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OPINION | COMMENTARY

The Climate-Change Religion

Earth Day provided a fresh opening for Obama to raise alarms about global warming based on beliefs, not science.



President Obama at Everglades National Park in Florida for Earth Day, April 22. PHOTO: JOE SKIPPER/EUROPEAN PRESSPHOTO AGENCY

By **LAMAR SMITH**

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“Today, our planet faces new challenges, but none pose a greater threat to future generations than climate change,” President Obama wrote in his proclamation for Earth Day on Wednesday. “As a Nation, we must act before it is too late.”

Secretary of State John Kerry, in an Earth Day op-ed for USA Today, declared that climate change has put America “on a dangerous path—along with the rest of the world.”

Both the president and Mr. Kerry cited rapidly warming global temperatures and ever-more-severe storms caused by climate change as reasons for urgent action.

Given that for the past decade and a half global-temperature increases

have been negligible, and that the worsening-storms scenario has been widely debunked, the pronouncements from the Obama administration sound more like scare tactics than fact-based declarations.

At least the United Nations' then-top climate scientist, Rajendra Pachauri, acknowledged—however inadvertently—the faith-based nature of climate-change rhetoric when he resigned amid scandal in February. In a farewell letter, he said that “the protection of Planet Earth, the survival of all species and sustainability of our ecosystems is more than a mission. It is my religion and my *dharma*.”

Instead of letting political ideology or climate “religion” guide government policy, we should focus on good science. The facts alone should determine what climate policy options the U.S. considers. That is what the scientific method calls for: inquiry based on measurable evidence. Unfortunately this administration's climate plans ignore good science and seek only to advance a political agenda.

Climate reports from the U.N.—which the Obama administration consistently embraces—are designed to provide scientific cover for a preordained policy. This is not good science. Christiana Figueres, the official leading the U.N.'s effort to forge a new international climate treaty later this year in Paris, told reporters in February that the real goal is “to change the economic development model that has been reigning for at least 150 years.” In other words, a central objective of these negotiations is the redistribution of wealth among nations. It is apparent that President Obama shares this vision.

The Obama administration recently submitted its pledge to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The commitment would lock the U.S. into reducing greenhouse-gas emissions more than 25% by 2025 and “economy-wide emission reductions of 80% or more by 2050.” The president's pledge lacks details about how to achieve such goals without burdening the economy, and it doesn't quantify the specific climate benefits tied to his pledge.

America will never meet the president's arbitrary targets without the country being subjected to costly regulations, energy rationing and reduced economic growth. These policies won't make America stronger. And these measures will have no significant impact on global temperatures. In a hearing last week before the House Science, Space and Technology Committee, of which I am chairman, climate scientist Judith Curry testified that the president's U.N pledge is estimated to prevent only a 0.03 Celsius temperature rise. That is three-hundredths of one degree.

In June 2014 testimony before my committee, former Assistant Secretary for Energy Charles McConnell noted that the president's Clean Power Plan—requiring every state to meet federal carbon-emission-reduction targets—would reduce a sea-level increase by less

than half the thickness of a dime. Policies like these will only make the government bigger and Americans poorer, with no environmental benefit.

The White House's Climate Assessment implies that extreme weather is getting worse due to human-caused climate change. The president regularly makes this unsubstantiated claim—most recently in his Earth Day proclamation, citing “more severe weather disasters.”

Even the U.N. doesn't agree with him on that one: In its 2012 Special Report on Extreme Events, the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says there is “high agreement” among leading experts that long-term trends in weather disasters are not attributable to human-caused climate change. Why do the president and others in his administration keep repeating this untrue claim?

Climate alarmists have failed to explain the lack of global warming over the past 15 years. They simply keep adjusting their malfunctioning climate models to push the supposedly looming disaster further into the future. Following the U.N.'s 2008 report, its claims about the melting of Himalayan glaciers, the decline of crop yields and the effects of sea-level rise were found to be invalid. The InterAcademy Council, a multinational scientific organization, reviewed the report in 2010 and identified “significant shortcomings in each major step of [the U.N.] assessment process.”

The U.N. process is designed to generate alarmist results. Many people don't realize that the most-publicized documents of the U.N. reports are not written by scientists. In fact, the scientists who work on the underlying science are forced to step aside to allow partisan political representatives to develop the “Summary for Policy Makers.” It is scrubbed to minimize any suggestion of scientific uncertainty and is publicized before the actual science is released. The Summary for Policy Makers is designed to give newspapers and headline writers around the world only one side of the debate.

Yet those who raise valid questions about the very real uncertainties surrounding the understanding of climate change have their motives attacked, reputations savaged and livelihoods threatened. This happens even though challenging prevailing beliefs through open debate and critical thinking is fundamental to the scientific process.

The intellectual dishonesty of senior administration officials who are unwilling to admit when they are wrong is astounding. When assessing climate change, we should focus on good science, not politically correct science.

Mr. Smith, a Republican from Texas, is chairman of the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology.

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