

## *The Globalization of Pollution*

*By The Editorial Board (New York Times)*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/25/opinion/the-globalization-of-pollution.html>

Emissions from Chinese factories that make goods for the American market are contributing to smog on the West Coast of the United States, according to a new study that shows the complexities of determining who is ultimately responsible for pollution that affects the entire planet.

China has become essentially the world's factory floor, producing clothes, electronics and other goods for the United States and others. That generally beneficial trade has also generated huge emissions of pollutants like sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides that are swiftly transported elsewhere by global winds — in addition, of course, to adding significantly to carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas.

According to the study, which was published in The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, emissions linked to China's exports caused increases in surface sulfate concentrations (a combination of sulfur dioxide and other gases) of between 3 percent and 10 percent in the Western United States in 2006, as well as a smaller increase in ozone-producing pollutants. In Los Angeles, that increased pollution was responsible for causing at least one extra day of smog per year that exceeded federal ozone limits. The report also estimated that the outsourcing of production to China resulted in less pollution in the Eastern United States, because there were fewer emissions from upwind factories in the East and Midwest.

The study provides further evidence that Beijing could and should do more to reduce pollution, which ultimately hurts people in that country much more than it does Americans. The study, which was written by a team of American and Chinese researchers, estimates that China could cut its emissions of sulfur dioxide by up to 62 percent and nitrogen oxides by up to 22 percent by requiring factories to install energy-efficiency and emission-control technologies as effective as those used in the United States.

More broadly speaking, the report's findings demonstrate that trade and global pollution patterns inextricably link countries to one another. That means that world leaders must coordinate their efforts to successfully reduce harmful emissions of all kinds. Not nearly enough has been done to rein in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, largely because of fundamental disagreements between rich and developing nations over who should be required to do more.

But the technology to control windblown pollutants like sulfur dioxide is readily available. What's needed is robust investment and political will on the local and regional levels.