

Jennifer Simon

Mr. Hennessey & Mr. Botting

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A Global Solution

China is looked to as a leader in many categories in the 21st Century, from AI to the Great Firewall. It is also a large producer of many things, unfortunately leading the way in pollution production. The vast amount of air pollution produced by Chinese cities helped to make cancer a top killers of Chinese citizens (Pariona). Pollution is not contained to the area where it is being produced, it spreads, and if left unmitigated it will be catastrophic for the whole world, not just China. China is the United States' neighbor to the East, a fact that is often overlooked due to the closer historical and cultural relations to Europe, particularly northwestern Europe. All people in the United States possess the right to life, liberty, and property as described in U.S. Constitution. The threat of climate change infringes on the right to life, and should be treated as such: a threat to the wellbeing and right to all. The only way to properly assess and address this issue is to be involved in further prevention and current acknowledgment of pollution and its effect on climate change and, in turn, the fate of the whole world. By actively participating in the conversation through international alliances, agreements, and regulations China, the United States, and other world powers would be able to mitigate the effects of climate change to ensure the safety and basic right to life for all people- collective good for all of humanity.

One such international treaty that works towards a collective good is the Paris Climate Agreement (PCA). The PCA is available in many languages like: English, Chinese, Russian, French, Arabic, and Spanish. The document specifically targets all the major players on the world stage because climate change is a global issue. Within the twenty-five pages it sets up a specific plan of mitigation through global efforts in which it very specifically states that it is the duty of “developed country parties” to assist “underdeveloped country parties” in the effort to minimize the effects of climate change. The United States opposition to the PCA is a big deal. By removing themselves from the conversation, the United States takes the position which enforces the idea of climate change not being a global problem. This is wrong. A parallel that can be drawn from American history is when President Roosevelt spoke at a press conference on December 17th, 1940 to advocate for the Lend-Lease Act of World War II. His fire-hose analogy can apply to this situation nearly eighty years later:

“Suppose my neighbor's home catches fire, and I have a length of garden hose four or five hundred feet away. If he can take my garden hose and connect it up with his hydrant, I may help him to put out his fire. Now, what do I do? I don't say to him before that operation, ‘Neighbor, my garden hose cost me \$15; you have to pay me \$15 for it.’ What is the transaction that goes on? I don't want \$15--I want my garden hose back after the fire is over. All right. If it goes through the fire all right, intact, without any damage to it, he gives it back to me and thanks me very much for the use of it. But suppose it gets smashed up--holes in it--during the fire; we don't have to have too much formality about it, but I say to him, ‘I was glad to lend you that hose; I see I can't use it any more, it's all smashed up.’ He says, ‘How many feet of it were there?’ I tell him, ‘There were 150 feet of it.’ He says, ‘All right, I will replace it.’ Now, if I get a nice garden hose back, I am in pretty good shape” (Roosevelt).

While in this specific speech Roosevelt is speaking of lending arms to Great-Britain during WWII, it can wholly apply to the mitigation of pollution and climate change. Article IX of

the agreement specifically outlines the role of developed countries and their assistance to underdeveloped countries. It emphasizes the role of public funds and providing aid to countries that are “particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change”. This no doubt is in reference countries like the Maldives who a facing the threat of rising sea levels, and can arguably include China (Paris Agreement).

In December, in response to the “yellow-vest” riots in France, President Trump tweeted that he believed that the American taxpayer should not need to “pay to clean up other countries’ pollution” (Trump). Chinese pollution will spread, it is only a matter of time. It is within the selfish aspiration of the American people and government to advocate and actively work towards mitigating pollution and climate change. The French President, Emmanuel Macron, agrees with President Trump that the PCA is “deeply flawed” (McDonald). However, France still signed the agreement. France is still actively participating in the conversation so that they have a say in its development; the U.S. is not. It’s leadership left the conversation and therefore gave up their position to make the agreement work towards American goals on climate mitigation.

In Article X, Section V, the Paris Climate Agreement states as follows, “Accelerating, encouraging, and enabling innovation is critical for an effective, long-term global response to climate change and promoting economic growth, and sustainable development”. It is no secret that China is leading the way in technological innovation. The topic of innovation was one if, if not the most, talked about thing at the 2019 Camden Conference Seminar. By supporting the need for green technology and environmentally friendly innovation, China may be able to reduce their contribution to air pollution and climate change. In her speech at the conference Elizabeth Economy briefly mentions the Four C’s, an outline for U.S. relations with China. The Four C’s

are cooperate, coordinate, compete, and counter (Economy). These mostly apply to American foreign policy, but they can also apply to climate mitigation. Through PCA participation the United States could increase its competition with China with green-technology innovation which would be economically beneficial for both countries, as well as working towards mitigating the effects of climate change.

A future without mitigation is a grim one. If unchallenged, the effects of Chinese air pollution will only make climate change a bigger threat. In the area of Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, the average PM_{2.5} measurement, a measurement of air particulates, is ten times the World Health Organization's dictated safe level. These levels effect 100 million people who live in that region of China (Preen). While China does put in place policies to combat their air pollution, there is little enforcement. A report from the South China Morning Post reported that in China officials have "promised to crack down on regions that fail to meet targets, regardless of weather, but it remains unclear what punishments they will face" (SCMP). Fourteen districts in Hebei failed to meet their goals for 2018, but there is little to know on whether or not they actually had to pay newly implemented fines. China needs to follow through with the enforcement of their mitigation and control policies (SCMP). In his presentation at the 2019 Camden Conference, Ma Jun said that "the barrier to pollution control [in China] is weak enforcement" (Jun). He argues that local governments are more worried about their GDP than the environment (Jun). If that were to flip to fit the Triple Bottom Line: "people, planet, profit", it would be a breath of fresh air, literally.

The influence held by China and the United States is vast and cooperative efforts between the two powers is beneficial economically and culturally. The United States should acknowledge

the international effects of climate change and take a more active role, globally, to mitigate the threat. They can do this by rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement, this way, anything the U.S. views as “flawed” in the agreement can be molded to closer fit their standards, instead of removing themselves altogether. The United States has to take part in this important conversation. Then, and only then, can countries successfully work together to mitigate climate change. This may mean coordinating for a greener Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), especially in regions that are vulnerable and do not have the proper funds or means to deal with emission control from the BRI. By cooperating, the future of the world will far less smog filled. The U.S. working with China through an international agreement will create healthy competition for both countries to develop green technology and boost both of their economies. Countering the effects of climate change should be considered one of, if not the, most important issue that all countries face together, despite their differences. Finally, Ma Jun said it best during his panel at the conference, “doing more in China will do more for the world”.

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