### Contention 1 – Desalination

#### The US is facing water shortages right now.

Bennet 24 [C.B. Bennet, September 17, 2024, “America is in a water crisis, but help is on the way”, <https://www.asce.org/publications-and-news/civil-engineering-source/article/2024/09/17/america-is-in-a-water-crisis-but-help-is-on-the-way/> Date Accessed 3/16/2025]//GZ

**Without drastic changes,** **the reality is** that some **sections of America could run out of clean** drinking **water** at some point. **Some communities already are.** Major rivers, such as **the Colorado River**; lakes, such as **Lake Mead; and the country’s aquifers are strained more than ever**. What’s more, **bringing in water from other places** used to be a popular short-term water shortage option for towns and municipalities, but even that **is becoming unreliable because of shortages**. It will take real, applicable solutions to help solve this water crisis. The country can’t rely on just one solution to replenish its groundwater, lakes, and rivers.

#### More Specifically,

Reinemer 24 [Michael Reinemer 2024, We’re running out of clean water: Consumption, Contamination, Costs” <https://www.iwla.org/publications/outdoor-america/articles/outdoor-america-2024-issue-2/we're-running-out-of-clean-water-consumption-contamination-costs> /Date Accessed 4/7/2025 //GZ]

The glass is half empty. Once, **clean fresh water was [is] something we could take for granted.** **That’s no longer possible.** Clean water, essential to our survival and a basic human right, is increasingly scarce. About **one half of one percent of the water on Earth is clean and readily available**. **At our current rate of consumption**, **the world may run out of water by 2040**, says a 2023 report from the Bank of America Global Research**. A March 2024 report from the University of Miami predicts severe shortages in the decades ahead in the U.S**. We’re accustomed to hearing about the **dire shortages and water wars** in the arid regions of the West, but they are now appearing in Eastern regions as well. The good news: we have water conservation technologies, policies and practices that could preserve supplies of clean water for generations to come—if we apply them broadly across industries and our individual households

#### And, current efforts aren’t working.

Balbuena Et All 23 [[Natalie Balbuena](https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/author/natalie-balbuena/) & [Mia DiFelice](https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/author/mdifelice/), April 27, 2023, “5 reasons why desalination isn’t worth it”, <https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/2023/04/27/5-reasons-desalination> Date Accessed 3/16/2025]//GZ

In response**, governments and companies are turning to the ocean**. Drought-stricken **areas are seeing more proposals for** ocean **desalination projects**, **which** would **make ocean water drinkable** by removing the salt. **However, ocean desalination is not a solution to the threat of water shortages**. **It’s expensive** and **environmentally destructive**. Moreover, **its downsides will** — like so many other greenwashed technologies— **impact[s] already struggling communities the hardest.**

#### Thankfully, affirming solves through nuclear desalination

IAEA 20 [IAEA, updated 2020, “Nuclear Desalination”, [https://www.iaea.org/topics/non-electric-applications/nuclear-desalination](https://www.iaea.org/topics/non-electric-applications/nuclear-desalination/) Date Accessed 3/16/2025]//GZ

For more than two decades, the support for **seawater desalination using nuclear energy** (in short, called nuclear desalination) has been repeatedly stressed at the General Conference and **supported by many Member States**. Currently, with over than 200 reactor-years of operating experience gained worldwide especially in Japan, India, and Kazakhstan, **nuclear desalination has been demonstrated and eyed as a viable option to meet the growing demand for [drinking] potable water** and provide hope to areas with acute water shortages in many arid and semi-arid zones. In support of Member States to assess nuclear desalination as an option, the IAEA has developed and released the Desalination Economic Evaluation Program DEEP and the DEsalination Thermodynamic Optimization Programme DE-TOP programs. These two programmes can be used to perform economic, thermodynamic, and optimization analyses of different power resources coupled to various desalination processes. The IAEA has also published several technical reports to highlight technical information on aspects of optimum coupling including some safety considerations, environmental impact assessment of nuclear desalination, and potential new technologies for seawater desalination using nuclear energy. In addition, the IAEA has developed and released the Nuclear Desalination Toolkit which provides access to all IAEA activities related to nuclear desalination including links to publications and software download.

#### And unsafe water prevents children from going to school

Water Mission 24 [Water Mission, January 24, 2024, “Safe Water Makes Education Possible for Children Around the World”, <https://watermission.org/news/impact-stories/safe-water-makes-education-possible-children-around-world#:~:text=In%20many%20countries%2C%20a%20lack,would%20otherwise%20be%20in%20school>. Date Accessed 4/1/2025 // GC]

Every child has dreams for their future. Whether they want to become a skilled laborer, a doctor, or an astronaut, they all need one thing—some form of education. But for millions of children around the world, education itself is only a dream. On this [International Day of Education](https://www.un.org/en/observances/education-day), we join with others to celebrate the power of education and raise awareness for the needs of children across the globe. In many countries, a [lack of safe water prevents kids from attending school](https://watermission.org/news/back-to-school-safe-water-means-education-and-opportunity/). It is common for women and children to have the responsibility to collect water for their families. **Collecting water can require walking long distances, consuming the time children would otherwise be in school.** Additionally, the water collected is often contaminated, causing water-related illnesses. More than [**443 million days of school**](https://watermission.org/global-water-crisis/)**are missed due to a lack of access to safe water each year**. Round trip, it takes Vanesa, age 16, and other children in Mankhaka Dwangwa, Malawi, **more** **than three hours to collect water for their families each day**. But having access to safe water nearby provides health, saves time and provides the opportunity for [children to attend school](https://watermission.org/news/safe-water-opens-doors-to-education/).   **Water Builds® Education**  Water Mission is working hard to bring safe water solutions to as many as possible around the world.   Genala, a teacher at the Primary School in Suza, Malawi, has seen how safe water has significantly impacted education in her community.  “Before Water Mission came, we had understaffing at the school,” said Genala. “Teachers would come, but without water here, they would ask to be moved to other schools. We also had low enrollment for girls because they had to wake at 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. and go to find water.” Then, Water Mission installed a safe water solution in Suza which serves more than 4,000 people as well as the school, clinic, and local churches.  “With the coming of Water Mission, we have water close to home and close to the school. We have good staff at school and are producing good, effective learners. Since Water Mission came in, both boys and girls have been in class on time. They sleep enough at night, so they perform well in school. We have been so helped by Water Mission.” Benita, age 12, who lives in Chimwenje, Malawi, can already anticipate the positive impact Water Mission’s safe water project will have on her education.   “I feel good because [safe water] means I can go to school and arrive on time,” she shared. “If I pass the Standard 8 [exams], I can go to secondary school. I want to be a police officer.”  Benita is excited to attend school regularly. According to UNICEF, only **33% of children in Malawi complete primary school.** “We are happy here, but we know that other schools don’t have this,” continued teacher Genala. “Please remember our friends in other schools who still need safe water.”  *Will you give children the opportunity to attend school by helping us provide them with safe water?*

#### No education plunges Americans into an inescapable cycle of generational poverty

The Matthews House 24 [The Matthews House, 2024, “Generational Poverty And Education”, <https://www.thematthewshouse.org/generational-poverty-education/> Date Accessed 4/2/2025 //GZ]

**Poverty**, or the state of being extremely poor **is a widespread issue** here in the United States. To be considered ‘living in poverty’ a household must be below a set income threshold that varies by family size. The set threshold for each family size is updated annually to reflect inflation and is consistent across the country. The Census Bureau determines poverty by family income before taxes– it does not include any government assistance such as subsidized housing, food stamps, or enrollment in programs such as Medicaid. The poverty measure also doesn’t account for cost of living variances or any other factors outside of income, often making the measure heavily skewed and inaccurate to measure who is truly impoverished. What is Generational Poverty? Generational poverty is a term to describe a family who has been considered impoverished for two or more generations**. Families stuck in the cycle of generational poverty** often **have** many commonalities that may include **illiteracy, lack of land ownership, lack of education, and lack of job stability**. How Does Poverty Affect Youth? Studies about poverty are in agreement: Poverty can have devastating impacts on our youth and their development. Multiple sources have stated children in poverty are more likely to experience hopelessness, illiteracy, behavioral/social/emotional issues, a survivalist mindset, and even poor health. **Youth in poverty are also more likely to suffer from criminality, hunger, illness and unemployment**. To top it off youth in poverty are more likely to face rough home situations which can worsen other issues. **Education** is Fundamental Education, or lack thereof, has been found to **be** both **a** leading cause of and **solution to poverty**. To begin with, **lack of early childhood education due to an inability to afford childcare or other resources can hinder a child’s cognitive development which may damage their future educational success.** **Often poverty can also lead to youth dropping out of school to help support their family by finding a job: This** may **hinder[s] their ability to later get a job stable enough to help pull them out of poverty, thus trapping them in the cycle of poverty.** **A study of generational poverty from Yale University insists education is the answer to escaping generational poverty.** The same study noted, “Schools are really the only places where students can learn about the choices and rules of the middle class or have access to people who are willing and able to help them.” Youth in poverty lack equal access to education and resources to help pull them out of poverty, or ever learn that is a viable option for their life. Ending poverty requires educated parents to help raise educated children, and the time to step up to help is now. The Matthews House mission is to empower youth and families by building trusting relationships and providing resources to disrupt the cycles of poverty and abuse. We work toward this by walking alongside families and youth as they set goals and overcome obstacles in these main areas: education, housing, employment, well-being, and life skills.

### Contention 2 – Climate Change

#### Current energy sources are hopelessly inadequate. Non-nuclear renewables would require five times more resources than exist on Earth AND traditional nuclear power is 100 times less effective than nuclear energy

Snyder ’23 [Van; March 16; spent 53 years as a mathematician and engineer at the Caltech Jet Propulsion Laboratory, MS in Applied Mathematics and System Engineering, spent seventeen years as an adjunct associate professor; “Five Myths About Nuclear Power,” https://substack.com/home/post/p-108860660?utm\_campaign=post&utm\_medium=web]

IFR-type reactors extract 99.99% of the energy immanent in mined uranium but today's reactors extract only 0.6%. The price of uranium would contribute the same amount to the delivered electricity price from IFR-type reactors if it were to increase 167 fold. Uranium could be economically extracted from lower quality ores, or from seawater, where there is estimated to be at least a thousand times more than could be extracted from land. Another low-quality ore is coal-fired power plant waste, which contains nineteen times more energy in the form of uranium and thorium than was extracted by burning the coal. Thorium, four times more common than uranium, can be converted to fissile fuel by neutron transmutation in a fast-spectrum reactor. Nuclear fission is an effectively inexhaustible source of energy. It is possible to breed about 5% more fuel from uranium than is consumed, but only about 1% more from thorium. If the goal is to deploy a fleet of new breeder reactors fueled only by recycled fuel, thorium should not be used before sufficient reactors are in service. The first two goals of the IFR project were safety and waste mitigation. The third was fuel economy. The system problem Most energy discussions focus only on components — wind turbines and solar panels. Electricity production and distribution is a system problem, not simply a component problem. In Burden of Proof: A comprehensive review of the feasibility of 100% renewable-electricity systems, Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews 76, Elsevier (2017), pp 1122-1133, Ben Heard et al described an analysis of 24 studies that claimed to explain how to construct and operate regional, national, or continental-scale electricity systems. None of the studies described systems that were physically feasible. Heard et al concluded there was no point to study economic viability. A more serious system problem is that the Earth does not have sufficient materials to build the “technology units” that the International Energy Agency (IEA) demands be built to provide all energy from renewable sources. To stay out of the weeds, here is just one problem: Five times more copper is needed than is known to exist on the Earth in forms that can be recovered.

#### Dramatic expansions of modernized nuclear power are the only feasible path to abate climate change.

Stein ’22 [Adam, Jonah Messinger, Dr. Seaver Wang, Juzel Lloyd, Jameson McBride, and Rani Franovich; July 6; Director of the Nuclear Energy Innovation program at the Breakthrough Institute, published by the Electric Power Research Institute, presented to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and contributed to many high-profile projects, including the first-ever license application for an advanced nuclear reactor in the U.S., Ph.D. and M.S. in Engineering and Public Policy from Carnegie Mellon University where his research focused on changing the paradigm for emergency preparedness and response for nuclear facilities; a non-resident Senior Energy Analyst at the Breakthrough Institute, Ph.D. student at the Cavendish Laboratory of Physics at the University of Cambridge, was a Visiting Scientist and ThinkSwiss Scholar at ETH Zürich, Master’s in Energy and Bachelor’s in Physics from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Breakthrough Institute Co-Director of the Climate and Energy team, PhD in Earth and Ocean Sciences from Duke University as well as a BA in Earth Sciences from the University of Pennsylvania; climate and energy analyst at Breakthrough, Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering at Howard University; graduate student in Technology and Policy at MIT, and a researcher at the MIT Energy Initiative. He studies the political economy of decarbonization, with a focus on US energy and technology policy published in the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, Greentech Media, and the Columbia Political Review; Master of Science in Industrial and Systems Engineering from Virginia Tech; Breakthrough Institute, “Advancing Nuclear Energy,” https://thebreakthrough.org/articles/advancing-nuclear-energy-report]

The Biden Administration has sought to restore America’s leadership in the global fight against climate change by investing in clean energy. The results illuminate the potential contribution of advanced nuclear power to meeting the Biden Administration’s climate goals. Upon taking office, President Biden rejoined the Paris Agreement, which seeks to limit the average global temperature rise by 2100 to 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Research published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggests that an unprecedented increase in global nuclear generation may be required, with global nuclear generation increasing to up to 500 percent of current levels across modeled scenarios, to reach ambitious climate targets like 1.5 C at low cost. President Biden has also announced a policy goal of reaching 100% clean electricity in the United States by 2035. Nuclear already accounts for 48 percent of clean electricity generation in the United States at present, and provides a valuable firm source of power to complement the increasing share of variable renewables on the grid. Meeting the administration’s ambitious climate and energy targets will require continued existing nuclear power plant operation, as well as advanced nuclear reactor deployment. The modeling results, produced with Vibrant Clean Energy, suggest that commercializing advanced nuclear technology could result in rapid growth of clean nuclear generation that would help to meet the administration’s climate goals. The contribution of advanced nuclear to the United States electricity sector in 2050 across the scenarios is summarized in Table 7-1. In the optimistic Low-Cost High-Learning scenario, the least-cost pathway to meeting a 2050 net-zero power sector target in the United States would have nuclear power provide approximately 50 percent of the entire US electricity demand, up from 19 percent today. The majority of this nuclear generation would come from advanced reactors, with the deployment of 469 GWe of advanced nuclear power by 2050. Nuclear energy is able to provide this high share of generation with only 21 percent of the capacity in the electricity system, due to the high capacity factors of nuclear plants relative to other clean sources. Additionally, this growth comes in spite of a steady decline in generation from existing traditional nuclear plants, which declines by 80 percent by 2050 in the Low-Cost High-Learning scenario. The results illustrate the potential importance of advanced nuclear power relative to solar and wind. In the Low-Cost High-Learning scenario, nuclear generation exceeds solar generation by 75 percent and exceeds wind generation by 50 percent in 2050. This suggests that the market size for advanced reactors could substantially exceed the projected large markets for solar and wind power in the course of achieving a future low-cost net-zero power sector. However, finance and policy support would be necessary to achieve the low costs and high learning rates implied by this optimistic scenario. In these modeling results, 20 to 50 GWe of advanced nuclear capacity is deployed by 2035. The contribution of advanced nuclear to the United States electricity sector in 2035 is summarized in Table 7-2. Across the scenarios, advanced nuclear power contributes 3 to 8% of US generation by 2035, with all nuclear generation providing 15 to 19% of US generation that year. In 2035, the percentage of total generation from the sum of conventional and advanced nuclear power plants across all scenarios is comparable to generation from wind or solar. Table 7 2 Table 7-2: Nuclear shares of total US generation and capacity in 2035 (least-cost optimized for 2050 net-zero power sector target). By 2035, the United States achieves around a 60% total reduction of direct power sector CO2 emissions relative to 2020 fossil CO2 emissions across all four of the scenarios. This corresponds to 2035 power sector CO2 emissions of around 700 million metric tons of CO2 (Mt CO2), compared with 2020 emissions of 1,750 Mt CO2. In the model scenarios, power sector emissions fall by 90% relative to 2020 levels by 2045 (175 Mt CO2 in 2045), before the power grid achieves essentially full decarbonization in 2050 (Figure 7-1). Note that the current US grid has already achieved some decarbonization relative to 2010 power sector fossil emissions of 2,400 Mt CO2. The scenarios used in this report were constructed around a 2050 net-zero power sector target rather than the Biden Administration’s 2035 goal for a zero-emission power sector, which means that these results may understate the potential contribution of advanced nuclear technology in reaching a binding 2035 net-zero target. Reaching a 2035 net-zero target would require substantially more policy and financial support. Across the scenarios, around 70% of the United States generation comes from clean sources in 2035.

#### Warming triggers existential planetary ecocide and geopolitical fractures.

Yang ’23 [Ying and Zhi Chen; January 5; M.D Ph.D from Zhejiang University; Ph.D and professor at the School of Medicine at Zhejiang University; 8th Annual International Conference on Social Science and Contemporary Humanity Development, “Severe Situation of Human Impact on Climate Change, Impact on Infectious Diseases and Solutions,” https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202315205001]

Abstract. The activities of the human activities, especially since the industrial revolution caused the greenhouse effect and the severe climate change situation, leading to a variety of suffering such as natural disasters, the collapse of the food system and extinction, also infectious diseases and mental diseases and so on. These grim situation makes most countries reach a consensus of net zero discharge and limiting the temperature rise to 1.5° C. To cope with and adapt to climate change threat in the future, we should carry out cross-regional and multidisciplinary cooperation as much as possible, develop high-tech products for early warning of climate health risks, carry out a number of climate health monitoring projects, strengthen the monitoring and early warning capacity of climate change risks, and work together to maintain and promote a good climate for the earth and human health. 1 Introduction The global human disaster caused by COVID-19 is not over yet, and climate change is increasingly becoming a global focus. Climate change not only exacerbates COVID-19, but also causes or aggravates other diseases or discomfort. Climate change and general health are issues that need to be addressed together with the strength of all mankind. After decades of discussion, climate change has become an urgent issue. Most countries in the world jointly participated in the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, aiming at the core targets of carbon peak and carbon emission. This article also gives some examples of measures to solve the climate problem. We must respect nature, and the climate issue should be an issue that requires a high degree of solidarity among mankind. We should take this as an opportunity to build a cultural environment of solving problems through negotiation and mutual trust among countries on a global scale. Although it is difficult to unite and cooperate in this era of individualism, nationalism and the supremacy of interests, I believe that mankind can unite and find a solution after experiencing the pain of climate change and holding the clear understanding that if it is not solved, it will probably lead to the extinction of ~~mankind~~ [humankind]. 2 Grim situation and consensus on human activities changing climate A team consist of 93 scientists has published a exceptionally comprehensive record of paleoclimatic data across the past 12,000 years. It contains 1,319 data records collected from 679 sites around the world and from samples such as marine sediments, lake sediments, peat, coral, cave sediments and glacial ice cores. From this data, the researchers mapped changes in surface air temperatures over the 12,000 years since the last iceage. The figure is compared to the century average temperature between 1800 and 1900 to track changes likely to be brought about by the Industrial Revolution. As expected, temperatures at the start of the period were much cooler than the 19th century baseline. But over the next few thousand years, temperatures rose steadily, eventually surpassing the baseline. Temperatures peaked 6,500 years ago, and since then, the planet has been slowly but surely cooling, seemingly driven by slow cycles in Earth's orbit, which reduced the amount of sunlight in the northern hemisphere's summer and ultimately led to the 'Little Ice Age' of recent centuries. In a relatively short period since the middle of the 19th century, human activity has increased the average temperature by as much as 1̊ C, a huge peak that is higher than the peak of 6500 years ago (Fig.1) [1]. <<<Figure 1 Omitted>>> A recent report by Xu Chi, a professor at the School of Life Sciences at Nanjing University, showed that, on a global scale, humans have been distributed in more stable climate conditions for the past 6,000 years. The research was conducted using interdisciplinary studies such as ecology, archaeology and climatology. If the global population is to remain in this climatic niche, according to the current trends in climate change, by 2070, some 3 billion people would be living in extreme temperatures similar to those currently found in the heart of the Sahara. Max Callaghan and other researchers used Bert model machine learning to identify and classify 100,000 climate impact research papers, in an attempt to determine how many people in the world are already experiencing the effects of the climate crisis. They drawed important conclusions: For climate change research, it is more focused on richer countries in Europe and North America, with about twice as many studies as low-income countries such as Africa and the Pacific Islands. The combined results show that the vast majority of the world, with more than 80% of the land area and 85% of the population, is currently experiencing the impacts of the climate crisis (Fig.2) [2]. <<<Figure 2 Omitted>>> The people of the Republic of Kiribati, an island nation in the central Pacific Ocean, have been forced to move their homes due to rising sea levels. They are at constant risk of flooding and waves. The rich and the rich countries emit more carbon, while the poor don't even own a house or a car. The poor who are most dependent on nature and want to live in harmony bear more of the impacts of climate change. The modern mode of development and industrialization were brought by the people of rich countries. Their technological strength, sustainable development concept, capital and management strength can also bring about visible results in a short period of time. There is no doubt that developed countries need to take the lead in solving the climate problem. 3 IPCC report The effects of human activities on the climate system has been the core content of every assessment report by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).The latest sixth IPCC assessment report adopted climate models participating in the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phase 6 (CMIP6), so that the impacts of different anthropogenic forcing factors on the climate system can be further recognized and quantified, and the understanding of the effects of human activities on climate change can be deepened. The indicators in different layers of the climate system, including the atmosphere, oceans, cryosphere and the surface of the change of the climate change , can detect the influence of human activity.The sixth time evaluation report suggests extreme cold and extreme warm events change in global and most of the mainland are likely to be the main reason of the greenhouse gases caused by human activities. The intensification of global heavy rainfall in recent decades may also be due to the influence of human activities. The decline in spring snow cover in the Northern Hemisphere since 1950 has also been linked to human activity, which is also likely to be a major driver of the recent universal glacier retreat that has occurred nearly worldwide. Human activity is most likely the main driver of global sea-level rise and ocean heat content increase since the 1970s.On 28 February 2022, the IPCC released its report "Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability". The report argues that warming has pushed the majority of the planet's ecosystems to "hard limits of human adaptation" -- the point at which human societies will be unable to adapt to any more change. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said: Today's IPCC report is an 'atlas of human suffering' ", and the climate problem is worse than ever [3]. The latest IPCC report, which is more than 2,000 pages and was compiled by 270 scientists after reviewing numerous independent studies, provides a comprehensive overview of the entire body of scientific research on climate change, with a focus on its effects on ecosystems, wildlife and human societies. According to the IPCC report, some of the consequences we are already seeing at current levels of warming include: 1) The disease is spreading to more areas 2) Species are dying out everywhere 3) Local animal and plant populations die or migrate, irreversibly changing local ecosystems 4) Plants and mammals died in large numbers due to droughts and heat waves 5) Major food systems begin to collapse 6) Past carbon sinks, such as the Amazon rainforest and Arctic permafrost, turn into sources of greenhouse gas emissions 7) As a result of climate change, half of the world's living things are at present moving habitats, destroying ecosystems everywhere. Half the world's population faces water shortages for at least part of the year. The risks to the food system are high: about 8 percent of the world's farmland could become unusable if warming reaches 1.5 degrees.

### Contention 3 – Climate Leadership

#### Paris withdrawal puts climate leadership up for grabs

Gibson 25 [Kalina Gibson, dual degrees in economics and environmental science and policy from the University of Maryland. 1-21-25, The Trump Administration’s Retreat From Global Climate Leadership, https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-trump-administrations-retreat-from-global-climate-leadership/]

As climate disasters grow in frequency and intensity, from devastating wildfires to relentless hurricanes to record-breaking heat waves, the Trump administration has once again taken a step that threatens to deepen the climate crisis: formally announcing the United States’ withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. In the midst of an escalating climate crisis that’s upending livelihoods and lives, this decision raises urgent questions about the future of national and global progress. Namely, what does it mean for the international climate effort to combat climate change when the world’s largest historical emitter steps away from the table? And what are the implications for Americans already grappling with the mounting costs of a warming planet? Since its adoption in 2015, the Paris Agreement has represented a historic act of global solidarity and a framework for collective accountability in addressing the climate crisis. Nearly 200 nations committed to curbing greenhouse gas emissions, bending the global emissions curve, and striving to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. While progress has been uneven and insufficient, the agreement underscores the power of collective action. At the same time, it fosters transparency and accountability, enabling nations to measure their ambition and progress against one another. This dynamic has not only spurred innovation but also inspired nations to vie for leadership in the global clean energy economy, proving that addressing climate change is both a shared responsibility and a pathway to prosperity. President Donald Trump’s decision to again withdraw does not reflect a failure of the Paris Agreement, but rather signals a profound abdication of leadership. The United States now joins Iran, Libya, and Yemen as the only countries in the entire world not party to the agreement. Other countries have already reaffirmed their commitments to the agreement by announcing their updated nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in an effort to uphold the agreement’s goal despite America’s retreat. Yet the withdrawal sends a troubling message: The United States is an unreliable partner. This is not just about one nation stepping back; it is a deliberate weakening of the multilateral system at a time when global unity has never been more critical to combat the climate crisis. In addition, it will serve to amplify the voice of China, the world’s largest greenhouse gas emitter still at the table. The question now is whether global momentum can overcome the absence of U.S. federal leadership—and what role subnational actors, international partners, and everyday citizens can play in ensuring climate progress continues, even as the clock ticks ever louder.

#### And, investment in nuclear energy is the only way to restore leadership

Pazzanese 25 [Christina Pazzanese, Master of Arts in Regional Studies, News writer at Harvard University, 1-7-25, “Nuclear has changed. Will the U.S. change with it?,” https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2025/01/nuclear-has-changed-will-the-u-s-change-with-it/]

Fueled by artificial intelligence, cloud service providers, and ambitious new climate regulations, U.S. demand for carbon-free electricity is on the rise. In response, analysts and lawmakers are taking a fresh look at a controversial energy source: nuclear power. Two new reactors in Georgia are the first in consecutive years in the U.S. since 1990. In June, Congress overwhelmingly passed the ADVANCE Act, a bipartisan bill that boosts the number of reactors coming on line. Late last year, tech giants Google, Amazon, and Microsoft all pledged to invest in small reactors to help meet their future energy needs. In this edited conversation with the Gazette, Daniel Poneman, a senior fellow at the Belfer Center, discusses the growing momentum behind nuclear power plants. Poneman served as deputy secretary of energy and chief operating officer at the U.S. Department of Energy from 2009 to 2014. From 2015 through 2023 he was CEO of Centrus Energy, a supplier of nuclear fuel to power plants around the world. Is nuclear power making a comeback? I believe the answer is yes, because we have new factors present and they’re all converging to add momentum to nuclear. For a long time, a lot of people have been worried about climate change and reducing carbon emissions. The only source of clean power that’s been proven to work — day or night, season in, season out, in any geographic location, and successfully operating at large scale — that’s nuclear. It’s just shy of 20 percent of our total electricity production and nearly half of our carbon-free electricity. On top of that is this vertiginous increase in electricity demand that’s driven by 1) the AI revolution and 2) the effort to decarbonize not only power generation, which is about one-quarter of total emissions, but also transportation and industrial processes. If you have electric vehicles and you get the power for the vehicles from coal plants, you haven’t solved the emissions problem. The last factor is the hyper scalers, which have the wherewithal and frankly the balance sheets to support these very substantial investments in nuclear. So, you have all of those market-driven factors and strong recognition by the government of the importance of nuclear. I don’t think there’s any issue that has broader or deeper bipartisan support than this one. All of these things are converging to add new momentum to American nuclear energy. Historically, opposition to nuclear power has been linked to safety and environmental concerns — including waste — and on the business side, to high costs and low profits. What’s different — is today’s nuclear power safer, cleaner, more cost-effective? In terms of security, when people were concerned after 9/11, changes were undertaken. And obviously, a lot of lessons were drawn after Fukushima. There has been a continuous set of improvements over the years. When you ask what’s different: There is a whole new generation called advanced reactors. One of the problems over the years is that large reactors got larger and larger, and each one became a bespoke project. There were too many change orders within a single reactor project, and that just kills you on budget. One thing is to go to factory-built, small reactors that can be standardized, punched out like a cookie cutter, the same design over and over. The more of these things you punch out, the cheaper it gets, and the more practice you have installing them, the cheaper it gets. If you do things like that, you can improve on safety and budget. The waste issue depends on the specific reactor technology. Some advanced reactors are based on existing Gen III designs, so their waste would be the same but with smaller quantities because the reactors are smaller. Gen IV reactors use fast neutrons, which allow a more efficient use of fuel and therefore a reduction of total volumes. Some Gen IV reactors can burn used fuel that has already been irradiated, which would have the effect of both burning out some of the minor actinides and turning what is now considered “waste” into a source of more energy. At the end of the day, all nuclear waste, whether from current generation or advanced reactors, will need to be disposed in deep geologic formations; this is a safe process with well-known technology. The Biden administration late last year announced several new U.S. nuclear benchmarks at the United Nations Climate Change Conference. Are those goals realistic? They’re ambitious, but I think they’re necessary if we’re going to reach our targets. At the Belfer Center, I’m working on a project on how to get 200 gigawatts of new nuclear built in the United States by 2050. A bunch of things have to happen right for that to be achievable. But I have great confidence that when there’s something that’s truly important, and people in the United States put their minds to it, we can do great things. But it’s going to take smart government policies. We’re going to have to have lean and effective regulations. We’ve got to figure out a way to spread the cost and risk sufficiently, so you induce people to act sooner rather than later. Government loan guarantees that reduce the cost of capital can both defray first-mover risks and also give confidence to the private sector to co-invest. If we concentrate our efforts, we have a chance to restore U.S. global leadership. What factors will determine whether those goals are reached or derailed? Government is going to have to be there in terms of smart tax policy, in terms of providing things like cost-overrun insurance. The government also can be an important source of demand, especially for small and micro reactors that have potential applications such as supporting micro grids for things that can’t afford to go dark — military bases, things of that character. If there’s a cyber threat from an enemy or from some natural event, I would recommend the government buy a bunch of these small reactors to help them get over that first-of-a-kind challenge that is so hard to overcome for private entrepreneurs who can’t wait decades for an adequate return on investment. Private capital can then take the confidence that comes from having strong co-investment and commitments from the federal side. You’re going to have to have the engineering, procurement, and construction contractors who got rusty over the last few decades get back into the game and execute well. And we’re going to have to have the talent pool grow and training programs at the university level, but also in the trades and organized labor. Many thousands and, ultimately, hundreds of thousands of jobs are needed. You’re going to need well-trained people in the supply chain manufacturing these very precise components and parts. It’s going to take a group effort. And to maintain the social license to do this, we have to bring all of civil society along with us. So far, in recent years, you see a lot of very positive movement in that direction.

#### It's specifically key to climate leadership

Baker et al 20 [James Baker III (Law degree from the university of Texas), George Schultz (PhD in industrial economics from MIT), and Ted Halstead (Masters degree from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government), May/June 2020, The Strategic Case for U.S. Climate Leadership How Americans Can Win with a Pro-Market Solution, <https://clcouncil.org/reports/Foreign-Affairs.pdf>]

Although the United States and its trading partners have a long way to go in reducing emissions, a fundamental paradigm shift is occurring. Climate action and economic growth, far from being mutually exclusive, are not only compatible but also increasingly interdependent. The U.S. economy has prospered in recent decades because the U.S. public and private sectors were the frst to embrace the communications and information technology revolutions. The transition to clean energy promises equally far-reaching economic advantages. Nextgeneration renewables and nuclear energy could substantially drive down the perunit cost of electricity, just as the digital revolution drove down costs in recent decades. That is why China is investing so heavily in these sectors. And that is why the United States could be putting its global economic leadership position at risk if it continues to ignore this transformation.

#### U.S. climate leadership is key to mitigating Middle Eastern tensions.

Todman ’23 [Will; Lubna Yousef; Mennah Abdelwahab; July 11; Senior fellow and deputy director of the Middle East Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington; Former research associate with the CSIS Middle East Program; Program coordinator and research assistant for the CSIS Middle East Program; CSIS, “The Unique Promise of Environmental Cooperation in the Gulf,” https://www.csis.org/analysis/unique-promise-environmental-cooperation-gulf]

The United States has a key but indirect role to play in fostering such a dialogue and an interest in its success. Greater U.S. engagement on environmental issues would help the United States remake its image, demonstrate that it can play a productive regional role, and support its strategies of advancing regional integration and promoting de-escalation of tensions in the Middle East.[6] The United States should encourage its Arab Gulf partners to engage in regional environmental dialogue and help connect experts and civil society members around the Gulf to deepen the understanding of shared environmental concerns and solutions. The Necessity of Regional Action Gulf states share many environmental concerns and most of them are supranational. As such, they require multilateral responses.[7] “The Gulf is a single system, and what happens in one place impacts the rest of us,” an Iranian environmental scientist said.[8] Failing to act benefits no one.[9] Water is a priority for all Gulf states. All eight states surrounding the Gulf suffer from high or extremely high water stress.[10] Bahrain is the most affected, with 3,878 percent water stress, meaning it withdraws 38 times as much water as is supplied from renewable resources each year. Iran has greater natural water resources—which it relies on for its large agricultural sector and electricity generation—but the situation is rapidly deteriorating. In June 2023, more than 200 Iranian parliamentarians wrote an open letter warning that water reserves in two provinces would run out within three months, causing a “humanitarian disaster.”[11] Shortages of water have prompted political instability, sparking widespread protest movements in both Iran and Iraq. Most of the region’s water resources are shared. All identified aquifer systems in the Arabian Peninsula are shared between Saudi Arabia and at least one of its neighbors.[12] Meanwhile, Iran is an upper riparian country of the Tigris basin and the Shatt al-Arab, which are critical sources of water for Iraq. Therefore, states have an interest in collaborating on water resources. Air pollution is also a key regional concern. As well as costing states’ economies billions of dollars each year in GDP losses, increasingly frequent dust storms have grounded planes in Iraq, stopped maritime traffic in Kuwait, and downgraded soil fertility in Iran.[13] In May 2022, a large dust storm engulfed Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), hospitalizing thousands across the region.[14] Meanwhile, dozens of dust storms forming in Iraq have crossed into Kuwait and Iran. The transboundary nature of dust storms exacerbates tensions between states. A Kuwaiti professor said some of her students consider dust storms to be the result of their neighbors’ political decisions rather than naturally occurring environmental phenomena.[15] Successfully tackling sand and dust storms requires multilateral efforts.[16] The Gulf itself is a key economic, strategic, and cultural resource, and maritime pollution is a growing concern. Oil, chemical, and biological pollution come from both land and sea-based sources. From the land, domestic sewage, thermal water from desalination plants, and industrial waste infiltrate the water.[17] From the sea, more than 800 offshore oil and gas platforms are prone to spillage, as are the oil tankers that traverse the Gulf.[18] This pollution has increased fish kill events and harmful algal blooms, leading to a loss of marine biodiversity, undermining the fishing industry, and disrupting oil production. An Iraqi activist said that “we know that states in the region have solutions” to pollution from the oil sector, suggesting it is a promising area for cooperation.[19] Counterclockwise currents in the Gulf render Kuwait and Saudi Arabia vulnerable to any radiation leak from Iran’s Bushehr nuclear facility, which is prone to earthquakes since it lies at the junction of three tectonic plates.[20] Serious contamination of the Gulf would risk a water crisis in Saudi Arabia, which relies on desalination for freshwater. Multilateral efforts to combat marine pollution are therefore imperative to ensure regional states’ economic and security interests. Climate change is placing additional pressure on the region. The Middle East is warming twice as quickly as the global average, which exacerbates water scarcity and the risk of dust storms. Extreme heat events are becoming more common and bring health and economic challenges.[21] “Extreme heat and dust storms will undermine oil production in the region as workers will not be able to be outside in these conditions,” an Iraqi academic said.[22] None of these issues can be adequately addressed unilaterally, and the consequences of environmental degradation will ripple across the region. “A breakdown in Iraq’s ecosystem would impact Saudi Arabia, too,” said an Iraqi academic.[23] But despite the imperative of action, some Gulf governments are only just appreciating that climate change could become an existential threat. Gulf States’ Environmental Strategies Environmental cooperation appears to be the obvious solution to these shared concerns, but it remains difficult in practice. Although environmental issues are gaining unprecedented attention among the public, governments tend to drive policy that has limited engagement with civil society experts or scientists, and there is little cooperation at the regional level.[24] Most environmental action in the Gulf is top-down and unilateral. Competition for regional climate leadership between Gulf Cooperation Council states undermines the prospect of regional collaboration. Saudi Arabia and the UAE seek to engage on climate as middle powers and pursue a leadership role on climate in the Middle East and beyond. At times, this competition has threatened to derail action. In 2021, Saudi Arabia reportedly pressured the UAE not to sign a major solar energy deal with Israel and Jordan because the Saudi crown prince felt it undermined his plans for regional climate leadership.[25] The UAE was the first state in the region to devote serious attention to climate issues. The UAE has hosted the International Renewable Energy Agency since 2009, when it became the first developing state to host a major international organization. The UAE is also a regional leader on nuclear energy and is building the region’s first multiunit nuclear energy plant.[26] When Dubai hosts the 2023 UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) in late 2023, the UAE’s environmental ambitions will receive unprecedented international attention. The Saudi government knows oil producers will come under increasing international scrutiny as the energy transition advances, so it has begun to highlight its efforts toward environmental sustainability. The government is also keen to “flex its regional leadership muscle” and has found environmental action to be a promising line of effort.[27] At the domestic level, it launched the “Saudi Green Initiative,” which it describes as a “whole-of-society” approach to address climate change.[28] The initiative includes targets to cut emissions, grow the green economy, and protect the land and sea. The government also committed to environmental sustainability in its megaprojects, such as Neom and The Line, but much of this rhetoric is yet to materialize. Saudi Arabia’s “Middle East Green Initiative” is the embodiment of its regional ambitions.[29] However, the government has released little information about what the initiative will involve or when its activities will begin.[30] Iran has officially recognized climate change as an existential threat, but it prioritizes action on other areas. A former Iraqi minister said, “Iran may not feel it has the luxury to respond to environmental issues, because it has more pressing priorities, like security challenges stemming from U.S. threats to its regime.”[31] Some Iranian officials blame the United States for its environmental woes, arguing that climate change is “propagated by imperialism” and that U.S. sanctions undermine its climate efforts.[32] Although sanctions do not directly cause Iran’s climate issues, the regime resorted to ill-conceived coping mechanisms to sustain its economy and pursue self-sufficiency, which have placed additional strain on its natural resources.[33] Recently, the Iranian regime has sought to bolster its diplomatic role by convening various regional conferences on environmental issues. Iraq witnesses the effects of climate change and environmental degradation most directly of all Gulf states, from water shortages to debilitating dust storms. However, the government does not yet see climate change as an existential threat.[34] A former minister said, “The Iraqi government’s strategic plan does not mention dust storms in particular and its budget will not allocate funds to tackle them in a serious way.”[35] Iraq only ratified its nationally determined contribution to the Paris Agreement in December 2021, a full five years after the agreement went into effect, and has lost out on opportunities to access climate financing as a result. Smaller Gulf states demonstrate differing levels of environmental focus. States like Bahrain and Kuwait are largely late to the game and wait for their neighbors to lead on climate action. These states are not just waiting for investment in environmental initiatives, but also for the spillover effect that comes when influential states in the region push other governments to tackle environmental issues.[36] Although some Gulf states’ unilateral environmental initiatives are ambitious, an analyst warned that “other Gulf states are unlikely to sign up for something that they did not help shape.”[37] Regional collaboration on a new initiative is therefore necessary. A New Climate for Diplomacy Conditions are currently ripe to push for environmental diplomacy. Regional environmental action is a growing priority for states in the Gulf, the tools to tackle some environmental issues are readily available, and recent normalization agreements create a new impetus for regional diplomacy. Environmental dialogue has proven productive in other contexts. Environmental issues are gaining unprecedented attention among both the different populaces and governments in the Gulf. Record temperatures, water shortages, and increasingly frequent dust storms are clear evidence for the public of the changing climate.[38] Across the region, states have emphasized environmental issues, including by forming new ministries, renaming national oil companies, setting national climate targets, and hosting environmental dialogues.[39] COP28 in Dubai will bring unprecedented attention to environmental issues in the region, and this increased attention will prompt greater government prioritization of climate action. Governments are also articulating the necessity of regional action.[40] Saudi Arabia’s “Middle East Green Initiative” shows its ambitions to engage on climate issues outside of its own borders. COP28 in Dubai will feature a series of side discussions on regional climate issues. And Iran has a clear interest in regional collaboration on sand and dust storms because it is largely downstream of storms that form in neighboring states.[41] Gulf states are also able to lead their own environmental initiatives. The necessary technology and tools to tackle climate and environmental issues are increasingly available, reducing regional states’ reliance on external actors to facilitate environmental action.[42] For example, many technologies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and advance environmental sustainability, such as renewable energy systems and smart agricultural technologies, are readily available off-the-shelf and do not require technological partnerships with Great Powers.[43] The region also has a wealth of homegrown climate expertise. Iranian scientists are global leaders, and graduates of a sustainable water management program at Oman’s state university are well-placed to use their expertise across the region. It is the opportune moment to use environmental cooperation as a confidence-building measure. Because there has been relatively little environmental action to date, a Saudi climate expert said, “There are lots of low-hanging fruit.”[44] Conservation efforts, greening initiatives, and efforts to reduce pollution are just a few of several promising areas for coordination and cooperation that exist right now. It will become harder to tackle environmental issues a decade from now, as the energy transition will have advanced considerably and the remaining environmental issues will require more fundamental shifts in behavior for Gulf states.[45] Those two trends will make confidence building harder in the future. The recent normalization agreements also provide a new window of opportunity to test the potential for environmental diplomacy. These agreements demonstrate Gulf states’ desire to de-escalate and reveal that both Saudi Arabia and Iran have determined the cost of continued hostilities outweighs the benefit. These states have expressed their desire to find areas of cooperation. In a June 2023 tour of Arab Gulf capitals, the Iranian foreign minister expressed his interest in a regional dialogue.[46] It is the opportune moment to use environmental cooperation as a confidence-building measure. Environmental dialogue in other contexts has helped normalize contact between adversaries and has prepared the ground for negotiations on more challenging areas. In the 1990s, the Madrid process included multilateral tracks on the environment and water, which facilitated contact between Israelis, Palestinians, Jordanians, Syrians, and Egyptians for the first time and built the foundation for talks on more difficult issues. More consequentially, the Trifinio Plan promoted local economic development and sought to control environmental change in the border area between rival states in Central America. It was the foundation of increased coordination and cooperation between El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua and was “instrumental in developing the idea of a more closely integrated Central America,” which endures to this day.[47] More recently, in the context of heightened tension levels between the United States and China, efforts to tackle climate change have been a key area of cooperation. Environmental dialogue is often successful because the issues are seen as less contentious and because talks are dominated by technical experts rather than politicians.    Enduring Obstacles Despite its promise, environmental collaboration must overcome several challenges. An ongoing lack of trust, diverging interests, and an institutional lacuna are the greatest obstacles to environmental collaboration in the region. The normalization agreements are still new, and Gulf states are distrustful of others’ motives. A Tehran-based political scientist said that since President Trump withdrew from the Iran deal in 2018, the Iranian regime fears that even negotiations on something as benign as air pollution could open them up to security risks.[48] For these reasons, states in the region are hesitant to share any environmental data. The uncertain trajectory of relations with Iran also deters Arab Gulf states from making major investments. Saudi investors say they have little incentive to support projects in Iran or Iraq amidst political uncertainty out of a fear of investing in soon-to-be stranded assets.[49] The lack of trust even frustrates collaboration between civil society members. An Iranian oceanographer said authorities refused to allow scientists to share seismic data with Omani counterparts due to national security concerns.[50] Cultural tensions also undermine his ability to collaborate with his Arab neighbors. When banners at a Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) meeting in Tehran referred to the “Persian Gulf” (as opposed to the “Arabian Gulf”), some Arab participants became angry.[51] They then refused to organize future workshops with his institute. Some environmental issues are still seen in zero-sum terms, and diverging interests work against collaboration. For these reasons, water diplomacy remains a distant prospect. If a regional state agreed to share some of its water resources with its neighbors, it would bolster the neighbors’ standing at its own expense. Some interviewees also doubted that Saudi Arabia would engage in any environmental action that would strengthen the Iranian regime in the process, and they suggested that the costs of engaging with Iran may outweigh the benefits. The parties to the Abraham Accords need to balance their relationship with Israel when they consider collaborating with Iran, and the prospect of Saudi Arabia normalizing with Israel may also constrain its freedom of movement in environmental diplomacy with Iran.[52] Finally, an institutional lacuna means there is no obvious venue to host environmental diplomacy in the Gulf.[53] ROPME is the only organization that includes all Arab Gulf states and Iran, but interviewees stated that it has been largely inactive in recent years and that Iranian participation is minimal.[54] “It seems like more of an Arab organization than a regional one,” an Iranian scientist said.[55] Beyond ROPME, it is not clear which areas of the countries’ different governments or even which UN agency has ownership of these issues.[56] This institutional gap also undermines the establishment of common understanding on environmental issues. “The impact of climate change in the region has not been clearly established with data,” a Qatar-based climate activist said.[57] Making Environmental Diplomacy Work Despite the challenges, environmental diplomacy holds unique promise in the region. Environmental dialogue would build routine contact between governments in the region and serve as a confidence-building mechanism. It could also lead to the establishment of economic ties further down the line. Even if dialogue does not yield significant environmental collaboration, it would serve other goals. Minor or symbolic forms of collaboration could demonstrate the benefits of cooperation to populaces and governments alike. Therefore, Gulf states should pursue a step-by-step approach, beginning with small interventions and then expanding.[58] An agreement for regional states to increase their efforts toward protecting biodiversity would be a promising first step. Biodiversity is a unifying issue that does not require significant intergovernmental activity and has clear storytelling value.[59] For example, each Gulf state could nominate an endangered species and encourage its neighbors to support its efforts in protecting it. If successful, these efforts could then widen to maritime conservation, including efforts to curb the pollution of the Gulf and combat illegal fishing.[60] Expanding Saudi Arabia’s tree planting initiative to Iraq as part of an effort to combat dust storms would also serve as a helpful early step, which would benefit Iran as well. Although its results would not manifest in the short term, it would be clearly visible to the public in the affected areas.[61] Environmental dialogue would build routine contact between governments in the region and serve as a confidence-building mechanism. For these first efforts, diplomats should focus on the process rather than the outcome.[62] If these efforts can normalize diplomatic contact and discussions on less sensitive issues, they could buy some calm. It is critical that these efforts have local design and do not rely on external experts that impose their preconceived ideas on the process. Conveners should also stress terms that resonate with all actors in the region. For example, references to Islamic values of stewardship of the environment will be more effective than rhetoric about greenhouse gases and man-made climate change. Although environmental diplomacy can only succeed at the government level, nongovernmental actors can support it in helpful ways. Collaborations between academics from different states working on environmental issues could create a common body of evidence on climate change’s effects in the region. Experts can also help influence their governments’ approach to environmental diplomacy by providing ideas at both the technical and political levels. In addition, they can sell the wide-reaching benefits of environmental action to government officials, including its ability to bolster food security, improve health, and bring economic benefits. For example, the credit rating agency Moody’s integrates environment, social, and governance (ESG) risks into its credit analysis for all sectors globally.[63] The U.S. Role The United States would benefit from regional environmental diplomacy in the Gulf. President Biden’s national security strategy focuses on supporting de-escalation and integration in the Middle East, but after years of failed nuclear negotiations, there appear few good opportunities for the United States to support efforts toward stabilizing the Gulf.[64] That said, environmental cooperation is one of those opportunities. It is economical and low risk, so it is an effective way to test Gulf states’ desire to build trust. The results of efforts to build environmental cooperation would be instructive to U.S. policymakers, as it would either reinforce or undermine their understanding of Gulf states’ regional strategies in the new environment. President Biden has also made climate action a priority. Supporting environmental initiatives in the Gulf would help one of the regions that will suffer the effects of climate change most acutely, but it would also support the United States’ political aims. As the United States is reconfiguring its role in the Middle East, a greater push for environmental cooperation would help remake its image in the region. Further, failing to engage more substantially on the environment would open up more space for China, which would undermine the ability of U.S. companies and analysts to help shape the transition to sustainability.[65]

#### Middle Eastern war is coming now and goes nuclear---only diplomacy averts extinction.

Al Makahleh ’24 [Shebab; June 28; Senior media and policy consultant in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, he has been working for several Middle Eastern countries as a political, military and security expert; The Jordan Times, “The Middle East tinderbox: Averting specter of nuclear catastrophe,” https://jordantimes.com/opinion/shehab-al-makahleh/middle-east-tinderbox-averting-specter-nuclear-catastrophe]

In a chilling roundtable discussion attended by a diverse array of scholars, professors and experts from renowned universities, think tanks and policy institutes, the fragile state of global affairs took centre stage. With the esteemed Professor Joseph Nye of Harvard University present, the conversation gravitated towards the Middle East, a region that has the potential to ignite a catastrophic nuclear war. The geopolitical landscape is increasingly defined by the rift between Russia and China, and their alliance, on one side, and the United States and NATO, on the other. This escalating tension is exacerbated by the mutual threats and saber-rattling across various flashpoints, from the Taiwan Strait to the Ukraine conflict, and from the Korean Peninsula to the volatile Middle East. The rift between the Russia-China alliance and the US-NATO axis has intensified in recent years, with both sides engaging in a perilous game of geopolitical brinkmanship. In the Middle East, this tension manifests in the proxy conflicts and power struggles playing out, from the war in Syria to the turmoil in Libya and Yemen. These regional conflicts have become entangled with the larger strategic competition between the great powers. Russia’s intervention in Syria, for example, was seen as an attempt to bolster its influence in the region and challenge the US-led order. Similarly, China’s growing economic and diplomatic ties with countries like Iran have raised concerns about its intentions in the Middle East. The Middle East, a powder keg of political, religious and ideological divisions, stands as the most immediate and perilous threat to global stability. The delicate balance of power in this region, coupled with the proliferation of nuclear capabilities, has created a scenario where the potential for miscalculation and unintended escalation looms large. The presence of nuclear weapons in the region further heightens the risks. Israel, widely believed to possess a sizeable nuclear arsenal, has long been a source of concern for its neighbours. The ongoing tensions between Iran and the West over Tehran’s nuclear program have also raised the specter of a potential nuclear confrontation. Furthermore, the unresolved disputes between India and Pakistan, both nuclear-armed states, and the precarious situation on the Korean Peninsula, where North Korea’s nuclear ambitions pose a threat to South Korea and Japan, create a complex web of nuclear flashpoints that could ignite a larger conflagration. In this volatile environment, the potential for miscalculation and unintended escalation is extremely high. A single mistake or misjudgement by any of the involved parties could trigger a chain reaction leading to a nuclear exchange. The fragile balance of deterrence that has held for decades is now under immense strain, as the risk of miscommunication and miscalculation increases. The numbers alone are staggering. The United States, Russia and China possess the lion’s share of the world’s nuclear stockpile, with the US and Russia maintaining over 5,000 nuclear warheads each, and China’s arsenal estimated to be in the hundreds. The volatile situation on the Korean Peninsula, with North Korea’s growing nuclear capabilities, further compounds the risk, as the fragile deterrence between North and South Korea, and Japan, hangs by a thread. In this precarious geopolitical landscape, the role of leadership and diplomacy becomes paramount. The nations involved must navigate the treacherous waters of strategic ambiguity, where the slightest misstep could unleash a chain reaction leading to unthinkable devastation. The path to averting this nuclear catastrophe lies in the hands of those with the foresight, courage, and diplomatic acumen to bridge the widening chasm between the global powers. It will require a fundamental shift in mindset, from the zero-sum game of political grandstanding to the recognition that the survival of humanity is the ultimate prize. The Middle East, with its entrenched conflicts and competing interests, presents the greatest challenge in this quest for peace. Resolving longstanding disputes, addressing the root causes of regional tensions, and cultivating a culture of mutual understanding and compromise must be the guiding principles. As the world watches with bated breath, the onus falls upon the leaders of these nations to rise above their own egos and ideological differences. The specter of nuclear war, once unthinkable, now looms large, and the consequences of inaction are unimaginable. Averting this nuclear catastrophe will require a concerted effort on multiple fronts. Diplomacy and dialogue must be prioritised, with the great powers engaging in substantive negotiations to address the underlying drivers of tension. Confidence-building measures, such as the establishment of clear communication channels and the implementation of crisis management mechanisms, can help reduce the risk of escalation. Regional conflict resolution efforts must also be intensified, with the involvement of all stakeholders, including the local actors and the global powers. The resolution of longstanding disputes, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the tensions in the Persian Gulf, can help create a more stable and secure regional environment. Moreover, the strengthening of global governance institutions and the reinforcement of international norms and laws regarding the use of nuclear weapons can contribute to a more stable and predictable international order. The time for action is now. The world cannot afford to be mere spectators to the unfolding drama in the Middle East. A concerted effort, guided by reason and a shared commitment to the preservation of human civilisation, must be undertaken to extinguish the flames of conflict and chart a course towards lasting peace. Ultimately, the key to averting a nuclear catastrophe in the Middle East lies in the ability of the global community to transcend narrow self-interests and work towards the common goal of preserving humanity. The stakes are too high, and the consequences too dire, to allow the pursuit of short-term political gains to jeopardise the future of our species.