As Russia And China Grow Closer In Energy, America Unilaterally Disarms

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Two new developments of enormous significance passed under the radar last week, buried by the growing threat of an outright Russia/Ukraine war and governmental encroachment on democracy in Canada. These developments, however, could have a huge impact on the future of our planet and the overall security of our citizens.

On Thursday, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission updated its policy guidelines for approval of new pipelines by announcing that, for the first time, it will be taking into account all potential "climate change" risks associated with the proposed pipeline.

While at initial glance this looks like a responsible position, in practical effect it may also open the process to extreme speculation and thus make it much more difficult to obtain FERC certification for any new pipelines. Of course, this could be the entire idea in the first place.

As the United States continues to tie its hands with regard to the transportation of natural gas, a fuel that has actually led to a large decrease in CO2 emissions over coal, Russia and China reached an agreement under which Russia will supply 100 million tons of coal to China so that China can continue to open up new coal-fired power plants – in effect, thwarting whatever benefits may come from American policies increasingly tightening the noose on the use and transport of natural gas in this country and elsewhere.

China is by far the world's largest emitter of CO2 emissions, to the point where its emissions exceed that of the United States and the European Union combined. As pollution knows no geographic boundaries, without China being on board to cut its CO2 emissions, all moves by this country, the EU, and the rest of the world will be undermined, and even negated, in an effort to combat any man-made aspects to planetary climate change. According to the Paris Climate Accords, China will be permitted to keep increasing its CO2 emissions until approximately 2030. This remarkably flawed treaty, combined with China and Russia's seeming indifference to the fight against man-made climate change altogether, make it highly unlikely that any actions taken by the west in the coming years will have real effect on the struggle.

Unfortunately, where western actions will have an effect is in reducing our personal security, as Nord Stream 2 and the recent Russian threats to Ukraine have now made clear. By self-limiting our shale production, making it more difficult to move the shale gas and oil to where it can actually be used and exported, we make it more difficult for the Europeans, who are highly dependent on imported gas and oil, to resist or punish Russian aggression against Ukraine, and elsewhere.

On Tuesday, Germany terminated Nord Stream 2, which has been expected ever since Russia's provocative threat to invade Ukraine started to become serious. This, however, still leaves Germany, and most of Europe, in need of a replacement for Russian gas and oil supplies.

To that end, President Biden has been feverishly calling countries like Qatar and Saudi Arabia asking them to pump more oil and gas, all the while his Administration makes it more difficult for the United States to come to Europe's rescue with much needed replacement supplies from the shale region in this country. This policy is both fraught and borderline absurd. As we send American men and women to NATO countries bordering Ukraine and put them potentially into harm's way – in response to a provocation that could trigger another world war, and against a country with nuclear weapons, no less – we refuse to open up our own Marcellus reserves that would both help decrease CO2 emissions in the near term and solidify European resolve against Moscow's misadventures, not to mention helping our own economy in a time of great need. And we do this for what appear to be mainly ideological reasons given the overall Russian and Chinese indifference to climate change, which the United States is, in effect, subsidizing by our dogged refusal to use our own shale reserves when and where they are truly needed.

Taken individually, it is possible to say that FERC's announced new policy in reviewing climate change, President Biden's prior actions in terminating the Keystone Pipeline, and other moves by this Administration to make shale drilling more difficult might make some sense. But taken together, and in light of the present international situation and the global fight against climate change, they make little to no sense. If the road to hell is paved with good intentions, we are halfway there.

ATTORNEYS MENTIONED

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