

Gewoon eerlijk over energie.



MORNING BRIEF

# Biden Puts White House on Climate War Footing

The appointment of John Kerry as presidential climate envoy signals a desire to pull in allies and adversaries in the climate change fight.

BY COLM QUINN | NOVEMBER 24, 2020, 6:00 AM



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry holds his granddaughter for the signing of the accord at the United Nations Signing Ceremony for the Paris Agreement climate change accord that came out of negotiations at the COP21 climate summit last December in Paris, on April 22, 2016 in New York City. SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES

Here is today's *Foreign Policy* brief: Former U.S. Secretary of State **John Kerry** joins the incoming Biden administration as climate envoy, **Saudi Arabia** denies meeting between Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and **former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn** condemns the international community's approach to the Tigray conflict in *Foreign Policy*.

If you would like to receive Morning Brief in your inbox every weekday, please sign up [here](#).

## Kerry's Return Signals Coming War on Climate Change

Biden's technocratic choices for his cabinet have raised eyebrows for their relatively low profiles, but one appointment still retains some big name appeal. John Kerry, last seen in government as the U.S. secretary of state who helped usher in the Iran nuclear deal and Paris climate accords, will soon be back at the White House.

As special presidential envoy for climate, Kerry will take up a post on the White House National Security Council, a move meant to signal how seriously the Biden administration will take the crisis of climate change while also sparing Kerry any Senate confirmation battle.

Kerry is unlikely to be the final Biden choice with a climate change remit outside of their traditional role. Janet Yellen, reported to be Biden's pick for Treasury secretary, has endorsed a **carbon tax** as a means to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

The news comes as the levels of greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere **continue to rise**. A report by the United Nations World Meteorological Organization released on Monday warned that global lockdowns in the face of COVID-19 have not stemmed the rise of carbon dioxide, and that the dip in carbon emissions estimated for 2020—between 4.2 percent and 7.5 percent—are a "tiny blip" in line with normal fluctuations in carbon emissions observed year on year.

**"Climate-related" change.** While Biden has now elevated climate change to an issue of national security, the U.S. military has never stopped preparing for the impacts of climate change even as the Trump administration effectively prohibited the use of the term. For example, a **2019 Pentagon report** assessed which U.S. military installations were most vulnerable to "climate-related events," finding 79 that were under threat of either recurrent flooding, drought, desertification, wildfires, or thawing permafrost.

**What to expect.** In a **Dec. 2019 interview** with Emily Atkin of the climate newsletter *Heated*, John Kerry spoke about the launch of the climate initiative World War Zero, (so called, in Kerry's words, because "we've got to treat this like a war") which gives some insight into his possible big-tent approach.

"We've got to start by saying the basic overall plan we can all agree on is we've got to get to net zero, low carbon, no carbon economy by 2045, 2050, or earlier," Kerry said. "The 'or earlier' is very important to that discussion, because with the right leadership, we can do this earlier. We could make that happen."

"But right now, no country in the world is getting the job done. The United States' emissions are going up this year. Europe's going up this year. Russia's going up. China's going up. And that's completely, totally unacceptable. We have every reason to be upset about it."

Asked why he signed up to the World War Zero initiative, his answer could just as well apply to why he is taking this White House job. "Because it wasn't getting done," Kerry replied. "Because it's not happening. Because I'm a person who tries to get things done. And people who know me know there's a level of impatience that manifests itself in trying to make things happen."

## What We're Following Today

**The meeting that didn't happen.** Saudi Arabia continues to deny that a **meeting** took place between Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, despite an Israeli government official appearing to confirm that the two met on Sunday along with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

The meeting would be the first-ever publicly known meeting between the two leaders and comes at a time of increased uncertainty for the Saudi kingdom. President-elect Joe Biden has vowed to "reassess" the U.S.-Saudi relationship, including pulling U.S. support for the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen—a withdrawal that has gained bipartisan support. Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan al-Saud said that normalization with Israel will only take place once "a permanent and full peace deal" has been reached between Israel and the Palestinians.

**Burkina Faso waits on results.** More results are expected to be released **today** in Burkina Faso's presidential election, following allegations of fraud and voting irregularities by opposition parties. Although many polling stations were closed to avoid targeting by jihadist groups, international observers report no evidence of fraud so far. With just 12 of the country's 360 districts reporting, incumbent **President Roch Kaboré** is in the lead. The contest will head to a second round if no candidate garners more than 50 percent of the vote.

**Progressives question Fournoy nomination.** One of Joe Biden's likely cabinet picks is facing **pushback** from the Democratic party's progressive wing, over past ties to defense contractors and connections to policy decisions on the Middle East during the Obama administration, FP's Jack Detsch and Robbie Gramer report. Michèle Flournoy, widely tipped to be named as Biden's defense secretary, currently serves on the board of Booz Allen Hamilton and, along with Secretary of State nominee Antony Blinken, founded a consulting firm that reportedly advises defense firms.

## Keep an Eye On

**A vaccine for the people?** A coronavirus vaccine candidate **developed** by AstraZeneca and Oxford University is 90 percent effective at certain doses, according to the result of late-stage trials. Although the efficacy of the vaccine—now the third to produce promising results—is cause for celebration, its relative ease of distribution and cost gives hope to poorer countries at risk of being shut out by richer countries buying up vaccine stocks. The AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine can be transported at normal refrigerator temperatures, unlike the mRNA based Pfizer and Moderna vaccines which require super cold temperatures. The price, at roughly \$2.50 a dose, is nearly ten times cheaper than the mRNA vaccines.

**U.N. fears purge of Tigrayan officers.** As the conflict between Ethiopia's federal government and the leaders of the northern Tigray region continues, FP's Colum Lynch and Robbie Gramer **report** that the Ethiopian government has allegedly been rounding up ethnic Tigrayan security forces deployed in United Nations and African Union peacekeeping missions abroad and forcing them onto flights to the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. According to an internal U.N. account, there are fears that they could face torture or death.

**Former Ethiopian PM weighs in.** Former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn argues in an **article** for *Foreign Policy* that these violations must be investigated immediately. "If verified, this is a dangerous development and should be condemned in no uncertain terms, and the perpetrators should be brought to justice," he writes.

However, the primary threat to Ethiopia, Hailemariam argues, is the current leaders of the Tigray People's Liberation Front who dominated the coalition he led as prime minister from 2012 to 2018—and the international community should not reward their aggression by backing talks that lead to a power-sharing deal. "As well-meaning as many of the voices calling for negotiations are, they also seem to ignore the Machiavellian and deadly machinations of the remnants of the old TPLF regime and are shying away from blaming them for destabilizing the country," he writes.

**Turkey-EU tensions.** Turkey summoned the ambassadors of Italy, Germany, and the European Union on Monday to protest the **search** of a Turkish ship by German forces on an EU mission to enforce an arms embargo on Libya. Turkey maintains that the ship was carrying humanitarian supplies and that German personnel boarded the ship without permission. The German Defense Ministry said nothing suspicious had been found on the ship by the time the German sailors were ordered to leave the ship.

**Dutch far-right leader drops out.** Thierry Baudet, the leader of the Dutch anti-immigration, anti-European Union party Forum for Democracy (FvD) has **removed** himself from the running for parliamentary elections in March after party members were found to have made anti-Semitic and homophobic slurs in a closed group chat. Baudet will remain as party chairman. FvD is currently polling in ninth place out of 13 main parties. In March 2019, Thijs Kleinpaste profiled Baudet as the **new face of the Dutch far-right**.

## Odds and Ends

China is aiming to be only the third country, after the United States and Soviet Union, to bring **lunar material** back from the moon. The Chang'e-5 lunar module blasted off from Hainan province on Tuesday on a journey toward Oceanus Procellarum, an unexplored part of the moon. Scientists hope that by analyzing the rock, they will be better able to understand and date other lunar samples in the future. The module, along with 4.5 pounds of lunar material, is expected to land back on Earth in early December.

That's it for today.

For more from FP, visit [foreignpolicy.com](#), [subscribe here](#), or [sign up](#) for our other newsletters. Send your tips, comments, questions, or corrections to [morningbrief@foreignpolicy.com](mailto:morningbrief@foreignpolicy.com).

Colm Quinn is the newsletter writer at *Foreign Policy*. Twitter: [@colmquinn](#)

TAGS: CLIMATE, JOE BIDEN, JOHN KERRY, POLITICS, UNITED STATES

VIEW COMMENTS

## TRENDING NOW

SPONSORED LINKS BY TABOLA



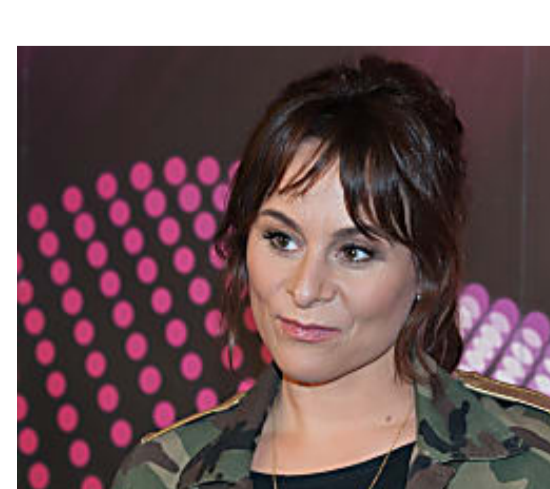
Is this the best mask you can bu...  
Smart Cover



Amazon-aandelen: met slechts...  
boltraders.com



De nieuwe truc tegen...  
Ornycosolve



Op 47-jarige leeftijd is dit het sal...  
Star Blvd

BY TABOLA

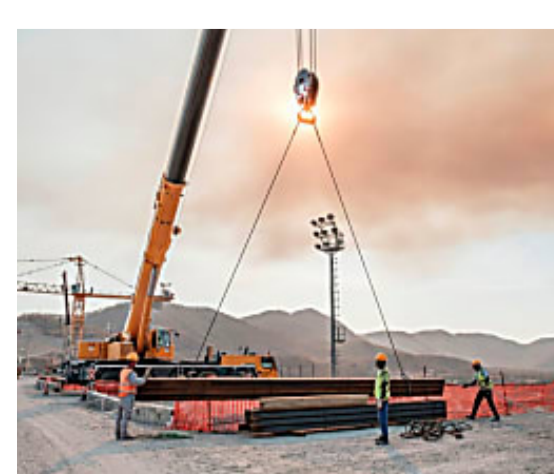
## MORE FROM FOREIGN POLICY



Political Violence Could Derail...



Slaughter in the East China Sea



The Ethiopian-Egyptian Water W...



Why Ethiopia Sailed While...

BY TABOLA



NIGHT WELLNESS  
Lichte en slanke benen?  
Het is mogelijk,  
terwijl jij droomt

GRADUATED  
COMPRESSION

KOOP NU

SOLDEA

## latest

'Put South Africa First' Breeds Hate  
Toward Other Africans  
NOVEMBER 24, 2020, 11:44 AM

Trump's Pentagon Now Vetting  
Nonpolitical Experts  
NOVEMBER 24, 2020, 10:47 AM

Yellen's Mandate: Massive  
Stimulus, Assuaging Fears of  
Inflation  
NOVEMBER 24, 2020, 10:04 AM

Biden Puts White House on Climate  
War Footing  
NOVEMBER 24, 2020, 6:00 AM

Ethiopia's Government and the  
TPLF Leadership Are Not Morally  
Equivalent  
NOVEMBER 24, 2020, 5:00 AM

SEE ALL STORIES

## TRENDING

- Ethiopia's Government and the TPLF Leadership Are Not Morally Equivalent
- Biden's Likely Defense Secretary Pick Fournoy Faces Progressive Pushback
- U.N. Fears Ethiopia Purging Ethnic Tigrayan Officers From Its Peacekeeping Missions
- How Russian Money Helped Save Trump's Business **28875 SHARES**
- Tigray's War Against Ethiopia Isn't About Autonomy. It's About Economic Power.



Floris van Bommel  
SHOP DEALS VAN VANDAAG

## voices

This Is How a Constitution Dies  
MICAH ZENKO

The West's Constitutional Crises  
Threaten the Economy's Last Best  
Hope  
ADAM TOOZE

Note to Biden: Forget Trade, the  
Real War With China Is Over Tech  
SALVATORE BABONES

