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Here's the climate dissent you're not hearing about because it's muffled by society's top institutions

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As the Biden administration and governments worldwide make massive commitments to rapidly decarbonize the global economy, the persistent effort to silence climate change skeptics is intensifying – and the critics keep



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The climate dissenters are pressing their case as President Biden, United Nations officials, and climate action advocates in media and academia argue that the “settled science” demands a wholesale societal transformation. That means halving U.S. carbon emissions by 2035 and achieving net zero emissions by 2050 to stave off the “existential threat” of human-induced climate change.

In response last month, more than 1,600 scientists, among them two Nobel physics laureates, Clauser and Ivar Giaever of Norway, [signed a declaration](#) stating that [there is no climate emergency](#), and that climate advocacy has devolved into mass hysteria. The skeptics say the radical transformation of entire societies is marching forth without a full debate, based on dubious scientific claims amplified by knee-jerk journalism.



Many of these climate skeptics reject the optimistic scenarios of economic prosperity promised by advocates of a net-zero world order. They say the global emissions-reduction targets are not achievable on such an accelerated timetable without lowering living standards and unleashing worldwide political unrest.

“What advocates of climate action are trying to do is scare the bejesus out of the public so they’ll think we need to [act] fast,” said Steven Koonin, author of “Unsettled: What Climate Science Tells Us, What It Doesn’t, and Why It Matters.”

“You have to balance the certainties and uncertainties of the changing climate – the risks and hazards – against many other factors,” he adds.

These dissenters don’t all agree on all scientific questions and do not speak in a single voice. Clauser, for example, is a self-styled “climate denialist” who believes climate is [regulated by](#)

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Among their arguments:

- There is no climate crisis or existential threat as expressed in catastrophic predictions by activists in the media and academia. As global temperatures gradually increase, human societies will need to make adjustments in the coming century, just as societies have adapted to earlier climate changes. By and large, humans cannot control the climate, which [Pielke describes as](#) “the fanciful idea that emissions are a disaster control knob.”
- Global temperatures are increasing incrementally, and have been for centuries, but the degree of human influence is uncertain or negligible. Climate skeptics themselves don't agree on how much humans are contributing to global warming by burning fossil fuels, and how much is caused by natural variability from El Niño and other cycles that can take centuries to play out. “The real question is not whether the globe has warmed recently,” writes Koonin, “but rather to what extent this warming is being caused by humans.”
- Rapidly replacing fossil fuels with renewables and electricity by mid-century would be economically risky and may have a negligible effect on global warming. Some say mitigation decrees – such as phasing out the combustion engine and banning gas stoves – are not likely to prevent climate change because humans play a minor role in global climate trends. Others say mitigation is necessary but won't happen without capable replacement technologies. It's unrealistic, they say, to force societies to rely on intermittent energy from wind and solar, or wager the future on technologies that are still in experimental stages.
- The global political push to kill the fossil fuel industry to get to “net zero” and “carbon neutrality” by 2050, as advocated by the [United Nations](#) and the [Biden administration](#), will erase millions of jobs and raise energy costs, leading to a prolonged economic depression and political instability. The result would be that developing regions will pay the highest price, while the biggest polluters (China and India) and hostile nations (like Russia and Iran) will simply ignore the net-zero mandate. This could be a case where the cure could be worse than

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- Climate science has been hijacked and politicized by activists, creating a culture of self-censorship that's enforced by a code of silence that Koonin likens to the Mafia's omerta. In her 2023 book, "Climate Uncertainty and Risk," climatologist Judith Curry asks: "How many skeptical papers were not published by activist editorial boards? How many published papers have buried results in order to avoid highlighting findings that conflict with preferred narratives? I am aware of anecdotal examples of each of these actions, but the total number is unknowable."

- Slogans such as "follow the science" and "scientific consensus" are misleading and disingenuous. There is no consensus on many key questions, such as the urgency to cease and desist burning fossil fuels, or the accuracy of computer modeling predictions of future global temperatures. The apparent consensus of imminent disaster is manufactured through peer pressure, intimidation, and research funding priorities, based on the conviction that "noble lies," "consensus entrepreneurship," and "stealth advocacy" are necessary to save humanity from itself. "One day PhD dissertations will be written about our current moment of apocalyptic panic," [Pielke predicts](#).

- The warming of the planet is a complicated phenomenon that will cause some disruptions but will also bring benefits, particularly in agricultural yields and increased vegetation. Some climate skeptics, including the CO2 Coalition, say CO2 is not a pollutant – it is "[plant food](#)."

Curry, the former Chair of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at the Georgia Institute of Technology, expresses a common theme among the climate refuseniks: that they are the sane, rational voices [in a maelstrom](#) of quasi-religious mania.

"In the 1500s, they used to drown witches in Europe because they blamed them for bad weather. You had the pagan people trying to appease the gods with sacrifices," Curry said. "What we're doing now is like a pseudoscientific version of that, and it's no more effective than those other strategies.'

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take from my testimony today it is this: You are being misinformed.”

Still, the overwhelming impression conveyed is one of impending disaster, with the menace of global warming rhetorically upgraded in July by U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres to “[global boiling](#).” Climate scientists [announced in July](#) that the [planet is the hottest](#) it's been in [120,000 years](#), an old claim that gets recycled [every few years](#). Meanwhile, [three vice-chairs](#) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned of mass starvation, extinction, and disasters, saying that if the temperature rises 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, “children under 12 will experience a fourfold increase in natural disasters in their lifetime, and up to 14% of all species assessed will likely face a very high risk of extinction.”

Many of these predictions are based on computer models and computer simulations that Pielke, Koonin, Curry, and others have decried as totally implausible. Koonin's book suggests that some computer models may be “cooking the books” to achieve desired outcomes, while [Pielke has decried](#) faulty scenarios as “one of the most significant failures of scientific integrity in the twenty-first century thus far.” Curry writes in her book that the primary inadequacy of climate models is their limited ability to predict the kinds of natural climate fluctuations that cause ice ages and warming periods, and play out over decades, centuries, or even millennia.

Another critique is the use of computer models to correlate [extreme weather](#) events to multi-decade climate trends in an attempt to show that the [weather was caused by climate](#), a branch of climate science called [climate attribution studies](#). This type of research is used to bolster claims that the frequency and intensity of heat waves, floods, hurricanes, and other extreme weather events [could not have happened](#) without climate change. An example is research [recently cited by the BBC](#) in an article warning that if the global temperature rises another 0.9 centigrade, crippling heat waves that were once exceedingly rare will bake the world every two-to-five years.

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Koonin says that greenhouse gas emissions are a gradual trend on which weather anomalies play out, and while it's tempting to confuse weather with climate, it would be a mistake to blame July's heat waves on human influence.

"The anomaly is about as large as we've ever seen, but not unprecedented," [Koonin explained on a podcast](#). "Now, what the real question is, why did it spike so much? Nothing to do with CO2 – CO2 is ... the base on which this phenomenon occurs."

Climate dissent comes with the occupational hazard of being tarred as a propagandist and stooge for "Big Oil." [Pielke was one of seven academics investigated](#) by a U.S. Congressman in 2015 for allegedly [failing to report](#) funding from fossil fuel interests (He was cleared). [A New York Times review](#) of Lomborg's 2020 book, "False Alarm," described it as "mind pollution."

Climate advocates see climate skepticism as so dangerous that Ben Santer, one of the world's leading climate scientists, [publicly cut ties](#) with Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory two years ago after the federal research facility invited Koonin to discuss his skeptical book, "Unsettled." Santer, a MacArthur "genius" grant recipient, said allowing Koonin's views to go unchallenged [undermined the credibility and integrity](#) of climate science research. For similar reasons, [the IMF postponed Clauser's July presentation](#) so that it could be rescheduled as a debate.

Another critique: scientists arbitrarily forcing the facts to fit a prescribed catastrophic narrative, often by ignoring plausible alternative explanations and relevant factors. That's what climate scientist Patrick Brown said he had to do to get published in the prestigious journal Nature, by attributing wildfires to climate change and ignoring other factors, like poor forest management and the startling fact that over 80% of wildfires are ignited by humans. [Brown publicly confessed](#) to this sleight-of-hand in a recent article in The Free Press.

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California is among a dozen states that have moved to [ban the sale of new gasoline-engine cars](#) in 2035, while [states like Virginia](#) and North Carolina have committed to [carbon-free power grids](#) by mid-century.

In the most detailed net-zero roadmap to date, the International Energy Agency in 2021 identified [more than 400 milestones](#) that would have to be met to achieve a net-zero planet by mid-century, including the immediate cessation of oil and gas exploration and drilling, and mandated austerity measures such as reducing highway speed limits, limiting temperature settings in private homes, and eating less meat.

In the [IEA's net zero scenario](#), global energy use will decline by 8% through energy efficiency even as the world's population adds 2 billion people and the economy grows a whopping 40%. In this scenario, all the nations of the world – including China, India, Russia, and Saudi Arabia – would have to commit to a net-zero future, generating 14 million jobs to create a new energy infrastructure. Nearly half the slated emissions reductions will have to come from experimental technologies currently in demonstration or prototype stages, such as hydrogen, bioenergy, carbon capture, and modular nuclear reactors. Reading this bracing outlook, one could almost overlook the IEA's caveat that relying on solar and wind for nearly 70% of electricity generation would cause retail electricity prices to increase by 50% on average and destroy 5 million jobs, of which “many are well paid, meaning structural changes can cause shocks for communities with impacts that persist over time.”

[A critique](#) of the [IEA's scenario](#) issued this year by the Energy Policy Research Foundation, a think tank that specializes in oil, gas, and petroleum products, warned of “massive supply shocks” if oil supplies are artificially suppressed to meet arbitrary net zero targets. The report further stated that “if the world stays committed to net zero regardless of high costs – the recession will turn into an extended depression and ultimately impose radical negative changes upon modern civilization.” (Disclosure: The report was commissioned by the [RealClearFoundation](#), the nonprofit parent of [RealClearInvestigations](#).)

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“We live in this world of exaggerated promises and delusional pop science,” Vaclav Smil, the University of Manitoba environmental scientist and policy analyst, [told The New York Times](#) last year. “People don’t appreciate the magnitude of the task and are setting up artificial deadlines which are unrealistic.”

A government push to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by cutting back on livestock farming has led to public protests in the Netherlands, a conflict over resources that [Time magazine predicts will spread](#) elsewhere: “This may be just the beginning of much wider global unrest over agriculture. Scientists say dealing with climate change will require not just gradual reform, but a rapid, wholesale transformation of the global food system.”

Climate dissidents say what happened in the Netherlands is a foretaste of the political backlash that is inevitable when net-zero policies start becoming implemented and people have to travel across state lines to buy a gasoline-powered car.

“The urgency is the stupidest part of the whole thing – that we need to act now with all these made-up targets,” Curry said. “The transition risk is far greater than any conceivable climate or weather risk.”

To Koonin, these challenges indicate that the catastrophic climate narrative will collapse when put to the test of practicality and politics. The more sensible route, he said, is a slow-and-steady approach.

“There’s going to be a deep examination of science and the cost-benefit issues,” he said. “We will eventually do the right thing, but it’s going to take a decade or so.”

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