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Climate Change Is Not an Apocalyptic Threat— Let's Address It Smartly

Based on the work of Bjorn Lomborg

“Climate Change Is Not an Apocalyptic Threat—Let's Address It Smartly,” an essay by Bjorn Lomborg, challenges the widespread belief that climate change poses an existential threat to humanity. Lomborg argues for a more measured approach to addressing climate change, emphasizing the need for smart, cost-effective solutions that balance climate action with other global priorities.

Key Points on Climate Change

1. About 60% of people in rich countries believe unmitigated climate change will likely lead to the end of humanity. This perception is largely driven by media, environmental campaigners, and politicians who tend to exaggerate potential impacts.
2. The world is actually much safer from climate-related disasters today. Deaths from climate-related disasters have decreased by 98% over the past century, despite population growth.
3. According to Nobel Prize-winning economist William Nordhaus's model, the realistic cost of climate change is equivalent to about a 3% loss of GDP, leaving us with 97% of a much larger GDP than if economic growth had been curtailed.
4. While heat-related deaths have increased, cold-related deaths have decreased more significantly, resulting in a net reduction in temperature-related mortality.

Economic Realities

Costly transition: The transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources remains enormously expensive, with estimates ranging from \$200 trillion by 2050 to \$2,000 trillion by 2100 (inflation adjusted).

Limited progress: Despite significant subsidies and political support, solar and wind energy deliver just 1.8% of the global energy supply.

Energy consumption scale: The scale of our energy use is often poorly understood. In the US, more than 85% of all energy consumed comes not from electricity but from other sources such as fossil fuels.

Slow renewable adoption: Even after extensive political pressure, the US is on track to reach only 27% of its energy needs being supplied by renewables by 2050.

Recommendations

1. Implement a carbon tax.

A carefully designed, moderate, and slowly increasing carbon tax could keep the average global temperature rise to 3.75°C by the end of the century. This approach balances the costs of climate change with the costs of climate policies.

2. Increase investment in green R&D.

Increase green R&D spending fivefold to \$100 billion per year. This investment in innovation is likely the most effective long-term climate policy, potentially avoiding up to \$11 in losses due to long-term climate damages for every \$1 spent.

3. Focus on adaptation.

Recognize humanity's ability to adapt to various challenging environments. Encourage adaptation measures led by both the private sector and government to increase resilience to climate change impacts.

4. Explore geoengineering.

Investigate geoengineering options, such as marine cloud whitening—injecting tiny sulfur particles into the upper atmosphere to reduce the absorption of heat below and increase reflectivity of clouds. While controversial, such potentially low-cost interventions could significantly mitigate temperature increases.

5. Prioritize prosperity, especially for developing nations.

Recognize that lifting people out of poverty reduces their vulnerability to climate-related hazards. Prosperous societies have more means to invest in climate adaptation and environmental preservation.

**Based on “Climate Change Is Not an Apocalyptic Threat—Let’s Address It Smartly,”
by Bjorn Lomborg, at www.hoover.org/fact-based-policy-program.**



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