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Paris Climate Accord: It's time to pay attention

By Steve Bakke  March 24, 2021



On day one of his presidency, Joe Biden signed an executive order to reenter the Paris Climate Accord. That's a signal that time is of the essence for Americans to pay attention to developments regarding the Accord.

Wherever one stands on the CO2 issue, there is common ground for all sides to agree on an achievable approach for developing dependable alternative energy sources. There's a way to accomplish mutual goals without being narrowly wedded to the approach taken by politicians and experts in promoting this Accord, and predecessor agreements. That concept has practical limitations in time, technology, and cost. More importantly hidden agendas abound, and it probably won't get the job done.

President Obama signed the agreement in 2016 as an executive action. Ideally, it would have had treaty status, but was DOA in the Senate if presented for affirmation due to bipartisan opposition led by democrat senators Schumer and Menendez. The lack of treaty status made it easy for Trump to void U.S. participation. For the same reason, it took a mere stroke of the pen for Biden to rejoin the agreement. Let's review the Accord's counterproductive elements.

The U.S. already leads the world in reducing emissions. Under the Accord, China, the world's leading emitter, is permitted to increase emission levels through 2030. China already doubles what the U.S. emits. China's emissions increased 353% from 1990 to 2017, while U.S. emissions reduced 0.4%. Biden's climate czar John Kerry admits the U.S. has already brought emissions down to only about 10% of the worldwide total.

Why was it so important to other countries to have the U.S. rejoin the Accord? It's clearly more symbolic than substantive. It's all about money. Several former United Nations officials have given us hints of some hidden financial agendas. While President Obama described the Accord's original intent as helping to "delay or avoid some of the worst consequences of climate change," Maurice Strong, founder of the U.N. Eco-Summit and a former Undersecretary General expressed something far different. He posed these rhetorical questions: "Isn't the only hope for the planet that the industrial civilizations collapse? Isn't it our responsibility to bring about?"

Ottmar Edenhofer, former Co-chair of the U.N.'s IPCC climate change working group, admitted the following: "This has almost nothing to do with environmental policy anymore.....We distribute de facto the world's wealth by climate policy.....in order to get rich, one has to burn coal, oil or gas." The final segment of those statements was an attempt to explain why selected countries, such as China, are permitted to increase CO2 emissions, almost at will, while restricting developed countries' emissions. This is merely a massive transfer of wealth.

There's a related financial issue which some critics have labeled the "slush fund requirement." This provision also results in "wealth transfer" by requiring significant U.S. financial contributions to other countries. Rather than requiring this "transfer payment," it would make more sense for the U.S. to employ those funds in their own "clean energy" research and development. That would be money well spent considering past U.S. performance in energy technology development and as the world leader in emissions reduction. Why not share this expertise with other countries, rather than sending them pallets of dollars?

The Accord's "voluntary" obligations are meaningless because the U.S. is virtually the only country able to comply with meaningful commitments. And trusting China to meet any commitment under the agreement would be like believing their reports about the COVID pandemic or living up to their commitments regarding Hong Kong's autonomy.

Operating independently, without being restricted by the agreement's wastefulness and lack of enforcement, preserves our sovereignty for establishing our own environmental priorities. And it permits us to independently lead research and development consistent with energy independence and national security. We would gain, but so would the rest of the world.

Finally, and most importantly, essential ingredients for timely and effective reduction of CO2 emissions include heavy reliance on clean natural gas and exploiting the potential of nuclear energy. The Accord's embedded process and ideology exclude those necessary elements. Nuclear energy and clean natural gas provide common ground for all sides to achieve their goals. If necessary, the U.S. should pursue those goals on its own.