



# We must go honest to 'go green'

BY SCOTT TINKER, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR — 01/20/21 11:00 AM EST

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The Biden administration represents itself as following science with regard to energy policy, yet it presents a simplistic clean and dirty energy [narrative](#) with the obvious solution to get rid of fossil fuels and “go green.”

Unfortunately, this narrative is naïve, expensive and misleading. It will harm U.S. energy security, the economy, the environment and the impoverished.

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To be sure, producing and burning coal and oil have significant environmental impacts. But what goes unmentioned are the extensive benefits of affordable, reliable energy provided by coal and oil to make cheap electricity, power cars and underpin a modern economy.

Intermittent solar and wind require almost 100 percent redundant and expensive backup power from natural gas plants or batteries to be reliable, which makes them more expensive to the consumer. That is partly why people in [California](#) and [Germany](#) pay much more for electricity. This higher cost is both regressive and inequitable to lower-income people.

China controls 50 to 70 percent of global [lithium](#), [cobalt](#) and [polysilicon](#) and is aggressively acquiring other mined materials to make batteries, turbines and solar panels. As we move to electric vehicles (EVs), we are essentially shifting control of transportation fuels from OPEC to China. Is that more secure? Mining practices for EV metals are known to [violate human rights](#), especially those of children. Do we want to promote that?

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Wind, solar and batteries have a significant role to play, but it's time to stop pretending that they can provide all the benefits of coal and oil, with none of the negative effects. The Biden administration, as a proponent of science, has a chance to represent the complex social, legal, political, economic and, yes, scientific challenges of energy.

To "go green," we must "go honest" so that we can address and solve the real energy challenges before us.

*Scott Tinker is a professor and the director of the Bureau of Economic Geology at The University of Texas at Austin.*

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