

TRUMP'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PARIS AGREEMENT

A reality check



MIZAN R KHAN
ON June 1 President Trump declared his administration's intention to withdraw from the Paris Agreement (PA). An immediate reaction from countries, such as Bangladesh, Britain, Canada, China, France,

Germany, India, Italy and others was to reaffirm their commitments to the PA, a universal accord so assiduously crafted in 2015. It appears Trump's declaration cemented global solidarity behind the cause. His justifications to withdraw appear to fly in the face of reality. This piece focuses on three issues: climate science-policy interface in the US, fairness and climate finance.

First, though climate change is becoming increasingly real, the US had a meandering record in science-policy interface in the last two decades. Fossil fuels invested millions to distort facts. During President Bush' first tenure, climate science had a twist, then led by Exxon, as a result of which the US as the lone holdout never joined the Kyoto Protocol (KP). In his State of the Union Address in January 2007 Bush even recognised for the first time that climate change was a "serious challenge." Then President-elect Obama in his Inauguration Address at the Washington Mall in January 2009 declared his resolve to "restore science in its rightful place." But Obama failed to mobilise public opinion for strong domestic policy. This was reflected in the three US presidential debates in late 2012. For fear of losing votes, neither Obama nor Romney uttered the words "climate change" ever.

The 2016 debates also somewhat reflected the same trend, though Democrat Hillary included climate in her agenda. President Trump claims he "represents Pittsburgh, not Paris," but the irony is that Pittsburgh voters overwhelmingly voted for Hillary, not Trump. Interestingly, though Trump was an avowed denier of climate change during his campaign



SOURCE: ALTERNATIVE MEDIA SYNDICATE

days, after his election he kept mum about it including his avoidance of denial of science in his withdrawal speech. The latest public opinion poll in May 2017 shows 70 percent of Americans are in favour of staying with the PA. So, it's an irony that the country which supplies the highest number of climate scientists to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) does not have much impact on policy formulation.

Second, Trump asserts the dispensation under the PA is totally unfair to the US, which hamstrings the US and empowers other major emitters like China and India. In hindsight, the same justification back in 1997 was used by the Congress not to ratify the KP. It had a top-down approach internationally, which the US always viewed as erosive of its sovereignty. This was evident in its refusal to join the League of Nations a century ago (brainchild of the visionary leadership of

President Wilson). However, the PA is a voluntary, bottom-up process, where countries themselves pledge national contributions to emissions reduction, only to be reviewed every five years. Non-compliance entails no penalty, just peer pressure. This design was the brainchild of America and the world accepted it. Then, how can such a voluntary, gentleman's agreement condemn the US to "potential liability of billions of dollars"? On the contrary, US withdrawal, as Saleemul argues, will push the US onto the liability scaffold.

Thus the fairness argument by Trump is misleading, and not grounded in reality. China with more than 18 percent of global population now emits almost double that of the US, but in terms of per capita Chinese emission is still one-third of the US. The case of India, with over 17 percent of global population, is more challenging. Though it is

the third largest emitter, on per capita its emission is one-tenth of the US. India's per capita income is just 3-4 percent that of the US, and about 400 million citizens have no access to modern energy. Still, both countries have already massively invested in renewable energy, which will allow them to comfortably live by their commitments under the PA. In terms of historical emissions, US is the largest contributor with 30 percent against China's 8 percent. This is the reason why even Bush Sr agreed under the Climate Convention in 1992 that developed countries must lead and act first.

Third, Trump asserts the US will be forced to shift "billions and billions and billions of dollars" to the Green Climate Fund. This is an exaggeration, which to date stands at just USD 1 billion, against a pledge of USD 3 billion for four years. So far 43 including 9 developing countries have committed to GCF

a total of USD 10.3 billion. Of this EU countries pledged almost half. On per capita US pledge ranks 11th and as share of GDP, it is 32nd among 43 countries. Trump argues that all this money is in addition to US's "massive" development assistance. This is again not right. While several developed countries contribute well over 0.7 percent of their GDP for such assistance, US provides a paltry 0.17 percent.

Further, America continues to subsidise fossil fuel production by about USD 25 billion a year, where most of the developing countries subsidise energy consumption mainly for the low-income people. Still 40 countries of the world have introduced carbon pricing, the cardinal solution to arrest climate change. China already introduced carbon trading at the state level, with a plan to upscale nationwide by mid-2018. About 100 countries have indicated in their submitted Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) the willingness to join an international carbon pricing mechanism. Kerry, former US Secretary of State who helped cobble up the PA, asserts that US efforts at state and city levels will greatly contribute to its pledge of reducing emissions by 26-28 percent by 2025, compared to the 2005 level.

Thus, at a time when coal is facing national and international censure, with its demand slowed to a crawl, when the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank decides not to fund coal-fired plants, when the world struggles to move along a low carbon trajectory, President Trump takes his country back to the nineteenth-century dirty energy pathway. Many analysts including this author believed that Trump being a pragmatic businessman would read the energy market trend, but his policy belies all rational expectations. This might be the reason Trump's Secretary of State Tillerson, former Exxon CEO and now a convert to climate science, is keeping mum, feeling that such wholesale abdication of global leadership by his boss may not make America great again.

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Urban spaces can promote empathy



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DHAKA is the most populated city in the country. It is also one of the most populated cities in the world with a density of 23,234

people per square kilometre within a total area of 300 square kilometres. The greater Dhaka area (Dhaka and the municipalities) has a population of over 18 million as of 2016, while the city itself has a population estimated at about 8.5 million (World Population Review, 2016). According to UN World Urbanization Prospects 2017, the population of Dhaka was only 336,000 in 1950.

The city of Dhaka has always been a centre of cultural vibrancy and has a long history and tradition of both tangible and intangible cultural heritages. The cultural vibrancy and heritage that have glorified Dhaka city for centuries often get obscured under different kinds of modern-day civic problems. As an ever-expanding megacity, Dhaka is continuously losing its cultural spaces to religious and ruling coteries. Many of the city's prime spaces are now earmarked for various businesses (public and private), commercial (shopping and private education) or military purposes. The situation was not as deplorable even during the Pakistan era.

The cultural properties of Dhaka city include all those things which have value for history, science, and culture. They are both manmade

artifacts and natural objects and include ancient mosques, Christian churches, Hindu and Buddhist temples, historic colonial buildings, forts, art galleries, national parks, Eidgahs, museums, zoos, stadiums, lake and river fronts, graveyards and cemeteries, playgrounds, botanical gardens, monuments, cultural academies or centres, public gathering places and other places of public interest. Different agencies of Dhaka are responsible for maintaining all these which constitute the city's cultural properties. For example, the Public Works Department maintains 302.5 acres of land, Dhaka City Corporation maintains 85.25 acres and the Housing and Settlement Directorate maintains another 5.71 acres. A number of other open public cultural spaces are maintained by different institutions and authorities, where use is reserved or restricted.

The newly built Hatirjheel project is a symbol of one such relationship between culture, social cohesion and development and has emerged as an example of rehabilitating neighbourhoods and development of a degraded area for public use. It has brought a kind of harmony among the people of surrounding neighbourhoods even with their differences of religion and class identity. This multi-purpose project has also had economic, socio-cultural and environmental impact. It has already started benefiting city-dwellers by providing them with a healthy environment and breathing space to relax, and spend time with families and friends. The 302-acre

Hatirjheel project scheme offers an aesthetic public space with wetlands, stylish eye-catching bridges, overpasses, walkways, leisure benches, gardens, plantation, and viewing decks.

Hatirjheel has created an atmosphere for peaceful coexistence of a diversified group of people for whom this serves as an escape from their fast-paced, exhausting lives. It has also become a hangout place for



TSC of Dhaka University is one of the few remaining public spaces available for Dhaka city dwellers where people gather to meet friends and participate in various cultural activities. PHOTO: TOUHIDUL ISLAM RIFAT

nature lovers. Increasing more such facilities, e.g. lake cruising, arrangement of cultural performances, selling souvenirs, dining facilities, etc., will attract more city-dwellers and tourists from home and abroad.

Developing the Hatirjheel area as a large regular public space is a good example of taking an initiative for developing an inclusive metropolitan

city. The dynamics of gathering in or passing through these types of public spaces reflect the impact of these places on the culture of consumption, practices of negotiations with the urban environment, and social responses to others. It also helps city-dwellers to adjust to the changing political and cultural atmosphere and shape civic culture.

The recent tensions among people of different religious and ethnic

communities accentuate the responsibility of this country to embrace diversity through creating various common cultural and public spaces. The increasing political, social and economic transformation in Bangladesh essentially emphasises on building a non-communal society in a democratic way. It is an important responsibility of the state to build more social and cultural spaces and

promote our heritage in different areas of the city to bring together people of various social, political and religious identities and for greater social cohesion.

As one of the largest megacities of the world, Dhaka has a very small number of public social and cultural spaces which reflect the commonness of practices and celebrations of people from all walks of life. Urban administrators, planners, architects

activities from various existing conflicts. If such types of urban public spaces are built in different areas of the city and are organised, it may open up a pathway to develop social empathy among city-dwellers. Restoration and regeneration of urban intangible cultural heritages are required for creating a socially inclusive multicultural urban community with a sense of national rights and obligations. Thus urban planning of Dhaka city must embrace cultural enrichment. By recognising heritage as a dynamic and transformative force, we need to explore intangible cultural heritage as an indicator and facilitator of social development and as an active agent of social transformation.

In addition to the ecological and aesthetic value of urban cultural properties to city-dwellers, open spaces, including green network, water bodies and heritage sites, are important elements of urban recreational facilities. Like Dhanmondi and Hatirjheel Lake, retention of more open areas and prevention of more canals from encroachment are needed for creating more recreational areas in the city. Relocated Central Jail area can be further developed as an open space in Old Dhaka for recreation, while the development of Gulshan Lake, like Hatirjheel or Dhanmondi Lake, is an excellent opportunity for the development of water-based recreational facilities.

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QUOTABLE Quote



SIR JOHN FREDERICK NEVILLE CARDUS
ENGLISH WRITER AND CRITIC

A true batsman should in most of his strokes tell the truth about himself.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| ACROSS | 31 Fire remnant | 9 Frolic |
| 1 Rap entourage | 32 Singer Rawls | 10 Patellae places |
| 6 Glossy | 33 None to bright | 16 Island off |
| 11 Starry hunter | 35 Bert's buddy | Venezuela |
| 12 Texan tree | 38 Lash of Westerns | 20 Looks like |
| 13 Mariners | 39 Aerie builder | 21 Yoga need |
| 14 Yucca's kin | 40 Put to use | 24 Stake |
| 15 "Be right with you" | 41 Glossy | 25 Like some wallpaper |
| 17 Eurasian deer | 42 Some curves | 26 Hotel area |
| 18 Easter find | DOWN | 27 Designer Ralph |
| 19 Soft sounds | 1 Bouquet makeup | 28 Promise |
| 22 Take in | 2 Marigold color | 29 White sale buy |
| 23 Fried chicken choice | 3 Cow chow | 30 Hightails it |
| 24 Explosion | 4 Lushes | 34 Curbside cry |
| 25 Rip off | 5 Coordinated outfits | 36 -de France |
| 27 - Crucege | 6 Masseur's place | 37 Mouse-spottingcry |
| 30 Wreckage at sea | 7 Pants part | |
| | 8 Doomed flyer | |



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

G O B A D E B E L O P
A R O S E E L A T E
M E W L S N E W T S
L A K E C L O T
J O I N A N T I
U R N P R E E N E D
M A G O O E D G A R
P L A N T E D B R A
L E S S S A N G
P I L L S L A B
A R E A S O N I C E
P A Y N E S T E A K
A S S E T T A S T E

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

