

# Introduction

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This issue of *Global Environmental Politics* brings together a wide array of articles on topics central to the study of global environmental politics, that range from the importance of international environmental agreements and transparency to climate change and the fossil fuel industry.

The issue begins with a fascinating and frightening forum article by Sarah M. Jordaan, Afreen Siddiqi, William Kakenmaster, and Alice C. Hill, titled “The Climate Vulnerabilities of Global Nuclear Power.” Most discussions of nuclear power and climate change involve the debate over the positives of nuclear power as a low-greenhouse-gas energy source versus the negatives of nuclear waste. This forum, however, delves into a more troubling relationship—the impact of climate change on nuclear power—detailing the threats to nuclear power facilities from climate change impacts like heat waves and sea level rise. These threats demand more and better international cooperation and standards around nuclear plants, but they have emerged at a nadir of global cooperative efforts around nuclear energy. This forum lays out the challenges and possible directions forward on this crucial issue.

A long-standing question in global environmental politics is whether treaties matter. This question is usually applied to multilateral environmental agreements, but Clara Brandi, Dominique Blümer, and Jean-Frédéric Morin, in “When Do International Treaties Matter for Domestic Environmental Legislation?” broaden its scope to examine preferential trade agreements with environmental provisions alongside MEAs, finding the former have *more robust* impacts on domestic environmental legislation. Leveraging their fine-grained dataset on trade agreements (see Jean-Frédéric Morin, Andreas Dür, and Lisa Lechner, “Mapping the Trade and Environment Nexus: Insights from a New Data Set” in *Global Environmental Politics* 2018 18 (1): 122-139), they identify several additional relationships that advance our understanding of how international agreements affect domestic environmental legislation, including variation in impacts across specific issues as well as developed and developing countries.

In their article on the Paris Agreement and the US fossil fuel industry, Lukas Hermwille and Lisa Sanderink offer a timely analysis of climate change and its effects on global economies and societies. The authors examine how the Paris Agreement provides a strong signal for shifting decision makers in the US fossil fuel industry to take action regarding climate change policy, most notably at a time when the US government under President Donald Trump has pulled

out of the Paris Agreement. In order to look at the impact of the Paris Agreement and more broadly at the impact of international governance on domestic politics, the authors highlight competing discourses and narratives about the fossil fuel industry. They find that the election of Trump has led to a narrative shift, especially surrounding the coal industry versus the oil and gas industry.

In “What Drives Norm Success? Evidence from Anti-Fossil Fuel Campaigns,” Mathieu Blondeel, Jeff Colgan, and Thijs Van de Graaf address an issue at the heart of key theoretical debates in international relations *and* of crucial empirical and practical concern in global environmental politics. Grasping when emergent norms are likely to catch on has vexed constructivists and rationalists alike. This article proposes that a key to norm success is whether and how norm-promoting campaigns are able to solve additional problems beyond the intended effect of the norm itself. They explore this argument in the context of fossil fuel subsidy reform and divestment movements, showing that the relative success of subsidy reform norms can be traced to how they help policy makers with financial stability concerns.

Adam Bumpus, Thu-Ba Huynh, and Sophie Pascoe, in their article on “Making REDD+ Transparent: Opportunities for Mobile Technology,” focus on climate finance mechanisms. Given the importance of transparency for promoting better governance, participation, and accountability across the environmental spectrum, they investigate the role of transparency as it relates to the transfer of information among a wide array of state and non-state actors vested in reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+). Specifically, they examine ways in which technologies such as mobile phones have been used to promote transparency and ultimately improve governance in REDD+, including the extent to which they enhance monitoring and reporting of REDD+ activities and provide information to local communities so as to improve social safeguards. In doing so, they provide an initial assessment of whether harnessing mobile technology for transparency can alter information asymmetries between global level decision makers and local level communities.

The shared socioeconomic pathways (SSP) framework has become an important tool for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to model the impacts of climate change while taking into account development trajectories of major greenhouse gas emitters. In their research note, Halvard Buhaug and Jonas Vestby identify a major shortcoming of SSPs related to one of their key goals: conducting assessments of societal adaptation and impact assessments under different climate change scenarios. Their important corrective is to incorporate more realistic growth projections sensitive to the political context that affects growth in the poorest and most climate-vulnerable countries in order to prevent unrealistic expectations for reductions in vulnerability and prompt more appropriate policy responses.