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OPINION

Dipping Toes in a Big Fat Radioactive Lie

Nuclear power no magic cure for climate change

BY EMILY SCHWARTZ GRECO

Not long ago, no billionaire worth his cufflinks would be caught dead without hurling bales of money at our nation's educational system. They bankrolled charter schools, high-stakes testing, and the splintering of big high schools into smaller academies. Their failure to make American kids learn more scuffed the luster on this enduring philanthropic fad.

Billionaires have landed, therefore, on a new mission. As Donald Trump might say, they want to make nuclear energy great again.

"If we are serious about replacing fossil fuels, we are going to need nuclear power," PayPal co-founder and Facebook mega-investor Peter Thiel crowed in a New York Times op-ed shortly before negotiators from 195 nations gathered in Paris to seal an international climate pact.

Thiel, who personally invests in nuclear energy, made the self-serving demand that the U.S.

government forge a "plan to fund and prototype the new reactors that we badly need."



In other words: What does a guy like me with only \$2.2 billion to my name gotta do to get my corporate welfare handout?

Bill Gates is also advocating heavy public investment in novel designs that these nuclear cheerleaders swear

Chinese, and Indian governments, as well as other billionaires and some foundations. Don't be surprised if it's nuclear-friendly.

The crowd of rich men with tech cred dipping their toes in these radioactive waters also includes Amazon titan Jeff Bezos and Paul Allen, Gates' fellow Microsoft co-founder.

But there are many reasons why governments, including our own, should resist their call to pump more tax dollars into nuclear energy. Namely: Reac-

of safeguarding nuclear waste and cleaning up abandoned uranium mines.

And nuclear power takes too long to crank up. Remarkably, five of the 62 reactors under construction worldwide have been in the nuclear pipeline for three decades. It's too slow to stop the climate crisis.

Besides — to a much greater extent than solar and wind power — nuclear energy emits its own carbon pollution. Those greenhouse gas emissions come largely

vestment bank with \$180 billion under management, has to say about today's top energy options: Utility-scale "wind and solar are much cheaper than gas and coal, and less than half the cost of nuclear."

Renewable energy's competitive edge makes it no surprise that generation from solar power is now growing exponentially and wind power has been expanding by more than 20 percent annually for the past seven years around the world as nukes have fumbled. The total amount of global nuclear energy remained well below 1996 levels in 2014.

A total of four new nuclear reactors in Georgia and South Carolina are at least three years behind schedule and billions of dollars over budget. That bodes badly for the save-our-nukes billionaire class because (sorry, guys) those power stations were supposed to be models for ramping up nuclear energy quickly without cost overruns.

I wonder what they'll choose as their next losing battle.

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will be safer and cheaper than the 391 reactors that now generate about one in 10 watts around the world.

As the Paris climate talks got underway, the Microsoft co-founder launched an unprecedented multibillion-dollar "clean" energy fund, backed by the U.S.,

tors are expensive, they're very difficult to shield from terrorist and other security threats, and they're prone to catastrophic accidents that have created ghost towns in Japan and the former Soviet Union. Furthermore, there are still no solutions for meeting the daunting challenges

through the use of fossil fuels in activities like reactor construction, waste transportation, and uranium mining.

More importantly, successful businessmen ought to be able to spot an uncompetitive industry when they see one.

Here's what Lazard, an in-

Syrian People Did Not Choose to be Refugees

Surely we can extend a welcoming hand

BY MAJD ISREB, M.D.

Forty-six volunteers went on a medical mission to Jordan to help the disadvantaged Syrian refugees and to restore their faith in humanity. The mission drew together an amazing group of people who validate the existence of those who are suffering -- through medical care, psychosocial support, food, clothing and most importantly, human empathy.

Many of us spent days in the Syrian American Medical Society clinic in Zatar camp, the second-largest refugee camp in the world. There were always many beautiful and playful children outside our clinic. These children have suffered and witnessed a tremendous amount in their short



lives. Their happy childhoods have been stolen from them and replaced with a bleak present and future. Many of them came with a single parent and some were even born in Zatar.

In 2011, a group of Syrians started a non-violent, democratic uprising against the injustice and lack of political liberty imposed upon them by the Assad regime. They were met with brutal, violent force. Unfortunately, some started carrying weapons to defend themselves.

Many neighboring countries with blessing from major world powers added fuel to fire by allowing foreign fighters to enter Syria unchecked. ISIL was, therefore, formed. It is crucial to know that, to the majority of Syrians, both the Assad regime and ISIL are the enemy. Many see them as two sides of the same token.

Since then, more than 10 million Syrians are internally or ex-

ternally displaced, and more than 50 percent of them are children. They are fleeing the violence inflicted upon them by the regime and ISIL.

Since the beginning of the up-

to be refugees. They are not trying to take away anyone's job nor live on welfare. They are not coming to steal our freedom.

They are pursuing freedom and safety themselves. They do not

war so that they can go back to their towns and homes.

These people have suffered enough for almost five years in the worst humanitarian disaster since World War II. The Amer-

Many neighboring countries with blessing from major world powers added fuel to fire by allowing foreign fighters to enter Syria unchecked.

rising more than 250,000 people were killed, mostly by the Syrian regime. Every day, civilians are victims of both indiscriminate and targeted aerial attacks. In addition, hundreds of thousands of civilians live in areas that have been besieged by the Syrian government since 2012.

Syrian people did not choose

seek to impose Islam or sharia law on anyone.

They are simply looking for a pursuit of happiness, and an opportunity to earn a living and have their kids go to decent schools without discrimination, away from bombs, arrests and siege. If you ask many of them, they would rather the world help them end the

ican people who were generous enough to accept about 760,000 Vietnamese refugees, and many Bosnian refugees are surely able to extend a welcoming hand to less than 0.01 percent of the displaced Syrians.

Majd Isreb, M.D. is an immigrant from Syria and lives in Vancouver.