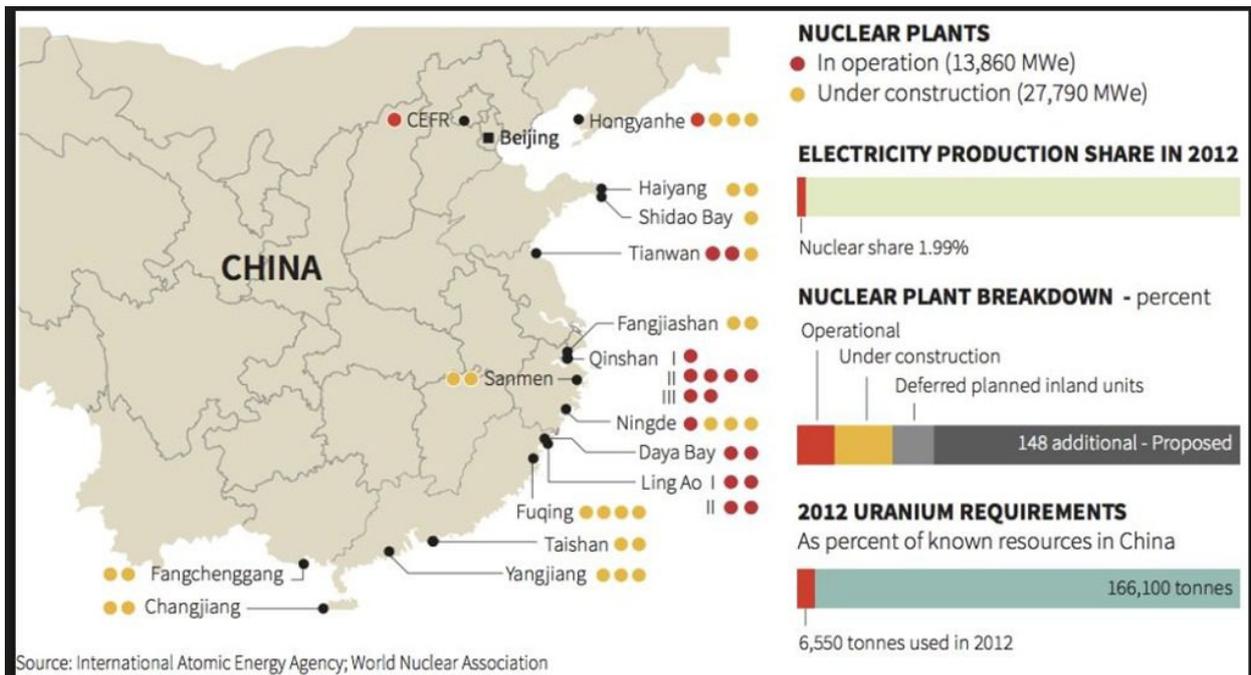


## China's Nuclear Boondoggle



According to the IAEA [here](#), there are 31 operational nuclear power reactors in China, and 24 more under construction. But, according to the excellent "[World Nuclear Industry Status Report 2015](#)," there is a deep slowdown underway in the planning for more new plants.

With that in mind, I want to report on some recent thoughts I and some others have had on China and nuclear power. Going back a few months, I attended a highly stimulating and informative program in September cosponsored by Columbia University's [Center on Global Energy Policy](#) and the [Sabin Center for Climate Change Law](#). It was titled [Meeting China's Climate Goals](#). I noted to the panelists and cosponsors then some of these thoughts:

There are many reasons why nuclear power is a terrible choice for any society. I have written about this any number of times, including in [a report](#) on a program at the Sabin Center several years back.

Nuclear power being a panacea for greenhouse gas emissions is a particularly cruel myth. The worst of it is that the money, material, time and expertise being spent on nuclear has slowed down our progress toward **real** clean tech solutions. Amory Lovins is eloquent about that, and I use his paper, [Four Nuclear Myths](#), to illustrate it in my classes. That the Chinese have committed so much to nuclear is a shame. Dr. Valerie Karplus of MIT, one of the panelists at the program in September, in her response to my question about China's nuclear plants and GHGs, appeared to say that nobody is looking at the cost and lifecycle GHG emissions of nuclear relative to true renewables. The best study that I know on GHGs in nuclear, generally, is [Valuing the greenhouse gas emissions from nuclear power: A critical survey](#). Here is a more up-to-date analysis with a focus on China: [Wind Energy Beats Nuclear & Carbon Capture for](#)

[Global Warming Mitigation.](#)

So, catching up on my reading today, I came across an article from Barron's Asia (via The Japan Times): "[China's Insane Nuclear Gamble.](#)" In the article, the writer compares the "developed, tech-savvy, safety-obsessed" culture of Japan to "a Communist China notorious for lax safety procedures, weak oversight and rampant graft." Here is a more recent article as well, from the SCMP, on concerns regarding nuclear power safety: "[Radiation fears in Hong Kong from China's unproven and possibly faulty nuclear reactors nearby.](#)" Both of these publications are business oriented and do not have a particularly strong environmental bias.

So, in addition to the obvious cost and GHG-mitigation inefficiencies in deploying new nuclear power relative to an all-in emphasis on wind and solar, the rather basic issue of safety should be a prime consideration for China, as anywhere, of course. But, unfortunately, as with the traditionally cozy relationships of Japan's monopolistic regional electric power companies, the government, and the nuclear power industry there, China too is promoting nuclear power through its highly favored, often thoroughly corrupt state-owned enterprises. China also does not bother with the "inconvenience" of considering public opinion. This is all to China's detriment.

If cost-effective, safe and quickly deployed low and zero-carbon electric power is the Chinese goal, then they can do it all infinitely better by jettisoning their nuclear program.