

# THE NATION

Islamabad

6 June 2017

**Opinion**

## **All Roads Lead to China**

**Dr Ahmad Rashid Malik**



All roads to China's preeminence are cleared. The Paris Agreement on climate change is dead. Over 150 countries have ratified it so far, controlling 85 percent greenhouse gas emissions. President Donald Trump announced on 1 June to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on climate change. The agreement, signed in December 2015, lays out the commitment from 195 countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions from 2020. Trump thought that the agreement was a bad idea and it is unfair for the American workers and the economy to grow.

Critics say that Trump's blatant disregard to global warming is damaging. America should be the leader than leaving the pact. The United States is the second biggest emitter of carbon dioxide worldwide (and has contributed, with Europe, 52% of the share of cumulative carbon emissions since industrialisation).

Given the continuous commitment of most countries to reduce emissions, and the firm leadership of Europe, China and Russia in shaping the transformation towards a decarbonised economy, the United States runs the risk of being left behind and missing one

of the greatest economic opportunities of our time, according to Thomas Stoker at the University of Bern in Switzerland.

Suzan Lozier at Duke University considers Trump's decision a shortsighted one. To Catherine Hayhoe of Texas Tech University, the United States will be the biggest loser. "The United States decision to withdraw from the Paris climate accord could stall domestic efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging business lobbies to oppose new restrictions aimed at fighting global warming," wrote The Japan Times in its report on 3 June. Japanese companies may be worried about becoming less competitive with their US counterparts, the paper said. This may be true for all other countries and for that reason they may put pressure on the governments to get out of the Paris Agreement's commitments.

The US exit from the global environment protection and its early withdrawal from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) paved the way for Chinese influence, without its intention unveiled and without any manipulations. The US withdrawal from these pacts naturally are increasing Chinese role. It is not instantly grabbing these opportunities but playing a cautious and responsible role.

China will not dominate on these issues but it will extend its responsibilities. This distinguishes China from the United States and other powers. China does not have a counter and containment policy against the United States. Strategists are wrongly wasting their energies on these analyses.

China was criticised by many on its climate change and environmental policy for long. But China is fully committed and pursuing its goals toward these commitments. The Chinese Foreign Ministry's spokeswoman, Hua Chunying, said: "We believe that the Paris Agreement embodies the broadest consensus of the international community on climate change, and the parties should cherish and maintain this hard-won outcome... In the future, China will continue to do a good job in dealing with climate change, actively participate in the multilateral process of climate change, and unswervingly uphold the global climate management."

China is fully committed to combating climate change. Recently China announced US\$ 360 billion investment in clean energy to create 13 million new jobs. China and the EU have signed a new alliance to reduce global carbon emissions showing their renewed commitment to the Paris Agreement. China is committed to all UN and international fora to reduce carbon emissions.

The impact of the US withdrawal will be unforeseen and huge. The whole structure of the Paris Agreement is weakened, allowing countries to make individual decisions. The agreement was misperceived and was made flexible for interpretations on national interest. Consensus and commitment to climate change is weakened. You can pollute the environment as you like using jobs and economy as an excuse. It will take a century to go roll back to global on climate change again.

The United States officially and formally abandoned the climate change commitment but China will continue with its commitment made with other signatories, which means Chinese infrastructural and industrial development will not be violating ethics drawn for the

protection of the environment and China will be a responsible country. China's Belt and Road infrastructural projects will be carried out under the commitment China made at national, bilateral, and international level about the climate change. Now what is the option of critics of China's climate policy? Why they will still doubt and criticise China? They criticised China on the US and Western mantra of climate change and doubted with its commitments. China is not replacing the United States. It is China's own natural space which it is filling – the sheer size of its economy and technological advancement and global connectivity. China is not filling the vacuum left out by America or Europe for that matter. China has its own role and policies. China is not living on American "left-outs" on trading blocs and climate change but on its own resilient policy.

*The writer is Director of the China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad. He writes on East Asian affairs.*

<http://nation.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2017-06-06/page-6>