

Everything that's wrong with the Trump Administration was on display yesterday, thanks to Scott Pruitt. He told "Fox and Friends" that the U.S. should get out of the Paris Agreement because China and India have no obligations until 2030. The fact that he made this comment, and made it on Fox, vividly exemplifies many of the Administration's weaknesses:

1. **Blatant falsity.** Criticizing the Paris Agreement on this ground is squarely opposite to the truth. Far from letting China and India off scot-free, Paris was the first time China and India did make major commitments — to rapidly increase energy efficiency and renewable energy, with a commitment to cutting total emissions later. Pruitt was pointing to the Agreement's big strength and getting it backwards — pretty much like saying Steph Curry's big weakness is an inability to make three-pointers.
2. **Internal divisions.** Pruitt was taking one side of the battle, on the side of the Steve Bannon and Reince Priebus against Ivanka Trump and Rex Tillerson. On this issue, as on many others, there's no coherent Administration position, just factions representing different political positions. Trump just isn't providing effective leadership.
3. **Fighting in public.** Most administrations would conduct their battles in private. But everything in this Administration seems to end up in public, partly as the result of a flood of leaks and partly (as here) because of public statements. There are so many leaks that it's more surprising when something *doesn't* get leaked.
4. **An uninformed President.** One reason Pruitt and others go on Fox is to get Trump's ear. Trump doesn't rely on experts or official communication channels. One result is that he's pretty ignorant on most major issues. That's why he was so surprised to find out that health care reform is complicated. Guess what? So is climate policy!
5. **Dumb policy.** Getting out of the Paris Agreement is a dumb idea, even apart from the benefits of cutting carbon. That's why Exxon and other major oil companies think we should stay in. First, ditching our Paris commitments would feed the sense that the U.S. can no longer be counted on to carry out its commitments. Second, compliance isn't actually all the burdensome. Third, the U.S. would no longer be at the table for further rounds of negotiation, so our interests wouldn't be represented. . Fourth, we would give China the opportunity of taking a greater leadership role at our expense.
6. **Obsolete ideas.** Where did Pruitt get the idea that Paris was flawed for this reason? It's actually a blast from the past. The Kyoto Protocol *didn't* impose

any obligations on India and China. But that was twenty years ago. As Talleyrand said of the Bourbon dynasty in France, the conservative movement seems to have forgotten nothing and learned nothing.

7. **Out of touch.** Pruitt's opposition to the Paris Agreement, and more generally to fighting climate change, is out of touch: out of touch with the science, out of touch with public opinion, out of touch with business leaders. But in the closed echo chamber of the Right, none of this can penetrate.
8. **Inexperienced officials.** Pruitt may very well believe what he said about the Paris Agreement. That's partly because of the echo chamber, but also in part because Oklahoma attorney generals — which is his only relevant experience — don't actually get much experience in foreign policy. Someone who had been involved in environmental policy at the national level would surely have known better. And remember: Pruitt is far from being Trump's least qualified cabinet appointment.

You'll notice that I didn't even bring up the biggest problem: climate change is a serious threat and Paris is a significant step toward addressing it. As the seas rise and glaciers melt, future generations will not look back kindly on the Scott Pruitts of the world.