

The New York Times [reported](#) — with seeming alarm — this weekend that China is now leading the world in the manufacture of wind turbines and solar panels. Yet shouldn't we view this news as good for efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? Action by the U.S. to reduce emissions, while absolutely necessary for geopolitical reasons and important for technology forcing, won't mean anything if China can't be persuaded to slow and ultimately reduce its exploding emissions growth (in fact in this [sobering article](#) about China and emissions growth it's hard to see how we slow and ultimately cut emissions sufficiently to stabilize temperatures under any scenario, but that's a story for a different day).

Some of the manufacturing of wind turbines and solar panels is undoubtedly for export to the west. But as the Times article makes clear, China's own domestic policies combined with huge increases in domestic energy demand have made China the largest market for power generation equipment. Moreover China's policies — mandates for renewable energy, subsidies for consumers to install solar panels, rate fees to subsidize alternative energy generation — are more aggressive than anything the U.S. government has enacted to date and are helping to spur the renewable technology boom. And China's attention is not aimed only at renewable resources: the country is also [dramatically improving](#) the carbon efficiency of new coal fired power plants and appears to be on the verge of building a plant with carbon capture and storage technology.

So I find China's technology lead heartening. There's more, of course, to do. China has to find a way to decrease emissions from its notoriously dirty existing coal fired plants. By many accounts it has a long way to go to improve energy efficiency in existing buildings. And the U.S. ought to be a major player in the technology game, something that will only occur with strong federal action on climate change. But the big take home point from this weekend's Times article is that China is taking the climate problem seriously. That has to be good news for the planet.