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TRUMP LEAVES THE PARIS CLIMATE ACCORD: WHAT NOW?

President Trump presented his views on the “hoax” of Climate Change as a candidate for President of the United States of America, so it should have come as no surprise when he mandated this country’s withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accords. Today’s paper, in part, highlights the consequences of the United States’ removal from the Accords, but “What Now?” What should be anticipated for the future in addressing Climate Change?

The debate over the concept of Climate Change has not diminished since the United States has withdrawn from the agreement. However, there is now talk of no longer debating the ideology of Climate Change, but accepting the fact that Climate Change exists, regardless of the reason.

Currently, the United States is only one of three countries world-wide not to belong to the Paris Climate Accords. This means that our country is not bound by the language or goals of the Accord. One option is to prepare for the consequences of Climate Change rather than debate its causes. It is evident that the weather will continue to get much hotter and more extreme. What could be done to address this phenomenon? What could be done about rising water or immigration related to Climate Change?

What can be done about extreme weather patterns such as hurricanes or tornadoes? The future demands answers.

More Questions to Consider:

1. Who loses and who wins because of the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Climate Accords?
2. What is gained or lost with the United States leaving the Accords?
3. Does it make sense to debate over the causes of Climate Change? Why/why not?
4. If Climate Change is a given, what is the best way to deal with its pending hazards?
5. Is the United States of America capable of addressing the ramifications of Climate Change unilaterally?

The Consequences of Leaving the Paris Agreement

cfr.org/backgrounder/consequences-leaving-paris-agreement

By withdrawing from the Paris accord, the United States—the second-largest global emitter—could undercut collective efforts to reduce emissions, transition to renewable energy sources, and lock in future climate measures.

Backgrounder by [James McBride](#) - June 1, 2017

Introduction

President Donald J. Trump has strongly criticized the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate reached by President Barack Obama’s administration, arguing that the global deal to cut back carbon emissions would kill jobs and impose onerous regulations on the U.S. economy. As a result, in June 2017 he [announced](#) that the United States will exit the agreement. With the United States producing nearly one-fifth of all global emissions, the U.S. withdrawal from the accord could undercut collective efforts to reduce carbon output, transition to renewable energy sources, and lock in future climate measures.

Debate over the impact of withdrawal continues. While Trump has rolled back climate regulations at a federal level, [thirty-four states](#), led by California and New York, have undertaken their own ambitious carbon reduction plans.

What is the status of the Paris Agreement?

The Paris Agreement was finalized at a global climate conference in 2015, and [entered into force](#) in November 2016 after enough countries, including China and the United States, ratified it. The nearly two hundred parties to the deal—only Syria and Nicaragua have failed to sign on—committed to voluntary reductions in carbon emissions with the goal of keeping global temperature increases below 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit (2 degrees Celsius), a level that the assembled nations warned could lead to an “urgent and potentially irreversible threat to human societies and the planet.”

Under the deal, countries will evaluate progress toward their goals in 2018 and, beginning in 2020, will submit updated carbon reduction plans every five years. The details on how countries’ efforts will be monitored, verified, and reported are subject to [ongoing negotiations](#), as are the specifics of a proposed \$100 billion in climate-related financing meant to help poorer countries adapt.

On June 1, 2017, Trump [announced](#) that the United States would become the only country to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

What is the perceived economic impact of the deal?

President Trump says complying with the Paris Agreement would impose unacceptable costs on the U.S. economy and provide unfair advantages to other countries like China and India. Trump has downplayed the threat of climate change and criticized the Obama administration’s expanded carbon regulations.

Trump has emphasized the expansion of U.S. fossil fuel production. His “[America First Energy Plan](#)” focuses on reducing the price of oil, achieving “energy independence,” tapping domestic oil sources, and creating energy-related jobs by decreasing regulation. He has also [promised to end](#) what he sees as wasteful payments to the United Nations Green Climate Fund. The United States has already paid \$1 billion into this fund, with \$2 billion more pledged. Faced with a choice between complying with Paris and boosting the U.S.

economy, the administration asserts that “growing our economy is going to win,” according to Trump’s chief economic advisor, Gary Cohn.

Meanwhile, a number of [economic analyses](#) question whether leaving the agreement will create jobs. Protecting jobs in the oil, gas, and coal industries, some economists say, could come at the cost of investments in clean energy industries that may ultimately offer more long-term employment.

What is the withdrawal process?

The Paris Agreement states that countries must wait four years before withdrawing. However, [legal analysts say](#) that Trump could shorten that process to just one year by removing the United States from a [1992 UN treaty](#) governing global climate talks, which the president has the authority to do without congressional backing. In his June 2017 comments, Trump said that his administration would cease implementation but explore a renegotiation of the deal to seek better terms.

Many observers also say that beyond officially rejecting the Paris accord, Trump was already in the process of effectively ending U.S. participation in it by rejecting the Obama-era [Clean Power Plan \(CPP\)](#) [PDF]. The CPP, which sets emissions-reduction requirements for each U.S. state but allows them flexibility in how to achieve them, was the centerpiece of President Obama’s Paris Agreement commitment.

How would it affect domestic U.S. climate and energy policy?

Trump began overturning Obama’s energy policy soon after taking office: In a [March 2017 executive order](#), he directed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to begin the process of rescinding the CPP.

Because the CPP is not legislation but rather a set of EPA regulations, the president does not need congressional approval to alter it. However, legal experts disagree over how much latitude Trump has to unilaterally abandon it. The CPP was already on hold due to a [court challenge](#), and while the administration could decline to continue defending it in court, legal challenges will likely continue. Some [experts say](#) that any changes would have to proceed through the time-consuming federal rulemaking process.

Trump’s executive order also reversed regulations that required all federal agencies to incorporate climate change into their planning and review processes, overturned a moratorium on coal development on federal lands, and ordered a review of emissions restrictions for oil and gas wells. Taken together, these steps sharply decreased the likelihood that the United States would have met its Paris obligations. Many U.S. states and cities, led by California and New York, have committed to ambitious carbon reduction plans, but even if local governments meet their goals, overall reduction [would fall short](#) of Paris targets.

How could the U.S. withdrawal affect global climate policy?

The United States is the second-largest emitter worldwide, behind only China, and its promised emissions cuts accounted for about 20 percent of global cuts foreseen by the agreement. The United States’ European allies have [lobbied hard](#) against a U.S. exit from the deal, arguing that it would weaken its enforcement measures and undermine the resolve of other countries to make their own tough cuts. They fear that backsliding by the world’s largest economy could arrest the efforts already underway to mitigate the changes in climate that are causing expensive coastal damage. Some foreign policy experts, like former Under Secretary of State R. Nicholas Burns, say that [going back on the deal](#) could hobble U.S. clout on a suite of unrelated diplomatic issues. For CFR’s Stewart Patrick, [the decision](#) “will endanger U.S. national security and prosperity by sabotaging U.S. global leadership.”

CFR's Varun Sivaram and Sagatom Saha [argue that](#) a U.S. retreat on climate would empower China to fill the leadership vacuum, ceding U.S. influence in the clean energy race and strengthening China's hand on other fraught issues like territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Already, indications are emerging that China is forging a [new alliance](#) with the European Union to advance common climate policies without the United States. Sivaram also points to Trump's proposal to [slash funding](#) for global clean energy innovation efforts, which could hamper efforts to develop and deploy new carbon-reducing technologies that would likely be central to achieving the goals set by the Paris Agreement.

Axios

[axios.com/climate-change-is-here-to-stay-so-deal-with-it-1513302730-f02bde93-43b3-4d8c-a189-c08c8ccb5a80.html](https://www.axios.com/climate-change-is-here-to-stay-so-deal-with-it-1513302730-f02bde93-43b3-4d8c-a189-c08c8ccb5a80.html)

Amy Harder

Everyone who wants to keep pushing climate policies in the vacuum of Washington leadership should start thinking more about how to adapt to a warmer world instead of focusing most political will on ways to stop it.

Why it matters: The chances of reversing climate change are slim regardless of U.S. involvement in the Paris agreement. Countries, companies, U.S. states and cities and non-governmental organizations pursuing policies to address climate change should refocus their high-level political efforts on ways to prepare for the impacts that are already here and those still to come.

"Adaptation has to become a more active part of the discussion," said Jason Grumet, president of the Bipartisan Policy Center, a centrist Washington think tank. "One thing is to recognize adaptation is not a question of defeat. Adaptation is the reality that is already taking place."

To be clear, in many areas of the U.S. and around the world, government and business leaders are considering or already pursuing policies to prepare for a warmer planet, particularly higher sea levels and more extreme storms. Many examples exist, and here are three:

1. New York City is considered a global leader on this front. In 2013, as mayor of the city, Michael Bloomberg announced a [\\$20 billion plan](#) to adapt to climate change. More recently, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a federal agency, is [looking at](#) how it can use large gates to protect Jamaica Bay, near JFK airport, from flooding.
2. Norfolk, Va., and the many military bases near there, [are preparing](#) for rising sea levels.
3. Miami [is adapting](#) its urban planning to be ready for rising sea levels.

These efforts are taking a backseat to America's obsession with the binary fight over whether or not to curb greenhouse gas emissions of fossil fuels. Judging by the reaction to Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris deal, one would think it was the only answer to solving climate change. But actually, nothing and nobody can solve climate change. Even if the world stopped burning fossil fuels tomorrow, "many aspects of climate change and associated impacts will continue for centuries," [according to](#) the United Nations.

This isn't to suggest abandoning efforts to slow the worst impacts of climate change. It should be an "and" proposition, not "either/or." Countries, companies and others should keep developing technologies and policies to use more renewable energy, nuclear power and cleaner burning fossil-fuel resources. The debate between whether to focus on stopping climate change versus adapting to it has persisted for years within the wonky climate policy world. It's suddenly relevant to more people now with Trump cutting the U.S. out of the Paris deal and deflating hopes of comprehensive global action to curb emissions.

"It's been one of the biggest challenges of climate advocacy over the past decade that there isn't a more robust conversation on what we need to do to adapt to the changing climate," said John Coequyt, director of the Sierra Club's federal and international climate campaigns.

Talking about adapting to climate change is easier said than done (and it's not even easy to talk about). That's for a few reasons:

- Preparing for the impacts of climate change is an inherently local endeavor and the federal government's role is limited. What role the federal government does have, such as authorizing flood insurance, hasn't [directly addressed](#) the impacts of rising sea levels.
- Most Republicans are comfortable talking about adapting to climate change — as long as you don't use those two "c" words.
- It's expensive and unpopular. Bloomberg's 2013 plan had an initial price tag of \$20 billion, but its overall cost, which wasn't disclosed, was projected to be far higher. Some efforts also face opposition from environmentalists, nearby residents and experts [who worry](#) about the impacts of such large structures like sea walls or gates.

Grumet and Coequyt both say talking more about adapting to climate change will help provide people with more information about an issue that's otherwise hard to grasp on an individual level. "Talking about adaptation helps people understand in a more tangible manner why we need to address this problem," Coequyt said.

One last ironic thing: A golf course in Ireland owned by one of Trump's companies applied for a sea wall application and specifically cited the consequences of global warming, Politico reported last year in a [highly cited article](#). Proof, at least, that the president's willing to engage in activities to address climate change even if he isn't willing to admit it's a problem.

