



WEDGEMERE



Top 10 Takeaways From Yesterday's Paris Exit

As you can guess, I listened to the President with great interest yesterday afternoon. In fact, I did more than that. I watched a lot of CNN, before and after the Rose Garden remarks. So here are my Top 10 thoughts on the speech and the coverage.

10. The President has broken a lot of the campaign promises that he made. Is it possible that the pressure was building up to actually make good on one, and this is where he took a stand? I don't think that is what is operative here, but it is still interesting to think about.

9. CNN devoted a full hour before and then again after the President's speech. It spent more time on it last evening. That is probably more than it collectively spent on climate in the years leading up to this. It's interesting to think about whether we would be in this situation if it and other networks had devoted some time to climate in the past. For example, it would have been nice to have heard climate come up in the Presidential debates last year.

8. When I watch or listen to a talking head on topics like health care or education, I don't personally know the numbers or data, and so I have to take in what they say with care but with no ability to know if they are correct or accurate. Yesterday was a case of where I know the numbers and so when I hear people use data, I can tell if they are wrong. A lot of people, including the President, quoted some wrong information yesterday. For example, he cited a very, very small

number of degrees that would be reduced by the Paris Agreement. But the number he used comes from a 2014 MIT Study and the author of that study came up with that number prior to the Paris Accord being signed. After it was signed, the same author came out with a much higher number based on the actuality of the December, 2015 signing.

7. One of the talking heads on CNN prior to the President appearing was Senator Rand Paul. One that was on a panel after the speech was Stephen Moore, a Trump Campaign Official. They both talked about how the climate is always changing and that there is nothing new going on. They made jokes about the "alarmists" that were talking about serious climate problems arising. They made other similar statements that to me sounded like old arguments. I wonder what other people watching him thought given that the polls are showing growing awareness and concern with respect to climate change?

6. Supporters of the President's action throughout the afternoon and into the evening talked incessantly of all the progress the U.S. has made on GHG emissions reduction to date. But they would not answer questions as to whether what we have done is enough to stave off adverse climate change, and whether we risk seeing the impacts of it if we don't keep reducing. Moreover, they talked a lot about China's No. 1 position as emitter without talking about the fact that the U.S. is No. 2. It is good to talk about our reductions to date, but to pursue a course where we rest our laurels makes no sense economically or environmentally.

5. There was a lot of talk about jobs yesterday, but neither the President nor any of his supporters on TV or radio once made reference to the fact that any jobs whatsoever have been created by renewable energy. Also, supporters of the President's action had no answer to the

question of why so many of America's business leaders, who are the "job creators" that are always otherwise cited, had pleaded with him not to exit the Accord. The talking heads slipped that question. They - and the President - also had nothing to say about jobs being created in other countries because the US may be abdicating our leadership on clean technology, as I talked about a back in January in my ["smile" Op Ed](#).

4. It appeared as though CNN had not adequately prepared for all the coverage it was giving to climate. The host and reporters seemed to not know enough about the topic or the data to refute obviously incorrect statements and arguments being made by speakers. For example, some speakers argued that renewable energy was only making headway because of subsidies. One went so far as to say that "windmills" had been around for hundreds of years and if they were so great why weren't there more of

them and why weren't they cost competitive. No one else seemed to have any knowledge of how solar has become cost-competitive. I hope the media steps up their knowledge going forward so that at least a discussion on climate can be on facts.

3. If I wanted to think and react "out of the box" to the President's remarks yesterday, I might say that he really did not make any statements to that climate change was not occurring. At times he sounded as though he accepted it but focus entirely on whether the Paris Accord was a good economic deal, and whether it threatened America's independence. That is interesting.

2. When I wrote an [Op Ed](#) after last November's election, I said that it was important to not just listen to the President's words but wait for his actions. Yesterday was certainly a day of action, but it is important to realize that there have been a lot of other actions. In

an [article earlier this week](#) by Chris Mooney of the Washington Post, he went through a number of things happening in the various agencies just from the standpoint of naming. It is worth a read.

But it is not just about naming and what is deleted on government websites. It is about the budget. It is the shutting down of government offices that work on climate change. It is about pulling back on aid to developing countries.

While yesterday was a big single event, what is important is that federal efforts on climate may be suffering death by a thousand cuts.

1. So what happens now? Well, the states and cities are not going to pull back on their efforts to address climate, and that is meaningful. When a statement to that effect comes from the 6th largest nation on earth...er, I mean California (measured by GDP) it means that the U.S will continue to do things regardless of

what the federal government does. If anything, they will step them up. Business is not going to look the other way on the economics on clean energy and where things are headed, and it will continue to prosper. Clean Energy and Grid Modernization are on a glide path. Yesterday did not shut that down. The extent to whether it significantly impacted its rate of growth is the question.

I also think things are getting interesting in the political sense. Recent Polling by Yale University has shown that a majority of people in every one of our 435 Congressional Districts are concerned about climate change. The percentage of people nationwide who are concerned about climate exceeds the approval rating of the President. I think that the Paris Exit and all of the media attention being paid to it is going to lead to more thought being given to it by the average citizen. I think that climate may have finally risen to a voting issue that will be a topic at

Town Halls and in the voting booth. That means the many Members of Congress from the majority party who secretly acknowledge that they are concerned about climate may not be able to stay in the shadows. It will no longer be good enough for a politician to say..."I want clean air and a clean environment" and then proceed to state a position or take an action that is directly opposed to the biggest environmental issue we have ever faced.

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