

US is escalating the adverse effects of global warming

Richard Cullen says Washington’s politicizing of problem-solving initiatives is terrible for consumers

Imagine if the United States was still a manufacturing powerhouse today, producing around 65 percent of the world’s new energy vehicles (NEVs), 80 percent of the world’s solar panels; 80 percent of its battery cells, and over 60 percent of global wind turbines. Next, envision China, Russia, and India (and other malcontents) imposing massive tariffs of up to 100 percent on all imports of NEVs, solar panels, battery cells, and wind turbines from America.

The US plus its G7 and Five Eyes allies would lift off into collective, outraged orbit — aided by their equally furious mainstream media outlets. And they would be entirely justified to do so, given the startling evidence of the impact of long-term, harmful climate change on everyone.

It is not hard to picture some headlines: “China, Russia, India And Other Easily Led Followers Declare War on Planet Earth”; “We Have A Solution to Global Warming But China And Others Want To Wreck It”; and so on.

So here is the point. According to the latest Western public data, there already is a single country currently responsible for those NEVs, solar panel, battery and wind turbine outputs. But it is China. And the wild-eyed embrace of massive, often crippling tariffs, in response, is being led by Washington, with other US pilot fish, like Canada and the European Union, scrambling to do likewise.

They argue that they must protect local manufacturers. But what a way to protect them and at what grave cost to the world’s profound common interest in finding real-time, practical ways to curb the generation of greenhouse gases arising from massive, entrenched fossil-fuel consumption.

Meanwhile, one looks in vain for any sort of high-volume, primary condemnation of this tariff-attack on serious, affordable, ready-to-use, climate-friendly remedies by the mainstream Western media. Fevered trepidation about the “China threat” appear to have simply pushed aside concerns in these media outlets, this time round, about addressing the intense risks posed by climate change, about which dangers they are normally so vocal.

As the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the US notes, China is now the single largest national emitter of greenhouse gases. This is a product of its unprecedented economic growth over the past 40-plus years. However, China’s per-capita emission of such gases, according



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to the NOAA, was only about half that of the US in 2021. And it is China that is now leading the world, by a long measure, in manufacturing remarkable, multilayered, climate change responses. China understands that the problem is deeply serious. And it is doing more than anyone to innovate and develop varied, mass-market solutions to apply in China and globally.

Moreover, the NOAA stresses how the US has, over time, released more heat-trapping gases than either China or India and that America “bears more responsibility for the amount of warming that has occurred so far and will persist for millennia”. Which makes this willful rush to build huge tariff walls to shut out the most cost-effective, manufactured solutions we can find today an appalling policy approach.

This conflicted Western response over climate change, led by the US, is fundamentally irrational, as former Singaporean diplomat Kishore Mahbubani argued during a recent presentation in Hong Kong. It is even more so given that, as he points out, the West, and especially the US over the past 100 years, has persuaded the world, to its great benefit, about the central importance of applying rational thinking to macro-level human problem-solving. Despite still being home to so many world-class, otherwise highly rational academic institutions, US elites, in particular, seem to be gripped by increasing spasms of self-damaging irrationality.

Over the past decade-plus, there has hardly been a geopolitical challenge that the US has encountered which it has not brazenly sought to politicize to its own advantage. Hong Kong has regularly been on the receiving end of this sort of twisted attention. See, for example, President Biden’s latest, bad-faith business advisory directed at the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Washington’s politicizing of pivotal global warming, problem-solving initiatives, though, is exceptionally obtuse. It is terrible for consumers and bad for the planet. And it confirms that America is a committed buddy of global warming.

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Closing HKETOs will damage US-China relations

Recently, as part of the unhinged “China Week”, the US House of Representatives passed a bill that could lead to the closure of Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices (HKETO) in the United States. The bill calls on the US president to “remove the extension of certain privileges, exemptions, and immunities to the HKETOs in the US if they determine that Hong Kong no longer enjoys a high degree of autonomy from the People’s Republic of China”. Some US lawmakers also accused the HKETOs of engaging in “oppression” and “espionage”. In reality, these offices in Washington DC, San Francisco and New York are dedicated to securing commercial, economic and business ties between the US and Hong Kong, which remains one of the most important financial centers in Asia, something the US has been eager to undermine.

The US Congress is a major instigator in the instability of broader China-America relations, in particular its habit of passing deliberately cynical, opportunistic, and arbitrary laws that aim to force through the agenda of those committed to a new cold war and the calculated destruction of bilateral ties. Many such bills are based on talking points or assumptions that push paranoia or total falsehoods, often making accusations that are completely unproven. In doing so, the bill to close HKETOs in the US will be wholly damaging to the US-China relationship, and is likely to incur countermeasures.

In Washington’s thinking, and Western logic as a whole, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China is only truly “autonomous” in its governance if it serves to advance US-led political goals and preferences, which is to serve their interests as opposed to those of China. During British rule, the city was ultimately a “Western outpost” in Asia, one that was enriched precisely because it was the lynchpin of an economic and trade order in the region



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created by the British Empire through its wars of aggression against China, and therefore also a means to project political influence.

Therefore, as Hong Kong was returned to China, it was anticipated that the city should continue to serve Western interests, and should serve as a bridge for transforming China, as one-way traffic. Although legally Hong Kong is Chinese sovereign territory, the “assumption” pushed by those in the US-led camp is that China does not have any right to enact laws to safeguard its own sovereign interests, and therefore national security considerations for Hong Kong. Thus, the discourse is subsequently pushed in Western governments and media outlets messaging that national security-based legislation, or efforts to safeguard national security in the city, somehow constitute an illegitimate and malign presence.

Since that time, following the 2019 riots and the passage of the National Security Law for Hong Kong, US policy and strategy has been geared toward attempting to undermine Hong Kong as a global financial center, seeking to create the mindset that these provisions make the city “bad for business” and that by preventing foreign political influence, sedition and insurrection, the city has lost its “autonomy”.

Hence, in the mindset of hawkish US Congresspeople, who are probably some of the most ignorant and callous people on the planet when it comes to the subject of China, the city is reduced to a mere “front for the Communist Party”, in the same way that they treat everything

British Museum should return stolen artifacts

One nation’s hero is another’s villain. While Major-General Charles Gordon is regarded as an outstanding military commander and administrator in some quarters of Britain, he is seen as a villain by the Chinese people because of his barbaric acts in the Summer Palace in Beijing in October 1860. Lord Elgin (James Bruce, 8th Earl of Elgin) and Gordon were responsible for directing the burning of the palace. Most notoriously, Gordon trampled on the bottom line of morality by plundering the palace. In a book written by Alfred Egmont Hake in the late 19th century, it was reported that all the invaders were wild for plunder.

In spite of the heinous sins of Gordon, he has a memorial in the northwest tower chapel near the west entrance to Westminster Abbey. The looting of the Summer Palace provides a historical lens for understanding the tragic loss of a large number of Chinese artifacts from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century. We hope the following discussion will help readers understand how much of our cultural identity depends on these invaluable artifacts. Most importantly, we want readers to understand why it is unconscionable for the British Museum to rely on Britain’s self-serving domestic laws to retain control over these stolen artifacts.

In an editorial published in late August 2023, the Global Times of China asked the British Museum to give back all Chinese cultural relics free of charge. The Global Times also supported the legitimate claims for the restitution of cultural relics that had been looted from other countries, such as India, Nigeria, and South Africa. It is worth noting that the vast majority of the British Museum’s collection of some eight million items came from countries other than the UK, and a significant portion of it was acquired through improper channels.

In a belated effort to repair the tarnished image of the British Museum, the British Museum and London’s Victoria and Albert Museum announced in January 2024 that 32 gold and silver artifacts from Ghana, which were looted during the Anglo-Ashanti Wars in the 1800s, would return to the country for the first time in 150 years. The above attempt by the British Museum to whitewash its record of handling and retaining stolen artifacts is doomed to failure. There is no doubt that a large number of Chinese artifacts flowed into Britain during a



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Standing on the right side of history, Lord Monson deserves our deep respect. In addition to improving Sino-British relations, the return would plant the rediscovered seeds of British charm and righteousness deep in Chinese people’s hearts.

period when China was suffering from foreign invasions and internal upheavals.

For example, the Great Bell of Tianning Temple was looted by British invaders during the First Opium War (1839-42) and presented to Queen Victoria, who donated it to the British Museum in 1841. Some of China’s oldest surviving paintings on silk and inscribed bronze ritual vessels are in the British Museum. It is estimated that 10 million artifacts were stolen from China between the First Opium War and the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45).

Most Chinese people view the loss of these cultural relics as a potent source of national humiliation and a painful reminder of the destruction of Chinese culture by imperialist invaders. Besides being invaluable symbols of national identity, these cultural relics are important because the soft power of a nation is often viewed through the prism of its cultural attractiveness. Being one of the oldest civilizations in the world, China is undoubtedly a culturally attractive nation. To steady the course of the ship

in China. Therefore Hong Kong becomes something that must be restricted.

Thus, in targeting the HKETOs, the goal of US politicians is to make a statement that the city is no longer “autonomous”, and also to undermine the interests of US businesses and organizations in the city by making it harder for them to do business and engage with the territory. So the idea is to unravel US-China economic ties wherever they can.

China hawks are committed to the destruction of all elements of the US-China relationship to the point of re-establishing a cold war iron curtain and a state of total isolation. This is why they cynically attack all channels of cooperation, no matter what they are. Hence, as an alternative example, in another bill debated in the US House of Representatives during “China Week”, Confucius Institutes are baselessly accused of being hubs for “espionage” and “stealing intellectual property”.

However, the closure of HKETOs is a diplomatic provocation to China. Such a move by the logic of diplomacy requires reciprocity, and this is where the US administration needs to be careful. If you close these offices, you are creating instability, uncertainty and tensions in the US-China relationship for pure domestic political theater and allowing the ultra-hawks of Congress to bang the drums of confrontation. After all, if Hong Kong is not allowed to have a presence in the US anymore for economics and trade, why should the US have a presence in Hong Kong? This is the can of worms that is being opened up. Pragmatism and cool heads must prevail in the relationship, and the reality is that Hong Kong is an important destination for US investment and commerce in Asia. Trying to undermine the city to get at China will also fundamentally hurt American interests in the region.

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Panda lovers



A couple in panda-print T-shirts enjoy their time at the panda-themed exhibition at New Town Plaza in Sha Tin on Thursday. To celebrate the birth of the city’s first panda pair and the anticipated arrival of a new pair of giant pandas in Hong Kong, the plaza has unveiled “Chill Park”, a diverse, panda-themed space spanning over 1,800 square meters. The park features five unique zones designed for recreation and relaxation. Adding to the charm, 80 panda models strike various poses on the staircase of the first floor, providing an adorable photo-taking spot for residents. The event also offers art workshops and musical activities to the public.

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