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# Doubt is cast over global warming

Emily Beament

Global temperatures may not increase over the next decade because of natural variations in the climate which will offset man-made warming, scientists predicted yesterday.

Researchers attempting to model what might happen to the climate of the North Atlantic over a period of decades suggest that the temperature of the sea and Europe and North America may cool slightly.

The researchers said the North Atlantic had variability on a 70 to 80-year cycle and the meridional overturning circulation (MOC) – a giant "conveyor belt" that brings warm water northwards into the area – had an important role to play in driving those fluctuations. When the circulation is strong, it creates warmer temperatures.

The study created a model that used sea surface temperatures and attempted to simulate the variability of the MOC in a bid to predict climate over coming decades.

The model - tested by comparing retrospective "predictions" against what has actually happened - suggests the MOC may weaken towards a long-term average, leading to slightly cooler temperatures in the North Atlantic.

Sea surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific will remain unchanged, the scientists led by Noel Keenlyside of Leibniz Institute of Marine Sciences, Kiel, Germany, said.

Writing in *Nature*, they said: "Our results suggest that global surface temperature may not increase over the next decade, as natural climate variations in the North Atlantic and tropical Pacific temporarily offset the projected anthropogenic warming."

Commenting on the study, Richard Wood of the Met Office, Hadley Centre, said the model suggested the weakening of the MOC would have a cooling effect around the North Atlantic.

"Such a cooling could temporarily offset the longer-term warming trend from increasing levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

"That emphasises once again the need to consider climate variability and climate change together when making predictions over timescales of decades."

But he said the use of just sea surface temperatures may not accurately reflect the state of the MOC, which is several kilometres deep and dependent on factors besides temperatures, such as salt content.

If the model could accurately forecast other variables besides temperature, such as rainfall, it would be increasingly useful, but climate predictions for a decade ahead would always be to some extent uncertain, he added.

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## Added Comments

Posted by: JohnM, Perth on 12:49am Thu 1 May 08

So- much ado about nothing. But this research tends to suggest that "anthropogenic global warming" were it not present would probably mean a reduction in temperature. Woops - major deviation from the current received wisdom.

Maybe I should pop out to the local shop in my 4x4 to retain my membership of the "denier" fraternity. Or maybe just to confuse the issue check out some LPG alternatives or electric due to the insanely priced fuel.

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Posted by: Dave, Away on 1 May 08

You are right on both counts.....

Yes this does mean the price of fuel must rise to save humanity!

(Research countering it will, oddly, have the same effect.....if you'll pardon the pun thesis, antithesis and synthesize!!)

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Posted by: Edward, Edinburgh on 1 May 08

AT last some sense!

No doubt the 'green' brigade will deny all this

But they should really understand that climate change is definately NOT man made.

I saw a program recently which mentioned that the UN body the IPCC had quietly amended there projections and changed some of there models, which include sea levels, that they expect now not to rise that much, with worst case senarion being 17 inches!

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Posted by: gordon Brown, Australia on 1 May 08

Why am I not surprised at this ?

I do note that Richard Wood of the Hadley Centre is still in denial !

They of course have been toeing the line as decreed by their politician paymasters in order that we can be taxed more in order to cure a problem tha tdoes not exist viz - Man made global warming !!

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Posted by: Alkie, NYC on May 08

The global temperature on Earth is so dynamic and influenced by so many different factors that to for anyone to claim they know (based on twenty years of research) the Earth is cooling or warming and predict either trend to continue shows nothing but hubris of the worst kind.

Global warming alarmists who go about calling themselves scientists are unscientific fear mongers who want the world to focus on what they have to say, no more and no less.

The Scottish middle class needs to stand up against alcohol. Your acceptance of it is ruining the fabric of all Scottish society. Say no to the liquid drug.

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Posted by: steve4349, larbet on 1 May 08

The greenwash loonies will be exposed for the lies and fears they manipulate. They should be tackling China, india and the USA – the biggest polluters on the planet. The trouble is they already know that the loonies are wrong

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Posted by: hughmuscat, UK on 1 May 08

The bottom line is that no one knows what the hell is going on. That said, you would have to be an idiot to believe that humankind does not have a significant impact on the planet. You do not have to have a science degree to know that chopping down all the rain forest will be bad for the planet and therefore for us. Lack of evidence of global warming should not be used as an excuse to "carry on regardless". The biggest threat to us is lack of resources, water, fuel etc and too many people on the planet. If we don't conserve our resources and control our populations then in time war, famine and disease will be more pressing threats than potential global warming.

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Posted by: McSomeone, Scotland on 1 May 08

Could Emily please tell us, who exactly funded this research?

We can already feel the cooling effect of the Gulf Stream on the west Coast because it has lost up to 30% of it's heat. The wind feels colder and also much drier. This doesn't mean that we no longer have problems with our environment, just that it's not going as was originally predicted. Our summers are still going to be a lot hotter and wetter and our winters longer, colder and wetter.

If no one believes in global warming go and research what's happening in Africa and the Middle East where they have suffered drought and spreading desertification for the last ten years.

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Posted by: Jack

If we don't conserve our resources and control our populations then in time war, famine and disease will be more pressing threats than potential global warming.

Nail on head. Global warming/Climate change and the hysteria around each new report we hear of is scaremongering of the highest order. The planet has bigger problems to deal with than the output of a few cars or factories.

The damage has been done in the past with infinitely more CO2 being emitted when the whole of the UK was heated by coal fires, and heavy industries were not as clean as they are today.

Perhaps the developing world could do more but while oil based fuels and materials are around there will be CO2 emissions. We must live with that.

Personally I think the billions of pounds/dollars profit that BP/Shell and their counterparts make should forcibly be invested in the alternative fuels like Hydrogen... I am sure they exist already but are being withheld until the oil (and associated profits) run dry.

Anyway back to this massive population expansion and the drain on resources... perhaps a mass global cull of everyone who does not contribute anything to the advancement of the human race, or is deemed a drain on their society would be in order. I think that's one kind of discrimination which nobody in their right mind can disagree with!

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Posted by: Alastair McIntosh, Govan (Centre for Human Ecology) on 1 May 08

This doesn't surprise me in the least. Oceanographers and climate scientists have been perfectly clear in recent years that there are major uncertainties about the pattern of ocean currents. That is why the latest IPCC report expresses doubt about the idea that the Gulf Stream might get "turned off" due to Arctic melting.

I've spent the past year and a half looking at this issue while writing a forthcoming book on the psychology underlying the consumerism that drives climate change (due in June from Birlinn). My view based on the IPCC's reports (the UN's scientific advisory body on the matter) is that we're faced with a paradox. Climate change is unlikely to have more than a creeping effect on us in a country like Scotland. Some aspects of it may even be beneficial - a bit warmer. Others are

problematic - gradually rising sea levels (currently about 3 mm a year). The seriously adverse impacts will hit elsewhere, and especially parts of the world with fragile ecosystems. This will heighten conflict and the displacement of peoples.

The conundrum is that we in the West are causing the problem, but will be the last to feel the more adverse consequences. Long term - beyond the lifetime of the current generation - the prognosis gets very much more scary if we carry on pumping carbon into the atmosphere.

The moral - if you're only into thinking about yourself - party on and do nothing - if you're living in Scotland and you're middle aged, it'll probably see you out quite nicely. But if you care about your grandchildren and their children, or if you care about people in the world living in vulnerable ecosystems that are subject to drought or flooding, then there's a serious ethical issue facing us. What kind of a Scotland do we want to be? Selfish or caring?

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Posted by: Fifer, kilmarnock on 1 May 08

If no one believes in global warming go and research what's happening in Africa and the Middle East where they have suffered drought and spreading desertification for the last ten years.

This is not down to Climate Change but is a direct effect of pollution, especially from the US, India and China these days. these are two very different problems.

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Posted by: iang on 1 May 08

The other point is that most governments are using the last 50 years climate records to show a change, if the cows' farts are a problem then how about the extra 4 Billion people breathing, 3+ times the population in the 1940's and 1950's? Surely that must have an impact and yet no-one is saying anything about population control.

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Posted by: Jwil, Lanarkshire on 1 May 08

What is to say that this research is any more definitive than that which existed yesterday? Wait for a few more months and we will have yet another viewpoint. Instead of just latching on to what we want to believe we should keep an open mind.

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Posted by: Carnwarth on 1 May 08

". . .because of natural variations in the climate which will offset man-made warming"

How convenient !!

I observe the start of the "climb-down".

Anyone with half a brain knew that the whole MMGW issue had become non-scientific and completely politicised. What other branch of science deals with terms such as "denier", "debate is over" and "consensus"? In what other branch of science do scientists with opposite views get ostracised and have their character assassinated? There are whole industries built upon MMGW, from Environmental Journalists to Carbon Offset Companies, all of whom are quite prepared to continue pumping out the propaganda so that they can remain on the gravy train.

You know that something is wrong when, in casual conversation, any expression of doubt about MMGW causes a sharp intake of breath from the poor souls who have fallen victim to the mantra.

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Posted by: daydreamer, Edinburgh on 1 May 08

Alastair McIntosh wrote:

This doesn't surprise me in the least. Oceanographers and climate scientists have been perfectly clear in recent years that there are major uncertainties about the pattern of ocean currents. That is why the latest IPCC report expresses doubt about the idea that the Gulf Stream might get "turned off" due to Arctic melting. I've spent the past year and a half looking at this issue while writing a forthcoming book on the psychology underlying the consumerism that drives climate change (due in June from Birlinn). My view based on the IPCC's reports (the UN's scientific advisory body on the matter) is that we're faced with a paradox. Climate change is unlikely to have more than a creeping effect on us in a country like Scotland. Some aspects of it may even be beneficial - a bit warmer. Others are problematic - gradually rising sea levels (currently about 3 mm a year). The seriously adverse impacts will hit elsewhere, and especially parts of the world with fragile ecosystems. This will heighten conflict and the displacement of peoples. The conundrum is that we in the West are causing the problem, but will be the last to feel the more adverse consequences. Long term - beyond the lifetime of the current generation - the prognosis gets very much more scary if we carry on pumping carbon into the atmosphere. The moral - if you're only into thinking about yourself - party on and do nothing - if you're living in Scotland and you're middle aged, it'll probably see you out quite nicely. But if you care about your grandchildren and their children, or if you care about people in the world living in vulnerable ecosystems that are subject to drought or flooding, then there's a serious ethical issue facing us. What kind of a Scotland do we want to be? Selfish or caring?

Very nice post. It's interesting that the people with the most to lose from acting against climate change are those that most strongly deny its existence, and somewhat bizarrely, these same people ascribe selfish motives to those who are putting the case for anthropogenic climate change, or attempting to do anything about it. I suspect some of these nay-sayers see the whole world in terms of selfish motives - classic projection.

The headline to this article appears deliberately misleading, equivocating as it seems to be between global warming and anthropogenic global warming. Doesn't indicate the temporary nature of the effect described in the article either. Obviously you can't stick a bunch of qualifiers in a short headline, but you would (one would hope) want to reflect the information contained within the article with some degree of honesty. "Anthropogenic global warming may be temporarily offset in

some places by natural cooling phenomena" might be a less sensational, but more accurate alternative.

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Posted by: GBW, Largs on 1 May 08

I guess we all need a few more years, decades, centuries before we can be more certain about projections - or best estimates.

However, whatever the future holds, it makes sense to use fewer of the earth's limited, non-renewable resources.

The economic growth in China, India etc will probably continue to push the price of scarcer commodities upwards - so learning to use less oil/petrol is what we'll be faced with.

Slainte Mhor

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Posted by: clayton-moore on 1 May 08

I note the total lack of appreciation of the meaning of the word TEMPORARILY by most of the posters above..

...READ IT AGAIN ...

"Writing in *Nature*, they said: "Our results suggest that global surface temperature may not increase over the next decade, as natural climate variations in the North Atlantic and tropical Pacific temporarily offset the projected anthropogenic warming."

"Such a cooling could temporarily offset the longer-term warming trend from increasing levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere."

Are you all completely thick ?

No.. don't bother to reply - I'm sure all we'll get is more of the same unthinking drivell.

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Posted by: sandy, scotland on 1 May 08

An awful lot of people educated by TV and newspapers here I fear.

There is a huge contribution to global warming as a result of human activity. Those who say otherwise tend to be proved wrong by peer review or found to have a hidden agenda behind there assumptions and the conclusions they draw from them.

The green brigade are often just as guilty of over egging things by advertising worst case scenario as most likely.

Even if you don't believe in global warming surely the things people are asked to do in its name are common sense in terms of efficiency and reducing pollution? People complain about high oil prices then buy 4x4s or don't recycle plastic adding to the demand and hastening our journey towards Peak Oil (if we haven't already passed it). There a no real shortages of oil just now, strange market forces are behind the current high prices, but in the relatively near future there probably will be. Small acts on a large scale can have surprisingly large effects.

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Posted by: daydreamer, Edinburgh on 1 May 08

No doubt people really will believe this nonsense. The earth cooled from 1940 to 1977. It got warmer from 1978 to 1998 then it cooled again from 1999 to 2018.

Further, the latest data from the NASA aqua sattelites suggest that CO2 has a negative, not positive warming feedback effect (resulting water vapour manifests as clouds),

They really are desperate to keep this Kyoto show on the road. Raising energy prices in the developed world will give further incentive to move industry to the far east where employment and environmental protection are virtually non existent.

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