



The (Political) Climate Is Changing

ITEM: In an article on November 15, Reuters reported that France and the United Nations that day had “stepped up warnings to U.S. President-elect Donald Trump about the risks of quitting a 2015 global plan to combat climate change, saying a historic shift from fossil fuels is unstoppable.”

The wire service noted that “French President François Hollande, addressing almost 200 nations meeting in Morocco on ways to slow global warming, said that inaction would be ‘disastrous for future generations and it would be dangerous for peace.’”

The French socialist was quoted as saying (“to applause,” noted Reuters) that the United States, “the largest economic power in the world, the second largest greenhouse gas emitter, must respect the commitments it has undertaken.” The Paris Agreement made the year before, he insisted, was “irreversible.”

ITEM: Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who is running again for the presidency, according to the International Business Times (in a piece carried by Yahoo.com on November 15), urged Europe to “impose a carbon tax on all U.S. products if President-elect Donald Trump pulled the country out of the Paris climate change agreement.”

Late on November 13, speaking to French broadcaster TF1, Sarkozy commented: “Donald Trump has said ... that he won’t respect the conclusions of the Paris climate agreement. Well, I will demand that Europe put in place a carbon tax at its border, a tax of 1-3 percent, for all products coming from the United States, if the United States doesn’t apply environmental rules that we are imposing on our companies.”

ITEM: Diplomats at Marrakesh, Morocco, reported the New York Times on November 16, meeting at an annual United Nations “global warming summit,” expressed “shock at the election of Donald J. Trump, who has called climate change a hoax and vowed to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate change accord, worrying



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Lot to learn about laws: French President François Hollande claimed that Obama’s personal validation of the Paris Agreement on climate change was binding, “irreversible.” But in the United States, treaties need to be both constitutional and ratified by the Senate to be binding.

that Mr. Trump’s presidency could cripple a decade of climate diplomacy.”

The paper noted that the Obama administration had “rolled out a slew of last-minute regulations since the election of Mr. Trump, and more are planned in the coming weeks.”

Meanwhile, the Times went on to say, “China, the world’s largest greenhouse gas polluter, is poised to step forward as the world’s new leader in climate diplomacy. ‘It is a new world order,’ Erik Solheim, head of the United Nations Environment Program, said.”

CORRECTION: Among eco-activists, the presidential election result has produced a remarkable overreaction. Or perhaps that term falls short. Fear, it would seem, is the only thing that multiplies faster than rabbits.

Here are just some of the headlines ginned up recently by the *New York Times* and *National Geographic*, for example: “Climate Protection Advocates Fear a Rollback of Emission Standards,” “Donald Trump Could Put Climate Change on Course for ‘Danger Zone,’” and “The Global Dangers of Trump’s Climate Denial.”

The activists will say anything to make their fear go away. We are being told, among other things, that the current administration has trapped us forever into a pact, though it is not even officially considered a treaty and therefore not subject

to ratification by the U.S. Senate, where it would never have passed. Moreover, we are told, the Obama White House can blithely continue to dream up and impose whatever stringent regulations it pleases, as long as it is in the name of its “environmental” ambitions (as if the next White House would have no similar authority). And then, if intimidation doesn’t work and we do dare to act like a sovereign nation with our own good in mind, “Europe” and the world in general will wage an economic war on us.

So are the threats of those who pride themselves on tolerance and who claim to love the planet. And if you don’t buy that pretense from the Brotherhood of Man crowd, they are more than willing to slug you, figuratively or literally.

Barack Obama has put the nation into a potentially vulnerable position, and the “international community” seems to be keen on holding our economy hostage. The head of the International Emissions Trading Organization claims that if “one big country backs out [of the Paris Agreement], it could trigger a whole wave of trade responses.” There is, in the words of Dirk Forrister, “no need to start a trade war over climate change. But it could happen.”

The United Nations has a lot at stake. At risk is about \$100 billion a year “committed” by rich countries to underdeveloped ones for climate-related projects. This



Correction, Please!



AP Images

Gullible glad-handing: Obama approved the Paris Agreement on climate change alongside China's President Xi Jinping, celebrating ideological unity. But while Obama promised to slash CO₂ emissions, China didn't agree to any reductions. Yet the UN is lauding China's stance.

serves as a global payoff so politicians in underdeveloped countries won't mind keeping their constituents in that condition. All they have to do is surrender their chance for affordable reliable energy.

And what of this vaunted international climate pact? Well, the science — or more accurately, the interpretation on which it is supposed to be based — is hardly settled.

The political stage is also shifting. What has been done may often be undone.

Before the UN summit in Morocco, Republicans from the U.S. Senate drew attention to what the Obama administration had done, and what it had not done, in its international maneuvering. In a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry, GOP members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works said they were concerned the administration had not been forthright about “the legal limitations of the president's domestic climate actions.”

As they wrote: “We urge you to be candid with parties to the agreement to preserve the diplomatic credibility of the United States.” That message was mentioned in a piece by Michael Bastasch in the Daily Caller; he wrote that Obama had

promised to cut U.S. greenhouse gas emissions 26 to 28 percent by 2025. Obama's ambitious pledge — and every domestic regulation crafted

to meet it — was meant to convince China to sign onto the deal.

Obama ratified the U.N. deal in September alongside Chinese President Xi Jinping. China pledged to “peak” emissions by 2030, but made no promise to actually cut global warming emissions.

Republicans warned that [by] bypassing the Senate, Obama is relying on his “sole executive authority” to enforce the treaty, meaning it's “no different than the president giving a speech, or stating at a news conference” that he's fighting global warming.

More importantly, Obama's plan “leaves the door open for any future administration to alter its course,” Republicans wrote.

Meanwhile, there has been a lot of green-tinted misinformation passed along as if it were Gospel. The truth is that the world is really not going to be “saved from disaster” by the Paris Agreement.

Some of the facts that don't get featured by the so-called mainstream media follow. That agreement, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's own models, “only prevents 0.1 to 0.2°C of warming by 2100,” explain Patrick Michaels and Paul “Chip” Knappenberger.

That is why, as the two have written, any “attempts to mitigate significant fu-

ture warming with the current suite of politically acceptable technologies are doomed to failure.” The agreement is, as they put it, “meaningless, unenforceable, and compels developed nations to tender funds to the developing world. That makes it a treaty that should be submitted to the Senate for ratification, where it will be soundly rejected.”

Some in U.S. conservative and libertarian circles have been fans, or at least not outspoken opponents, of the theory of a carbon tax. (Whether they are as enthusiastic when a foreign tariff is pointed at the U.S. economy is another matter.) Michaels and Knappenberger are not in that corner, and they make a convincing argument in a lengthy, detailed “Policy Analysis,” with lead author Robert Murphy (“The Case Against a U.S. Carbon Tax,” October 17, 2016). As they point out, the “actual economics of climate change — as summarized in the peer-reviewed literature as well as United Nations ... and Obama administration reports — reveal that the case for a U.S. carbon tax is weaker than the carbon tax proponents claim.”

There is evidence bolstering their contention that such taxes do not perform as predicted by backers. For instance:

In Australia, the carbon tax was quickly removed after the public recoiled against electricity price hikes and a faltering economy. Even in British Columbia (BC), Canada — touted as having the world's finest example of a carbon tax — the experience has been underwhelming. After an initial (but temporary) drop, the BC carbon tax has not yielded significant reductions in gasoline purchases, and it has arguably reduced the BC economy's performance relative to the rest of Canada.

(Murphy is a research assistant professor at Texas Tech University; Michaels is the director of the Center for the Study of Science at the Cato Institute, a former president of the American Association of State Climatologists, and a long-time research professor of Environmental Sciences at the University of Virginia; and Knappen-

berger has more than 25 years of experience in climate research.)

As part of the campaign of fear, the scaremongers want us to be terrified about carbon dioxide. It makes you wonder: Who are the real science “deniers”?

Perhaps you recall learning about CO₂ in elementary or junior-high classes. Here’s a refresher by geologist Rodney Nichols and Harrison Schmitt, a former Apollo 17 astronaut; they are the co-founders of the CO₂ Coalition. They take note of the environmental progress made in recent years, even while reminding us about the characteristics of this greenhouse gas.

In this country, write Nichols and Schmitt, the most dangerous environmental pollutants have largely been cleaned up. “U.S. emissions of particulates, metals and varied gases — all of these: ozone, lead, carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen and sulfur — fell almost 70% between 1970 and 2014.” Yet, as they also have noted, a

myth persists that is both unscientific and immoral to perpetuate: that the beneficial gas carbon dioxide ranks among hazardous pollutants. It does not.

Unlike genuine pollutants, carbon dioxide (CO₂) is an odorless, colorless gas. Every human being exhales about two pounds of CO₂ a day, along with

a similar amount of water vapor. CO₂ is nontoxic to people and animals and is a vital nutrient to plants. It is also a greenhouse gas which helps maintain earth at a habitable temperature.

Facts don’t stop fear-mongers. As Nichols and Schmitt put it:

Fear of excessive warming from more CO₂ in the atmosphere, including that released from human activity, has caused some people to advocate substantial and expensive reductions in CO₂ emissions. But observations ... show that increased CO₂ levels over the next century will cause modest and beneficial warming — perhaps as much as one degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) — and that this will be an even larger benefit to agriculture than it is now. The costs of emissions regulations, which will be paid by everyone, will be punishingly high and will provide no benefits to most people anywhere in the world.

Let’s take another gander at China — at least at the current establishment line. The *New York Times*, which is generally where the brainwashing is hung on the line, happily parroted on November 19 about how China is now “lecturing the United States

on the need to fight climate change.” This is a “reversal” of roles and a sign that “China may have to take the leadership position in the global campaign,” said the paper.

China’s dictatorial command economy has not solved its environmental woes. However, China’s pollution afflictions are not caused by carbon dioxide.

Nicholas Loris, an economist who focuses on energy, environmental, and regulatory issues at the Heritage Foundation, acknowledged in the *Daily Signal* not long ago that there was “no denying [that] China has serious air and water quality problems. But people aren’t wearing masks in China because they’re worried about carbon dioxide. They’re worried about smog. The technology exists to reduce such pollutants and most power plants in China have them installed. However, because it’s cheaper to run the power plant with the scrubbers off, operators do so.”

Environmental problems and “solutions” in our own nation have been of a different nature.

The *Wall Street Journal* has suggested that there is a good way for Donald Trump to start on promised infrastructure projects, with major energy and environmental ramifications — namely, approve the Keystone XL pipeline that “President Obama rejected to satisfy his climate friends.” As the *Journal* observed on November 11:

TransCanada’s Keystone could carry some 830,000 barrels of oil a day from Alberta to Nebraska....

In 2015 TransCanada withdrew its route application after seven years of haggling with the Obama Administration, which rejected the pipeline despite favorable environmental reviews from its own State Department. President Obama said that approving Keystone would undercut U.S. “global leadership” on climate change.

How about some real hope and change from Mr. Trump? It wouldn’t take much to get this symbolic Keystone pipeline on track. All the new president would have to do is say: Make it happen. ■

— WILLIAM P. HOAR

