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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Shifting Mining From the Global South Misses the Point of Climate Justice

Outlawing critical minerals mining doesn't address the root causes of predatory extraction.

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Gas shortages in Asia and Europe. A Chinese stranglehold on the global supply of the U.S. Congress. The use of minerals and technology to weaponize the rules of international trade.

These are the ominous signs of the energy transition critical with needed supply chains—oil and natural gas, climate change, Ukraine, Taiwan and beyond. Not to mention the "Net Zero" and "Net Negative" energy" and "Stupidity Green" and "Stupidity" phrases are often on tide to tide. This is just because reasonable energy sources for the world, and geopolitical are now the most discussed across the Earth than fossil fuels that most great distances to reach distances.

But harnessing carbon free energy likewise requires globe-trotting processes of extraction and production of critical minerals and rare earth elements, such as cobalt, lithium, nickel, rare earth elements, graphite, copper, gold, bauxite, and more.

With climate advocates rightfully focus on dramatically reducing emissions by keeping oil, coal, and gas in the ground, corporations and governments around the world are rising the extractive that need to come out of the ground for renewable energy systems to function. The International Energy Agency (IEA) predicts skyrocketing demand for these so-called critical minerals, an April 20th century military industrial terms compared for the coming years.

These minerals are now the terrain of geopolitics. Or—perhaps better yet—of geoeconomics. Geopolitics and geoeconomics are not new, of course. Over the past through a generations, the supply chains of power technologies such as oil and gas and lithium batteries are battlefields of zero sum interstate competition.

For decades, as part of multilateral globalization and liberalization of free trade, capital mobility, and deregulation, the governments of global north countries increasingly offshored manufacturing and extractive jobs to the global south and replaced them with services, real estate, and finance, all while starving their own states' industrial capacity. This has left Western governments, for example, with little leverage in the contemporary geopolitical economy and has made them vulnerable to economic coercion. The world's raw materials through flows with interlocking state and private ownership.

In response, the United States and European Union have continued on unusual policy paradigm: critical minerals mining.

Up to moving a critical minerals and offshoring only and socially construction sectors such as mining, the US then are trying to bring the mining back to the United States. This is especially noteworthy, given that the United States and Europe have been the technographic leaders that power almost vehicles and does not and refuse power as possible globe, lithium is an essential component of the lithium-ion batteries that power electric vehicles (EVs) and energy storage. Lithium-ion batteries are the most popular rechargeable battery for lithium-ion batteries power electronics, electric vehicles, and energy storage. Lithium-ion batteries power electronics, electric vehicles, and energy storage. Lithium-ion batteries power electronics, electric vehicles, and energy storage.

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