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John J. Berger ♥ Become a fan
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US-China Bilateral Climate Agreement--Troubling Aspects

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The recent, widely heralded bilateral climate [accord](#) between the U.S. and China was a step in the right direction in terms of moving towards a global climate agreement.

Nonetheless, it has glaring shortcomings that illustrate the perils of voluntary pledges, each nation operating in its own autonomous emissions bubble and on its own schedule, impervious to any absolute global emission and temperature limit.

Thus China, the world's largest coal producer, coal consumer, and carbon emitter, committed itself to plateau its emissions by 2030. The U.S. in turn pledged to cut its annual emissions 26–28 percent by 2025, relative to 2005 emission levels. However China refused to set a maximum emission level at which its emissions would crest.

And so, although China simultaneously announced plans for a massive increase in renewable energy development, China still could increase its coal consumption 50 percent by 2040, according to 2011 U.S. Department of Energy data. By contrast, only one percent of China's energy supply today comes from non-hydro renewable energy sources. Coal, however, provides two thirds of China's power.

Meanwhile, India recently announced an even less stringent emissions goal than China, promising to only plateau its rapidly growing emissions by 2040, after further unspecified emissions increases.

Last year India-- despite a huge renewable energy potential--got 59 percent of its power from coal but under one percent from solar and wind. India is currently in the midst of a major power supply expansion. More than half of that new power will be from coal.

Ad hoc bilateral agreements and voluntary emissions pledges are therefore not adequate to assure that global emissions stay below critical climate thresholds that must be observed to keep the planet from a climate disaster. Mandatory greenhouse gas limits under a failsafe global emissions cap are urgently needed. Hopefully they will be achieved in the forthcoming 2015 UN climate negotiations in Paris, but the recently concluded climate accord signed in Lima, Peru does not bode well for that.

(See John J. Berger, "The Turbulent Lima Climate Talks--Voluntarism Won't Save the Climate," Huffington Post, for further related analysis.)

John J. Berger, PhD. (www.johnjberger.com) is an energy and environmental policy specialist who has produced ten books on climate, energy, and natural resource topics.

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He is the author of *Climate Peril: The Intelligent Reader's Guide to Understanding the Climate Crisis* and *Climate Myths: The Campaign Against Climate Science*.

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