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OPINION | REVIEW & OUTLOOK

## *John Kerry's Ukraine Emissions*

He frets that Russian brutality will distract from climate change.

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By [The Editorial Board](#)

Feb. 24, 2022 6:41 pm ET



U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry

PHOTO: MOHAMED ABD EL GHANY/REUTERS

Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry warned in [an interview](#) this week about “massive emissions consequences” from a Russian war against Ukraine, which he also said would be a distraction from work on climate change. Nevertheless, he added, “I hope President Putin will help us to stay on track with respect to what we need to do for the climate.”

What’s overheated here is Mr. Kerry’s brain. His comments came before [Vladimir Putin](#) began Thursday’s massive assault on Ukraine. But the BBC says the interview was taped this week, and the alarms about Mr. Putin’s impending attack have been ringing loudly. Mr. Kerry was running Foggy Bottom in 2014 when Mr. Putin invaded Crimea. How has he failed to internalize that Mr. Putin is a bad actor motivated by power and Russian revanchism?

Mr. Kerry told the BBC that he hopes Mr. Putin realizes Northern Russia is thawing, “and his infrastructure is at risk, and the people of Russia are at risk.” We’ll wait until you stop laughing. Mr. Putin deserves to be made a pariah. Western leaders like Mr. Kerry shouldn’t be wondering whether a polite tea in Moscow might induce him to slightly lower next year’s oil production when he can enrich the Kremlin by selling it for \$100 a barrel.

Mr. Kerry’s defenders—assuming they exist—might say he’s merely fulfilling his role as President Biden’s climate envoy. And Mr. Kerry did express to the BBC his concerns about “the people of Ukraine,” as well as the principle of using force to alter boundaries.

But Mr. Kerry’s comments aren’t a gaffe. They reveal the Biden Administration’s obsession with climate, and with punishing fossil-fuel production, which has made the U.S. and Europe vulnerable to Mr. Putin’s energy blackmail. The climate lobby has made Mr. Putin more powerful. Every time Mr. Kerry visits Moscow, the boys in the Kremlin must think it’s Christmas.

*Appeared in the February 25, 2022, print edition.*

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