

GLOBAL VIEWS



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# Climate change action multiplied by the power of three

China, the US and Japan, which head the carbon dioxide emissions list, should forge a community to tackle the problem

To bring the US back to the negotiating table, it is of utmost significance to promote the coordinated development of mitigation measures and economic growth, which is also the most important task of China and Japan when dealing with climate change.

Greenhouse gases are, as scientific research shows, the main culprits for global warming and worldwide climate change, and fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas the major source of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

On May 3, carbon dioxide levels at the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii hit a record 415 parts per million (ppm), the highest in more than 800,000 years. There is no time for humans to dispute climate change.

China, the United States and Japan rank the highest, second highest and fifth highest, respectively, in the world, vis-a-vis CO2 emissions. Their combined emissions account for 45 percent of the world's total. They are also the world's top three economies, with combined GDP accounting for 40 percent of the world total.

But compared to the US and China, Japan is very efficient when it comes to saving energy. If China and the US were to replicate Japan's efficiency, their combined energy consumption and CO2 emission levels could dip by over 50 percent, respectively. China, the US and Japan should join hands to tackle climate change.

Scientifically, there are three ways of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The first is "no-regrets" actions such as afforestation and energy conservation, even if global warming is uncorrelated with CO2 emission.

The second one is "least regrets" actions, mainly development of new energy sources such as wind, solar and biomass energy.

Compared with traditional fossil fuel energy, developing new energy costs more and its development and exploitation comes with certain risks. But humans will have to develop new energy in order to optimize the energy mix and ensure sustainable energy supply.

The third one is a specialized solution, involving the capture and storage of CO2 emitted by human beings. It is especially suited for

tackling climate change, but is only a temporary solution, being no good for long-term societal development.

Most of the aforementioned actions aim at creating a low-carbon, sustainable and vigorous society, instead of merely tackling climate change. But if the three countries could cooperate in the areas of energy technology, energy mix and industrial structure, it would kill two birds with one stone. Such tripartite cooperation could significantly reduce CO2 emissions; improve the energy mix, energy sustainability and industrial structure while enhancing energy efficiency, reducing acid rain and improving human livelihoods. Even without global warming, this is the ideal situation that human society pursues.

One thing worth mentioning is that even though the US has withdrawn from the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, we should see the country's two-sidedness in this regard.

Addressing climate change involves two possible approaches: reducing and stabilizing the levels of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (mitigation) and/or adapting to the climate change already in the pipeline (adaptation). Although the US acts passively on mitigation measures such as cutting CO2 emissions, it attaches great significance to the research and development of adaptation-related technologies, with enormous capital and talent input.

This duality is also manifested by the different approaches taken by the US federal government and state governments on mitigation policies. While the federal government has walked away from the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, some states, such as California and New Mexico, are proactively taking emission-cutting measures and making commitments in this regard.

Therefore, to bring the US back to the negotiating table, it is of utmost significance to promote the

coordinated development of mitigation measures and economic growth, which is also the most important task of China and Japan when dealing with climate change.

In a nutshell, China, Japan and the US should establish a community to tackle climate change via bilateral, multilateral and third-party cooperation on green financing, technology transfer, capability improvement and emissions trading.

Such a community can be framed by four dimensions. First, the timeline. There is need to formulate a detailed emissions reduction schedule from now to 2050, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Second, the geographic element, which means low-carbon local development should be realized in both urban and rural areas and in both developed and less developed countries.

Third, there needs to be policy coordination between environmental protection and economic growth, as well as local issues and global ones. Last but not the least is the outcome dimension — win-win results that should be realized not only in countries, but also in terms of the environment, economy, cost and efficiency, and the policies of various sectors.

Although climate change has different impacts on different countries, no country can walk away from this battle unscathed. In spite of political, economic and trade conflicts, China, the US and Japan should forge a community of a shared future in the process of coping with climate change, given the shared benefits, responsibilities and risks.

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## It's time China and EU come together

Complementary strengths make them ideal partners for a new front to advance and manage the digital economy

The rise of the digital economy brings with it umpteen benefits and also challenges that call for international cooperation. China and the European Union, having complementary strengths, are well placed to work together to advance and manage the digital economy, a driving force of growth and innovation in the 21st century.

This is particularly true of China, where, in 2018, the value of the digital economy reached 31 trillion yuan (\$4.34 trillion), almost one-third of its GDP.

A report jointly published by the Center for China and Globalization and the Hinrich Foundation shows digital exports as the second-largest category in Chinese exports. It also estimates that digital trade will drive China's digital exports up by 207 percent to 5 trillion yuan in 2030.

Data has become as vital to the world economy as oil was in the 20th century, transforming and creating entire industries and giving birth to countless products and services. Technologies such as cloud computing, big data, and the internet of things have brought new ways to connect people, things, and places, and their impact is only set to grow.

However, the rise of the digital economy has also brought to the fore data privacy and data security risks. While data circulation can create wealth, if not adequately protected, the same data can present opportunities for criminal and illegal activities.

Given the global nature of information networks and how data flows around the world at lightning speed, international cooperation is needed to effectively mitigate these risks.

China — being a leader in digital adoption and innovation, and the EU — with its rich experience in progressive regulation of emerging sectors, are well placed to join forces and intensify these efforts. Also, unlike the United States, China and the EU share a proactive approach to digital regulation and promoting global governance.

Current challenges and opportunities highlight potential areas for joint China-EU efforts. For example, a data breach at Facebook last year affected over 50 million users, triggering a debate on data privacy on social media platforms. The European Com-

mission's General Data Protection Regulations, which came into force last year, is one of the most ambitious attempts to address data privacy. GDPR is an example of the EU's rich experience in formulating regulatory frameworks, something China is working on. But GDPR remains complex and ill-defined in certain areas, leading to uncertainties in its actual enforcement.

The EU has put forward "three pillars" in its digital single market strategy, namely, providing better digital products and services for individuals and enterprises, creating a favorable environment for the development of digital networks and services, and maximizing the growth potential of the digital economy.

This is in line with China's current efforts to solve problems in data security, market regulation and unbalanced regional development.

Also, while Chinese firms have leading capabilities in digital

industries such as e-commerce and fintech, accounting for nearly half of the world's top 20 tech companies, Europe has no company in that list but boasts strengths in advanced manufacturing.

China and the EU should thus increase dialogue and cooperation

and encourage their enterprises to cooperate in relevant fields for industrial digitalization to be able to tap the potential of the digital economy while strengthening market supervision.

Both sides should also use international platforms to promote global governance in this field. World Trade Organization e-commerce negotiations started earlier this year, with 76 members participating. The Osaka Declaration on the digital economy was issued at the G20 Summit in Osaka in Japan.

There is a growing international consensus on the need for multilateral cooperation on the digital economy. As pioneers in the field, China and the EU are well placed to step up these efforts and help reinvigorate multilateral cooperation.

The author is president of the Centre for China and Globalization. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



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