

EVENT

Dinner Dialogue
Climate

Can We Reconstruct Climate Policy? National Interests and International Action

The Transatlantic Climate Dinner in honour of Dr. Jonathan B. Wiener focused on the question of how national interests can be engaged to establish a comprehensive and effective international climate change regime. The dinner's discussion showed that a future system can only be ecologically effective and economically efficient if all major emitting countries participate and show a common effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, Dr. Wiener made clear that major constraints of the current system must be overcome to achieve this.

As a professor of law and public policy at Duke University, [Jonathan Wiener](#) [1] holds joint appointments to the Law School, the Nicholas School of Environment & Earth Sciences, and the Stanford Institute of Public Policy. Prior to joining Duke in 1994, Dr. Wiener worked in the White House on U.S. and international environmental policy for both the Clinton and first Bush administrations.

In his initial statement, Dr. Wiener introduced the participants to the future climate change regime that he and co-author Richard B. Stewart proposed in their book [Reconstructing Climate Policy: Beyond Kyoto](#) [2]. Dr. Wiener argued that developing an international climate change regime requires an institutional approach that can help engage national interests. This is especially true for involving the U.S. and China. Although it is now generally recognised in the U.S. that climate change is occurring, the political debate is polarised and highly oversimplified. Dr. Wiener calls instead for a policy approach that takes both the science and economics of climate change seriously, resulting in the benefit maximizing path to achieve necessary greenhouse gas reductions.

A more comprehensive approach than that of the Kyoto Protocol could help to overcome crucial problems that currently hinder global climate policy. Key issue areas are:

- Environment - As long as major developing countries are not involved in the Kyoto Protocol climate policy regime, there will be leakage effects through the shifting of carbon intensive activities into non-regulated countries. This will prevent the Kyoto regime from effectively reducing global emissions.
- Economics - A functioning CO₂ market is essential for reaching climate change targets in the most efficient manner. Low-cost abatement options in major developing countries are important to such a market. And the market cannot function well as long major sellers such as Russia can exercise market power, adding additional sellers, such as China, would help alleviate this concern.
- Politics - Each country's decision whether to join a climate change policy regime depends on the structure of its internal decision making. The U.S. will not join an international climate regime without significant action by China. Engaging China, India and Brazil is crucial to engaging the U.S. but these countries cannot be coerced to join, they must see participation as beneficial. Thus some system of international incentives must be created. An international cap-and-trade market could deliver these incentives.
- Changing geopolitics - The future world order will not be the same as the last several decades. The future geopolitical system may be more multipolar, with the U.S. no longer the lone superpower but flanked by a surging China and India, and organized Europe, and a revived Russia, as well as Japan and Brazil. Climate policy must be designed to succeed in this changing world order.

In the following discussion, the participants engaged in a lively dialogue over current problems of international climate policy and their recommendations for solving them:

- Time horizon - Climate change as a long-term problem is difficult to tackle within a political system that is based on short-term election cycles. The future system needs to overcome these differing time horizons.
- Allocation - The approach to defining reduction targets needs to be changed if major developing countries are to be involved. An allocation of emission budgets based on historical emissions (grandfathering) can be seen as an imperialistic principle that is not acceptable for developing countries.
- Link to energy issues - The advantages of joining an international climate change regime, especially for the U.S., can be increased if a stronger link between climate change policy and energy security is established.
- Parallel regimes - - The involvement of the U.S. in the Asian Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate is a

step in the right direction, according to Wiener, though not as vigorous an approach to limiting emissions as he and Stewart had recommended. However, many of the dinner dialogue participants questioned whether two parallel systems could ensure the necessary mitigation activities.

The dinner, which took place in Berlin on 26 June 2006, was the last in the series of six [Transatlantic Climate dinners](#) [3] sponsored by the [German Marshall Fund of the United States](#) [4] and organised by Ecologic.

Further Links:

- [Jonathan B. Wiener at Duke Law School](#) [1]
- [Reconstructing Climate Policy - Beyond Kyoto](#) [2], by Richard B. Stewart, Jonathan B. Wiener
- Ecologic Series of Events: [Capacity Building in the New Member States on further climate change action](#) [5] (post-2012)
- Ecologic Project: [Legal implementation of the European directive on emissions trading](#) [6]
- Ecologic Publication: [Climate Change Policies at the U.S. Subnational Level - Evidence and Implications](#) [7]
- Ecologic Series of Events: [Climate Talk](#) [8]

26 June 2006

Berlin

Jonathan B. Wiener

Speaker

Jonathan B. Wiener

Date

26 June 2006

Location

Berlin, Germany

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Links

[1] <https://law.duke.edu/fac/wiener/>

[2] http://www.aei.org/books/bookID.211,filter.all/book_detail.asp

[3] <https://www.ecologic.eu/1361>

[4] <http://www.gmfus.org/template/index.cfm>

[5] <http://ecologic.eu/about-ecologic-eventsclimate2012/en/index.htm>

[6] <https://www.ecologic.eu/1488>

[7] <https://www.ecologic.eu/1609>

[8] <http://ecologic.eu/about-ecologic-eventsclimate-talk/en/index.htm>