

## Biden and the TikTok Anti-LNG Crusade

Americans received a preview of a second Biden term on Friday when the President halted permits for new liquefied natural gas (LNG) export projects. Climate politics has become the tail wagging this Administration's economic, national security and foreign policy. President Biden isn't running for reelection. Climate lobbyist Bill McKibben and his TikTok army are.

“This pause on new LNG approvals sees the climate crisis for what it is: the existential threat of our time,” Mr. Biden said. “We will heed the calls of young people and frontline communities who are using their voices to demand action from those with the power to act.” Didn't he campaign in 2020 by promising to be the adult in the room?

Now he's letting TikTokers dictate U.S. policy. Press reports say Biden adviser John Podesta pushed for the “pause”—which tees up an outright ban—after TikTokers and Mr. McKibben made stopping LNG exports a *cause celebre*. Mr. Biden's advisers at the White House even met with a TikTok climate “influencer.” The Administration hopes its climate gesture will boost the President's flagging political support among young people.

Who cares about the real-world impact, or the signal to allies and adversaries that the U.S. isn't a reliable partner? Europe and Asia should plan to import their gas from Qatar, Russia or even Iran. Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin now know they can exploit the Administration's climate obsession to undermine U.S. interests.

During the pause, the Energy Department will conduct an environmental and economic review of LNG exports. “Today, we have an evolving understanding of the market need for LNG, the long-term supply of LNG, and the perilous impacts of methane on our planet” and “pollution from new export facilities,” the White House statement says.

Mr. Biden's views sure have evolved. As Vice President, he boasted about the benefits of U.S. LNG exports. “The United States is now a net [gas] exporter,” he proclaimed at the 2016 CAF conference. “There are even greater opportunities to

supply the energy needs of our partners in Latin America and around the world.”

He was right. Global demand for natural gas is expected to increase 46% by 2050 as countries industrialize and shift from coal. Most developing Asian economies still rely on coal for power, including India (71%), Indonesia (59%), Vietnam (57%) and the Philippines (55%). Global coal exports and power generation last year hit a record.

China was the biggest coal importer, followed by India, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Demand for LNG has outstripped supply especially as Europe tries to wean itself from Russian gas. A Bangladesh energy official complained last year that Asian countries couldn't buy gas because of skyrocketing prices. Instead, they burned coal. How will this be good for the climate?

The climate lobby also doesn't care that some 2.3 billion people in the world still cook with open fires or stoves that burn heavily-polluting wood, coal, biomass or kerosene. Developing countries want and need gas to escape poverty, which is another reason demand for LNG is expected to exceed supply for decades.

Hence, Russia, Iran and Qatar are expanding their export capacities. By the way, Russia last year supplied Europe with almost as much gas as the U.S. The White House says its pause won't jeopardize supply to Europe, but energy officials across the pond disagree. Germany accounted for a third or more of the contracted capacity of a large planned Gulf Coast LNG project.

Nobody in the White House seems to understand that countries sign long-term contracts years in advance so they can plan their energy infrastructure and needs. They won't build new gas plants or import terminals without supply locked in—or they will turn to more reliable sources. Russia now looks like a more reliable energy source than the U.S.

Much of the supply from LNG projects in the works is slated for Asia. They would strengthen U.S. relationships and influence in the region to counter China. Xi Jinping no doubt is elated by the Administration's pause, which will do more damage to U.S. strategic interests than blocking the Keystone XL pipeline.

Re-election imperatives have partly restrained the President's attack on fossil fuels

in his first term, but don't expect the same in a second. Recall how the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in early 2022 backtracked on a plan to conduct greenhouse-gas analyses for natural gas pipelines and export projects after West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin raised a ruckus.

But Mr. Manchin is retiring, and Mr. Biden won't need to worry about him in a second term. Nor will he have to heed voters in states such as Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin. Mr. McKibben will lead a no-holds-barred children's crusade against fossil fuels. Is Mr. Biden trying to give Americans another reason to vote for Donald Trump?

*His 'pause' on export permits may be his most destructive climate act.*

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