

IS THE IPCC ENDANGERED BY THE IAC REPORT?

by Dennis Ambler



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The excellent [Christopher Booker of the Daily Telegraph](#) hits the nail firmly on the head once again, with this perceptive evaluation of the Inter-Academy report on the failings of the IPCC.

"A report on the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, on behalf of the world's leading scientific academies, last week provoked even some of the more committed believers in man-made global warming to demand the resignation of Dr Rajendra Pachauri as chairman of the IPCC. But is the report all that it seems?

Last winter, the progress of this belief – that the world faces catastrophe unless we spend trillions of dollars to halt global warming – suffered an unprecedented reverse. In Copenhagen, the world's leaders failed to agree on a treaty designed to reshape the future of civilisation. This coincided with a series of scandals that blew up around the IPCC's 2007 report.

Since then several inquiries, including three into the leaked "Climategate" emails, have tried to hold the official line, all following a consistent pattern. Each has made a few peripheral criticisms, for plausibility, while deliberately avoiding the main issue. Each has then gone on to put over the required message: that the science of global warming remains unchallenged."

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There are some who seem to think that this heralds the departure of the IPCC chairman, Dr Rajendra Pachauri, or signals the imminent demise of the IPCC, but this is probably wishful thinking. We mustn't forget that AR5 is already on the stocks and will continue with all the claims of the previous reports. Large sections are just cut and pasted from earlier reports and form the basis for the next one, with all assumptions, expert judgements and the like, carried forward as sound science.

In general, the report by the panel convened by the Inter-Academy Council has done what it set out to achieve:

1. Acknowledge the anger felt by sceptics and even some environmentalists, at the obvious mistakes, (in the plural, in spite of Dr Pachauri agreeing to only one), that were revealed in the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report in 2007.
2. Given the IPCC process a clean bill of health and a licence to carry on, albeit with some management recommendations that will require more funding for the IPCC, effectively as requested by Dr Pachauri last year.

2009 - Dr Pachauri seeks more funding and stronger Secretariat for IPCC.

This is from his speech at the Opening Ceremony of the [30th Session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), Antalya, Turkey, 21st April 2009.

“We now have a new Bureau of the IPCC and a new team of office-bearers. We also have new challenges, which we must have the ability and wisdom to decipher. Our work emphasizes the **policy relevance** of the assessments we produce, and if this is going to remain the hallmark of our work we must understand the shifting landscape on which our work must be based.”

“To a large extent, we are now facing the consequences of the **success achieved by the Panel**, credit for which must go collectively to all the distinguished delegates present in this room and the thousands of scientists who have toiled hard over the years. The members of the Panel deserve great credit for **the foresight they have displayed in establishing the procedures and practices of the IPCC.**”

“While we plan our efforts at this stage, we also need to get into **some organizational issues.**”

Given the **growing demands on the IPCC for a range of outreach activities** and the emphasis expressed repeatedly for greater coordination and information sharing across working groups, we would need to **strengthen the core structure of the IPCC.**”

“A task group to deal with **strengthening of the Secretariat** will be reporting to the Panel in this session, and I would suggest that we would be well served by early decisions on this subject, so that we can equip ourselves better for the challenges ahead.

The WMO and UNEP had advisedly provided the Secretariat **two senior scientific positions two decades ago, but given the challenges ahead, we need to create some depth in that structure with a sense of urgency now.**”

"In this context, let me also highlight the growing demand for outreach activities by the IPCC. These have no doubt had an important effect in the past two years; because awareness on the scientific facts related to climate change have reached a level which could not have been anticipated even at the beginning of 2007.

But, all this has only added to the demand for more information, which **the IPCC will have to provide and disseminate on a much larger scale in the future.** Indeed, this demand will not end whatever the outcome in Copenhagen, but is likely to escalate.

All the office-bearers and authors involved in the work of the IPCC will have to play an important role in outreach activities."

[Outreach Activities](#) would seem to be nothing more or less than "policy promotion" or in plain terms, propaganda. It will be interesting to see if this aspect of the IAC panel report will be addressed or whether outreach activities will continue.

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In spite of this report being all things to all men, it did not criticise the IPCC process and whilst many have seen it as a call for Dr Pachauri to resign, panel chairman Harold Shapiro, was at pains, in a recent interview, to insist that [no such interpretation](#) should be made:

"It was beyond our charter to even look at whether the current leadership was adequate or inadequate or super-terrific, and so we did not look. This suggestion [of term limits], from our point of view, **does not come from any lack of confidence in the current director.** It's something we simply did not address.

We don't recommend any change in the director's position. We do propose a **new position** called executive director, who would head the secretariat in Geneva. We believe that should be a senior scientist, responsible for day-to-day operations of the secretariat and of the overall assessment."

Quite clearly, [Dr Pachauri](#) is to get what he has asked for, an opinion with which he concurs:

"There are two sets of recommendations. One, I would call fairly significant, like they have suggested that we have an executive committee which is empowered to take decisions between the sessions of the panel.

In 2006, I had established something called the E-Team or the executive team of the panel comprising the chairs and the co-chairs and so on. So, essentially, **they have formalized what I had done** and I am very happy about that."

So what did they look at? Dr Shapiro responds again:

“Our charge here was **not to review the science**, but simply to ask, “Are their policies and practices set up in such a way as to minimize errors and generally achieve the authoritative nature they sought in the report?”

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“And so once you ask the question that way, it’s not a unique organization; **it’s just a quality control problem.**”

“Now, in a report that’s a couple of thousand pages, you’ll always have some errors -- hopefully minor ones -- so we made a number of recommendations, just to improve things in this area.”

IT’S ALL ABOUT RISK MANAGEMENT

Dr Shapiro subscribes to the “house insurance” fallacy that has been advanced many times by those, who say, well, OK, maybe it’s not happening but let’s insure against it anyway. He continues in this vein:

“Is it time to buy insurance? And if so, how much insurance do you want to buy? That’s really the question, and the more we know, the more certain we will be.

Given the fact that we have all these enormous climate models with all the uncertainties built into them, these things happen on such extraordinary timescales, you don’t have that much past data -- there’s all sorts of ways to be uncertain.

But nevertheless, the committee didn’t try to come to an opinion on this.”

He was asked the question, “If your panel concluded generally that the **IPCC’s procedure is reasonable**, even if it could use improvement, **doesn’t that implicitly suggest that the science is sound?**”

He replied, “Yes, I think that’s fair. It suggests that it was convincing enough -- this organization is not a fraud, this organization wasn’t perpetuating some sort of criminal act on us all -- in fact, it’s extraordinary the number of scientists who participated. I know of no other comparable situation.

He then compares global warming to [ozone and the Montreal Protocol](#):

“The ozone situation might be comparable in some ways. It was a **big, worldwide problem**, not understood very well at the beginning. It took them a decade or two before they could come to the Montreal Protocol and begin to solve the problem. It wasn’t easy. Because even if you convinced every scientist in the U.S. and Great Britain and western Europe that this was a problem, it was a worldwide problem: you had to convince a lot of people and a lot of governments.”

IT’S ALL ABOUT COMMUNICATION

We talked a lot about communications. Since this is a matter of great public interest and public concern, you’ve got to find some way -- it’s not just scientists talking to themselves -- **this is something you’ve got to be able to communicate to policy makers and the public at large.**

Everyone believes that the IPCC’s communications capacity is awful. So we have in the report... a set of recommendations. But it’s not an easy problem.

There’s just a small number of people who can really communicate to both sides -- speak to scientists, understand what they do, and speak to **the public**, which **speaks a different language** and so on.

I don’t know what they’re going to do about this in the end, but my sense is that they’re going to have to rely, if they want to take this on, they’ll have to rely on some external people.

This report belongs to the IPCC – “Who decides whether to accept the report?”

Dr Shapiro: “Well **that’s up to the panel** [the IPCC]. The panel, of course, are the governments that established IPCC in the first place, of course under the auspices of the World Meteorological Organization and U.N. Environment Program, and they meet in plenary session in Korea, in the middle of October, which is why they wanted our report by August 30th. They’re the ones that decide.”

Which of course is perfectly fair, as they are the client.

[The Inter-Academy Council](#) “In May 2000 all of the world’s science academies created the IAC to mobilize the best scientists and engineers worldwide to provide high quality advice to international bodies - such as the United Nations and the World Bank - as well as to other institutions.”

“In a world where science and technology are fundamental to many critical issues - ranging from climate change and genetically modified organisms to the crucial challenge of achieving sustainability - making wise policy decisions has become

increasingly dependent on good scientific advice. The IAC is **client-driven** and works on a project-by-project basis.”

As with all reports produced for clients, where the client is the subject of the report, the long-term survival of the client has to be a major consideration of the review process.

Much has been made of its "independence" from the UN and the IPCC, yet it included people with strong allegiance to the IPCC process, some having been involved with it for many years.

For example, [Syukuro Manabe](#) is described as the first scientist in the world to build computer models predicting climate change. Manabe is cited no less than 57 times in the IPCC First Assessment Report, (FAR) WGI, including 22 times in Chapter 5 of which he was a Lead Author, 8 times in WGII and six times in WGIII. He is cited no less than 43 times in SAR WGI and six times in WGIII. He was hardly likely to criticize his own conclusions.

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[Professor Mario Molina](#) was a review editor for Chapter 7 in WG1, a contributing author to Chapter 5 WG1 and a drafting author for the **Summary For Policy Makers** in AR4. One would assume he would have a certain responsibility for the output on that basis. One of the criticisms of the IPCC is that it used “gray literature” in AR4 and in particular, **WWF** are mentioned in this regard. How ironic then that Professor Molina is a member of **WWF-México’s Senior Advisory Council**.

These are not personal attacks; they are statements of fact that impinge on the objectivity of the panel members when assessing the IPCC.

A further instance relates to the highly respected Chairman of the IAC panel, Dr Harold Shapiro, who probably doesn’t even remember that Dr Pachauri [received \\$45,000](#) in 2001 for his “Tata Energy Research Institute” (Teri-NA) from the Alfred Sloan Foundation, at a time when Dr Shapiro was chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation, which to this day sponsors [TERI-NA](#).

It would be invidious to comment on the CV of every panel member, they have been asked to do a job and they have done it, but associations do have an effect on the mind-set of those involved and there are other panel members who are closely aligned with NGO’s and with IPCC/UN related bodies, making them unlikely to be critical of the IPCC conclusions.

Christopher Booker notes this in concluding his article:

“Through all this the IPCC has been exposed for what it truly is: not a proper scientific body but an advocacy group, ready to stop at nothing in hijacking the prestige of science for its cause. But **little of this might be guessed from the Inter-Academy report** (jointly commissioned by Dr Pachauri himself and Ban Ki-Moon, the UN's Secretary General).

Even if Dr Pachauri is forced to resign at a UN meeting in Korea next month, as seems possible, he will merely have been thrown off the sledge so that **the all-important cause** can survive.

Yet the IPCC is the body on whose authority our Parliament voted for the Climate Change Act, passed all but unanimously two years ago. This will land us, on the Government's own figures, with by far the biggest bill we have ever faced: up to £18 billion every year for the next 40 years – £734 billion in all – in order to cut our CO₂ emissions by 80 per cent, something impossible to achieve except by closing down virtually all our industrial economy.


On the same authority, the rest of the world is being told that it must take similar steps, to avert a catastrophe dreamed up and promoted by no one more than those joint winners of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize, Al Gore and the IPCC.

Does this not all add up to the most bizarre and outrageous scandal in the history of the world?”

One can only agree with Christopher Booker and his comment.



Cover photo of Harold Shapiro (IAC Committee Chair) presenting review findings to secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon from UNphoto library as posted on mediaglobal.org.



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