

Global Warming: Science or Politics?

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Abstract

The debate on global warming and the consequent climate change has gained currency in political and scientific discourses in recent times. It is arguably the most discussed topical issue in today's world. It has been the subject of social and political actions on a global scale. Tons of scholarly works have been produced on the contentious subject. Yet the controversies surrounding the subject persist. At the heart of this research is an investigation into the nature of the inquiry and declarations on global warming and the resultant climate change. Is it a scientific inquiry or a political movement? Are the declarations on global warming scientific facts or political talking points? This article examines these controversies with a view to determining the scientificity or otherwise, of propositions on global warming. The critique will be guided by rigorous analytic logicity.

Keywords: Global warming, Science, Politics, Western Europe, Environment, Climate change.

Introduction

Since Western Europe entered the postindustrial phase of development, concerns about the environmental consequences of industrial productions have become centre stage in the global political discourse. These concerns have led to numerous environmental studies and scientific findings. Scientists are universally agreed that there are some modes of industrial production that have negative effects on the environment. The degree and significance of these effects are, however, highly

debatable with respect to global warming and climate change. That pollutions often result from industrial productions is not debatable. However, the claim by a segment of the scientific community and the leftist political ideology that some industrial activities cause global warming and climate change has raised so much political and scientific dust in the intellectual and political community, among opposing viewpoints and among different nations. The debate is further charged by the politicization of the discourse by elitist leftist politicians (Irfan, 2019). It has become a contentious issue in international politics. The United Nations has organized numerous conferences and come up with several protocols on global warming and climate change.

But of fundamental importance is the nature of the discourse on global warming. Are actions on global warming and climate change scientific imperatives or matters of political ideologies? So many questions pop up when key claims on global warming are subjected to critical scrutiny (Singer, 2011). Answers to these questions have shaped the debate on climate change. They have also fuelled diverse political actions and inactions even on global proportions. If global warming is strictly a scientific proposition, it must be subjected to all necessary critiques of science. No proposition thereof should be sacrosanct. However, climate change activists have often expressed severe hostility to attempts to subject propositions on global warming to scientific critique. This raises serious questions on the scientificity and the validity of the propositions. This article being fundamentality philosophical dwells on the critique of the propositions on global warming. Criticality is at the core of scientific enquiries. The scientific method provides for continuous and progressive critiques. This is the logic of science.

Is global warming a natural or manmade phenomenon; is it a scientific or a political proposition? These are the questions this work explores. For a scientific proposition to stand the test of time, it must have its basis in epistemology rather than politics. Propositions on global warming must be evaluated solely on their epistemological merit rather than their political appeal. Fear mongering does not advance science. Most climate change activists appear to be alarmist in their agitations. They generally create the impression of an impending Armageddon if their dictates were not strictly followed.

What is Global Warming?

The phrase “global warming” was popularized by the American scientist activist, Wallace Broecker, a Newberry professor of environmental science at Columbia University (Krajick, 2019). Although he made major contributions to the study of carbon cycle, Charles David Keeling heralded him. After years of collecting carbon dioxide samples on Mauna Loa in Hawaii, Keeling came to the conclusion that there is a significant anthropogenic factor in the increase of atmospheric carbon dioxide leading to global warming (Kahele, 2007). But before the duo, Svante August Arrhenius, a Nobel laureate and a physical chemist had in 1896 stated that rises in atmospheric carbon dioxide were responsible for rises in the earth’s overall temperature (Baun & Rudy, 2016). He was the first to make the correlation between the rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide and the rise in global temperatures. This observation by Arrhenius was eventually demonstrated by Keeling when he observed that atmospheric carbon dioxide decreased with the growth of trees in spring and early summer. By persistent observations and data collection, Keeling demonstrated that carbon dioxide levels were on a steady increase on a global scale.

However, discourse on global warming was pushed into the public domain by the US Science Advisory Committee which in 1965 declared that the earth was facing dangers from heat trapping gases which caused global warming (Nuccitelli, 2015). This declaration by President Johnson’s Science Advisory Committee made global warming a matter of political discourse. Global warming generally refers to rise in overall global temperature due to the presence in the Earth’s atmosphere, heat-trapping gasses which are generally referred as “greenhouse” gases. These gases mostly occur naturally in the earth’s atmosphere. But some percentages of these gases have been observed to increase as a result of anthropogenic activities. Carbon is particularly singled out as a significant greenhouse gas that is increased in the atmosphere as a result of anthropogenic activities. Some scholars in their bias conversely define global warming as an increase in overall global temperature as a result of human activities which increase greenhouse gas emissions in the earth’s atmosphere (Mcrae, 2019).

But greenhouse gases occur naturally in the atmosphere. Water vapour constitutes about 75% of the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide which is less than 20% is naturally released by humans during respiration. Methane is given off naturally by decomposing, nitrous oxide which is found naturally in air while ozone is found naturally in the atmosphere (Shindell, 2005; Wallace & Hobbs, 2006). These substances retain heat in the atmosphere through natural processes. It could be said that the earth is naturally fated to be warmed, and for good. Without the greenhouse gases, the earth's average temperature would probably be less than 18 °C (Karl & Trenberth, 2003; Le Treut et al., 2008; NASA, 2010). But activist scholars tend to see global warming purely from the anthropogenic dimension. Without a doubt, human activities contribute to the production of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere but there is an overwhelming natural dimension to the presence of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Earth Heating Gases

Earth heating gases commonly known as greenhouse gases are chiefly water vapour, carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, methane, chlorofluorocarbons, hydrofluorocarbons, ozone and a few other gases whose impacts on atmospheric temperature might be minute. As previously noted, the bulk of these gases occur naturally in the atmosphere, although human activities can to a certain degree, affect their availability in the atmosphere. These gases naturally absorb and retain heat from the sunrays, thereby affecting atmospheric temperature. The discourse on global warming and climate change is largely triggered by the human factor in the increase of these gases in the atmosphere, especially carbon dioxide. But it is also important to add that the degree of naturally induced global warming by these gases by far out-rates those supposedly induced by human activities. These gases did not start warming the earth's atmosphere at a point in time. They have always been doing that from the beginning - an ontological reality about the nature and the operations of the earth.

The greenhouse gases have always been there, humans or no humans. The gases always retained heat in the earth's atmosphere, thereby inducing global warming even right from the pre-human era. The activities of these gases are ontological to the earth. They

have always been there, doing that as part of the very nature of the earth. The significance of such increase, however, is highly debatable. The focus on man-induced global warming is on carbon dioxide. However, water vapor dominates the percentages of gases that contribute to rise in global temperature. But man's contribution to the volume of water vapor in the Earth's atmosphere pales into insignificance compared to the hype on manmade carbon dioxide induced global warming. The phasing out of steam powered engines marked the phasing out of water vapor as a major industrial waste. The bulk of the water vapor in the atmosphere originates from purely natural causes.

The Muting of Water Vapour in the Discourse on Global Warming

Although water vapour is the largest gas in the atmosphere that contributes to rise in atmospheric temperature, it is rarely hyped by global warming scholars and climate change activists. Why is water vapour not given same prominence as carbon dioxide in the discourse on global warming? Could it be because there is little man-made contribution to the presence and volume of water vapour in the earth's atmosphere? It occurs naturally in the earth's atmosphere. It is one of the ontological components of the atmosphere. It is always there though in varying degrees. If it is an earth warming agent; it is fated by nature to be thus. Even if there were no humans on earth, the earth's atmospheric water vapour would still trap heat from the sun, thereby contributing to global warming. It is simply natural. The bulk of the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are water vapour, over 70%. This makes it the most important and the decisive greenhouse gas in the atmosphere. Logically, the discourse on global warming ought to be focused on water vapour but it is not!

A greater percentage of the earth's atmosphere is covered by water. Water naturally evaporates with parcels of heat into the atmosphere as water vapour when heated (Shroeder, 2000). Thus on a daily basis, volumes of water are evaporated into the earth's atmosphere from the seas and other water bodies. Humans literally have no role to play in this entirely natural process. No significant discourse can take place on rolling back global warming without factoring in water vapour. It is by far the dominant retainer of

heat in the earth's atmosphere. So, why the silence on water vapour? Why are climate change activists silent on water vapour? No meaningful effort to roll back global warming can go on without tackling the presence of water vapour in the atmosphere. If water vapour can't be controlled, global warming can't be meaningfully controlled. This is the decisive point in the global warming discourse. Carbon which is the major focus of the climate action pales into insignificance when it is taken into consideration that around 80% of the greenhouse effect in the earth's atmosphere is induced by water vapor (Cataldo, 2014). There could be no anthropogenic blames for that neither could there be calls for water vapor tax. If the focus were on water vapor, climate activism would have been of little or no commercial value. What this proves is that there is a decisive commercial component in the clamor for climate action. It would have been natural, scientific and commonsensical for the clamour for climate action to be focused on water vapour as the most potent greenhouse gas. Sadly, that's not the case! Why is there no focus on a global technology to control the humidity of the earth's atmosphere? Why are climate actions programs mostly focused on carbon? This is yet another unscientific happenstance in the discourse on global warming and climate change. The deafening silence on water vapour is a global question mark on the global warming debate.

The Politics of Carbon

Carbon emission almost always dominates all talks on global warming and climate change. The outcry on human induced climate change is significantly focused on man's natural and industrial activities which lead to carbon dioxide emissions. In the same vein most of the decisive actions taken to control global warming are always targeted on human activities that produce carbon emissions. In fact, there is a global lobby by climate action activists to ultimately phase out all technologies and industrial production processes that lead to carbon dioxide emissions. But carbon dioxide accounts for just about 17 to 23% of the greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere, and of this number, only 2 to 3 % is said to be created as a result of human activities (Kiehl & Trenberth, 1997). Carbon so to speak is not the major greenhouse gas though it is the major concern of the climate action lobby.

The fervour and outcry of climate change activists on manmade carbon is clearly unscientific. They clearly ignore other variables in the global warming debate. It is queer that the most significant cause of global warming is entirely left out of the debate. What is the epistemological justification for the hype on carbon dioxide? Of great importance is the fact that even the 20% carbon dioxide that is said to constitute the greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere, only about 2% out of that 20% is said to be caused by anthropogenic activities. Wherein lays the justification for the focus on carbon? But worrisome is the fact that the global warming crusade is led by politicians rather than scientists. In the United States of America (USA), for instance, the lobby on climate change is led by Democrat politicians rather than scientists. It has more or less become one of the talking points of the Democrat political party (Irfan, 2019). The global warming alarm has often been used to drive agenda that are far from being rooted in science. The hype they place on carbon is often irrational. Climate change has become part of liberal political ideology (Irfan, 2019). Carbon tax has often been imposed in domains where liberals hold sway (World Bank, 2019). The argument which has no sound scientific basis is that anthropogenic carbon emission is significantly responsible for global warming and consequent climate change.

The Climate Change Racket

The greatest discredit to the global warming argument is the commercialization and politicization of the climate change. This unhealthy development cast a pall of doubt on the supposed altruism of the climate change lobbyists. There appears to be a global network of political elites who have used the climate change lobby to further their politics and feather their nests. They have used the climate lobby to get the government to fund projects of their choice, ostensibly to save the earth. Sometimes these projects have no basis in reasonable reality, often ending up as fiascoes. The California speed train rail project is a typical example (Vartabedian, 2018). The climate lobby has often used the global warming advocacy to influence favourable government policies to companies tied to them. These covert political activities often belie their supposed altruism. Another disturbing aspect of the climate lobby racket is the political advocacy that government

funds its activities by way of grants. The lobby from another perspective could be seen as a money making racket for the businesses and political interests behind them.

The Racket Called the Carbon Credit Trade

The trading of carbon credits created a racket that turned a process that was supposedly set up to reduce global carbon dioxide emission into a money making venture for the climate change lobby. A project that was supposed to be a nonprofit venture to save the earth from excessive carbon emission ended up as a global multibillion dollar fraud infested industry for the privileged few with the necessary political connections to the climate change lobby (Coleman, 2019). Carbon credit trade started with the arbitrary and unequal allocations of units of emission limits to nations. No nation is to exceed its carbon emission limit. Industries within nations are supposed to be allocated emission units from their country's overall emission quota. Any corporation that exhausts its allocated unit and exceeds the permitted emission level would have to buy carbon credit units, either from the country's regulatory authorities, from other corporations within the country that have some units to spare or from accredited international carbon credit dealers.

At the international level, a nation could sell its excess carbon units to another nation. It could also sell to corporations or accredited international carbon credit dealers. Thus was born the carbon credit trade billion dollar industries. A critical look at the entire exercise raises gargantuan moral questions. The entire exercise was supposed to be altruistic since it was supposedly about saving the earth planet. Why the industry? It is even more worrisome when it is discovered that the forces behind carbon credit trade are the same as the forces behind the global climate change lobby. This realization raises another question about the motivations of the lobby—the dollar or the earth?

A comparative look at the allocations of carbon credit units to countries belies every principle of fairness as it is neither reasonable nor does it have basis on any objective parameters. There is no flat rate. It is neither based on land mass nor population. It is not strictly based on the number of factories or existing pollution levels. Many countries are allotted carbon emission units that they clearly

have no capacity to exhaust (Gignac & Matthews, 2015). What is the rationale? Are they being encouraged to increase their emissions levels? Is it a deliberate ploy by the carbon trade racket to create excess carbon credit units for the market, knowing full well that those countries would definitely sell off what they don't need? The allocations also failed to take into consideration, nations who may have been heavy polluters in the past but have taken significant steps to lower their carbon emission levels. The allocations penalized them for alleged past emissions. That logic is queer.

China which is currently the world's biggest polluter gets far more advantages than many industrialized countries whose national carbon emission level are on the downward trend. The preferential treatment given to China, which is currently the world's largest polluter, questions the political neutrality of the allocations. Commonsense demands that they be hard hit for being the contemporary biggest polluters in the world but the reverse is the case. They are given more years to pollute with higher carbon dioxide emission limits. Another contentious issue in the emission limits allocation is the supposed reparation for imagined carbon emissions in the past. Industrialized nations are demanded to pay reparations for their imagined emissions in the past (Burkett, 2009). That does not gel with commonsense at all. It is difficult to dissociate the climate change lobby from the carbon credit trade.

14 is the New 15

Scientists are yet to come to a unanimous agreement that there is actually a steady rise in global mean temperatures over the years. At the heart of this contention is the disagreement over what the normal global mean temperature actually is. While some argue that the normal global mean temperature was always pegged at 15°C in the past, some contemporary scientists have chosen to peg it at 14 °C. This 1 °C makes the critical difference. If it is accepted that the normal global mean temperature is 15 °C, there would be no significant increase in global mean temperature over the years. There would be no basis for the claims of rising global temperatures. The earth would be perfectly normal and fine (Kumar, 2012). There would be no global warming or apocalyptic climate change. But if the normal global mean temperature were to be pegged at 14 °C, the earth would be in deep trouble. It would

mean that the earth's temperature is increasing, the world is changing and that civilization would ultimately burn out. But the critical question is why would the goalpost be changed at all? Why would the normal global mean temperature be moved from 15 °C to 14 °C? It suggests a willingness to manipulate data in favor of a predetermined narrative. If the world was okay when the global mean temperature was 15c, why making the world seem abnormal by pegging it at 14° C?

The Abortion Lobby in Climate Change Activism

A queer logic of a contingent of the climate change lobby is the absurd argument that humans ought to stop or reduce giving births in order to save the climate. This is the argument of the abortionist contingent in the climate change lobby. Humans breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide. By an absurd logic, they concluded that an increase in human population would inevitably lead to an increase in the volume of atmospheric carbon dioxide. This according to them, would exacerbate the greenhouse situation of the Earth, cause global warming and ultimately damage the Earth. This argument is prevalent among extreme leftists in the United States of America.

Abortion is a strong political talking point in the US. Government funded prochoice abortion is one of the ideological bedrocks of the Democrat Party. The queer argument above is unsurprisingly parroted by Democrat politicians. Prominent among them is a maverick New York district congresswoman, Alexandra Ocasio Cortez. She and others have unabashedly called for abortion and the mitigation of human births as a way of reducing carbon dioxide emissions and saving the earth (Cortez, 2019). This school of thought views human reproduction as a direct cause of global warming. In other words, humans are the problem. However, a political undertone to this argument cannot be dismissed. Liberals already have prochoice abortions as one of the cardinal tenets of their political ideology. There is no surprise in their using global warming and climate change to advance their prochoice abortion argument.

The Claims: The Absurd and the Outlandish

There have been several predictions by climate change activists about the supposedly severe consequences of anthropogenic

induced climate change. Many of these claims have not only turned out to be absurd and untrue, but oftentimes downright irrational. Many a time, climate change activists have predicted the expiration of the earth as a consequence of climate change, but the earth is still there. The Arctic ice is a favourite talking point of climate change activists. There have been multiple predictions of a projected melting of the Arctic ice but the ice is still there. There have been predictions of rising and overflowing sea levels but seashores are relatively still where they are. Even the projected phenomenal heat waves are yet to come as it is still cold in winter; and ice indeed still fall in winter where they have been falling even before the Industrial Revolution. The ozone layer is still there and there are no reports yet of people dying from supposedly dangerous rays from the sun. The Amazon is not disappearing as a result of global warming and climate change but as a result of bush burning, lumbering and other industrial activities that are inimical to the natural processes in the forests.

Conclusion

The critical question to be determined in the global warming controversy is whether propositions on global warming will stand the test of the scientific method. How do these propositions fare when they are measured against the scientific criteria. Science is apolitical; and truth is immune to number. What is the scientificity of the global warming claims? This question cannot be answered without determining what the normal global mean temperature is. If the earth temperature is the way it is naturally fated to be, then the hue and cry about global warming is all noise. Scientists have argued that the greenhouse effect is nature's way of keeping the earth warm and conducive for human habitation (American Chemical Society, n.d).

What drives the claims about global warming; science or politics? From the outset, the claims have been driven by politics rather than science (Johnson, 1965). The entire argument on global warming is standing on shaky propositions. They generally do not meet the basic criteria of scientificity. The claims on global warming have more value as political fads than scientific facts. Little wonder the lobbyists brutally repress any critique of their claims. Global warming is more or less a group think politically correct fad than an

iconoclastic scientific inquiry. It is more or less a dogma than a bias neutral scientific proposition which can either be verified or falsified. The fact that the claims and lobby on global warming are driven by politics and politicians rather than science says it all. Scientific propositions do not bend to politics; are never driven by politics and are never intended for political correctness. Global warming as we see it today is more or less a political stunt. Whatever scientificity it has is blurred by the thick dust of liberal propaganda that hovers over it. Science is not possible under such conditions.

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