Somewhat to my surprise, there was a question at the first GOP debate about climate change. The candidates' pre-debates views, which the *NY Times* helpfully collected, provided insight into possible directions for GOP energy policy. It's even possible that reality has started to make a dent into the party;'s reflexive climate denial.

The climate question was prompted by a statement by Alexander Diaz of the Young America's Foundation, a conservative youth organization speaking of the concerns of younger conservatives: "How will you as both president of the United States and leader of the Republican party calm their fears that the Republican party doesn't care about climate change?" The debaters never provided much of an answer.

Vivek Ramaswamy embraced the "hoax" meme while also taking a shot at all the other candidates. "I'm the only person on the stage who isn't bought and paid for, so I can say this: The climate change agenda is a hoax." He got some booing after that line. He also said, ""The reality is more people are dying of bad climate change policies than they are of actual climate change." His energy policy? "This isn't that complicated guys: Unlock American energy. Drill, frack, burn coal, embrace nuclear."

Ron DeSantis first said," Let's have this debate," but immediately changed the subject to Biden's response to the Maui fire.

Nikki Haley: "Is climate change real? Yes, it is, But if you want to go and really change the environment, then we need to start telling China and India that they have to lower their emissions. That's what our problem is."

Tim Scott: ""America has cut our carbon footprint in half in the last 25 years," so the problem is other countries like China.

Doug Bergum: "Green New Deal spending" is "something that is just subsidizing China. If we're going to stop buying oil from the Middle East and start buying batteries from China, we're just trading OPEC for Sinopec,"

During the debate, Pence bragged about the Trump Administration's record promoting fossil fuels: ""We revived our economy, we unleashed American energy, and we appointed three conservatives to the Supreme Court." He recently told an AP interviewer, ""Look the climate is changing, but I believe the issue is what we do about it, It's all just about communicating a different vision." Not much sign of a

“different vision” was visible in his remarks at the debate.

Prior to the debate, some of the candidates had floated possible solutions. The two most popular seem to be nuclear power and carbon capture. Nuclear is endorsed by Ramaswamy, Asa Hutchinson, and Will Hurd. Carbon capture is supported by Nikki Haley, Doug Bergum, and Chris Christie. Several of the candidates endorse an “all of the above” strategy, with Hutchinson supporting private development of renewables, Of the debaters, only Christie has previously indicated some support for emission cuts. At the debate itself, the main climate strategy on the table seemed to be “Blame China.”

Except fpr Ramaswamy’s effort to channel Trump, the candidate responses sound pretty perfunctory. Climate and energy just don’t seem to excite them much as issues. I guess that’s probably a good thing, as opposed to the Ramaswamy approach. They didn’t try to offer real solutions either–not such a good thing.

I’ve focused on the non-Trump candidates, but of course Trump is by far the frontrunner. His website rhapsodizes about “our country’s God-given abundance of oil, natural gas, and clean coal.” In the interview with Tucker Carlson that posted during the debate, he said, ““Who wants to not be able to use a gas stove or have to drive an electric car?” He did grudgingly admit that electric cars might not be such terrible things if some people did choose to have them.

Trump still seems obsessed with what he imagines to be the horrors of water-saving fixtures and appliances; “They have sinks where no water comes out. You turn it on, no water comes out. No water comes out of the shower,” he said. “No water is allowed to go into the washing machine for your dishes or for your clothing. And I voided all of that.”

Trump has about 55% support in primary polls, though that also means that 45% of GOP voters haven’t ruled out other options. He’s the obvious favorite to win the nomination, and his supporters seem unfazed by his status as an indicted criminal. The positions taken by the other candidates do indicate, however, that GOP positions on climate aren’t quite as monolithic as you might think.