

Mini Review

Environmentalism and World Politics

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Abstract

President Trump states that national interests call for more burning of fossil fuels, e.g. the acceptance of large scale fracking. National interests are the main reason why the 20 most polluting countries resist the COP efforts for global coordination at any price. What is national interest: economic development/growth, military power, political prestige, revenge for colonialism? Global warming and its enormous dangers should be debated on the preponderance of evidence only.

Keywords: Schneider's theorem; Hawking's Irreversibility; The damocles sword of energy against temperature rise; Eliminating coal power

Introduction

Flamboyant Prime Minister of Great Britain has started preparations for COP26, scheduled to be held in Glasgow ultimo 2020. The UN Conference of the Parties have convened since 1995 under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in the effort to create a governance mechanism in relation to global warming. Recently, international governance coordination has met with skepticism and criticism from civil society around the world, supporting environmentalism. Even though the green movements receive increasing amounts of support, policy-making rests in the hands of the set of politicians the majority of whom hardly endorse environmentalism. The outcome of this tension is the green groups expand while policy making has yet to reach a stage of implementation. The goals of the Paris agreement - COP 21 - are vague and lacks a control mechanism. Politicians tend to support environmental discourse, yet hesitate to take real action. Why is this? Because politicians are on the one side opportunistic and on the other hand trying to meet other objectives such as power, economic affluence and national pride. Let us see how Mr. Boris Johnson will handle the Glasgow reunion.

Environmentalism as Post-Modernism

Environmentalism presents a broad and complex set of beliefs in combination with the usage of key terms, the relevance of which are taken for granted: "sustainability", "carbon neutral", "zero economic growth" society, "sanctity" of all living organisms, "ecological footprint" etc. Although explicitly green political parties reach a mere 10-16 % of the electorate, environmentalism as an ideology enjoys a much higher level of support in civil society.

Climate change is only ONE concern of environmentalism. In reality, it receives more attention than other related issues like biodiversity, extinction of species etc. The simple reason is that ordinary people place a high value on a safe future for themselves and their children. This distinction between climate change and general degradation is of crucial importance. One may venture to suggest that climate change is something a majority in all nations fear. The critics of environmentalism place global warming in the same category as all forms of environmentalism, calling it "the Mother of all scares". This is not appropriate, as it underestimates the relevance and importance

Table 1: Top 20 Energy consuming, CO2 emitting, and coal power producing nations of the world Enerdata 2019, Crippa et al. 2019.

Top 20 Energy Consuming Countries 2018	Top 20 CO2 Emitting Countries 2018	Top 20 producers of coal energy 2019
China	China	China
United States	United States	United States
India	India	India
Russia	Russia	Russia
Japan	Japan	Japan
South Korea	Germany	Germany
Germany	Iran	South Africa
Canada	South Korea	South Korea
Brazil	Saudi Arabia	Indonesia
Iran	Canada	Poland
Indonesia	Indonesia	Australia
France	Brazil	Ukraine
Saudi Arabia	Mexico	Turkey
Mexico	South Africa	Vietnam
United Kingdom	Turkey	Taiwan
Nigeria	Australia	Malaysia
Italy	United Kingdom	Kazakhstan
Turkey	Italy	Spain
Thailand	Poland	United Kingdom
South Africa	France	Philippines
Share of World: 75.2 %	Share of World: 78.5 %	Share of World: 93,8 %

of global warming.

The debate about climate change in accordance with the "Global Warming: Are We Entering the Greenhouse Century?" book by Stephen Schneider should be conducted with regards to the preponderance of evidence, whatever one's perspective on the environment may be. Traditionally, economics and political scientists have endorsed the Simon (Simon, 2000) and Wildavsky (Wildavsky, 1997) position that the Schneider theory is flawed, however British economist Nicolas Stern accomplished a breakthrough for global

Table 2: Temperature increase scenarios based on global energy projections.

Global Energy / btoe	CO2 concentration / PPM	Temperature rise / degrees C
16	430	1.1
18	450	1.3
20	470	1.5
22	490	1.7
24	510	2.0

Table 3: Number of solar plants required to substitute coal-fired plants by country [Global Energy Monitor].

Country	Number of plants
Asia	
China	475
India	100
Japan	28
South Korea	18
Turkey	9
Americas	
United States	106
Canada	6
Europe	
Germany	32
Russia	30
Africa	
South Africa	14

warming theory (Stern, 2006). Yet, how are we to understand that the majority of politicians are lukewarm on the issue of global warming and how to counteract it?

The Cop Approach and World Politics

The United Nations’ efforts at global policy making have not resulted in anything concrete, merely a confirmation of global warming as a post-modernist narrative. The reason is that the UN lacks political leverage to introduce and enforce real anti-global warming measures. These annual COP reunions attract thousands of delegates and visitors from most countries of the world, and decisions, if any, are taken by the unanimity principle. However, global political power is in the hands of some 20 states who in reality decide the fate of global climate. Look at the following table.

Table 1 clearly shows how the great powers of the world are also the great “sinners” in fueling global warming. They decide what to do about climate change. Hitherto they have accepted to participate in the UN process including much valuable research, but they have blocked any commitment to do anything concrete or serious besides applauding general objective as a post-modernist discourse. These major powers could lower the pressure on the planet by implementing energy transformation, stopping entirely the use of coal-fired power plants, but they will not do that. Why?

Table 1 shows that the global warming problematic is fundamentally skewed. The responsibility rests with the 20 largest consumers of energy and they shirk. Most activists are to be found

in small affluent countries. This finding validates the argument or Cornucopians that environmentalism is a new ideology to crush the “system”, capitalism.

The great powers may be “removing the carpet underneath themselves”.

Climate change is analysed from the aggregation perspective: How long before planet Earth’s carbon budget is used up? However, distributional aspects cannot be avoided. They all point to then sure responsible states, namely the Great Powers. But they all shirknow and the dominant theory of states in international interaction support this strategy choice: any government must always promote the interests of its country.

Energy and National Interests

On a list of basic country priorities one would certainly find energy safety, whether provided by domestic production or imports.

Most of the 20 largest states above have reached high or medium levels of economic and political power by consumption of 70% of global energy supply. Relying upon mainly fossil fuels, consuming more than 90 % of all coal, they are responsible for almost 80% of CO2s.

Thus, these countries figure prominently in the following equation, remembering that coal is the dirtiest of fossil fuels

$$CO_2 \text{ concentration / ppm} = 267.5 + 10*(World \ Energy \ Consumption / mtoe) \tag{1}$$

And moreover, according to Schneider CO2 emissions raise temperatures as follows:

$$Temperature \ Increase/(degrees \ centigrade) = -3.4 + 0.0106*(CO_2 \ conc. / ppm) \tag{2}$$

Employing these two recession equations Planet Earth would be in the situation in table 2.

To avoid more than 1.5 degrees increase the energy consumption must be held back. The 20 countries above are not going to that. Reason: National interest. In this century, there will be a slow but steady rise in energy consumption, hardly accompanied by any kind of drastic reduction in fossil fuel usage. This means that Planet Earth will ineluctably warm, because past emissions stay in the atmosphere for long time periods. Even though innovations and energy transformations can reduce the burning of fossil fuels, the demand for energy will invariably increase: growing population, developmental concerns in less affluent nations, economic growth in richer countries, megalithic infrastructure projects requiring large amounts of cement, military expansion etc.

Conclusion

While it is correct that environmentalism in general as one of the major post-modernistic discourses is only supported by a minority of the people in most countries, nevertheless the fear for consequences of global warming reaching 2 or 3 degrees is rapidly growing, especially in nations with free speech.

Climate change is driven by the demand and supply of energy, seemingly never ceasing to expand. In order to halt Hawking’s

irreversibility, one should decide at the Glasgow COP26 to phase out coal plants. Table 3 shows how many solar plants each country would need to replace coal power, if they could all construct plants of the same size as world-leading Indian Bhadla Solar Factory.

It is touching to see the Cornucopian hero Bjorn Lomborg argue on TV that removing CO₂ emissions is much more costly than laissez aller, but what about the cost of climate change if worse comes to worst?

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