

EXTREME WEATHER EXTREME CLAIMS

by Dennis Ambler



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EXTREME WEATHER – EXTREME CLAIMS

by Dennis Ambler | September 3, 2010

The on-going claims of catastrophic anthropogenic global warming have been ramped up again lately because of the opportunities presented by the heat wave in Russia and the floods in Pakistan, which are also being claimed as attributable to anthropogenic CO₂. If the amount spent on global warming were to be diverted to mitigating and preventing the worst effects of natural disasters, then the desperate plight of the people of Pakistan would be relieved more quickly.

This piece is from [The Times of India](#):

“Experts from the United Nations (UN) and universities around the world said the recent "extreme weather events" **prove global warming** is already happening.

If the amount spent on global warming were to be diverted to mitigating and preventing the worst effects of natural disasters, then the desperate plight of the people of Pakistan would be relieved more quickly.

Jean-Pascal van Ypersele, vice-president of the body set up by the UN to monitor global warming, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), said the 'dramatic' weather patterns are consistent with **changes in the climate caused by mankind.** “

Stefan Rahmstorf, the alarmist advocate scientist from Potsdam and *Real Climate* web site, said in the Guardian: “The [events of this summer](#) show how vulnerable our societies are to weather-related extremes. **But what we see now is happening after only 0.8C of global warming.**”

No less an expert than US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in an interview with Pakistan's Dawn TV, said “**there is a linkage**” between the Pakistan floods and climate change.

There has been sparse reporting in the Northern Hemisphere press of the severe cold in South America.

It is obvious that climate changes over time, sometimes for the better sometimes for the worse, but the inference now is that, if it is for the better, then the planet is warming dangerously, as a result of our modern lifestyle and consumption of fossil fuels over the last century and a half. If it is

for the worse, it is also the result of our modern lifestyle and consumption of fossil fuels over the last century and a half.

Whilst there has been sparse reporting in the Northern Hemisphere press of the severe cold in South America, some people have claimed that it too demonstrates that the climate is changing because of anthropogenic CO₂ emissions as with this [report in Nature](#):

“With high Andean peaks and a humid tropical forest, Bolivia is a country of ecological extremes. But during the Southern Hemisphere's recent winter, unusually low temperatures in part of the country's tropical region hit freshwater species hard, killing an estimated 6 million fish and thousands of alligators, turtles and river dolphins.

Scientists who have visited the affected rivers say the event is the biggest ecological disaster Bolivia has known, and, as an example of a **sudden climatic change** wreaking havoc on wildlife, it is **unprecedented in recorded history**.

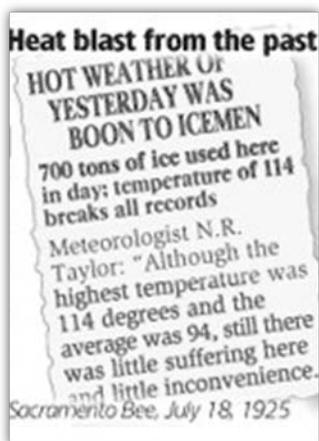
With such extreme climatic events **potentially** becoming more common **due to climate change**, scientists are hurrying to coordinate research into the impact, and how quickly the ecosystem is likely to recover.”

IS CURRENT WEATHER “UNPRECEDENTED”?

The short answer is **NO**, yet we are told constantly that climate events currently experienced are unprecedented, are the worst on record and confirm that catastrophic anthropogenic global warming is undeniable. Yet there are uncountable major instances of heat waves, severe droughts and dramatic flooding in history, long before industrialisation occurred.

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In the case of South America, severe cold is recorded from Aztec times:



“Aztec chronicles record great snowfalls and frosts (The Aztec *Historia chichimeca* tells of a 'catarro pestilencial' (pestilence) that came during the unusually cold weather between 1447–1450 AD, followed by a great drought between 1450–1454 AD. The cold had also destroyed the Aztec empire's annual harvest in Central Mexico.”

Real science, (as opposed to “*Real Climate*”) demands that, if a theory is disproved just once, then the theory is invalid, but in the world of anthropogenic global warming, this is not the case. In spite of countless challenges from history, to show that there have been much warmer periods and much colder periods, when industrial anthropogenic CO₂ could not be implicated, the

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campaign continues on a daily basis. In the last century there were hot periods in the 1920’s and 30’s:

“Many states endured the longest drought of the 20th century. Peak periods were 1930, 1934, 1936, 1939, and 1940. During 1934, dry regions stretched solidly from N.Y. and Pa. across the Great Plains to the

Californian coast. A great “dust bowl” covered some 50 million acres in the south-central plains during the winter of 1935–1936.”

The Great Heat Wave of 1936 – [How Hot Can It Get?](#)

“The Dust Bowl Years of the 1930s are well known for drought and blowing dust, but they were also years of temperature extremes as well — both summer heat and winter cold. Of all the years in that decade, 1936 was most exceptional both for heat and cold.”

During the winter of 1935-36, the US shivered through the second coldest winter ever across the nation.

“During the winter of 1935-36, the US shivered through the second coldest winter ever across the nation. St. Louis, Missouri would go for 20 days without an above-zero °F (-18°C) reading. In Minnesota the statewide average temperature between 22 and 26 January was -20.3°F (-29°C).

Devils Lake, North Dakota dropped below freezing on 27 November 1935, and did not rise above it until 1 March 1936, a period of 96 consecutive days.

The average temperature in the state of North Dakota never got above 0°F for 18 consecutive days, and an all-time state record low of -60°F (-51°C) was recorded at Parshall on 16 February 1936. Devils Lake, North Dakota dropped below freezing on 27 November 1935, and did not rise above it until 1 March 1936, a period of 96

consecutive days. February brought record snowfalls. For the first time in memory, the Arkansas River froze near Little Rock.”

“Then in a complete flip, the summer became the **hottest on record**, as a hot, humid airmass **stagnated** over the eastern half of the continent during July. Even after seven decades, fifteen state maximum temperature records set during the Summer of 1936 still stand.”

(That is exactly what happened around the Moscow area in July 2010, with the blocking of the Jet Stream.)

[This weather site](#) shows United States Extreme Record Temperatures and Ranges from NCDC. Of all fifty states, only **five** records occurred **after 1980**, whereas **thirty six** occurred **before 1940**.

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DROUGHT AND FAMINE

[Paleo-climatic evidence](#) shows that a "mega-drought" in the 16th century wreaked havoc for decades in the lives of the early Spanish and English settlers and American Indians throughout Mexico and North America.

The tree ring records tell of the **worst drought in 1,000 years**, with an extended period of dryness **lasting 40 years** in places. In this case early records from Spanish and English settlements in the Carolinas and Virginia corroborate the paleo-climatic findings.

These comments are from [Climate History](#) – “Causes and Consequences of the Medieval Warm Period”:

“The most striking aspect of the period of American climate, between the [2nd and 16th Centuries](#), is the incidence, extent, prevalence, duration and severity of droughts, throughout the Americas; particularly - but by no means exclusively - over western and central regions of the Americas.

These droughts often lasted for a decade or longer and have been dubbed *meagadroughts*. **Two droughts**, in California and Patagonia, each **lasted for well over 100 years** and have been described as *epic droughts*.

Scores of shorter (1-3 year) droughts and floods have been recorded between the Spanish conquest and the present day, as well as **major flood events**.

Droughts and floods in Central and South America are known to be often related to **El Nino/La Nina** events.”

High temperatures and droughts have also been documented in Europe going back over centuries. For example, [ecclesiastical documents](#) from Spain referencing the period 1506

Dutch records show that the year 1540 was one with an even hotter summer than the heat wave year of 2003. “This Europe-wide heat wave lasted for seven months, harvests were destroyed and thousands of cattle died, leading to wide spread famine and death.

to 1900 in Toledo and Madrid, show that “**the most severe droughts** were recorded during the period from the end of the **16th Century up until the 18th Century**”.

[Dutch records](#) show that the year **1540** was one

with an even hotter summer than the heat wave year of 2003. **“This Europe-wide heat wave lasted for seven months,** harvests were destroyed and thousands of cattle died, leading to wide spread famine and death. The Rhine dried up and it was reported that people could walk upon the Seine riverbed in Paris without getting their feet wet.”

INCREASE IN WILD FIRES DUE TO GLOBAL WARMING?

Wildfire occurrences are also claimed to be due to global warming/climate change, as in the recent Moscow event and in this report from **2007** in the US:

[Global Warming Linked](#) to Increase in U.S. Forest Fires May 25, 2007

Forest fires in the Western United States have occurred more frequently, burned longer, and covered more acres since 1987—and **global warming is a big part of the underlying cause**—according to a research paper published in July 2006 by the journal *Science*. The report compared 1987-2005 with the previous 16 year period and said the results were unequivocal:

"The real message of the paper is **not** as much **about forest management,**" said Steven Running, a University of Montana ecology professor and one of the study's peer reviewers, according to an article in the *Sacramento Bee*. "It's that **this is yet another dimension of global warming's impact.**

However, in 2008, a [study of 2000 years of wildfires](#), showed a different story and was rather more scientifically constructed than the 16 year comparison embraced by Professor Running. (Study led by Professor Mitchell Power, Utah Museum of Natural History and Department of Geography at the University of Utah, and Jennifer Marlon, a doctoral student in geography at the University of Oregon.)

“A 100-year decline in wildfires worldwide—from 1870 to 1970 was recorded, despite increasing temperatures and population growth, researchers found. "From studying this global network of charcoal records, we were surprised to see a decrease in global biomass burned during those years," said Power. "We are attributing this recent decrease to habitat fragmentation, expansion of agriculture, intensification of livestock grazing, and **effective fire management.**"

The decline in biomass burning after A.D. 1870 is opposite to the expected effect of rising carbon dioxide and rapid warming, but contemporaneous with an unprecedentedly high rate of population increase.

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This [Dutch report](#) describes a much more prevalent fire situation in the 16th century:

“Heatwaves in earlier days, not unlike other harsh weather phenomenons, were more intrusive, and often disastrous.”

“Another disaster usually associated with heat waves and droughts was fire, **often destroying entire villages or even towns** such as Harderwijk in 1503. Wooden houses became tinderboxes, **dry peat, forests and undergrowth ignited readily and led to massive wildfires.**”

City fire in Schärding, Holland, 1725

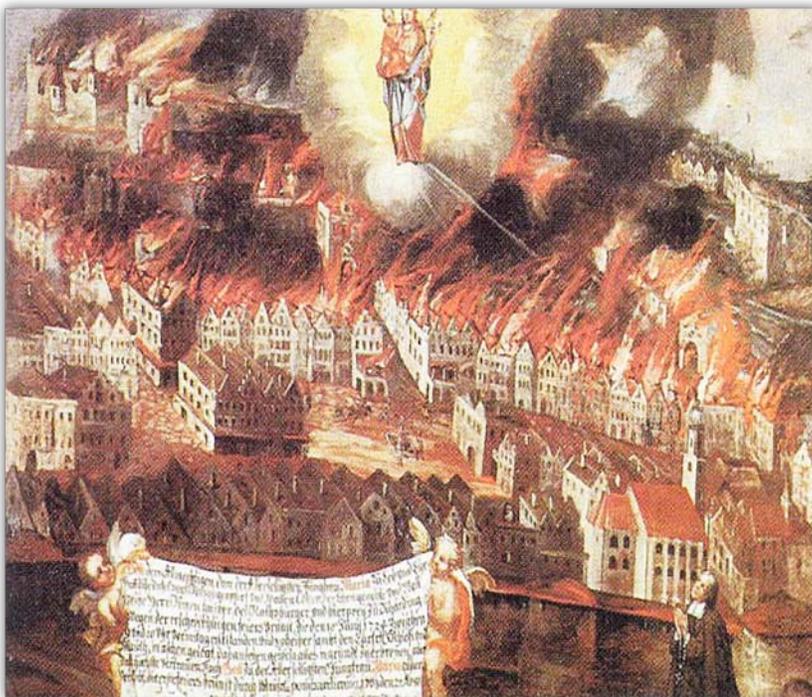


Image from “Precipitation Indices – Low Countries, van Engelen, Ynsen, Buisman, vd Schreier, Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute”

DROUGHT IN ASIA

A recent study published in July in Science re-constructs [droughts in Asia](#).

“The seasonal monsoon rains in Asia feed nearly half the world's population, and when the rains fail to come, people can go hungry, or worse. A new study of tree rings provides the most detailed record yet of **at least four epic droughts** that have shaken Asia **over the last thousand years**, from one that may have helped bring down China's Ming Dynasty in 1644, to another that **caused tens of millions of people to starve to death in the late 1870s.**”

The tree rings provide additional evidence of a **severe drought in China** referenced in some historical texts as **the worst in five centuries**.

Another severe monsoon failure came in 1756-1768, coinciding with the collapse of kingdoms in what are now Vietnam, Myanmar and Thailand.

Another severe monsoon failure came in **1756-1768**, coinciding with the collapse of kingdoms in what are now Vietnam, Myanmar and Thailand.

Then, the so-called East India drought hit in **1790-1796**. This one appears to have been felt

worldwide, spreading civil unrest and socio-economic turmoil. For instance, in Mexico, water levels at Lake Pátzcuaro fell so much they gave rise to ownership disputes over the land that emerged. In Europe, drought led to crop failures that preceded the French Revolution. There were famines in India.”

Perhaps the worst drought, the scientists found, was the **Victorian-era "Great Drought"** of **1876-1878**. The effects were felt across the tropics; by some estimates, **resulting famines killed up to 30 million people**. According to the tree-ring evidence, the effects were especially acute in India, but extended as far away as China and present-day Indonesia.

In March, another tree ring study of [drought in Asia](#) was published in PNAS: (Buckley et al., 'Climate as a contributing factor in the demise of Angkor, Cambodia', PNAS, March 2010; doi: 0.1073/pnas.0910827107)

“The tree rings revealed evidence of a **mega-drought lasting three decades**—from the 1330s to 1360s-- followed by a more severe but shorter drought from the 1400s to 1420s. Written records corroborate the latter drought, which may have been felt as far away as Sri Lanka and central China.

The study also finds that the droughts were punctuated by several **extraordinarily intense rainy seasons** that may have damaged Angkor's hydraulic system. During a normal monsoon season, Angkor's hydraulic network could have handled heavy downpours, but after extended droughts, the system may have been vulnerable to massive siltation and clogging, the study suggests.”

A common thread linking all of these studies and the high temperatures of 1998 and 2010 is the occurrence of ENSO events, (El Niño-Southern Oscillation), the warming and cooling of the tropical Pacific atmosphere-ocean system.

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DROUGHT IN AFRICA

Droughts in the late 20th century rival some of [North Africa's major droughts](#) of centuries past, going back to **1179**. The first multi-century drought reconstruction that includes Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia shows **frequent and severe droughts** during the **13th and 16th** centuries and the latter part of the 20th century.

Tree ring data shows persistent drought was more widespread across northwest Africa **before the year 1500**, than for the four centuries following, with the pattern of widespread regional drought re-emerging in the late 20th century.

In another study, in April 2009, scientists developed an almost year-by-year record of the last **3,000 years** of [West African climate](#).

“In that period, **droughts lasting 30 to 60 years were common**. Surprisingly, however, these decades-long droughts were dwarfed by much more severe droughts lasting three to four times as long.”

Made famous by Al Gore in An Inconvenient Truth, Lake Chad was said to be an indicator of global warming. This was repeated in a [Greenpeace letter](#) to Barack Obama before Copenhagen:

“Already climate impacts, such as the **drying up of Lake Chad**, one of the largest inland seas in the world, have exacerbated the tragedy in Darfur, where water scarcity and competition for land have destroyed the lives of millions.”

LAKE CHAD

Experienced rapid falls in lake levels around 1680-1690, 1740-1760, and 1800-1840, attesting to desiccation in the area of northern Nigeria.” Six to seven thousand years ago, Lake Chad was the biggest lake in the world, at 400,000 square kilometers.

[Working paper WP61](#) from the UK Tyndall Centre in 2004 has a very good account of climate history in Africa:

DROUGHT IN THE AFRICAN SAHEL:

Long term perspectives and future prospects, Nick Brooks, Saharan Studies Programme and Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia

“Long-term climatic and environmental change in the Sahel is associated with variations in the strength and position of the African Monsoon. At the last glacial maximum (LGM) some **21 thousand years ago (ka)**, the Sahara desert **covered a much larger area than at present**,

as apparent from the dating of fossil dunes some 5° south of the present extent of mobile dunes (Talbot, 1983).

“Over the past 1.65 million years, approximately corresponding to the Quaternary period, there have been some **seventeen glacial cycles**, each lasting approximately **100ka** (Goudie, 1992). Evidence from lake sediments in the central and southern Sahara indicates a succession of arid and humid episodes broadly coincident with glacial and interglacial periods respectively (Kowalski *et al.*, 1989; Szabo *et al.*, 1995; Cremaschi, 1998; Martini *et al.*, 1998).”

EARTH’S ORBITAL AXIS

“On multi-millennial timescales, shorter than those represented by the 100ka glacial cycles, monsoon dynamics are modulated by the Earth’s 21ka precessional cycle, which determines the angle at which the Earth’s axis is inclined to the plane of the ecliptic (the plane in which the planets orbit the sun) (Kukla and Gavin, 2004).”

“When this angle is large, the northern hemisphere is inclined more steeply towards the sun in summer, resulting in increased solar insolation or heating of the Earth’s

I suppose we have to ask the question, “what effect does anthropogenic CO₂ have on the angle of inclination of the Earth’s axis?”

surface, and a larger differential heating between the northern hemisphere land masses and the oceans, which intensifies the global monsoon system.

When the angle of inclination of the Earth’s axis is small, boreal summer heating is reduced and the monsoon system is weak. The **21ka and 100ka cycles interact**, and **an increase in boreal summer insolation** is

believed to have contributed to the process of **deglaciation** after the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM) (Goudie, 1992).

By around 10ka, maximum inclination had been reached, resulting in an increase in incident solar radiation at the Earth’s surface associated with intensified monsoon activity throughout the northern hemisphere subtropics (Tuenter *et al.*, 2003).”

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FLOODING IN THE INDUS VALLEY

Although some of its water comes from melting Himalayan glaciers, the vast majority is dumped by the summer monsoon.

“As torrential rain sweeps in from the Indian Ocean, floods are triggered almost annually. Its floodplain was an early cradle of civilisation 9,000 years ago. Here people first gave up their nomadic ways to farm livestock and cultivate crops.

The Indus Valley is **home to 100 million people**, who rely on it completely for drinking water and irrigation. Due to population growth, the **people are now living in the alluvial flood plains**, which used to be left for the river to meander about.

Today the river is changing its course and as it flows down, it engulfs many of the populated areas. 500 km of the river bed’s floodzone is called “kacha”. This is the natural flood plain of the river. However the “kacha area” is inhabited by millions of people and those who live there are poor people who do not have the means to live in safe areas.

People living in these areas do so at their own risk. Property cannot be bought and sold in “kacha”, however successive government have allocated the lands and even electrified the villages that exist in the flood plains.

Geologist Professor Peter Clift of Aberdeen University, has been precisely dating layers of flood-deposited sand in the Indus floodplain, in order to work out past changes in river flow, with surprising results:

“During a warm period 6,000 years ago, the Indus was a monster river, more powerful and more prone to flooding than today. Then, 4,000 years ago, as the climate cooled, a large part of it simply dried up. Deserts appeared where mighty torrents once flowed.”

The article then asks the question, “But what caused these thousand-year cycles of Indus drought and flood?”

I suspect it wasn’t coal-fired power stations and SUV’s.

One wonders what the headlines and coverage of these following events would be like today. They are just a brief selection of major disasters through history that show quite clearly, current events are not the worst on record and it is highly disingenuous and insulting to the people affected, for scientists and politicians to use such tragedies for political purposes.

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FLOODING IN EUROPE

Fagan - Floods, Famines, and Emperors: El Niño and the Fate of Civilizations (Basic Books, 1999).

“As Arctic regions cooled, the thermal contrast between the Greenland & Iceland region and middle Atlantic latitudes steepened, causing greater storminess. Great westerly gales conspired with the prevailing high sea levels to cause vast destruction.

Powerful wind storms and surging sea floods inundated low-lying North Sea coasts, **drowning hundreds of thousands of people in some of the worst weather disasters ever recorded.”**

Sea inundation in Holland, 1421, the sea submerged 72 Dutch counties, **killing 100,000** people.

Sea inundation in Holland, 1530, sea dikes burst in Holland, submerging much of the country and **killing 400,000** people.

The Great Storm of 1703 was the most severe storm or natural disaster ever recorded in the southern part of Great Britain. The Royal Navy lost 13 ships and 1500 seamen. Up to **15000 people** died overall.

China - 15 years of storms 1851 to 1866, the low area between Beijing, Shanghai and Hankow flooded repeatedly during a disastrous 15 years of storms. It is estimated that **40 to 50 million Chinese perished in these floods.**

Yellow River Flood, 1887, spring rains in China caused the Yellow River to overflow, covering **50,000 square miles** and killing an estimated **1.5 million people**.

The 1910 Great Flood of Paris - On January 28, the water reached its maximum height at 8.62 metres (28.28 feet), some **20 feet above its normal level**. Estimates of the flood damage reached some 400 million francs, approximately 1.5 billion modern US dollars.

Central China floods of 1931 The 20th century’s worst water related disaster inundating 70,000 square miles and killing **3.5-4 million people**.

Ganges Delta tidal wave 1970, a cyclone-driven tidal wave overwhelmed the Ganges Delta in what is now Bangladesh, killing somewhere between **300,000 and 500,000 people**.

Early Flooding in the US

1889 Johnstown, Pennsylvania was destroyed by a massive flood. The South Fork Dam across a tributary of the Little Conemaugh River collapsed under pressure from the rain-swollen Lake Conemaugh. Water slammed into Johnstown, Pa., 55 miles southeast of Pittsburgh and **killed 2,209** people in a flood and related fire.

The Great Dayton Flood of 1913 flooded Dayton, Ohio, and the surrounding area with water from the Great Miami River, causing the greatest natural disaster in Ohio history. Within three days, 8-11 inches of rain fell throughout the Great Miami River watershed on frozen ground, resulting in more than 90% runoff that caused the river and its tributaries to overflow. The existing series of levees failed, and downtown Dayton experienced **flooding up to 20 feet** (6.1 m) deep.

The Mississippi Flood of 1927 - There was a major flood along the Mississippi that killed 247 people and displaced thousands. The levee system broke in 145 places and caused **27,000 square miles of flooding** in Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee.

The Ohio River flood of 1937 occurred in late January and February 1937, causing damage along the Ohio River and several smaller tributaries from Pittsburgh, Illinois to Cairo, Illinois. This flood left close to **1 million people homeless, 385 dead, and \$50,000,000 worth of damage.**

EXTREME WEATHER – THE BLAME GAME

[The Aztecs](#) had sophisticated irrigation systems and “astrolonomical” observatories, (apparently a mix of astrology and astronomy), to attempt to predict the weather and reservoirs. But the unseasonal frosts and cold, followed by severe, prolonged drought, may have taken them to the brink of collapse. Once the climate became more benign again, they praised their gods with human sacrifice.

When rainfall and agriculture had resumed, the Aztecs responded by massively increasing the number of human sacrifices to their rain god Tlaloc. It is thought that hundreds of thousands of people were sacrificed.

“When rainfall and agriculture had resumed, the **Aztecs responded** by

*massively increasing the number of **human sacrifices to their rain god Tlaloc.** It is thought that hundreds of thousands of people were sacrificed.”*

In the **Little Ice Age**, witchcraft was blamed for the devastating climate:

Fagan's *The Little Ice Age* (Basic Books, 2000):

“**Witchcraft** accusations soared, as **people accused their neighbors of fabricating bad weather....** Sixty-three women were burned to death as witches in the small town of Wisensteig in Germany in 1563 at a time of intense debate over the authority of God over the weather.”

“Almost invariably, a frenzy of prosecutions coincided with the coldest and most difficult years of the Little Ice Age, when people demanded the eradication of the witches they held responsible for their misfortunes.”

These days we don't blame witchcraft for the weather, instead we blame it on our emissions of carbon dioxide, describing it as a pollutant that must be controlled by Government taxes and vilifying anyone who dares to challenge the orthodoxy.

We ignore thousands of years of climate evidence, in favour of an agenda based upon a century and a half of sometimes distorted and often-disputed temperature records, coming out of a known Little Ice Age and we call it “Science”.

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Have we really left the Dark Ages behind?



Cover photos of Pakistan flooding by Reuters at abc.net.au and Russian wildfires by Artyom Korotayev, AFP/Getty Images at nationalgeographic.com.



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