



**Global Climate Change and the Bush Presidency:
Head in the Sand, or Visionary Leadership?**

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Eero Daitz*

It is well-known that global climate change has been one of the “hottest” subjects of scientific debate in recent decades. It is equally no secret that the Bush administration has come under intense domestic and international criticism for its refusal to endorse the Kyoto Accord.¹ In this paper, however, we will show that President Bush’s approach to the issue of global warming is an example of forward thinking that is so ahead of the curve that it appears to the media and “environmentalists” as backward.

What We Know

The possibility that the emission of “greenhouse gases” might be warming the planet has been discussed and researched for many years. The subject is a difficult one, because the climate is an extremely complex thing, a system of systems, and an exact understanding of its functioning is beyond even the most elaborate computer models available.

For years, the environmental lobby has been pushing for the United States to rush headlong into a program of reduction of emissions, even without conclusive data showing what such a reduction would accomplish. Now, in just the last year or so, a clear picture is beginning to emerge. And the actual facts that are now in hand vindicate the Bush approach, and demonstrate that once again courageous American leadership has proved correct in the face of withering criticism from our nation’s foes, both domestic and foreign.

Recently, two authoritative papers have been released that provide the information crucial to moving forward. One, from the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences, is titled *Climate Change: Inevitable Surprises*. The other, *An Abrupt Climate Change Scenario and Its Implications for United States National Security*, comes from strategic planners at the Pentagon.

We note that, though environmental special interests have accused the Bush Administration of inaction in the face of global warming, *both these authoritative reports were produced for US government agencies during the Bush presidency.*

Both reports confirm that the global climate is warming:

It seems that the questions to ask are: When will this happen? What will the impacts be? And, how can we best prepare for it? Rather than: Will this really happen?²

Far from the inaction that critics have attributed to the Bush administration, the papers demonstrate that the Bush leadership has already begun to lay strategic plans to respond to this situation, economically, politically, and militarily.

The Gathering Storm

The picture these reports paint of the looming crisis is indeed dire.

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Global warming could lead to a relatively abrupt slowing of the ocean's thermohaline conveyor, which could lead to harsher winter weather conditions, sharply reduced soil moisture, and more intense winds in certain regions that currently provide a significant fraction of the world's food production. With inadequate preparation, the result could be a significant drop in the human carrying capacity of the Earth's environment.

Humanity would revert to its norm of constant battles for diminishing resources...
Once again warfare would define human life.³

The Bush Program

Both reports lay out a concrete series of steps our nation can take to meet the coming crisis. *Reducing emissions of greenhouse gases is not one of them.* Global warming is underway, and would continue even if drastic reductions of greenhouse gases were immediately implemented across the board. Environmentalists who advocate this are simply living in the past; President George W. Bush is boldly leading us into the future.

The first step in this leadership is President Bush's courageous decision to walk away from the Kyoto Accord. This Accord enacts a system of pollution credits. In effect, it creates a new market in which the right to pollute can be bought and sold.. The accord, which has been strongly advocated by environmentalists and was signed by Democrat Bill Clinton, is a perfect example of backward thinking. The Kyoto Accord will *not* stop global warming. By having the courage to stand virtually alone among world leaders in rejecting the Kyoto Accord, President Bush has ensured that US companies will get, for free, an unlimited amount of the rights that other countries' companies will be paying for.

In today's increasingly competitive global economy, the importance of the President's leadership in this matter can hardly be overstated. But this is just the beginning. Scientists agree that global warming will affect different areas of the world differently. The two countries singled out as uniquely situated to weather the storm are the US and Australia.⁴ Among the areas slated for the most devastating consequences are Europe, China, and Japan. The astute reader will recognize this list as the three main centers of economic competition the US is currently facing.

By refusing to sign the Kyoto Accord or in any way compromise our right to pollute, the Bush Administration is using US-generated pollution as a weapon. By using pollution as a weapon, President Bush is in effect recycling: the boldest, largest scale, most innovative recycling program the world has seen.

Pollution is a most extraordinary weapon, in that it can be fired at will against every adversary our nation has without costing us one penny: *we are making that stuff anyway.* The Democratic Party complains about the cost of the war on terrorism, yet they would have our country forgo this powerful, free weapon.

Taken as a whole, the field of pollution-as-weapons takes the arms race in to a terrain on which the US cannot possibly lose. Though Americans only account for 20% of the world's population, we generate more carbon dioxide gas than the entire rest of the world. And we have built up this lead *without even trying.* If our great nation set a priority on increasing these emissions even more, the results would be even more impressive. Were any rogue state or terrorist organization to be foolish enough to attempt to beat us on this terrain, they would be taught a very stern lesson. What are they going to do, raise the earth's temperature by burning campfires in the mountains of Afghanistan?

Many Facets

But there's more. In fact, every challenge raised by the Pentagon's report on abrupt climate change is already being addressed by President Bush's far-reaching program.

- **Energy**

Energy supply will be shored up through expensive (economically, politically, and morally) alternatives such as nuclear, renewables, hydrogen, and Middle Eastern contracts... Nuclear energy will become a critical source of power.⁵

The Bush administration has already launched the world's most ambitious program in the development of hydrogen fuel. Contracts for Middle Eastern oil have been replaced by the far more reliable direction occupation of Iraq. And President Bush has become the first president in decades – Republican *or* Democrat – to aggressively promote nuclear power. Finally, by appointing energy industry personnel to many influential government posts, and keeping the doors of the President's (and Vice-President's) office open to the view and concerns of the industry, President Bush has ideally situated our nation to confront the challenges ahead.

- **Border Security**

Borders will [need to] be strengthened around the country to hold back unwanted starving immigrants from the Caribbean islands (an especially severe problem), Mexico, and South America.⁶

The Republican Party has been in the forefront of border control issues for decades. President Bush is the proud heir of this tradition.

- **Self-Sufficiency**

[Global warming] may lead to finger-pointing and blame, as the wealthier nations tend to use more energy and emit more greenhouse gasses such as CO₂ into the atmosphere.⁷

President Bush has been laying the groundwork for the kind of foreign policy that the expected finger-pointing will require by limiting consultation with allies and refusing to all United Nations resolutions or debate to interfere with the pursuit of US interests. Critics have argued that this approach has left the US alone footing the bill for rebuilding post-Saddam Iraq. Once again, the President is far out ahead of his critics.

- **Geo-Engineering**

Explore geo-engineering options that control the climate. Today, it is easier to warm than to cool the climate, so it might be possible to add various gases, such as hydrofluorocarbons, to the atmosphere to offset the affects of cooling [that will result when rising temperatures disrupt the ocean's thermohaline conveyor].⁸

This final element of the Bush program is so bold that most of his critics have not even considered it. The idea of deliberately putting massive quantities of hydrofluorocarbons into the atmosphere to regulate ocean current is simply beyond the imagination of most of us. But the Bush team is already investigating such an eventuality. In fact, the ability to turn large-scale hydrofluorocarbon emission on and off at will could become the "carrot and stick" of US diplomacy in the Twenty-First Century.

¹ The Kyoto Accord is an international treaty whereby countries agree to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases they emit if their neighbors do likewise. It is a very complex agreement that allows trading pollution credits. If it is cheaper to reduce emissions in country A, then country B can buy the pollution credits, and have them count toward its own quota of reductions

² Schwartz, Peter and Doug Randall, *An Abrupt Climate Change Scenario and Its Implications for United States National Security*, October 2003.

³ Schwartz and Randall, *op cit*.

⁴ “The United States and Australia are likely to build defensive fortresses around their countries because they have the resources and reserves to achieve self-sufficiency. With diverse growing climates, wealth, technology, and abundant resources, the United States could likely survive shortened growing cycles and harsh weather conditions without catastrophic losses.” Schwartz and Randall, *op cit*.

⁵ Schwartz and Randall, *op cit*.

⁶ Schwartz and Randall, *op cit*.

⁷ Schwartz and Randall, *op cit*.

⁸ Schwartz and Randall, *op cit*.