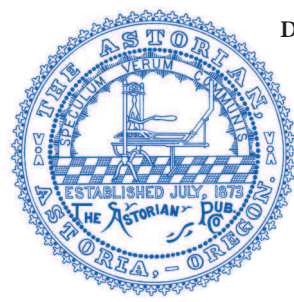


# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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## OUR VIEW



NASA/John Sonntag

A crack in an Antarctic ice shelf has grown by several miles over the past week. We all share the atmosphere and its man-made problems.

## Trump's decision on climate control is full of hot air

South Florida and low-lying island nations will be the first to face existential climate-change disasters, it's often said. The Lower Columbia River and adjacent coastlines also are at risk in important ways. We already are starting to pay a steep price for mankind's thoughtless pollution of our planet's thin film of atmosphere.

Saying he was "elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris," President Donald Trump last week spurned the Paris climate agreement. He hitched his wagon and ours to a nostalgic vision of smokestack America, abandoning not only the nation's vulnerable coastlines and fisheries, but also a host of U.S. industries tied to clean energy. The new, alternative energy sector is quite alive in Oregon and Washington state.

With this decision, it will be the U.S., Syria and Nicaragua on one side, and the world's 189 other nations on the other. This isn't putting America first. It's grouping us with a failed dictatorship and a country historically in turmoil. Embarrassing. And Nicaragua doesn't back the agreement because it views it as too weak. On matters of environmental science, no country is a disreputable entity — we all share the atmosphere and its man-made problems.

These problems have a lot to do with our country's voracious appetite for dirty energy in the past century and a half. We built our industries and consumer economy with carbon-based fossil fuels that took the planet's natural processes eons to lock away underground. Although China now surpasses us as a polluter, our own behavior did much to get everyone into this mess. Instead of disadvantaging the U.S. "to the exclusive benefit of other countries" as Trump alleges, the climate accord provides a pathway for us to gradually throttle back greenhouse emissions while giving us moral leverage to insist other nations do the same.

Symbolism counts. We're the annoying neighbor with a stinky, long-smoldering burn barrel, telling others they should put theirs out before we will. The president last week dangled the possibility he might negotiate a more advantageous climate deal. It took years of tough talking to achieve the Paris accords. It is pure poppycock and chicanery to suggest that we can somehow bully our way to a new agreement that will achieve meaningful goals at less cost to us.

We can put off paying our share of the bill for climate action, but the planet will keep counting up the interest in the form of carbon dioxide, methane and their byproducts in the atmosphere and oceans. Our neglect of Paris goals could add as much as another 3 billion tons of carbon dioxide per year into the air.

Seawater is intruding far up Hawaii beaches. Observers see ominous cracks expanding across Antarctica's vast coastal shelves, which keep fearsome ice sheets out of the ocean. Here on the north Pacific, great reservoirs of warm seawater encourage toxin algal blooms and make rivers too hot for fish. No single clue is definitive proof that global warming is already walloping us. Together they form a disturbing pattern.

Our CIA, the Pentagon and corporations from Weyerhaeuser to Coca-Cola have long studied the implications of climate change. Political instability, disruptions of supply chains, refugee crises and illegal immigration are all consequences of a whacked-out, whipped-up climate. The Paris accord is a small price to pay to stay ahead of these calamities.

Fully withdrawing from the Paris agreement will take until the next presidential election, when the American people will have another chance to decide who best to lead us as we navigate the dangers ahead.

In the meantime, individual states in the U.S. Climate Alliance must continue forging a sane path, investing in the lucrative clean-energy industry and curbing greenhouse gas emissions. Oregon should formally join this group. Not only will we reap economic benefits, we will demonstrate to the world that the U.S. is still about a lot more than Trump's risky brand of hot air.



## The axis of selfishness

By DAVID BROOKS  
New York Times News Service

Last week, two of Donald Trump's top advisers, H.R. McMaster and Gary Cohn, wrote the following passage in The Wall Street Journal: "The president embarked on his first foreign trip with a clear-eyed outlook that the world is not a 'global community' but an arena where nations, nongovernmental actors and businesses engage and compete for advantage."

That sentence is the epitome of the Trump project. It asserts that selfishness is the sole driver of human affairs. It grows out of a worldview that life is a competitive struggle for gain. It implies that cooperative communities are hypocritical covers for the selfish jockeying underneath.

The essay explains why the Trump people are suspicious of any cooperative global arrangement, like NATO and the various trade agreements. It helps explain why Trump pulled out of the Paris global-warming accord. This essay explains why Trump gravitates toward leaders like Vladimir Putin, the Saudi princes and various global strongmen: They share his core worldview that life is nakedly a selfish struggle for money and dominance.

It explains why people in the Trump White House are so savage to one another. Far from being a band of brothers, their world is a vicious arena where staffers compete for advantage.

In the essay, McMaster and Cohn make explicit the great act of moral decoupling woven through this presidency. In this worldview, morality has nothing to do with anything. Altruism, trust, cooperation and virtue are unaffordable luxuries in the struggle of all against all. Everything is about self-interest.

We've seen this philosophy before, of course. Powerful, selfish people have always adopted this dirty-minded realism to justify their own selfishness. The problem is that this philosophy is based on an error about human beings and it leads to self-destructive behavior in all cases.

The error is that it misunderstands what drives human action. Of course people are driven by selfish motivations — for individual status, wealth and power. But they are also motivated by another set of drives — for solidarity, love and moral fulfillment — that are equally and sometimes more powerful.

People are wired to cooperate. Far from being a flimsy thing, the desire for cooperation is the primary human evolutionary advantage we have over the other animals.

People have a moral sense. They



AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais

President Donald Trump in the Oval Office of the White House in March.

have a set of universal intuitions that help establish harmony between peoples. From their first moments, children are wired to feel each other's pain. You don't have to teach a child about what fairness is; they already know. There's no society on Earth where people are admired for running away in battle or for lying to their friends.

People have moral emotions. They feel rage at injustice, disgust toward greed, reverence for excellence, awe before the sacred and elevation in the face of goodness.

**Powerful, selfish people have always adopted this dirty-minded realism to justify their own selfishness.**

People yearn for righteousness. They want to feel meaning and purpose in their lives, that their lives are oriented toward the good.

People are attracted by goodness and repelled by selfishness. New York University social psychologist Jonathan Haidt has studied the surges of elevation we feel when we see somebody performing a selfless action. Haidt describes the time a guy spontaneously leapt out of a car to help an old lady shovel snow from her driveway.

One of his friends, who witnessed this small act, later wrote: "I felt like jumping out of the car and hugging this guy. I felt like singing and running, or skipping and laughing. Just being active. I felt like saying nice things about

people. Writing a beautiful poem or love song. Playing in the snow like a child. Telling everybody about his deed."

Good leaders like Lincoln, Churchill, Roosevelt and Reagan understand the selfish elements that drive human behavior, but they have another foot in the realm of the moral motivations. They seek to inspire faithfulness by showing good character. They try to motivate action by pointing toward great ideals.

Realist leaders like Trump, McMaster and Cohn seek to dismiss this whole moral realm. By behaving with naked selfishness toward others, they poison the common realm and they force others to behave with naked selfishness toward them.

By treating the world simply as an arena for competitive advantage, Trump, McMaster and Cohn sever relationships, destroy reciprocity, erode trust and eviscerate the sense of sympathy, friendship and loyalty that all nations need when times get tough.

By looking at nothing but immediate material interest, Trump, McMaster and Cohn turn America into a nation that affronts everybody else's moral emotions. They make our country seem disgusting in the eyes of the world.

George Marshall was no idealistic patsy. He understood that America extends its power when it offers a cooperative hand and volunteers for common service toward a great ideal. Realists reverse that formula. They assume strife and so arouse a volley of strife against themselves.

I wish H.R. McMaster was a better student of Thucydides. He'd know that the Athenians adopted the same amoral tone he embraces: "The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must." The Athenians ended up making endless enemies and destroying their own empire.

## LETTERS WELCOME

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Letters should be fewer than 350 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone numbers. You will be contacted to confirm authorship.

All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and, on occasion, factual accuracy and verbal verification of authorship. Only two letters per writer are printed each month.

Letters written in response to

other letter writers should address the issue at hand and, rather than mentioning the writer by name, should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil and people should be referred to in a respectful manner. Letters referring to news stories should also mention the headline and date of publication.

The Daily Astorian welcomes short "in gratitude" notes from readers for publication. They should keep to a 200-word maximum and writers are asked to avoid simply listing event sponsors. They

must be signed, include the writer's address, phone number and are subject to condensation and editing for style, grammar, etc.

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