



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on April 5, 2021

Kerry Hopeful to Cooperate With China on Climate. Is U.S. Playing into Beijing's Hands?

U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry said the United States was hopeful it could work with China to tackle climate change despite longstanding disagreements that have affected the bilateral relationship.

“Our hope is that we’re going to be able to deal with yes, China,” Kerry [said](#). “President Biden has made it clear, and I’ve made it clear: none of the other issues we have with China — and there are issues — is held hostage to or is engaged in a trade for what we need to do on climate.”



AP Images

On March 26, President Joe Biden [issued](#) the invitation to Xi Jinping and 39 other world leaders to a virtual climate summit, the first big climate talk of the Biden administration.

A week passed by, but Beijing still hasn’t accepted the invite. In its first official response to the invitation, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying [said](#), “[We] have received the invitation and are carefully studying it.... The Chinese side will make our contribution to the global fight against climate change and is willing to strengthen cooperation with the international community with our input.”

And the input Beijing is talking about is as ambitious as it is challenging. Last September during the UN Summit, Xi Jinping [surprised](#) the whole world when he pledged to make China — the world’s [biggest polluter](#) — carbon-neutral by 2060.

So far, China has outspent the United States nearly two-to-one on energy transition-related investment between 2010 and 2020, [according](#) to BNEF data cited by Bank of America’s ESG Research team. This has liberal observers, who see shifting from fossil fuels to renewable energy as a prerequisite to a “clean” economy, are [panicking](#) that “China is crushing the US on renewable energy,” demanding more action from the government. Indeed, it is China that’s [winning](#) the global market of renewable energy technology, supplying some two-thirds of the world’s solar panels and producing nearly half of the world’s wind turbines.

Trying hard to catch up to China and pursuing his own [climate goal](#) — making electricity generation carbon free by 2035, and reaching a complete carbon neutrality by 2050 by [transitioning from fossil fuels](#) — President Biden is laying out a big proposal: A roughly \$2 trillion [plan](#) for improving the nation’s infrastructure and shifting to renewable energy. Will it help the U.S. economy to become cleaner?

Dubbed the American Jobs Plan, the White House claims Biden’s “once-in-a-century capital investment” in U.S. infrastructure will create “millions” of well-paying jobs and position America to “out-compete” China by spending about one percent of GDP per year over the course of eight years. To pay for this legislation, Biden proposed what he has called the Made in America Tax Plan, which would raise the



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corporate tax rate from 21 percent to 28 percent. It would also increase the minimum tax on multinational corporations to 21 percent and “calculate it on a country-by-country basis so it hits profits in tax havens,” alongside several other efforts to eliminate perceived loopholes in the corporate tax code. All of these measures will [hurt](#) the American middle class, [drive](#) businesses away, and [stifle](#) the investment climate. Furthermore, a weak economy does not produce innovations.

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In his blind resolution to shift from fossil fuels, Biden [ordered](#) the elimination fossil-fuel subsidies (even though the fossil-fuel industry receives tax deductions rather than tax subsidies, and many of the industry’s tax deductions are federal law), cancelled the Keystone Pipeline permit, and banned oil and gas leasing on federal land and water — all of which [will cost American jobs](#).

Of course, the shift to a “clean economy” is not limited to increasing the use of renewable energy. America, for example, [is leading](#) in a technology called carbon capture and storage (CCS), which could be used in conjunction with coal mining and burning. Many energy and climate researchers [believe](#) CCS is vital to avoiding a climate catastrophe if we don’t completely get rid of coal, since it would ostensibly allow the world to keep burning its most abundant fuel source while capturing CO2 emissions, liquefying them, and pumping them deep underground (a very expensive and difficult process). But Joe Biden seems to be unaware of it, and once [told](#) coal miners to “learn to code” and move into new industries.

There is also natural gas, which played a key role in lowering U.S. carbon-dioxide emissions in the past 15 years and [advancing](#) in becoming cleaner. Natural gas is cheap and plentiful in America, and the advanced technology of hydraulic fracturing (aka “fracking”) [boosts](#) the U.S. economy and turned it into a world leader in oil and natural gas output.

Reader should also keep in mind that “renewable energy” does not always equal “clean energy.” The Stanford [study](#) “Renewable energy is not enough” shows how the use of solar power can generate greenhouse gases, defeating the purpose of investing in it.

“Renewable” also doesn’t mean “reliable.” Solar and wind [require](#) natural-gas or coal-fired power plants, hydroelectric dams, batteries, or some other form of reliable power be ready at a moment’s notice to start churning out electricity when the wind stops blowing and the sun stops shining. It was wind-turbine [failure](#) that contributed to Texas’ deadly power loss this February.

Last but not least, Biden’s fixation on climate change doesn’t mean that our foreign counterparts share this passion. China has long [argued](#) that, as a developing economy, it should not have to share the same burden of curbing emissions as developed nations whose pollution went unchecked for decades. Currently, China’s [level](#) of air pollution overpasses the pre-COVID levels. On top of that, China is [building](#) more coal plants than all of Europe has combined.

Contrary to what many Americans believe, the Europeans are not that engaged when it comes to pollution, either. Nearly every nation that signed on to the Paris Climate Accord, and had admonished President Trump for his attempt to leave the accord, continues to violate the agreement. According to 2018 [Climate Action Network Europe](#), “All EU countries are failing to increase their climate action in line with the Paris Agreement goal.” All but five countries have even reached 50 percent of their current targets. They strive to keep their economies competitive, but only President Trump could have his cake and eat it, too. In 2017, America reduced its carbon emissions by 0.5 percent, the most of all major countries, while growing the economy by three percent.



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And for many, it's not even about "saving the planet." Some economists see the transition to a "clean economy" as the next path to commercial supremacy, being the arena in which the main battles for economic dominance will be fought. "It's not just about saving the planet," [argues](#) Bank of America Managing Director Haim Israel. "We believe climate strategies offer a route to global supremacy."

Akin to the arms race that accelerated the devastation of the USSR's economy and the eventual dissolution of the bloc, China is dragging the United States into a meaningless and expensive "climate change" race that the United States cannot win with the strategy proposed by the Biden administration, and should not even get involved in to begin with.



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