

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

5 on 45:

On 'energy week' in the White House

Friday, June 30, 2017

PARTICIPANTS:

Host:

ADRIANNA PITA

Contributor:

SAMANTHA GROSS

Fellow – Foreign Policy, Energy Security and Climate Initiative

PITA: You're listening to 5 on 45 from the Brookings podcast network analysis and commentary from Brookings experts on today's news regarding the Trump administration.

GROSS: I'm Samantha Gross, fellow with the Brookings initiative on energy and climate change. The White House declared this week energy week. After reading the press release and watching the speeches. I somewhat agree with the Trump administration is pointing us in a new energy direction but that area seems to be pointed backwards towards the past. All week the administration has been ignoring an impressive American success story the breakneck pace of renewable electricity development since 2010 renewable electricity generation in the U.S. has increased more than 50 percent. And this development is creating jobs jobs; the renewable electricity industry employs three and a half times the number of people employed in the coal industry. Clean energy as a whole has created a term menace number of jobs 3.4 million Americans are directly employed and some aspects of the clean energy industry including renewable power and fuels. Smart Grid and energy storage and electric and hybrid vehicles. If we want to achieve American energy dominance best not to ignore the world's fastest growing energy technologies the world adds more renewable power capacity than net fossil capacity today.

But China is leading today's renewable industry producing two thirds of the world's solar panels and nearly half the world's wind turbines. The Made in China 2025 program calls for clean energy research and development to boost the Chinese economy. Meanwhile in the U.S. we're proposing cuts to our flagship energy research and development efforts. The House proposed budget bill for the Department of Energy cuts funding for the office of energy efficiency and renewable energy nearly in half and zeroes

out funding for ARPA-E programs that aim to develop and deploy transformational energy technologies here in the U.S.. Our national labs jewels of the U.S. research system and the envy of the world are also facing budget cuts clean tech innovation is a 1.4 trillion dollar business globally. If the US wants to be energy dominant. We need to play daring energy week. The administration has mostly focused on fossil energy oil and gas and coal. But it seems like the president may have missed many developments of the past few years. He said yesterday in his speech at the Department of Energy that we are now on the cusp of a true energy revolution.

We're not on the cusp. We're 10 years into that revolution created by us innovation in drilling techniques that have unlocked resources the US lifted its moratorium on exporting crude oil a year and a half ago under the Obama administration and we have been exporting liquefied natural gas since February of last year. The president's announcement of a national LNG exports and a new oil pipeline to Mexico are certainly welcome but part of an ongoing trend not a brave new world. Nuclear power also received attention this week. President Trump didn't provide a lot of specifics but said he wants to revive and expand nuclear power. But nuclear is having a rough go in the U.S. right now. The future of two new build nuclear plants is in question right now as Westinghouse developer recently entered bankruptcy. The most pressing issue in nuclear power today is keeping currently operating plants open since low priced gas and renewables are change challenging their economics. I hope the nuclear study the president requested covers both the high cost of new nuclear and the economics of our existing nuclear fleet. To sum it up and actually we really fell flat for me. Energy dominance seems more like a slogan than a goal. If the administration is ignoring the fastest growing energy source

today renewables and the US is building on a strong trend of oil and gas development but crowing about rolling back regulations risks losing public trust in companies' ability to develop oil and gas safely while minimizing harm to the environment. Energy was a strong theme for the president during his campaign but I'm afraid that his backward looking policies may do more harm than good.

PITA: If you've been listening to five on forty five and like what you're hearing. Please take a minute to rate review us on iTunes. And don't forget to follow us and the rest of the Brookings Podcast Network on Twitter at [policy podcasts](#).