

U.S. China tensions impact efforts to address climate change

We hear much today about the rising tensions between the United States and China, much of it centered around China's relationship with Taiwan and China's construction of military facilities on small islands and reefs in the South China Sea. In [a recent article posted on the TomDispatch website](#), journalist Joshua Frank examines some overlooked factors in this conflict, factors directly related to efforts to address climate change by moving to non-polluting energy sources.

“Not only will nodule mining result in the loss of species and damage deep sea beds for thousands of years, it will potentially result in negative consequences for the rest of the ocean and the people who depend on its health.” —*Dr. Andrew Chin*

In addition to large reserves of petroleum and natural gas, the South China Sea floor contains large deposits of polymetallic nodules which are rich in cobalt, copper and lithium. These minerals play an essential role in green power generation, electrical grids, energy storage, and transportation and are critical to the shift to a zero carbon emissions future.

As the world's two largest emitters of greenhouse gases, the U.S. and China are competing for these finite minerals and this competition could lead to military confrontation. There are also the environmental impacts of deep-sea mining that threaten deep-water ecosystems. Frank closes by warning that “According to those who want to mine our way out of the climate crisis, such highly sought-after metals and minerals will remain crucial to weaning the world off dirty fossil fuels. Yet, count on one thing: they will come at a grave cost — not only geopolitically but environmentally, too...”