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#### TRANSMISSION DA.

#### Construction of new transmission lines is low.

Slayter ’24 [Chloe; July 30th; Communications Manager for Americans for a Clean Energy Grid; “Americans for a Clean Energy Grid and Grid Strategies Release New Report on Declining Large-Scale Transmission Construction in the U.S.”; Americans for a Clean Energy Grid; https://www.cleanenergygrid.org/fewer-new-miles-2024/] cameron

The new report reveals a contrast between transmission spending and the dwindling expansion of new infrastructure, posing significant challenges to the nation’s energy future.

Key findings from the report include:

Construction of new high-voltage transmission in the U.S. has slowed to a trickle over the past decade, with only 55 new miles built in 2023.

Projected load growth has doubled in the last year, and serving that load will require expanded transmission capacity.

Despite this decline in new construction, annual transmission spend has risen to more than $25 billion in 2023. Ninety percent of this spend is driven by reliability upgrades and the replacement of aging equipment, which does not increase delivery capacity.

The U.S. only builds 20% as much new transmission in the 2020s as it did a decade ago in the first half of the 2010s.

This trend began over a decade ago, when the average of 1,700 miles of new high-voltage transmission miles per year from 2010 to 2014 dropped to only 925 miles from 2015 to 2019, and has fallen further to an average of 350 miles per year from 2020 to 2023.

#### The AFF requires new transmission lines and gets delayed.

Miet ’24 [Hannah; October 14th; Founding Editor of The Red Deal, Commercial Real Estate Reporter for Urban Land; “Nuclear Power Makes a Comeback as Data Centers Adapt to Rising Power Demands”; Urban Land; https://urbanland.uli.org/resilience-and-sustainability/nuclear-power-makes-a-comeback-as-data-centers-adapt-to-rising-power-demands] cameron

Regulatory challenges

In the U.S., regulatory barriers can prevent green solutions from scaling. Utility grids are not connected, and renewable plants often exist far from population centers. Connecting them requires new transmission lines, but the process of getting them is plagued by lengthy schedules and delays, according to Daniel Crosby, CEO of Legend Energy Advisors.

#### That triggers permanent deforestation.

Williams ’3 [Dr. James H.; October 3rd; Professor of Applied Mechanics in the Mechanical Engineering Department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Ph.D. in Engineering from the University of Cambridge; “International Best Practices for Assessing and Reducing the Environmental Impacts of High-Voltage Transmission Lines”; Nautilus Institute; https://www.nautilus.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Env\_Best\_Practices\_Williams\_final.pdf] cameron

Transmission line construction and maintenance can lead to the permanent removal of woody vegetation and in some cases to the complete conversion of strips of forest ecosystem into bare land or land covered by completely different vegetation communities. Fragmentation, pesticide use, and invasive plant species within the right-of-way can also affect surrounding forest areas.

#### Deforestation causes extinction.

Williams ’17 [Gerardo; March 5th; Environmental Scientist and Author; “Effects of Deforestation: The Ultimate Guide to Deforestation Solutions”; Lulu Press; https://www.lulu.com/shop/gerardo-williams/effects-of-deforestation-the-ultimate-guide-to-deforestation-solutions/ebook/product-1wr4r957.html?srsltid=AfmBOop1KzT4pKXshKnSmDOe1JWOItGBE2G7CSFjEyuyfJB3Y2LtAXzc&page=1&pageSize=4] cameron

Deforestation introduces numerous community and environmental harms. The abrupt and irreversible consequences of worldwide deforestation are guaranteed to jeopardize the existence of Earth. The domino effect of deforestation includes: extinction of the biodiversity; the annihilation of the indigenous people (local inhabitants of the area); and a global change in climate. One wrong move can lead us all to an empty and meaningless world. The consequence of deforestation is claimed to be a domino effect because one step to destroying nature will cause the deaths or extinction of many more species. After the death of animal and plant life is the partial loss of human life through poverty and pollution. If things pursue this way, human extinction could also be inevitable. The years are counting, and each day of that year trees are being felled and lands are being abolished of the natural wonders. If the world used to be a better and cleaner place to live in, then we can definitely start to relive those days now. The only known way to halt this is to put a stop to every cause of deforestation. Regardless of the pros and cons of deforestation, we must only think of one thing, and that is reviving nature while it is still possible to be saved. While there is only an ample amount of time left, we would need it to rebuild nature and stop its total destruction.

#### HVT build-out spikes electricity prices far before any benefits could be achieved.

McNamee ’24 [Bernard; March 14th; former commissioner of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, B.A. from the University of Virginia, J.D. from Emory University School of Law; “Electric Transmission Buildout Could Cost Americans Trillions of Dollars”; Real Clear Energy; https://www.realclearenergy.org/articles/2024/03/14/electric\_transmission\_buildout\_could\_cost\_americans\_trillions\_of\_dollars\_1018392.html; error corrected] cameron

Though windmills and solar panels get the headlines, the big energy topic in Washington is electric transmission. Whether it is Congress’s newfound interest in permitting reform, the U.S. Department of Energy’s new Grid Deployment Office, or the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s (FERC) upcoming final rule on transmission planning and cost allocation, how to build and pay for long-range transmission to connect generators to customers is considered the final piece in the quest to meet net-zero goals.

Like so many issues in Washington, the need for more transmission lines is accepted without question and the costs are not considered. But for American consumers, especially low-income and elderly, as well as small businesses and energy intense manufacturers, building new transmission lines could result in much higher monthly bills and leave them on the hook for stranded assets.

Traditionally, high-voltage transmission lines, consisting of 150-foot lattice towers crossing the landscape for hundreds of miles, were planned for by local utilities to meet their customers’ energy needs and subject to approval by state public utility commissions. But public policy goals to promote renewables are changing how the grid is being developed.

Over the past few years, States established renewable energy mandates; Congress enacted over $1 trillion in taxpayer subsidies for renewable energy; and President Biden issued an executive order setting net-zero goals for electricity generation by 2035. To fulfill these policies, the grid needs new high-voltage transmission lines—lots of them—and they will be expensive.

According to the “Net-Zero America” analysis published by Princeton researchers, achieving net zero goals with 100% wind and solar by 2050 will require an additional $3.5 trillion in capital spending for new transmission lines. If net-zero goals are pursued with a mix of renewables, nuclear, and natural gas generation (which may include carbon capture), then a significant portion of this transmission investment would be unnecessary. Furthermore, a balanced resource mix of dispatchable and renewable resources would enhance grid reliability without overbuilding renewables or transmission.

Contributing to the cost is that renewable projects are often built far away from where the electricity will be consumed. For example, the Midwest is a great place to build windmills, but long-distance transmission lines are needed to deliver their electricity to big population centers on coasts. Not only are these lines capital intensive, but they also require purchasing or condemning private property to site them. Adding insult to injury, many of these transmission lines will not serve the people whose land is used.

Renewable power developers see the potential for selling their electricity in higher priced power systems near urban centers, while also being able to harvest generous taxpayer subsidies. But having to pay for transmission cuts into profits. Furthermore, property owners impacted by the transmission lines are objecting. The solution: a wave of lobbyists and special interests pressing policy makers to eliminate permitting barriers and to socialize the $3.5 trillion cost of building new transmission lines to more Americans.

In response, FERC is engaged in a rulemaking to change transmission planning and cost allocation. Among the proposals is requiring grid planners to consider factors like “geographic zones”, such as wind potential in the Midwest; state and federal “public policy goals”; and “trends” in technology. If adopted, these factors would provide more subjective ways to justify building big, expensive, long-range transmission projects that would be paid for by a broader number of Americans.

With public concerns about costs, transmission advocates now argue that more transmission is needed for grid reliability. Yet, the threat of blackouts is the result of the very net-zero policies that now require more transmission. For example, Maryland’s recent decision to shut down the Brandon Shores coal plant will cause customers across 12 states and the District of Columbia to pay $796 million for new transmission projects to support reliability.

Customers may also be left paying for transmission projects that are no longer needed. New technology, such as small modular nuclear reactors that can be built at existing power plants that already have transmission access, may negate the need for new transmission lines to serve renewable generators. The current push for transmission reform may be another expensive example of Washington trying to solve yesterday’s problem. This is not mere speculation, since 2008 customers have paid $250 million for the PATH transmission line that crossed three states, even though it was never built and never served customers.

It is time for policy makers to reaffirm that the electric grid exists to serve customers, not developers and investors. Transmission planning and cost allocation should be driven by the needs of customers and overseen by the state regulators who are best suited to protect their citizens. At a time when inflation is making it tougher for families and businesses to thrive, imposing additional costs for transmission buildouts for special interests makes little sense.

#### High electricity prices enable China to leapfrog American AI leadership.

Loyola ’24 [Mario; February 12th; Senior Research Fellow for Environmental Policy and Regulation at The Heritage Foundation, J.D. from Washington University School of Law; “High Electricity Prices Have Europe Facing Deindustrialization; Don’t Let It Happen Here”; Heritage Foundation; https://www.heritage.org/energy/commentary/high-electricity-prices-have-europe-facing-deindustrialization-dont-let-it-happen]

Rising electricity prices could not come at a worse time. The revolution in artificial intelligence heralds a new age in America’s technological dominance, but only if America can keep its electricity prices low. The power requirements of AI are staggering. In 2021, Google alone consumed 18 terawatt-hours of electricity, more than many of the world’s nations. According to John Henessy, chairman of Google’s parent company Alphabet, a Google search assisted by AI can consume 10 times more electricity than a normal Google search. Powered by AI, Google’s energy consumption could triple by 2027.

Rising electricity prices bode ill for the competition with China. While U.S. electricity prices have soared since Biden’s inauguration, China’s prices have kept steady at a level about 31 percent below ours, and will likely decrease as the country continues building coal-fired power plants at a frenetic pace. China’s tech industry is quickly catching up to America’s and could meet Chinese premier Xi Jinping’s stated goal of surpassing the U.S. by 2030.

America has been at the forefront of every major technological innovation since the Industrial Revolution began, a major reason the U.S. became the world’s superpower. Part of the reason has been abundant energy supply. But that era could be coming to an end.

#### Extinction.

Yadav ’23 [Gaurav; December; Lead of the Bristol AI Safety Centre, LLB candidate at the University of Bristol; Robert Reason; M.A. in Research Psychology and Economics, Researcher at Rethink Wellbeing; “Evaluating Taiwan's Tactics to Safeguard its Semiconductor Assets Against a Chinese Invasion”; Bristol AI Safety Centre; https://bristolaisafety.org/assets/files/taiwan-2bfcc399939f0566c45b2dd5516d5a3b.pdf]

Control of TSMC could serve dual purposes for China. Economically, it would likely strengthen China's technological infrastructure, spurring advancements that could 9 drive economic growth. Politically, superior AI models could amplify China's influence globally, intensifying competitive dynamics with the United States. Potential effects include:

a) Intensified US-China rivalry, as both nations race to develop increasingly advanced AI systems, escalating geopolitical tensions. These tensions would have likely already been amplified by starting the invasion.

b) Higher accident risk from Western countries that try to outpace China if China seems competitive in developing transformative AI systems.

c) Existential risks from China rapidly developing powerful and potentially misaligned AI without sufficient safeguards.

d) Regulatory lag, as China may struggle to enact adequate regulations given the pace of AI advancement enabled by its semiconductor capabilities.

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#### The fifty states should substantially increase investment in domestic nuclear energy

#### States solve better, they have the experience and expertise, and avoids future rollbacks and legal loopholes.

Farber 21 [Daniel Farber, Sho Sato Professor of Law and Faculty Director of the Center for Law, Energy, and the Environment, 6-23-2021, "State Governmental Leadership in U.S. Climate Policy," Wilson Center, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/state-governmental-leadership-us-climate-policy] [accessed 11-17-2023] lydia+pT

States have pioneered policies for energy storage, electric vehicles, energy efficiency standards for appliance and buildings, low carbon fuel standards, and emissions trading. State emission reductions were all the more important under Presidents Bush and Trump, when the federal government abandoned the effort to reduce emissions and promoted production of fossil fuels. As soon as President Trump announced his intent to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, the governors of New York and California announced the formation of the U.S. Climate Alliance along with their intentions to comply with the United States’ emissions reduction commitment under the Paris Agreement. States that committed to upholding the U.S. pledge have cut their emissions 17 percent below their 2005 level (not including temporary 2020 reductions due to the pandemic.)

It is likely that many states will remain ahead of the nation as a whole for years to come, meaning that their emission cuts will continue to augment national efforts. An enormous amount of time, effort, and expertise have gone into shaping policies, with California and a few other states in the lead. These states have learned a lot about what works and what doesn’t. They have developed roadmaps for drastic reductions of emissions in coming decades that can provide models for developing federal policies.

Despite the tradition of federal exclusivity in international affairs, states like California have also played important roles beyond U.S. borders. Through their commitments and actions, they sent a strong signal that important parts of American society were still committed to climate progress. Actions taken under the Trump administration have left other countries uneasy about future American commitments. They would surely be far more uneasy if the only message received during the Trump years had been from Trump himself.

Through evaluation of state programs, the provision of financing, and improved coordination, the federal government could fully leverage these state efforts to augment federal climate efforts. Evaluation of state efforts could guide federal policy development. The federal government should fund more systematic efforts to measure what has and hasn’t worked for states. It could also provide financial supports for innovative state programs, and provide a clearer sense of what types of state experiments would be particularly useful.  On the international side, the federal government could make more conscious use of the “state channel” to augment its own efforts to reduce emissions.

The Scope and Ambition of State Policy

Although a few states like California and New York tend to draw the most attention, efforts to address climate change and promote renewable energy are widespread. The majority of states have adopted renewable portfolio standards, which require that a certain percentage of electricity sold by each utility come from renewable sources. States also took the lead in setting a price on carbon. In addition to the better-known California program, a consortium of states in the northeast and mid-Atlantic states have formed an emissions trading system. (An emissions trading program sets a ceiling on the amount of total amount of emissions—the “cap”—and establishes a market in which firms can trade the right to emit specified amounts—the “trade”) The state of Washington is now on the cusp of launching its own emissions trading system, a modified version of California’s system.

California legislation focusing specifically on climate change dates back to a 1988 law mandating an inventory of California greenhouse gas emissions. California’s climate efforts have steadily increased over time. In 2002, the state took advantage of an exception to federal preemption of emissions standards for new cars by enacting legislation requiring reduction of CO2 emissions. This was almost a decade before the federal government adopted similar rules. In 2006, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed the California Global Warming Solutions Act, usually referred to as AB 32, which required California to reduce emissions to the 1990 level by 2020. AB 32 created a cap-and-trade program to achieve this goal. Later legislation requires a 40 percent cut below 1990 levels by 2030. California law also mandates that the state get 60 percent of all electricity from renewable sources by 2030 and 100 percent from carbon-free sources by 2045. Another notable measure is the Low Carbon Fuel Standard, which regulates vehicle fuels sold in the state based on their total carbon emissions—from production through combustion—and has helped jump-start the country’s electric vehicle market.

These policies are part of a suite of climate changes measures adopted by the state. Recent California governors, both Republicans and Democrats, have helped pave the way for these policies with ambitious executive orders setting targets for emission reduction, internal combustion engine phase-out, and state carbon neutrality.

State efforts have accelerated despite heavy headwinds at times from Washington. Between Trump’s election and the end of 2018, six states, including California and New York, made binding commitments to 100 percent renewable or carbon-free power by 2050 or even earlier.  In 2018, after the Trump Administration had begun to roll back limits on carbon emissions and promote fossil fuels, California mandated that all new homes have solar energy and enacted a mandate for carbon-free electricity by mid-century.The same year, Washington State set goals for zero reliance on coal by 2025, a carbon-neutral grid by 2030, and total reliance on renewable energy by 2050. New Jersey’s governor signed an executive order to begin rejoining the eastern regional carbon trading system. He also signed new legislation requiring one-third renewable power by 2025 and 50 percent by 2030, with special provisions to encourage solar and offshore wind. State efforts accelerated further after 2018.

Clearly, the drive toward climate action at the state level was strong enough to survive the adverse national political climate. Indeed, states like California and New York were very active in litigating against Trump’s regulatory rollbacks, with significant success in the courts. Just as states were not deterred by a hostile national climate, the prospect of positive federal action has not made them complacent.

Lessons Learned from State Policy

The simplest, most basic lesson to be learned from the experience of California and other states is that it is possible in the context of U.S. society to make substantial emission cuts while maintaining a dynamic economy. That is not an insignificant lesson, given the prophecies of economic doom and dire consequences of a transition from fossil fuels.

The experience of California and other states also identifies some tools that have been used with success. Unlike a carbon tax, these are tools that are within the realm of possibility in America today, although the political barriers to national adoption are not insubstantial. Emissions trading is one of those tools. Renewable portfolio standards, or more generically, clean energy standards, are another. California’s standards for new vehicles, which have been widely adopted by other states, and its low carbon fuel standard have also been successes. California achieved its 2020 emissions target four years early. California has also collected billions of dollars in revenue from the sale of emissions allowances, using the money for efforts to reduce emissions and assist disadvantaged communities. California has also adopted an incentive systems for electric vehicles and energy storage, helping to jumpstart these technologies.

The design details of these state systems are complex, resulting from years of study by state agencies with input from economists and energy modelers. National policymakers can take advantage of these hard-earned lessons in designing their own emissions reduction instruments.  California’s scoping plans have identified pathways for long-term carbon reductions based on complex energy modeling and economic analysis, combined with careful consideration of environmental and land use impacts.

National policymakers can also learn from some of the failures encountered by state policymakers. Despite its impressive general successes, not all of California’s programs have been equally successful. California’s pioneering cap-and-trade program offers a mix of lessons for national leaders: while it has generated billions of dollars for state climate investments and contributed to meeting early emission reduction targets, experts have highlighted concerns including the oversupply of allowances, price and revenue instability, and unclear capacity to drive deep emission cuts in the long term. In addition, environmental justice advocates have criticized the distribution of impacts and benefits under the state’s market-based frameworks—an issue state legislators have addressed, perhaps belatedly, through equity-focused funding and air quality programs.

These issues can be remedied. Washington State’s new trading system has profited from the California experience and adopted several improvements. California itself has adopted the Transformative Climate Communities program in order to give communities that are heavily impacted by pollution more ability to control local pollution.

Other state policies have also run into rough sledding. California’s efforts to increase urban density and combat sprawl, so as to decrease transportation emissions, have run into resistance at the local level. Local governments have used their control over land use decisions to inhibit apartment construction.  Some legislative steps, however, have begun to address this issue. Another sticking point has been retrofitting older buildings. California’s efforts to incentivize owners to retrofit buildings have been stymied by weak uptake by owners and may need to be replaced by retrofit mandates. Those problems are probably not susceptible to direct federal interventions, but the federal government needs to consider how to move state and local governments in the right direction.

States will continue to play a major role in implementing climate policy even if the federal government assumes the lead. While the federal government regulates wholesale markets and interstate transmission, states regulate power generators and local distribution of electricity. Solar and wind generation, along with electricity storage, involve siting decisions that can only be made at the state level. States will control connections between the local grid and charging stations for electrical vehicles. They and their subdivisions control urban planning and public transit, which are key to reducing transportation emissions. States have far more capacity than the federal government to work with farmers and forest owners to increase carbon sequestration. States will also continue to pioneer and test new policies before they are adopted at the federal level.

The federal government could do more to support state efforts. States need fuller access to national energy markets for their consumers and generators in order to achieve their goals.  Federal support for expanded transmission would help states reach their climate goals at much lower cost. States also need help in dealing with the problem of “carbon leakage,” when emissions restrictions in one state can result in shifting production of energy or goods to other states. Because states are small and have open borders, they are more exposed to this risk than the U.S. would be as a whole. The federal government can help protect states against leakage, and it could also give its blessing to state efforts to prevent leakage. By doing so, it could help block lawsuits claiming the anti-leakage measures overstep the boundaries of state legal authority. Finally, the federal government has technical capacity that could provide vital assistance, especially to smaller states, in performing the modeling needed to shape state policy.

#### Reasserting state sovereignty counterbalances governance failures from federal encroachment---extinction.

Mihalakas ’19 [Nasos; May 21; Global Professor of Law at the University of Arizona, LL.M. from University College London, J.D. from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law; The Federalism Project, “The Need for Governance Reform – Symptoms vs. Cause,” https://the-federalism-project.org/2019/05/21/the-need-for-governance-reform-symptoms-vs-cause/]

States

There is no doubt that we live in “challenging” times. We face ‘social challenges,’ from racial discrimination to gender inequality, women’s rights (reproductive or otherwise) that will have to be addressed, LGBTQ issues (recognition of gay marriage), a gun violence epidemic due to both inadequate gun control laws but also excessive violence in our society, etc. We also face ‘economic challenges,’ like stagnant salaries and low wages, job insecurity (due to automation or outsourcing), taxes that are too high for some and not high enough for others, mounting student debt, and yes massive income inequality. And, of course, we do face ‘external challenges’, from nuclear proliferation in the Korean peninsula, to ISIS and religiously motivated global terrorism, to global warming and climate change!

Yet, most of these issues are but symptoms of a greater cause. Their existence, or our inability to overcome them, is being caused by a much greater problem in our society that unless we address soon we risk permanent societal failures within the next 20 to 30 years.

This greater cause is our very own failing system of governance!!!

Though brilliant in its original construction by the founding fathers, our Federal system of governance (separation of powers, check and balances, separate Federal and State governments) is grossly off track and highly unbalanced. During the past 200 years , we witnessed a steady transfer of power away from the States and into the Federal government, and within the Federal government we saw a similar steady concentration of power in the hands of the Executive (the singular President), and to a certain extend the Supreme Court (due to Congressional acquiescence).

This did not happen due to some conspiracy by the ‘powerful elite’ or through interference by foreign powers. It happened gradually (almost naturally), as a response to major failures at the State level: in dealing with slavery and racial discrimination (see Civil War and Jim Crow laws in the south), in dealing with market failures and the need to regulate business and provide a safety net (see Great Depression, The New Deal and the Great Society), in fighting a Cold War with the Soviet Union (see expansion of military and intelligence services to advance US foreign policy).

Today, power and authority to deal with issues and solve problems is highly concentrated at the Federal level, away from ordinary people and their ability to monitor let alone influence elected politicians.

There is so much power concentrated at the Federal level, and in particular in the hands of one person (the President) that it makes Washington politicians constant targets of special interests and lobbying organizations, makes negotiations for compromise impossible because there is so much at stake, and it has created a highly unbalanced system (where “checks and balances” are not fully implemented and more often can’t work effectively).

Washington gridlock, dysfunction, polarization, and partisanship have led to the inability to pass a budget (balanced or otherwise), or address the need for immigration reform, or provide for adequate healthcare coverage and affordable prescription drugs, or even implement proper tax reform. Therefore, unless we address these ‘systemic’ failures of our system of governance, unless we implement institutional changes and fix the process, we will never get lasting solutions to our current and future societal challenges.

Unfortunately, there is no one thing we can do, no ‘magic bullet’ that can fix the dysfunction of our Federal system of governance (because it’s not just ‘the Federal government’ that needs reform, but also/primarily Congress and the Judiciary). Rather, there are several things (from specific process changes through laws/regulations to Constitutional amendments) that we will have to changes now, in order to see improvement in the function of our system of governance in the next 20 to 30 years.

There is a parallel example to this system of governance failures, and it’s that of ‘global warming.’  Global temperatures have been rising, due to greenhouse gases (caused by human activity – burning fossil fuels like coal and oil), presenting an existential threat to our planet and our way of life. However, fossil fuels are not inherently evil, used by certain people bent on the destruction of humanity!  Energy from fossil fuels was instrumental in facilitating the industrial revolution, which brought progress and technological innovations during the past 150 years, that helped the whole world to advance, prosper, and better connect. It was not until recently that we realized that the constantly expanding use of fossil fuels by humans is contributing to rising temperatures, and if we don’t do something now to ‘bent the curve’, then in 20 to 30 years from now temperatures will rise to levels that can be devastating to the planets ecosystem, and by extension us humans.

Concentration of power at the Federal level, over the past 200 years, though not inherently evil (downright necessary and proper during some critical periods), has reached a point of pure dysfunction. The proof of the unsustainable nature of our current system (like rising temperatures are a proof of global warming) is income inequality. During the past 50 years, we have witnessed a steady concentration of wealth at the hands of the top 10% (and primarily the top 1%).

And although one can look at our society today statically and say: “things are still ok: there are rich people and poor people, and we are still the most powerful and wealthy nation in the world – so what’s the problem?”… the trend keeps going upwards: currently over 70% of our national wealth is concentrated at the hands for the top 10%. When do we need to do something to stop this trend?  When it gets to 80%, or 90%?

Democrats and Republicans (now thanks to Donald Trump) both agree on the existence of a ‘powerful elite, in cahoots with the political establishment, bent on exploiting the middle class’… yet both party’s solution is the same: win political power and cut or raise taxes, regulate more or less, appoint some type of judges… in essence, deal with the symptoms and not the underlying cause!

If we want to address the underlying cause of income inequality (and outsourcing of jobs, health-care failures, racial tensions, education funding, women’s rights, public housing, etc.), then we need to reform our system of governance, before we can consider specific policy priorities. By fixing the legislative process, restoring proper checks, correcting the imbalance within the government branches and returning powers back to the States… we can get on a path where we see real results within the next 20 to 30 years.

Otherwise, gridlock and dysfunction at the Federal level will only get worse!

#### 1] “United States” is the federal government. That is the most predictable.

**Mitchell ’15** — Paul Andrew; BA MS, Founder of the Supreme Law Firm, previous Vice President for Legal Affairs and Counsel to an Arizona Trust, Private Attorney General, Criminal Investigator. 2015; <http://www.supremelaw.org/letters/us-v-usa.htm>; //TDI

Note also that those Articles clearly distinguished "United States of America" from "United States" in Congress assembled. The States formally delegated certain powers to the federal government, which is clearly identified in those Articles as the "United States". Therefore, the "United States of America" now refer to the 50 States of the Union, and the term "United States" refers to the federal government. The term "United States" is the term that is used consistently now throughout Title 28 to refer to the federal government domiciled in D.C. There is only ONE PLACE in all of Title 28 where the term "United States of America" is used, and there it is used in correct contradistinction to "United States": http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/28/1746.html Because Title 28 contains statutes which govern all federal courts, the consistent use of "United States" to refer to the federal government carries enormous weight. Title 28 is the latest word on this subject, as revised, codified and enacted into positive law on June 25, 1948. Moreover, the Supremacy Clause elevates Title 28 to the status of supreme Law of the Land.

#### The counterplan tests the necessity of federal action, and has a net benefit to a competitive policy option.

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#### Oil prices will skyrocket.

Kane ’24 [Jana; 11-11-2024; M.A. in Macroeconomics, Editor-in-chief of the LiteFinance trading blog; LiteFinance, “Crude Oil Price Forecast for 2024–2030 and Beyond: WTI and Brent Outlook,” https://www.litefinance.org/blog/analysts-opinions/oil-price-prediction-forecast/]

In 2025, most experts predict prices will rise to about $83–$84. The forecasts consider the ongoing conflicts in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, which will keep oil prices from falling. Besides, analysts anticipate moderate global economic growth, with oil production remaining approximately the same.

Long Forecast

Price range: $70.24 – $93.53 (as of August 14, 2024).

According to LongForecast, the WTI crude oil will slowly rise and exceed $80.00 in 2025. In the first half of the year, the rate will climb to $89.08 and then correct to $73.94. By the end of the year, the price is expected to hover around $83.37.

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CoinPriceForecast

Price range: $72.34 – $75.34 (as of August 14, 2024).

CoinPriceForecast analysts offer a more moderate outlook. The oil price will remain approximately at the current levels. Analysts expect the rate to reach $72.34 by mid-2025 and $75.34 by the end of the year. Thus, the price will trade in a narrow range, making it favorable to open positions at its boundaries.

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WalletInvestor

Price range: $76.26 – $88.77 (as of August 14, 2024).

WalletInvestor experts provide a moderate forecast for 2025, with the asset reaching its high at $88.77 and closing the year at $83.17. The maximum decline during the month will be approximately -3.1%, suggesting no major drawdowns.

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Long-Term Oil Predictions 2026–2030

Most experts anticipate the WTI oil to rise steadily until 2030. In 2028–2029, the price will trade around $115 per barrel. A moderate upward trend with correction ranges typical for this instrument is expected. However, some analysts believe the price will not change significantly and will stand at $89.63 in 2030.

Long-term forecasts do not take into account unforeseen events, such as armed conflicts or natural disasters. Investors should be aware of potential risks when making long-term investments.

Long Forecast

According to Long Forecast, WTI will rise to $114.87 by September 2028, with high volatility expected. In 2026, the quotes will fluctuate between $84.39 and $65.01 based on months' closing prices. However, starting from 2027, the rate will strengthen and reach its peak in 2028.

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CoinPriceForecast

CoinPriceForecast suggests a slow pace of the quote's growth. The price will remain almost at the same level until 2030, trading in the $70.00–$80.00 range. Periods of growth will be balanced by periods of decline. However, oil will be able to grow slightly by 2030, with experts projecting a year-end rate of around $89.63.

This forecast may come true if the geopolitical situation remains approximately the same until 2030. However, this is unlikely, given the unforeseen events of the last decade. Therefore, these estimates should be treated with caution.

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WalletInvestor

WalletInvestor estimates that the WTI rate will appreciate until August 2029. By the end of 2026, quotes will reach $90.30 and increase to $97.16 in 2027. In December 2028, the oil price will grow to $104.06 and $114.45 by August 2029. Thus, the average growth rate will amount to 9.4% per year.

#### The plan necessitates a significant decline in global demand, crushing prices. Independently, producers flood the market---turns case.

Soummane ’23 [Salaheddine and Aisha Al-Sarihi; March 21; Research Associate at the Centre for International Research on Environment and Development, Ph.D. in Economics from Paris-Saclay University; Associate Fellow of the Middle East and North Africa Program at Chatham House, Research Fellow at the National University of Singapore’s Middle East Institute, Nonresident Fellow at the Middle East Council on Global Affairs and the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington; King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center, “Impacts of Global Climate Policies on Middle Eastern Oil Exporters: A Review of Economic Implications and Mitigation Strategies,” https://www.kapsarc.org/research/publications/impacts-of-global-climate-policies-on-middle-eastern-oil-exporters-a-review-of-economic-implications-and-mitigation-strategies/]

This review of empirical studies confirms that Middle Eastern oil exporters are negatively impacted by low oil prices and require sustained oil rents. Indeed, oil rents not only support growth but also the social welfare system linking oil exporting countries’ governments to their populations (Fattouh and Sen 2021). This welfare system consists mainly of public sector employment, low taxation, and other social transfers (Hertog 2017). Welfare schemes are common in all resource-exporting countries, but they are particularly robust in oil exporting countries (Ross 2015). This redistribution of oil rents results in economic inefficiencies. Nevertheless, high oil revenues allow the GCC countries to achieve strong macroeconomic, fiscal and political stability (Elbadawi and Makdisi 2020). In turn, declining rents may create acute political instability in these countries. Bjorvatn and Naghavi (2011) show that significant declines in oil rents may significantly increase the possibility of internal conflict. Rent seeking is more likely to affect these countries when rents are less abundant.

Advanced global climate policies are expected to create risks like those associated with declining oil prices for oil exporting countries. These potential risks were first acknowledged in 1992 in Article 4.8 of the treaty that established the UNFCCC (U.N. 1992). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2014) reaffirmed that climate mitigation policies may create revenue losses for fossil fuel exporters by devaluing fossil fuel assets. Middle Eastern oil exporters are therefore viewed as opposing advances in climate negotiations (Depledge 2008). However, the global consensus regarding the need for urgent measures to reduce emissions is growing. Thus, some nations, including major oil exporters, have recently shifted from opposing climate policies to becoming more receptive to them (Al-Sarihi and Mason 2020; Ramady and Mahdi 2015).

Global climate policies to reduce overall carbon dioxide emissions and meet the PA’s objectives pose a threat to Middle Eastern oil exporters. These policies will significantly alter the outlook for oil demand and prices, putting more stress on oil exporters’ state budgets. Researchers have developed different oil demand outlooks that are in line with the PA’s objectives. Ansari, Holz and Al-Kuhlani (2019) and Dagnachew et al. (2019) provide comparative analyses of these various energy outlooks. A widely referenced demand outlook that is consistent with the PA is the Sustainable Development Scenario (SDS) created by the International Energy Agency (IEA) (2019). In this scenario, global oil demand is 35.6 million barrels per day (MMb/d) in 2040, or 32.6% lower than its level in the reference scenario. Mitigating the use of fossil fuels will significantly curtail oil demand in major importers of Middle Eastern oil (Table 2).

#### High oil prices backstop Vision 2030---a price crash escalates great power competition AND exposes the world to numerous, existential security crises.

Sadjadpour ’24 [Karim; November 2024; Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University; Foreign Affairs, “The New Battle for the Middle East,” https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/new-battle-saudi-arabia-iran-sadjadpour]

There are many Middle Eastern conflicts that could reshape the global political order. But the one most likely to do so is the battle between the region’s two dominant powers: the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Although this rivalry was once primarily viewed as an ethnic and sectarian conflict between the predominantly Sunni Arab Saudis and the Shiite Persian Iranians, the key dividing line today is ideological. The clash centers on their respective strategic visions—Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 and Iran’s Vision 1979. Each vision dictates the internal policies of its respective country, as well as how it deals with others.

Iran and Saudi Arabia are both autocratic energy titans, collectively controlling nearly a third of the world’s oil reserves and a fifth of its natural gas. Yet they are led by starkly different men with profoundly different plans. The de facto leader of Saudi Arabia, 39-year-old Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, known as MBS, wants to rapidly modernize a state long steeped in Islamist orthodoxy and move it away from its dependence on fossil fuel production. He created Vision 2030 to achieve those ends. The longtime leader of Iran, 85-year-old Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, remains dedicated to the ideological principles of Iran’s Islamist revolution. Khamenei does not call his plan Vision 1979. But the name can still aptly be applied, since his vision is all about preserving the Iranian Revolution’s ruthless commitment to theocracy.

These two countries are historic rivals with irreconcilable goals. Vision 2030 appeals to national aspirations, whereas Vision 1979 taps into national grievances. Vision 2030 seeks a security alliance with the United States and normalization with Israel; Vision 1979 is premised on resisting the former and eradicating the latter. Vision 2030 is propelled by social liberalization; Vision 1979 is anchored in social repression.

Although they harbor enormous mutual mistrust, Iran and Saudi Arabia are unlikely to fight each other directly. Tehran and Riyadh struck a 2023 agreement to normalize relations, lowering bilateral tensions. Their greatest challenge thus lies not in confronting each other but in addressing their internal struggles. And here, both have plenty to grapple with.

The Islamic Republic of Iran’s problems are obvious. The country resembles the late-stage Soviet Union, economically and ideologically bankrupt and reliant on brutality for its survival. Beyond its borders, however, Tehran is more powerful than ever before in its modern history. Iranian-backed proxies and militias dominate four failing Arab states—Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen—as well as Gaza. Tehran also has an outsize effect on numerous global security issues, including nuclear proliferation, Russia’s war in Ukraine, cybersecurity, disinformation campaigns, and the weaponization of energy resources.

Saudi Arabia’s struggles are not as immediately apparent. Right now, MBS appears to enjoy widespread support for having lifted social restrictions and for his country’s strong economy. Yet the success of Vision 2030 will invariably depend on the economic viability of its gigantic projects, and it will be challenged by lofty public expectations, oil price volatility, corruption, and repression. It will also be tested by disgruntled reactionary forces. The country still has a large population of deeply conservative Islamists who are unhappy with MBS’s choices, and they could create major problems for his government. Vision 2030, then, is a high-risk, high-reward endeavor.

Whether either state will succeed in sustaining its vision is not clear. What is clear is that the fate of the two visions—one driven by change, the other defined by resistance—will have consequences that extend far beyond either country. These visions will shape not only whether the Middle East becomes more prosperous and stable but whether the whole world does, as well.

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THE LEGACY OF 1979 Saudi officials like to tell a story about their country and Iran. In the late 1960s, Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, Iran’s modernizing ruler, wrote to King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. Faisal, the shah wrote, had to liberalize Saudi Arabia. Otherwise, he might be overthrown. The king strenuously disagreed. In his response, Faisal suggested that it was Pahlavi—with his secular, more European vision for society—who was actually at risk of being deposed. “Your majesty, may I remind you, you are not the shah of France,” he wrote back, adding: “Your population is 90 percent Muslim. Please don’t forget that.’’ The king proved to be right. In Iran’s 1979 revolution, protesters deposed Pahlavi and transformed the country from a U.S.-allied monarchy into an anti-American theocracy. Although a diverse coalition of forces opposed the shah, the man who emerged as the leader of the revolution, the 76-year-old Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, believed that Western political and cultural influence posed an existential threat to Iran and Islamic civilization. “All the things they used to pervert our youth were gifts from the West,” the cleric said. “Their plan was to devise the means to pervert both our men and our women, to corrupt them and thus prevent them from their human development.” Khomeini died a decade later, but his successor, Khamenei, has kept his vision alive. As it happened, 1979 was also a pivotal year for Saudi Arabia. Islamist radicals, believing the Saudi royal family had strayed from the path of true Islam, seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca, helping to plunge the monarchy into an existential crisis. Fearing that they would suffer the same fate as the shah, the Saudi government abandoned modernization efforts and redirected vast resources to reactionary forces at home and abroad. The country empowered fundamentalist clerics to exercise control over education and the judiciary, expanded the morality police, shut down movie theaters, and enforced strict gender segregation in schools and public spaces. In exporting these policies, in part with U.S. encouragement to counter the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia spent tens of billions of dollars to fund thousands of mosques as well as jihadi groups that became the antecedents of the Taliban and al Qaeda. Iran and Saudi Arabia are led by starkly different men with profoundly different plans. These policies endured for 20 years. But the 9/11 attacks on the United States in 2001—15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi nationals—and the deadly al Qaeda bombings in Riyadh in 2003 forced a course correction. Both attacks exposed a harsh reality: Islamic fundamentalism, once perceived as an asset, had evolved into a profound threat to the kingdom’s stability. The Saudi government thus attempted to turn off its financial support for external radicalism as well as embark on a costly domestic counter-radicalization campaign. “We try to transform each detainee from a young man who wants to die into a young man who wants to live,” said Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, then one of the key architects of the Saudi counterterrorism strategy, in 2007. But it was not until more than a decade later, when MBS began his ascent to power, that Saudi Arabia commenced its broader, international transformation. One of more than a dozen children born to King Salman, MBS saw an aging Saudi leadership that was overly reliant on oil and disconnected from its young society. He worried his country was falling behind Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, which were working to become transportation and trade hubs with outsize influence in business, entertainment, sports, and media. In response, MBS had the kingdom launch its own agenda, Vision 2030, aimed at opening the country economically, jettisoning Islamist restrictions, diversifying away from oil, and building a national identity. The vision’s foundational document is centered on three themes—“a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation”—and has led to real policy shifts. Beginning in 2018, Saudi women gained the right to drive and travel without a male guardian’s permission. Their presence in the country’s labor force increased significantly, including in senior government positions. The government began investing tens of billions of dollars in plans for data centers and in artificial intelligence and other types of technology. It dramatically boosted youth entertainment—nearly two-thirds of Saudis are under 30—with Formula 1 races, wrestling tournaments, and the recruitment of soccer stars such as Cristiano Ronaldo. New tourist rules were introduced to encourage foreign visitors to explore the country and bring in revenue.

**<<PARAGRAPH BREAKS RESUME>>**

So far, these efforts have had mixed results. Saudi Arabia has been among the world’s fastest-growing major economies in the last several years, with significant growth in non-oil sectors. Yet growth figures are still often tied to the price of oil. Similarly, the Saudi Ministry of Investment has estimated that foreign direct investment increased by over 150 percent from 2017 to 2023. One Saudi businessman, however, told me that “non-oil FDI has gone nowhere.”

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TWO MEN, TWO VISIONS Vision 1979 and Vision 2030 reflect the personalities of Khamenei and MBS. The two men are arguably the most powerful individuals in today’s Middle East, but they have vastly different visions and leadership styles—the former’s based on historic grievances, and the latter’s on modern ambitions. These differences are clear in their animosity toward each other. MBS has called Khamenei the “new Hitler of the Middle East,” and Khamenei has derided MBS as a “criminal” whose “inexperience” will lead to Saudi Arabia’s downfall. Both have unique backstories. Khamenei was born into a clerical family of modest means, was educated in a Shiite seminary, and spent his formative years as a revolutionary agitator (including several as a political prisoner). Had the Iranian Revolution never happened, he would have been destined for the life of a humble cleric. Instead, he was catapulted to power, becoming Iran’s president in 1981 and supreme leader in 1989. His hypervigilance, born of profound insecurity, has been one of the keys to his longevity. Despite widespread popular discontent and a state of near-permanent external crisis, Khamenei has not deviated from the revolutionary ideals of his mentor, Khomeini. The ideological pillars of Iran’s Vision 1979 remain as they were then: “Death to America, Death to Israel,” as Khamenei’s supporters often chant, and the mandatory veiling of women, which Khomeini once referred to as “the flag of the Islamic Revolution.” In stark contrast, MBS was born into immense wealth as a son of one of the world’s richest men, King Salman bin Abdulaziz. Although MBS was born after 1979, he said that the radicalism spawned that year “hijacked” Islam as a religion. He aspires for his people to achieve modernity rather than martyrdom. “We will not waste 30 years of our lives dealing with extremist ideas,” he once declared. “We will destroy them today.’’ This decisiveness has sometimes led to grave misjudgments, including the brutal 2018 murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi and the devasting war in Yemen. Yet the crown prince has retained the confidence of much of young Saudi society and the momentum of Vision 2030. One of the most important differences between the Saudi vision and the Iranian one relates to social freedoms. Iranians had long looked down on their Gulf Arab neighbors. Khomeini once referred to the House of Saud as “the followers of the camel grazers of Riyadh and the barbarians of Najd, the most infamous and the wildest members of the human family,” and he denounced them in his last will and testament. No matter how reactionary their regime was, Iranians may have taken some comfort in having more social freedoms than Saudis. But this is no longer the case. The world’s most famous musicians regularly perform in Saudi Arabia, including top Iranian singers whose music is banned in their homeland. Tens of millions of Iranians get their news from Iran International, a Saudi-backed Persian-language satellite news channel. After a 35-year ban, Saudi Arabia reopened movie theaters in 2018. Social media apps are widely available. The country has welcomed more tourists than ever before, while Iran has doubled down on the practice of taking foreigners (often Iranian dual nationals) as hostages. The difference between the two plans is particularly stark when it comes to the treatment of women. Although Saudi women, once hidden from public life, continue to lag on indices of equality, the advances they have made under MBS are real and significant. Iranian women are better educated than their male counterparts and have often risen to the top of their professions. Yet they are among the few in the world who face more restrictions today than their grandmothers did five decades ago, before the Islamic Revolution. This imbalance erupted during Iran’s 2022 to 2023 “Women, Life, Freedom” protests, which were triggered by the death in police custody of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman. She had been arrested for allegedly wearing her hijab improperly. CRUDE POWER The most dramatic difference in outcomes between Vision 2030 and Vision 1979, however, is in the effect on each state’s economy. Saudi Arabia has used its energy production to fuel its strategic vision. As a result, the Saudis are far richer than their Iranian counterparts by virtually every metric. Saudi Arabia has more than twice the GDP of Iran despite having less than half its population. Iran’s annual inflation rate is consistently among the world’s highest, and Saudi Arabia’s is around two percent. Riyadh has over $450 billion in foreign currency reserves, around 20 times what Tehran possesses. There are many reasons for Iran’s terrible economic performance. But they all relate to Vision 1979. Thanks to its hostility toward the West, Iran has come under heavy sanctions that have crippled its foreign currency holdings and made it hard to sell its main two commodities, oil and gas. In 1978, the year before the revolution, Iran was producing almost six million barrels of oil per day, roughly five million of which were exported. Since the revolution, Iranian production and exports have averaged less than half these amounts. Although Iran has the world’s second-largest reserves of natural gas, after Russia, it does not rank among the world’s top 15 exporters. And Tehran has sought to use the energy resources it does have as a weapon. In the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Iranian officials repeatedly reminded an energy-strapped Europe that “winter is coming’’ to try to threaten the continent’s leaders into acceding to Tehran’s nuclear demands. Yet the greatest tragedy of Vision 1979 for Iran has been the waste not of its natural resources but of its human resources. In 2014, Iran’s minister of science and technology claimed that the country’s annual brain drain—estimated at 150,000 people leaving annually—cost the economy a staggering $150 billion every year, more than four times its oil revenue from 2023. In contrast, most of the estimated 70,000 Saudi students studying abroad return home when their studies are finished. Vision 1979 often sees its country’s educated minds as a threat, but Vision 2030 treats them as an asset. Saudi Arabia has spent heavily on ambitious plans to modernize its economy, such as on the introduction of smart cities. That includes its Neom project, focused on creating a large urban area in the desert that could transform the kingdom into a global technology hub and drive economic diversification. Although both governments have built strong surveillance states, Tehran’s technology innovations and investments have been employed mostly to repress its people, arm its proxies, and attack its enemies. ORDER VS. DISORDER Saudi Vision 2030 has clearly outperformed Iran’s Vision 1979 in advancing the economic well-being and satisfaction of citizens. But when it comes to international influence, the story is very different. The Middle East’s regional power vacuums and chronic instability are threats to Vision 2030, yet they have been boons to Vision 1979. This difference makes sense. Vision 2030 is contingent on building, whereas Vision 1979 is content with destroying. The power vacuums and instability caused by the Lebanese civil war, the Iraq war, and the 2011 Arab Spring have thus all furthered Iranian ambitions, and Iranian influence has in turn deepened the disorder and chaos across the Arab world. Although opinion polls have suggested that Saudi Arabia enjoys significantly more popular support than Iran in the Arab world, including in countries where Iran wields the most influence, Riyadh’s efforts to counter Tehran’s ambitions—using hard power, soft power, or financial co-optation—have largely failed. Over the last two decades, Iran and Saudi Arabia have been on opposing sides of the deadliest conflicts in the Middle East. The two have backed rival groups in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, as well as in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. In each of these arenas, Iranian-backed hard power prevailed. Saudi Arabia has largely opted out or been defeated. The most humiliating of these defeats was in Yemen. Between 2015 and 2019, Riyadh spent over $200 billion on a military intervention to counter the power grab of the Iranian-backed Houthis. That intervention contributed to tens of thousands of civilian deaths. Yet it failed to weaken the group. Today, the Houthis, whose slogans wish death to America and Israel, not only remain entrenched in power but have also bottlenecked the global economy, diverting an estimated $200 billion in trade by harassing ships in the Red Sea (ostensibly to protest Israel’s war in Gaza). As the Middle East’s lone theocracy, Iran uses Islamist radicalism as an asset. Virtually all Shiite radicals, from Lebanon to Pakistan, are willing to fight for Iran. Meanwhile, most Sunni radicals, including al Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, also known as ISIS, seek to overthrow the government of Saudi Arabia despite its Sunni lineage. In fact, Tehran has proved willing and able to work with Sunni radical groups that share its opposition to Israel and the United States. The current head of al Qaeda, Saif al-Adel, has resided mostly in Iran for two decades. Israel is one of the biggest international points of contention between the two countries. Vision 2030 is open to normalization with Israel, whereas Vision 1979 is opposed to Israel’s very existence. Iran was the lone country in the world that explicitly praised Hamas’s invasion of Israel on October 7, 2023. Although it remains unclear to what extent Tehran was involved in the planning of the operation, Iran funds most of Hamas’s military budget, so U.S. officials have said Tehran is “broadly complicit.” The attack succeeded in delaying, and perhaps sabotaging, a Saudi-Israeli normalization agreement. FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES The outside countries that will likely play the greatest role in determining the fate of these two visions are the United States and China. Vision 2030 needs Washington as an ally, but Vision 1979 wants it as an adversary. Vision 2030 is contingent on U.S. security support, while Vision 1979 cannot survive without Chinese economic support. An estimated 90 percent of Iranian oil exports are bound for China.

**<<PARAGRAPH BREAKS RESUME>>**

Given Iran’s economic and strategic dependence on China, any U.S. strategy to counter Tehran’s nuclear and regional ambitions will probably require some collaboration with Beijing. There is reason to believe that such cooperation is possible despite Beijing and Washington’s global competition. China and the United States ultimately have common interests in the region: namely, political stability and the free flow of trade and energy. (Russia, by contrast, benefits from regional instability and tumult in the oil markets.)

Yet the United States ultimately has even more in common with Saudi Arabia. American liberals may historically be deeply ambivalent about the country, but the United States’ great-power competition with China and Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine changed Washington’s perceptions. Once seen as a problematic partner, Saudi Arabia is now viewed as a coveted ally. The possibility of a historic Israeli-Saudi normalization agreement under the umbrella of a U.S.-Saudi defense treaty ratified by the Senate will likely remain a signature aspiration of any future American administration, Democratic or Republican.

In the current environment, however, the domestic political costs to Saudi Arabia of a normalization deal with Israel could outweigh the benefits of a U.S. security umbrella. A public opinion poll conducted in November and December 2023 showed that 95 percent of Saudis believed that Hamas did not kill Israeli civilians on October 7; 96 percent of Saudis agreed that “Arab countries should immediately break all diplomatic, political, economic, and any other contacts with Israel.” These sentiments have forced MBS to increase his negotiating demands. He recently declared that Riyadh would not establish diplomatic relations with Israel before the “establishment of a Palestinian state.” MBS may be an autocrat, but he cannot afford to be insensitive to public opinion. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, after all, was an autocrat. That did not prevent him from being assassinated after normalizing relations with Israel.

Still, there is reason to think that the Saudis will eventually strike a bargain with the Americans and the Israelis. Despite Saudi Arabia’s vast commercial ties to China and its friendship with Russia, it can count only on the United States to protect it from external adversaries, and it needs such protection. The September 2019 Iranian attacks on Saudi Aramco, Saudi Arabia’s national oil company, exposed just how vulnerable the country and its vision are. In the absence of U.S. security guarantees, Saudi Arabia could spend half a trillion dollars over a decade to build Neom, intended to be 33 times the size of New York City, and Iran and its proxies could destroy it in days with cheap missiles and drones.

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THE DANGER OF EXPECTATIONS Numerous civil unrest indices have ranked Iran among the least stable governments in the world. In the past 15 years alone, Iran has experienced three major national uprisings—in 2009, 2019, and 2022—that brought millions of citizens into the streets. Yet Khamenei is one of the world’s longest-serving autocrats, having ruled since 1989, and the regime has consistently defied predictions of its imminent demise. History suggests, perhaps counterintuitively, that revolutionary dictatorships are often more enduring than rapidly modernizing monarchies. As the political scientists Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way have written, revolutionary regimes born from “sustained, ideological, and violent struggle” tend to endure because they destroy independent power centers, produce cohesive ruling parties, and establish tight control over formidable security forces. In Iran, all these factors apply, helping to shield the Islamic Republic from elite defections and from military coups. Up to now, the regime has consistently crushed mass protests. The past also suggests that successful popular uprisings tend to happen not in states suffering from constant deprivation, as Iran is, but in countries where improved living standards create elevated expectations. As the social theorist Eric Hoffer has written, “It is not actual suffering, but the taste of better things which excites people to revolt.” Political reforms can also open the door to sudden change, something Iran has studiously avoided. Machiavelli observed that there is nothing “more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.” For this reason, Khamenei, a student of the fall of the Soviet Union, has been firmly committed to the ideological principles of the 1979 revolution, believing that diluting them would precipitate the Islamic Republic’s downfall. For MBS, meanwhile, the most applicable cautionary tale from history may be the experience of the shah of Iran, a fellow modernizing leader who alienated key constituencies, including the clergy, the bazaar, and intellectuals, that would conspire to unseat him. Yet the lessons learned from the shah’s downfall are mixed. As the historian Abbas Milani argued in his biography of the shah, Pahlavi was too authoritarian when he didn’t need to be and not authoritarian enough when he needed to be. For many Saudi elites, the greatest fear is not a mass popular uprising like Iran’s 1979 revolution, but a targeted internal plot against the crown prince—a scenario with historical precedent in the kingdom. In March 1975, King Faisal, another modernizing monarch, was shot and killed by his nephew. This act of revenge was motivated by the death of the assassin’s brother, an Islamist who had been killed roughly a decade earlier while protesting Faisal’s introduction of television in Saudi Arabia. MBS has put his stamp on the country’s leadership. He has faced down Saudi political and business elites more than any leader in his country’s history. He downsized the royal family, and his 2017 detention of hundreds of prominent Saudi businessmen at the Ritz-Carlton hotel—called a “sheikhdown” in Western tabloids—reportedly yielded over $100 billion in recovered assets. But MBS may be unaware of the hazards awaiting him. To avoid internal challenges, autocrats often prioritize loyalty over competence when appointing advisers, creating an echo chamber that results in dangerous blind spots. The shah, for example, was bewildered by the anger against him and later lamented that he had been misled by sycophantic aides who shielded him from the truth. MBS may already be falling into this trap. One consigliere to the crown prince—a former European head of state—privately told me that the longer MBS rules, the more confident he becomes in his own judgment and the less need he feels to heed constructive criticism. MBS faces other risks, as well. Ongoing judicial reforms in Saudi Arabia still lag behind economic and social reforms (and international standards). Training a new generation of secular Saudi lawyers and judges is a much more laborious process than hiring foreign consultants to transform the economy and build cities of the future. Many Saudi men feel resentment about losing power over women. This uneven progress—rapid economic and social reform without concurrent political reform—can also be a source of unrest. As Samuel Huntington warned in his book Political Order in Changing Societies, political instability is commonly triggered by “rapid social change and the rapid mobilization of new groups into politics coupled with the slow development of political institutions.” The Saudi crown prince may be unaware of the hazards awaiting him. For now, MBS is strong and seemingly popular. Although credible public opinion polling in Saudi Arabia is rare, one November 2023 survey suggested that a solid majority of Saudis have trust in their government. In contrast, a recent government poll in Iran reported that more than 90 percent of the country’s citizens feel dissatisfied or hopeless. Targeting prominent Saudi businessmen for corruption, shrinking the entitlements of the royal family, imprisoning fundamentalist clerics, and diminishing the religious police have all earned the crown prince some support. Yet MBS has also cracked down on members of what should be his natural constituency: Saudi liberals, including Khashoggi and the women’s rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul. This could backfire. “A social and economic reformation on overdrive is at too high a risk of failure without the parallel legal and procedural transformation occurring at the same pace and intensity,” warned Mohammed al-Yahya, a senior Saudi Foreign Ministry official and friend of Khashoggi, after Khashoggi’s killing. The murder of the journalist no longer looms large inside Saudi Arabia. But it continues to taint MBS’s reputation in the West. Externally, his most vociferous critics, much like those of the shah, are Western liberals, many of whom liken him to the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. In 2020, U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders, an independent, even said that Saudi Arabia’s leaders were “murderous thugs” and that the regime was “one of the very most dangerous countries on the face of this earth.” Inside Saudi Arabia, however, the group more likely to eventually challenge MBS’s authority is not liberals who believe he is undemocratic, but Islamists who believe he is far too liberal. As the author David Rundell wrote, “If a successor government came to power by the ballot, it would almost certainly be an Islamist populist regime. . . . If a new government came to power through violence, it would most likely be a jihadist organization such as ISIS or al-Qaeda.” Although the crown prince is trying to turn the page on Islamic fundamentalism, he has not been able to eliminate it wholesale. MBS “put the Wahhabis in a cage,” said the Saudi author Ali Shihabi, referring to the country’s ultra-orthodox school of Islam. Yet just as the Taliban bided their time for two decades in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia’s Islamists are dormant but not dead. In an interview with The Economist, one Saudi religious commentator likened Islamist opponents of MBS to ants building an underground kingdom. “The prince has closed their mouths,” he said, “but he hasn’t ended their kingdom.” WHITE ELEPHANTS AND BLACK SWANS

**<<PARAGRAPH BREAKS RESUME>>**

Over the last half century, the Middle East has consistently defied the predictions of forecasters. The whims of individual autocrats and the volatile mix of oil wealth, religion, and great-power politics have made the region uniquely vulnerable to black swan events with global ramifications. Those events include Iran’s 1979 revolution, Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, the Arab Spring, the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, and the October 7 attacks in Israel.

In this context, the future of both Vision 2030 and Vision 1979 will hinge on the fate of Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s leaders and the global energy demands that sustain their ambitions. Should MBS’s grand projects become white elephants—costly, unproductive endeavors—or should oil prices experience a prolonged decline, rising public dissatisfaction may compel the Saudi crown prince to prioritize regime stability over transformational reforms. Although MBS is young, he is acutely aware of the occupational hazards that come with absolute rule, including the unforeseen pressures that have brought down autocrats in the past. The shah’s political downfall stemmed from myriad forces, but also partly from a terminal cancer diagnosis that he concealed even from his family, which undoubtedly impaired his decision-making during crises.

In Iran, meanwhile, the future of the Islamic Republic and Vision 1979 remains uncertain beyond the lifespan of the 85-year-old Khamenei. Although there is a possibility that power may transfer smoothly to loyal clerics and military leaders committed to revolutionary ideals, there is also a chance of a shift toward a leadership that prioritizes Iran’s national and economic interests over its revolutionary doctrine. Efforts by some supporters of Mojtaba Khamenei, Khamenei’s 55-year-old son and potential successor, to compare him to Iran’s MBS are risible. But they suggest that even Tehran’s younger-generation revolutionaries recognize that a forward-looking vision is more appealing than a backward-looking one.

The success or failure of these competing visions will have broad global ramifications. A world in which Vision 2030 fails dramatically, leaving the vast energy resources of both Saudi Arabia and Iran under the control of Sunni and Shiite extremists, would make the Middle East and the global economy less prosperous and stable. Conversely, if Iran’s post-Khamenei leadership prioritizes the economic welfare and security of its people, Iran has the potential to one day become a G-20 nation and a pillar of global stability.

The failed American experiments in Afghanistan and Iraq, coupled with the failures of the Arab Spring, have largely dispelled illusions among U.S. officials that Washington has the capacity to meaningfully shape, at least in a positive way, the politics of the Middle East. It will be local actors who determine which visions prevail. But given that Vision 2030 seeks to uphold the U.S.-led liberal world order and Vision 1979 seeks to defeat it, the United States has a vested interest in the success of the former and the failure of the latter. It is also in the global economic interest to see stable, prosperous governments in Saudi Arabia and Iran that are at peace with one another and themselves. This means the world should help the people of Iran move beyond an oppressive ideological regime that has caused internal stagnation and regional unrest, and help Saudi Arabia navigate political reforms that will help sustain its social and economic transformation.

The best outcome for the United States, the Middle East, and the world is two sustainable, representative, forward-looking visions in both countries. The worst outcome is two backward-looking regimes clinging to past grievances. The former may be difficult to achieve. But the consequences of the latter would be nothing short of catastrophic.

**Sustained oil revenue enables effective Norwegian foreign policy---it finances military capabilities AND underpins soft power.**

**Sivonen ’25** [Marja and Paula Kivimaa; January 2025; Doctoral Researcher, Master’s in Social Science from Tampere University; Professor in Climate and Society at the Finnish Environmental Institute; Energy Research and Social Sciences, “Interrelations Between Security and the Zero-Carbon Energy Transition in the Finnish and Norwegian Arctic,” vol. 119]

Norwegian strategies so consistently and closely bind renewable energy development to fossil fuel production that we did not detect any mentions in which the current regime would not be supported. Although the strategies repeatedly mentioned the importance of environmental protection and climate change mitigation, we did not detect any concrete measures to encourage regime decline. At the same time, (**fossil fuel**) energy policy is intricately **connected** to foreign and **security** policy. Here, security discourse was mainly linked to negative, state-centred approaches in which areas are needed to be secured from external threats. The **oil** and gas sector was discussed as a **comprehensive** part of development in **all aspects** of society. This was mirrored in the interviews, with many mentioning that because prosperity is so bound up with oil and gas, the decline of the sector was slow and grudging. Others noted that there was openness in the process and felt uncomfortable about discussing the topic:

The **focus** of Norwegian energy policy is thus continuing its historical **shift** towards the **north**. At the same time, **energy** issues are acquiring a **foreign policy** dimension as energy supply and security become **increasingly** important in international relations. In many countries, energy is becoming more clearly defined as a part of security policy. The main lines of Norway's petroleum policy are well established. However, we must be aware of and respond to the increased importance of energy issues as we implement our foreign and security policy. ([69], p. 14).

And Norway, Sweden, and Finland are on different sides of the table in that thinking; of course, in the words of the politicians, they say “oh yeah, we need to support the green shift and we need to do that” but everyone knows that Norway's **main** focus is still **oil** and gas drilling. I mean, that's the reason why we are millionaires.… I used to say that the Norwegians are petroholics. We know that it is bad, but we can't resist. We just need one more drilling, one more oil platform. “No, yeah, put it away”, like alcohol, you know. Just one more. (Interview, Norway other)

The Finnish strategies discussed continued fossil fuel production in Norway. The plans were to provide expertise in cold-climate operations and business for the oil and gas sector, supporting the regime in both Russia (prior to 2022) and Norway, an issue that was also mentioned in the interviews. Although we detected only a few direct references in the strategies to keeping the Arctic area inhabited explicitly through these plans, it is reasonable to assume that one way to gain positive security was to connect regime support and unsustainable energy production to security justifications, even in Finland, which has no oil and gas production.

Regime support was scarcely discussed in the interviews, although several participants mentioned the improbability of simply halting oil and gas production due to the economic dependence of four Arctic states: Russia, the United States, Canada and Norway. As the interviews were conducted after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, this was directly connected to hard security issues of protecting the state, its assets and its claims of sovereignty over maritime areas. This highlights the importance of more diverse paradigms that the framing of positive security allows.

6. Discussion

As noted above, energy **transition** processes are not straightforward and are governed with discursive tools [74]. Finnish strategies employed minimal direct or clear action-directing language, maintaining instead a largely passive tone that suggests a cautious approach to Arctic issues but is also a general style in Finnish policy strategies. By contrast, Norwegian documents used active and straightforward language, reflecting a hands-on attitude and emphasising the importance of the High North to both Norway and Europe. This alignment between the actions described and the language used in the documents contributes to cohesive and clear policy planning. This style would also allow for more comprehensive consideration, such as regarding the supply chains. We treated the text as a way to understand the process of energy transitions, specifically through regime-niche interaction.

We used transformative outcomes (TOs): the three macro-processes and 12 sub-processes [19] for data analysis. However, the analysis showed that, in the European Arctic context, the findings could mainly be presented in the level of macro-processes (merging niche development with niche expansion and regime decline). Due to the strong support given still to fossil fuels in the region, we added a category of regime support to the analysis. Previous research on Eurasian Arctic regimes has shown that the **state** as a regulatory and funding body is so closely **connected** to **fossil fuel** production in the area that powerful pressure from the regime has facilitated continued action [2,3].

We found only a few mentions of niche development in the strategies. This does not, however, mean that niches are not developed or supported in the Finnish and Norwegian Arctic areas; rather, the energy sector simply has not been treated with Arctic specifics, especially in Finland. This was discussed in the interviews, where the pressure exerted by the energy transition is on national and EU policymaking. We estimate that the energy sector was not of interest in policymaking related to specifically Arctic issues and that Finnish interests in the Arctic are less developed and refined than their Norwegian counterparts. In light of contemporary renewable energy development projects in Finnish Lapland, perhaps this should change, with a more comprehensive take on Arctic policy implemented. This would of course require Finland to take a stronger stance on Arctic policy in general, as at least until the most recent strategy (2021) the aims have not been clear, despite significant efforts to justify Finland as an Arctic state. At the time of the writing, this remains the latest update on Arctic policy. Although NATO was not strongly present in the data, we expect that Finland's recent NATO membership will change that in the future, perhaps towards more emphasis on the negative security thinking, as Finland brings significant land and air force assets to NATO in the Arctic. In turn, the **establishment** of the Sámi Climate Council in 2023 enshrined in the revised Finnish Climate Act, creates an improved **opportunity** to link positive **security** to the energy transitions. Meanwhile, Norway continues to use its own definition of sustainable development, one that includes **oil** and gas production [75].

To answer the first research question of how renewable energy and security are intertwined, we can say that they were connected to each other on various ways. In both countries, land use disputes over wind production, minerals mining and expanding electricity transmission networks were directly discussed as positive security issues, as “the everyday” is intricate to those developments. They imply significant changes to the inhabitants, and for the Sámi also their right to their traditional culture and way of life. Security was defined to be of multi-actor premises, where ability to participate in decision-making and defining what security is and to whom it should be provided when energy transitions proceed was highlighted. As our analysis has revealed, notions of justice are deeply an aspect of security. Indeed, many interviewees wished to discuss issues of injustice in the context of security, even when not directly asked about them.

According to the analysis pertaining to Norway, oil and gas production is used to claim **sovereignty**, hence, sovereignty as a notion of security is delaying the energy transition. In addition, oil and gas provide national **wealth** (i.e. socio-economic security) that finances, not only **military** and surveillance activity, but also the overall socio-economic **development** of the Arctic region, including renewable energy production. This emphasises state as the main provider of security, and the state's right to define security. Renewable energy and sovereignty were not discussed in detail. However, previous research on the Norwegian debate has shown that renewable energy developments are not straightforwardly believed to be increasing sovereignty. The opposite was found, especially in relation to Norway's position to EU energy policy that was seen to decrease sovereignty [76]. In the Finnish strategies, claims of sovereignty are not as direct, although Finnish Lapland provides a military training ground of strategic significance. In the interviews, connecting issues were the different views on how to keep the land inhabited and by whom, land use claims and the policy measures by which the energy transition could be governed under changing landscape pressures, such as the war in Ukraine. The emphasis was on negative security during the transition, with the state operating as the primary authority on both the energy and defence policy sectors.

This connects to the second research question on what might hinder energy transitions. We detected reservations from security policy actors about trying out new forms of energy and more sustainable practices. Whereas the Finnish strategy documents did not discuss this issue at all, the interviews revealed that the pressure for the transition was exerted at the national level by indicating that the military uses the form of energy that is currently available. This is particularly interesting in Finland, where also large land areas of Lapland are used for military exercises, and interest from allied countries to practice in cold climates is expected to increase in the coming years. In a broader context, however, the Arctic does not stand out from the plans of Finland's Ministry of Defence to participate in climate change adaptation [77], although details are absent from the data. Climate security (impacts of climate crisis) also did not appear in the data, despite future scenarios that are deemed stark [78], especially for the Arctic region. One reason why climate security was not explicitly discussed may be that the interviewees took it as self-evident. Risks and threat scenarios related to Arctic climate change may have been the reason they participated in the first place, so they may not have felt the need to emphasise it.

Other justifications for hindering the transition in the Arctic were related to long distances, sparsely populated areas, disputes over land use and claims of ownership and user rights among Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations and the technological challenges of cold climates. Previous research has also pointed out the general populations´ concerns over “green grabbing” and “Europeanization” in Norway, where legal and physical control over renewable energy development is gradually transferred to the EU, away from Norway [76]. Overall, land use questions are especially tightly bound up with questions of human rights [67], an issue that was discussed in the interviews but was absent in the strategy documents of both countries. In Finland, the new Sámi Climate Council could be a fruitful body to strengthen regime-niche interactions in a fair manner by allowing non-state actors to have a role in decision-making, if under a mandate of the state. It is yet to be seen what actual impact the council will have over the medium and long term. Additionally, the role of the Sámi Parliament could be enhanced in the decision-making.

In our strategy document analysis, we did not find many mentions of regime decline in either Finland or Norway. In fact, we created a new code for the support the regime received in those documents. In **Norway**, support for fossil fuel production **correlates** well with **national ambitions** and policies [79]. However in Finland, phasing out fossil fuels is an important part of national climate and energy strategies [80]. The support that Arctic strategies appeared to show for continued fossil fuel production or use in both countries connects to positive and negative notions of security. In negative security thinking, military and national interests, sovereignty and landownership are central. This is present when Norway claims sea areas with oil and gas industry installations and when economic advancements in Finland are sought from cold-climate technology development, enabling, for instance, winter passage and machine durability. The connection to positive security can be found in both countries' aims to keep remote areas inhabited by enabling safe socio-economic wellbeing that will encourage people to stay in the area. Infrastructure and other state-provided basic living condition elements are needed to keep people in the north, along with cultural, political and technical solutions that can offer the same living standards as in the south. Here, positive security as a multi-actor discursive practice [15] provides a useful perspective; the Norwegian strategies claim support of and possibilities for local and Indigenous populations to take part in decision-making, but our analysis echoes previous research that more is needed [9,81]. This is significant because democratising security thinking can foster change in practice. However, it is by no means an easy process, from ontological differences [8] through land use and the costs and benefits of, for instance, mining activities [82]. The latter may either contrast energy transitions with security (when energy-related land use threatens reindeer herding or broader environmental security) or align them (when mining creates employment in the north and supports the energy transition), showing the complexities of the energy-security nexus.

Although both countries follow comprehensive security principles, climate security was not strongly visible in the documents in the sense of reducing emissions from the fossil fuel sector. Climate change and the risks brought by it are an undercurrent in the area in general and is considered a landscape pressure to allow continued development in the area, despite its negative implications for the environment and Arctic inhabitants. This is part of human security thinking that calls for attention to communities first before scaling up towards inclusive and just development [51]. Including human security and positive security perspectives in the planning and development of the Arctic would enable a fair distribution of both benefits and burdens [9], with a deep awareness of the actual impact of measures on the people who are affected by them. According to our findings, there is also a wish to participate in providing negative security through the knowledge and possibilities that people have. This contrasts with the way that “participation” is currently interpreted: the land is seen as a provider of vitally needed less-polluting energy and the material and minerals needed to produce it. When thinking about positive security from the broader conceptual perspective, our findings indicate that the people living and operating in the Arctic are calling for positive, inclusive and just security that they themselves are part of defining and thus defending. The energy transitions in both countries are inevitably part of directing the process, but the unequal position of participants in decision-making must be recognised and addressed.

Climate change is also one key factor in thinking about the scales in which the Finnish and Norwegian Arctic issues are discussed in the data. While the negative impacts of climate change are global, and the local population in the North have not been part of the problem, the solutions to (at least) European climate change mitigation via energy transition are expected to come from the Arctic air, sea and land. Historically this has been dramatic, and current “green transition” is feared to have (re)colonial traits [8]. Local people, politicians, activists, entrepreneurs, and civil officials are in constant parallel to the global, national, and local. Lack of resources, time and leverage on these levels does not support sustainable development overall.

7. Conclusions

We conducted a content analysis of all published Arctic strategies and carried out expert interviews in the Finnish and Norwegian context to identify the processes of energy transitions with niche development and regime decline. The identified aspects were then addressed using the concepts of negative and positive security to broaden the understanding of security in energy transitions. The broader aim was to find out why fossil fuel production and consumption are still going strong in environmentally fragile and globally significant Arctic areas. Our hypothesis was that security and defence-related questions have significance in the justifications used to support the petroleum-driven regime. Indeed, we argue that the **challenges** related to **energy** transitions and **security** in the Arctic are closely **intertwined** and that the governance of these phenomena needs a broader understanding of security, inclusive decision-making and coherence in strategic planning as part of national and international policymaking.

Our main finding from the analysis supports the hypothesis, as the **development** of the north in Norway is intimately **connected** to continued **oil** and gas production and the **success** of the Norwegian state, including financing the **military** sector. This has been present to the extent that climate-related landscape pressures have not changed the narratives of policymaking. For Finland, this link has not been so evident. Yet even though Finland does not have its own oil and gas production, its Arctic policy until 2021 was partially framed to support the fossil fuel industry with economic incentives. This concept extends beyond Finland, resonating within the broader Arctic context. The **development** potential across the entire Arctic region, involving the Arctic 8 states and other interested parties, places significant **importance** on oil and gas production. The major question is to which direction this interest is steered to in relation to Arctic onshore and offshore wind, mineral and metals. To that, Finland, and other Nordic states, have possibilities to contribute to.

**That’s the only pathway to deter Russia in the High North---otherwise, escalation’s inevitable.**

**Black ’24** [James, Katja Fedina, and Mattias Eken; June 2; Assistant Director of Defense and Security; Senior Analyst researching NATO, Nordic, and Baltic Defense; Analyst at RAND Europe; RAND, “Evolving Norway's Role in the NATO Alliance,” https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2024/07/evolving-norways-role-in-the-nato-alliance.html#:~:text=Given%20its%20strategic%20position%20on,power%20into%20the%20North%20Atlantic]

Because of its **geography**, Norway's security has always been intimately **tied** to control of the **North** and Norwegian Seas, and of the associated airspace. A history of occupation and liberation places additional importance on securing wider lines of **communications**, such as the sea lanes across the Atlantic which are **arterial** to the NATO Alliance.

Since the days of the Cold War, **Russian** plans for any future war with NATO have recognized the need to **interdict** the flow of American and Canadian troops and materiel across the **Atlantic**. Given its strategic position on NATO's northern flank, Norway has an **essential** role to play alongside U.S. and British forces in securing the Greenland-Iceland-UK (GUIK) and Bear (Svalbard–North Cape) gaps—preventing Russia from projecting naval and air power into the North Atlantic.

Norway also needs to monitor growing hybrid **threats** to the country's territorial waters and exclusive economic zone. This includes new threats to the **subsea** infrastructure essential to Norway's economy and modern way of life, such as underwater data **cables**, electricity interconnectors, and oil and gas pipelines. Such infrastructure is increasingly **vulnerable**, given Russia's advanced undersea warfare capabilities, as well as the proliferation of uncrewed underwater systems, smart mines, and other technologies. There are also ongoing hybrid **threats** to Norway's remote northern territories, including those arising from **Russian** activities around **Finnmark**, such as GPS jamming and airspace incursions, or provocations around the **Svalbard** archipelago.

Amidst growing militarisation of the **polar** region, and with melting sea ice making Arctic waters and the Northern Sea Route increasingly navigable in summer months, the Norwegian Armed Forces also face new requirements for operations in extreme cold conditions. Crucially, even if the risks of a military conflict starting in the High North remain comparatively low, the region's strategic **significance** as Russia's defensive **bastion** and the home of its nuclear-armed submarines and North Sea Fleet means it would quickly be pulled into any conflict sparked elsewhere.

Facing growing threats from the North, Norway thus represents the **first line** of defence for NATO. Here, then, the planned acquisition of new submarines, anti-submarine warfare frigates, mine-countermeasure capabilities, and uncrewed systems all align with this role. Such enhanced **capabilities** will not only boost Norway's own defence, but also help the U.S., UK, and other NATO navies ensure a credible **deterrent** in the North Atlantic, North Sea, Norwegian Sea, and Arctic.

The 2024 LTP also increases Norway's capacity for **intel**ligence gathering, including through space-based capabilities. This offers increased reach, coverage, and remote monitoring of some of Norway's less accessible territory and waters. It also reduces **reliance** on U.S. capabilities at a time when the American military's attention is increasingly pulled toward the Indo-Pacific.

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While the latest LTP directs much of the new spending towards the navy and army, this partly reflects the fact that the Norwegian Air Force was the main beneficiary of previous iterations of the plan. Norway is already bringing online its new F-35 stealth fighter and P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, offering a major boost to the country's intelligence-gathering and strike capabilities. The 2024 LTP's commitment to invest more in uncrewed systems like long-range aerial drones offers a chance to build on these recent acquisitions by exploiting the benefits of new technologies—including the increased mass from lower-cost drones. However, few Western militaries have yet incorporated these new technologies fully into their arsenals. At the same time, Sweden and Finland have joined NATO and all four Nordic countries have agreed to integrate their air forces more closely. This offers new opportunities to enhance the defence of the North Calotte region especially and of the combined Nordic airspaces more broadly. Finland is soon acquiring the F-35A to replace its ageing F/A-18 fighters. There are also new efficiencies to be derived from three of the four Nordic air forces operating and maintaining the same aircraft type. Conversely, the need to integrate the F-35A with Sweden's JAS-39 Gripen fleet also offers Norway a chance to be at the forefront of shaping NATO's wider efforts to get the most out of fourth and fifth generation aircraft. Steadfast Supporter With comparatively small armed forces, and a large territory to defend, Norway's defence also hinges on receiving and supporting Allied reinforcements in a crisis. This was already recognised as a key priority in the previous LTP and in RAND's 2020 study for the Norwegian ministry of defence. Both emphasised revitalising Norway's capacity for host nation support. This includes investment in infrastructure such as airbases, ports, and secure locations for pre-positioned U.S. military equipment—much of which was overlooked in the decades following the Cold War. Sweden and Finland joining NATO means that the military geography of the Nordic region has shifted. While reception, staging, and onward integration of Allied reinforcements is still vital to Norwegian defence and security, it is likely that any future conflict with Russia would involve direct attacks by Russian forces on Norway's neighbours, requiring Norway to help NATO project power eastward. Even Norway's own border with Russia could be contested, in which case the trilateral cooperation with Sweden and Finland will provide support. In particular, Finland's new membership of NATO has greatly increased the Alliance's land border with Russia. It has also placed the strategically important Russian military bases and lines of communication on the Kola Peninsula within long-range fires from Finnish territory. Similarly, the Swedish island of Gotland offers a vital launchpad for operations in the Baltic Sea. In both cases, Russia would want to push back NATO forces further from its own territory in any future conflict, meaning the newest entrants into the Atlantic Alliance are likely to be priority targets for air and missile strikes, and possibly for land incursions too. Finland is now responsible for much of NATO's front line in the north of Europe, and Sweden is emerging as a key logistical hub for moving troops and supplies to Finland and across to the Baltic States. Norway will be key to strategic depth and enabling NATO activities in the wider region. As Sweden is starting to think about what NATO membership means, it looks to both east and west, to aid in defence of both Finnmark and Finland. Common command and control links would enable long-range precision fires to be directed from Sweden and Finland, munitions to be interchangeable, and newly acquired ISTAR drones to have the capability to share information with allies. Here, the establishment of a new Brigade South, and the acquisition of long-range air defence systems, helps to secure Norwegian airbases and ports for importing troops and equipment and pushing them east. The expanded Home Guard can provide further protection to logistic and staging infrastructure. Collaboration and mutual exercises between Swedish and Norwegian forces can facilitate smooth troop transport across the borders when required. Expanding and mechanising the Army will similarly provide valuable Norwegian reinforcements to Sweden and Finland if needed, while investment in long-range fires and new ISTAR capabilities will increase Norway's ability to provide rear-echelon fire support. The scale of the challenge may not be appreciated by all, however. For Norway, upgrading the infrastructure needed to support staging and receiving from both east and west, and the flow of assets south to north, will be costly and take many years to implement, not least given the difficult terrain in rural areas. To maximise the coordination of activities in the Nordic countries, NATO should continue to investigate the most efficient command and control arrangements for the region. It must be conscious of the current division of Norway, Sweden, and Finland between two separate Joint Forces Commands in Brunssum and Norfolk, VA. This appears suboptimal.

<<PARAGRAPH BREAKS RESUME>>

Crucially, too, the war in Ukraine has shown that future conflicts may not be the swift (if bloody) affairs long envisaged by many defence planners in NATO countries. Rather, Norway must be ready for a protracted conflict, possibly with reduced American support. This entails a growing need for capabilities to conduct sustained combat operations, including in harsh and remote environments where Norway already has experience, but not on the scale that would be needed in future. An increase in army resources for Finnmark is a positive first step, but further actions could be required to sustain and supply these resources long-term. There is similarly a need to ensure that **Norway** has sufficient underlying defence industrial **capacity** to surge **production** in times of crisis, as well as to revitalise the Cold War–era Total Defence concept to bolster the resilience of Norway's society, economy, and civilian population, including against cyberthreats.

Threat-Driven Capability Development

To anchor and strengthen the NATO roles outlined above, Norway should also focus on accelerating the development and acquisition of innovative new capabilities for its military, as well as bolstering the technology, industrial, and skills bases needed to deliver them.

Even if it is impossible to foresee what the threat will look like in 10 to 15 years from now, some trends based on **current** and past **behaviours** and stated ambitions can be observed and should be considered. **Hybrid threats** to **c**ritical **i**nfrastructure are bound to persist, as well as subthreshold threats to target national and societal resilience. Observations from the battlefields of Ukraine show

increasing duels between **u**ncrewed **a**erial **s**ystems and their countermeasures;

the deadly and **asymmetric** threats posed by **uncrewed** surface and underwater systems to traditional naval platforms;

the vital importance of **e**lectronic **w**arfare and countermeasures, long overlooked by most Western militaries;

the increasing ease of hacking or jamming **satellite** service**s**;

the impact of long-range fires, combined with pervasive ISTAR capabilities and **AI**-enhanced **c**ommand a**n**d **c**ontrol tools, in forcing military units to disperse, dig in, and conceal themselves to survive.

Through **Nordic** cooperation and interoperability, current capability **gaps** can begin to **close** and new ones can be tackled together.

**Extinction.**

**Shute ’23** [Joe; September 12; Ph.D. Researcher at Manchester Metropolitan University; UnHerd, “An Arctic War is Coming,” https://unherd.com/2023/09/an-arctic-war-is-coming-russia-china/]

A similar story is being recorded right across the High North. “Arctic amplification” is the term meteorologists use for the accelerated rate of global warming. But the same amplification is occurring with the geopolitics of the region. The Arctic is melting — one scientific study, published in June, claimed that the first summer in which all sea ice disappears could occur as early as the 2030s — and, from China to the US to Putin’s Russia, suddenly everyone wants a piece. The **era** of “Arctic **exceptionalism**” declared by Russian president Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987 is resolutely **over**, his entreaties for the Arctic to remain a “zone of peace” free from conflict and exploitation forgotten. As climate change accelerates and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has **cleaved** apart the international **order**, the Arctic has emerged as the potential theatre of the next **global conflict**.

Alexander, who also represents the Gwich’in on the Arctic council (which includes the eight Arctic states, Canada, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, the US and Russia) warns that the global **race** to plunder the Arctic could have **devastating** consequences. “If you don’t co-operate on the Arctic and we don’t get these things right, then I’ll tell you this, my friend: the world can change very rapidly.”

**Russia**, whose territory **spans** around 53% of the Arctic Ocean shoreline, and **China** are rapidly developing plans to expand the **N**orthern **S**ea **R**oute. The maritime passage between the east and west of the Arctic Ocean is regarded by the Kremlin as vital to avoid Western sanctions. It is already possible to navigate the route for anyone with several briefcases full of dollars to pay for the mandatory Russian ice breakers which accompany any transit as patrol vessels. In 2024, the Kremlin is planning to commence year-round navigations of the route, through which it hopes to increase the amount of cargo shipped from around 30 million annually to 80 million.

China — which has ominously declared itself a “**near-Arctic** state” — also harbours ambitions to transform the passage into a silk road of the far north, while in March, a Russian delegation to India held talks over new co-operation over the route. The **West** is similarly flexing its muscles, with Finland (and the expected accession of Sweden) extending **NATO’s** borders into the Arctic. In June, the US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken announced that the US would be opening an outpost in the far-north Norwegian town of Tromsø, stressing the need to have “a diplomatic footprint” above the Arctic Circle. “The war in **Ukraine** has really torpedoed this idea of Arctic exceptionalism,” explains Dr Neil Melvin, Director of International Security at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI). “The whole focus of northern Europe has basically now shifted to building security against Russia.”

As Melvin points out, the heavy losses sustained by Russia’s land army in Ukraine will **force** it to become increasingly **reliant** on its **nuc**lear force**s** stationed in the Arctic, where the UK and US have also long operated their own attack submarines. Russia’s Northern Fleet comprises of a dozen or so nuclear-powered attack submarines as well as surface vessels, including two heavy nuclear-powered missile battle cruisers. In recent years, Russia has also reoccupied old Cold War-era Arctic bases to bolster its presence. “They will feel more **vulnerable** as a result of not having a strong army, and I think we are likely to see them **threaten** nuclear options much more as part of national defence,” Melvin says of Russia’s designs in the Arctic. “They are going to be much more **explicit** and threatening.”

Beneath the ice, the Arctic possesses untold riches. The region is estimated to contain a fifth of the world’s undiscovered oil and gas reserves and rare earth elements such as gold, nickel and zinc. While most of these are present within the largely undisputed land borders of the Arctic nations, it is the increasingly navigable international **waters** that present the most likely **flashpoint**. An ongoing process led by a United Nations commission is considering sovereignty rights to the central Arctic Ocean between Russia, Denmark and Canada. While Putin is cooperating with the process so far, he has also planted a flag in the most literal sense — dropping a titanium standard of the Russian Federation two miles beneath the ocean on the North Pole seabed in 2007. Fishing rights are also key; as southern oceans heat up, species will migrate ever further north, causing estimated catches in higher latitudes to increase by up to 20 per cent by 2050.

According to Professor Klaus Dodds, an expert in geopolitics and ice studies based at Royal Holloway and author of the recent book, Border Wars, the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard could prove another area of conflict. Under a treaty originally signed in 1920, a host of countries including China and Russia have rights to engage in commercial activities across Svalbard. Moscow conducts coal mining operations on the island of Spitsbergen (and insists on referring to Svalbard by the same name, to emphasise its historic claim on the land). In settlements such as Barentsburg, Russian is the predominant language.

“The concern is we know we have potential **flashpoints** like Svalbard which, having caused agitation and tension in the past, might be **escalate**d very **quickly**,” Dodds says. Aggression could be anything from attacks on underwater **cables** (last year, a Russian trawler was linked to the severing of a sub-sea fibre-optic cable which linked Svalbard to the Norwegian mainland), to an outright attack on oil and gas **infrastructure**. “The Norwegian European Arctic will be the space where, if anything, this is most likely to happen,” Dodds says. “That would also be the ultimate **opportunity** for Russia to test **NATO**’s resolve.”

Regardless of the potential for **nuclear conflict**, a burning Arctic poses grave threats for humanity. The Arctic permafrost contains peatland soils which are the world’s most vital carbon sink. Globally, peatlands store twice as much carbon as all the forests combined. When this burns, it releases the carbon back into the atmosphere creating something of a doom loop. According to the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service, wildfires across Canada have released 290 megatons of carbon into the atmosphere between January and August, more than 25% of the global total for 2023 in the year to date.

Thawing permafrost is also exposing chemical and radioactive waste and millennia-old “zombie viruses”. In 2016, around 100,000 reindeer were culled in the Russian far north after an anthrax outbreak that killed a 12-year-old boy. Plague bacillus, smallpox and other historic diseases are also feared to soon re-emerge from the melting earth. The discovery earlier this summer of 46,000-year-old roundworms lying dormant in Siberia, which are happily reproducing once again, may hold clues for adapting to climate change — but they also raise questions about what else might venture forth in a thaw. And herein lies the **great lesson** of the far north, Professor Dodds explains: nothing here ever happens in isolation — there will be wider **ramifications** across the **globe**. “Change in the Arctic is never restricted to the Arctic itself,” he says. “It is almost as if the Arctic strikes back.”

The time is long gone where we could think of the Arctic as a great pristine wilderness. Instead it has become the burning crucible of our climate crisis. But, as the towering glaciers melt and the seas of the Earth’s fifth largest ocean are revealed to us at last, their future looks even darker still, reanimating the **bio**logical threats of our deep past, and providing yet another site for human competition and **conquest**.