, Inc.*, 10 F.R.D. 282 (S.D.N.Y.1950); *Neset v. Christensen*, 92 F.Supp. 78 (E.D.N.Y.1950). Opposing waiver, see *Phillips v. Baker*, 121 F.2d 752 (9th Cir.1941); *Crum v. Graham*, 32 F.R.D. 173 (D.Mont.1963) (regretfully following the Phillips case); see also *Birnbaum v. Birrell*, 9 F.R.D. 72 (S.D.N.Y.1948); *Johnson v. Joseph Schlitz Brewing Co.*, 33 F.Supp. 176 (E.D.Tenn.1940); cf. *Carter v. American Bus Lines, Inc.*, 22 F.R.D. 323 (D.Neb.1958).

Amended subdivision (h)(1)(A) eliminates the ambiguity and states that certain specified defenses which were available to a party when he made a preanswer motion, but which he omitted from the motion, are waived. The specified defenses are lack of jurisdiction over the person, improper venue, insufficiency of process, and insufficiency of service of process (see Rule 12(b)(2)-(5) ). A party who by motion invites the court to pass upon a threshold defense should bring forward all the specified defenses he then has and thus allow the court to do a reasonably complete job. The waiver reinforces the policy of subdivision (g) forbidding successive motions.

By amended subdivision (h)(1)(B), the specified defenses, even if not waived by the operation of (A), are waived by the failure to raise them by a motion under Rule 12 or in the responsive pleading or any amendment thereof to which the party is entitled as a matter of course. The specified defenses are of such a character that they should not be delayed and brought up for the first time by means of an application to the court to amend the responsive pleading.

Since the language of the subdivisions is made clear, the party is put on fair notice of the effect of his actions and omissions and can guard himself against unintended waiver. It is to be noted that while the defenses specified in subdivision (h)(1) are

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subject to waiver as there provided, the more substantial defenses of failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, failure to join a party indispensable under Rule 19, and failure to state a legal defense to a claim (see Rule 12(b)(6), (7), (f) ), as well as the defense of lack of jurisdiction over the subject matter (see Rule 12(b)(1) ), are expressly preserved against waiver by amended subdivision (h)(2) and (3).

**1987 Amendment**

The amendments are technical. No substantive change is intended.

**1993 Amendment**

Subdivision (a) is divided into paragraphs for greater clarity, and paragraph (1)(B) is added to reflect amendments to Rule 4. Consistent with Rule 4(d)(3), a defendant that timely waives service is allowed 60 days from the date the request was mailed in which to respond to the complaint, with an additional 30 days afforded if the request was sent out of the country. Service is timely waived if the waiver is returned within the time specified in the request (30 days after the request was mailed, or 60 days if mailed out of the country) and before being formally served with process. Sometimes a plaintiff may attempt to serve a defendant with process while also sending the defendant a request for waiver of service; if the defendant executes the waiver of service within the time specified and before being served with process, it should have the longer time to respond afforded by waiving service.

The date of sending the request is to be inserted by the plaintiff on the face of the request for waiver and on the waiver itself. This date is used to measure the return day for the waiver form, so that the plaintiff can know on a day certain whether formal service of process will be necessary; it is also a useful date to measure the time for answer when service is waived. The defendant who returns the waiver is given additional time for answer in order to assure that it loses nothing by waiving service of process.

**2000 Amendment**

Rule 12(a)(3)(B) is added to complement the addition of Rule 4(i)(2)(B). The purposes that underlie the requirement that service be made on the United States in an action that asserts individual liability of a United States officer or employee for acts occurring in connection with the performance of duties on behalf of the United States also require that the time to answer be extended to 60 days. Time is needed for the United States to determine whether to provide representation to the defendant officer or employee. If the United States provides representation, the need for an extended answer period is the same as in actions against the United States, a United States agency, or a United States officer sued in an official capacity.

An action against a former officer or employee of the United States is covered by subparagraph (3)(B) in the same way as an action against a present officer or employee. Termination of the relationship between the individual defendant and the United States does not reduce the need for additional time to answer.

**GAP Report**

No changes are recommended for Rule 12 as published.

**2007 Amendment**

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The language of Rule 12 has been amended as part of the general restyling of the Civil Rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic only.

Former Rule 12(a)(4)(A) referred to an order that postpones disposition of a motion “until the trial on the merits.” Rule 12(a)(4) now refers to postponing disposition “until trial.” The new expression avoids the ambiguity that inheres in “trial on the merits,” which may become confusing when there is a separate trial of a single issue or another event different from a single all-encompassing trial.

2009 Amendments

The times set in the former rule at 10 or 20 days have been revised to 14 or 21 days. See the Note to Rule 6.

Notes of Decisions (3819)

Amendments received to 11-1-11

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United States Code Annotated  
Federal Rules of Civil Procedure for the United States District Courts (Refs & Annos)  
Title VII. Judgment

Federal Rules of Civil Procedure Rule 56

Rule 56. Summary Judgment

Currentness

**(a) Motion for Summary Judgment or Partial Summary Judgment.** A party may move for summary judgment, identifying each claim or defense--or the part of each claim or defense--on which summary judgment is sought. The court shall grant summary judgment if the movant shows that there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. The court should state on the record the reasons for granting or denying the motion.

**(b) Time to File a Motion.** Unless a different time is set by local rule or the court orders otherwise, a party may file a motion for summary judgment at any time until 30 days after the close of all discovery.

**(c) Procedures.**

**(1) Supporting Factual Positions.** A party asserting that a fact cannot be or is genuinely disputed must support the assertion by:

**(A)** citing to particular parts of materials in the record, including depositions, documents, electronically stored information, affidavits or declarations, stipulations (including those made for purposes of the motion only), admissions, interrogatory answers, or other materials; or

**(B)** showing that the materials cited do not establish the absence or presence of a genuine dispute, or that an adverse party cannot produce admissible evidence to support the fact.

**(2) Objection That a Fact Is Not Supported by Admissible Evidence.** A party may object that the material cited to support or dispute a fact cannot be presented in a form that would be admissible in evidence.

**(3) Materials Not Cited.** The court need consider only the cited materials, but it may consider other materials in the record.

**(4) Affidavits or Declarations.** An affidavit or declaration used to support or oppose a motion must be made on personal knowledge, set out facts that would be admissible in evidence, and show that the affiant or declarant is competent to testify on the matters stated.

**(d) When Facts Are Unavailable to the Nonmovant.** If a nonmovant shows by affidavit or declaration that, for specified reasons, it cannot present facts essential to justify its opposition, the court may:

**Rule 56. Summary Judgment, FRCP Rule 56**

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- (1) defer considering the motion or deny it;
- (2) allow time to obtain affidavits or declarations or to take discovery; or
- (3) issue any other appropriate order.

**(e) Failing to Properly Support or Address a Fact.** If a party fails to properly support an assertion of fact or fails to properly address another party's assertion of fact as required by Rule 56(c), the court may:

- (1) give an opportunity to properly support or address the fact;
- (2) consider the fact undisputed for purposes of the motion;
- (3) grant summary judgment if the motion and supporting materials--including the facts considered undisputed--show that the movant is entitled to it; or
- (4) issue any other appropriate order.

**(f) Judgment Independent of the Motion.** After giving notice and a reasonable time to respond, the court may:

- (1) grant summary judgment for a nonmovant;
- (2) grant the motion on grounds not raised by a party; or
- (3) consider summary judgment on its own after identifying for the parties material facts that may not be genuinely in dispute.

**(g) Failing to Grant All the Requested Relief.** If the court does not grant all the relief requested by the motion, it may enter an order stating any material fact--including an item of damages or other relief--that is not genuinely in dispute and treating the fact as established in the case.

**(h) Affidavit or Declaration Submitted in Bad Faith.** If satisfied that an affidavit or declaration under this rule is submitted in bad faith or solely for delay, the court--after notice and a reasonable time to respond--may order the submitting party to pay the other party the reasonable expenses, including attorney's fees, it incurred as a result. An offending party or attorney may also be held in contempt or subjected to other appropriate sanctions.

**Credits**

(Amended December 27, 1946, effective March 19, 1948; January 21, 1963, effective July 1, 1963; March 2, 1987, effective August 1, 1987; April 30, 2007, effective December 1, 2007; March 26, 2009, effective December 1, 2009; April 28, 2010, effective December 1, 2010.)

**Editors' Notes**

## Rule 56. Summary Judgment, FRCP Rule 56

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTES

## 1937 Adoption

This rule is applicable to all actions, including those against the United States or an officer or agency thereof.

Summary judgment procedure is a method for promptly disposing of actions in which there is no genuine issue as to any material fact. It has been extensively used in England for more than 50 years and has been adopted in a number of American states. New York, for example, has made great use of it. During the first nine years after its adoption there, the records of New York county alone show 5,600 applications for summary judgments. Report of the Commission on the Administration of Justice in New York State (1934), p. 383. See also *Third Annual Report of the Judicial Council of the State of New York* (1937), p. 30.

In England it was first employed only in cases of liquidated claims, but there has been a steady enlargement of the scope of the remedy until it is now used in actions to recover land or chattels and in all other actions at law, for liquidated or unliquidated claims, except for a few designated torts and breach of promise of marriage. *English Rules Under the Judicature Act* (The Annual Practice, 1937) O. 3, r. 6; Orders 14, 14A, and 15; see also O. 32, r. 6, authorizing an application for judgment at any time upon admissions. In Michigan (3 Comp.Laws (1929) § 14260) and Illinois (Smith-Hurd Ill.Stats. c. 110, §§ 181, 259.15, 259.16), it is not limited to liquidated demands. New York (N.Y.R.C.P. (1937) Rule 113; see also Rule 107) has brought so many classes of actions under the operation of the rule that the Commission on Administration of Justice in New York State (1934) recommend that all restrictions be removed and that the remedy be available “in any action” (p. 287). For the history and nature of the summary judgment procedure and citations of state statutes, see Clark and Samenow, *The Summary Judgment* (1929), 38 Yale L.J. 423.

**Note to Subdivision (d).** See Rule 16 (Pre-Trial Procedure; Formulating Issues) and the Note thereto.

**Note to Subdivisions (e) and (f).** These are similar to rules in Michigan. Mich.Court Rules Ann. (Searl, 1933) Rule 30.

## 1946 Amendment

**Note to Subdivision (a).** The amendment allows a claimant to move for a summary judgment at any time after the expiration of 20 days from the commencement of the action or after service of a motion for summary judgment by the adverse party. This will normally operate to permit an earlier motion by the claimant than under the original rule, where the phrase “at any time after the pleading in answer thereto has been served” operates to prevent a claimant from moving for summary judgment, even in a case clearly proper for its exercise, until a formal answer has been filed. Thus in *Peoples Bank v. Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco*, N.D.Cal.1944, 58 F.Supp. 25, the plaintiff’s countermotion for a summary judgment was stricken as premature, because the defendant had not filed an answer. Since Rule 12(a) allows at least 20 days for an answer, that time plus the 10 days required in Rule 56(c) means that under original Rule 56(a) a minimum period of 30 days necessarily has to elapse in every case before the claimant can be heard on his right to a summary judgment. An extension of time by the court or the service of preliminary motions of any kind will prolong that period even further. In many cases this merely represents unnecessary delay. See *United States v. Adler’s Creamery, Inc.*, C.C.A.2, 1939, 107 F.2d 987. The changes are in the interest of more expeditious litigation. The 20-day period, as provided, gives the defendant an opportunity to secure counsel and determine a course of action. But in a case where the defendant himself makes a motion for summary judgment within that time, there is no reason to restrict the plaintiff and the amended rule so provides.

**Subdivision (c).** The amendment of Rule 56(c), by the addition of the final sentence, resolves a doubt expressed in *Sartor v. Arkansas Natural Gas Corp.*, 1944, 64 S.Ct. 724, 321 U.S. 620, 88 L.Ed. 967. See also Commentary, Summary Judgment as to Damages, 1944, 7 Fed.Rules Serv. 974; *Madeirense Do Brasil S/A v. Stulman-Emrick Lumber Co.*, C.C.A.2d, 1945, 147 F.2d 399, certiorari denied 1945, 65 S.Ct. 1201, 325 U.S. 861, 89 L.Ed. 1982. It makes clear that although the question of

**Rule 56. Summary Judgment, FRCP Rule 56**

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recovery depends on the amount of damages, the summary judgment rule is applicable and summary judgment may be granted in a proper case. If the case is not fully adjudicated it may be dealt with as provided in subdivision (d) of Rule 56, and the right to summary recovery determined by a preliminary order, interlocutory in character, and the precise amount of recovery left for trial.

**Subdivision (d).** Rule 54(a) defines “judgment” as including a decree and “any order from which an appeal lies.” Subdivision (d) of Rule 56 indicates clearly, however, that a partial summary “judgment” is not a final judgment, and, therefore, that it is not appealable, unless in the particular case some statute allows an appeal from the interlocutory order involved. The partial summary judgment is merely a pretrial adjudication that certain issues shall be deemed established for the trial of the case. This adjudication is more nearly akin to the preliminary order under Rule 16, and likewise serves the purpose of speeding up litigation by eliminating before trial matters wherein there is no genuine issue of fact. See *Leonard v. Socony-Vacuum Oil Co.*, C.C.A.7, 1942, 130 F.2d 535; *Biggins v. Oltmer Iron Works*, C.C.A.7, 1946, 154 F.2d 214; 3 *Moore’s Federal Practice*, 1938, 3190-3192. Since interlocutory appeals are not allowed, except where specifically provided by statute, see 3 *Moore*, op. cit. supra, 3155-3156, this interpretation is in line with that policy, *Leonard v. Socony-Vacuum Oil Co.*, supra. See also *Audi Vision Inc. v. RCA Mfg. Co.*, C.C.A.2, 1943, 136 F.2d 621; *Toomey v. Toomey*, 1945, 149 F.2d 19, 80 U.S.App.D.C. 77; *Biggins v. Oltmer Iron Works*, supra; *Catlin v. United States*, 1945, 65 S.Ct. 631, 324 U.S. 229, 89 L.Ed. 911.

## 1963 Amendment

**Subdivision (c).** By the amendment “answers to interrogatories” are included among the materials which may be considered on motion for summary judgment. The phrase was inadvertently omitted from the rule, see 3 *Barron & Holtzoff, Federal Practice & Procedure* 159-60 (Wright ed. 1958), and the courts have generally reached by interpretation the result which will hereafter be required by the text of the amended rule. See Annot., 74 A.L.R.2d 984 (1960).

**Subdivision (e).** The words “answers to interrogatories” are added in the third sentence of this subdivision to conform to the amendment of subdivision (c).

The last two sentences are added to overcome a line of cases, chiefly in the Third Circuit, which has impaired the utility of the summary judgment device. A typical case is as follows: A party supports his motion for summary judgment by affidavits or other evidentiary matter sufficient to show that there is no genuine issue as to a material fact. The adverse party, in opposing the motion, does not produce any evidentiary matter, or produces some but not enough to establish that there is a genuine issue for trial. Instead, the adverse party rests on averments of his pleadings which on their face present an issue. In this situation Third Circuit cases have taken the view that summary judgment must be denied, at least if the averments are “well-pleaded,” and not suppositious, conclusory, or ultimate. See *Frederick Hart & Co., Inc. v. Recordgraph Corp.*, 169 F.2d 580 (3d Cir. 1948); *United States ex rel. Kolton v. Halpern*, 260 F.2d 590 (3d Cir. 1958); *United States ex rel. Nobles v. Ivey Bros. Constr. Co., Inc.*, 191 F.Supp. 383 (D.Del.1961); *Jamison v. Pennsylvania Salt Mfg. Co.*, 22 F.R.D. 238 (W.D.Pa.1958); *Bunny Bear, Inc. v. Dennis Mitchell Industries*, 139 F.Supp. 542 (E.D.Pa.1956); *Levy v. Equitable Life Assur. Society*, 18 F.R.D. 164 (E.D.Pa.1955).

The very mission of the summary judgment procedure is to pierce the pleadings and to assess the proof in order to see whether there is a genuine need for trial. The Third Circuit doctrine, which permits the pleadings themselves to stand in the way of granting an otherwise justified summary judgment, is incompatible with the basic purpose of the rule. See 6 *Moore’s Federal Practice* 2069 (2d ed. 1953); 3 *Barron & Holtzoff*, supra, § 1235.1.

It is hoped that the amendment will contribute to the more effective utilization of the salutary device of summary judgment.

The amendment is not intended to derogate from the solemnity of the pleadings. Rather it recognizes that, despite the best efforts of counsel to make his pleadings accurate, they may be overwhelmingly contradicted by the proof available to his

**Rule 56. Summary Judgment, FRCP Rule 56**

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adversary.

Nor is the amendment designed to affect the ordinary standards applicable to the summary judgment motion. So, for example: Where an issue as to a material fact cannot be resolved without observation of the demeanor of witnesses in order to evaluate their credibility, summary judgment is not appropriate. Where the evidentiary matter in support of the motion does not establish the absence of a genuine issue, summary judgment must be denied even if no opposing evidentiary matter is presented. And summary judgment may be inappropriate where the party opposing it shows under subdivision (f) that he cannot at the time present facts essential to justify his opposition.

#### 1987 Amendment

The amendments are technical. No substantive change is intended.

#### 2007 Amendments

The language of Rule 56 has been amended as part of the general restyling of the Civil Rules to make them more easily understood and to make style and terminology consistent throughout the rules. These changes are intended to be stylistic only.

Former Rule 56(a) and (b) referred to summary-judgment motions on or against a claim, counterclaim, or crossclaim, or to obtain a declaratory judgment. The list was incomplete. Rule 56 applies to third-party claimants, intervenors, claimants in interpleader, and others. Amended Rule 56(a) and (b) carry forward the present meaning by referring to a party claiming relief and a party against whom relief is sought.

Former Rule 56(c), (d), and (e) stated circumstances in which summary judgment “shall be rendered,” the court “shall if practicable” ascertain facts existing without substantial controversy, and “if appropriate, shall” enter summary judgment. In each place “shall” is changed to “should.” It is established that although there is no discretion to enter summary judgment when there is a genuine issue as to any material fact, there is discretion to deny summary judgment when it appears that there is no genuine issue as to any material fact. *Kennedy v. Silas Mason Co.*, 334 U.S. 249, 256-257 (1948). Many lower court decisions are gathered in 10A Wright, Miller & Kane, Federal Practice & Procedure: Civil 3d, § 2728. “Should” in amended Rule 56(c) recognizes that courts will seldom exercise the discretion to deny summary judgment when there is no genuine issue as to any material fact. Similarly sparing exercise of this discretion is appropriate under Rule 56(e)(2). Rule 56(d)(1), on the other hand, reflects the more open-ended discretion to decide whether it is practicable to determine what material facts are not genuinely at issue.

Former Rule 56(d) used a variety of different phrases to express the Rule 56(c) standard for summary judgment--that there is no genuine issue as to any material fact. Amended Rule 56(d) adopts terms directly parallel to Rule 56(c).

#### 2009 Amendments

The timing provisions for summary judgment are outmoded. They are consolidated and substantially revised in new subdivision (c)(1). The new rule allows a party to move for summary judgment at any time, even as early as the commencement of the action. If the motion seems premature both subdivision (c)(1) and Rule 6(b) allow the court to extend the time to respond. The rule does set a presumptive deadline at 30 days after the close of all discovery.

The presumptive timing rules are default provisions that may be altered by an order in the case or by local rule. Scheduling

**Rule 56. Summary Judgment, FRCP Rule 56**

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orders are likely to supersede the rule provisions in most cases, deferring summary-judgment motions until a stated time or establishing different deadlines. Scheduling orders tailored to the needs of the specific case, perhaps adjusted as it progresses, are likely to work better than default rules. A scheduling order may be adjusted to adopt the parties' agreement on timing, or may require that discovery and motions occur in stages--including separation of expert-witness discovery from other discovery.

Local rules may prove useful when local docket conditions or practices are incompatible with the general Rule 56 timing provisions.

If a motion for summary judgment is filed before a responsive pleading is due from a party affected by the motion, the time for responding to the motion is 21 days after the responsive pleading is due.

**2010 Amendments**

Rule 56 is revised to improve the procedures for presenting and deciding summary-judgment motions and to make the procedures more consistent with those already used in many courts. The standard for granting summary judgment remains unchanged. The language of subdivision (a) continues to require that there be no genuine dispute as to any material fact and that the movant be entitled to judgment as a matter of law. The amendments will not affect continuing development of the decisional law construing and applying these phrases.

**Subdivision (a).** Subdivision (a) carries forward the summary-judgment standard expressed in former subdivision (c), changing only one word--genuine "issue" becomes genuine "dispute." "Dispute" better reflects the focus of a summary-judgment determination. As explained below, "shall" also is restored to the place it held from 1938 to 2007.

The first sentence is added to make clear at the beginning that summary judgment may be requested not only as to an entire case but also as to a claim, defense, or part of a claim or defense. The subdivision caption adopts the common phrase "partial summary judgment" to describe disposition of less than the whole action, whether or not the order grants all the relief requested by the motion.

"Shall" is restored to express the direction to grant summary judgment. The word "shall" in Rule 56 acquired significance over many decades of use. Rule 56 was amended in 2007 to replace "shall" with "should" as part of the Style Project, acting under a convention that prohibited any use of "shall." Comments on proposals to amend Rule 56, as published in 2008, have shown that neither of the choices available under the Style Project conventions--"must" or "should"--is suitable in light of the case law on whether a district court has discretion to deny summary judgment when there appears to be no genuine dispute as to any material fact. Compare *Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc.*, 477 U.S. 242, 255 (1986) ("Neither do we suggest that the trial courts should act other than with caution in granting summary judgment or that the trial court may not deny summary judgment in a case in which there is reason to believe that the better course would be to proceed to a full trial. *Kennedy v. Silas Mason Co.*, 334 U.S. 249 \* \* \* (1948)"), with *Celotex Corp. v. Catrett*, 477 U.S. 317, 322 (1986) ("In our view, the plain language of Rule 56(c) mandates the entry of summary judgment, after adequate time for discovery and upon motion, against a party who fails to make a showing sufficient to establish the existence of an element essential to that party's case, and on which that party will bear the burden of proof at trial."). Eliminating "shall" created an unacceptable risk of changing the summary-judgment standard. Restoring "shall" avoids the unintended consequences of any other word.

Subdivision (a) also adds a new direction that the court should state on the record the reasons for granting or denying the motion. Most courts recognize this practice. Among other advantages, a statement of reasons can facilitate an appeal or subsequent trial-court proceedings. It is particularly important to state the reasons for granting summary judgment. The form and detail of the statement of reasons are left to the court's discretion.

**Rule 56. Summary Judgment, FRCP Rule 56**

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The statement on denying summary judgment need not address every available reason. But identification of central issues may help the parties to focus further proceedings.

**Subdivision (b).** The timing provisions in former subdivisions (a) and (c) are superseded. Although the rule allows a motion for summary judgment to be filed at the commencement of an action, in many cases the motion will be premature until the nonmovant has had time to file a responsive pleading or other pretrial proceedings have been had. Scheduling orders or other pretrial orders can regulate timing to fit the needs of the case.

**Subdivision (c).** Subdivision (c) is new. It establishes a common procedure for several aspects of summary-judgment motions synthesized from similar elements developed in the cases or found in many local rules.

Subdivision (c)(1) addresses the ways to support an assertion that a fact can or cannot be genuinely disputed. It does not address the form for providing the required support. Different courts and judges have adopted different forms including, for example, directions that the support be included in the motion, made part of a separate statement of facts, interpolated in the body of a brief or memorandum, or provided in a separate statement of facts included in a brief or memorandum.

Subdivision (c)(1)(A) describes the familiar record materials commonly relied upon and requires that the movant cite the particular parts of the materials that support its fact positions. Materials that are not yet in the record--including materials referred to in an affidavit or declaration--must be placed in the record. Once materials are in the record, the court may, by order in the case, direct that the materials be gathered in an appendix, a party may voluntarily submit an appendix, or the parties may submit a joint appendix. The appendix procedure also may be established by local rule. Pointing to a specific location in an appendix satisfies the citation requirement. So too it may be convenient to direct that a party assist the court in locating materials buried in a voluminous record.

Subdivision (c)(1)(B) recognizes that a party need not always point to specific record materials. One party, without citing any other materials, may respond or reply that materials cited to dispute or support a fact do not establish the absence or presence of a genuine dispute. And a party who does not have the trial burden of production may rely on a showing that a party who does have the trial burden cannot produce admissible evidence to carry its burden as to the fact.

Subdivision (c)(2) provides that a party may object that material cited to support or dispute a fact cannot be presented in a form that would be admissible in evidence. The objection functions much as an objection at trial, adjusted for the pretrial setting. The burden is on the proponent to show that the material is admissible as presented or to explain the admissible form that is anticipated. There is no need to make a separate motion to strike. If the case goes to trial, failure to challenge admissibility at the summary-judgment stage does not forfeit the right to challenge admissibility at trial.

Subdivision (c)(3) reflects judicial opinions and local rules provisions stating that the court may decide a motion for summary judgment without undertaking an independent search of the record. Nonetheless, the rule also recognizes that a court may consider record materials not called to its attention by the parties.

Subdivision (c)(4) carries forward some of the provisions of former subdivision (e)(1). Other provisions are relocated or omitted. The requirement that a sworn or certified copy of a paper referred to in an affidavit or declaration be attached to the affidavit or declaration is omitted as unnecessary given the requirement in subdivision (c)(1)(A) that a statement or dispute of fact be supported by materials in the record.

A formal affidavit is no longer required. 28 U.S.C. § 1746 allows a written unsworn declaration, certificate, verification, or statement subscribed in proper form as true under penalty of perjury to substitute for an affidavit.

**Rule 56. Summary Judgment, FRCP Rule 56**

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**Subdivision (d).** Subdivision (d) carries forward without substantial change the provisions of former subdivision (f).

A party who seeks relief under subdivision (d) may seek an order deferring the time to respond to the summary-judgment motion.

**Subdivision (e).** Subdivision (e) addresses questions that arise when a party fails to support an assertion of fact or fails to properly address another party's assertion of fact as required by Rule 56(c). As explained below, summary judgment cannot be granted by default even if there is a complete failure to respond to the motion, much less when an attempted response fails to comply with Rule 56(c) requirements. Nor should it be denied by default even if the movant completely fails to reply to a nonmovant's response. Before deciding on other possible action, subdivision (e)(1) recognizes that the court may afford an opportunity to properly support or address the fact. In many circumstances this opportunity will be the court's preferred first step.

Subdivision (e)(2) authorizes the court to consider a fact as undisputed for purposes of the motion when response or reply requirements are not satisfied. This approach reflects the "deemed admitted" provisions in many local rules. The fact is considered undisputed only for purposes of the motion; if summary judgment is denied, a party who failed to make a proper Rule 56 response or reply remains free to contest the fact in further proceedings. And the court may choose not to consider the fact as undisputed, particularly if the court knows of record materials that show grounds for genuine dispute.

Subdivision (e)(3) recognizes that the court may grant summary judgment only if the motion and supporting materials--including the facts considered undisputed under subdivision (e)(2)--show that the movant is entitled to it. Considering some facts undisputed does not of itself allow summary judgment. If there is a proper response or reply as to some facts, the court cannot grant summary judgment without determining whether those facts can be genuinely disputed. Once the court has determined the set of facts--both those it has chosen to consider undisputed for want of a proper response or reply and any that cannot be genuinely disputed despite a procedurally proper response or reply--it must determine the legal consequences of these facts and permissible inferences from them.

Subdivision (e)(4) recognizes that still other orders may be appropriate. The choice among possible orders should be designed to encourage proper presentation of the record. Many courts take extra care with pro se litigants, advising them of the need to respond and the risk of losing by summary judgment if an adequate response is not filed. And the court may seek to reassure itself by some examination of the record before granting summary judgment against a pro se litigant.

**Subdivision (f).** Subdivision (f) brings into Rule 56 text a number of related procedures that have grown up in practice. After giving notice and a reasonable time to respond the court may grant summary judgment for the nonmoving party; grant a motion on legal or factual grounds not raised by the parties; or consider summary judgment on its own. In many cases it may prove useful first to invite a motion; the invited motion will automatically trigger the regular procedure of subdivision (c).

**Subdivision (g).** Subdivision (g) applies when the court does not grant all the relief requested by a motion for summary judgment. It becomes relevant only after the court has applied the summary-judgment standard carried forward in subdivision (a) to each claim, defense, or part of a claim or defense, identified by the motion. Once that duty is discharged, the court may decide whether to apply the summary-judgment standard to dispose of a material fact that is not genuinely in dispute. The court must take care that this determination does not interfere with a party's ability to accept a fact for purposes of the motion only. A nonmovant, for example, may feel confident that a genuine dispute as to one or a few facts will defeat the motion, and prefer to avoid the cost of detailed response to all facts stated by the movant. This position should be available without running the risk that the fact will be taken as established under subdivision (g) or otherwise found to have been accepted for other purposes.

If it is readily apparent that the court cannot grant all the relief requested by the motion, it may properly decide that the cost of determining whether some potential fact disputes may be eliminated by summary disposition is greater than the cost of

**Rule 56. Summary Judgment, FRCP Rule 56**

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resolving those disputes by other means, including trial. Even if the court believes that a fact is not genuinely in dispute it may refrain from ordering that the fact be treated as established. The court may conclude that it is better to leave open for trial facts and issues that may be better illuminated by the trial of related facts that must be tried in any event.

**Subdivision (h).** Subdivision (h) carries forward former subdivision (g) with three changes. Sanctions are made discretionary, not mandatory, reflecting the experience that courts seldom invoke the independent Rule 56 authority to impose sanctions. *See Cecil & Cort, Federal Judicial Center Memorandum on Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 56(g) Motions for Sanctions (April 2, 2007).* In addition, the rule text is expanded to recognize the need to provide notice and a reasonable time to respond. Finally, authority to impose other appropriate sanctions also is recognized.

Notes of Decisions (1581)

Amendments received to 11-1-11

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**Rule 7008. General Rules of Pleading, FRBP Rule 7008**

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United States Code Annotated  
Bankruptcy Rules (Refs & Annos)  
Part VII. Adversary Proceedings

**Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure, Rule 7008****Rule 7008. General Rules of Pleading****Currentness****(a) Applicability of Rule 8 F.R.Civ.P.**

Rule 8 F.R.Civ.P. applies in adversary proceedings. The allegation of jurisdiction required by Rule 8(a) shall also contain a reference to the name, number, and chapter of the case under the Code to which the adversary proceeding relates and to the district and division where the case under the Code is pending. In an adversary proceeding before a bankruptcy judge, the complaint, counterclaim, cross-claim, or third-party complaint shall contain a statement that the proceeding is core or non-core and, if non-core, that the pleader does or does not consent to entry of final orders or judgment by the bankruptcy judge.

**(b) Attorney's fees**

A request for an award of attorney's fees shall be pleaded as a claim in a complaint, cross-claim, third-party complaint, answer, or reply as may be appropriate.

**Credits**

(As amended Mar. 30, 1987, eff. Aug. 1, 1987.)

**Rules 1001 to 3006 appear in this Volume****Editors' Notes****ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTES**

## 1987 Amendment

Proceedings before a bankruptcy judge are either core or non-core. 28 U.S.C. § 157. A bankruptcy judge may enter a final order or judgment in a core proceeding. In a non-core proceeding, absent consent of the parties, the bankruptcy judge may not enter a final order or judgment but may only submit proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law to the district judge who will enter the final order or judgment. 28 U.S.C. § 157(c)(1). The amendment to subdivision (a) of this rule requires an allegation as to whether a proceeding is core or non-core. A party who alleges that the proceeding is non-core shall state whether the party does or does not consent to the entry of a final order or judgment by the bankruptcy judge. Failure to include the statement of consent does not constitute consent. Only express consent in the pleadings or otherwise is effective to authorize entry of a final order or judgment by the bankruptcy judge in a non-core proceeding. Amendments to Rule 7012 require that the defendant admit or deny the allegation as to whether the proceeding is core or non-core.

Notes of Decisions (77)

**Rule 7008. General Rules of Pleading, FRBP Rule 7008**

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United States Code Annotated  
Bankruptcy Rules (Refs & Annos)  
Part VII. Adversary Proceedings

Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure, Rule 7010

Rule 7010. Form of Pleadings

Currentness

Rule 10 F.R.Civ.P. applies in adversary proceedings, except that the caption of each pleading in such a proceeding shall conform substantially to the appropriate Official Form.

**Credits**

(As amended Apr. 30, 1991, eff. Aug. 1, 1991.)

**Rules 1001 to 3006 appear in this Volume**

**Editors' Notes**

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTES**

1991 Amendment

Reference to the Official Form number is deleted in anticipation of future revision and renumbering of the Official Forms.

Notes of Decisions (3)

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**Rule 7012. Defenses and Objections--When and How..., FRBP Rule 7012**

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United States Code Annotated  
Bankruptcy Rules (Refs & Annos)  
Part VII. Adversary Proceedings

**Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure, Rule 7012****Rule 7012. Defenses and Objections--When and How Presented--By Pleading or Motion--Motion for Judgment on the Pleadings****Currentness****(a) When presented**

If a complaint is duly served, the defendant shall serve an answer within 30 days after the issuance of the summons, except when a different time is prescribed by the court. The court shall prescribe the time for service of the answer when service of a complaint is made by publication or upon a party in a foreign country. A party served with a pleading stating a cross-claim shall serve an answer thereto within 21 days after service. The plaintiff shall serve a reply to a counterclaim in the answer within 21 days after service of the answer or, if a reply is ordered by the court, within 21 days after service of the order, unless the order otherwise directs. The United States or an officer or agency thereof shall serve an answer to a complaint within 35 days after the issuance of the summons, and shall serve an answer to a cross-claim, or a reply to a counterclaim, within 35 days after service upon the United States attorney of the pleading in which the claim is asserted. The service of a motion permitted under this rule alters these periods of time as follows, unless a different time is fixed by order of the court: (1) if the court denies the motion or postpones its disposition until the trial on the merits, the responsive pleading shall be served within 14 days after notice of the court's action; (2) if the court grants a motion for a more definite statement, the responsive pleading shall be served within 14 days after the service of a more definite statement.

**(b) Applicability of Rule 12(b)-(i) F.R.Civ.P.**

Rule 12(b)-(i) F.R.Civ.P. applies in adversary proceedings. A responsive pleading shall admit or deny an allegation that the proceeding is core or non-core. If the response is that the proceeding is non-core, it shall include a statement that the party does or does not consent to entry of final orders or judgment by the bankruptcy judge. In non-core proceedings final orders and judgments shall not be entered on the bankruptcy judge's order except with the express consent of the parties.

**Credits**

(As amended Mar. 30, 1987, eff. Aug. 1, 1987; Apr. 23, 2008, eff. Dec. 1, 2008; Mar. 26, 2009, eff. Dec. 1, 2009.)

**Rules 1001 to 3006 appear in this Volume****Editors' Notes****ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTES**

**Subdivision (a)** continues the practice of former Bankruptcy Rule 712(a) by requiring that the answer to a complaint be filed within 30 days after the issuance of the summons. Under Rule 7004(f), the summons must be served within 10 days of issuance. The other pleading periods in adversary proceedings are the same as those in civil actions before the district courts, except that the United States is allowed 35 rather than 60 days to respond.

**Rule 7012. Defenses and Objections--When and How..., FRBP Rule 7012**

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Rule 12(b)(7) and (h)(2) F.R.Civ.P. refers to Rule 19 F.R.Civ.P. Pursuant to Rule 7002 these references are to Rule 19 F.R.Civ.P. as incorporated and modified by Rule 7019.

1987 Amendment

The amendment to subdivision (b) requires a response to the allegation that the proceeding is core or non-core. A final order of judgment may not be entered in a non-core proceeding heard by a bankruptcy judge unless all parties expressly consent. 28 U.S.C. § 157(c).

2008 Amendments

The rule is amended to conform to the changes made to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure through the restyling of those rules effective on December 1, 2007.

2009 Amendments

The rule is amended to implement changes in connection with the amendment to Rule 9006(a) and the manner by which time is computed under the rules. The deadlines in the rule are amended to substitute a deadline that is a multiple of seven days. Throughout the rules, deadlines are amended in the following manner:

- 5-day periods become 7-day periods
- 10-day periods become 14-day periods
- 15-day periods become 14-day periods
- 20-day periods become 21-day periods
- 25-day periods become 28-day periods

Notes of Decisions (143)

Amendments received to 11-1-11

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**Rule 7056. Summary Judgment, FRBP Rule 7056**

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United States Code Annotated  
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Part VII. Adversary Proceedings

**Federal Rules of Bankruptcy Procedure, Rule 7056**

**Rule 7056. Summary Judgment**

**Currentness**

Rule 56 F.R.Civ.P. applies in adversary proceedings.

**Rules 1001 to 3006 appear in this Volume**

Notes of Decisions (222)

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**Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662 (2009)**

129 S.Ct. 1937, 173 L.Ed.2d 868, 77 USLW 4387, 2009-2 Trade Cases P 76,785...

129 S.Ct. 1937  
Supreme Court of the United States

John D. ASHCROFT, Former Attorney General, et al., Petitioners,  
v.  
Javaid IQBAL et al.

No. 07-1015. | Argued Dec. 10, 2008. | Decided May 18, 2009.

**Synopsis**

**Background:** Muslim Pakistani pretrial detainee brought action against current and former government officials, alleging that they took series of unconstitutional actions against him in connection with his confinement under harsh conditions after separation from the general prison population. The United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York, John Gleeson, J., 2005 WL 2375202, denied in part defendants’ motions to dismiss on ground of qualified immunity. Defendants appealed. The United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, Jon O. Newman, Circuit Judge, 490 F.3d 143, affirmed in part, reversed in part, and remanded. Certiorari was granted.

**Holdings:** The Supreme Court, Justice Kennedy, held that:

- 1 Second Circuit had subject matter jurisdiction to affirm district court’s order denying officials’ motion to dismiss on grounds of qualified immunity, and
- 2 detainee’s complaint failed to plead sufficient facts to state claim for purposeful and unlawful discrimination.

Reversed and remanded.

Justice Souter filed dissenting opinion in which Justices Stevens, Ginsburg, and Breyer joined.

Justice Breyer filed dissenting opinion.

West Headnotes (16)

**1 Federal Courts**  
⚙️Power and Duty of Court

**Federal Courts**  
⚙️Waiver or Consent

Subject matter jurisdiction cannot be forfeited or waived and should be considered when fairly in doubt.

27 Cases that cite this headnote

**2 Federal Courts**  
⚙️Interlocutory Orders Appealable

Under “collateral-order doctrine,” limited set of district court orders are reviewable though short of final judgment; orders within this narrow category are immediately appealable because they finally determine claims of right separable from, and collateral to, rights asserted in action, too important to be denied review and too independent of cause itself to require that appellate consideration be deferred until whole case is adjudicated. 28 U.S.C.A. § 1291.

20 Cases that cite this headnote

**3 Federal Courts**  
⚙️Other Particular Orders

District court decision denying Government officer’s claim of qualified immunity can fall within narrow class of appealable orders despite the absence of a final judgment. 28 U.S.C.A. § 1291.

7 Cases that cite this headnote

**4 Civil Rights**  
⚙️Government Agencies and Officers  
**Civil Rights**  
⚙️Good Faith and Reasonableness; Knowledge and Clarity of Law; Motive and Intent, in General

“Qualified immunity,” which shields Government officials from liability for civil damages insofar as their conduct does not violate clearly established statutory or

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constitutional rights, is both a defense to liability and limited entitlement not to stand trial or face the other burdens of litigation.

70 Cases that cite this headnote

**5 Federal Courts**

☛Other Particular Orders

Provided it turns on issue of law, district court order denying qualified immunity can fall within narrow class of prejudgment orders reviewable under collateral order doctrine; such an order conclusively determines that defendant must bear burdens of discovery, conceptually distinct from merits of plaintiff's claim, and would prove effectively unreviewable on appeal from final judgment. 28 U.S.C.A. § 1291.

26 Cases that cite this headnote

**6 Federal Courts**

☛Dismissal and Nonsuit in General

Second Circuit had subject matter jurisdiction to affirm district court's order denying government officials' motion to dismiss Muslim Pakistani pretrial detainee's *Bivens* action on grounds of qualified immunity; because the order turned on issue of law and rejected qualified immunity defense, it was a "final decision" subject to immediate appeal. 28 U.S.C.A. § 1291.

71 Cases that cite this headnote

**7 United States**

☛Liabilities of Officers or Agents for Negligence or Misconduct

*Bivens* recognizes implied private action for damages against federal officers alleged to have violated a citizen's constitutional rights.

30 Cases that cite this headnote

**8 Civil Rights**

☛Vicarious Liability and Respondeat Superior

in General; Supervisory Liability in General  
**Civil Rights**

☛Complaint in General

**United States**

☛Vicarious Liability; Respondeat Superior

Government officials may not be held liable, under *Bivens* or § 1983, for unconstitutional conduct of their subordinates under theory of respondeat superior; because vicarious liability is inapplicable, plaintiff must plead that each government official-defendant, through his or her own actions, has violated Constitution. 42 U.S.C.A. § 1983.

1657 Cases that cite this headnote

**9 Constitutional Law**

☛First Amendment in General

**Constitutional Law**

☛Intentional or Purposeful Action Requirement

**United States**

☛Actions

Factors necessary to establish *Bivens* violation will vary with constitutional provision at issue, and where claim is invidious discrimination in contravention of First and Fifth Amendments, plaintiff must plead and prove that defendant acted with discriminatory purpose; under extant precedent, "purposeful discrimination" requires more than intent as volition or intent as awareness of consequences and instead involves decisionmaker's undertaking course of action because of, not merely in spite of, action's adverse effects upon identifiable group. U.S.C.A. Const.Amend. 1, 5.

153 Cases that cite this headnote

**10 Federal Civil Procedure**

☛Claim for Relief in General

Requirement that pleading contain a short and plain statement of claim showing that pleader is entitled to relief does not require detailed factual allegations, but demands more than unadorned "the defendant unlawfully harmed me" accusation. Fed.Rules Civ.Proc.Rule 8(a)(2), 28

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12655 Cases that cite this headnote

**11 Federal Civil Procedure**

☛ Claim for Relief in General

Pleading that offers labels and conclusions or formulaic recitation of elements of cause of action will not do, nor does complaint suffice if it tenders naked assertions devoid of further factual enhancement. Fed.Rules Civ.Proc.Rule 8(a)(2), 28 U.S.C.A.

9579 Cases that cite this headnote

**12 Federal Civil Procedure**

☛ Insufficiency in General

**Federal Civil Procedure**

☛ Construction of Pleadings

To survive motion to dismiss, complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face; claim has “facial plausibility” when plaintiff pleads factual content that allows court to draw reasonable inference that defendant is liable for misconduct alleged. Fed.Rules Civ.Proc.Rule 12(b)(6), 28 U.S.C.A.

26765 Cases that cite this headnote

**13 Federal Civil Procedure**

☛ Insufficiency in General

“Plausibility” standard, for complaint to survive motion to dismiss for failure to satisfy short and plain statement requirement, is not akin to probability requirement, but asks for more than sheer possibility that defendant has acted unlawfully. Fed.Rules Civ.Proc.Rule 8(a)(2), 28 U.S.C.A.

5592 Cases that cite this headnote

**14 United States**

☛ Actions

Muslim Pakistani pretrial detainee’s *Bivens* complaint against government officials failed to plead sufficient facts to state claim for purposeful and unlawful discrimination; complaint challenged neither constitutionality of detainee’s arrest nor his initial detention but rather policy of holding post-September 11th detainees once they were categorized as of “high interest,” and complaint thus had to contain facts plausibly showing that officials purposefully adopted policy of so classifying detainees because of their race, religion, or national origin. Fed.Rules Civ.Proc.Rule 8(a)(2), 28 U.S.C.A.

790 Cases that cite this headnote

**15 Officers and Public Employees**

☛ Actions by or Against Officers and Employees

Basic thrust of qualified immunity doctrine is to free officials from concerns of litigation, including avoidance of disruptive discovery.

29 Cases that cite this headnote

**16 Federal Civil Procedure**

☛ Sufficiency in General

**Federal Civil Procedure**

☛ Fraud, Mistake and Condition of Mind

Requirement that fraud be pled with particularity does not give party license to evade the less rigid, though still operative, strictures of plain and short statement requirement. Fed.Rules Civ.Proc.Rules 8, 9(b), 28 U.S.C.A.

45 Cases that cite this headnote

**\*1939 Syllabus\***

Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, respondent Iqbal, a Pakistani Muslim, was arrested on criminal charges and detained by federal officials under restrictive conditions. Iqbal filed a *Bivens* action against numerous federal officials, including petitioner Ashcroft, the former Attorney General, and petitioner Mueller, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). See

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*Bivens v. Six Unknown Fed. Narcotics Agents*, 403 U.S. 388, 91 S.Ct. 1999, 29 L.Ed.2d 619. The complaint alleged, *inter alia*, that petitioners designated Iqbal a person “of high interest” on account of his race, religion, or national origin, in contravention of the First and Fifth Amendments; that the FBI, under Mueller’s direction, arrested and detained thousands of Arab Muslim men as part of its September-11th investigation; that petitioners knew of, condoned, and willfully and maliciously agreed to subject Iqbal to harsh conditions of confinement as a matter of policy, solely on account of the prohibited factors and for no legitimate penological interest; and that Ashcroft was the policy’s “principal architect” and Mueller was “instrumental” in its adoption and execution. After the District Court denied petitioners’ motion to dismiss on qualified-immunity grounds, they invoked the collateral order doctrine to file an interlocutory appeal in the Second Circuit. Affirming, that court assumed without discussion that it had jurisdiction and focused on the standard set forth in *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 127 S.Ct. 1955, 167 L.Ed.2d 929, for evaluating whether a complaint is sufficient to survive a motion to dismiss. Concluding that *Twombly*’s “flexible plausibility standard” obliging a pleader to amplify a claim with factual allegations where necessary to render it plausible was inapplicable in the context of petitioners’ appeal, the court held that Iqbal’s complaint was adequate to allege petitioners’ personal involvement in discriminatory decisions which, if true, violated clearly established constitutional law.

*Held:*

1. The Second Circuit had subject-matter jurisdiction to affirm the District \*1940 Court’s order denying petitioners’ motion to dismiss. Pp. 1944 - 1947.

(a) Denial of a qualified-immunity claim can fall within the narrow class of prejudgment orders reviewable under the collateral-order doctrine so long as the order “turns on an issue of law.” *Mitchell v. Forsyth*, 472 U.S. 511, 530, 105 S.Ct. 2806, 86 L.Ed.2d 411. The doctrine’s applicability in this context is well established; an order rejecting qualified immunity at the motion-to-dismiss stage is a “final decision” under 28 U.S.C. § 1291, which vests courts of appeals with “jurisdiction of appeals from all final decisions of the district courts.” *Behrens v. Pelletier*, 516 U.S. 299, 307, 116 S.Ct. 834, 133 L.Ed.2d 773. Pp. 1945 - 1946.

(b) Under these principles, the Court of Appeals had, and this Court has, jurisdiction over the District Court’s order. Because the order turned on an issue of law and rejected the qualified-immunity defense, it was a final decision

“subject to immediate appeal.” *Behrens, supra*, at 307, 116 S.Ct. 834. Pp. 1946 - 1947.

2. Iqbal’s complaint fails to plead sufficient facts to state a claim for purposeful and unlawful discrimination. Pp. 1947 - 1954.

(a) This Court assumes, without deciding, that Iqbal’s First Amendment claim is actionable in a *Bivens* action, see *Hartman v. Moore*, 547 U.S. 250, 254, n. 2, 126 S.Ct. 1695, 164 L.Ed.2d 441. Because vicarious liability is inapplicable to *Bivens* and § 1983 suits, see, e.g., *Monell v. New York City Dept. of Social Servs.*, 436 U.S. 658, 691, 98 S.Ct. 2018, 56 L.Ed.2d 611, the plaintiff in a suit such as the present one must plead that each Government-official defendant, through his own individual actions, has violated the Constitution. Purposeful discrimination requires more than “intent as volition or intent as awareness of consequences”; it involves a decisionmaker’s undertaking a course of action “ ‘because of,’ not merely ‘in spite of,’ [the action’s] adverse effects upon an identifiable group.” *Personnel Administrator of Mass. v. Feeney*, 442 U.S. 256, 279, 99 S.Ct. 2282, 60 L.Ed.2d 870. Iqbal must plead sufficient factual matter to show that petitioners adopted and implemented the detention policies at issue not for a neutral, investigative reason, but for the purpose of discriminating on account of race, religion, or national origin. Pp. 1947 - 1949.

(b) Under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)(2), a complaint must contain a “short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.” “[D]etailed factual allegations” are not required, *Twombly*, 550 U.S., at 555, 127 S.Ct. 1955, but the Rule does call for sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to “state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face,” *id.*, at 570, 127 S.Ct. 1955. A claim has facial plausibility when the pleaded factual content allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged. *Id.*, at 556, 127 S.Ct. 1955. Two working principles underlie *Twombly*. First, the tenet that a court must accept a complaint’s allegations as true is inapplicable to threadbare recitals of a cause of action’s elements, supported by mere conclusory statements. *Id.*, at 555, 127 S.Ct. 1955. Second, determining whether a complaint states a plausible claim is context-specific, requiring the reviewing court to draw on its experience and common sense. *Id.*, at 556, 127 S.Ct. 1955. A court considering a motion to dismiss may begin by identifying allegations that, because they are mere conclusions, are not entitled to the assumption of truth. While legal conclusions can provide the complaint’s framework, they must be supported by factual allegations. When there are

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well- \*1941 pleaded factual allegations, a court should assume their veracity and then determine whether they plausibly give rise to an entitlement to relief. Pp. 1948 - 1951.

(c) Iqbal's pleadings do not comply with Rule 8 under *Twombly*. Several of his allegations—that petitioners agreed to subject him to harsh conditions as a matter of policy, solely on account of discriminatory factors and for no legitimate penological interest; that Ashcroft was that policy's "principal architect"; and that Mueller was "instrumental" in its adoption and execution—are conclusory and not entitled to be assumed true. Moreover, the factual allegations that the FBI, under Mueller, arrested and detained thousands of Arab Muslim men, and that he and Ashcroft approved the detention policy, do not plausibly suggest that petitioners purposefully discriminated on prohibited grounds. Given that the September 11 attacks were perpetrated by Arab Muslims, it is not surprising that a legitimate policy directing law enforcement to arrest and detain individuals because of their suspected link to the attacks would produce a disparate, incidental impact on Arab Muslims, even though the policy's purpose was to target neither Arabs nor Muslims. Even if the complaint's well-pleaded facts gave rise to a plausible inference that Iqbal's arrest was the result of unconstitutional discrimination, that inference alone would not entitle him to relief: His claims against petitioners rest solely on their ostensible policy of holding detainees categorized as "of high interest," but the complaint does not contain facts plausibly showing that their policy was based on discriminatory factors. Pp. 1950 - 1953.

(d) Three of Iqbal's arguments are rejected. Pp. 1952 - 1954.

(i) His claim that *Twombly* should be limited to its antitrust context is not supported by that case or the Federal Rules. Because *Twombly* interpreted and applied Rule 8, which in turn governs the pleading standard "in all civil actions," Rule 1, the case applies to antitrust and discrimination suits alike, see 550 U.S., at 555-556, and n. 14, 127 S.Ct. 1955. Pp. 1952 - 1953.

(ii) Rule 8's pleading requirements need not be relaxed based on the Second Circuit's instruction that the District Court cabin discovery to preserve petitioners' qualified-immunity defense in anticipation of a summary judgment motion. The question presented by a motion to dismiss for insufficient pleadings does not turn on the controls placed on the discovery process. *Twombly, supra*, at 559, 127 S.Ct. 1955. And because Iqbal's complaint is deficient under Rule 8, he is not entitled to discovery,

cabined or otherwise. Pp. 1952 - 1954.

(iii) Rule 9(b)—which requires particularity when pleading "fraud or mistake" but allows "other conditions of a person's mind [to] be alleged generally"—does not require courts to credit a complaint's conclusory statements without reference to its factual context. Rule 9 merely excuses a party from pleading discriminatory intent under an elevated pleading standard. It does not give him license to evade Rule 8's less rigid, though still operative, strictures. Pp. 1953 - 1954.

(e) The Second Circuit should decide in the first instance whether to remand to the District Court to allow Iqbal to seek leave to amend his deficient complaint. P. 1954.

490 F.3d 143, reversed and remanded.

KENNEDY, J., delivered the opinion of the Court, in which ROBERTS, C.J., and SCALIA, THOMAS, and ALITO, JJ., joined. SOUTER, J., filed a dissenting opinion, in which STEVENS, GINSBURG, and BREYER, JJ., joined. BREYER, J., filed a dissenting opinion.

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## Opinion

Justice KENNEDY delivered the opinion of the Court.

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Respondent Javaid Iqbal is a citizen of Pakistan and a Muslim. In the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks he was arrested in the United States on criminal charges and detained by federal officials. Respondent claims he was deprived of various constitutional protections while in federal custody. To redress the alleged deprivations, respondent filed a complaint against numerous federal officials, including John Ashcroft, the former Attorney General of the United States, and Robert Mueller, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Ashcroft and Mueller are the petitioners in the case now before us. As to these two petitioners, the complaint alleges that they adopted an unconstitutional policy that subjected respondent to harsh conditions of confinement on account of his race, religion, or national origin.

In the District Court petitioners raised the defense of qualified immunity and moved to dismiss the suit, contending the complaint was not sufficient to state a claim against them. The District Court denied the motion to dismiss, concluding the complaint was sufficient to state a claim despite petitioners' official status at the times in question. Petitioners brought an interlocutory appeal in the Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. The court, without discussion, assumed it had jurisdiction over the order denying the motion to dismiss; and it affirmed the District Court's decision.

Respondent's account of his prison ordeal could, if proved, demonstrate unconstitutional misconduct by some governmental actors. But the allegations and pleadings with respect to these actors are not before us here. This case instead turns on a narrower question: Did respondent, as the plaintiff in the District Court, \*1943 plead factual matter that, if taken as true, states a claim that petitioners deprived him of his clearly established constitutional rights. We hold respondent's pleadings are insufficient.

**I**

Following the 2001 attacks, the FBI and other entities within the Department of Justice began an investigation of vast reach to identify the assailants and prevent them from attacking anew. The FBI dedicated more than 4,000 special agents and 3,000 support personnel to the endeavor. By September 18 "the FBI had received more than 96,000 tips or potential leads from the public." Dept. of Justice, Office of Inspector General, The September 11

Detainees: A Review of the Treatment of Aliens Held on Immigration Charges in Connection with the Investigation of the September 11 Attacks 1, 11-12 (Apr.2003) (hereinafter **OIG Report**), [http://www.usdoj.gov/oig/special/0306/full.pdf?bcsi\\_scan\\_61073EC0F74759AD=0 &bcsi\\_scan\\_filename=full.pdf](http://www.usdoj.gov/oig/special/0306/full.pdf?bcsi_scan_61073EC0F74759AD=0&bcsi_scan_filename=full.pdf) (as visited May 14, 2009, and available in Clerk of Court's case file).

In the ensuing months the FBI questioned more than 1,000 people with suspected links to the attacks in particular or to terrorism in general. *Id.*, at 1. Of those individuals, some 762 were held on immigration charges; and a 184-member subset of that group was deemed to be "of 'high interest' " to the investigation. *Id.*, at 111. The high-interest detainees were held under restrictive conditions designed to prevent them from communicating with the general prison population or the outside world. *Id.*, at 112-113.

Respondent was one of the detainees. According to his complaint, in November 2001 agents of the FBI and Immigration and Naturalization Service arrested him on charges of fraud in relation to identification documents and conspiracy to defraud the United States. *Iqbal v. Hasty*, 490 F.3d 143, 147-148 (C.A.2 2007). Pending trial for those crimes, respondent was housed at the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) in Brooklyn, New York. Respondent was designated a person "of high interest" to the September 11 investigation and in January 2002 was placed in a section of the MDC known as the Administrative Maximum Special Housing Unit (ADMAX SHU). *Id.*, at 148. As the facility's name indicates, the ADMAX SHU incorporates the maximum security conditions allowable under Federal Bureau of Prison regulations. *Ibid.* ADMAX SHU detainees were kept in lockdown 23 hours a day, spending the remaining hour outside their cells in handcuffs and leg irons accompanied by a four-officer escort. *Ibid.*

Respondent pleaded guilty to the criminal charges, served a term of imprisonment, and was removed to his native Pakistan. *Id.*, at 149. He then filed a *Bivens* action in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York against 34 current and former federal officials and 19 "John Doe" federal corrections officers. See *Bivens v. Six Unknown Fed. Narcotics Agents*, 403 U.S. 388, 91 S.Ct. 1999, 29 L.Ed.2d 619 (1971). The defendants range from the correctional officers who had day-to-day contact with respondent during the term of his confinement, to the wardens of the MDC facility, all the way to petitioners-officials who were at the highest level of the federal law enforcement hierarchy. First Amended Complaint in No. 04-CV-1809 (JG)(JA), ¶¶ 10-11, App. to Pet. for Cert. 157a (hereinafter **Complaint**).

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The 21-cause-of-action complaint does not challenge respondent's arrest or his confinement in the MDC's general prison population. Rather, it concentrates on his \*1944 treatment while confined to the ADMAX SHU. The complaint sets forth various claims against defendants who are not before us. For instance, the complaint alleges that respondent's jailors "kicked him in the stomach, punched him in the face, and dragged him across" his cell without justification, *id.*, ¶ 113, App. to Pet. for Cert. 176a; subjected him to serial strip and body-cavity searches when he posed no safety risk to himself or others, *id.*, ¶¶ 143-145, App. to Pet. for Cert. 182a; and refused to let him and other Muslims pray because there would be "[n]o prayers for terrorists," *id.*, ¶ 154, App. to Pet. for Cert. 184a.

The allegations against petitioners are the only ones relevant here. The complaint contends that petitioners designated respondent a person of high interest on account of his race, religion, or national origin, in contravention of the First and Fifth Amendments to the Constitution. The complaint alleges that "the [FBI], under the direction of Defendant MUELLER, arrested and detained thousands of Arab Muslim men ... as part of its investigation of the events of September 11." *Id.*, ¶ 47, at 164a. It further alleges that "[t]he policy of holding post-September-11th detainees in highly restrictive conditions of confinement until they were 'cleared' by the FBI was approved by Defendants ASHCROFT and MUELLER in discussions in the weeks after September 11, 2001." *Id.*, ¶ 69, at 168a. Lastly, the complaint posits that petitioners "each knew of, condoned, and willfully and maliciously agreed to subject" respondent to harsh conditions of confinement "as a matter of policy, solely on account of [his] religion, race, and/or national origin and for no legitimate penological interest." *Id.*, ¶ 96, at 172a-173a. The pleading names Ashcroft as the "principal architect" of the policy, *id.*, ¶ 10, at 157a, and identifies Mueller as "instrumental in [its] adoption, promulgation, and implementation." *Id.*, ¶ 11, at 157a.

Petitioners moved to dismiss the complaint for failure to state sufficient allegations to show their own involvement in clearly established unconstitutional conduct. The District Court denied their motion. Accepting all of the allegations in respondent's complaint as true, the court held that "it cannot be said that there [is] no set of facts on which [respondent] would be entitled to relief as against" petitioners. *Id.*, at 136a-137a (relying on *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 78 S.Ct. 99, 2 L.Ed.2d 80 (1957)). Invoking the collateral-order doctrine petitioners filed an interlocutory appeal in the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. While that appeal was pending, this Court decided *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550

U.S. 544, 127 S.Ct. 1955, 167 L.Ed.2d 929 (2007), which discussed the standard for evaluating whether a complaint is sufficient to survive a motion to dismiss.

The Court of Appeals considered *Twombly*'s applicability to this case. Acknowledging that *Twombly* retired the *Conley* no-set-of-facts test relied upon by the District Court, the Court of Appeals' opinion discussed at length how to apply this Court's "standard for assessing the adequacy of pleadings." 490 F.3d, at 155. It concluded that *Twombly* called for a "flexible 'plausibility standard,' which obliges a pleader to amplify a claim with some factual allegations in those contexts where such amplification is needed to render the claim *plausible*." *Id.*, at 157-158. The court found that petitioners' appeal did not present one of "those contexts" requiring amplification. As a consequence, it held respondent's pleading adequate to allege petitioners' personal involvement in discriminatory decisions which, if true, violated clearly established constitutional law. *Id.*, at 174.

\*1945 Judge Cabranes concurred. He agreed that the majority's "discussion of the relevant pleading standards reflect[ed] the uneasy compromise ... between a qualified immunity privilege rooted in the need to preserve the effectiveness of government as contemplated by our constitutional structure and the pleading requirements of Rule 8(a) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure." *Id.*, at 178 (internal quotation marks and citations omitted). Judge Cabranes nonetheless expressed concern at the prospect of subjecting high-ranking Government officials-entitled to assert the defense of qualified immunity and charged with responding to "a national and international security emergency unprecedented in the history of the American Republic"-to the burdens of discovery on the basis of a complaint as nonspecific as respondent's. *Id.*, at 179. Reluctant to vindicate that concern as a member of the Court of Appeals, *ibid.*, Judge Cabranes urged this Court to address the appropriate pleading standard "at the earliest opportunity." *Id.*, at 178. We granted certiorari, 554 U.S. ----, 128 S.Ct. 2931, 171 L.Ed.2d 863 (2008), and now reverse.

## II

1 We first address whether the Court of Appeals had subject-matter jurisdiction to affirm the District Court's order denying petitioners' motion to dismiss. Respondent disputed subject-matter jurisdiction in the Court of Appeals, but the court hardly discussed the issue. We are not free to pretermitt the question. Subject-matter jurisdiction cannot be forfeited or waived and should be

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considered when fairly in doubt. *Arbaugh v. Y & H Corp.*, 546 U.S. 500, 514, 126 S.Ct. 1235, 163 L.Ed.2d 1097 (2006) (citing *United States v. Cotton*, 535 U.S. 625, 630, 122 S.Ct. 1781, 152 L.Ed.2d 860 (2002)). According to respondent, the District Court's order denying petitioners' motion to dismiss is not appealable under the collateral-order doctrine. We disagree.

**A**

2 With exceptions inapplicable here, Congress has vested the courts of appeals with "jurisdiction of appeals from all final decisions of the district courts of the United States." 28 U.S.C. § 1291. Though the statute's finality requirement ensures that "interlocutory appeals-appeals before the end of district court proceedings-are the exception, not the rule," *Johnson v. Jones*, 515 U.S. 304, 309, 115 S.Ct. 2151, 132 L.Ed.2d 238 (1995), it does not prevent "review of all prejudgment orders." *Behrens v. Pelletier*, 516 U.S. 299, 305, 116 S.Ct. 834, 133 L.Ed.2d 773 (1996). Under the collateral-order doctrine a limited set of district-court orders are reviewable "though short of final judgment." *Ibid.* The orders within this narrow category "are immediately appealable because they 'finally determine claims of right separable from, and collateral to, rights asserted in the action, too important to be denied review and too independent of the cause itself to require that appellate consideration be deferred until the whole case is adjudicated.'" *Ibid.* (quoting *Cohen v. Beneficial Industrial Loan Corp.*, 337 U.S. 541, 546, 69 S.Ct. 1221, 93 L.Ed. 1528 (1949)).

3 4 5 A district-court decision denying a Government officer's claim of qualified immunity can fall within the narrow class of appealable orders despite "the absence of a final judgment." *Mitchell v. Forsyth*, 472 U.S. 511, 530, 105 S.Ct. 2806, 86 L.Ed.2d 411 (1985). This is so because qualified immunity-which shields Government officials "from liability for civil damages insofar as their conduct does not violate clearly established statutory or constitutional rights," *Harlow v. Fitzgerald*, \*1946 457 U.S. 800, 818, 102 S.Ct. 2727, 73 L.Ed.2d 396 (1982)-is both a defense to liability and a limited "entitlement not to stand trial or face the other burdens of litigation." *Mitchell*, *supra*, 472 U.S., at 526, 105 S.Ct. 2806. Provided it "turns on an issue of law," *id.*, at 530, 105 S.Ct. 2806, a district-court order denying qualified immunity " 'conclusively determin[e]s' " that the defendant must bear the burdens of discovery; is "conceptually distinct from the merits of the plaintiff's claim"; and would prove "effectively unreviewable on

appeal from a final judgment." *Id.*, at 527 - 528 (citing *Cohen*, *supra*, at 546, 69 S.Ct. 1221). As a general matter, the collateral-order doctrine may have expanded beyond the limits dictated by its internal logic and the strict application of the criteria set out in *Cohen*. But the applicability of the doctrine in the context of qualified-immunity claims is well established; and this Court has been careful to say that a district court's order rejecting qualified immunity at the motion-to-dismiss stage of a proceeding is a "final decision" within the meaning of § 1291. *Behrens*, 516 U.S., at 307, 116 S.Ct. 834.

**B**

6 Applying these principles, we conclude that the Court of Appeals had jurisdiction to hear petitioners' appeal. The District Court's order denying petitioners' motion to dismiss turned on an issue of law and rejected the defense of qualified immunity. It was therefore a final decision "subject to immediate appeal." *Ibid.* Respondent says that "a qualified immunity appeal based solely on the complaint's failure to state a claim, and not on the ultimate issues relevant to the qualified immunity defense itself, is not a proper subject of interlocutory jurisdiction." Brief for Respondent Iqbal 15 (hereinafter Iqbal Brief). In other words, respondent contends the Court of Appeals had jurisdiction to determine whether his complaint avers a clearly established constitutional violation but that it lacked jurisdiction to pass on the sufficiency of his pleadings. Our opinions, however, make clear that appellate jurisdiction is not so strictly confined.

In *Hartman v. Moore*, 547 U.S. 250, 126 S.Ct. 1695, 164 L.Ed.2d 441 (2006), the Court reviewed an interlocutory decision denying qualified immunity. The legal issue decided in *Hartman* concerned the elements a plaintiff "must plead and prove in order to win" a First Amendment retaliation claim. *Id.*, at 257, n. 5, 126 S.Ct. 1695. Similarly, two Terms ago in *Wilkie v. Robbins*, 551 U.S. 537, 127 S.Ct. 2588, 168 L.Ed.2d 389 (2007), the Court considered another interlocutory order denying qualified immunity. The legal issue there was whether a *Bivens* action can be employed to challenge interference with property rights. 551 U.S., at 549, n. 4, 127 S.Ct. 2588. These cases cannot be squared with respondent's argument that the collateral-order doctrine restricts appellate jurisdiction to the "ultimate issu[e]" whether the legal wrong asserted was a violation of clearly established law while excluding the question whether the facts pleaded establish such a violation. Iqbal Brief 15. Indeed,

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the latter question is even more clearly within the category of appealable decisions than the questions presented in *Hartman* and *Wilkie*, since whether a particular complaint sufficiently alleges a clearly established violation of law cannot be decided in isolation from the facts pleaded. In that sense the sufficiency of respondent's pleadings is both "inextricably intertwined with," *Swint v. Chambers County Comm'n*, 514 U.S. 35, 51, 115 S.Ct. 1203, 131 L.Ed.2d 60 (1995), and "directly implicated by," \*1947 *Hartman, supra*, at 257, n. 5, 126 S.Ct. 1695, the qualified immunity defense.

Respondent counters that our holding in *Johnson*, 515 U.S. 304, 115 S.Ct. 2151, 132 L.Ed.2d 238, confirms the want of subject-matter jurisdiction here. That is incorrect. The allegation in *Johnson* was that five defendants, all of them police officers, unlawfully beat the plaintiff. *Johnson* considered "the appealability of a portion of" the District Court's summary judgment order that, "though entered in a 'qualified immunity' case, determine[d] only" that there was a genuine issue of material fact that three of the defendants participated in the beating. *Id.*, at 313, 115 S.Ct. 2151.

In finding that order not a "final decision" for purposes of § 1291, the *Johnson* Court cited *Mitchell* for the proposition that only decisions turning " 'on an issue of law' " are subject to immediate appeal. 515 U.S., at 313, 115 S.Ct. 2151. Though determining whether there is a genuine issue of material fact at summary judgment is a question of law, it is a legal question that sits near the law-fact divide. Or as we said in *Johnson*, it is a "fact-related" legal inquiry. *Id.*, at 314, 115 S.Ct. 2151. To conduct it, a court of appeals may be required to consult a "vast pretrial record, with numerous conflicting affidavits, depositions, and other discovery materials." *Id.*, at 316, 115 S.Ct. 2151. That process generally involves matters more within a district court's ken and may replicate inefficiently questions that will arise on appeal following final judgment. *Ibid.* Finding those concerns predominant, *Johnson* held that the collateral orders that are "final" under *Mitchell* turn on "abstract," rather than "fact-based," issues of law. 515 U.S., at 317, 115 S.Ct. 2151.

The concerns that animated the decision in *Johnson* are absent when an appellate court considers the disposition of a motion to dismiss a complaint for insufficient pleadings. True, the categories of "fact-based" and "abstract" legal questions used to guide the Court's decision in *Johnson* are not well defined. Here, however, the order denying petitioners' motion to dismiss falls well within the latter class. Reviewing that order, the Court of Appeals considered only the allegations contained within the four corners of respondent's complaint; resort to a

"vast pretrial record" on petitioners' motion to dismiss was unnecessary. *Id.*, at 316, 115 S.Ct. 2151. And determining whether respondent's complaint has the "heft" to state a claim is a task well within an appellate court's core competency. *Twombly*, 550 U.S., at 557, 127 S.Ct. 1955. Evaluating the sufficiency of a complaint is not a "fact-based" question of law, so the problem the Court sought to avoid in *Johnson* is not implicated here. The District Court's order denying petitioners' motion to dismiss is a final decision under the collateral-order doctrine over which the Court of Appeals had, and this Court has, jurisdiction. We proceed to consider the merits of petitioners' appeal.

### III

In *Twombly, supra*, at 553-554, 127 S.Ct. 1955, the Court found it necessary first to discuss the antitrust principles implicated by the complaint. Here too we begin by taking note of the elements a plaintiff must plead to state a claim of unconstitutional discrimination against officials entitled to assert the defense of qualified immunity.

7 In *Bivens*-proceeding on the theory that a right suggests a remedy-this Court "recognized for the first time an implied private action for damages against federal officers alleged to have violated a citizen's constitutional rights." \*1948 *Correctional Services Corp. v. Malesko*, 534 U.S. 61, 66, 122 S.Ct. 515, 151 L.Ed.2d 456 (2001). Because implied causes of action are disfavored, the Court has been reluctant to extend *Bivens* liability "to any new context or new category of defendants." 534 U.S., at 68, 122 S.Ct. 515. See also *Wilkie*, 551 U.S., at 549-550, 127 S.Ct. 2588. That reluctance might well have disposed of respondent's First Amendment claim of religious discrimination. For while we have allowed a *Bivens* action to redress a violation of the equal protection component of the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment, see *Davis v. Passman*, 442 U.S. 228, 99 S.Ct. 2264, 60 L.Ed.2d 846 (1979), we have not found an implied damages remedy under the Free Exercise Clause. Indeed, we have declined to extend *Bivens* to a claim sounding in the First Amendment. *Bush v. Lucas*, 462 U.S. 367, 103 S.Ct. 2404, 76 L.Ed.2d 648 (1983). Petitioners do not press this argument, however, so we assume, without deciding, that respondent's First Amendment claim is actionable under *Bivens*.

8 In the limited settings where *Bivens* does apply, the implied cause of action is the "federal analog to suits brought against state officials under Rev. Stat. § 1979, 42 U.S.C. § 1983." *Hartman*, 547 U.S., at 254, n. 2, 126

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S.Ct. 1695. Cf. *Wilson v. Layne*, 526 U.S. 603, 609, 119 S.Ct. 1692, 143 L.Ed.2d 818 (1999). Based on the rules our precedents establish, respondent correctly concedes that Government officials may not be held liable for the unconstitutional conduct of their subordinates under a theory of *respondeat superior*. Iqbal Brief 46 (“[I]t is undisputed that supervisory *Bivens* liability cannot be established solely on a theory of *respondeat superior*”). See *Monell v. New York City Dept. of Social Servs.*, 436 U.S. 658, 691, 98 S.Ct. 2018, 56 L.Ed.2d 611 (1978) (finding no vicarious liability for a municipal “person” under 42 U.S.C. § 1983); see also *Dunlop v. Munroe*, 7 Cranch 242, 269, 3 L.Ed. 329 (1812) (a federal official’s liability “will only result from his own neglect in not properly superintending the discharge” of his subordinates’ duties); *Robertson v. Sichel*, 127 U.S. 507, 515-516, 8 S.Ct. 1286, 3 L.Ed. 203 (1888) (“A public officer or agent is not responsible for the misfeasances or position wrongs, or for the nonfeasances, or negligences, or omissions of duty, of the subagents or servants or other persons properly employed by or under him, in the discharge of his official duties”). Because vicarious liability is inapplicable to *Bivens* and § 1983 suits, a plaintiff must plead that each Government-official defendant, through the official’s own individual actions, has violated the Constitution.

9 The factors necessary to establish a *Bivens* violation will vary with the constitutional provision at issue. Where the claim is invidious discrimination in contravention of the First and Fifth Amendments, our decisions make clear that the plaintiff must plead and prove that the defendant acted with discriminatory purpose. *Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. Hialeah*, 508 U.S. 520, 540-541, 113 S.Ct. 2217, 124 L.Ed.2d 472 (1993) (First Amendment); *Washington v. Davis*, 426 U.S. 229, 240, 96 S.Ct. 2040, 48 L.Ed.2d 597 (1976) (Fifth Amendment). Under extant precedent purposeful discrimination requires more than “intent as volition or intent as awareness of consequences.” *Personnel Administrator of Mass. v. Feeney*, 442 U.S. 256, 279, 99 S.Ct. 2282, 60 L.Ed.2d 870 (1979). It instead involves a decisionmaker’s undertaking a course of action “ ‘because of,’ not merely ‘in spite of,’ [the action’s] adverse effects upon an identifiable group.” *Ibid.* It follows that, to state a claim based on a violation of a clearly established right, respondent must plead sufficient factual matter to show that \*1949 petitioners adopted and implemented the detention policies at issue not for a neutral, investigative reason but for the purpose of discriminating on account of race, religion, or national origin.

Respondent disagrees. He argues that, under a theory of “supervisory liability,” petitioners can be liable for

“knowledge and acquiescence in their subordinates’ use of discriminatory criteria to make classification decisions among detainees.” Iqbal Brief 45-46. That is to say, respondent believes a supervisor’s mere knowledge of his subordinate’s discriminatory purpose amounts to the supervisor’s violating the Constitution. We reject this argument. Respondent’s conception of “supervisory liability” is inconsistent with his accurate stipulation that petitioners may not be held accountable for the misdeeds of their agents. In a § 1983 suit or a *Bivens* action—where masters do not answer for the torts of their servants—the term “supervisory liability” is a misnomer. Absent vicarious liability, each Government official, his or her title notwithstanding, is only liable for his or her own misconduct. In the context of determining whether there is a violation of clearly established right to overcome qualified immunity, purpose rather than knowledge is required to impose *Bivens* liability on the subordinate for unconstitutional discrimination; the same holds true for an official charged with violations arising from his or her superintendent responsibilities.

## IV

## A

10 11 We turn to respondent’s complaint. Under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)(2), a pleading must contain a “short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.” As the Court held in *Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 127 S.Ct. 1955, 167 L.Ed.2d 929, the pleading standard Rule 8 announces does not require “detailed factual allegations,” but it demands more than an unadorned, the-defendant-unlawfully-harmed-me accusation. *Id.*, at 555, 127 S.Ct. 1955 (citing *Papasan v. Allain*, 478 U.S. 265, 286, 106 S.Ct. 2932, 92 L.Ed.2d 209 (1986)). A pleading that offers “labels and conclusions” or “a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.” 550 U.S., at 555, 127 S.Ct. 1955. Nor does a complaint suffice if it tenders “naked assertion[s]” devoid of “further factual enhancement.” *Id.*, at 557, 127 S.Ct. 1955.

12 13 To survive a motion to dismiss, a complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to “state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” *Id.*, at 570, 127 S.Ct. 1955. A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged. *Id.*, at 556, 127 S.Ct. 1955. The plausibility standard is not akin to a “probability

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requirement,” but it asks for more than a sheer possibility that a defendant has acted unlawfully. *Ibid.* Where a complaint pleads facts that are “merely consistent with” a defendant’s liability, it “stops short of the line between possibility and plausibility of ‘entitlement to relief.’ ” *Id.*, at 557, 127 S.Ct. 1955 (brackets omitted).

Two working principles underlie our decision in *Twombly*. First, the tenet that a court must accept as true all of the allegations contained in a complaint is inapplicable to legal conclusions. Threadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action, supported by mere conclusory statements, do not suffice. *Id.*, at 555, 127 S.Ct. 1955 (Although for the purposes of a motion to dismiss we must take all of the factual allegations in the complaint as true, we \*1950 “are not bound to accept as true a legal conclusion couched as a factual allegation” (internal quotation marks omitted)). Rule 8 marks a notable and generous departure from the hyper-technical, code-pleading regime of a prior era, but it does not unlock the doors of discovery for a plaintiff armed with nothing more than conclusions. Second, only a complaint that states a plausible claim for relief survives a motion to dismiss. *Id.*, at 556, 127 S.Ct. 1955. Determining whether a complaint states a plausible claim for relief will, as the Court of Appeals observed, be a context-specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and common sense. 490 F.3d, at 157-158. But where the well-pleaded facts do not permit the court to infer more than the mere possibility of misconduct, the complaint has alleged-but it has not “show[n]”—“that the pleader is entitled to relief.” Fed. Rule Civ. Proc. 8(a)(2).

In keeping with these principles a court considering a motion to dismiss can choose to begin by identifying pleadings that, because they are no more than conclusions, are not entitled to the assumption of truth. While legal conclusions can provide the framework of a complaint, they must be supported by factual allegations. When there are well-pleaded factual allegations, a court should assume their veracity and then determine whether they plausibly give rise to an entitlement to relief.

Our decision in *Twombly* illustrates the two-pronged approach. There, we considered the sufficiency of a complaint alleging that incumbent telecommunications providers had entered an agreement not to compete and to forestall competitive entry, in violation of the Sherman Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1. Recognizing that § 1 enjoins only anticompetitive conduct “effected by a contract, combination, or conspiracy,” *Copperweld Corp. v. Independence Tube Corp.*, 467 U.S. 752, 775, 104 S.Ct. 2731, 81 L.Ed.2d 628 (1984), the plaintiffs in *Twombly* flatly pleaded that the defendants “ha[d] entered into a

contract, combination or conspiracy to prevent competitive entry ... and ha[d] agreed not to compete with one another.” 550 U.S., at 551, 127 S.Ct. 1955 (internal quotation marks omitted). The complaint also alleged that the defendants’ “parallel course of conduct ... to prevent competition” and inflate prices was indicative of the unlawful agreement alleged. *Ibid.* (internal quotation marks omitted).

The Court held the plaintiffs’ complaint deficient under Rule 8. In doing so it first noted that the plaintiffs’ assertion of an unlawful agreement was a “ ‘legal conclusion’ ” and, as such, was not entitled to the assumption of truth. *Id.*, at 555, 127 S.Ct. 1955. Had the Court simply credited the allegation of a conspiracy, the plaintiffs would have stated a claim for relief and been entitled to proceed perforce. The Court next addressed the “nub” of the plaintiffs’ complaint—the well-pleaded, nonconclusory factual allegation of parallel behavior—to determine whether it gave rise to a “plausible suggestion of conspiracy.” *Id.*, at 565-566, 127 S.Ct. 1955. Acknowledging that parallel conduct was consistent with an unlawful agreement, the Court nevertheless concluded that it did not plausibly suggest an illicit accord because it was not only compatible with, but indeed was more likely explained by, lawful, unchoreographed free-market behavior. *Id.*, at 567, 127 S.Ct. 1955. Because the well-pleaded fact of parallel conduct, accepted as true, did not plausibly suggest an unlawful agreement, the Court held the plaintiffs’ complaint must be dismissed. *Id.*, at 570, 127 S.Ct. 1955.

**B**

**14** Under *Twombly*’s construction of Rule 8, we conclude that respondent’s complaint \*1951 has not “nudged [his] claims” of invidious discrimination “across the line from conceivable to plausible.” *Ibid.*

We begin our analysis by identifying the allegations in the complaint that are not entitled to the assumption of truth. Respondent pleads that petitioners “knew of, condoned, and willfully and maliciously agreed to subject [him]” to harsh conditions of confinement “as a matter of policy, solely on account of [his] religion, race, and/or national origin and for no legitimate penological interest.” Complaint ¶ 96, App. to Pet. for Cert. 173a-174a. The complaint alleges that Ashcroft was the “principal architect” of this invidious policy, *id.*, ¶ 10, at 157a, and that Mueller was “instrumental” in adopting and executing it, *id.*, ¶ 11, at 157a. These bare assertions, much like the pleading of conspiracy in *Twombly*, amount to nothing more than a “formulaic recitation of the

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elements” of a constitutional discrimination claim, 550 U.S., at 555, 127 S.Ct. 1955, namely, that petitioners adopted a policy “ ‘because of,’ not merely ‘in spite of,’ its adverse effects upon an identifiable group.” *Feeney*, 442 U.S., at 279, 99 S.Ct. 2282. As such, the allegations are conclusory and not entitled to be assumed true. *Twombly*, *supra*, 550 U.S., at 554-555, 127 S.Ct. 1955. To be clear, we do not reject these bald allegations on the ground that they are unrealistic or nonsensical. We do not so characterize them any more than the Court in *Twombly* rejected the plaintiffs’ express allegation of a “ ‘contract, combination or conspiracy to prevent competitive entry,’ ” *id.*, at 551, 127 S.Ct. 1955, because it thought that claim too chimerical to be maintained. It is the conclusory nature of respondent’s allegations, rather than their extravagantly fanciful nature, that disentitles them to the presumption of truth.

We next consider the factual allegations in respondent’s complaint to determine if they plausibly suggest an entitlement to relief. The complaint alleges that “the [FBI], under the direction of Defendant MUELLER, arrested and detained thousands of Arab Muslim men ... as part of its investigation of the events of September 11.” Complaint ¶ 47, App. to Pet. for Cert. 164a. It further claims that “[t]he policy of holding post-September-11th detainees in highly restrictive conditions of confinement until they were ‘cleared’ by the FBI was approved by Defendants ASHCROFT and MUELLER in discussions in the weeks after September 11, 2001.” *Id.*, ¶ 69, at 168a. Taken as true, these allegations are consistent with petitioners’ purposefully designating detainees “of high interest” because of their race, religion, or national origin. But given more likely explanations, they do not plausibly establish this purpose.

The September 11 attacks were perpetrated by 19 Arab Muslim hijackers who counted themselves members in good standing of al Qaeda, an Islamic fundamentalist group. Al Qaeda was headed by another Arab Muslim—Osama bin Laden—and composed in large part of his Arab Muslim disciples. It should come as no surprise that a legitimate policy directing law enforcement to arrest and detain individuals because of their suspected link to the attacks would produce a disparate, incidental impact on Arab Muslims, even though the purpose of the policy was to target neither Arabs nor Muslims. On the facts respondent alleges the arrests Mueller oversaw were likely lawful and justified by his nondiscriminatory intent to detain aliens who were illegally present in the United States and who had potential connections to those who committed terrorist acts. As between that “obvious alternative explanation” for the arrests, *Twombly*, *supra*, at 567, 127 S.Ct. 1955, and the purposeful, invidious

discrimination respondent \*1952 asks us to infer, discrimination is not a plausible conclusion.

But even if the complaint’s well-pleaded facts give rise to a plausible inference that respondent’s arrest was the result of unconstitutional discrimination, that inference alone would not entitle respondent to relief. It is important to recall that respondent’s complaint challenges neither the constitutionality of his arrest nor his initial detention in the MDC. Respondent’s constitutional claims against petitioners rest solely on their ostensible “policy of holding post-September-11th detainees” in the ADMAX SHU once they were categorized as “of high interest.” Complaint ¶ 69, App. to Pet. for Cert. 168a. To prevail on that theory, the complaint must contain facts plausibly showing that petitioners purposefully adopted a policy of classifying post-September-11 detainees as “of high interest” because of their race, religion, or national origin.

This the complaint fails to do. Though respondent alleges that various other defendants, who are not before us, may have labeled him a person of “of high interest” for impermissible reasons, his only factual allegation against petitioners accuses them of adopting a policy approving “restrictive conditions of confinement” for post-September-11 detainees until they were “ ‘cleared’ by the FBI.” *Ibid.* Accepting the truth of that allegation, the complaint does not show, or even intimate, that petitioners purposefully housed detainees in the ADMAX SHU due to their race, religion, or national origin. All it plausibly suggests is that the Nation’s top law enforcement officers, in the aftermath of a devastating terrorist attack, sought to keep suspected terrorists in the most secure conditions available until the suspects could be cleared of terrorist activity. Respondent does not argue, nor can he, that such a motive would violate petitioners’ constitutional obligations. He would need to allege more by way of factual content to “nudge[e]” his claim of purposeful discrimination “across the line from conceivable to plausible.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S., at 570, 127 S.Ct. 1955.

To be sure, respondent can attempt to draw certain contrasts between the pleadings the Court considered in *Twombly* and the pleadings at issue here. In *Twombly*, the complaint alleged general wrongdoing that extended over a period of years, *id.*, at 551, 127 S.Ct. 1955, whereas here the complaint alleges discrete wrongs—for instance, beatings-by lower level Government actors. The allegations here, if true, and if condoned by petitioners, could be the basis for some inference of wrongful intent on petitioners’ part. Despite these distinctions, respondent’s pleadings do not suffice to state a claim. Unlike in *Twombly*, where the doctrine of *respondeat*

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*superior* could bind the corporate defendant, here, as we have noted, petitioners cannot be held liable unless they themselves acted on account of a constitutionally protected characteristic. Yet respondent's complaint does not contain any factual allegation sufficient to plausibly suggest petitioners' discriminatory state of mind. His pleadings thus do not meet the standard necessary to comply with Rule 8.

It is important to note, however, that we express no opinion concerning the sufficiency of respondent's complaint against the defendants who are not before us. Respondent's account of his prison ordeal alleges serious official misconduct that we need not address here. Our decision is limited to the determination that respondent's complaint does not entitle him to relief from petitioners.

**C**

Respondent offers three arguments that bear on our disposition of his case, but none is persuasive.

**\*1953 1**

Respondent first says that our decision in *Twombly* should be limited to pleadings made in the context of an antitrust dispute. Iqbal Brief 37-38. This argument is not supported by *Twombly* and is incompatible with the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Though *Twombly* determined the sufficiency of a complaint sounding in antitrust, the decision was based on our interpretation and application of Rule 8. 550 U.S., at 554, 127 S.Ct. 1955. That Rule in turn governs the pleading standard "in all civil actions and proceedings in the United States district courts." Fed. Rule Civ. Proc. 1. Our decision in *Twombly* expounded the pleading standard for "all civil actions," *ibid.*, and it applies to antitrust and discrimination suits alike. See 550 U.S., at 555-556, and n. 3, 127 S.Ct. 1955.

**2**

Respondent next implies that our construction of Rule 8 should be tempered where, as here, the Court of Appeals has "instructed the district court to cabin discovery in such a way as to preserve" petitioners' defense of qualified immunity "as much as possible in anticipation of

a summary judgment motion." Iqbal Brief 27. We have held, however, that the question presented by a motion to dismiss a complaint for insufficient pleadings does not turn on the controls placed upon the discovery process. *Twombly, supra*, at 559, 127 S.Ct. 1955 ("It is no answer to say that a claim just shy of a plausible entitlement to relief can, if groundless, be weeded out early in the discovery process through careful case management given the common lament that the success of judicial supervision in checking discovery abuse has been on the modest side" (internal quotation marks and citation omitted)).

**15** Our rejection of the careful-case-management approach is especially important in suits where Government-official defendants are entitled to assert the defense of qualified immunity. The basic thrust of the qualified-immunity doctrine is to free officials from the concerns of litigation, including "avoidance of disruptive discovery." *Siegert v. Gilley*, 500 U.S. 226, 236, 111 S.Ct. 1789, 114 L.Ed.2d 277 (1991) (KENNEDY, J., concurring in judgment). There are serious and legitimate reasons for this. If a Government official is to devote time to his or her duties, and to the formulation of sound and responsible policies, it is counterproductive to require the substantial diversion that is attendant to participating in litigation and making informed decisions as to how it should proceed. Litigation, though necessary to ensure that officials comply with the law, exacts heavy costs in terms of efficiency and expenditure of valuable time and resources that might otherwise be directed to the proper execution of the work of the Government. The costs of diversion are only magnified when Government officials are charged with responding to, as Judge Cabranes aptly put it, "a national and international security emergency unprecedented in the history of the American Republic." 490 F.3d, at 179.

It is no answer to these concerns to say that discovery for petitioners can be deferred while pretrial proceedings continue for other defendants. It is quite likely that, when discovery as to the other parties proceeds, it would prove necessary for petitioners and their counsel to participate in the process to ensure the case does not develop in a misleading or slanted way that causes prejudice to their position. Even if petitioners are not yet themselves subject to discovery orders, then, they would not be free from the burdens of discovery.

We decline respondent's invitation to relax the pleading requirements on the **\*1954** ground that the Court of Appeals promises petitioners minimally intrusive discovery. That promise provides especially cold comfort in this pleading context, where we are impelled to give

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real content to the concept of qualified immunity for high-level officials who must be neither deterred nor detracted from the vigorous performance of their duties. Because respondent's complaint is deficient under Rule 8, he is not entitled to discovery, cabined or otherwise.

3

Respondent finally maintains that the Federal Rules expressly allow him to allege petitioners' discriminatory intent "generally," which he equates with a conclusory allegation. Iqbal Brief 32 (citing Fed. Rule Civ. Proc. 9). It follows, respondent says, that his complaint is sufficiently well pleaded because it claims that petitioners discriminated against him "on account of [his] religion, race, and/or national origin and for no legitimate penological interest." Complaint ¶ 96, App. to Pet. for Cert. 172a-173a. Were we required to accept this allegation as true, respondent's complaint would survive petitioners' motion to dismiss. But the Federal Rules do not require courts to credit a complaint's conclusory statements without reference to its factual context.

16 It is true that Rule 9(b) requires particularity when pleading "fraud or mistake," while allowing "[m]alice, intent, knowledge, and other conditions of a person's mind [to] be alleged generally." But "generally" is a relative term. In the context of Rule 9, it is to be compared to the particularity requirement applicable to fraud or mistake. Rule 9 merely excuses a party from pleading discriminatory intent under an elevated pleading standard. It does not give him license to evade the less rigid-though still operative-strictures of Rule 8. See 5A C. Wright & A. Miller, Federal Practice and Procedure § 1301, p. 291 (3d ed. 2004) ("[A] rigid rule requiring the detailed pleading of a condition of mind would be undesirable because, absent overriding considerations pressing for a specificity requirement, as in the case of averments of fraud or mistake, the general 'short and plain statement of the claim' mandate in Rule 8(a) ... should control the second sentence of Rule 9(b)"). And Rule 8 does not empower respondent to plead the bare elements of his cause of action, affix the label "general allegation," and expect his complaint to survive a motion to dismiss.

V

We hold that respondent's complaint fails to plead

sufficient facts to state a claim for purposeful and unlawful discrimination against petitioners. The Court of Appeals should decide in the first instance whether to remand to the District Court so that respondent can seek leave to amend his deficient complaint.

The judgment of the Court of Appeals is reversed, and the case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

*It is so ordered.*

Justice SOUTER, with whom Justice STEVENS, Justice GINSBURG, and Justice BREYER join, dissenting.

This case is here on the uncontested assumption that *Bivens v. Six Unknown Fed. Narcotics Agents*, 403 U.S. 388, 91 S.Ct. 1999, 29 L.Ed.2d 619 (1971), allows personal liability based on a federal officer's violation of an individual's rights under the First and Fifth Amendments, and it comes to us with the explicit concession of petitioners Ashcroft and Mueller that an officer may be subject to *Bivens* liability as a supervisor on grounds other than *respondeat superior*.<sup>1955</sup> The Court apparently rejects this concession and, although it has no bearing on the majority's resolution of this case, does away with supervisory liability under *Bivens*. The majority then misapplies the pleading standard under *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 127 S.Ct. 1955, 167 L.Ed.2d 929 (2007), to conclude that the complaint fails to state a claim. I respectfully dissent from both the rejection of supervisory liability as a cognizable claim in the face of petitioners' concession, and from the holding that the complaint fails to satisfy Rule 8(a)(2) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

I

A

Respondent Iqbal was arrested in November 2001 on charges of conspiracy to defraud the United States and fraud in relation to identification documents, and was placed in pretrial detention at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, New York. *Iqbal v. Hasty*, 490 F.3d 143, 147-148 (C.A.2 2007). He alleges that FBI officials carried out a discriminatory policy by designating him as a person "of high interest" in the investigation of the September 11 attacks solely because of his race, religion,

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or national origin. Owing to this designation he was placed in the detention center's Administrative Maximum Special Housing Unit for over six months while awaiting the fraud trial. *Id.*, at 148. As I will mention more fully below, Iqbal contends that Ashcroft and Mueller were at the very least aware of the discriminatory detention policy and condoned it (and perhaps even took part in devising it), thereby violating his First and Fifth Amendment rights.<sup>1</sup>

Iqbal claims that on the day he was transferred to the special unit, prison guards, without provocation, "picked him up and threw him against the wall, kicked him in the stomach, punched him in the face, and dragged him across the room." First Amended Complaint in No. 04-CV-1809 (JG)(JA), ¶ 113, App. to Pet. for Cert. 176a (hereinafter Complaint). He says that after being attacked a second time he sought medical attention but was denied care for two weeks. *Id.*, ¶¶ 187-188, at 189a. According to Iqbal's complaint, prison staff in the special unit subjected him to unjustified strip and body cavity searches, *id.*, ¶¶ 136-140, at 181a, verbally berated him as a "terrorist" and "Muslim killer," *id.*, ¶ 87, at 170a-171a, refused to give him adequate food, *id.*, ¶ 91, at 171a-172a, and intentionally turned on air conditioning during the winter and heating during the summer, *id.*, ¶ 84, at 170a. He claims that prison staff interfered with his attempts to pray and engage in religious study, *id.*, ¶¶ 153-154, at 183a-184a, and with his access to counsel, *id.*, ¶¶ 168, 171, at 186a-187a.

The District Court denied Ashcroft and Mueller's motion to dismiss Iqbal's discrimination claim, and the Court of Appeals affirmed. Ashcroft and Mueller then asked this Court to grant certiorari on two questions:

"1. Whether a conclusory allegation that a cabinet-level officer or other high-ranking official knew of, condoned, or agreed to subject a plaintiff to allegedly unconstitutional acts purportedly committed by subordinate officials is sufficient to state individual-capacity claims against those officials under *Bivens*.

\*1956 "2. Whether a cabinet-level officer or other high-ranking official may be held personally liable for the allegedly unconstitutional acts of subordinate officials on the ground that, as high-level supervisors, they had constructive notice of the discrimination allegedly carried out by such subordinate officials." Pet. for Cert. I.

The Court granted certiorari on both questions. The first is about pleading; the second goes to the liability standard.

In the first question, Ashcroft and Mueller did not ask

whether "a cabinet-level officer or other high-ranking official" who "knew of, condoned, or agreed to subject a plaintiff to allegedly unconstitutional acts committed by subordinate officials" was subject to liability under *Bivens*. In fact, they conceded in their petition for certiorari that they would be liable if they had "actual knowledge" of discrimination by their subordinates and exhibited " 'deliberate indifference' " to that discrimination. Pet. for Cert. 29 (quoting *Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 837, 114 S.Ct. 1970, 128 L.Ed.2d 811 (1994)). Instead, they asked the Court to address whether Iqbal's allegations against them (which they call conclusory) were sufficient to satisfy Rule 8(a)(2), and in particular whether the Court of Appeals misapplied our decision in *Twombly* construing that rule. Pet. for Cert. 11-24.

In the second question, Ashcroft and Mueller asked this Court to say whether they could be held personally liable for the actions of their subordinates based on the theory that they had constructive notice of their subordinates' unconstitutional conduct. *Id.*, at 25-33. This was an odd question to pose, since Iqbal has never claimed that Ashcroft and Mueller are liable on a constructive notice theory. Be that as it may, the second question challenged only one possible ground for imposing supervisory liability under *Bivens*. In sum, both questions assumed that a defendant could raise a *Bivens* claim on theories of supervisory liability other than constructive notice, and neither question asked the parties or the Court to address the elements of such liability.

The briefing at the merits stage was no different. Ashcroft and Mueller argued that the factual allegations in Iqbal's complaint were insufficient to overcome their claim of qualified immunity; they also contended that they could not be held liable on a theory of constructive notice. Again they conceded, however, that they would be subject to supervisory liability if they "had actual knowledge of the assertedly discriminatory nature of the classification of suspects as being 'of high interest' and they were deliberately indifferent to that discrimination." Brief for Petitioners 50; see also Reply Brief for Petitioners 21-22. Iqbal argued that the allegations in his complaint were sufficient under Rule 8(a)(2) and *Twombly*, and conceded that as a matter of law he could not recover under a theory of *respondeat superior*. See Brief for Respondent Iqbal 46. Thus, the parties agreed as to a proper standard of supervisory liability, and the disputed question was whether Iqbal's complaint satisfied Rule 8(a)(2).

Without acknowledging the parties' agreement as to the standard of supervisory liability, the Court asserts that it must *sua sponte* decide the scope of supervisory liability

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here. *Ante*, at 1947 - 1949. I agree that, absent Ashcroft and Mueller's concession, that determination would have to be made; without knowing the elements of a supervisory liability claim, there would be no way to determine whether a plaintiff had made factual allegations amounting to grounds for relief on that claim. See *Twombly*, 550 U.S., at 557-558, 127 S.Ct. 1955. But deciding the scope of supervisory \*1957 *Bivens* liability in this case is uncalled for. There are several reasons, starting with the position Ashcroft and Mueller have taken and following from it.

First, Ashcroft and Mueller have, as noted, made the critical concession that a supervisor's knowledge of a subordinate's unconstitutional conduct and deliberate indifference to that conduct are grounds for *Bivens* liability. Iqbal seeks to recover on a theory that Ashcroft and Mueller at least knowingly acquiesced (and maybe more than acquiesced) in the discriminatory acts of their subordinates; if he can show this, he will satisfy Ashcroft and Mueller's own test for supervisory liability. See *Farmer, supra*, at 842, 114 S.Ct. 1970 (explaining that a prison official acts with "deliberate indifference" if "the official acted or failed to act despite his knowledge of a substantial risk of serious harm"). We do not normally override a party's concession, see, e.g., *United States v. International Business Machines Corp.*, 517 U.S. 843, 855, 116 S.Ct. 1793, 135 L.Ed.2d 124 (1996) (holding that "[i]t would be inappropriate for us to [e]xamine in this case, without the benefit of the parties' briefing," an issue the Government had conceded), and doing so is especially inappropriate when, as here, the issue is unnecessary to decide the case, see *infra*, at 1958 - 1959. I would therefore accept Ashcroft and Mueller's concession for purposes of this case and proceed to consider whether the complaint alleges at least knowledge and deliberate indifference.

Second, because of the concession, we have received no briefing or argument on the proper scope of supervisory liability, much less the full-dress argument we normally require. *Mapp v. Ohio*, 367 U.S. 643, 676-677, 81 S.Ct. 1684, 6 L.Ed.2d 1081 (1961) (Harlan, J., dissenting). We consequently are in no position to decide the precise contours of supervisory liability here, this issue being a complicated one that has divided the Courts of Appeals. See *infra*, at 1957 - 1959. This Court recently remarked on the danger of "bad decisionmaking" when the briefing on a question is "woefully inadequate," *Pearson v. Callahan*, 555 U.S. ----, ----, 129 S.Ct. 808, 819, 172 L.Ed.2d 565 (2009), yet today the majority answers a question with no briefing at all. The attendant risk of error is palpable.

Finally, the Court's approach is most unfair to Iqbal. He was entitled to rely on Ashcroft and Mueller's concession, both in their petition for certiorari and in their merits briefs, that they could be held liable on a theory of knowledge and deliberate indifference. By overriding that concession, the Court denies Iqbal a fair chance to be heard on the question.

**B**

The majority, however, does ignore the concession. According to the majority, because Iqbal concededly cannot recover on a theory of *respondeat superior*, it follows that he cannot recover under any theory of supervisory liability. *Ante*, at 1948 - 1949. The majority says that in a *Bivens* action, "where masters do not answer for the torts of their servants," "the term 'supervisory liability' is a misnomer," and that "[a]bsent vicarious liability, each Government official, his or her title notwithstanding, is only liable for his or her own misconduct." *Ibid*. Lest there be any mistake, in these words the majority is not narrowing the scope of supervisory liability; it is eliminating *Bivens* supervisory liability entirely. The nature of a supervisory liability theory is that the supervisor may be liable, under certain conditions, for the wrongdoing of his subordinates, and it is this very principle that the majority rejects. *Ante*, at 1952 ("[P]etitioners cannot be held liable unless they themselves \*1958 acted on account of a constitutionally protected characteristic").

The dangers of the majority's readiness to proceed without briefing and argument are apparent in its cursory analysis, which rests on the assumption that only two outcomes are possible here: *respondeat superior* liability, in which "an employer is subject to liability for torts committed by employees while acting within the scope of their employment," Restatement (Third) of Agency § 2.04 (2005), or no supervisory liability at all. The dichotomy is false. Even if an employer is not liable for the actions of his employee solely because the employee was acting within the scope of employment, there still might be conditions to render a supervisor liable for the conduct of his subordinate. See, e.g., *Whitfield v. Melendez-Rivera*, 431 F.3d 1, 14 (C.A.1 2005) (distinguishing between *respondeat superior* liability and supervisory liability); *Bennett v. Eastpointe*, 410 F.3d 810, 818 (C.A.6 2005) (same); *Richardson v. Goord*, 347 F.3d 431, 435 (C.A.2 2003) (same); *Hall v. Lombardi*, 996 F.2d 954, 961 (C.A.8 1993) (same).

In fact, there is quite a spectrum of possible tests for

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supervisory liability: it could be imposed where a supervisor has actual knowledge of a subordinate's constitutional violation and acquiesces, see, e.g., *Baker v. Monroe Twp.*, 50 F.3d 1186, 1194 (C.A.3 1995); *Woodward v. Worland*, 977 F.2d 1392, 1400 (C.A.10 1992); or where supervisors " 'know about the conduct and facilitate it, approve it, condone it, or turn a blind eye for fear of what they might see,' " *International Action Center v. United States*, 365 F.3d 20, 28 (C.A.D.C.2004) (Roberts, J.) (quoting *Jones v. Chicago*, 856 F.2d 985, 992 (C.A.7 1988) (Posner, J.)); or where the supervisor has no actual knowledge of the violation but was reckless in his supervision of the subordinate, see, e.g., *Hall, supra*, at 961; or where the supervisor was grossly negligent, see, e.g., *Lipsett v. University of Puerto Rico*, 864 F.2d 881, 902 (C.A.1 1988). I am unsure what the general test for supervisory liability should be, and in the absence of briefing and argument I am in no position to choose or devise one.

Neither is the majority, but what is most remarkable about its foray into supervisory liability is that its conclusion has no bearing on its resolution of the case. The majority says that all of the allegations in the complaint that Ashcroft and Mueller authorized, condoned, or even were aware of their subordinates' discriminatory conduct are "conclusory" and therefore are "not entitled to be assumed true." *Ante*, at 1951. As I explain below, this conclusion is unsound, but on the majority's understanding of Rule 8(a)(2) pleading standards, even if the majority accepted Ashcroft and Mueller's concession and asked whether the complaint sufficiently alleges knowledge and deliberate indifference, it presumably would still conclude that the complaint fails to plead sufficient facts and must be dismissed.<sup>2</sup>

## II

Given petitioners' concession, the complaint satisfies Rule 8(a)(2). Ashcroft and Mueller admit they are liable for their subordinates' conduct if they "had actual knowledge of the assertedly discriminatory nature of the classification of suspects as being 'of high interest' and they were deliberately indifferent to that discrimination." Brief for Petitioners 50. Iqbal alleges \*1959 that after the September 11 attacks the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) "arrested and detained thousands of Arab Muslim men," Complaint ¶ 47, App. to Pet. for Cert. 164a, that many of these men were designated by high-ranking FBI officials as being " 'of high interest,' " *id.*, ¶¶ 48, 50, at 164a, and that in many cases, including Iqbal's, this designation was made "because of the race, religion, and

national origin of the detainees, and not because of any evidence of the detainees' involvement in supporting terrorist activity," *id.*, ¶ 49. The complaint further alleges that Ashcroft was the "principal architect of the policies and practices challenged," *id.*, ¶ 10, at 157a, and that Mueller "was instrumental in the adoption, promulgation, and implementation of the policies and practices challenged," *id.*, ¶ 11. According to the complaint, Ashcroft and Mueller "knew of, condoned, and willfully and maliciously agreed to subject [Iqbal] to these conditions of confinement as a matter of policy, solely on account of [his] religion, race, and/or national origin and for no legitimate penological interest." *Id.*, ¶ 96, at 172a-173a. The complaint thus alleges, at a bare minimum, that Ashcroft and Mueller knew of and condoned the discriminatory policy their subordinates carried out. Actually, the complaint goes further in alleging that Ashcroft and Mueller affirmatively acted to create the discriminatory detention policy. If these factual allegations are true, Ashcroft and Mueller were, at the very least, aware of the discriminatory policy being implemented and deliberately indifferent to it.

Ashcroft and Mueller argue that these allegations fail to satisfy the "plausibility standard" of *Twombly*. They contend that Iqbal's claims are implausible because such high-ranking officials "tend not to be personally involved in the specific actions of lower-level officers down the bureaucratic chain of command." Brief for Petitioners 28. But this response bespeaks a fundamental misunderstanding of the enquiry that *Twombly* demands. *Twombly* does not require a court at the motion-to-dismiss stage to consider whether the factual allegations are probably true. We made it clear, on the contrary, that a court must take the allegations as true, no matter how skeptical the court may be. See *Twombly*, 550 U.S., at 555, 127 S.Ct. 1955 (a court must proceed "on the assumption that all the allegations in the complaint are true (even if doubtful in fact)"); *id.*, at 556, 127 S.Ct. 1955 ("[A] well-pleaded complaint may proceed even if it strikes a savvy judge that actual proof of the facts alleged is improbable"); see also *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 327, 109 S.Ct. 1827, 104 L.Ed.2d 338 (1989) ("Rule 12(b)(6) does not countenance ... dismissals based on a judge's disbelief of a complaint's factual allegations"). The sole exception to this rule lies with allegations that are sufficiently fantastic to defy reality as we know it: claims about little green men, or the plaintiff's recent trip to Pluto, or experiences in time travel. That is not what we have here.

Under *Twombly*, the relevant question is whether, assuming the factual allegations are true, the plaintiff has stated a ground for relief that is plausible. That is, in *Twombly* 's words, a plaintiff must "allege facts" that,

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taken as true, are “suggestive of illegal conduct.” 550 U.S., at 564, n. 8, 127 S.Ct. 1955. In *Twombly*, we were faced with allegations of a conspiracy to violate § 1 of the Sherman Act through parallel conduct. The difficulty was that the conduct alleged was “consistent with conspiracy, but just as much in line with a wide swath of rational and competitive business strategy unilaterally prompted by common perceptions of the market.” *Id.*, at 554, 127 S.Ct. 1955. We held that in \*1960 that sort of circumstance, “[a]n allegation of parallel conduct is ... much like a naked assertion of conspiracy in a § 1 complaint: it gets the complaint close to stating a claim, but without some further factual enhancement it stops short of the line between possibility and plausibility of ‘entitlement to relief.’ ” *Id.*, at 557, 127 S.Ct. 1955 (brackets omitted). Here, by contrast, the allegations in the complaint are neither confined to naked legal conclusions nor consistent with legal conduct. The complaint alleges that FBI officials discriminated against Iqbal solely on account of his race, religion, and national origin, and it alleges the knowledge and deliberate indifference that, by Ashcroft and Mueller’s own admission, are sufficient to make them liable for the illegal action. Iqbal’s complaint therefore contains “enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” *Id.*, at 570, 127 S.Ct. 1955.

I do not understand the majority to disagree with this understanding of “plausibility” under *Twombly*. Rather, the majority discards the allegations discussed above with regard to Ashcroft and Mueller as conclusory, and is left considering only two statements in the complaint: that “the [FBI], under the direction of Defendant MUELLER, arrested and detained thousands of Arab Muslim men ... as part of its investigation of the events of September 11,” Complaint ¶ 47, App. to Pet. for Cert. 164a, and that “[t]he policy of holding post-September-11th detainees in highly restrictive conditions of confinement until they were ‘cleared’ by the FBI was approved by Defendants ASHCROFT and MUELLER in discussions in the weeks after September 11, 2001,” *id.*, ¶ 69, at 168a. See *ante*, at 1951. I think the majority is right in saying that these allegations suggest only that Ashcroft and Mueller “sought to keep suspected terrorists in the most secure conditions available until the suspects could be cleared of terrorist activity,” *ante*, at 1952, and that this produced “a disparate, incidental impact on Arab Muslims,” *ante*, at 1951 - 1952. And I agree that the two allegations selected by the majority, standing alone, do not state a plausible entitlement to relief for unconstitutional discrimination.

But these allegations do not stand alone as the only significant, nonconclusory statements in the complaint, for the complaint contains many allegations linking Ashcroft and Mueller to the discriminatory practices of

their subordinates. See Complaint ¶ 10, App. to Pet. for Cert. 157a (Ashcroft was the “principal architect” of the discriminatory policy); *id.*, ¶ 11 (Mueller was “instrumental” in adopting and executing the discriminatory policy); *id.*, ¶ 96, at 172a-173a (Ashcroft and Mueller “knew of, condoned, and willfully and maliciously agreed to subject” Iqbal to harsh conditions “as a matter of policy, solely on account of [his] religion, race, and/or national origin and for no legitimate penological interest”).

The majority says that these are “bare assertions” that, “much like the pleading of conspiracy in *Twombly*, amount to nothing more than a ‘formulaic recitation of the elements’ of a constitutional discrimination claim” and therefore are “not entitled to be assumed true.” *Ante*, at 1951 (quoting *Twombly, supra*, at 555, 127 S.Ct. 1955). The fallacy of the majority’s position, however, lies in looking at the relevant assertions in isolation. The complaint contains specific allegations that, in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, the Chief of the FBI’s International Terrorism Operations Section and the Assistant Special Agent in Charge for the FBI’s New York Field Office implemented a policy that discriminated against Arab Muslim men, including Iqbal, solely on account of their race, religion, or national origin. See \*1961 Complaint ¶¶ 47-53, App. to Pet. for Cert. 164a-165a. Viewed in light of these subsidiary allegations, the allegations singled out by the majority as “conclusory” are no such thing. Iqbal’s claim is not that Ashcroft and Mueller “knew of, condoned, and willfully and maliciously agreed to subject” him to a discriminatory practice that is left undefined; his allegation is that “they knew of, condoned, and willfully and maliciously agreed to subject” him to a particular, discrete, discriminatory policy detailed in the complaint. Iqbal does not say merely that Ashcroft was the architect of some amorphous discrimination, or that Mueller was instrumental in an ill-defined constitutional violation; he alleges that they helped to create the discriminatory policy he has described. Taking the complaint as a whole, it gives Ashcroft and Mueller “‘fair notice of what the ... claim is and the grounds upon which it rests.’ ” *Twombly*, 550 U.S., at 555, 127 S.Ct. 1955 (quoting *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 47, 78 S.Ct. 99, 2 L.Ed.2d 80 (1957) (omission in original)).

That aside, the majority’s holding that the statements it selects are conclusory cannot be squared with its treatment of certain other allegations in the complaint as nonconclusory. For example, the majority takes as true the statement that “[t]he policy of holding post-September-11th detainees in highly restrictive conditions of confinement until they were ‘cleared’ by the

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FBI was approved by Defendants ASHCROFT and MUELLER in discussions in the weeks after September 11, 2001.” Complaint ¶ 69, App. to Pet. for Cert. 168a; see *ante*, at 1951. This statement makes two points: (1) after September 11, the FBI held certain detainees in highly restrictive conditions, and (2) Ashcroft and Mueller discussed and approved these conditions. If, as the majority says, these allegations are not conclusory, then I cannot see why the majority deems it merely conclusory when Iqbal alleges that (1) after September 11, the FBI designated Arab Muslim detainees as being of “ ‘high interest’ ” “because of the race, religion, and national origin of the detainees, and not because of any evidence of the detainees’ involvement in supporting terrorist activity,” Complaint ¶¶ 48-50, App. to Pet. for Cert. 164a, and (2) Ashcroft and Mueller “knew of, condoned, and willfully and maliciously agreed” to that discrimination, *id.*, ¶ 96, at 172a. By my lights, there is no principled basis for the majority’s disregard of the allegations linking Ashcroft and Mueller to their subordinates’ discrimination.

I respectfully dissent.

Justice BREYER, dissenting.

I agree with Justice SOUTER and join his dissent. I write separately to point out that, like the Court, I believe it important to prevent unwarranted litigation from interfering with “the proper execution of the work of the Government.” *Ante*, at 1953. But I cannot find in that

need adequate justification for the Court’s interpretation of *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 127 S.Ct. 1955, 167 L.Ed.2d 929 (2007), and Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8. The law, after all, provides trial courts with other legal weapons designed to prevent unwarranted interference. As the Second Circuit explained, where a Government defendant asserts a qualified immunity defense, a trial court, responsible for managing a case and “mindful of the need to vindicate the purpose of the qualified immunity defense,” can structure discovery in ways that diminish the risk of imposing unwarranted burdens upon public officials. See *Iqbal v. Hasty*, 490 F.3d 143, 158 (2007). A district court, for example, can begin discovery with lower level government defendants before determining whether a case can be made to allow \*1962 discovery related to higher level government officials. See *ibid*. Neither the briefs nor the Court’s opinion provides convincing grounds for finding these alternative case-management tools inadequate, either in general or in the case before us. For this reason, as well as for the independently sufficient reasons set forth in Justice SOUTER’s opinion, I would affirm the Second Circuit.

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Footnotes

- \* The syllabus constitutes no part of the opinion of the Court but has been prepared by the Reporter of Decisions for the convenience of the reader. See *United States v. Detroit Timber & Lumber Co.*, 200 U.S. 321, 337, 26 S.Ct. 282, 50 L.Ed. 499.
- 1 Iqbal makes no claim against Ashcroft and Mueller based simply on his right, as a pretrial detainee, to be free from punishment prior to an adjudication of guilt on the fraud charges. See *Bell v. Wolfish*, 441 U.S. 520, 535, 99 S.Ct. 1861, 60 L.Ed.2d 447 (1979).
- 2 If I am mistaken, and the majority’s rejection of the concession is somehow outcome determinative, then its approach is even more unfair to Iqbal than previously explained, see *supra*, at 1957, for Iqbal had no reason to argue the (apparently dispositive) supervisory liability standard in light of the concession.

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abundantly clear that doing justice does not always cause the heavens to fall. The Court would therefore do well to heed Justice KENNEDY's just reminder that "[w]e ought not to take steps which diminish the likelihood that [federal] courts will base their legal decision on an accurate assessment of the facts." *Keeney*, 504 U.S., at 24, 112 S.Ct. 1715 (dissenting opinion).

It may well be true that respondent would have completely waived his right to present mitigating evidence if that evidence had been adequately investigated at the time of sentencing. It may also be true that respondent's mitigating evidence could not outweigh his violent past. What is certainly true, however, is that an evidentiary hearing would provide answers to these questions. I emphatically agree with the majority of judges on the en banc Court of Appeals that it was an abuse of discretion to refuse to conduct such a hearing in this capital case.

Accordingly, I respectfully dissent.



550 U.S. 544, 167 L.Ed.2d 929

**BELL ATLANTIC CORPORATION**  
**et al., Petitioners,**

v.

**William TWOMBLY et al.**

**No. 05-1126.**

Argued Nov. 27, 2006.

Decided May 21, 2007.

**Background:** Consumers brought putative class action against incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs) alleging anti-trust conspiracy, in violation of the Sherman Act, both to prevent competitive entry into local telephone and Internet service

markets and to avoid competing with each other in their respective markets. The United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, Gerald Lynch, J., 313 F.Supp.2d 174, dismissed complaint for failure to state a claim upon which relief could be granted. The United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, 425 F.3d 99, reversed. The Supreme Court granted certiorari.

**Holdings:** The Supreme Court, Justice Souter, held that:

- (1) stating a claim under Sherman Act's restraint of trade provision requires a complaint with enough factual matter, taken as true, to suggest that an agreement was made;
- (2) an allegation of parallel business conduct and a bare assertion of conspiracy will not alone suffice to state a claim under the Sherman Act;
- (3) dismissal for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted does not require appearance, beyond a doubt, that plaintiff can prove no set of facts in support of claim that would entitle him to relief, abrogating *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 78 S.Ct. 99, 2 L.Ed.2d 80; and
- (4) consumers' allegations of parallel conduct were insufficient to state a claim.

Judgment of the Court of Appeals reversed and remanded.

Justice Stevens filed a dissenting opinion in which Justice Ginsburg joined in part.

**1. Antitrust and Trade Regulation**

↔537

Because Sherman Act's restraint of trade provision does not prohibit all unreasonable restraints of trade but only restraints effected by a contract, combination, or conspiracy, the crucial question is whether the challenged anticompetitive

conduct stems from independent decision or from an agreement, tacit or express. Sherman Act, § 1, 15 U.S.C.A. § 1.

## 2. Antitrust and Trade Regulation ⌘975

While a showing of parallel business behavior is admissible circumstantial evidence from which the fact finder may infer agreement, it falls short of conclusively establishing agreement or itself constituting an offense under the Sherman Act's restraint of trade provision. Sherman Act, § 1, 15 U.S.C.A. § 1.

## 3. Antitrust and Trade Regulation ⌘537

Conscious parallelism with respect to business behavior, a common reaction of firms in a concentrated market that recognize their shared economic interests and their interdependence with respect to price and output decisions, is not in itself unlawful under Sherman Act's restraint of trade provision. Sherman Act, § 1, 15 U.S.C.A. § 1.

## 4. Antitrust and Trade Regulation ⌘537

An antitrust conspiracy plaintiff with evidence showing nothing beyond parallel conduct on part of defendants is not entitled to a directed verdict. Sherman Act, § 1, 15 U.S.C.A. § 1.

## 5. Antitrust and Trade Regulation ⌘977(2)

Proof of a conspiracy under Sherman Act's restraint of trade provision must include evidence tending to exclude the possibility of independent action. Sherman Act, § 1, 15 U.S.C.A. § 1.

## 6. Federal Civil Procedure ⌘2484

At the summary judgment stage, an offer of conspiracy evidence by a plaintiff alleging violation of Sherman Act's restraint of trade provision must tend to rule

out the possibility that the defendants were acting independently. Sherman Act, § 1, 15 U.S.C.A. § 1.

## 7. Federal Civil Procedure ⌘673, 1772

While a complaint attacked by a motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted does not need detailed factual allegations, a plaintiff's obligation to provide the grounds of his entitlement to relief requires more than labels and conclusions, and a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do. Fed.Rules Civ.Proc. Rule 12(b)(6), 28 U.S.C.A.

## 8. Federal Civil Procedure ⌘1772, 1835

To survive a motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, factual allegations must be enough to raise a right to relief above the speculative level, on the assumption that all the allegations in the complaint are true even if doubtful in fact. Fed.Rules Civ. Proc.Rule 12(b)(6), 28 U.S.C.A.

## 9. Federal Civil Procedure ⌘673

While, for most types of cases, the Federal Rules eliminated the cumbersome requirement that a claimant set out in detail the facts upon which he bases his claim, the general rule governing pleadings still requires a showing, rather than a blanket assertion, of entitlement to relief; without some factual allegation in the complaint, it is hard to see how a claimant could satisfy the requirement of providing not only fair notice of the nature of the claim, but also grounds on which the claim rests. Fed.Rules Civ.Proc.Rule 8(a)(2), 28 U.S.C.A.

## 10. Antitrust and Trade Regulation ⌘972(4)

Stating a claim under Sherman Act's restraint of trade provision requires a complaint with enough factual matter, taken as true, to suggest that an agreement

was made; asking for plausible grounds to infer an agreement does not impose a probability requirement at the pleading stage, but simply calls for enough fact to raise a reasonable expectation that discovery will reveal evidence of illegal agreement. Sherman Act, § 1, 15 U.S.C.A. § 1.

#### 11. Federal Civil Procedure ⇨1773

A well-pleaded complaint may proceed even if it strikes a savvy judge that actual proof of those facts is improbable, and that a recovery is very remote and unlikely.

#### 12. Antitrust and Trade Regulation ⇨972(4)

An allegation of parallel business conduct and a bare assertion of conspiracy will not suffice to state a claim under Sherman Act's restraint of trade provision; without more, parallel conduct does not suggest conspiracy, and a conclusory allegation of agreement at some unidentified point does not supply facts adequate to show illegality. Sherman Act, § 1, 15 U.S.C.A. § 1.

#### 13. Antitrust and Trade Regulation ⇨972(4)

When allegations of parallel conduct are set out in order to make a claim under the Sherman Act's restraint of trade provision, they must be placed in a context that raises a suggestion of a preceding agreement, not merely parallel conduct that could just as well be independent action. Sherman Act, § 1, 15 U.S.C.A. § 1.

#### 14. Federal Civil Procedure ⇨674, 1773

Dismissal for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted does not require appearance, beyond a doubt, that plaintiff can prove no set of facts in support of claim that would entitle him to relief, although once a claim has been stated adequately, it may be supported by showing any set of facts consistent with the allegations in the complaint; abrogat-

ing *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 78 S.Ct. 99, 2 L.Ed.2d 80. Fed.Rules Civ.Proc. Rule 12(b)(6), 28 U.S.C.A.

#### 15. Antitrust and Trade Regulation ⇨972(4)

Consumers' allegations that, by virtue of parallel conduct, incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs) entered into a contract, combination, or conspiracy to prevent competitive entry into their local telephone and Internet service markets, and agreed not to compete with one another, failed to state claim for violation of Sherman Act's restraint of trade provision, as claim essentially rested on descriptions of parallel conduct and not on any independent allegation of actual agreement among the ILECs. Sherman Act, § 1, 15 U.S.C.A. § 1.

#### 16. Evidence ⇨11

Where antitrust complaint quoted portion of statement of one defendant's chief executive officer (CEO) to suggest that defendants conspired together, district court was entitled to take notice of the full contents of the published articles referenced in the complaint, from which the truncated quotations were drawn. Fed. Rules Evid.Rule 201, 28 U.S.C.A.

#### 17. Federal Civil Procedure ⇨31

Broadening of a Federal Rule of Civil Procedure can only be accomplished by the process of amending the Federal Rules, and not by judicial interpretation.

#### 18. Federal Civil Procedure ⇨633.1

On certain subjects understood to raise a high risk of abusive litigation, a plaintiff must state factual allegations with greater particularity than that required by general rule governing pleadings. Fed. Rules Civ.Proc.Rules 8, 9(b-c), 28 U.S.C.A.

1<sub>544</sub> *Syllabus* \*

The 1984 divestiture of the American Telephone & Telegraph Company's (AT & T) local telephone business left a system of regional service monopolies, sometimes called Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers (ILECs), and a separate long-distance market from which the ILECs were excluded. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 withdrew approval of the ILECs' monopolies, "fundamentally restructur[ing] local telephone markets" and "subject[ing] [ILECs] to a host of duties intended to facilitate market entry." *AT & T Corp. v. Iowa Utilities Bd.*, 525 U.S. 366, 371, 119 S.Ct. 721, 142 L.Ed.2d 835. It also authorized them to enter the long-distance market. "Central to the [new] scheme [was each ILEC's] obligation . . . to share its network with" competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs). *Verizon Communications Inc. v. Law Offices of Curtis V. Trinko, LLP*, 540 U.S. 398, 402, 124 S.Ct. 872, 157 L.Ed.2d 823.

Respondents (hereinafter plaintiffs) represent a class of subscribers of local telephone and/or high-speed Internet services in this action against petitioner ILECs for claimed violations of § 1 of the Sherman Act, which prohibits "[e]very contract, combination in the form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce among the several States, or with foreign nations." The complaint alleges that the ILECs conspired to restrain trade (1) by engaging in parallel conduct in their respective service areas to inhibit the growth of upstart CLECs; and (2) by agreeing to refrain from competing against one another, as indicated by their common failure to pursue attractive business opportunities in contiguous markets and by a statement by one ILEC's chief

executive officer that competing in another ILEC's territory did not seem right. The District Court dismissed the complaint, concluding that parallel business conduct allegations, taken alone, do not state a claim under § 1; plaintiffs must allege additional facts tending to exclude independent self-interested conduct as an explanation for the parallel actions. Reversing, the Second Circuit held that plaintiffs' parallel conduct allegations were sufficient to withstand a motion to dismiss because the ILECs failed to show that there is no set of facts that would permit plaintiffs to demonstrate that the particular parallelism asserted was the product of collusion rather than coincidence.

1<sub>545</sub> *Held:*

1. Stating a § 1 claim requires a complaint with enough factual matter (taken as true) to suggest that an agreement was made. An allegation of parallel conduct and a bare assertion of conspiracy will not suffice. Pp. 1963–1970.

(a) Because § 1 prohibits "only restraints effected by a contract, combination, or conspiracy," *Copperweld Corp. v. Independence Tube Corp.*, 467 U.S. 752, 775, 104 S.Ct. 2731, 81 L.Ed.2d 628, "[t]he crucial question" is whether the challenged anticompetitive conduct "stem[s] from independent decision or from an agreement," *Theatre Enterprises, Inc. v. Paramount Film Distributing Corp.*, 346 U.S. 537, 540, 74 S.Ct. 257, 98 L.Ed. 273. While a showing of parallel "business behavior is admissible circumstantial evidence from which" agreement may be inferred, it falls short of "conclusively establish[ing] agreement or . . . itself constitut[ing] a Sherman Act offense." *Id.*, at 540–541, 74 S.Ct. 257. The inadequacy of showing parallel conduct or interdependence, without more,

\* The syllabus constitutes no part of the opinion of the Court but has been prepared by the Reporter of Decisions for the convenience of

the reader. See *United States v. Detroit Timber & Lumber Co.*, 200 U.S. 321, 337, 26 S.Ct. 282, 50 L.Ed. 499.

mirrors the behavior's ambiguity: consistent with conspiracy, but just as much in line with a wide swath of rational and competitive business strategy unilaterally prompted by common perceptions of the market. Thus, this Court has hedged against false inferences from identical behavior at a number of points in the trial sequence, *e.g.*, at the summary judgment stage, see *Matsushita Elec. Industrial Co. v. Zenith Radio Corp.*, 475 U.S. 574, 106 S.Ct. 1348, 89 L.Ed.2d 538. Pp. 1963–1964.

(b) This case presents the antecedent question of what a plaintiff must plead in order to state a § 1 claim. Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)(2) requires only “a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief,” in order to “give the defendant fair notice of what the . . . claim is and the grounds upon which it rests,” *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 47, 78 S.Ct. 99, 2 L.Ed.2d 80. While a complaint attacked by a Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss does not need detailed factual allegations, *ibid.*, a plaintiff's obligation to provide the “grounds” of his “entitle[ment] to relief” requires more than labels and conclusions, and a formulaic recitation of a cause of action's elements will not do. Factual allegations must be enough to raise a right to relief above the speculative level on the assumption that all of the complaint's allegations are true. Applying these general standards to a § 1 claim, stating a claim requires a complaint with enough factual matter to suggest an agreement. Asking for plausible grounds does not impose a probability requirement at the pleading stage; it simply calls for enough fact to raise a reasonable expectation that discovery will reveal evidence of illegal agreement. The need at the pleading stage for allegations plausibly suggesting (not merely consistent with) agreement reflects Rule 8(a)(2)'s threshold requirement that the

“plain statement” possess enough heft to “sho[w] that the pleader is entitled to relief.” A parallel<sup>546</sup> conduct allegation gets the § 1 complaint close to stating a claim, but without further factual enhancement it stops short of the line between possibility and plausibility. The requirement of allegations suggesting an agreement serves the practical purpose of preventing a plaintiff with “‘a largely groundless claim’” from “‘tak[ing] up the time of a number of other people, with the right to do so representing an *in terrorem* increment of the settlement value.’” *Dura Pharmaceuticals, Inc. v. Broudo*, 544 U.S. 336, 347, 125 S.Ct. 1627, 161 L.Ed.2d 577. It is one thing to be cautious before dismissing an antitrust complaint in advance of discovery, but quite another to forget that proceeding to antitrust discovery can be expensive. That potential expense is obvious here, where plaintiffs represent a putative class of at least 90 percent of subscribers to local telephone or high-speed Internet service in an action against America's largest telecommunications firms for unspecified instances of antitrust violations that allegedly occurred over a 7-year period. It is no answer to say that a claim just shy of plausible entitlement can be weeded out early in the discovery process, given the common lament that the success of judicial supervision in checking discovery abuse has been modest. Plaintiffs' main argument against the plausibility standard at the pleading stage is its ostensible conflict with a literal reading of *Conley's* statement construing Rule 8: “a complaint should not be dismissed for failure to state a claim unless it appears beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of facts in support of his claim which would entitle him to relief.” 355 U.S., at 45–46, 78 S.Ct. 99. The “no set of facts” language has been questioned, criticized, and explained away long enough by courts and commentators,

and is best forgotten as an incomplete, negative gloss on an accepted pleading standard: once a claim has been stated adequately, it may be supported by showing any set of facts consistent with the allegations in the complaint. *Conley* described the breadth of opportunity to prove what an adequate complaint claims, not the minimum standard of adequate pleading to govern a complaint's survival. Pp. 1964 – 1970.

2. Under the plausibility standard, plaintiffs' claim of conspiracy in restraint of trade comes up short. First, the complaint leaves no doubt that plaintiffs rest their § 1 claim on descriptions of parallel conduct, not on any independent allegation of actual agreement among the ILECs. The nub of the complaint is the ILECs' parallel behavior, and its sufficiency turns on the suggestions raised by this conduct when viewed in light of common economic experience. Nothing in the complaint invests either the action or inaction alleged with a plausible conspiracy suggestion. As to the ILECs' supposed agreement to disobey the 1996 Act and thwart the CLECs' attempts to compete, the District Court correctly found that nothing in the complaint intimates that resisting the upstarts was anything more than the natural, unilateral reaction of each ILEC intent on preserving its regional dominance. The complaint's general collusion premise fails to answer the point that there was no need for joint encouragement to resist the 1996 Act, since each ILEC had reason to try to avoid dealing with CLECs and would have tried to keep them out, regardless of the other ILECs' actions. Plaintiffs' second conspiracy theory rests on the competitive reticence among the ILECs themselves in the wake of the 1996 Act to enter into their competitors' territories, leaving the relevant market highly compartmentalized geographically, with minimal competition. This parallel conduct did not suggest con-

spiracy, not if history teaches anything. Monopoly was the norm in telecommunications, not the exception. Because the ILECs were born in that world, doubtless liked it, and surely knew the adage about him who lives by the sword, a natural explanation for the noncompetition is that the former Government-sanctioned monopolists were sitting tight, expecting their neighbors to do the same. Antitrust conspiracy was not suggested by the facts adduced under either theory of the complaint, which thus fails to state a valid § 1 claim. This analysis does not run counter to *Swierkiewicz v. Sorema N. A.*, 534 U.S. 506, 508, 122 S.Ct. 992, 152 L.Ed.2d 1, which held that “a complaint in an employment discrimination lawsuit [need] not contain specific facts establishing a prima facie case of discrimination.” Here, the Court is not requiring heightened fact pleading of specifics, but only enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face. Because the plaintiffs here have not nudged their claims across the line from conceivable to plausible, their complaint must be dismissed. Pp. 1970 – 1974.

425 F.3d 99, reversed and remanded.

SOUTER, J., delivered the opinion of the Court, in which ROBERTS, C. J., and SCALIA, KENNEDY, THOMAS, BREYER, and ALITO, JJ., joined. STEVENS, J., filed a dissenting opinion, in which GINSBURG, J., joined, except as to Part IV, *post*, p. 1974.

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For U.S. Supreme Court briefs, see:

2006 WL 2474079 (Pet.Brief)

2006 WL 3089915 (Resp.Brief)

2006 WL 3265610 (Reply.Brief)

Justice SOUTER delivered the opinion of the Court.

<sup>1548</sup>Liability under § 1 of the Sherman Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1, requires a “contract, combination . . . , or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce.” The question in this putative class action is whether a § 1 complaint can survive a motion to dismiss when it alleges that major telecommunications providers engaged in certain parallel conduct unfavorable to <sup>1549</sup>competition, absent some factual context suggesting agreement, as distinct from identical, independent action. We hold that such a complaint should be dismissed.

## I

The upshot of the 1984 divestiture of the American Telephone & Telegraph Compa-

ny’s (AT & T) local telephone business was a system of regional service monopolies (variously called “Regional Bell Operating Companies,” “Baby Bells,” or “Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers” (ILECs)), and a separate, competitive market for long-distance service from which the ILECs were excluded. More than a decade later, Congress withdrew approval of the ILECs’ monopolies by enacting the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (1996 Act), 110 Stat. 56, which “fundamentally restructure[d] local telephone markets” and “subject[ed] [ILECs] to a host of duties intended to facilitate market entry.” *AT & T Corp. v. Iowa Utilities Bd.*, 525 U.S. 366, 371, 119 S.Ct. 721, 142 L.Ed.2d 835 (1999). In recompense, the 1996 Act set conditions for authorizing ILECs to enter the long-distance market. See 47 U.S.C. § 271.

“Central to the [new] scheme [was each ILEC’s] obligation . . . to share its network with competitors,” *Verizon Communications Inc. v. Law Offices of Curtis V. Trinko, LLP*, 540 U.S. 398, 402, 124 S.Ct. 872, 157 L.Ed.2d 823 (2004), which came to be known as “competitive local exchange carriers” (CLECs), Pet. for Cert. 6, n. 1. A CLEC could make use of an ILEC’s network in any of three ways: by (1) “purchas[ing] local telephone services at wholesale rates for resale to end users,” (2) “leas[ing] elements of the [ILEC’s] network ‘on an unbundled basis,’” or (3) “interconnect[ing] its own facilities with the [ILEC’s] network.” *Iowa Utilities Bd.*, *supra*, at 371, 119 S.Ct. 721 (quoting 47 U.S.C. § 251(c)). Owing to the “considerable expense and effort” required to make unbundled network elements available to rivals at wholesale prices, *Trinko*, *supra*, at 410, 124 S.Ct. 872, the ILECs vigorously litigated the scope of the sharing obligation imposed by the 1996 Act, with the result that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) three times <sup>1550</sup>revised

its regulations to narrow the range of network elements to be shared with the CLECs. See *Covad Communications Co. v. FCC*, 450 F.3d 528, 533–534 (C.A.D.C. 2006) (summarizing the 10-year-long regulatory struggle between the ILECs and CLECs).

Respondents William Twombly and Lawrence Marcus (hereinafter plaintiffs) represent a putative class consisting of all “subscribers of local telephone and/or high speed internet services . . . from February 8, 1996 to present.” Amended Complaint in No. 02 CIV. 10220(GEL) (SDNY) ¶ 53, App. 28 (hereinafter Complaint). In this action against petitioners, a group of ILECs,<sup>1</sup> plaintiffs seek treble damages and declaratory and injunctive relief for claimed violations of § 1 of the Sherman Act, ch. 647, 26 Stat. 209, as amended, 15 U.S.C. § 1, which prohibits “[e]very contract, combination in the form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce among the several States, or with foreign nations.”

The complaint alleges that the ILECs conspired to restrain trade in two ways, each supposedly inflating charges for local telephone and high-speed Internet services. Plaintiffs say, first, that the ILECs “engaged in parallel conduct” in their respective service areas to inhibit the growth of upstart CLECs. Complaint ¶ 47, App. 23–26. Their actions allegedly included making unfair agreements with the CLECs for access to ILEC networks, providing inferior connections to the networks, overcharging, and billing in ways designed to sabotage the CLECs’ relations with their own customers. *Ibid.* According

to the complaint, the ILECs’ “compelling common motivatio[n]” to thwart the CLECs’ competitive efforts naturally led them to form a conspiracy; “[h]ad any one [ILEC] not sought to prevent CLECs . . . from competing effectively . . ., the resulting greater competitive inroads into that [ILEC’s] territory would have revealed the degree to which competitive entry by CLECs would have been successful in the other territories in the absence of such conduct.” *Id.*, ¶ 50, App. 26–27.

Second, the complaint charges agreements by the ILECs to refrain from competing against one another. These are to be inferred from the ILECs’ common failure “meaningfully [to] pursu[e]” “attractive business opportunit[ies]” in contiguous markets where they possessed “substantial competitive advantages,” *id.*, ¶¶ 40–41, App. 21–22, and from a statement of Richard Notebaert, chief executive officer (CEO) of the ILEC Qwest, that competing in the territory of another ILEC “‘might be a good way to turn a quick dollar but that doesn’t make it right,’” *id.*, ¶ 42, App. 22.

The complaint couches its ultimate allegations this way:

“In the absence of any meaningful competition between the [ILECs] in one another’s markets, and in light of the parallel course of conduct that each engaged in to prevent competition from CLECs within their respective local telephone and/or high speed internet services markets and the other facts and market circumstances alleged above, Plaintiffs allege upon information

1. The 1984 divestiture of AT & T’s local telephone service created seven Regional Bell Operating Companies. Through a series of mergers and acquisitions, those seven companies were consolidated into the four ILECs named in this suit: BellSouth Corporation, Qwest Communications International, Inc.,

SBC Communications, Inc., and Verizon Communications, Inc. (successor-in-interest to Bell Atlantic Corporation). Complaint ¶ 21, App. 16. Together, these ILECs allegedly control 90 percent or more of the market for local telephone service in the 48 contiguous States. *Id.*, ¶ 48, App. 26.

and belief that [the ILECs] have entered into a contract, combination or conspiracy to prevent competitive entry in their respective local telephone and/or high speed internet services markets and have agreed not to compete with one another and otherwise allocated customers and markets to one another.” *Id.*, ¶ 51, App. 27.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>152</sup>The United States District Court for the Southern District of New York dismissed the complaint for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. The District Court acknowledged that “plaintiffs may allege a conspiracy by citing instances of parallel business behavior that suggest an agreement,” but emphasized that “while [c]ircumstantial evidence of consciously parallel behavior may have made heavy inroads into the traditional judicial attitude toward conspiracy[. . .] ‘conscious parallelism’ has not yet read conspiracy out of the Sherman Act entirely.” 313 F.Supp.2d 174, 179 (2003) (quoting *Theatre Enterprises, Inc. v. Paramount Film Distributing Corp.*, 346 U.S. 537, 541, 74 S.Ct. 257, 98 L.Ed. 273 (1954); alterations in original). Thus, the District Court understood that allegations of parallel business conduct, taken alone, do not state a claim under § 1; plaintiffs must allege additional facts that “ten[d] to exclude independent self-interested conduct as an explanation for defendants’ parallel behavior.” 313 F.Supp.2d, at 179. The District Court found plaintiffs’ allegations of parallel ILEC actions to discourage competition inadequate because “the behavior of each ILEC in resisting the incur-

2. In setting forth the grounds for § 1 relief, the complaint repeats these allegations in substantially similar language:

“Beginning at least as early as February 6, 1996, and continuing to the present, the exact dates being unknown to Plaintiffs, Defendants and their co-conspirators engaged in a contract, combination or conspiracy to prevent

sion of CLECs is fully explained by the ILEC’s own interests in defending its individual territory.” *Id.*, at 183. As to the ILECs’ supposed agreement against competing with each other, the District Court found that the complaint does not “alleg[e] facts . . . suggesting that refraining from competing in other territories as CLECs was contrary to [the ILECs’] apparent economic interests, and consequently [does] not rais[e] an inference that [the ILECs’] actions were the result of a conspiracy.” *Id.*, at 188.

<sup>153</sup>The Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit reversed, holding that the District Court tested the complaint by the wrong standard. It held that “plus factors are not *required* to be pleaded to permit an antitrust claim based on parallel conduct to survive dismissal.” 425 F.3d 99, 114 (2005) (emphasis in original). Although the Court of Appeals took the view that plaintiffs must plead facts that “include conspiracy among the realm of ‘plausible’ possibilities in order to survive a motion to dismiss,” it then said that “to rule that allegations of parallel anticompetitive conduct fail to support a plausible conspiracy claim, a court would have to conclude that there is no set of facts that would permit a plaintiff to demonstrate that the particular parallelism asserted was the product of collusion rather than coincidence.” *Ibid.*

We granted certiorari to address the proper standard for pleading an antitrust conspiracy through allegations of parallel conduct, 548 U.S. 903, 126 S.Ct. 2965, 165 L.Ed.2d 949 (2006), and now reverse.

competitive entry in their respective local telephone and/or high speed internet services markets by, among other things, agreeing not to compete with one another and to stifle attempts by others to compete with them and otherwise allocating customers and markets to one another in violation of Section 1 of the Sherman Act.” *Id.*, ¶ 64, App. 30–31.

## II

## A

[1–3] Because § 1 of the Sherman Act “does not prohibit [all] unreasonable restraints of trade . . . but only restraints effected by a contract, combination, or conspiracy,” *Copperweld Corp. v. Independence Tube Corp.*, 467 U.S. 752, 775, 104 S.Ct. 2731, 81 L.Ed.2d 628 (1984), “[t]he crucial question” is whether the challenged anticompetitive conduct “stem[s] from independent decision or from an agreement, tacit or express,” *Theatre Enterprises*, 346 U.S., at 540, 74 S.Ct. 257. While a showing of parallel “business behavior is admissible circumstantial evidence from which the fact finder may infer agreement,” it falls short of “conclusively establish[ing] agreement or . . . itself constitut[ing] a Sherman Act offense.” *Id.*, at 540–541, 74 S.Ct. 257. Even “conscious parallelism,” a common reaction of “firms in a concentrated market [that] recogniz[e] their shared economic interests and their interdependence with respect to price and output decisions<sup>554</sup>” is “not in itself unlawful.” *Brooke Group Ltd. v. Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp.*, 509 U.S. 209, 227, 113 S.Ct. 2578, 125 L.Ed.2d 168 (1993); see 6 P. Areeda & H. Hovenkamp, *Antitrust Law* ¶ 1433a, p. 236 (2d ed.2003) (hereinafter *Areeda & Hovenkamp*) (“The courts are nearly unanimous in saying that mere interdependent parallelism does not establish the contract, combination, or conspiracy required by Sherman Act § 1”); Turner, *The Definition of Agreement Under the Sherman Act: Conscious Parallelism and Refusals to Deal*, 75 Harv. L.Rev. 655, 672 (1962) (“[M]ere interdependence of basic price decisions is not conspiracy”).

[4–6] The inadequacy of showing parallel conduct or interdependence, without more, mirrors the ambiguity of the behavior: consistent with conspiracy, but just as much in line with a wide swath of rational

and competitive business strategy unilaterally prompted by common perceptions of the market. See, e.g., AEI–Brookings Joint Center for Regulatory Studies, Epstein, *Motions to Dismiss Antitrust Cases: Separating Fact from Fantasy*, Related Publication 06–08, pp. 3–4 (2006) (discussing problem of “false positives” in § 1 suits). Accordingly, we have previously hedged against false inferences from identical behavior at a number of points in the trial sequence. An antitrust conspiracy plaintiff with evidence showing nothing beyond parallel conduct is not entitled to a directed verdict, see *Theatre Enterprises, supra*; proof of a § 1 conspiracy must include evidence tending to exclude the possibility of independent action, see *Mon-santo Co. v. Spray-Rite Service Corp.*, 465 U.S. 752, 104 S.Ct. 1464, 79 L.Ed.2d 775 (1984); and at the summary judgment stage a § 1 plaintiff’s offer of conspiracy evidence must tend to rule out the possibility that the defendants were acting independently, see *Matsushita Elec. Industrial Co. v. Zenith Radio Corp.*, 475 U.S. 574, 106 S.Ct. 1348, 89 L.Ed.2d 538 (1986).

## B

[7–9] This case presents the antecedent question of what a plaintiff must plead in order to state a claim under § 1 of the Sherman Act. Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)(2) requires only “a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief,” in order to “give the defendant fair notice of what the . . . claim is and the grounds upon which it rests,” *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 47, 78 S.Ct. 99, 2 L.Ed.2d 80 (1957). While a complaint attacked by a Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss does not need detailed factual allegations, *ibid.*; *Sanjuan v. American Bd. of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.*, 40 F.3d 247, 251 (C.A.7 1994), a plaintiff’s obligation to provide the

“grounds” of his “entitle[ment] to relief” requires more than labels and conclusions, and a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do, see *Papa-san v. Allain*, 478 U.S. 265, 286, 106 S.Ct. 2932, 92 L.Ed.2d 209 (1986) (on a motion to dismiss, courts “are not bound to accept as true a legal conclusion couched as a factual allegation”). Factual allegations must be enough to raise a right to relief above the speculative level, see 5 C. Wright & A. Miller, *Federal Practice and Procedure* § 1216, pp. 235–236 (3d ed.2004) (hereinafter Wright & Miller) (“[T]he pleading must contain something more . . . than . . . a statement of facts that merely creates a suspicion [of] a legally cognizable right of action”),<sup>3</sup> on the assumption that all the allegations in the complaint are true (even if doubtful in fact), see, e.g., *Swierkiewicz v. Sorema N. A.*, 534 U.S. 506, 508, n. 1, 122 S.Ct. 992, 152 L.Ed.2d 1 (2002); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 327, 109 S.Ct. 1827, 104 L.Ed.2d 338 (1989) (“Rule 12(b)(6) does not countenance . . . dismiss-

als based on a judge’s disbelief of a complaint’s factual allegations”); *Scheuer v. Rhodes*, 416 U.S. 232, 236, 94 S.Ct. 1683, 40 L.Ed.2d 90 (1974) (a well-pleaded complaint may proceed even if it appears “that a recovery is very remote and unlikely”).

[10–13] In applying these general standards to a § 1 claim, we hold that stating such a claim requires a complaint with enough factual matter (taken as true) to suggest that an agreement was made. Asking for plausible grounds to infer an agreement does not impose a probability requirement at the pleading stage; it simply calls for enough fact to raise a reasonable expectation that discovery will reveal evidence of illegal agreement.<sup>4</sup> And, of course, a well-pleaded complaint may proceed even if it strikes a savvy judge that actual proof of those facts is improbable, and “that a recovery is very remote and unlikely.” *Ibid.* In identifying facts that are suggestive enough to render a § 1 conspiracy plausible, we have the benefit

3. The dissent greatly oversimplifies matters by suggesting that the Federal Rules somehow dispensed with the pleading of facts altogether. See *post*, at 1979 (opinion of STEVENS, J.) (pleading standard of Federal Rules “does not require, or even invite, the pleading of facts”). While, for most types of cases, the Federal Rules eliminated the cumbersome requirement that a claimant “set out *in detail* the facts upon which he bases his claim,” *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 47, 78 S.Ct. 99, 2 L.Ed.2d 80 (1957) (emphasis added), Rule 8(a)(2) still requires a “showing,” rather than a blanket assertion, of entitlement to relief. Without some factual allegation in the complaint, it is hard to see how a claimant could satisfy the requirement of providing not only “fair notice” of the nature of the claim, but also “grounds” on which the claim rests. See 5 Wright & Miller § 1202, at 94, 95 (Rule 8(a) “contemplate[s] the statement of circumstances, occurrences, and events in support of the claim presented” and does not authorize a pleader’s “bare averment that he wants relief and is entitled to it”).

4. Commentators have offered several examples of parallel conduct allegations that would state a § 1 claim under this standard. See, e.g., 6 Areeda & Hovenkamp ¶ 1425, at 167–185 (discussing “parallel behavior that would probably not result from chance, coincidence, independent responses to common stimuli, or mere interdependence unaided by an advance understanding among the parties”); Blechman, *Conscious Parallelism, Signalling and Facilitating Devices: The Problem of Tacit Collusion Under the Antitrust Laws*, 24 N.Y.L. S. L.Rev. 881, 899 (1979) (describing “conduct [that] indicates the sort of restricted freedom of action and sense of obligation that one generally associates with agreement”). The parties in this case agree that “complex and historically unprecedented changes in pricing structure made at the very same time by multiple competitors, and made for no other discernible reason,” would support a plausible inference of conspiracy. Brief for Respondents 37; see also Reply Brief for Petitioners 12.

of the prior rulings and considered views of leading commentators, already quoted, that lawful parallel conduct fails to bespeak unlawful agreement. It makes sense to say, therefore, that an allegation of parallel conduct and a bare assertion of conspiracy will not suffice. Without <sup>557</sup>more, parallel conduct does not suggest conspiracy, and a conclusory allegation of agreement at some unidentified point does not supply facts adequate to show illegality. Hence, when allegations of parallel conduct are set out in order to make a § 1 claim, they must be placed in a context that raises a suggestion of a preceding agreement, not merely parallel conduct that could just as well be independent action.

The need at the pleading stage for allegations plausibly suggesting (not merely consistent with) agreement reflects the threshold requirement of Rule 8(a)(2) that the “plain statement” possess enough heft to “sho[w] that the pleader is entitled to relief.” A statement of parallel conduct, even conduct consciously undertaken, needs some setting suggesting the agreement necessary to make out a § 1 claim; without that further circumstance pointing toward a meeting of the minds, an account of a defendant’s commercial efforts stays in neutral territory. An allegation of parallel conduct is thus much like a naked assertion of conspiracy in a § 1 complaint: it gets the complaint close to stating a claim, but without some further factual enhancement it stops short of the line between possibility and plausibility of “entitle[ment] to relief.” Cf. *DM Research, Inc. v. College of Am. Pathologists*, 170 F.3d 53, 56 (C.A.1 1999) (“[T]erms like ‘conspiracy,’ or even ‘agreement,’ are border-line: they might well be sufficient in

conjunction with a more specific allegation—for example, identifying a written agreement or even a basis for inferring a tacit agreement, . . . but a court is not required to accept such terms as a sufficient basis for a complaint”).<sup>5</sup>

We alluded to the practical significance of the Rule 8 entitlement requirement in *Dura Pharmaceuticals, Inc. v. Broudo*, 544 U.S. 336, 125 S.Ct. 1627, 161 L.Ed.2d 577 (2005), when we explained that something beyond the mere possibility of loss causation must be <sup>558</sup>alleged, lest a plaintiff with “a largely groundless claim” be allowed to “take up the time of a number of other people, with the right to do so representing an *in terrorem* increment of the settlement value.” *Id.*, at 347, 125 S.Ct. 1627 (quoting *Blue Chip Stamps v. Manor Drug Stores*, 421 U.S. 723, 741, 95 S.Ct. 1917, 44 L.Ed.2d 539 (1975)). So, when the allegations in a complaint, however true, could not raise a claim of entitlement to relief, “this basic deficiency should . . . be exposed at the point of minimum expenditure of time and money by the parties and the court.” 5 Wright & Miller § 1216, at 233–234 (quoting *Daves v. Hawaiian Dredging Co.*, 114 F.Supp. 643, 645 (D.Hawai 1953)); see also *Dura*, supra, at 346, 125 S.Ct. 1627; *Asahi Glass Co. v. Pentech Pharmaceuticals, Inc.*, 289 F.Supp.2d 986, 995 (N.D.Ill.2003) (*Posner, J., sitting by designation*) (“[S]ome threshold of plausibility must be crossed at the outset before a patent anti-trust case should be permitted to go into its inevitably costly and protracted discovery phase”).

Thus, it is one thing to be cautious before dismissing an antitrust complaint in advance of discovery, cf. *Poller v. Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc.*, 368 U.S.

the factually suggestive. Each must be crossed to enter the realm of plausible liability.

5. The border in *DM Research* was the line between the conclusory and the factual. Here it lies between the factually neutral and

464, 473, 82 S.Ct. 486, 7 L.Ed.2d 458 (1962), but quite another to forget that proceeding to antitrust discovery can be expensive. As we indicated over 20 years ago in *Associated Gen. Contractors of Cal., Inc. v. Carpenters*, 459 U.S. 519, 528, n. 17, 103 S.Ct. 897, 74 L.Ed.2d 723 (1983), “a district court must retain the power to insist upon some specificity in pleading before allowing a potentially massive factual controversy to proceed.” See also *Carriers, Inc. v. Ford Motor Co.*, 745 F.2d 1101, 1106 (C.A.7 1984) (“[T]he costs of modern federal antitrust litigation and the increasing caseload of the federal courts counsel against sending the parties into discovery when there is no reasonable likelihood that the plaintiffs can construct a claim from the events related in the complaint”); Note, *Modeling the Effect of One-Way Fee Shifting on Discovery Abuse in Private Antitrust Litigation*, 78 N.Y. & U. L.Rev. 1887, 1898–1899 (2003) (discussing the unusually high cost of discovery in antitrust cases); *Manual for Complex Litigation*,<sup>559</sup> Fourth, § 30, p. 519 (2004) (describing extensive scope of discovery in antitrust cases); Memorandum from Paul V. Niemeyer, Chair, Advisory Committee on Civil Rules, to Hon. Anthony J. Scirica, Chair, Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure (May 11, 1999), 192 F.R.D. 354, 357 (2000) (reporting that discovery accounts for as much as 90 percent of litigation costs when discovery is actively employed). That potential expense is obvious enough in the present case: plaintiffs represent a putative class of at least 90 percent of all subscribers to local telephone or high-speed Internet ser-

vice in the continental United States, in an action against America’s largest telecommunications firms (with many thousands of employees generating reams and gigabytes of business records) for unspecified (if any) instances of antitrust violations that allegedly occurred over a period of seven years.

It is no answer to say that a claim just shy of a plausible entitlement to relief can, if groundless, be weeded out early in the discovery process through “careful case management,” *post*, at 1975, given the common lament that the success of judicial supervision in checking discovery abuse has been on the modest side. See, e.g., Easterbrook, *Discovery as Abuse*, 69 B.U.L.Rev. 635, 638 (1989) (“Judges can do little about impositions on discovery when parties control the legal claims to be presented and conduct the discovery themselves”). And it is self-evident that the problem of discovery abuse cannot be solved by “careful scrutiny of evidence at the summary judgment stage,” much less “lucid instructions to juries,” *post*, at 1975; the threat of discovery expense will push cost-conscious defendants to settle even anemic cases before reaching those proceedings. Probably, then, it is only by taking care to require allegations that reach the level suggesting conspiracy that we can hope to avoid the potentially enormous expense of discovery in cases with no “‘reasonably founded hope that the [discovery] process will reveal relevant evidence’” to support a § 1 claim. *Dura*,<sup>1560</sup> 544 U.S., at 347, 125 S.Ct. 1627, 161 L.Ed.2d 577, (quoting *Blue Chip Stamps*, *supra*, at 741, 95 S.Ct. 1917; alteration in *Dura* ).<sup>6</sup>

6. The dissent takes heart in the reassurances of plaintiffs’ counsel that discovery would be “‘phased’” and “‘limited to the existence of the alleged conspiracy and class certification.’” *Post*, at 1987. But determining whether some illegal agreement may have taken place between unspecified persons at

different ILECs (each a multibillion dollar corporation with legions of management level employees) at some point over seven years is a sprawling, costly, and hugely time-consuming undertaking not easily susceptible to the kind of line drawing and case management that the dissent envisions. Perhaps the best

[14] Plaintiffs do not, of course, dispute the requirement of plausibility and the need for something more than merely parallel behavior explained in *Theatre Enterprises*, *Monsanto*, and *Matsushita*, and their main argument against the plausibility standard at the pleading stage is its ostensible <sup>1561</sup>conflict with an early statement of ours construing Rule 8. Justice Black's opinion for the Court in *Conley v. Gibson* spoke not only of the need for fair notice of the grounds for entitlement to relief but of "the accepted rule that a complaint should not be dismissed for failure to state a claim unless it appears beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of facts in support of his claim which would entitle him to relief." 355 U.S., at 45-46, 78 S.Ct. 99. This "no set of facts" language can be read in isolation as saying that any statement revealing the theory of

the claim will suffice unless its factual impossibility may be shown from the face of the pleadings; and the Court of Appeals appears to have read *Conley* in some such way when formulating its understanding of the proper pleading standard, see 425 F.3d, at 106, 114 (invoking *Conley's* "no set of facts" language in describing the standard for dismissal).<sup>7</sup>

On such a focused and literal reading of *Conley's* "no set of facts," a wholly conclusory statement of claim would survive a motion to dismiss whenever the pleadings left open the possibility that a plaintiff might later establish some "set of [undisclosed] facts" to support recovery. So here, the Court of Appeals specifically found the prospect of unearthing direct evidence of conspiracy sufficient to preclude dismissal, even though the complaint

answer to the dissent's optimism that antitrust discovery is open to effective judicial control is a more extensive quotation of the authority just cited, a judge with a background in antitrust law. Given the system that we have, the hope of effective judicial supervision is slim:

"The timing is all wrong. The plaintiff files a sketchy complaint (the Rules of Civil Procedure discourage fulsome documents), and discovery is launched. A judicial officer does not know the details of the case the parties will present and in theory *cannot* know the details. Discovery is used to find the details. The judicial officer always knows less than the parties, and the parties themselves may not know very well where they are going or what they expect to find. A magistrate supervising discovery does not—cannot—know the expected productivity of a given request, because the nature of the requester's claim and the contents of the files (or head) of the adverse party are unknown. Judicial officers cannot measure the costs and benefits to the requester and so cannot isolate impositional requests. Requesters have no reason to disclose their own estimates because they gain from imposing costs on rivals (and may lose from an improvement in accuracy). The portions of the Rules of Civil Procedure calling on judges to trim back excessive demands, therefore, have been, and are doomed to be,

hollow. We cannot prevent what we cannot detect; we cannot detect what we cannot define; we cannot define 'abusive' discovery except in theory, because in practice we lack essential information." Easterbrook, *Discovery as Abuse*, 69 B.U.L.Rev. 635, 638-639 (1989) (footnote omitted).

7. The Court of Appeals also relied on Chief Judge Clark's suggestion in *Nagler v. Admiral Corp.*, 248 F.2d 319 (C.A.2 1957), that facts indicating parallel conduct alone suffice to state a claim under § 1. 425 F.3d, at 114 (citing *Nagler, supra*, at 325). But *Nagler* gave no explanation for citing *Theatre Enterprises* (which upheld a denial of a directed verdict for plaintiff on the ground that proof of parallelism was not proof of conspiracy) as authority that pleading parallel conduct sufficed to plead a Sherman Act conspiracy. Now that *Monsanto Co. v. Spray-Rite Service Corp.*, 465 U.S. 752, 104 S.Ct. 1464, 79 L.Ed.2d 775 (1984), and *Matsushita Elec. Industrial Co. v. Zenith Radio Corp.*, 475 U.S. 574, 106 S.Ct. 1348, 89 L.Ed.2d 538 (1986), have made it clear that neither parallel conduct nor conscious parallelism, taken alone, raise the necessary implication of conspiracy, it is time for a fresh look at adequacy of pleading when a claim rests on parallel action.

does not set forth a single fact<sup>562</sup> in a context that suggests an agreement. 425 F.3d, at 106, 114. It seems fair to say that this approach to pleading would dispense with any showing of a “‘reasonably founded hope’” that a plaintiff would be able to make a case, see *Dura*, 544 U.S., at 347, 125 S.Ct. 1627 (quoting *Blue Chip Stamps*, 421 U.S., at 741, 95 S.Ct. 1917); Mr. Micawber’s optimism would be enough.

Seeing this, a good many judges and commentators have balked at taking the literal terms of the *Conley* passage as a pleading standard. See, e.g., *Car Carriers*, 745 F.2d, at 1106 (“*Conley* has never been interpreted literally” and, “[i]n practice, a complaint . . . must contain either direct or inferential allegations respecting all the material elements necessary to sustain recovery under *some* viable legal theory” (internal quotation marks omitted; emphasis and omission in original)); *Ascon Properties, Inc. v. Mobil Oil Co.*, 866 F.2d 1149, 1155 (C.A.9 1989) (tension between *Conley*’s “no set of facts” language and its acknowledgment that a plaintiff must provide the “grounds” on which his claim rests); *O’Brien v. DiGrazia*, 544 F.2d 543, 546, n. 3 (C.A.1 1976) (“[W]hen a plaintiff . . . supplies facts to support his claim, we do not think that *Conley* imposes a duty on the courts to conjure up unpleaded facts that might turn a frivolous claim of unconstitutional . . . action into a substantial one”); *McGregor v. Industrial Excess Landfill, Inc.*, 856 F.2d 39, 42–43 (C.A.6 1988) (quoting *O’Brien*’s analysis); Hazard, From Whom No Secrets Are Hid, 76 Tex. L.Rev. 1665, 1685 (1998) (describing *Conley* as having “turned Rule 8 on its head”); Marcus, The Revival of Fact Pleading Under the Federal Rules of Civil

Procedure, 86 Colum. L.Rev. 433, 463–465 (1986) (noting tension between *Conley* and subsequent understandings of Rule 8).

We could go on, but there is no need to pile up further citations to show that *Conley*’s “no set of facts” language has been questioned, criticized, and explained away long enough. To be fair to the *Conley* Court, the passage should be understood in light of the opinion’s preceding summary of the complaint’s<sup>563</sup> concrete allegations, which the Court quite reasonably understood as amply stating a claim for relief. But the passage so often quoted fails to mention this understanding on the part of the Court, and after puzzling the profession for 50 years, this famous observation has earned its retirement. The phrase is best forgotten as an incomplete, negative gloss on an accepted pleading standard: once a claim has been stated adequately, it may be supported by showing any set of facts consistent with the allegations in the complaint. See *Sanjuan*, 40 F.3d, at 251 (once a claim for relief has been stated, a plaintiff “receives the benefit of imagination, so long as the hypotheses are consistent with the complaint”); accord, *Swierkiewicz*, 534 U.S., at 514, 122 S.Ct. 992; *National Organization for Women, Inc. v. Scheidler*, 510 U.S. 249, 256, 114 S.Ct. 798, 127 L.Ed.2d 99 (1994); *H.J. Inc. v. Northwestern Bell Telephone Co.*, 492 U.S. 229, 249–250, 109 S.Ct. 2893, 106 L.Ed.2d 195 (1989); *Hishon v. King & Spalding*, 467 U.S. 69, 73, 104 S.Ct. 2229, 81 L.Ed.2d 59 (1984). *Conley*, then, described the breadth of opportunity to prove what an adequate complaint claims, not the minimum standard of adequate pleading to govern a complaint’s survival.<sup>8</sup>

8. Because *Conley*’s “‘no set of facts’” language was one of our earliest statements about pleading under the Federal Rules, it is no surprise that it has since been “cited as authority” by this Court and others. *Post*, at

1978. Although we have not previously explained the circumstances and rejected the literal reading of the passage embraced by the Court of Appeals, our analysis comports with this Court’s statements in the years since *Con-*

1<sup>564</sup>III

[15] When we look for plausibility in this complaint, we agree with the District Court that plaintiffs' claim of conspiracy in restraint of trade comes up short. To begin with, the complaint leaves no doubt that plaintiffs rest their § 1 claim on descriptions of parallel conduct and not on any independent allegation of actual agreement among the ILECs. *Supra*, at 1962–1963. Although in form a few stray statements speak directly of agreement,<sup>9</sup> on fair reading these are merely legal conclusions resting on the prior allegations. Thus, the

*ley*. See *Dura Pharmaceuticals, Inc. v. Broudo*, 544 U.S. 336, 347, 125 S.Ct. 1627, 161 L.Ed.2d 577(2005) (requiring “‘reasonably founded hope that the [discovery] process will reveal relevant evidence’” to support the claim (quoting *Blue Chip Stamps v. Manor Drug Stores*, 421 U.S. 723, 741, 95 S.Ct. 1917, 44 L.Ed.2d 539 (1975));(alteration in *Dura* )); *Associated Gen. Contractors of Cal., Inc. v. Carpenters*, 459 U.S. 519, 526, 103 S.Ct. 897, 74 L.Ed.2d 723 (1983) (“It is not . . . proper to assume that [the plaintiff] can prove facts that it has not alleged or that the defendants have violated the antitrust laws in ways that have not been alleged”); *Wilson v. Schnettler*, 365 U.S. 381, 383, 81 S.Ct. 632, 5 L.Ed.2d 620 (1961) (“In the absence of . . . an allegation [that the arrest was made without probable cause] the courts below could not, nor can we, assume that respondents arrested petitioner without probable cause to believe that he had committed . . . a narcotics offense”). Nor are we reaching out to decide this issue in a case where the matter was not raised by the parties, see *post*, at 1979, since both the ILECs and the Government highlight the problems stemming from a literal interpretation of *Conley*'s “no set of facts” language and seek clarification of the standard. Brief for Petitioners 27–28; Brief for United States as *Amicus Curiae* 22–25; see also Brief for Respondents 17 (describing “[p]etitioners and their amici” as mounting an “attack on *Conley*'s ‘no set of facts’ standard”).

The dissent finds relevance in Court of Appeals precedents from the 1940s, which allegedly gave rise to *Conley*'s “no set of facts” language. See *post*, at 1979–1981. Even indulging this line of analysis, these cases do not challenge the understanding that, before

complaint<sup>565</sup> first takes account of the alleged “absence of any meaningful competition between [the ILECs] in one another's markets,” “the parallel course of conduct that each [ILEC] engaged in to prevent competition from CLECs,” “and the other facts and market circumstances alleged [earlier]”; “in light of” these, the complaint concludes “that [the ILECs] have entered into a contract, combination or conspiracy to prevent competitive entry into their . . . markets and have agreed not to compete with one another.” Complaint ¶ 51, App. 27.<sup>10</sup> The nub of the

proceeding to discovery, a complaint must allege facts suggestive of illegal conduct. See, e.g., *Leimer v. State Mut. Life Assurance Co. of Worcester, Mass.*, 108 F.2d 302, 305 (C.A.8 1940) (“[I]f, in view of what is alleged, it can reasonably be conceived that the plaintiffs . . . could, upon a trial, establish a case which would entitle them to . . . relief, the motion to dismiss should not have been granted”); *Continental Collieries, Inc. v. Shober*, 130 F.2d 631, 635 (C.A.3 1942) (“No matter how likely it may seem that the pleader will be unable to prove his case, he is entitled, upon averring a claim, to an opportunity to try to prove it”). Rather, these cases stand for the unobjectionable proposition that, when a complaint adequately states a claim, it may not be dismissed based on a district court's assessment that the plaintiff will fail to find evidentiary support for his allegations or prove his claim to the satisfaction of the factfinder. Cf. *Scheuer v. Rhodes*, 416 U.S. 232, 236, 94 S.Ct. 1683, 40 L.Ed.2d 90 (1974) (a district court weighing a motion to dismiss asks “not whether a plaintiff will ultimately prevail but whether the claimant is entitled to offer evidence to support the claims”).

9. See Complaint ¶¶ 51, 64, App. 27, 30–31 (alleging that ILECs engaged in a “contract, combination or conspiracy” and agreed not to compete with one another).

10. If the complaint had not explained that the claim of agreement rested on the parallel conduct described, we doubt that the complaint's references to an agreement among the ILECs would have given the notice required by Rule 8. Apart from identifying a 7-

complaint, then, is the ILECs' parallel behavior, consisting of steps to keep the CLECs out and manifest disinterest in becoming CLECs themselves, and its sufficiency turns on the suggestions raised by this conduct when viewed in light of common economic experience.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1566</sup>We think that nothing contained in the complaint invests either the action or inaction alleged with a plausible suggestion of conspiracy. As to the ILECs' supposed agreement to disobey the 1996 Act and thwart the CLECs' attempts to compete, we agree with the District Court that nothing in the complaint intimates that the resistance to the upstarts was anything more than the natural, unilateral reaction of each ILEC intent on keeping its regional dominance. The 1996 Act did more than just subject the ILECs to competition; it obliged them to subsidize their competitors with their own equipment at wholesale rates. The economic incentive to resist was powerful, but resisting competition is routine market conduct, and even if the ILECs flouted the 1996 Act in all the ways the plaintiffs allege, see *id.*, ¶ 47, App. 23–24, there is no reason to infer that the companies had agreed among themselves to do what was only natural anyway; so natural, in fact, that if

alleging parallel decisions to resist competition were enough to imply an antitrust conspiracy, pleading a § 1 violation against almost any group of competing businesses would be a sure thing.

The complaint makes its closest pass at a predicate for conspiracy with the claim that collusion was necessary because success by even one CLEC in an ILEC's territory "would have revealed the degree to which competitive entry by CLECs would have been successful in the other territories." *Id.*, ¶ 50, App. 26–27. But, its logic aside, this general premise still fails to answer the point that there was just no need for joint encouragement to resist the 1996 Act; as the District Court said, "each ILEC has reason to want to avoid dealing with CLECs" and "each ILEC would attempt to keep CLECs out, regardless of the actions of the other ILECs." 313 F.Supp.2d, at 184; cf. *Kramer v. Pollock-Krasner Foundation*, 890 F.Supp. 250, 256 (S.D.N.Y.1995) (while the plaintiff "may believe the defendants conspired . . . , the defendants' allegedly conspiratorial actions<sup>567</sup> could equally have been prompted by lawful, independent goals which do not constitute a conspiracy").<sup>12</sup>

year span in which the § 1 violations were supposed to have occurred (*i. e.*, "[b]eginning at least as early as February 6, 1996, and continuing to the present," *id.*, ¶ 64, App. 30), the pleadings mentioned no specific time, place, or person involved in the alleged conspiracies. This lack of notice contrasts sharply with the model form for pleading negligence, Form 9, which the dissent says exemplifies the kind of "bare allegation" that survives a motion to dismiss. *Post*, at 1977. Whereas the model form alleges that the defendant struck the plaintiff with his car while plaintiff was crossing a particular highway at a specified date and time, the complaint here furnishes no clue as to which of the four ILECs (much less which of their employees) supposedly agreed, or when and where the illicit agreement took place. A defendant

wishing to prepare an answer in the simple fact pattern laid out in Form 9 would know what to answer; a defendant seeking to respond to plaintiffs' conclusory allegations in the § 1 context would have little idea where to begin.

11. The dissent's quotations from the complaint leave the impression that plaintiffs directly allege illegal agreement; in fact, they proceed exclusively via allegations of parallel conduct, as both the District Court and Court of Appeals recognized. See 313 F.Supp.2d 174, 182 (S.D.N.Y.2003); 425 F.3d 99, 102–104 (C.A.2 2005).

12. From the allegation that the ILECs belong to various trade associations, see Complaint ¶ 46, App. 23, the dissent playfully suggests

Plaintiffs' second conspiracy theory rests on the competitive reticence among the ILECs themselves in the wake of the 1996 Act, which was supposedly passed in the "hop[e] that the large incumbent local monopoly companies . . . might attack their neighbors' service areas, as they are the best situated to do so." Complaint ¶ 38, App. 20 (quoting Consumer Federation of America, *Lessons from 1996 Telecommunications Act: Deregulation Before Meaningful Competition Spells Consumer Disaster*, p. 12 (Feb. 2000)). Contrary to hope, the ILECs declined "to enter each other's service territories in any significant way," Complaint ¶ 38, App. 20, and the local telephone and high-speed Internet market remains highly compartmentalized geographically, with minimal competition. Based on this state of affairs, and perceiving the ILECs to be blessed with "especially attractive business opportunities" in surrounding markets dominated by other ILECs, the plaintiffs assert that the ILECs' parallel conduct was "strongly suggestive of conspiracy." *Id.*, ¶ 40, App. 21.

But it was not suggestive of conspiracy, not if history teaches anything. In a traditionally unregulated industry with low barriers to entry, sparse competition among

that they conspired to restrain trade, an inference said to be "buttressed by the common sense of Adam Smith." *Post*, at 1985–1986, 1987–1988. If Adam Smith is peering down today, he may be surprised to learn that his tongue-in-cheek remark would be authority to force his famous pinmaker to devote financial and human capital to hire lawyers, prepare for depositions, and otherwise fend off allegations of conspiracy; all this just because he belonged to the same trade guild as one of his competitors when their pins carried the same price tag.

13. The complaint quoted a reported statement of Qwest's CEO, Richard Notebaert, to suggest that the ILECs declined to compete against each other despite recognizing that it

large firms dominating separate geographical segments of the market could very well signify illegal agreement, but here we have an obvious alternative explanation. In the decade preceding the 1996 Act and well before that, monopoly was the norm in telecommunications, not the exception. See *Verizon Communications Inc. v. FCC*, 535 U.S. 467, 477–478, 122 S.Ct. 1646, 152 L.Ed.2d 701 (2002) (describing telephone service providers as traditional public monopolies). The ILECs were born in that world, doubtless liked the world the way it was, and surely knew the adage about him who lives by the sword. Hence, a natural explanation for the noncompetition alleged is that the former Government-sanctioned monopolists were sitting tight, expecting their neighbors to do the same thing.

[16–18] In fact, the complaint itself gives reasons to believe that the ILECs would see their best interests in keeping to their old turf. Although the complaint says generally that the ILECs passed up "especially attractive business opportunities" by declining to compete as CLECs against other ILECs, Complaint ¶ 40, App. 21, it does not allege that competition as CLECs was potentially any more lucrative than other opportunities being pursued by the ILECs during the same period,<sup>13</sup> and

"might be a good way to turn a quick dollar." ¶ 42, App. 22 (quoting *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 31, 2002, Business Section, p. 1). This was only part of what he reportedly said, however, and the District Court was entitled to take notice of the full contents of the published articles referenced in the complaint, from which the truncated quotations were drawn. See Fed. Rule Evid. 201.

Notebaert was also quoted as saying that entering new markets as a CLEC would not be "a sustainable economic model" because the CLEC pricing model is "just . . . nuts." *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 31, 2002, Business Section, p. 1 (cited at Complaint ¶ 42, App. 22). Another source cited in the complaint quotes Notebaert as saying he thought it "unwise" to "base a business plan" on the privileges ac-

the complaint is replete with indications that any CLEC faced nearly insurmountable barriers to profitability owing to the ILECs' flagrant resistance to the network sharing requirements of the 1996 Act, *id.*, ¶ 47, App. ¶569-23-26. Not only that, but even without a monopolistic tradition and the peculiar difficulty of mandating shared networks, "[f]irms do not expand without limit and none of them enters every market that an outside observer might regard as profitable, or even a small portion of such markets." Areeda & Hovenkamp ¶ 307d, at 155 (Supp.2006) (commenting on the case at bar). The upshot is that Congress may have expected some ILECs to become CLECs in the legacy territories of other ILECs, but the disappointment does not make conspiracy plausible. We agree with the District Court's assessment that antitrust conspiracy was not suggested by the facts adduced under either theory of the complaint, which thus fails to state a valid § 1 claim.<sup>14</sup>

Plaintiffs say that our analysis runs counter to *Swierkiewicz*, 534 U.S., at 508, 122 S.Ct. 992, 152 L.Ed.2d 1, which held that "a complaint in an employment discrimination lawsuit [need] not contain specific facts establishing a prima facie case of discrimination under the framework set forth in *McDonnell Douglas Corp. v. Green*, 411 U.S. 792[, 93 S.Ct. 1817, 36 L.Ed.2d 668] (1973)." They argue that

corded to CLECs under the 1996 Act because the regulatory environment was too unstable. Chicago Tribune, Dec. 19, 2002, Business Section, p. 2 (cited at Complaint ¶ 45, App. 23).

14. In reaching this conclusion, we do not apply any "heightened" pleading standard, nor do we seek to broaden the scope of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 9, which can only be accomplished "by the process of amending the Federal Rules, and not by judicial interpretation.'" *Swierkiewicz v. Sorema N. A.*, 534 U.S. 506, 515, 122 S.Ct. 992, 152

just as the prima facie case is a "flexible evidentiary standard" that "should not be transposed into a rigid pleading standard for discrimination cases," *Swierkiewicz*, *supra*, at 512, 122 S.Ct. 992, "transpos[ing] 'plus factor' summary judgment analysis woodenly into a rigid Rule 12(b)(6) pleading standard . . . would be unwise," Brief for Respondents 39. As the District Court ¶570 correctly understood, however, "*Swierkiewicz* did not change the law of pleading, but simply re-emphasized . . . that the Second Circuit's use of a heightened pleading standard for Title VII cases was contrary to the Federal Rules' structure of liberal pleading requirements." 313 F.Supp.2d, at 181 (citation and footnote omitted). Even though *Swierkiewicz's* pleadings "detailed the events leading to his termination, provided relevant dates, and included the ages and nationalities of at least some of the relevant persons involved with his termination," the Court of Appeals dismissed his complaint for failing to allege certain additional facts that *Swierkiewicz* would need at the trial stage to support his claim in the absence of direct evidence of discrimination. *Swierkiewicz*, 534 U.S., at 514, 122 S.Ct. 992. We reversed on the ground that the Court of Appeals had impermissibly applied what amounted to a heightened pleading requirement by insisting that *Swierkiewicz* allege "specific facts" beyond those necessary to state his

L.Ed.2d 1 (2002) (quoting *Leatherman v. Tarrant County Narcotics Intelligence and Coordination Unit*, 507 U.S. 163, 168, 113 S.Ct. 1160, 122 L.Ed.2d 517 (1993)). On certain subjects understood to raise a high risk of abusive litigation, a plaintiff must state factual allegations with greater particularity than Rule 8 requires. Fed. Rules Civ. Proc. 9(b)-(c). Here, our concern is not that the allegations in the complaint were insufficiently "particular[ized]," *ibid.*; rather, the complaint warranted dismissal because it failed *in toto* to render plaintiffs' entitlement to relief plausible.

claim and the grounds showing entitlement to relief. *Id.*, at 508, 122 S.Ct. 992.

Here, in contrast, we do not require heightened fact pleading of specifics, but only enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face. Because the plaintiffs here have not nudged their claims across the line from conceivable to plausible, their complaint must be dismissed.

\* \* \*

The judgment of the Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit is reversed, and the case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

*It is so ordered.*

Justice STEVENS, with whom Justice GINSBURG joins except as to Part IV, dissenting.

In the first paragraph of its 23-page opinion the Court states that the question to be decided is whether allegations that “major telecommunications providers engaged in certain §571 parallel conduct unfavorable to competition” suffice to state a violation of § 1 of the Sherman Act. *Ante*, at 1961. The answer to that question has been settled for more than 50 years. If that were indeed the issue, a summary reversal citing *Theatre Enterprises, Inc. v. Paramount Film Distributing Corp.*, 346 U.S. 537, 74 S.Ct. 257, 98 L.Ed. 273 (1954), would adequately resolve this case. As *Theatre Enterprises* held, parallel conduct is circumstantial evidence admissible on the issue of conspiracy, but it is not itself illegal. *Id.*, at 540–542, 74 S.Ct. 257.

Thus, this is a case in which there is no dispute about the substantive law. If the defendants acted independently, their conduct was perfectly lawful. If, however, that conduct is the product of a horizontal agreement among potential competitors, it

was unlawful. The plaintiffs have alleged such an agreement and, because the complaint was dismissed in advance of answer, the allegation has not even been denied. Why, then, does the case not proceed? Does a judicial opinion that the charge is not “plausible” provide a legally acceptable reason for dismissing the complaint? I think not.

Respondents’ amended complaint describes a variety of circumstantial evidence and makes the straightforward allegation that petitioners

“entered into a contract, combination or conspiracy to prevent competitive entry in their respective local telephone and/or high speed internet services markets and have agreed not to compete with one another and otherwise allocated customers and markets to one another.” Amended Complaint in No. 02 CIV. 10220(GEL) (SDNY) ¶ 51, App. 27 (hereinafter Complaint).

The complaint explains that, contrary to Congress’ expectation when it enacted the 1996 Telecommunications Act, and consistent with their own economic self-interests, petitioner Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers (ILECs) have assiduously avoided infringing upon each other’s markets and have §572 refused to permit nonincumbent competitors to access their networks. The complaint quotes Richard Notebaert, the former chief executive officer of one such ILEC, as saying that competing in a neighboring ILEC’s territory “‘might be a good way to turn a quick dollar but that doesn’t make it right.’” *Id.*, ¶ 42, App. 22. Moreover, respondents allege that petitioners “communicate amongst themselves” through numerous industry associations. *Id.*, ¶ 46, App. 23. In sum, respondents allege that petitioners entered into an agreement that has long been recognized as a classic *per se*

violation of the Sherman Act. See Report of the Attorney General's National Committee to Study the Antitrust Laws 26 (1955).

Under rules of procedure that have been well settled since well before our decision in *Theatre Enterprises*, a judge ruling on a defendant's motion to dismiss a complaint "must accept as true all of the factual allegations contained in the complaint." *Swierkiewicz v. Sorema N. A.*, 534 U.S. 506, 508, n. 1, 122 S.Ct. 992, 152 L.Ed.2d 1 (2002); see *Overstreet v. North Shore Corp.*, 318 U.S. 125, 127, 63 S.Ct. 494, 87 L.Ed. 656 (1943). But instead of requiring knowledgeable executives such as Notebaert to respond to these allegations by way of sworn depositions or other limited discovery—and indeed without so much as requiring petitioners to file an answer denying that they entered into any agreement—the majority permits immediate dismissal based on the assurances of company lawyers that nothing untoward was afoot. The Court embraces the argument of those lawyers that "there is no reason to infer that the companies had agreed among themselves to do what was only natural anyway," *ante*, at 1971; that "there was just no need for joint encouragement to resist the 1996 Act," *ibid.*; and that the "natural explanation for the non-competition alleged is that the former Government-sanctioned monopolists were sitting tight, expecting their neighbors to do the same thing," *ante*, at 1972.

The Court and petitioners' legal team are no doubt correct that the parallel conduct alleged is consistent with the absence<sup>573</sup> of any contract, combination, or conspiracy. But that conduct is also entirely consistent with the *presence* of the illegal agreement alleged in the complaint. And the charge that petitioners "agreed not to compete with one another" is not

just one of "a few stray statements," *ante*, at 1970; it is an allegation describing unlawful conduct. As such, the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, our longstanding precedent, and sound practice mandate that the District Court at least require some sort of response from petitioners before dismissing the case.

Two practical concerns presumably explain the Court's dramatic departure from settled procedural law. Private antitrust litigation can be enormously expensive, and there is a risk that jurors may mistakenly conclude that evidence of parallel conduct has proved that the parties acted pursuant to an agreement when they in fact merely made similar independent decisions. Those concerns merit careful case management, including strict control of discovery, careful scrutiny of evidence at the summary judgment stage, and lucid instructions to juries; they do not, however, justify the dismissal of an adequately pleaded complaint without even requiring the defendants to file answers denying a charge that they in fact engaged in collective decisionmaking. More importantly, they do not justify an interpretation of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) that seems to be driven by the majority's appraisal of the plausibility of the ultimate factual allegation rather than its legal sufficiency.

## I

Rule 8(a)(2) of the Federal Rules requires that a complaint contain "a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief." The Rule did not come about by happenstance, and its language is not inadvertent. The English experience with Byzantine special pleading rules—illustrated by the hyper-technical Hilary rules of 1574<sup>1834</sup><sup>1</sup>—made

1. See 9 W. Holdsworth, *History of English*

*Law* 324–327 (1926).

obvious the appeal of a pleading standard that was easy for the common litigant to understand and sufficed to put the defendant on notice as to the nature of the claim against him and the relief sought. State-side, David Dudley Field developed the highly influential New York Code of 1848, which required “[a] statement of the facts constituting the cause of action, in ordinary and concise language, without repetition, and in such a manner as to enable a person of common understanding to know what is intended.” An Act to Simplify and Abridge the Practice, Pleadings and Proceedings of the Courts of this State, ch. 379, § 120(2), 1848 N.Y. Laws pp. 497, 521. Substantially similar language appeared in the Federal Equity Rules adopted in 1912. See Fed. Equity Rule 25 (requiring “a short and simple statement of the ultimate facts upon which the plaintiff asks relief, omitting any mere statement of evidence”).

A difficulty arose, however, in that the Field Code and its progeny required a plaintiff to plead “facts” rather than “conclusions,” a distinction that proved far easier to say than to apply. As commentators have noted,

“it is virtually impossible logically to distinguish among ‘ultimate facts,’ ‘evidence,’ and ‘conclusions.’ Essentially any allegation in a pleading must be an assertion that certain occurrences took place. The pleading spectrum, passing from evidence through ultimate facts to conclusions, is largely a continuum varying only in the degree of particularity with which the occurrences are described.” Weinstein & Distler, *Comments on Procedural Reform: Drafting Pleading Rules*, 57 Colum. L.Rev. 518, 520–521 (1957).

2. *Gulfstream Aerospace Corp. v. Mayacamas Corp.*, 485 U.S. 271, 283, 108 S.Ct. 1133, 99

See also Cook, *Statements of Fact in Pleading Under the Codes*, 21 Colum. L.Rev. 416, 417 (1921) (hereinafter Cook) (“[T]here is no logical distinction between statements which are grouped by the courts under the phrases ‘statements of fact’ and ‘conclusions of law’”). Rule 8 was directly responsive to this difficulty. Its drafters intentionally avoided any reference to “facts” or “evidence” or “conclusions.” See 5 C. Wright & A. Miller, *Federal Practice and Procedure* § 1216, p. 207 (3d ed.2004) (hereinafter Wright & Miller) (“The substitution of ‘claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief’ for the code formulation of the ‘facts’ constituting a ‘cause of action’ was intended to avoid the distinctions drawn under the codes among ‘evidentiary facts,’ ‘ultimate facts,’ and ‘conclusions’ . . .”).

Under the relaxed pleading standards of the Federal Rules, the idea was not to keep litigants out of court but rather to keep them in. The merits of a claim would be sorted out during a flexible pretrial process and, as appropriate, through the crucible of trial. See *Swierkiewicz*, 534 U.S., at 514, 122 S.Ct. 992 (“The liberal notice pleading of Rule 8(a) is the starting point of a simplified pleading system, which was adopted to focus litigation on the merits of a claim”). Charles E. Clark, the “principal draftsman” of the Federal Rules,<sup>2</sup> put it thus:

“Experience has shown . . . that we cannot expect the proof of the case to be made through the pleadings, and that such proof is really not their function. We can expect a general statement distinguishing the case from all others, so that the manner and form of trial and remedy expected are clear, and so that a permanent judgment will result.” The

L.Ed.2d 296 (1988).

New Federal Rules of Civil Procedure: The Last Phase—Underlying Philosophy Embodied in Some of the Basic Provisions of the New Procedure, 23 A.B.A.J. 976, 977 (1937) (hereinafter Clark, New Federal Rules).

The pleading paradigm under the new Federal Rules was well illustrated by the inclusion in the appendix of Form 9,<sup>1576a</sup> a complaint for negligence. As relevant, the Form 9 complaint states only: “On June 1, 1936, in a public highway called Boylston Street in Boston, Massachusetts, defendant negligently drove a motor vehicle against plaintiff who was then crossing said highway.” Form 9, Complaint for Negligence, Forms App., Fed. Rules Civ. Proc., 28 U.S.C.App., p. 829 (hereinafter Form 9). The complaint then describes the plaintiff’s injuries and demands judgment. The asserted ground for relief—namely, the defendant’s negligent driving—would have been called a “‘conclusion of law’” under the code pleading of old. See, e.g., Cook 419. But that bare allegation suffices under a system that “restrict[s] the pleadings to the task of general notice-giving and invest[s] the deposition-discovery process with a vital role in the preparation for trial.”<sup>3</sup> *Hickman v. Taylor*, 329 U.S. 495, 501, 67 S.Ct. 385, 91 L.Ed. 451 (1947); see also *Swierkiewicz*, 534 U.S., at 513, n. 4, 122 S.Ct. 992 (citing Form 9 as an example of “‘the simplicity and brevity of statement which the rules contemplate’”); *Thomson v. Washington*, 362 F.3d 969, 970 (C.A.7 2004) (Posner, J.) (“The federal rules replaced fact pleading with notice pleading”).

## II

It is in the context of this history that *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 78 S.Ct. 99,

3. The Federal Rules do impose a “particularity” requirement on “all averments of fraud or mistake,” Fed. Rule Civ. Proc. 9(b), neither of which has been alleged in this case. We have recognized that the canon of *expresio unius*

2 L.Ed.2d 80 (1957), must be understood. The *Conley* plaintiffs were black railroad workers who alleged that their union local had refused to protect them against discriminatory discharges, in violation of the National Railway Labor Act. The union sought to dismiss the complaint on the ground that its general allegations of discriminatory treatment by the defendants lacked sufficient specificity. Writing<sup>1577</sup> for a unanimous Court, Justice Black rejected the union’s claim as foreclosed by the language of Rule 8. *Id.*, at 47–48, 78 S.Ct. 99. In the course of doing so, he articulated the formulation the Court rejects today: “In appraising the sufficiency of the complaint we follow, of course, the accepted rule that a complaint should not be dismissed for failure to state a claim unless it appears beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of facts in support of his claim which would entitle him to relief.” *Id.*, at 45–46, 78 S.Ct. 99.

Consistent with the design of the Federal Rules, *Conley*’s “no set of facts” formulation permits outright dismissal only when proceeding to discovery or beyond would be futile. Once it is clear that a plaintiff has stated a claim that, if true, would entitle him to relief, matters of proof are appropriately relegated to other stages of the trial process. Today, however, in its explanation of a decision to dismiss a complaint that it regards as a fishing expedition, the Court scraps *Conley*’s “no set of facts” language. Concluding that the phrase has been “questioned, criticized, and explained away long enough,” *ante*, at 1969, the Court dismisses it as careless composition.

*est exclusio alterius* applies to Rule 9(b). See *Leatherman v. Tarrant Cty. Narcotics Intelligence and Coordination Unit*, 507 U.S. 163, 168, 113 S.Ct. 1160, 122 L.Ed.2d 517 (1993).

If *Conley's* “no set of facts” language is to be interred, let it not be without a eulogy. That exact language, which the majority says has “puzzl[ed] the profession for 50 years,” *ante*, at 1969, 355 U.S. 41, 2 L.Ed.2d 80, has been cited as authority in a dozen opinions of this Court and four separate writings.<sup>4</sup> In not one of 1578 those 16 opinions was the language “questioned,” “criticized,” or “explained away.” Indeed,

today’s opinion is the first by any Member of this Court to express *any* doubt as to the adequacy of the *Conley* formulation. Taking their cues from the federal courts, 26 States and the District of Columbia utilize as their standard for dismissal of a complaint the very language the majority repudiates: whether it appears “beyond doubt” that “no set of facts” in support of the claim would entitle the plaintiff to relief.<sup>5</sup>

4. *SEC v. Zandford*, 535 U.S. 813, 818, 122 S.Ct. 1899, 153 L.Ed.2d 1 (2002); *Davis v. Monroe County Bd. of Ed.*, 526 U.S. 629, 654, 119 S.Ct. 1661, 143 L.Ed.2d 839 (1999); *Hartford Fire Ins. Co. v. California*, 509 U.S. 764, 811, 113 S.Ct. 2891, 125 L.Ed.2d 612 (1993); *Brower v. County of Inyo*, 489 U.S. 593, 598, 109 S.Ct. 1378, 103 L.Ed.2d 628 (1989); *Hughes v. Rowe*, 449 U.S. 5, 10, 101 S.Ct. 173, 66 L.Ed.2d 163 (1980) (*per curiam*); *McLain v. Real Estate Bd. of New Orleans, Inc.*, 444 U.S. 232, 246, 100 S.Ct. 502, 62 L.Ed.2d 441 (1980); *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 106, 97 S.Ct. 285, 50 L.Ed.2d 251 (1976); *Hospital Building Co. v. Trustees of Rex Hospital*, 425 U.S. 738, 746, 96 S.Ct. 1848, 48 L.Ed.2d 338 (1976); *Scheuer v. Rhodes*, 416 U.S. 232, 236, 94 S.Ct. 1683, 40 L.Ed.2d 90 (1974); *Cruz v. Beto*, 405 U.S. 319, 322, 92 S.Ct. 1079, 31 L.Ed.2d 263 (1972) (*per curiam*); *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 521, 92 S.Ct. 594, 30 L.Ed.2d 652 (1972) (*per curiam*); *Jenkins v. McKeithen*, 395 U.S. 411, 422, 89 S.Ct. 1843, 23 L.Ed.2d 404 (1969) (plurality opinion); see also *Cleveland Bd. of Ed. v. Loudermill*, 470 U.S. 532, 554, 105 S.Ct. 1487, 84 L.Ed.2d 494 (1985) (Brennan, J., concurring in part and dissenting in part); *Hoover v. Ronwin*, 466 U.S. 558, 587, 104 S.Ct. 1989, 80 L.Ed.2d 590 (1984) (STEVENS, J., dissenting); *United Air Lines, Inc. v. Evans*, 431 U.S. 553, 561, n. 1, 97 S.Ct. 1885, 52 L.Ed.2d 571 (1977) (Marshall, J., dissenting); *Simon v. Eastern Ky. Welfare Rights Organization*, 426 U.S. 26, 55, n. 6, 96 S.Ct. 1917, 48 L.Ed.2d 450 (1976) (Brennan, J., concurring in judgment).

5. See, e.g., *EB Invs., LLC v. Atlantis Development, Inc.*, 930 So.2d 502, 507 (Ala.2005); *Department of Health & Social Servs. v. Native Village of Curyung*, 151 P.3d 388, 396 (Alaska 2006); *Newman v. Maricopa Cty.*, 167 Ariz. 501, 503, 808 P.2d 1253, 1255 (App.1991); *Public Serv. Co. of Colo. v. Van Wyk*, 27 P.3d

377, 385–386 (Colo.2001) (en banc); *Clawson v. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, LLC*, 906 A.2d 308, 312 (D.C.2006); *Hillman Constr. Corp. v. Wainer*, 636 So.2d 576, 578 (Fla.App.1994); *Kaplan v. Kaplan*, 266 Ga. 612, 613, 469 S.E.2d 198, 199 (1996); *Wright v. Home Depot U.S.A., Inc.*, 111 Hawai’i 401, 406, 142 P.3d 265, 270 (2006); *Taylor v. Maile*, 142 Idaho 253, 257, 127 P.3d 156, 160 (2005); *Fink v. Bryant*, 2001–CC–0987, p. 4 (La.11/28/01), 801 So.2d 346, 349; *Gagne v. Cianbro Corp.*, 431 A.2d 1313, 1318–1319 (Me.1981); *Gasior v. Massachusetts Gen. Hospital*, 446 Mass. 645, 647, 846 N.E.2d 1133, 1135 (2006); *Ralph Walker, Inc. v. Gallagher*, 926 So.2d 890, 893 (Miss.2006); *Jones v. Montana Univ. System*, 337 Mont. 1, 7, 155 P.3d 1247, 1252 (2007); *Johnston v. Nebraska Dept. of Correctional Servs.*, 270 Neb. 987, 989, 709 N.W.2d 321, 324 (2006); *Blackjack Bonding v. Las Vegas Munic. Ct.*, 116 Nev. 1213, 1217, 14 P.3d 1275, 1278 (2000); *Shepard v. Ocwen Fed. Bank*, 361 N.C. 137, 139, 638 S.E.2d 197, 199 (2006); *Rose v. United Equitable Ins. Co.*, 2001 ND 154, ¶ 10, 632 N.W.2d 429, 434; *State ex rel. Turner v. Houk*, 112 Ohio St.3d 561, 562, 2007–Ohio–814, ¶ 5, 862 N.E.2d 104, 105 (*per curiam*); *Moneypenney v. Dawson*, 2006 OK 53, ¶ 2, 141 P.3d 549, 551; *Gagnon v. State*, 570 A.2d 656, 659 (R.I.1990); *Osloond v. Farrier*, 2003 SD 28, ¶ 4, 659 N.W.2d 20, 22 (*per curiam*); *Smith v. Lincoln Brass Works, Inc.*, 712 S.W.2d 470, 471 (Tenn.1986); *Association of Haystack Property Owners, Inc. v. Sprague*, 145 Vt. 443, 446, 494 A.2d 122, 124 (1985); *In re Coday*, 156 Wash.2d 485, 497, 130 P.3d 809, 815 (2006) (en banc); *Haines v. Hampshire Cty. Comm’n*, 216 W.Va. 499, 502, 607 S.E.2d 828, 831 (2004); *Warren v. Hart*, 747 P.2d 511, 512 (Wyo.1987); see also *Malpiede v. Townson*, 780 A.2d 1075, 1082–1083 (Del.2001) (permitting dismissal only “where the court determines with reasonable certainty that the

<sup>1579</sup>Petitioners have not requested that the *Conley* formulation be retired, nor have any of the six *amici* who filed briefs in support of petitioners. I would not rewrite the Nation's civil procedure textbooks and call into doubt the pleading rules of most of its States without far more informed deliberation as to the costs of doing so. Congress has established a process—a rulemaking process—for revisions of that order. See 28 U.S.C. §§ 2072–2074 (2000 ed. and Supp. IV).

Today's majority calls *Conley's* “‘no set of facts’” language “an incomplete, negative gloss on an accepted pleading standard: once a claim has been stated adequately, it may be <sup>1580</sup>supported by showing any set of facts consistent with the allegations in the complaint.” *Ante*, at 1969. This is not and cannot be what

the *Conley* Court meant. First, as I have explained, and as the *Conley* Court well knew, the pleading standard the Federal Rules meant to codify does not require, or even invite, the pleading of facts.<sup>6</sup> The “pleading standard” label the majority gives to what it reads into the *Conley* opinion—a statement of the permissible factual support for an adequately pleaded complaint—would not, therefore, have impressed the *Conley* Court itself. Rather, that Court would have understood the majority's remodeling of its language to express an *evidentiary* standard, which the *Conley* Court had neither need nor want to explicate. Second, it is pellucidly clear that the *Conley* Court was interested in what a complaint *must* contain, not what it *may* contain. In fact, the Court said without qualification that it was “appraising the *sufficiency* of

plaintiff could prevail on no set of facts that may be inferred from the well-pleaded allegations in the complaint” (internal quotation marks omitted); *Canel v. Topinka*, 212 Ill.2d 311, 318, 288 Ill.Dec. 623, 818 N.E.2d 311, 317 (2004) (replacing “appears beyond doubt” in the *Conley* formulation with “is clearly apparent”); *In re Young*, 522 N.E.2d 386, 388 (Ind.1988) (*per curiam*) (replacing “appears beyond doubt” with “appears to a certainty”); *Barkema v. Williams Pipeline Co.*, 666 N.W.2d 612, 614 (Iowa 2003) (holding that a motion to dismiss should be sustained “only when there exists no conceivable set of facts entitling the non-moving party to relief”); *Pioneer Village v. Bullitt Cty.*, 104 S.W.3d 757, 759 (Ky.2003) (holding that judgment on the pleadings should be granted “if it appears beyond doubt that the nonmoving party cannot prove any set of facts that would entitle him/her to relief”); *Corley v. Detroit Bd. of Ed.*, 470 Mich. 274, 277, 681 N.W.2d 342, 345 (2004) (*per curiam*) (holding that a motion for judgment on the pleadings should be granted only “‘if no factual development could possibly justify recovery’”); *Oberkramer v. Ellisville*, 706 S.W.2d 440, 441 (Mo. 1986) (en banc) (omitting the words “beyond doubt” from the *Conley* formulation); *Colman v. Utah State Land Bd.*, 795 P.2d 622, 624 (Utah 1990) (holding that a motion to dismiss

is appropriate “only if it clearly appears that [the plaintiff] can prove no set of facts in support of his claim”); *NRC Management Servs. Corp. v. First Va. Bank-Southwest*, 63 Va. Cir. 68, 70, 2003 WL 23540085 (2003) (“The Virginia standard is identical [to the *Conley* formulation], though the Supreme Court of Virginia may not have used the same words to describe it”).

6. The majority is correct to say that what the Federal Rules require is a “‘showing’” of entitlement to relief. *Ante*, at 1965, n. 3. Whether and to what extent that “showing” requires allegations of fact will depend on the particulars of the claim. For example, had the amended complaint in this case alleged *only* parallel conduct, it would not have made the required “showing.” See *supra*, at 1974. Similarly, had the pleadings contained *only* an allegation of agreement, without specifying the nature or object of that agreement, they would have been susceptible to the charge that they did not provide sufficient notice that the defendants may answer intelligently. Omissions of that sort instance the type of “bareness” with which the Federal Rules are concerned. A plaintiff's inability to persuade a district court that the allegations actually included in her complaint are “plausible” is an altogether different kind of failing, and one that should not be fatal at the pleading stage.

the complaint.” 355 U.S., at 45, 78 S.Ct. 99 (emphasis added). It was, to paraphrase today’s majority, describing “the minimum standard of adequate pleading to govern a complaint’s survival,” *ante*, at 1969.

We can be triply sure as to *Conley*’s meaning by examining the three Court of Appeals cases the *Conley* Court cited as support for the “accepted rule” that “a complaint should not <sup>1581</sup>be dismissed for failure to state a claim unless it appears beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of facts in support of his claim which would entitle him to relief.” 355 U.S., at 45–46, 78 S.Ct. 99. In the first case, *Leimer v. State Mut. Life Assurance Co. of Worcester, Mass.*, 108 F.2d 302 (C.A.8 1940), the plaintiff alleged that she was the beneficiary of a life insurance plan and that the insurance company was wrongfully withholding proceeds from her. In reversing the District Court’s grant of the defendant’s motion to dismiss, the Eighth Circuit noted that court’s own long-standing rule that, to warrant dismissal, “it should appear from the allegations that a cause of action does not exist, rather than that a cause of action has been defectively stated.” *Id.*, at 305 (quoting *Winget v. Rockwood*, 69 F.2d 326, 329 (C.A.8 1934)).

The *Leimer* court viewed the Federal Rules—specifically Rules 8(a)(2), 12(b)(6), 12(e) (motion for a more definite statement), and 56 (motion for summary judgment)—as reinforcing the notion that “there is no justification for dismissing a complaint for insufficiency of statement, except where it appears to a certainty that the plaintiff would be entitled to no relief under any state of facts which could be proved in support of the claim.” 108 F.2d, at 306. The court refuted in the strongest terms any suggestion that the unlikelihood of recovery should determine the fate of a complaint: “No matter how improbable it may be that she can prove her claim, she is

entitled to an opportunity to make the attempt, and is not required to accept as final a determination of her rights based upon inferences drawn in favor of the defendant from her amended complaint.” *Ibid.*

The Third Circuit relied on *Leimer*’s admonition in *Continental Collieries, Inc. v. Shober*, 130 F.2d 631 (1942), which the *Conley* Court also cited in support of its “no set of facts” formulation. In a diversity action the plaintiff alleged breach of contract, but the District Court dismissed the complaint on the ground that the contract appeared to be unenforceable under state law. The Court of Appeals reversed, <sup>1582</sup>concluding that there were facts in dispute that went to the enforceability of the contract, and that the rule at the pleading stage was as in *Leimer*: “No matter how likely it may seem that the pleader will be unable to prove his case, he is entitled, upon averring a claim, to an opportunity to try to prove it.” 130 F.3d, at 635.

The third case the *Conley* Court cited approvingly was written by Judge Clark himself. In *Dioguardi v. Durning*, 139 F.2d 774 (C.A.2 1944), the *pro se* plaintiff, an importer of “tonics,” charged the customs inspector with auctioning off the plaintiff’s former merchandise for less than was bid for it—and indeed for an amount equal to the plaintiff’s own bid—and complained that two cases of tonics went missing three weeks before the sale. The inference, hinted at by the averments but never stated in so many words, was that the defendant fraudulently denied the plaintiff his rightful claim to the tonics, which, if true, would have violated federal law. Writing six years after the adoption of the Federal Rules he held the lead rein in drafting, Judge Clark said that the defendant

“could have disclosed the facts from his point of view, in advance of a trial if he

chose, by asking for a pre-trial hearing or by moving for a summary judgment with supporting affidavits. But, as it stands, we do not see how the plaintiff may properly be deprived of his day in court to show what he obviously so firmly believes and what for present purposes defendant must be taken as admitting.” *Id.*, at 775.

As any civil procedure student knows, Judge Clark’s opinion disquieted the defense bar and gave rise to a movement to revise Rule 8 to require a plaintiff to plead a “‘cause of action.’” See 5 Wright & Miller § 1201, at 86–87. The movement failed, see *ibid.*; *Dioguardi* was explicitly approved in *Conley*; and “[i]n retrospect the case itself seems to be a <sup>1583</sup>routine application of principles that are universally accepted,” 5 Wright & Miller § 1220, at 284–285.

In light of *Leimer*, *Continental Collieries*, and *Dioguardi*, *Conley*’s statement that a complaint is not to be dismissed unless “no set of facts” in support thereof would entitle the plaintiff to relief is hardly “puzzling,” *ante*, at 1969. It reflects a philosophy that, unlike in the days of code pleading, separating the wheat from the chaff is a task assigned to the pretrial and trial process. *Conley*’s language, in short, captures the policy choice embodied in the Federal Rules and binding on the federal courts.

We have consistently reaffirmed that basic understanding of the Federal Rules in the half century since *Conley*. For example, in *Scheuer v. Rhodes*, 416 U.S. 232, 94 S.Ct. 1683, 40 L.Ed.2d 90 (1974), we reversed the Court of Appeals’ dismissal on the pleadings when the respondents, the Governor and other officials of the State of Ohio, argued that the petitioners’ claims were barred by sovereign immunity. In a unanimous opinion by then-Justice Rehnquist, we emphasized:

“When a federal court reviews the sufficiency of a complaint, before the reception of any evidence either by affidavit or admissions, its task is necessarily a limited one. The issue is not whether a plaintiff will ultimately prevail but whether the claimant is entitled to offer evidence to support the claims. *Indeed it may appear on the face of the pleadings that a recovery is very remote and unlikely but that is not the test.*” *Id.*, at 236, 94 S.Ct. 1683 (emphasis added).

The *Rhodes* plaintiffs had “alleged generally and in conclusory terms” that the defendants, by calling out the National Guard to suppress the Kent State University student protests, “were guilty of wanton, wilful and negligent conduct.” *Krause v. Rhodes*, 471 F.2d 430, 433 (C.A.6 1972). We reversed the Court of Appeals on the ground that “[w]hatever <sup>1584</sup>the plaintiffs may or may not be able to establish as to the merits of their allegations, their claims, as stated in the complaints, given the favorable reading required by the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure,” were not barred by the Eleventh Amendment because they were styled as suits against the defendants in their individual capacities. 416 U.S., at 238, 94 S.Ct. 1683.

We again spoke with one voice against efforts to expand pleading requirements beyond their appointed limits in *Leatherman v. Tarrant County Narcotics Intelligence and Coordination Unit*, 507 U.S. 163, 113 S.Ct. 1160, 122 L.Ed.2d 517 (1993). Writing for the unanimous Court, Chief Justice Rehnquist rebuffed the Fifth Circuit’s effort to craft a standard for pleading municipal liability that accounted for “the enormous expense involved today in litigation,” *Leatherman v. Tarrant County Narcotics Intelligence and Coordination Unit*, 954 F.2d 1054, 1057 (1992) (internal quotation marks omitted), by requiring a plaintiff to “state with factual

detail and particularity the basis for the claim which necessarily includes why the defendant-official cannot successfully maintain the defense of immunity,” 507 U.S., at 167, 113 S.Ct. 1160, 122 L.Ed.2d 517, (internal quotation marks omitted). We found this language inconsistent with Rules 8(a)(2) and 9(b) and emphasized that motions to dismiss were not the place to combat discovery abuse: “In the absence of [an amendment to Rule 9(b)], federal courts and litigants must rely on summary judgment and control of discovery to weed out unmeritorious claims sooner rather than later.” *Id.*, at 168–169, 113 S.Ct. 1160.

Most recently, in *Swierkiewicz*, 534 U.S. 506, 122 S.Ct. 992, 152 L.Ed.2d 1, we were faced with a case more similar to the present one than the majority will allow. In discrimination cases, our precedents require a plaintiff at the summary judgment stage to produce either direct evidence of discrimination or, if the claim is based primarily on circumstantial evidence, to meet the shifting evidentiary burdens imposed under the framework articulated in *McDonnell Douglas Corp. v. Green*, 411 U.S. 792, 93 S.Ct. 1817, 36 L.Ed.2d 668 (1973). See, e.g., *Trans World Airlines, Inc. v. Thurston*,<sup>585</sup> 469 U.S. 111, 121, 105 S.Ct. 613, 83 L.Ed.2d 523 (1985). *Swierkiewicz* alleged that he had been terminated on account of national origin in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Second Circuit dismissed the suit on the pleadings because he had not pleaded a prima facie case of discrimination under the *McDonnell Douglas* standard.

We reversed in another unanimous opinion, holding that “under a notice pleading

system, it is not appropriate to require a plaintiff to plead facts establishing a prima facie case because the *McDonnell Douglas* framework does not apply in every employment discrimination case.” *Swierkiewicz*, 534 U.S., at 511, 122 S.Ct. 992. We also observed that Rule 8(a)(2) does not contemplate a court’s passing on the merits of a litigant’s claim at the pleading stage. Rather, the “simplified notice pleading standard” of the Federal Rules “relies on liberal discovery rules and summary judgment motions to define disputed facts and issues and to dispose of unmeritorious claims.” *Id.*, at 512, 122 S.Ct. 992; see Brief for United States et al. as *Amici Curiae* in *Swierkiewicz v. Sorema N. A.*, O.T.2001, No. 00–1853, p. 10 (stating that a Rule 12(b)(6) motion is not “an appropriate device for testing the truth of what is asserted or for determining whether a plaintiff has any evidence to back up what is in the complaint” (internal quotation marks omitted)).<sup>7</sup>

As in the discrimination context, we have developed an evidentiary framework for evaluating claims under § 1 of the Sherman Act when those claims rest on entirely circumstantial evidence of conspiracy. See *Matsushita Elec. Industrial Co. v. Zenith Radio Corp.*, 475 U.S. 574, 106 S.Ct. 1348, 89 L.Ed.2d 538 (1986). Under *Matsushita*, a plaintiff’s allegations of an illegal conspiracy may not, at the summary judgment stage, rest solely on the inferences that may be drawn from the parallel conduct of the defendants. In order to survive a Rule 56 motion, a § 1 plaintiff “must present evidence “that tends

7. See also 5 Wright & Miller § 1202, at 89–90 (“[P]leadings under the rules simply may be a general summary of the party’s position that is sufficient to advise the other party of the event being sued upon, to provide some guidance in a subsequent proceeding as to what was decided for purposes of res judicata and

collateral estoppel, and to indicate whether the case should be tried to the court or to a jury. No more is demanded of the pleadings than this; indeed, history shows that no more can be performed successfully by the pleadings” (footnotes omitted)).

to exclude the possibility' that the alleged conspirators acted independently.'" *Id.*, at 588, 106 S.Ct. 1348 (quoting *Monsanto Co. v. Spray-Rite Service Corp.*, 465 U.S. 752, 764, 104 S.Ct. 1464, 79 L.Ed.2d 775 (1984)). That is, the plaintiff "must show that the inference of conspiracy is reasonable in light of the competing inferences of independent action or collusive action." 475 U.S., at 588, 106 S.Ct. 1348.

Everything today's majority says would therefore make perfect sense if it were ruling on a Rule 56 motion for summary judgment and the evidence included nothing more than the Court has described. But it should go without saying in the wake of *Swierkiewicz* that a heightened production burden at the summary judgment stage does not translate into a heightened pleading burden at the complaint stage. The majority rejects the complaint in this case because—in light of the fact that the parallel conduct alleged is consistent with ordinary market behavior—the claimed conspiracy is "conceivable" but not "plausible," *ante*, at 1974. I have my doubts about the majority's assessment of the plausibility of this alleged conspiracy. See Part III, *infra*. But even if the majority's speculation is correct, its "plausibility" standard is irreconcilable with Rule 8 and with our governing precedents. As we made clear in *Swierkiewicz* and *Leatherman*, fear of the burdens of litigation does not justify factual conclusions supported only by lawyers' arguments rather than sworn denials or admissible evidence.

This case is a poor vehicle for the Court's new pleading rule, for we have observed that "in antitrust cases, where 'the proof is largely in the hands of the alleged conspirators,' . . . dismissals prior to giving the plaintiff ample 157 opportunity for discovery should be granted very sparingly." *Hospital Building Co. v. Trustees*

*of Rex Hospital*, 425 U.S. 738, 746, 96 S.Ct. 1848, 48 L.Ed.2d 338 (1976) (quoting *Poller v. Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc.*, 368 U.S. 464, 473, 82 S.Ct. 486, 7 L.Ed.2d 458 (1962)); see also *Knuth v. Erie-Crawford Dairy Cooperative Assn.*, 395 F.2d 420, 423 (C.A.3 1968) ("The 'liberal' approach to the consideration of antitrust complaints is important because inherent in such an action is the fact that all the details and specific facts relied upon cannot properly be set forth as part of the pleadings"). Moreover, the fact that the Sherman Act authorizes the recovery of treble damages and attorney's fees for successful plaintiffs indicates that Congress intended to encourage, rather than discourage, private enforcement of the law. See *Radovich v. National Football League*, 352 U.S. 445, 454, 77 S.Ct. 390, 1 L.Ed.2d 456 (1957) ("Congress itself has placed the private antitrust litigant in a most favorable position . . . In the face of such a policy this Court should not add requirements to burden the private litigant beyond what is specifically set forth by Congress in those laws"). It is therefore more, not less, important in antitrust cases to resist the urge to engage in armchair economics at the pleading stage.

The same year we decided *Conley*, Judge Clark wrote, presciently,

"I fear that every age must learn its lesson that special pleading cannot be made to do the service of trial and that live issues between active litigants are not to be disposed of or evaded on the paper pleadings, i.e., the formalistic claims of the parties. Experience has found no quick and easy short cut for trials in cases generally *and antitrust cases in particular*." Special Pleading in the "Big Case"? in *Procedure—The Handmaid of Justice* 147, 148 (C. Wright & H. Reasoner eds.1965) (hereinafter

Clark, Special Pleading in the Big Case) (emphasis added).

<sup>588</sup>In this “Big Case,” the Court succumbs to the temptation that previous Courts have steadfastly resisted.<sup>8</sup> While the majority assures us that it is not applying any “heightened” pleading standard, see *ante*, at 1973, n. 14, I shall now explain why I have a difficult time understanding its opinion any other way.

### III

The Court does not suggest that an agreement to do what the plaintiffs allege would be permissible under the antitrust laws, see, e.g., *Associated Gen. Contractors of Cal., Inc. v. Carpenters*, 459 U.S. 519, 526–527, 103 S.Ct. 897, 74 L.Ed.2d 723 (1983). Nor does the Court hold that these plaintiffs have failed to allege an injury entitling them to sue for damages under those laws, see *Brunswick Corp. v. Pueblo Bowl-O-Mat, Inc.*, 429 U.S. 477, 489–490, 97 S.Ct. 690, 50 L.Ed.2d 701 (1977). Rather, the theory on which the Court permits<sup>589</sup> dismissal is that, so far as the Federal Rules are concerned, no agreement has been alleged at all. This is a mind-boggling conclusion.

8. Our decision in *Dura Pharmaceuticals, Inc. v. Broudo*, 544 U.S. 336, 125 S.Ct. 1627, 161 L.Ed.2d 577 (2005), is not to the contrary. There, the plaintiffs failed adequately to allege loss causation, a required element in a private securities fraud action. Because it alleged nothing more than that the prices of the securities the plaintiffs purchased were artificially inflated, the *Dura* complaint failed to “provid[e] the defendants with notice of what the relevant economic loss might be or of what the causal connection might be between that loss and the [alleged] misrepresentation.” *Id.*, at 347, 125 S.Ct. 1627. Here, the failure the majority identifies is not a failure of notice—which “notice pleading” rightly condemns—but rather a failure to satisfy the Court that the agreement alleged might plausibly have occurred. That being a question not of *notice* but of *proof*, it should not be

answered without first hearing from the defendants (as apart from their lawyers).  
As the Court explains, prior to the enactment of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 the law prohibited the defendants from competing with each other. The new statute was enacted to replace a monopolistic market with a competitive one. The Act did not merely require the regional monopolists to take affirmative steps to facilitate entry to new competitors, see *Verizon Communications Inc. v. Law Offices of Curtis V. Trinko, LLP*, 540 U.S. 398, 402, 124 S.Ct. 872, 157 L.Ed.2d 823 (2004); it also permitted the existing firms to compete with each other and to expand their operations into previously forbidden territory. See 47 U.S.C. § 271. Each of the defendants decided not to take the latter step. That was obviously an extremely important business decision, and I am willing to presume that each company acted entirely independently in reaching that decision. I am even willing to entertain the majority’s belief that any agreement among the companies was unlikely. But the plaintiffs allege in three places in their complaint, ¶¶ 4, 51, 64, App. 11, 27, 30, that the ILECs did in fact agree both to prevent competitors from entering into their local markets and to forgo competition with each other. And as the Court

answered without first hearing from the defendants (as apart from their lawyers).

Similarly, in *Associated Gen. Contractors of Cal., Inc. v. Carpenters*, 459 U.S. 519, 103 S.Ct. 897, 74 L.Ed.2d 723 (1983), in which we also found an antitrust complaint wanting, the problem was not that the injuries the plaintiffs alleged failed to satisfy some threshold of plausibility, but rather that the injuries *as alleged* were not “the type that the antitrust statute was intended to forestall.” *Id.*, at 540, 103 S.Ct. 897; see *id.*, at 526, 103 S.Ct. 897 (“As the case comes to us, we must assume that the Union can prove the facts alleged in its amended complaint. It is not, however, proper to assume that the Union can prove facts that it has not alleged or that the defendants have violated the antitrust laws in ways that have not been alleged”).

recognizes, at the motion to dismiss stage, a judge assumes “that all the allegations in the complaint are true (even if doubtful in fact).” *Ante*, at 1965.

The majority circumvents this obvious obstacle to dismissal by pretending that it does not exist. The Court admits that “in form a few stray statements in the complaint speak directly of agreement,” but disregards those allegations by saying that “on fair reading these are merely legal conclusions resting on the prior allegations” of parallel conduct. *Ante*, at 1970. The Court’s dichotomy between factual allegations and “legal conclusions” is the stuff of a bygone era, *supra*, at 1976–1977. That distinction was a defining feature of code pleading, see generally Clark, *The Complaint in* §590 *Code Pleading*, 35 *Yale L.J.* 259 (1925–1926), but was conspicuously abolished when the Federal Rules were enacted in 1938. See *United States v. Employing Plasterers Assn. of Chicago*, 347 U.S. 186, 188, 74 S.Ct. 452, 98 L.Ed. 618 (1954) (holding, in an antitrust case, that the Government’s allegations of effects on interstate commerce must be taken into account in deciding whether to dismiss the complaint “[w]hether these charges be called ‘allegations of fact’ or ‘mere conclusions of the pleader’”); *Brownlee v. Conine*, 957 F.2d 353, 354 (C.A.7 1992) (“The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure establish a system of notice pleading rather than of fact pleading, . . . so the happenstance that a complaint is ‘conclusory,’ whatever exactly that over-

used lawyers’ cliché means, does not automatically condemn it”); *Walker Distributing Co. v. Lucky Lager Brewing Co.*, 323 F.2d 1, 3–4 (C.A.9 1963) (“[O]ne purpose of Rule 8 was to get away from the highly technical distinction between statements of fact and conclusions of law . . .”); *Oil, Chemical & Atomic Workers Int’l Union v. Delta*, 277 F.2d 694, 697 (C.A.6 1960) (“Under the notice system of pleading established by the Rules of Civil Procedure, . . . the ancient distinction between pleading ‘facts’ and ‘conclusions’ is no longer significant”); 5 *Wright & Miller* § 1218, at 267 (“[T]he federal rules do not prohibit the pleading of facts or legal conclusions as long as fair notice is given to the parties”). “Defendants entered into a contract” is no more a legal conclusion than “defendant negligently drove,” see Form 9; *supra*, at 1977. Indeed it is less of one.<sup>9</sup>

§591 Even if I were inclined to accept the Court’s anachronistic dichotomy and ignore the complaint’s actual allegations, I would dispute the Court’s suggestion that any inference of agreement from petitioners’ parallel conduct is “implausible.” Many years ago a truly great economist perceptively observed that “[p]eople of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices.” A. Smith, *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, in 39 *Great Books of the Western World* 55 (R. Hutchins & M. Adler eds. 1952). I am not so cynical as to accept that sentiment at face value, but I need not do so here. Respondents’ complaint

9. The Court suggests that the allegation of an agreement, even if credited, might not give the notice required by Rule 8 because it lacks specificity. *Ante*, at 1970–1971, n. 10. The remedy for an allegation lacking sufficient specificity to provide adequate notice is, of course, a Rule 12(e) motion for a more definite statement. See *Swierkiewicz v. Sorema N. A.*, 534 U.S. 506, 514, 122 S.Ct. 992, 152

L.Ed.2d 1 (2002). Petitioners made no such motion and indeed have conceded that “[o]ur problem with the current complaint is not a lack of specificity, it’s quite specific.” Tr. of Oral Arg. 14. Thus, the fact that “the pleadings mentioned no specific time, place, or persons involved in the alleged conspiracies,” *ante*, at 1971, n. 10, is, for our purposes, academic.

points not only to petitioners' numerous opportunities to meet with each other, Complaint ¶ 46, App. 23,<sup>10</sup> but also to Notebaert's curious statement that encroaching on a fellow incumbent's territory "might be a good way to turn a quick dollar but that doesn't make it right," *id.*, ¶ 42, App. 22. What did he mean by that? One possible (indeed plausible) inference is that he meant that while it would be in his company's economic self-interest to compete with its brethren, he had agreed with his competitors not to do so. According to the complaint, that is how the Illinois Coalition for Competitive Telecom construed Notebaert's statement, *id.*, ¶ 44, App. 22 (calling the statement "evidence of potential collusion among regional Bell phone monopolies to not compete<sup>592</sup> against one another and kill off potential competitors in local phone service"), and that is how Members of Congress construed his company's behavior, *id.*, ¶ 45, App. 23 (describing a letter to the Justice Department requesting an investigation into the possibility that the ILECs' "very apparent non-competition policy" was coordinated).

Perhaps Notebaert meant instead that competition would be sensible in the short term but not in the long run. That's what his lawyers tell us anyway. See Brief for Petitioners 36. But I would think that no

one would know better what Notebaert meant than Notebaert himself. Instead of permitting respondents to ask Notebaert, however, the Court looks to other quotes from that and other articles and decides that what he meant was that entering new markets as a competitive local exchange carrier would not be a "sustainable economic model." *Ante*, at 1972–1973, n. 13. Never mind that—as anyone ever interviewed knows—a newspaper article is hardly a verbatim transcript; the writer selects quotes to package his story, not to record a subject's views for posterity. But more importantly the District Court was required at this stage of the proceedings to construe Notebaert's ambiguous statement in the plaintiffs' favor.<sup>11</sup> See *Allen v. Wright*, 468 U.S. 737, 767–768, n. 1, 104 S.Ct. 3315, 82 L.Ed.2d 556 (1984) (Brennan, J., dissenting). The inference the statement supports—that simultaneous decisions by ILECs not even to attempt to poach customers from one another once the law authorized them to do<sup>593</sup> so were the product of an agreement—sits comfortably within the realm of possibility. That is all the Rules require.

To be clear, if I had been the trial judge in this case, I would not have permitted the plaintiffs to engage in massive discovery based solely on the allegations in this complaint. On the other hand, I surely would not have dismissed the complaint

10. The Court describes my reference to the allegation that the defendants belong to various trade associations as "playfully" suggesting that the defendants conspired to restrain trade. *Ante*, at 1971–1972, n. 12. Quite the contrary: An allegation that competitors meet on a regular basis, like the allegations of parallel conduct, is consistent with—though not sufficient to prove—the plaintiffs' entirely serious and unequivocal allegation that the defendants entered into an unlawful agreement. Indeed, if it were true that the plaintiffs "rest their § 1 claim on descriptions of parallel conduct and not on any independent allegation of actual agreement among the ILECs," *ante*, at 1970, there would have been no purpose in including a reference to the

trade association meetings in the amended complaint.

11. It is ironic that the Court seeks to justify its decision to draw factual inferences in the defendants' favor at the pleading stage by citing to a rule of evidence, *ante*, at 1972–1973, n. 13. Under Federal Rule of Evidence 201(b), a judicially noticed fact "must be one not subject to reasonable dispute in that it is either (1) generally known within the territorial jurisdiction of the trial court or (2) capable of accurate and ready determination by resort to sources whose accuracy cannot reasonably be questioned." Whether Notebaert's statements constitute evidence of a conspiracy is hardly beyond reasonable dispute.

without requiring the defendants to answer the charge that they “have agreed not to compete with one another and otherwise allocated customers and markets to one another.”<sup>12</sup> Complaint, ¶ 51, App. 27. Even a sworn denial of that charge would not justify a summary dismissal without giving the plaintiffs the opportunity to take depositions from Notebaert and at least one responsible executive representing each of the other defendants.

12. The Court worries that a defendant seeking to respond to this “conclusory” allegation “would have little idea where to begin.” *Ante*, at 1971, n. 10. A defendant could, of course, begin by either denying or admitting the charge.

13. The potential for “sprawling, costly, and hugely time-consuming” discovery, *ante*, at 1967, n. 6, is no reason to throw the baby out with the bathwater. The Court vastly underestimates a district court’s case-management arsenal. Before discovery even begins, the court may grant a defendant’s Rule 12(e) motion; Rule 7(a) permits a trial court to order a plaintiff to reply to a defendant’s answer, see *Crawford-El v. Britton*, 523 U.S. 574, 598, 118 S.Ct. 1584, 140 L.Ed.2d 759 (1998); and Rule 23 requires “rigorous analysis” to ensure that class certification is appropriate, *General Telephone Co. of Southwest v. Falcon*, 457 U.S. 147, 161, 102 S.Ct. 2364, 72 L.Ed.2d 740 (1982); see *In re Initial Public Offering Securities Litigation*, 471 F.3d 24 (C.A.2 2006) (holding that a district court may not certify a class without ruling that each Rule 23 requirement is met, even if a requirement overlaps with a merits issue). Rule 16 invests a trial judge with the power, backed by sanctions, to regulate pretrial proceedings via conferences and scheduling orders, at which the parties may discuss, *inter alia*, “the elimination of frivolous claims or defenses,” Rule 16(c)(1); “the necessity or desirability of amendments to the pleadings,” Rule 16(c)(2); “the control and scheduling of discovery,” Rule 16(c)(6); and “the need for adopting special procedures for managing potentially difficult or protracted actions that may involve complex issues, multiple parties, difficult legal questions, or unusual proof problems,” Rule 16(c)(12). Subsequently, Rule 26 confers broad discretion to control the combination of interrogatories, requests for admis-

Respondents in this case proposed a plan of “phased discovery” limited to the existence of the alleged conspiracy and class certification. Brief for Respondents 25–26. Two petitioners rejected the plan. *Ibid.* Whether or not respondents’ proposed plan was sensible, it was an appropriate subject for negotiation.<sup>13</sup> Given the charge in the complaint<sup>594</sup>—buttressed by the common sense of Adam Smith—I cannot say that the possibility that joint dis-

sions, production requests, and depositions permitted in a given case; the sequence in which such discovery devices may be deployed; and the limitations imposed upon them. See 523 U.S., at 598–599, 118 S.Ct. 1584. Indeed, Rule 26(c) specifically permits a court to take actions “to protect a party or person from annoyance, embarrassment, oppression, or undue burden or expense” by, for example, disallowing a particular discovery request, setting appropriate terms and conditions, or limiting its scope.

In short, the Federal Rules contemplate that pretrial matters will be settled through a flexible process of give and take, of proffers, stipulations, and stonewalls, not by having trial judges screen allegations for their plausibility *vel non* without requiring an answer from the defendant. See *Societe Internationale Pour Participations Industrielles Et Commerciales, S.A. v. Rogers*, 357 U.S. 197, 206, 78 S.Ct. 1087, 2 L.Ed.2d 1255 (1958) (“Rule 34 is sufficiently flexible to be adapted to the exigencies of particular litigation”). And should it become apparent over the course of litigation that a plaintiff’s filings bespeak an *in terrorem* suit, the district court has at its call its own *in terrorem* device, in the form of a wide array of Rule 11 sanctions. See Rules 11(b), (c) (authorizing sanctions if a suit is presented “for any improper purpose, such as to harass or to cause unnecessary delay or needless increase in the cost of litigation”); see *Business Guides, Inc. v. Chromatic Communications Enterprises, Inc.*, 498 U.S. 533, 111 S.Ct. 922, 112 L.Ed.2d 1140 (1991) (holding that Rule 11 applies to a represented party who signs a pleading, motion, or other papers, as well as to attorneys); *Atkins v. Fischer*, 232 F.R.D. 116, 126 (D.D.C.2005) (“As possible sanctions pursuant to Rule 11, the court has an arsenal of options at its disposal”).

cussions and perhaps some agreements played a role in petitioners' decisionmaking process is so implausible that dismissing the complaint before any defendant has denied the charge is preferable to granting respondents even a minimal opportunity<sup>595</sup> to prove their claims. See Clark, *New Federal Rules 977* ("[T]hrough the weapons of discovery and summary judgment we have developed new devices, with more appropriate penalties to aid in matters of *proof*, and do not need to force the pleadings to their less appropriate function").

I fear that the unfortunate result of the majority's new pleading rule will be to invite lawyers' debates over economic theory to conclusively resolve antitrust suits in the absence of any evidence. It is no surprise that the antitrust defense bar—among whom "lament" as to inadequate judicial supervision of discovery is most "common," see *ante*, at 1967—should lobby for this state of affairs. But "we must recall that their primary responsibility is to win cases for their clients, not to improve law administration for the public." Clark, *Special Pleading in the Big Case* 152. As we did in our prior decisions, we should have instructed them that their remedy was to seek to amend the Federal Rules—not our interpretation of them.<sup>14</sup> See *Swierkiewicz*, 534 U.S., at 515, 122 S.Ct. 992; *Crawford-El v. Britton*, 523 U.S. 574, 595, 118 S.Ct. 1584, 140 L.Ed.2d

759 (1998); *Leatherman*, 507 U.S., at 168, 113 S.Ct. 1160.

#### IV

Just a few weeks ago some of my colleagues explained that a strict interpretation of the literal text of statutory language<sup>596</sup> is essential to avoid judicial decisions that are not faithful to the intent of Congress. *Zuni Public School Dist. No. 89 v. Department of Education*, *ante*, p. 108, 127 S.Ct. 1534, 167 L.Ed.2d 449, (2007) (SCALIA, J., dissenting). I happen to believe that there are cases in which other tools of construction are more reliable than text, but I agree of course that congressional intent should guide us in matters of statutory interpretation. *Ante*, at 106, 127 S.Ct. 1534, 167 L.Ed.2d 449, (STEVENS, J., concurring). This is a case in which the intentions of the drafters of three important sources of law—the Sherman Act, the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure—all point unmistakably in the same direction, yet the Court marches resolutely the other way. Whether the Court's actions will benefit only defendants in antitrust treble-damages cases, or whether its test for the sufficiency of a complaint will inure to the benefit of all civil defendants, is a question that the future will answer. But that the Court has announced a significant new rule that does not even purport to respond to any

14. Given his "background in antitrust law," *ante*, at 1968, n. 6, Judge Easterbrook has recognized that the most effective solution to discovery abuse lies in the legislative and rulemaking arenas. He has suggested that the remedy for the ills he complains of requires a revolution in the rules of civil procedure:

"Perhaps a system in which judges pare away issues and focus [on] investigation is too radical to contemplate in this country—al-

though it prevailed here before 1938, when the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure were adopted. The change could not be accomplished without abandoning notice pleading, increasing the number of judicial officers, and giving them more authority . . . . If we are to rule out judge-directed discovery, however, we must be prepared to pay the piper. Part of the price is the high cost of unnecessary discovery—impositional and otherwise." *Discovery as Abuse*, 69 B.U.L.Rev. 635, 645 (1989).

congressional command is glaringly obvious.

The transparent policy concern that drives the decision is the interest in protecting antitrust defendants—who in this case are some of the wealthiest corporations in our economy—from the burdens of pretrial discovery. *Ante*, at 1966–1967. Even if it were not apparent that the legal fees petitioners have incurred in arguing the merits of their Rule 12(b) motion have far exceeded the cost of limited discovery, or that those discovery costs would burden respondents as well as petitioners,<sup>15</sup> that concern would not provide an adequate justification for this law-changing decision. For in the final analysis it is only a lack of confidence in the ability of trial judges to control discovery, buttressed by appellate judges’ independent appraisal of the plausibility of profoundly<sup>597</sup> serious factual allegations, that could account for this stark break from precedent.

If the allegation of conspiracy happens to be true, today’s decision obstructs the congressional policy favoring competition that undergirds both the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the Sherman Act itself. More importantly, even if there is abundant evidence that the allegation is untrue, directing that the case be dismissed without even looking at any of that evidence marks a fundamental—and unjustified—change in the character of pretrial practice.

Accordingly, I respectfully dissent.



15. It would be quite wrong, of course, to assume that dismissal of an antitrust case after discovery is costless to plaintiffs. See Fed. Rule Civ. Proc. 54(d)(1) (“[C]osts other

550 U.S. 609, 167 L.Ed.2d 974

LOS ANGELES COUNTY,  
CALIFORNIA, et al.

v.

Max RETTELE et al.

No. 06–605.

Decided May 21, 2007.

**Background:** Residents brought suit against city, sheriff’s department, and department officers, alleging that officers conducted unlawful and unreasonable search and detention. The United States District Court for the Central District of California, Dale S. Fischer, J., granted qualified immunity to officers on motion for summary judgment, and residents appealed. The Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, 186 Fed.Appx. 765, reversed and remanded.

**Holding:** On grant of certiorari, the Supreme Court held that officers acted reasonably while executing search warrant. Reversed.

Justice Stevens filed opinion, concurring in the judgment, with which Justice Ginsburg joined.

1. Searches and Seizures ⇌147.1

Law enforcement officers acted reasonably for Fourth Amendment purposes while executing valid warrant to search residence when they ordered naked residents out of their bed, and held them at gunpoint for one to two minutes, while they verified that no weapons were present and that other persons were not close by; although the residents were Caucasian, and the criminal suspects were African-American, based on warrant, officers be-

than attorneys’ fees shall be allowed as of course to the prevailing party unless the court otherwise directs”).