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The SAIS Review Editorial Board

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Letter from the Editors

Plan(et) A: Addressing the Climate Crisis

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Human-driven climate change poses a continual and existential threat to our planet. This crisis disproportionately impacts developing nations and indigenous populations and inhibits human and economic development around the world. Annually, climate change-induced extreme weather events take thousands of lives, displace millions, and destabilize governments. These challenges have reached new heights in recent years as historic flooding in Nigeria and Pakistan uprooted tens of millions; devastating wildfires engulfed Greece, Italy, and Spain; and melting glaciers precipitously elevated global sea levels, threatening to erase coastal populations and small island nations. Less than two years ago marked the end of the world's warmest decade on record. From widespread economic insecurity to exacerbated military conflicts, the climate crisis poses intersectional, unabating threats to world peace and stability. Despite these momentous challenges set before our generation, the editors of the *SAIS Review of International Affairs* remain optimistic.

Our optimism is abundant as Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) enters its 80th year and a new building at 555 Pennsylvania Avenue NW in Washington, DC during the Summer of 2023. Writing for the *SAIS Review* in Autumn 1963, SAIS Professor Paul Linebarger characterized the creation of our school twenty years prior as persisting on "the basis of nothing but a little money, a lot of hope, and enormous talent." In the six decades since his writing, SAIS has cultivated countless students prepared to meet the United States' and the world's most pressing challenges, outlined each year in the pages of the *SAIS Review*.

This edition of the *SAIS Review of International Affairs* has the bittersweet distinction of being the last edition published from our office in 1619 Massachusetts Avenue, and the first dedicated entirely to assessing the impacts of climate change and practical policy solutions to address its root causes. *Plan(et) A: Addressing the Climate Crisis* explores the intersectionality of climate change with major global trends and challenges including energy, financial systems, governance, injustice, and state sovereignty.

The issue begins with **Anne Andreassen** and **Connemara Doran**, who analyze the negative impact of climate change on electrical grid resilience using the 2021 Texas polar vortex as a case study, weather data, and data on

mixed sources of electricity generation. The authors determine that resilience is a global challenge because it is local: each climate-induced crisis provides lessons for averting disaster elsewhere. They explain that officials must address local resilience gaps to avoid using natural gas as a “bridge fuel” in the transition to renewable forms of electricity generation. While the transition to non-fossil fuels is ongoing and necessary to address the impacts of climate change, interdependence on different energy sources may exacerbate resilience gaps in electrical grids. The Texas polar vortex and other intense weather events linked to global warming highlight the need to address local resilience gaps to manage the impact of climate-induced energy crises.

The next two works address country- and region-specific concerns and opportunities related to combating climate change. **Wilder Alejandro Sánchez** writes about the need for Kazakhstan to implement a comprehensive domestic green strategy and a green multivector foreign policy. The Central Asian state has faced environmental challenges with greater frequency in recent years. A severe drought in the summer of 2021 gravely impaired agricultural industries throughout the country. Kazakhstan, known for its steppe, will struggle to keep its terrain green in the long term. Sánchez argues that Kazakhstan can and will be able to protect its land and waters through sound “green” policies, which will require leadership, foresight, and collaboration with allies.

Nitya Labh highlights the existential and legal threats of climate change for Pacific Island states and peoples. She outlines how climate change disproportionately affects small island developing states (SIDS), including Vanuatu and its Pacific Island neighbors. The author explains that Pacific SIDS confront sea-level rise, ocean acidification, and extreme weather events, which threaten their existence; sovereignty; and legal, economic, and cultural survival. Labh assesses that international maritime law insufficiently safeguards small island states from the harsh impacts of climate change, despite strides taken through the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and regional initiatives.

However, Labh writes that countries can set a legal precedent for “[protecting] vulnerable states from the impacts of climate change” by supporting Pacific Island states in international forums including the ICJ. After the time of her writing, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on March 31, 2023, cosponsored by 130 countries, requesting the ICJ to issue an advisory opinion on states’ obligations concerning climate change.

Where the previous two articles focused on policy-oriented strategies and legal implications of climate change, **Noah Yosif** emphasizes the need to address climate risk regarding global macroprudential policy. He discusses the shortcomings within the Basel Accords and their inability to properly address both physical and transition risks related to climate change. Yosif proposes several recommendations that would enable the Basel Accords to improve their long-term oversight of climate-related issues, while encouraging institutions within the global financial system to assume leadership over the transition towards a sustainable economy. He emphasizes the importance of having an enhanced international macroprudential policy framework to protect against the catastrophic consequences of inaction on climate change.

Amar Causevic, Nabil Haque, Matthew LoCastro, Sujeetha Selvakumar, Sasja Beslik, and Sara Causevic close the issue by highlighting the need for higher amounts of bilateral climate finance in order to improve the readiness to address this issue and reduce vulnerability to climate change impacts. From three indices, Causevic et al. identify ten countries with the lowest governance scores from 2016 to 2020. The authors argue that developed countries with high democracy scores must support developing countries through climate finance. By providing climate finance to developing countries, developed nations can ensure that the costs and benefits of addressing climate change are shared equitably. They believe this would be a crucial step toward protecting vulnerable populations and addressing climate injustice.

The 2022-23 Editorial Board hopes that this volume is a small reflection of the “enormous talent” SAIS has displayed in addressing global challenges for the past eight decades. This issue offers insights and guidance on one of humanity’s greatest modern challenges.

We express our sincerest gratitude to the authors of *Plan(et) A* for their illuminating contributions and to the assistant editors for their diligent review and editing of this journal’s content. Our work is only possible with the guidance of the SAIS Review Advisory Board; the tireless support of the SAIS Foreign Policy Institute, FPI Executive Director (and our Faculty Advisor) Ambassador Cinnamon Dornsife, and Ginny Rosell. We thank our peers and faculty at Johns Hopkins University SAIS and congratulate the school on both its 80-year anniversary and move to our new home at 555 Pennsylvania Avenue.