

### Combating Climate Change

There's a consensus in the scientific community that manmade, excess CO2 emissions are damaging the structural integrity of our atmosphere. This is not simply a domestic issue; the emergence of the global society has rendered climate change a global issue (whether we like it or not). The fact that US political parties disagree on the extent to which climate change is an issue is inconsequential; the incontrovertible truth is that climate change stands as one of the greatest challenges that the international order as a whole has ever experienced. I am of the belief that, in order to successfully combat climate change, international actors must come together and write a policy that ensures governments across the globe take tactful steps to reduce this potentially devastating threat to the global society.

Throughout my time at college, I have always heard: "Climate change is a real issue and the US government should exhaust all measures to stop its progression before it's too late." I wholeheartedly agree with this assertion. However, I believe it's irresponsible if the US government reduces domestic CO2 emissions without first certifying that our rivals across the globe – namely China and Russia – are leaning towards/in agreement that their governments must act in a similar fashion. I am not advocating that the US should avoid the issue of climate change and leave it up for the subsequent generation to rectify. Instead, I contend that climate change is a global issue, not a domestic political issue. This is to say that, from a global perspective, it means nothing if the US *alone* enacts policy that limits the extent of climate change. If we enact policy that restricts CO2 emissions, that does nothing to confirm that other global powers are doing the same. In fact, our rivals such as Russia and China might see this as an opportunity to gain a leg up on the US. This would obviously be catastrophically bad, as

foreign adversaries might seek territorial conquest if we falter as an economic and militaristic powerhouse. With the emergence of a global society, we must ensure that as many foreign states as possible are on board with legislating either global or domestic policies to combat this ostensibly deadly issue. Our political leaders need to get to the negotiating table with foreign heads of states and discuss how the world as a whole will go about overcoming this pressing matter. Should we transition to renewable energy exclusively? This would be incredibly costly and use up vital government resources. Should we eliminate fossil fuels entirely, or just ban a few such as coal, gasoline, and oil? These are incredibly complex questions with multifaceted, complicated answers. That's why my contention is that world leaders must quickly put aside national interests and do what's right for the world and its 7-8 billion residents. One must also take into account that virtually all international institutions (the EU, IMF, WTO, UN, etc.) must be willing to sign on the dotted line, effectively mandating that the world will do anything in its power to battle the spread of climate change. This requires that world leaders – who are humans just like you and I – place global needs over national needs. There is no tangible evidence that indicates another planet in the universe can sustain human life, so we better start to bargain if we want humans to inhabit the Earth centuries from now. Thanks to a booming economy due in large part to both Obama and Trump economic policies, I maintain that the US still has the credibility to facilitate this type of conference. Although the President and both political parties are incredibly divisive (in my estimation) and are the butt of many international jokes, we're still the United States of America. Not only are we the most prosperous nation in the history of the world, but the most influential as well. We still have the credibility to call for an international meeting dedicating to implementing policy that combats climate change. If the US leads the charge on this issue facing the entirety of mankind, other superpowers will comply. We are the

world's best shot to kick start the fight. Therefore, I believe that the US is morally obligated to broker some type of transnational agreement that ensures our grandchildren and their grandchildren alike have a clean, beautiful earth to live on.

The toughest obstacle to this type of action is the deep division within our domestic government that are exacerbated by liberals and conservatives alike. It's simultaneously sad and troubling that the two US political parties are so deeply polarized on such a critical problem that plagues the planet we inhabit. When it comes to climate change, Republicans and Democrats are at opposite ends of the spectrum: one side of the aisle (inexplicably) believes that climate change isn't all that serious, while their opponents (preemptively) decree that the Earth is quickly running out of time (10-20 years). Like all things, I am of the opinion that the truth likely lies somewhere in the middle. Since I am not a scientific expert, my estimation carries little weight, so I will not go into detail. However, I do believe I'm qualified to expound upon the modern day societal epidemic of political divisiveness thanks to identity politics. Instead of fostering bipartisan support on an issue we should all agree on (since we all live on planet Earth), politicians are more concerned with placating constituents with platitudes about climate change, polarization, and gaining power.

The final, and perhaps most important, matter to take into account is the cost of combatting climate change. In an ideal world, all governments throughout the world will unite by pooling together their capital and resources in a coordinated effort to halt (or significantly decrease the rate of climate change). However, world leaders must tackle this issue in a feasible manner. In other words, someone has to foot the bill. Recent natural disasters have cost the US \$300 billion in weather-related emergencies in 2017, while China's water scare and loss of roughly 28,000 rivers might cost the Chinese government roughly \$50 billion (Bubsy 40). This is

all well and good, but what happens when these natural disasters affect relatively poor countries? The US provided Pakistan with \$390 million in relief aid and 13,000 troops to the Philippines in 2010 and 2013, respectively. Again, in an ideal world rich countries like the US and China will always offer assistance to less prosperous countries in their times of need, but is this feasible on a global scale to combat climate change? The answer may be yes; it may be no, but we must come together and deliberate with logic and reason if we wish to defeat/reduce the effects of climate change.

The statistics behind climate change are frankly startling and only further prove that it is a global (not domestic) issue. In fact, a 2018 survey found that participants named climate change as the top international threat, followed by ISIS and cyber attacks (Poushter). It's clear that the global society sees climate change as an existential threat, so we have to listen to the people and take this extremely seriously. Due to the emergence of a highly globalized society, we have to think on a worldwide as opposed to national scale when talking about issues such as climate change. Additionally, the World Economic Forum's *Global Risks Report 2016* identifies climate change as the biggest threat to the global economy. This was the first time an environmental issue was among the threats in the report since 2006. According to their findings, climate change ranked higher than weapons of mass destruction, the water crisis, large-scale involuntary migration, and energy price shocks in terms of having greater potential damage (Cann). These numbers are stunning, yet they perfectly encapsulate my exact point: climate change is not an issue exclusive to one country; it poses a looming risk to us all. The global society that has formed over the past century must work together to overcome this impediment to sustained human life of earth. This is confirmed by the Office of the Director of US National Intelligence's yearly Worldwide Threat Assessment Report, which states "the negative effects of

environmental degradation and climate change... fuel competition for resources, economic distress, and social discontent through 2019 and beyond” (Banis). After reading all these reports, it’s quite shocking to me that the international community has yet to act. The environment is a public (not private) good, since it is non-excludable and non-rival. However, this poses a free rider problem, as some countries will simply “go along for the ride” and not contribute their fair share to reducing the effects of climate change. This is why we need leaders to come together and enact transnational policies in a timely and efficient manner.

My central claim is that we are likely to see success in confronting climate change if we unite first as a country by healing deep partisan divisions, and then consolidate resources/capital on a global scale. It’s time for world leaders to put aside their differences and actively solve the unremitting spread of climate change. In this paper I was hoping to provide my own analysis on climate change as a global issue. I concluded with a few stats only to reinforce, and not make, my thesis: transnational actors must cooperate with each other and take a hard stance against what is touted as the greatest threat to the global society.

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