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“What is America’s Biggest Challenge in the Word?”
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The Challenge of Global Climate Change

The biggest challenge for the United States is maintaining an active voice in the conversation on global climate change and contributing to the effort of reducing further damage. The issues that the U.S. must deal with domestically, like receding coast lines, falling farm production, and extreme weather, are only a part of the problem. Climate change threatens to affect every aspect of the modern world, including international diplomacy, the global economy, and human health, making it the greatest problem that the United States will have to deal with in the coming years.

America has been taking a strong role in global leadership since World War II. Developing countries have looked to the United States for leadership and globalization has allowed the actions of the U.S. to have widespread impact. If the United States does not take stronger action to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and waste, other countries would have an excuse to loosen their climate protection regulations. The Paris Climate Agreement is strongest if the entire world stays committed, as there are no punishments for not meeting the goals. The United States is setting a poor example by pulling out of this agreement on the basis of incorrect information, such as President Trump’s claim that the agreement was intended to punish the U.S. The deal has no consequences, beyond global shame, for not reaching the emissions goals. The issue of rising global temperature is impacting the entire globe and it is critical that the United States takes a strong position and follows through on agreements like the Paris Climate Accord.

Other countries are stepping in to fill the leadership hole that the United States is leaving as President Trump pulls the U.S. out of the conversation. This began happening nearly as soon as President Trump announced his decision to back out. Saudi Arabia committed to renewable energy and China strengthened its commitment to fulfilling green energy goals. Emmanuel Macron, the president of France, has even awarded grants to U.S. scientists willing to move to France to work on climate change solutions. Stepping out of this leadership role will also affect the United States’ position in terms of the global economy and diplomacy. As the impacts of climate change intensify, the United States will face an even bigger challenge to catch up to other global powers technologically. The green energy industry could leave the United States behind if President Trump’s promises to revert to coal as an energy source are made into policy. The rest of the world may grow closer in order to deal with this threat, while the U.S. remains stuck in the past, alienating itself from former allies. In order to maintain a reliable reputation as an ally and hold its position of leadership in the world, the United States must contribute to the effort to mitigate the effects of climate change.

The decision to back out of the conversation, most notably with President Trump’s commitment to pull out of the Paris Climate Agreement as soon as possible, will have huge consequences for the United States down the line. Even if the U.S. was solely focused on the safety and security of its own people, it should be concerned about the effects of climate change

in other countries, as environmental changes have contributed to food shortages, destruction of homes, and loss of jobs, elevating already tense global situations. Climate change refugees, people who are displaced by rising tides, extreme weather, and other events connected to a rising global temperature, will need a place to live. Often these people are much less responsible for the current state of the climate than heavy emitters like the United States. In the future, if the United States is not willing to step up to the challenge of fixing its mistakes or at least helping the refugees, global attitude towards the U.S. will certainly decline.

The effects that climate change will have on the United States domestically are already enough of a challenge. Residents of Miami deal with unusually common flooding, native communities in Alaska face losing their land to the sea, and California burns after years of droughts. Retreating from the global initiatives to do something about climate change will only add to the ever-growing list of problems, affecting global reputation in diplomacy, the United States' position in the world's economy, and people living all over the world.