
Paris Isn't Burning

Why the Climate Agreement Will Survive Trump

Brian Deese

For decades, the world has understood the threat of climate change. But until recently, the economic and political obstacles to tackling the problem stymied global action. Today, that calculus has changed. Technological progress has made clean energy a profitable investment, and growing popular pressure has forced politicians to respond to the threat of ecological disaster. These trends have enabled major diplomatic breakthroughs, most notably the 2015 Paris agreement. In that pact, 195 countries pledged to make significant reductions in their greenhouse gas emissions. “We’ve shown what’s possible when the world stands as one,” proclaimed U.S. President Barack Obama after the talks concluded.

Now, however, that agreement is under threat. When it comes to climate change, U.S. President Donald Trump has replaced urgency with skepticism and threatened to pull the United States out of the Paris agreement. He has spent the early months of his presidency attempting to roll back the Obama administration’s environmental regulations and promising the return of the U.S. coal industry.

The Trump administration has not yet decided whether to formally leave the Paris agreement. Whatever it decides, the agreement itself will survive. Negotiators designed it to withstand political shocks. And the economic, technological, and political forces that gave rise to it are only getting stronger. U.S. policy cannot stop these trends. But inaction from Washington on climate change will cause the United States serious economic and diplomatic pain and waste precious time in the race to save the planet. Sticking with the deal would mitigate

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