Climate policy in the Trump era: a European perspective

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Is Trump a return to the status quo?

• US leadership in international climate policy has been the exception, not the rule
• Over the past 25 years, the typical position of US policy has been as a reluctant or obstructive hegemon
• This has offered political opportunities to others (notably the EU)
Can Trump reverse US commitments to the Paris Agreement?

• Formally, the process of withdrawal will take 4 years (entry into force, November 2016)
Will a Trump administration affect US emissions trajectories?

• The energy transition in the US is underway
  – Costs are falling
  – RETs have been the dominant new power capacity for nearly 10 years
  – Deregulation is as likely to speed up as to retard innovation and transition
What will other parties to Paris do?

• Unlikely to be much change for most states (nor for other actors)
• Commitments of China and India may have been contingent, but probably not any more
• ‘Pledge and review’ was intended to avoid a ‘grand bargain’ framing for international climate policy and to emphasize national motivations
Will there be a crisis of leadership in international climate policy?

- China has shown that on trade and climate it is willing to take on a leadership position; strategically valuable for a nervous emerging power
- EU likely to play a less significant role as it deals with its own difficulties, but will ally with China on trade and climate
So what is the downside?

- US science leadership: observations, modelling, basic science
- US technology leadership: many enabling digital and biotech technologies for the energy transition are from US innovations and firms
- US political leadership under Obama was key to Paris, so the loss of this will slow policy innovation