



TRAGEDY AND MOBILIZATION

In 2040, a global coalition, led by the European Union (EU) and China working with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and revitalized multilateral institutions, is implementing far-reaching changes designed to address climate change, resource depletion, and poverty following a global food catastrophe caused by climate events and environmental degradation. Richer countries shift to help poorer ones manage the crisis and then transition to low carbon economies through broad aid programs and transfers of advanced energy technologies, recognizing how rapidly these global challenges spread across borders.

HOW WE GOT THERE

In the early 2030s, the world was in the midst of a global catastrophe. Rising ocean temperatures and acidity devastated major fisheries already stressed by years of overfishing. At the same time, changes in precipitation patterns depressed harvests in key grain producing areas around the world, driving up food prices, triggering widespread hoarding, and disrupting the distribution of food supplies, leading to global famine. A wave of unrest spread across the globe, protesting governments' inability to meet basic human needs and bringing down leaders and regimes. In one of many incidents in the Western world, thousands of people were killed in three days of violence in Philadelphia triggered by social media rumors about bread shortages.

The ongoing famines catalyzed a global movement that advocated bold systemic change to address environmental problems. Across the world, younger generations, shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic and traumatized by the threat of running out of food, joined together across borders to overcome resistance to reform, blaming older generations for destroying their planet. They threw their support behind NGOs and civil society organizations that were involved in relief efforts and developed a larger global following than those governments that were perceived to have failed their populations. As the movement grew, it took on other issues including global health and poverty.

After Green parties swept democratic elections in several European countries between 2034 and 2036, the EU launched a campaign within the United Nations (UN) to greatly expand international aid programs and to set a new target date for meeting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals by 2050. Hurt badly by the famine and hoping to quell unrest in its major cities, China announced its support for the EU effort, which the Chinese Communist Party portrayed as a new national patriotic mission and the kind of global restructuring it had long advocated. Others, including Australia, Canada, and the United States, slowly joined the movement as environmentally focused parties gained political strength, winning several elections, despite strong continued resistance from some domestic groups arguing that their countries were better positioned to adapt to a changing climate and should prioritize domestic industries and constituencies.

The EU initiative resulted in the creation of a new international organization, the Human Security Council, in cooperation with developing countries, which focused on 21st Century transnational security challenges. Open to both states and nonstate actors, membership required a commitment to verifiable actions to improve food, health, and environmental security, even if these were perceived as painful for wealthier states and groups. Members could easily be expelled for noncompliance, and face grassroots, popular backlashes and boycotts, similar to the Anti-Apartheid Movement of the last century. By 2038, global attitudes about the environment and human security were being transformed by growing recognition of the unsustainability of past practices.

States and large corporations concentrated investments to advance technological solutions to food, climate, and health challenges and to provide essential aid to the hardest hit populations. Corporate goals expanded to embrace serving a wider range of stakeholders,

including customers, employees, suppliers, and communities.

Not everyone has come on board. Russia and some states in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries resisted change, and some communities found the new global ethos threatening to traditional values and patronage systems. Extremists resorted to cyber attacks and terrorism to draw attention to their causes. States with powerful energy interests, such as Iran, Russia, and some Gulf Arab states, faced disruptive political movements that threaten to lead to a prolonged period of political and social conflict.

KEY TAKEAWAYS	
▶	An existential threat catalyzes a bottom-up social movement that transforms multilateral cooperation, disrupts economic incentives, and offers nonstate actors greater influence.
▶	Major power competition among individual states is rechanneled to address more pressing global challenges; the geopolitical hierarchy is reshuffled, creating once unlikely partnerships between progressive European political parties and the Chinese Communist Party. Europe takes the lead in promoting sustainable development, while China adopts and promotes new energy technologies.
▶	Countries beholden to fossil fuel industries are the slowest to get on board with the global revolution, creating a global backlash to their leadership, products, and brands. The second- and third-order implications of the new political movements create long-term challenges for their economies.
▶	With broad popular support, NGOs, multilateral organizations, and activist groups have unprecedented ability to influence standards, marshal resources, hold violators accountable, and prod states to act. In some cases, global priorities take precedence over national interests.