

POSC 1020 Introduction to International Relations

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Adapt or Perish: How the Inescapable Effects of Climate Change Relate to International
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Adapt or perish. This is how Alice Hill titled her article imploring the reader to understand the severity of the effects our changing climate can have on several aspects of our future lives. Within her article she describes why it is imperative for the U.S government to adapt their policies and opinions of climate change in order to avoid catastrophic consequences in the future. The article starts off explaining what the future might look like should we not attempt to prepare ourselves for eminent change and what should begin to happen in order to prepare. The article then covers the topic of getting communities to safer ground regarding rising sea levels, flooding, and wildfire zones. She then goes on to discuss how difficult it is to gain access to climate information and how while the government uses taxpayer dollars to fund data collection and analysis but makes it incredibly difficult for citizens to also view this information, spreading the data across several different pages, forums, and hubs. Proceeding that, the costs of such an endeavor as preparing for climate change is also discussed. She explains the significance of investing in being prepared rather than paying large expenses in clean up and reparations. Lastly, she discusses how polarizing the topic of climate change is within the government and policymaking. She explains how important it is for government officials as well as private corporations and citizens to realize how extreme the issue of climate change is and beginning to act not only to prepare for the events of the future but to prevent the worst of them.

Now to discuss how this article relates to this class and the readings for this topic. The main idea of both the article and this chapter within the textbook is creating policies and lifestyles that promote sustainability and are prepared for changes in the future, both environmental and climate related as well as consequences of such environmental changes. Hill discusses in the section of her article titled “FINDING SAFER GROUND” the difficulty the U.S government has faced in attempting to relocate communities within zones at high risk of flooding or wildfires, as well as the incredible costs incurred in doing such. (Hill 2020, sect. 2) She also discusses how the government is running into issues regarding this as the ideal “prime real estate” is often defined as property on the coastline, thus often at risk of flooding due to rising sea level. Similarly, the textbook discusses the creating policies that lead towards sustainable development and living. Moving these communities, simply barring developers from building within “at risk” areas as well as implementing building codes geared towards future environmental issues absolutely ties into the ideology of sustainable development discussed within the text. The text defines “sustainable development” as growth that does not undermine itself by depleting resources at a dramatic rate. (Goldstein 2021, pg. 352) Allowing communities to be built within these zones as well as not require buildings to be built up to codes that would anticipate future risks would certainly dramatically deplete the government’s resources in requiring heavy costs when and not if an extreme climate caused disaster occurs.

In addition to discussing sustainable development, Hill talks about how groups that collect climate data and analyze it do not tend to work together as well as making such data and information not accessible to the public to use to aid in preparation for potential future events. She explains how regional climate data is and how the public faces different issues across the entirety of the country. Similarly, the text describes how climate change issues are a global

problem and require collaborative efforts in order to mitigate causes of climate change such as pollution and depletion of natural resources and prepare for future climate related events and changes.

While these topics relate to a multitude of climate related current events, the easiest ones to pinpoint would be the past couple of years within the U.S and historic number of natural disasters Americans have experienced recently. Just last year the U.S was subject to 18 separate \$1 billion weather and climate related disasters, placing 2022 tied with 2017 and 2011 for third most billion-dollar catastrophes in a year. First highest with 22 is 2020, followed by 2021 with 20. In total, the U.S has experienced 341 similar events, costing over \$2.475 trillion. The U.S has also lost roughly 5,000 people and paid almost \$1 trillion in damages within the past 7 years as climate issues have skyrocketed and become an increasingly prevalent issue. Hill's article takes this into account explaining how important it is for governments to prepare for future events, investing in fail safes and plans rather than incurring the massive expenses of trying to pick up the pieces after a major disaster. She illustrates just how costly not preparing for imminent future events can be. Furthermore, the text describes several instances of how other countries are taking future climate disasters into consideration and investing in the future of their citizens. An example provided is how the melting polar ice caps are causing sea levels to rise and therefore countless islands in the Pacific are at high risk of disappearing within the next century. It also mentions the fund set in place by the government of the Maldives to buy land in other countries to allow the relocation of 300,000 residents as their land is swallowed by the ocean. (Goldstein 2021, pg. 352)

In conclusion, while Hill primarily discusses past mistakes, what needs to be done, and future problems should we not adapt with the changing climate within the U.S, the points she

discusses, such as investing in our future and preparing for problems rather than playing catch up goes hand-in-hand with the discussion brought up about how imperative it is that the world begin developing more sustainably as well as working collaboratively to face the issue of climate change as a whole. Hill says the U.S government needs to understand the regionality of climate issues, similarly, world leaders need to begin working together as while the changing climate affects us all differently, we are all citizens of the world.

Works Cited

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