

# Kerry urges US-China cooperation on climate change

November 4 2014, by Matthew Pennington

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Secretary of State John Kerry said Tuesday the U.S. and China must work together to stave off a global catastrophe from climate change. He appealed for greater cooperation between the two world powers despite strains between them over cyber theft and maritime security.

Kerry heads to Beijing this week, to set the stage for a visit by President Barack Obama for a regional summit and talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping. That will be first leg of a three-nation swing through Asia, intended to underscore the president's commitment to the region despite the necessity of American attention on security crises in the Mideast and eastern Europe.

But there have been growing signs of friction in the U.S.-China relationship in the past year, despite efforts to expand areas in which they work together and forge closer personal ties between their leaders, after Obama and Xi held an unusually informal summit meeting in California in June 2013.

Kerry emphasized what Obama administration officials have been saying since they declared a reorientation of American foreign policy toward Asia during the president's first term—that the "rebalance" toward the region is not aimed at countering the growing might of China.

"The US-China relationship is the most consequential in the world today. Period. And it will do much to determine the shape of 21st century. That means that we have to get it right," Kerry said in an address on

U.S.-China relations at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington.

But Kerry also made clear the U.S. wouldn't back down over its differences with China on cyber espionage, human rights violations and maritime security in the South China Sea, where China has disputes with several of its Southeast Asian neighbors that could spark conflict.

"Our differences will undoubtedly continue to test the relationship," Kerry said. "But they should not, and in fact, must not, prevent us from acting cooperatively in other areas."

Kerry praised China's help on combating nuclear proliferation by Iran and North Korea and welcomed a growing Chinese role for the stability of Afghanistan as the U.S. draws down its forces after 13 years of war. He commended China for committing \$130 million in aid to combat Ebola in West Africa, and to deploy a military unit to Liberia.

"That's global leadership," Kerry said.

He made the case in stark terms for greater cooperation between the U.S. and China on [climate change](#), which he said presented not just an environmental threat to the world, but one to the economy, health and security as people compete for food and water resources.

"That will change the nature of security and conflict in the world. That's the reality of what we're up against. That's why it is so imperative that the United States and China lead the world with genuine reductions and put us on a path to real progress," Kerry said.

Kerry said that together, the U.S. and China, the world's two largest economies and energy consumers, account for nearly 50 percent of global emissions.

Despite the appealing logic of the U.S. and China working together to tackle global problems, and Xi's eagerness for what he calls a "new model of great power relations," Beijing has taken an increasingly defiant stance toward Washington on issues where they disagree.

China has pulled the plug on a dialogue on cyber security, after the U.S. in May indicted five Chinese military officials over allegations of cyber espionage against U.S. companies. China has reportedly accelerated land reclamation in the South China Sea, despite U.S. calls for a moratorium on such construction.

"The administration is continuing to try to influence these Chinese policies but just isn't really having much impact," said Bonnie Glaser, a China specialist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank. "Xi Jinping seems to have more of an appetite than his predecessors for a contentious relationship with the United States."

Kerry was departing Washington Tuesday, but before he arrives in China, he will stop in Paris, where he will meet with French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius on Wednesday to discuss a range of issues including the Islamic State group, Ebola, and Ukraine.

In Beijing, Kerry is due to meet top diplomats from Australia, Indonesia, Japan and New Zealand and, of course, China. He will then will make a brief detour to Muscat, Oman, to meet with negotiators on Iran's nuclear program, before returning to Beijing for Obama's arrival for an economic summit of Asia-Pacific leaders starting Monday. The president will later travel to Myanmar and Australia.

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Citation: Kerry urges US-China cooperation on climate change (2014, November 4) retrieved 26

April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-11-kerry-urges-us-china-cooperation-climate.html>

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