

# The World's Shift to Electric Cars

**Exclusive:** Despite resistance from the oil industry and Team Trump, the transition to electric vehicles is accelerating, with key foreign countries and some U.S. states taking the lead, writes Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

Even as the Trump administration scrubs federal web sites of data about climate science and clean energy and appoints coal industry lobbyists to senior policy positions, other nations are responding vigorously to the reality of global warming.

Great Britain and France have recently announced ambitious timetables for phasing out fossil-fueled cars by 2040. Even bolder are Norway, which expects all new cars sold by 2025 to be electric, up from 37 percent today, and India, which set 2030 as its target date for going all-electric.

Together with the rising domestic popularity of all-electric and hybrid electric vehicles, the potential political contagion from such foreign programs is spurring major U.S. fossil fuel producers into spending millions of dollars to kill clean transportation alternatives.

A shadowy outfit called Fueling U.S. Forward, devoted to promoting greater use of oil and natural gas, recently produced a misleading attack video called "Dirty Secrets of Electric Cars." The *New York Times* exposed the group as "a public relations group for fossil fuels funded by Koch Industries, the oil and petrochemicals conglomerate led by the ultraconservative billionaire brothers David H. and Charles G. Koch."

The stakes, both financial and environmental, are high. The U.S. transportation sector currently consumes 14 million barrels of petroleum products every day. Transitioning away from all that gasoline and diesel to cleaner electric transportation will be critical to lowering carbon emissions before global warming wreaks havoc on human civilization and natural ecosystems. It will also help alleviate vehicle air pollution that kills an estimated 50,000 people each year in the United States alone.

Unlike the power sector, where the renewable energy revolution is well underway across the nation, transportation remains largely stuck in the last century. In my car-friendly state of California, for example, thanks to a boom in solar and wind energy, electric power today accounts for only about 20 percent of statewide greenhouse gas emissions. Transportation, by contrast, contributes 36

percent, far more than any other sector.

When charged by clean solar, wind, hydro or nuclear power, electric cars and trucks contribute almost no greenhouse or toxic air emissions. Even in states with a high proportion of coal-fired generation, efficient electric vehicles (EVs) account for fewer emissions than the average new gas-powered car.

With coal-burning plants increasingly giving way to cleaner natural gas-fired plants and renewable generation of energy, more than 70 percent of Americans now live in areas where EVs cause fewer emissions even than the cleanest conventional cars, according to recent research by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). On average, across the country, EVs create as little carbon pollution as gasoline-powered cars that get 73 mpg – if such cars even existed.

Critics, like the Koch-funded Fueling U.S. Forward, complain that it takes more energy to manufacture an electric car than a gas-powered car, mostly because of the need for big batteries. But those manufacturing emissions are more than offset by the reduced emissions from driving a mid-sized electric car after just 5,000 miles, the UCS report notes.

### **Electric Vehicles on a Roll**

Electric vehicles today number only about 2 million, or just 0.2 percent of all light passenger vehicles in use globally today, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). The good news is that their numbers are growing about 60 percent per year. In the United States, customers bought 53,000 electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles in the first six months of 2017 – not counting Tesla sales – up from 33,000 in the same period a year ago.

Momentum is growing in the EV industry. Tesla briefly this year enjoyed the highest market cap of any U.S. automaker. In July, Volvo announced that it plans to produce only hybrid or all-electric vehicles by 2019. China, which now leads the world in EV sales, has tough incentives to increase them further. A multi-nation coalition called the Electric Vehicles Initiative – including Canada, China, Finland, France, Germany, India, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom, and, for now, the United States – is encouraging the global deployment of 20 million EVs by 2020.

IEA cites estimates that the global stock of electric cars will range between 40 million and 70 million by 2025, if governments continue to support R&D, purchase incentives, and charging infrastructure. The transition to EVs may accelerate if, as some experts forecast, they become fully cost competitive with gasoline-powered cars within a decade.

Bloomberg New Energy Finance projects that “cars with a plug [will] account for

a third of the global auto fleet by 2040 and displace about 8 million barrels a day of oil production – more than the 7 million barrels Saudi Arabia exports today.”

The Trump administration can be counted on to do what it can to slow this revolution, but 10 states have aggressive programs to promote the adoption of electric vehicles: California, Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island and Vermont. Just as with renewable energy, their success may pave the way for similar programs in other states, even “red” ones.

Fiscal conservatives should applaud their efforts to jump-start the EV market. A [study by the American Lung Association in California](#) last year documented health costs of \$24 billion a year – for lost work days, respiratory illnesses, and premature deaths – from vehicle emissions in just those 10 states. The report estimated an additional \$13 billion in climate-related costs (agricultural losses, flooding, fires, etc.). Converting two-thirds of cars on the road to electric vehicles by 2050 would save those states about \$21 billion a year, well worth the effort.

And if they succeed, proponents may also prove instrumental in helping U.S. automakers like Tesla, GM, and Ford remain world leaders in the fast-growing market for electric vehicles. The United States can't afford to be stranded in the slow lane of adapting its economy to climate change while the rest of the world speeds ahead.

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## Farmworkers Protest EPA's Pesticide Ruling

As part of President Trump's campaign against President Obama's environmental regulations, Trump's EPA has rejected a proposed rule banning a brain-damaging pesticide, reports Dennis J Bernstein.

By Dennis J Bernstein

The decision by President Trump's Environmental Protection Agency to rebuff the advice of its own scientists to ban the brain-damaging pesticide chlorpyrifos has prompted protests from California's farm worker communities, now demanding an immediate statewide ban of the dangerous chemical.

A delegation delivered more than 167,000 petition signatures along with a letter signed by 75 organizations representing hundreds of thousands of Californians. The petition was also co-signed by Care2, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Environmental Health, Center for Food Safety, Courage Campaign, CREDO, Friends of the Earth, and Pesticide Action Network.

EPA scientists have documented that chlorpyrifos can cause serious and profound neurological and respiratory damage, as well as developmental delays, autism and IQ loss for children – even in very small doses, say the activists.

They maintain that the use of chlorpyrifos is particularly problematic in California, “where more than one million pounds of the neurotoxic organophosphate pesticide are used each year, much of it in close proximity to schools and residences. Accounting for roughly 10% of the nationwide total, this chemical is applied on dozens of crops in the state. In the Monterey Bay Area, chlorpyrifos is most heavily used on wine grapes, Brussels sprouts, and apple orchards. In 2016, the air monitor at the Salinas Airport registered average air levels of chlorpyrifos three times higher than the EPA’s target risk level.”

According to Californians for Pesticide Reform (CPR), a statewide coalition of more than 190 organizations, “after years of stalling, EPA was set to implement a ban on chlorpyrifos use on food crops in March. But under intense pressure from Dow Chemical, the largest manufacturer of the neurotoxic pesticide, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt reversed the agency’s plan and announced he was allowing continued agricultural use of chlorpyrifos.”

The group’s statement went on to say “just last November, the EPA announced that it intended to revoke all food tolerances of chlorpyrifos, calling exposure to any amount unsafe. Underscoring the importance of this proposed ban, the agency cited the serious dangers of chlorpyrifos exposure and added that young children risk exposure from food residues alone that are 14,000 percent higher than the level EPA currently believes is safe.”

I spoke with Lucia Calderon, an organizer with Safe Ag Safe Schools and Californians for Pesticide Reform, about the battle against chlorpyrifos.

Dennis Bernstein: Tell us exactly what it is – what’s the chemistry we’re talking about here? And then we’ll talk about how dangerous it is.

Lucia Calderon: Chlorpyrifos is an organophosphate insecticide, and its main action is to harm the brains of the insects that the agricultural industry is trying to kill. And, incidentally, it has been shown to really, really harm brains, especially children’s developing brains.

DB: Children’s developing brains – say a little bit more about that. Are there

cases? Are there studies being conducted now? Are there examples of kids being hurt? What can you say about that?

LC: Yeah, well this is a really historical issue. Chlorpyrifos was actually banned for residential use. It started being phased out in 2000, because of its proven association with developmental harm. And UC Berkeley and Columbia University both had big parts in these studies. In 2000 the science was known that chlorpyrifos was extremely harmful to developing brains and bodies, and it was banned for residential use.

But nowadays it is not banned for agricultural use, and it's still being used in our fields, especially in California fields. We account for a fifth of the entire nation's use of this chemical pesticide. And so, what we're looking at is science that has been established, and is continuing to come out, showing these really detrimental effects of this chemical. And there is complete inaction on the federal level.

DB: So the EPA was set to pass a ban on this, right? Until the new folks came in?

LC: Yes, exactly. The EPA was set on a deadline to revoke the tolerances of this chemical on March 31, 2017, and just a couple of days before that date our new EPA administrator, Scott Pruitt, reversed that ban. So what we're doing now is going to the State of California. As a big user of chlorpyrifos, we are demanding that the State of California impose a ban on this chemical. And, as I mentioned the science before, a lot of it is coming out of California. We have the UC Berkeley CHAMACOS study, which stands for the Center for Health of Mother and Children of the Salinas Valley, right where Safe Ag Safe Schools is located. That study has been going on for almost 20 years, showing the connections between prenatal organophosphate chlorpyrifos exposure and lowering IQ, and respiratory issues as well.

DB: Tell us a little bit about who's involved. Your group is working with the Pesticide Action Network: are there community groups or teachers involved? How are you bringing in the families?

LC: Californians for Pesticide Reform is a statewide coalition, and Safe Ag Safe Schools is only one of the organizations involved. And we represent the communities of the front line. We are from the affected communities, and we all get to come together through this statewide coalition, and then demand improvements and better protections for people living on the front lines of pesticide exposure – those working in the fields and living and attending school very close to the fields.

DB: Are there still problems in terms of schools? Does that come into it?

LC: Yes, definitely. And even regarding chlorpyrifos, we have a city in Monterey County, Greenfield, and two schools there – the middle school and the high school – rank 9th and 4th in the state for chlorpyrifos use within a quarter of a mile. We're seeing issues with chlorpyrifos being applied around schools and we're also just seeing issues with pesticide use in general around schools.

The most recent action we've had on that was establishing buffer zones around schools where pesticides could not be applied. We have been demanding for years a full mile buffer zone at all times around schools, where pesticides cannot be applied. And what we got were quarter mile buffer zones for parts of the day – from 6am to 6pm Monday through Friday. So we're still fighting on that front as well. Right now we're really trying to get chlorpyrifos banned, because it's one of the nastiest chemicals out there.

DB: This is incredibly important because it affects children and their ability to learn. I understand that some of this, depending upon how you're doused with this, could cause permanent damage, particularly in pregnant women and young, formative kids.

LC: Yes, one of the reasons that the federal EPA was going to ban the chemical was that the U.S. EPA found that for pregnant women and developing babies and for some children just the amount of chlorpyrifos they were consuming on food as food residue was way too high. The reason that the EPA was banning it was not only for food residues, but for how much is in the air. There's also no safe amount of chlorpyrifos in drinking water, and it has contaminated a lot of our water supplies as well. So the danger is on all fronts, but especially for women of childbearing age and young children.

DB: And I'm gonna spell that because the name is a little bit unclear: it's c-h-l-l-o-r-p-y-r-i-f-o-s – that's the brain-harming chemistry that we're talking about?

LC: Exactly, and it is produced by Dow AgroSciences.

DB: Dow?

LC: Yes, Dow Chemical. The CEO of Dow Chemical [Andrew Liveris] is the head of the American Manufacturing Council. Dow Chemical contributed a million dollars to Trump's inauguration dinner. We're now hearing reports that Scott Pruitt met with Dow right before he decided to reverse the ban of chlorpyrifos. So they're a really big actor in this fight right now.

DB: Yeah, and they certainly have the reputation, shall we say, for doing

terrible things to people. We thank you for this important information.

**Dennis J Bernstein is a host of “Flashpoints” on the Pacifica radio network and the author of Special Ed: Voices from a Hidden Classroom. You can access the audio archives at www.flashpoints.net.**

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## How Trump Defines the Future

President Trump has defined the future as a battle between old-style nationalism and neoliberal globalism, a challenge that the West’s elites mock at their own peril, as ex-British diplomat Alastair Crooke describes.

By Alastair Crooke

Europe, the *Guardian* tells us, has its old “mojo” back. There is a new optimistic mood – “or even a triumphalist mood, in much of Europe.” German Chancellor Angela Merkel is praised for achieving a “nuanced” final statement at the recent G20 meeting, and for “standing up” to President Trump, on behalf of the “liberal international order.” Really? If this is the “mood,” so be it, but even the Guardian op-ed writer argues that the narrative that Europe somehow “is back” – having beaten back the “populist wave” – is flawed: “the spirit of cohesion is overstated.”

Actually, the Euro-élites must have had their attention fixed elsewhere. For the “Great Disrupter,” as David Stockman calls President Trump, threw a hefty stone into the liberal pond: It is fine to ignore it, but what is happening is that the old division between those inside the supposedly democratic, globalist “sphere,” and those of the delinquent “regimes” outside it – and lying beyond its civilized walls – is being, bit-by-bit, dissolved.

The “war” that used to be between one sphere and another is being overtaken by the insurgency within spheres. The bitterness and polarization so induced is having its effect: the “international liberal order” (as the *Guardian* terms it), may no longer work as the highly centralized, quasi-cohesive establishment that it has been for the last six decades. There is no more a “center”; no more a cohesive certainty; nor a common directionality, or purposiveness.

If Europe wants to present the G20 deliberation as the clever finessing of discordant views, that is understandable. But whereas Europe included in the declaration the commitment to “free” trade, U.S. negotiators parried this with a “right” – the right to protect against unfair trade practices, and to consider

the imposition of tariffs, where appropriate (i.e. on steel products).

On climate change, the G19 stood by the Paris accord, but America, by contrast, retained its decision to *withdraw* from it. The consensus stood by carbon-reduction measures, but found this juxtaposed – uncomfortably – with an American call (rather), to use fossil fuels more cleanly. It was agreement, I would suggest, to disagree, rather than some Merkel-made synthesis.

### **Trump's Biggest Rock**

But the biggest rock thrown by Trump in the G20 pond, passed almost unnoticed. But potentially, it can hurt the Europeans in the spot, just where it hurts most. And this did not even occur at Hamburg. It occurred on the way there.

Conservative commentator Pat Buchanan summarizes: “Calling the Polish people ‘the soul of Europe,’ [Trump] related how, in the Miracle of the Vistula in 1920, Poland, reborn after 12 decades of subjugation, drove back the invading Red Army of Leon Trotsky.

[Then Trump] described the gang rape of Poland by Nazis and Soviets after the Hitler-Stalin pact. He cited the Katyn Forest massacre of the Polish officer corps by Stalin, and the rising of the Polish people against their Nazi occupiers in 1944.

“When the Polish Pope, John Paul II, celebrated his first Mass in Victory Square in 1979, said Trump, ‘a million Polish men, women and children raised their voices in a single prayer ... “We want God” ...’

“What enabled the Poles to endure [all their tribulations] was an unshakable belief in and a willingness to fight for, who they were – a people of God and country, faith, families, and freedom – with the courage and will to preserve a nation built on the truths of their ancient tribe and Catholic traditions.

“ *‘The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive. Do we have the confidence in our values to defend them at any cost? Do we have enough respect for our citizens to protect our borders? Do we have the desire and the courage to preserve our civilization in the face of those who would subvert and destroy it? [emphasis added].*

“ ‘We can have the largest economies and the most lethal weapons anywhere on Earth, but if we do not have strong families and strong values, then we will be weak and we will not survive.’”

### **Ignoring the Point**



Did the G20 élites miss the point? Trump is asking the Europeans whether “you [still] have *the will*, the steadfastness, the clear-sightedness and strength, by which ‘to take back’ your culture, your way-of-being, your values” – your nations? The message was, I believe, not directed so much at the Poles, but rather, at other Europeans. Trump implicitly targeted the part where it hurts Europe the most: the immigration issue, at diversity and politics, and at the fear of Europeans for their cultural submersion, under the wave of immigration. (The G20 offered no solutions to this crucial question).

Did Merkel – the media-designated new “Leader of the West” – impress with her “resolute” response to mobs rioting in Germany’s second city, Buchanan asks, rather pointedly? The scenes from Hamburg, perhaps, he implied, reinforced Trump’s point.

Many in Europe may be offended by Trump’s words, perceiving them to be wholly contrary to everything for which they stand. They too, may dislike Trump, viscerally. But these feelings should not blind them to the very key point that he – rightly or wrongly – is pressing: Is diversity and identity politics our strength (as we are told), or is the possession of some sort of historical and cultural (including a spiritual) legacy, something which binds us, and gives a people its inner strength?

It is, at the very least, a valid question. And, it is the sides which are taken on this issue, which represent the new fault line that is displacing the old “good guy” globalist, versus the delinquent, “bad guy,” non-global sphere. This new insurgency is in-house. And the “center” has gone – bifurcated possibly irreparably, into two.

### **Meeting with Putin**

And so, to Trump’s final symbolic “act of disruption”: the prolonged and warm encounter with President Putin. If not on exactly the same page as Trump, Russia nonetheless, has been pursuing a parallel path of political and cultural re-sovereignty. The lengthy meeting with the Russian President disconcerted and outraged many (see [here](#), for example). But the provoking of such an (over) reaction of outrage precisely would be viewed as its main merit by many Trump supporters, who value disruption of the old paradigm.

Trump was not as alone and as isolated as the mainstream media portrayed him: the élites may revile and deprecate his abdication of American global leadership, and for dangerously insisting that job losses resulting from unfair trade practices must be redressed, but there is, however, a constituency within Europe that is entirely in sympathy with his approach.

Trump's questioning of the orthodoxy that the U.S. must retain hegemony over the global order, and his sense that the free trade system simply has lost America its manufacturing base, possesses a self-evident content for many ordinary Americans and Europeans. Trump says simply enough: "We (the U.S.), can no longer afford it. We are up to the ceiling, and out of the windows, piled high in debts, and we anyway get zilch in return from all these ingrates who shelter under our bankrupting global security umbrella. Let us not go on trying to impose this on others; we shall rebuild ourselves, and pursue our own, culturally distinct, American way-of-being – and let them pursue theirs'. It is simple; it is plain; it has appeal.

Whether one thinks Trump is right or wrong on these issues, is beside the point. The essential point is that the key components – the Poland speech, the G20 dissidence, and the warm Putin meeting – do form a concerted, strategic whole. Too, the atmospherics were better at the G20, than at the G7 meeting in Sicily in May – President Trump seemed actually to be enjoying himself in Hamburg at dinner, (and why not). But two summits into Trump's Presidency, it is hard to escape two conclusions:

Firstly, that things have changed – maybe permanently. Surprisingly, of all people, it was "globalist" Emmanuel Macron, who best caught this sense when he remarked: "Our world has never been so divided; centrifugal forces have never been so powerful; our common goods have never been so threatened."

And secondly, the immediate relapse on the President's return to Washington into the Donald Trump Jr. Russia "hysteria" over a "faux scandal" as an Op-Ed in the *Washington Post* describes it (whatever the whys and wherefores of the affair), reinforces the conclusion (as Mike Krieger notes) "that America may no longer work as the largely centralized, semi-cohesive unit it has been for our entire lives." Maybe he puts it too mildly. To outsiders, Americans seem to be eating each other alive.

Aptly, Krieger quotes William Yeats:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre*

*The falcon cannot hear the falconer;*

*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;*

*Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,*

*The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere*

*The ceremony of innocence is drowned;*

*The best lack all conviction, while the worst*

*Are full of passionate intensity.*

**Alastair Crooke is a former British diplomat who was a senior figure in British intelligence and in European Union diplomacy. He is the founder and director of the Conflicts Forum.**

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## Another Attack on Honduran Rights Activist

Defending indigenous and environmental rights in Central America can be a very dangerous undertaking, with an account of a new attack on the daughter of slain Honduran activist Berta Cáceres, as Dennis J Bernstein reports.

By Dennis J Bernstein

Bertha Zuñiga, daughter of slain indigenous and environmental rights campaigner Berta Cáceres, has survived an attack by three men armed with machetes who then tried to force Zuñiga and two co-workers off the road twice before the activists escaped serious harm.

Zuñiga had only recently been named leader of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras, or COPINH, the indigenous rights organization co-founded and led by her mother. The elder Cáceres was murdered in her home a little over a year ago, only a week after she was threatened for opposing a major hydroelectric project in Honduras. The elder Cáceres was the recipient of the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize for her grassroots environmental work in Honduras.

I spoke on July 5 with Silvio Carrillo, nephew of Berta Cáceres, about the recent attack on his first cousin, Bertha Zuñiga. Carrillo runs the website [BertaCaceres.org](http://BertaCaceres.org).

Dennis Bernstein: This is not a happy occasion. I know you've been on the phone, you've been e-mailing around. Maybe you can tell us, as best as you can, what you know about what happened in terms of the assassination attempt on Bertha Zuñiga.

Silvio Carrillo: It was three women from the organization COPINH, that my aunt founded, Bertha's mother. And they were leaving and they were confronted by these men wielding machetes. And they quickly got into the car, and they took off. They had a driver. The driver was savvy enough to get away from them

quickly, and then they tried again to run them down, and run them off the road.

[...] I saw it on Twitter, that's where I heard about it. And it was hours [after the attempt] that I heard about it. And I immediately alerted the NGOs that work with us here in the U.S. that my aunt used to work with. And we started getting in touch with the embassy to find out what they were doing about it. And, to my surprise, when I reached the embassy the next day, they told me they knew nothing about it.

DB: They hadn't heard about this at all? Very high profile.

SC: Right. I mean it was already on Twitter. So, if I'm catching it, you know, 3,000 – 4,000 miles away, one night when I'm in bed, and it was hours after it had happened, they had no clue. Now, they told me, what they said was, "We apologize for the late response, that it's a holiday weekend." It was July 4th weekend.

So, anyway, I heard back from him just now, actually, to check in to see if they had—this is the embassy that I reached out to, again—to see if they had an update. And they said, "Well, it looks like the police spoke to the man that was driving the car. But, it's turned into a he-said, she-said. Where he says that that's not actually what happened. It was a misunderstanding." And so, the police are just like ... shrugging their shoulders. I mean, this isn't a surprise, right?

DB: A "misunderstanding."

SC: Right.

DB: But the embassy is engaged now?

SC: That's the extent of... all they can do is ask, and say "Hey, attorney general ... can you find out about this? Tell us what the police are saying." And so, that's how it goes. And this is how I find out any information about what's happening in Honduras, like believable information, is I have to go to the U.S. embassy and say, "Hey, look, you know the government is not providing us with information, they are not doing this, they are not doing that." And the embassy sends them an e-mail or gives them a call to the attorney general, and says "Why aren't you doing this?"

DB: This he-said, she-said, in the context of who it is that we're talking about here, makes it really unbelievable. Now [Zuñiga] has only been head of the organization about three weeks?

SC: A few weeks, yeah. She was just elected, named by the organization, they had

elections, internal elections.

DB: And what was she doing, before she was attacked?

SC: They were in a community meeting. They were talking to organizers in this small town that are having an issue with their water. They're not getting the water that they used to get because a dam has been built that has rerouted the water for the dam. And so this village isn't getting water, and they want help from COPINH to help them fight against the government, so that they can get some water back in their town.

DB: And, of course, fighting against the dam and the dams, those were the things that got your aunt killed. Because she was very effective.

SC: Yeah. Now ... she had managed to get ... what happened in the dam, Agua Zarca, that my aunt was fighting against, the builders pulled out. This was the largest dam builder in the world, a company called Sinohydro, a Chinese company. They pulled out... but they only pulled out after the military, the Honduran military, shot point blank at one of the protestors. So this is the price we've been paying, Hondurans have been paying. They're paying with their lives. Clearly, it's continuing, nothing's changed even though Berta was killed 16, 17 months ago.

DB: That's amazing. And we are talking about an attack on Berta's... we believe that there was an attack on Bertha, she's 26 years old. She is the daughter of Berta Cáceres. And apparently these folks are unrelenting. What will be the strategy? Obviously, just like your aunt kept going, I imagine your cousin is going to keep going because this is what you all are doing.

SC: That's right. We're not going to let this happen again. We are doing everything we can from here. And we're gaining more and more tools, more and more allies because we've been working... doing a lot of work on the ground, on social media, making sure people know what's happening. We've got the Berta Cáceres Act which was introduced on March 2<sup>nd</sup> by Representative Hank Johnson from Georgia. And we've got about 60 co-signers.

DB: Remind people what that is.

SC: So, the Berta Cáceres Act is HR1299. And this act will prohibit security funding to the Honduran government which is using \$18 million, it's only \$18 million, but it's a message. And they're using this money to militarize their police force. And so they're arming them to the teeth. But they don't have the training, they don't have the wherewithal, they don't have the decency to not be corrupt. And every one of these government agencies is extremely corrupt. And so they shouldn't be arming them to the teeth.

They're essentially private police forces. And they were protecting the dam that my aunt was fighting against. I mean, how can that be? They were told by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission to protect my aunt. The police were supposed to have been protecting my aunt. Instead they were protecting the dam. What kind of world is this where these things are allowed to happen?

And so the strategy going forth is to put an end to ... our tax dollars being used to pay for the Honduran military to get armed to the teeth, and police to get armed to the teeth. And so, that's where we're headed, and we've been making some great headway. We've got a lot of great response from California Congress people and we still need to get many, many more, especially here in the Bay Area. We don't have every Democrat signed on, but we're fighting to do so.

DB: Now, there's every reason to question the role, or how active the United States embassy and U.S. officials are going to be in this context because they're compromised. Part of the resistance has to do with the amount of military presence that the United States has on the ground in Honduras. Right? [...]

SC: Every time I fly in [to Honduras], I always see Americans that look like they are military personnel going in. I go in at random times, random flights, and every single time, they are there. This country is full of military from the U.S. And there's more and more of that because this is such a strategic place, in Latin America.

It's a good perch to watch the rest of Latin America. And so, ideally, what you would be doing is, if you're going to perch yourself there, you would want to, instead of helping to militarize this country even more, you would probably want to help the country gain some control in their corruption. Because this is a problem.

The reason the U.S. has to be there, or thinks it has to be there, is because of the drug trafficking coming into the U.S. Well, a lot of that is done by the people, the functionaries in the government, and the military, and the police.

DB: That's sort of a narco-dictatorship.

SC: Yeah, it absolutely is.

DB: ...posing as a democracy.

SC: Right. That is right. It's a kleptocracy, a narco-democracy. There's a study that was done by a researcher named Sara Chase for the Council on Foreign Relations. [Chase] did a study on the Honduran government and it's essentially a kleptocracy. And they are heavily involved in drug trafficking here to the U.S.

So, the U.S. is really exacerbating the problem, and not helping the situation, not helping Hondurans ... come to a place where they have at least somewhat of a corruption-free government. And where heroes like Berta Cáceres, and Bertha Cáceres are cultivated. Where people believe and look at heroes, like little girls and little boys can see, look up to people like Berta or Bertha, and say, "Gosh, I want to be like her. I want to make my country great." You know like, apparently that's what Donald Trump is doing here. We should have that same ability to do that in Honduras, and we don't.

DB: How would you describe the role of the government, sort of government police, in the context of it being sort of the death squad capitol of the region? What's the role of the government? How does that work?

SC: Well, it's hard to describe, because the government really does things in very... in unofficial ways. There's laws, there's secrecy laws, there's all kinds of police actions that take place, there's raids, but all under this veil of secrecy. So you never know what's going to happen at any moment.

DB: Would you say that all community activists are in jeopardy in Honduras, now? Those who are being somewhat effective whether they're working within the school system, or wherever they're working?

SC: Absolutely. And there's a lot of homophobia. There's a lot of people that are in jeopardy, because... whether they're organizing, or they're protesting, or they're signing petitions. They're finding out the names of people. And they're coming after them. And the government has also passed laws criminalizing protests.

DB: Really?

SC: I mean, yeah, this is unbelievable. It's a dictatorship essentially, already.

DB: And the idea, or what it appears to be, the idea of U.S. involvement besides the military, it's sort of their free trade zone. That's the vision of the United States government, is Honduras becomes a free trade zone. So the people who can't even travel the way they used to, on certain roads, in certain ways, because of what's happened.

SC: Right, they're selling off... they're not just selling off the water rights, which they have, the Honduran government. They've sold roads and put in tolls. Tolls! ... In the second poorest country in Latin America. People are incredibly impoverished people, and they are being charged tolls by the government because the government privatized some major arteries.

So they are making money hand over fist. Meanwhile people now, in addition to being poorly educated, having poor government resources, they are now being taxed, and killed indiscriminately. Under 5% of the murder cases in Honduras ever get solved. How can the U.S. government support that, and say everything is okay in Honduras? I mean that's really what you have to ask your congressman.

DB: And what is your cousin doing now? Are they trying to think of ways to be more secure? I imagine there's an international outpouring? We just have a minute.

SC: There's been a lot of support, certainly here from the U.S. and the organizations we work with. She is actually getting ready to come to the U.S., to New York, next week, to make some appearances, and to speak to people and tell them what's been happening in Honduras, like the reality, and not what the government of Honduras is peddling here in the U.S. They've got groups lobbying for them, P.R. firms lobbying for them. We don't have any of that money that they are using, that power.

And so, we have to do this on our dime. Bertha is coming on NGO dime money and doing what she needs to do ... so that her mother's death isn't in vain. We're not going to let up. We're not going to be intimidated by this. Of course, we fear for our Bertha's life, as we did with Berta's life. But what's the alternative? As Berta used to say to me, "What is our alternative? Do we just sit down and take it? Of course not."

DB: You do have a web site. What's the best way for people if they want to follow this, if they want to get more information?

SC: There's a Facebook site called [facebook.com/justiceforBerta](https://www.facebook.com/justiceforBerta). There's also a Twitter [@justiceforBerta](https://twitter.com/justiceforBerta) and there's a website [bertacasares.org](https://www.bertacasares.org).

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## Ten Problems with Anti-Russian Obsession

Many anti-Trump Americans see the Russia-gate "scandal" as a way to derail Donald Trump, but this political opportunism has fed a dangerous anti-Russian hysteria and led Democrats to ignore why they really lost, says Rick Sterling.



By Rick Sterling

The U.S. mainstream media and Democratic Party politicians have built a major “scandal” out of accusing Russia of “meddling” in the U.S. election to help Donald Trump win the presidency and possibly even colluding with his campaign to do so. The charges began as “allegations” but now are routinely asserted as facts.

The Washington Post recently ran a long article claiming all the above plus saying the operation was directed by Russian President Putin himself and implying not enough has been done to “punish” Russia. The July-August 2017 edition of Mother Jones magazine features an article headlined “We Already Know Trump Betrayed America. Collusion? Maybe. Active Enabling? Definitely.”

Is this effort to indict Russia and condemn Trump based on facts or political opportunism? Does it help or hurt the progressive cause of peace with justice? Following are major problems with the “anti-Russia” theme, starting with the lack of clear evidence.

### **1) Evidence from CrowdStrike is dubious.**

Accusations that Russia stole and released the Democratic National Committee (DNC) emails are based on the findings of the private company CrowdStrike. The DNC did not allow the FBI to scan the computers but relied on a hired private company which claims to have found telltale Russian alphabet characters (Cyrillic) in the computer memory. However, CrowdStrike is known to be political biased, to be connected to the Clintons and to make false accusations such as this one documented by Voice of America. Recently, the Wikileaks “Vault7” disclosures revealed that the CIA has developed software which purposely leaves foreign language characters in memory, casting further doubt on the CrowdStrike evidence.

### **2) The Steele Dossier looks fictitious.**

The accusations of Trump-Russia collusion and Putin’s personal involvement are significantly based on the so-called “Steele Dossier,” a 35-page compilation of “opposition research” on Trump by a former MI6 officer Christopher Steele. The research and reports by Steele first were contracted by anti-Trump Republicans in the primary race and then by Clinton supporters in the presidential race.

There is no supporting evidence or verification of the dossier’s claims; the reports are essentially that a Kremlin source says such-and-such. It has since been revealed that Steele was not in direct contact but collected the information via Russians in the U.K. who in turn received it from supposed Kremlin insiders.

The reports were viewed skeptically by media, politicians and the intelligence community through the summer and fall of 2016. But elements of the dossier became public prior to the election, and it was published in full in the days before Trump's inauguration, including sensational stories of "golden showers" by prostitutes urinating on Trump to "defile" the bed in Moscow's Ritz-Carlton Hotel where the Obamas previously slept.

Is the Steele dossier accurate or was it a P.R. dirty trick designed to damage Trump? The latter seems at least if not more likely. This Newsweek article, "Thirteen things that don't add up in the Russia-Trump intelligence dossier," lists some of the reasons to be skeptical.

### **3) The "assessment" from several (not 17) Intel Agencies gives no evidence and seems politically biased.**

On Jan. 6, the office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) released a 14-page document titled "Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections." The report says Russian President Putin ordered a campaign including cyber activity along with "overt efforts" to influence the election through official media (RT) and social media. Half of the report (seven pages) is devoted to describing the effectiveness and growth of the Russian-sponsored news outlet known as "RT," including faulting RT for sponsoring debates among third-party U.S. presidential candidates in 2012 and for covering the Occupy Wall Street protests.

The report gives no solid evidence that the Russians did covertly interfere with the U.S. elections in 2016, acknowledging that the report "does not and cannot include the full supporting information, including specific intelligence and sources and methods." The report further admits that its "judgments are not intended to imply that we have proof that shows something to be a fact. Assessments are based on collected information, which is often incomplete or fragmentary, as well as logic, argumentation, and precedents."

So, should this report be accepted uncritically? Not if you consider past performance. The CIA has a long history of deception and disinformation, including "politicized intelligence" to support the goals of presidents and other senior officials. One clear example was the false claims about Iraq's WMD that led to the U.S. invasion in 2003.

In addition, the intelligence leadership has been known to lie under oath. For example, President Obama's Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, who issued the Jan. 6 report, lied in testimony before Congress regarding the extent of the National Security Agency's monitoring of American citizens' private communications. The truth was later revealed by whistleblower Edward

Snowden, forcing Clapper to retract his statement.

In short, there is no good reason to uncritically accept the statements and assertions of the U.S. intelligence community. Plus, the oft-repeated claim that all 17 U.S. intelligence agencies concurred in the Russia assessment was never true. There was no community-wide assessment, which would have required some form of a National Intelligence Estimate or NIE and would have included dissents as well as consensus judgments.

In raising the Russia meddling allegation last October – before the presidential election – Clapper simply claimed to be speaking for the Intelligence Community and that was then falsely interpreted to mean that all 17 intelligence agencies agreed. A formal assessment – though not an NIE – was not undertaken until December leading to the Jan. 6 report, which was the work of what Clapper later described as “hand-picked” analysts from three agencies: CIA, NSA and FBI.

On June 29, The New York Times ran a grudging correction to one of its stories that had repeated the false claim about the “17 intelligence agencies” although that canard continues to resonate on cable news channels as way to shut down any questioning of what has become the new groupthink believing in “Russian meddling.”

Another reason to be skeptical is the fact that Trump and elements of the Intelligence Community have clashed and some senior intelligence officials may be looking to pay back the President. Even Democratic Sen. Chuck Schumer warned Trump about the dangers of bucking the CIA and other agencies: “They have six ways to Sunday at getting back at you.”

What better way of getting back at Trump than shining a bright light on the Steele dossier by including a summary of its contents as a classified annex to the Jan. 6 report, thus giving credence to the third-hand accusations and giving news organizations a peg for publishing the salacious allegations?

Finally, it is significant that the NSA would only grant “moderate confidence” to the accusation that “Putin and the Russian Government aspired to help President-elect Trump’s election chances.” Page 13 of the Jan. 6 report explains that moderate confidence means the information is “plausible but not of sufficient quality or corroborated sufficiently to warrant a higher level of confidence.”

In an apparent reference to those NSA doubts, The Washington Post reported on June 25 that “Some of the most critical technical intelligence on Russia came from another country, officials said. Because of the source of the material, the NSA was reluctant to view it with high confidence.”

Though the Post did not identify the country, this reference suggests that another key element of the case for Russian culpability was based not on direct investigations by the U.S. intelligence agencies, but on the work of external organizations with checkered histories.

Given the Intelligence Community's history of deception and politicization – and especially given the false assumption about the 17-agency consensus – there is every reason to be skeptical and to demand credible and verifiable evidence about the core charge that Russia did “meddle” in the U.S. election.

#### **4) The counter-evidence seems stronger and more factual.**

Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS), including William Binney, a former technical director of the NSA, asserts that the DNC email release was caused by a leak not a “hack.” The distinction is important: a hack is done over the Internet; a leak is done transferring files onto a memory stick with little or no record. VIPS believes the emails were taken by an insider who transferred the files onto a thumb drive. If the files had been transferred over the Internet, the NSA would have a record of that since virtually every packet is stored.

In addition, the publisher of the DNC and Podesta emails, Wikileaks, says it did not receive the emails from Russia. Also, Wikileaks founder Julian Assange has offered a reward for the discovery of the murderer of Seth Rich, the young DNC Director of Voter Expansion who was mysteriously murdered on July 22, 2016. When asked if Seth Rich was the source of the DNC emails, Assange does not reply directly but it is implied.

Since Trump's November victory, there also have been accusations of “Russian interference” in European elections. But in each case, subsequent investigations showed the opposite. In Germany, France and the U.K., security services found no evidence to support the initial allegations. The French security chief dismissed the claims of the Macron campaign saying the hack “was so generic and simple that it could have been practically anyone.”

#### **5) The purported “crimes” have been wildly inflated.**

The leaking of DNC and Podesta emails has been inflated into an “attack on US democracy” and an “act of war.” Not to be outdone in the hyperbole department, The Washington Post article calls this “the crime of the century.” It's quite astounding; even if Russia were guilty of hacking the DNC servers and the emails of Clinton's campaign chairman John Podesta, the information was truthful, not “fake news” or disinformation as some mainstream media outlets have suggested. The idea that disclosing truthful and newsworthy information amounts to an “act

of war” is preposterous, and indeed dangerous.

Plus, the Wikileaks-related stories were secondary problems for the Clinton campaign, far less important than the FBI closing and then re-opening the criminal investigation of Clinton’s use of a private email server for her official business as Secretary of State or her labeling half of Trump’s supporters as “deplorables.”

And, blaming RT for reporting on shortcomings in the U.S. democratic process and faulting the network for allowing third-party candidates to have a forum – as the Jan. 6 report does – amount to an absurdity. Even former U.S. President Jimmy Carter questions whether the U.S. is a still democracy, saying: “Now it’s just an oligarchy, with unlimited political bribery being the essence.”

#### **6) The anti-Russia hysteria has reduced resistance to reactionary changes in domestic policy.**

For progressives, the anti-Russia hysteria has not only bordered on McCarthyistic challenges to people’s patriotism but has diverted time and attention from the need to build opposition to Trump policies including the loss of net neutrality, increased military spending, reductions in environmental protection, plans to slash health-care for the poor to permit more tax cuts for the rich, and reduction in other budgets for education and social programs.

Further, the “blame-Russia” and “hate Trump” campaigns have reduced the credibility of liberals and progressives and make it harder to reach out to white working-class Americans who voted for Trump, in part, because they felt ignored and disrespected by the national Democratic Party.

#### **7) The DNC and Podesta leaks were not bad; they were good.**

If one is to take The Washington Post’s new slogan seriously – “Democracy Dies in Darkness” – you’d have to agree that shedding light on the secret machinations of the DNC and the Clinton campaign was a service to democracy, not an attack on democracy.

The leaks exposed how the DNC was violating its mandate to remain neutral during the primaries. Instead, the DNC leadership conspired to boost Clinton’s candidacy and frustrate a successful challenge by Sen. Bernie Sanders. If there was an “attack on democracy,” it was by the DNC leadership, not from the public release of authentic emails. And, as for the Podesta emails, they revealed the contents of Clinton’s paid speeches to Wall Street, which she had sought to hide from voters, and exposed some pay-to-play features of the Clinton Foundation.

#### **8) Social media criticizing Clinton was not bad; much of the criticism was**

**accurate.**

While short on actual evidence of a Russian hack, the Jan. 6 report blames Russia for undermining “public faith in the US democratic process” by denigrating Clinton and harming “her electability and potential presidency.” The report suggests that Russia was responsible for anti-Clinton online messages, tweets, Facebook posts, etc.

Yet, it was predictable that Hillary Clinton would generate a lot of opposition during the presidential campaign since she has long been a magnet for right- and left-wing criticism. She is strongly disliked by many progressives for a number of reasons, including her warmongering foreign policy. So, it should come as no surprise that social media was alive with tweets, pages, posts and campaigns against Clinton – as it was with harsh criticism of Donald Trump.

It is self-deception to think this opposition was initiated or controlled in any substantial way by Moscow. Without doubt, the overwhelming majority of the criticism directed at Hillary Clinton – and at Donald Trump – was sincere and home-grown.

**9) The anti-Russia hysteria distracts from an objective evaluation of why the Democratic Party lost.**

Instead of doing an honest and objective assessment of the election failure, the Democratic Party has invested enormous time and resources in promoting the narrative of Russian “meddling” and collusion with Trump. If the Democrats want to regain popularity – and gain congressional seats in 2018 as well as the White House in 2020 – they need to look in the mirror and undertake reforms, including a shake-up of leadership which has changed very little in over 15 years.

The Democrats must confront the reality that many working-class Americans view the party as elitist and lacking a deep concern for the economic suffering of average people.

By concentrating so much energy on blaming “Russia, Russia, Russia,” the DNC also ignores that it tilted the primary race in Clinton’s favor while Sanders might well have been a much stronger candidate against Trump. In that sense, the Democratic Party’s leaders have nobody to blame but themselves for Trump’s victory.

**10) The anti-Russia hysteria reduces resistance to neoconservative forces pushing for more war.**

By obsessing on Russia-gate, Democrats and liberals are playing into the hands of neoconservatives and the Military Industrial Complex, which are pushing for

another war in the Middle East and an expensive New Cold War with Russia. The immediate flashpoint is Syria where the Syrian government and allies are making slow but steady progress defeating tens of thousands of foreign-funded extremists.

In response, the U.S. and its allies have escalated their intervention and aggression trying to prolong the conflict and/or grab territory to block a Syrian government victory. The expanding U.S. military role in Syria also is threatening to bring about a direct clash between United States, which is operating inside Syria in violation of international law, and Russia, which has come to the aid of the internationally recognized government.

The Democratic and liberal hysteria around Russia has confused huge numbers of people who now have been led to believe that Russia is America's "enemy" and must be confronted militarily around the world. Leading liberals are allying themselves with the CIA and war hawks, while also alienating peace voters, another important voting bloc.

Looking back over the eight months since the election, the obsession with Russia-gate may have started from shock over Trump's election and then morphed into a resistance to his presidency (including the unlikely hope that the "scandal" would lead to his impeachment), but the hysteria has contributed to significant mistakes by those who have embraced it.

The mainstream news media jettisoned any pretense of objectivity as it joined the "hate-Russia" and "get-Trump" movement. Many Democrats and liberals also opportunistically and uncritically accepted and promoted the anti-Russia demonization, including McCarthyistic attacks on Americans who balked at the political/media stampede and questioned the accusations as either lacking in evidence or exaggerated.

Meanwhile, Trump finds himself getting pressured by Democrats and liberals to adopt even more warlike stances – to prove that he's not Putin's puppet – including a slide toward a new war in the Middle East and a step onto the slippery slope that could lead to nuclear annihilation.

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## Trump Takes Aim at Energy R&D Funds

**Exclusive:** While boasting of his plans for "American energy dominance,"

President Trump is slashing key research projects and ceding much of the renewable energy market to China, notes Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

In case you didn't get the memo, the White House dubbed this "Energy Week." Though devoid of substance, President Trump took the opportunity to tout his administration's commitment not just to energy security – how passé – but to "a golden age of American energy dominance."

Apparently the White House budget office didn't get the memo, either, because it still wants crippling cuts to very Department of Energy programs that help Americans get more bang for their energy bucks and fund breakthrough technology research to sustain U.S. energy leadership for decades to come.

The Trump administration proposes about \$3 billion in cuts to basic and applied research on energy. It would slash over half the funding for the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) and wipe out altogether the much-acclaimed Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E). Those priorities are reflected in legislation now being crafted by the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee.

EERE works with industry and federal laboratories to promote cutting-edge, marketable technology related to energy efficiency; solar, wind, bioenergy and geothermal energy production; and advanced manufacturing programs.

To date, according to the office's website, now under the supervision of Energy Secretary Rick Perry, "third-party evaluations have assessed one-third of EERE's research and development portfolio and found that an EERE taxpayer investment of \$12 billion has already yielded an estimated net economic benefit to the United States of more than \$230 billion, with an overall annual return on investment of more than 20%."

To promote visionary technologies that EERE and the private sector find too risky to fund, Congress authorized the creation of ARPA-E in 2007. It was modeled after the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), which is widely credited – among other breakthroughs – with funding the creation of the Internet and the Global Positioning System.

### **A Nimble Agency**

ARPA-E's mission is to "enhance the economic and energy security of the United States" by reducing energy imports and pollution, improving the energy efficiency of the U.S. economy, and "ensur(ing) that the United States maintains



a technological lead in developing and deploying advanced energy technologies.”

Since ARPA-E first received funding in 2009, it has selectively supported some 580 R&D projects, representing a mere five percent of funding requests. Of those, 74 projects have gone on to attract more than \$1.8 billion in private funding to pursue pilot projects, 68 have partnered with the Defense Department or other government agencies to further develop their technology, and 56 have spawned new companies to commercialize their concepts.

It has also earned an enviable reputation for brilliant leadership and for a nimble, efficient operational style usually associated with successful tech companies, not government bureaucracies.

Just in time to inform the debate in Washington, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine two weeks ago issued an authoritative assessment of ARPA-E’s track record and mission.

Contrary to the claims of critics, the report concluded, “The agency is not failing and is not in need of reform. In fact, attempts to reform the agency – such as applying pressure for ARPA-E to show short-term success rather than focusing on its long-term mission and goals – would pose a significant risk of harming its efforts and chances.”

The report’s biggest criticism: ARPA-E fails to tell its powerful story often and clearly enough to the general public.

The Trump administration’s sabotage of such R&D programs comes at an especially critical time, when vital considerations of climate, national security, and economics all cry out for more, not less, attention to clean energy.

On the climate front, time is fast running out for a global response to the threat of disruptive warming. An international group of prominent climate scientists, writing in the journal *Nature*, have just warned that without substantial reductions in carbon emissions starting in 2020, the chances are low of limiting our planet’s temperature increase to a high but manageable 2 degrees Celsius.

On the national security front, the increasingly anarchic state of the Middle East, the shakiness of the Saudi monarchy, and saber-rattling by Sunni oil producing powers against Iran and Qatar, provide a convincing rationale for weaning the U.S. economy off fossil fuels as quickly as possible, so our industry and transportation sectors become less vulnerable to price shocks induced by war or political instability.

**Bowing to China**

And on the economic front, the Trump administration's energy sector cuts would amount to unilateral industrial disarmament against rising foreign competitors like China.

Recalling the waves of technology innovation that propelled the U.S. economy in the Twentieth Century, MIT lecturer William Bonvillian recently argued in *The American Interest* that the next great sources of growth and innovation are renewable energy (wind and solar) and vehicle electrification.

"Although U.S. R&D played a key role in creating these sectors, it has lost implementation leadership," he warned. China "now dominates world production of solar, boasting five of the world's six largest solar companies, has the largest wind turbine company, and is on track to generate a quarter of its electricity from wind by 2030.

"China did not enter wind and solar for the environmental benefits; rather, it saw them as rapidly growing advanced-technology sectors where it could dominate and capture major world export markets. It now has. While the U.S. economy maintains the overall lead in technological advances through its still-strong research in these areas, it is in the process of ceding the financial gains of production."

With 10 electric car companies ramping up production, China also threatens the U.S. lead in such vehicles. But Bonvillian cited ARPA-E's support of radical new battery technology as a potential key to creating a true mass market for clean electric vehicles while keeping the lead in the United States:

"If the next big [energy technology wave] is electric vehicles, ARPA-E is arguably a critical breakthrough innovation institution for achieving the battery advances this requires (as well as to other energy breakthroughs). Other agencies and the private sector aren't anywhere near as well positioned."

The good news is that Trump faces fierce opposition to his efforts to disband successful organizations like EERE and ARPA-E. Two years ago, a group of prominent business leaders, including Bill Gates and General Electric CEO Jeffrey Immelt, recommended tripling ARPA-E's budget. ARPA-E also received strong support in June from the conservative U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Just a couple of months ago, it received the most critical endorsement of all – when Congress upped its budget for the 2017 fiscal year by \$15 million. Let's hope that legislators continue putting our money where the jobs are and keep supporting America's urgently needed development of clean energy.

**Jonathan Marshall is a regular contributor to Consortiumnews.com.**

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# Trump Isolates America from the World

In 2016, American voters faced a painful dilemma, electing a proven war hawk or a climate-change denier – and somehow the climate denier won – as Donald Trump just reminded the world, notes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Donald Trump's inexcusable withdrawal from the Paris climate change agreement was widely expected and amply telegraphed by Trump himself, of course. And yet, there were reasonable grounds for hope that this might have been one place where Trump would move from being a demagogic campaigner to being a real president, one who deals not just with applause lines but with real U.S. interests and with America's place in the world.

The substantive importance of the issue is unsurpassed, involving the fate of the planet. The main reasons to stay with the agreement are compelling, involving not only the habitability of Earth but also economic dynamism, U.S. leadership, and U.S. credibility. The non-binding nature of the agreement meant that there was not some unbearable onus that could be removed only through withdrawal.

And even though Trump has made much of fulfilling campaign promises, he already has allowed himself to be deflected from some such promises when they have collided with reality. He has not torn up the nuclear agreement with Iran, in the face of Iran's compliance with that accord. And on the very day Trump announced the pull-out from the Paris agreement, he signed a paper that keeps the U.S. embassy to Israel in Tel Aviv, in the face of what would be certain uproar, deleterious to any prospects for peace, if he had moved the embassy as promised to Jerusalem.

The withdrawal from the Paris agreement is indefensible, and thus Trump's statement announcing the move has much hot air, foreshadowing the increased hot air that everyone will be feeling without increased efforts to arrest global warming. There is, for example, the usual Trumpian assertion about being able to get a better deal, as if this were possible with an agreement that has 195 signatories and with respect to which, given Trump's withdrawal, the United States is now virtually alone.

He harangues about how the Green Climate Fund that the agreement established is "costing the United States a vast fortune." Barack Obama committed \$1 billion to the fund and promised a total of \$3 billion through 2020; for comparison, the

proposed increase in military spending in Trump's budget for fiscal 2018 is \$53 billion.

Trump repeatedly complains about what China will be allowed to do while ignoring completely the leadership role that China is assuming in moving to clean energy. He predicts economically crippling blackouts and brownouts under the agreement while ignoring completely the rapid progress in implementing generation of renewable energy. He avows that he "cares deeply about the environment," which is a laughable claim in light of what Trump has been doing not only to climate change but also to the Environmental Protection Agency and to stewardship of public lands.

### **Ideology Over Realism**

Opposition to the Paris agreement reflects, as Heather Hurlburt observes, some larger patterns within American political ideology that go beyond the President himself and that Trump has exploited. Those patterns, as Hurlburt notes, are related to the unusual American experience of being a superpower, an experience that also underlies several other unconstructive American habits of perceiving and dealing with the outside world.

But the President's withdrawal is also very much a statement about Trump himself. Given the reasons that one might have expected a better decision on this issue, the decision demonstrates that Trump's worst and most destructive qualities are deeply entrenched. It demonstrates that things are unlikely to get much better, with many other issues, under Trump.

The episode shows that Trump will continue to play to a narrow base that squeaked him through to victory last November rather than being president of all the people, let alone a leader of the free world. It shows that campaign themes and the urge not to do whatever Obama did will continue to be more important to him than will enlightened interest, even enlightened self-interest.

It shows that he will continue to shove aside even the most glaring and indisputable facts if they conflict with the themes. It shows that his capability to focus is very short in terms of both time and space. And it shows a deficient moral sense, including in the respects in which morality is involved in what a generation bequeaths to future generations.

As citizens brace and prepare for three years and seven plus months more of this, the problem of climate change itself should be at the top of issues that require not just bracing and preparation but also creative thinking about how to deal with the issue as long as this kind of destructive force is in control of the U.S. government. A reminder is in order that Americans are citizens not only

of the United States but also of states, localities, and civil society and also – uniquely important to this issue – citizens of the world, the same world that climate change endangers.

Regarding the smaller units, what states, cities and the private sector are doing to transition to clean energy deserves all the support it can get. Regarding citizenship of the world, Americans will have to consider carefully how to respond to the rest of the world's response to the irresponsibility on this issue in Washington.

The responsible posture may entail not just respect and understanding but also support for some of those responses. Martin Wolf of the *Financial Times* has even written about sanctions as a response to U.S. withdrawal from the Paris agreement. More plausible, more worthy of support from individual Americans, defensible under the rules of the World Trade Organization, and already talked about among foreign government officials, would be a carbon tariff applied to U.S. exports.

Our children and grandchildren, feeling increasingly the effects of climate change, will read about what Trump did and wonder how our generation could have placed such a small-minded man in such a position of power with such lasting and damaging consequences.

**Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is author most recently of Why America Misunderstands the World. (This article first appeared as a blog post at The National Interest's Web site. Reprinted with author's permission.)**

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## Trump Tosses Red Meat to Red States

Cornered by the expanding Russia-gate investigation, President Trump reached back to his hardcore "base" by tossing out the Paris climate accord, but the move may hurt U.S. interests, says JP Sottile.

By JP Sottile

President Trump just yanked the Yanks from a treaty that was intentionally designed to be mostly non-binding because the Senate would never pass a binding treaty on climate. It was, however, a significant global political agreement to move toward goals that would create a working framework built on an unprecedented consensus. Mostly, Paris was an important admission that there is

a problem ... like an environmental AA meeting.

So, what just happened?

Trump used the Paris Climate Agreement as a buttress. This was a political ploy to shore up support among his loyalists out in the vast swath of Red on that electoral map he recently hung in the White House. This was a move meant to give the President a chance to say he's fulfilling promises. This was about serving red meat to demoralized Trumpist media outlets. This is about generating a much-needed point of agreement with increasingly uncomfortable conservatives in Congress. This is about selling a new catchphrase: "Pittsburgh before Paris." And this speech signaled the return of Steve Bannon.

Trump rehashed the grievances of his campaign with all its incessant whining about the ways the world is taking advantage of America. It doesn't matter that the global system was constructed by the U.S. ... in the interest of the U.S. ... and with American corporations and financial "leaders" always benefiting from this system.

It doesn't matter that the American people have benefited mightily from this system, too. America is less than 5 percent of the global population, but it consumes over 26 percent of the world's resources. America's middle class was enriched by America's domination of the global system it created. But now the world is leveling out a bit and Trump is telling the people they should moan and groan because the benefits of the post-World War II system are waning ... because America isn't getting everything.

Yet the truth is that America's wealth isn't being stolen by wily Chinese or shady Indians or conniving Europeans. The people who've hoarded the wealth are not only a lot like the people in Trump's cabinet ... some of them are in Trump's cabinet. Ivanka and Jared are hoarders, too. And so, too, have the oil industry and the defense industry held a death-lock grip on this system. In fact, the intersection of weapons and crude is the nexus of the system Trump slugs-off as some global conspiracy to deny Americans their birthright. And it is a big reason why the Paris Agreement was needed in the first place.

But that's okay. Why? Because Trump is unintentionally creating space for the rest of the world to finally have a real say in the way the global system works. He's catalyzing even more leveling-off of an imbalanced system long tilted by America in America's favor.

Trump has been totally played by President Xi of China. Outmaneuvered by Vladimir Putin of Russia. Dismissed by Chancellor Merkel of Germany. And now he's shown the world that America is more fallible than ever. It is moving

backwards. It is retreating. And that's more room for China and Europe and Russia.

Maybe that's not so bad. Maybe it is a good thing that America is the laughingstock that Trump, in a perfect moment of solipsistic irony, said he wanted to forestall. One thing is for sure, the rest of the world shouldn't wait around for America to clean up its own mess ... because that's something it was loath to do well before Trump body-slammed the body politic and put the future in a headlock. Alas, that's a wrestling match America is now having with itself ... and the rest of the world should just head for the exits.

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## Cumulative Costs from Global Warming

While it's impossible to precisely calculate the costs from global warming, they range from macro threats such as massive shore erosion and mass dislocations of people to micro ones like lost sleep, writes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Resistance to arresting human-caused warming of Earth is politically entrenched in personnel and policies of the Trump administration. This makes the United States a conspicuous delinquent among advanced industrialized countries, as highlighted at the recent G-7 summit meeting, and among the community of nations generally, as highlighted by Trump's refusal to commit to adherence to the Paris climate change agreement and by the United States surrendering leadership to the likes of [China and even India](#).

The reasons for such resistance are multiple, and even uncovering all of them would not stop perverse refusal to help save the planet. Reflecting on what appear to be the main reasons, however, may help point to strategies for overcoming the resistance.

Probably the principal belief – a mistaken belief – that accounts for the absence of what ought to be a groundswell of condemnation of the administration's climate policies by earthlings who live in the United States is the notion that there is a zero-sum trade-off between economic well-being and action to curb global warming. Even if the notion were true, there still would

be ample grounds to condemn the selfishness and short-sightedness involved in much of the resistance to action.

And even though the notion is false, politicians will exploit the notion, as Trump does in trying to reduce the issue to a question of coal-mining jobs in Appalachia. He does so even though the jobs in question were lost to technological change and will not be coming back, even though those jobs always will be a relatively small part of employment in the parts of Appalachia Trump is politically targeting, and even though economic growth in the United States would be helped much less by clinging to retrograde burning of fossil fuel than by being in the forefront of developing and implementing advanced forms of renewable energy generation.

### **False Choice**

Notwithstanding such political exploitation of misbelief, it would be wise to highlight the falsity of the notion that mankind faces a choice between economic well-being and preventing a further rise of a few degrees in global temperatures. The prospects for economic well-being worsen with that temperature rise. This is a matter not only of the economics of energy generation but of far broader and greater consequences.

The positive consequences (longer growing seasons at the higher latitudes, new opportunities for maritime transportation in the Arctic) are vastly outweighed by the negative ones, which are centered on, but not limited to, the impact on agriculture of drought and desertification, huge displacements caused by rising sea levels, and damage from increased extreme weather.

The enormity of the consequences, and the multiplicity of ways in which they will be felt, make it difficult for even the most diligent analysis to come up with an accurate translation of those consequences into dollar costs. Don't expect something like a Congressional Budget Office scoresheet. But to use this difficulty as a reason not to embrace understanding of the consequences would be no more justified than is the posture of Scott Pruitt, the eviscerator (a.k.a. the administrator) of the Environmental Protection Agency, that the reality of climate change should not be accepted because it cannot be calculated with "precision." The very enormity of the likely consequences is all the more reason to focus on them.

It behooves us to consider and to highlight all the likely consequences having economic impact (which is not to suggest that consequences that are at least as political and societal as economic, such as ones stemming from mass migration from increasingly uninhabitable areas, aren't just as important), to chip away at the main misbelief about the economic trade-offs.



## Sleep Deprivation

Here's a recent bit of research to add to the mix. It's a [study](#) of how climate change is increasing sleep deprivation in the United States. Using large-scale data collected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about self-reported sleep habits, and correlating the data with weather records, the researchers calculated that every increase in nighttime temperature of one degree Celsius leads to an additional three nights of restless sleep per 100 people per month.

For the entire United States, this means a one degree increase causes an additional 110 million nights of insufficient sleep each year. If current climate trends continue, there would be an additional six nights of insufficient sleep per 100 people per month by 2050, and 14 more such nights by 2099.

The impact on productivity and thus on the economy of the United States, from having so many more groggy and sleep-deprived people going to work the next day, cannot be calculated with precision but surely is substantial.

This is just one more reason, among many, not to let economic concerns be an excuse for inaction about climate change. And we shouldn't have to sleep on that.

**Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is author most recently of [Why America Misunderstands the World](#). (This article first appeared as a [blog post](#) at The National Interest's Web site. Reprinted with author's permission.)**

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## How Trump Fixes Facts Around Policy

President Trump's disdain for inconvenient truth has led to the deletion of climate science from the EPA's web site and other moves to fix the facts around his policies, notes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Many of us have had more than our fill of the 100-day assessments of Donald Trump's presidency. Besides the arbitrary nature of this point on the calendar, and besides the sheer overload of the number of attempts at such a first-quarter report card, most of what gets put on such cards does not get at what is most important in evaluating any presidency.

Heavy emphasis gets placed on legislative acts. Although an ability to work with Congress is one attribute we like to see in a president, it is only one and hardly the most important one. Besides, the reasons for lack of legislative accomplishment are apt to be found less in the White House than in obduracy and dysfunction in whoever has majority control at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

The artificial reporting period encourages not only silly claims about accomplishments but also an incentive to give the impression of motion and progress even when substance is lacking. The Trump White House certainly has been no exception to this pattern.

There has been, for example, the counting as an “accomplishment” the appointment and confirmation this early in the presidential term of a Supreme Court justice – without mentioning, of course, that this event was the direct result of the Republican majority in the Senate refusing for a year even to consider the previous president’s nominee (and then expanding the “nuclear option” to shove through Trump’s nominee). Also added to the count are executive orders that only undo something that President Obama did, or, in many cases, that order a cabinet secretary to study how something that Obama did could be undone.

### **Reading Trump**

It’s not just the White House and its supporters who have indulged in the 100-day excesses. There has been much over-analysis, sometimes tinged with either hope or worry, depending on the analyst’s policy preferences, that attempts to discern larger substance and implications from individual actions or exclamations from Trump. Such attempts to extrapolate doctrine and direction from this inconsistent presidency are mostly a blood-from-a-turnip exercise.

Some lessons can indeed be drawn from the first 100 days, but with Trump the lessons are less a matter of either doctrine or accomplishment than of whether the habits, and the character and ability or lack thereof, that Trump exhibited during the campaign and in his earlier business career are continuing while he is office.

One of the best summary observations in this regard is from *Washington Post* columnist Steven Pearlstein, who writes on business and financial matters but whose conclusions could apply as well to Trump’s handling of a wide range of foreign and domestic matters:

“What we know, first and foremost, is that it hardly matters what Trump says because what he says is as likely as not to have no relationship to the truth, no relationship to what he said last year during the campaign or even what he

said last week. What he says bears no relationship to any consistent political or policy ideology or world-view. What he says is also likely to bear no relationship to what his top advisers or appointees have said or believe, making them unreliable interlocutors even if they agreed among themselves, which they don't.

"This lack of clear policy is compounded by the fact that the president, despite his boasts to the contrary, knows very little about the topics at hand and isn't particularly interested in learning. In other words, he's still making it up as he goes along."

### **Reasons to Worry**

Many elements of dismay can follow from the fact of having this kind of president. We are apt to get a better idea of which specific things are most worthy of dismay as the rest of this presidency unfolds. I suggest, however, that a prime, overarching reason to worry is Trump's utter disregard for the truth. Not just a disregard, actually, but a determination to crush the truth and to instill falsehood in the minds of as many people as possible.

The *Post's* fact checker, [Glenn Kessler](#), summarizes the situation by noting that "the pace and volume of the president's misstatements" are so great that he and other fact checkers "cannot possibly keep up." Kessler also observes how Trump's handling of falsehoods is qualitatively as well as quantitatively different from the garden variety of lying in which many politicians indulge: "Many will drop a false claim after it has been deemed false. But Trump just repeats the claim over and over."

It is a technique reminiscent of the Big Lie that totalitarian regimes have used, in which the repetition and brazenness of a lie help lead to its acceptance. The problem is fundamental, and relates to a broad spectrum of policy issues both foreign and domestic, because truth – factual reality – is a necessary foundation to consider and evaluate and debate policy on any subject.

Crushing the truth means not just our having to endure any one misdirected policy; it means losing the ability even to address policy intelligently. To the extent that falsehood is successfully instilled in the minds of enough people, the political system loses what would otherwise be its ability to provide a check on policy that is bad policy because it is inconsistent with factual reality.

### **Ignoring Climate Science**

One hundred days is enough time for the Trumpian assault on truth to start to become institutionalized. The process has become plain at the website of the

Environmental Protection Agency. Changes at the website since Trump's inauguration include not only what would be expected after a change of administrations in keeping any policy statements consistent with the new regime's preferences; it also has involved expunging the truth.

Specifically, a section of the site that had existed for 20 years and provided detailed data and scientific information on climate change has been removed. The deleted site, according to climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe of Texas Tech University, included "important summaries of climate science and indicators that clearly and unmistakably explain and document the impacts we are having on our planet."

The site was a go-to place for authoritative information about climate change. This is the sort of service one should expect to get from a government agency such as EPA (just like, before I took some recent foreign travel, the website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention served as a go-to site for authoritative information about what inoculations I would need). Now that part of the EPA site is gone.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt approved the deletion because, according to an anonymous staffer under Pruitt, "we can't have information which contradicts the actions we have taken in the last two months."

So instead of defending those actions in a well-informed policy debate based on truth, the administration's approach was to delete the truth. If the policy doesn't conform with reality, then deny the reality and make it as hard as possible for citizens to be informed of the reality.

Orwell's Ministry of Truth may be closer than we thought.

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