

# We must discuss the most important issues

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*Western societies are taking a u-turn. We are abandoning the basis of modern civilization, and what created the industrial revolution: cheap fossil fuels. We are running to become zero emitters of carbon dioxide, in just a few years. And what appears to be most astonishing: It's said to cost us little.*

In his book *False Alarm* (2020), the Danish statistician Bjørn Lomborg tells a new story. He describes the Paris agreement of 2015 as climate change panic that costs us trillions, hurts the poor, and fails to fix the planet. And he is in good company. His think tank Copenhagen Consensus Center works with the best climate economists.

We therefore should be willing to listen when the best scientists tell us that the Paris agreement is the costliest international agreement ever and will do more harm than good. They state that the whole effort is based on false assumptions. Lomborg is a lukewarmer. He agrees that humans effect the climate, and we should tackle it. But he denies that there is a climate crisis. He points out that the exaggerations are endless and describes them. So, we should calm down the rhetoric, and base the politics on best knowledge. We should be willing to discuss the approach to an ever changing and variable nature: how much will it cost, does it help, and does the medicine hurt? This is what *False Alarm* is about.

The western societies are facing the largest economic costs in human history. The yearly expenses of the Paris agreement are heading up to 1 trillion dollars per year in 2030. But that's only a start. Climate panic is likely to end up costing humanity hundreds of trillions of dollars, every single year. And still, that will hardly change the temperature. According to the climate models of IPCC, a fully implemented Paris agreement will reduce the temperature rise by the end of the century by an almost imperceptible 0,028°C. Therefore, the agreement is purely symbolic.

Lomborg therefore argues that we have to prioritize We have to discuss which route to take. We have to discuss a reasonable level of taxation, as well as other precautions. We should avoid climate politics that is based on increasing bids from political parties heading to capture young voters in the next election. We need to take a deep collective breath and understand what climate change is and isn't.

## What should we do?

Economic growth is important. And the magnitude makes a difference. Today the world leaders are poised to pick a lower-growth pathway, "because climate". It condemns our children and grandchildren to a worse existence than our own, and ensures that the world's poorest are trapped in a future with fewer opportunities, less prospects, and less welfare, to the tune of 500 trillion dollars. Per year. That's the difference of a global growth rate of 1,27 and 1,89 percent.

Lomborg argues that we should take several actions to meet global challenges, like climate change. A richer world is important, because it increases both private and public premises to withstand the effects of hurricanes or rising sea level. Rich countries like the Netherlands, where more than half of the country is below sea level, have no problems in tackling the Northern Sea, while poor Haiti suffers immensely after earthquakes. That's one of the reasons why we have to become richer.

Climate politics has a blank page. Or a nearly hated focus, denied or overlooked by most activists and politicians: *adaptation*. They tend to want a pure focus on CO<sub>2</sub> taxation. When reading climate scare stories in newspapers and magazines, we are presented figures on immense climate conse-

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quences and costs. Lomborg gives us an example from Vietnam. In 2019 the *New York Times* presented a story which swept the world, based on a peer reviewed article in *Nature*, on how much of Southern Vietnam would be under high tide by 2050. The maps showed nearly hundred percent. 20 million people, a quarter of the population, would be flooded by then. “Climate change is shrinking the planet – in the scariest possible way” – tweeted Bill McKibben – the founder of 350.org.

The scare story comes with a deficiency. It avoids to tell the situation of today, which is nearly similar to 2050. This southern part of Vietnam is already beneath high sea level, but is protected by dikes. In other means: the country has adapted. As humans always do, when meeting a changing world. Without doubt, this is the most important way to tackle an ever-changing nature.

The actual research on which the *New York Times* article is based mentions in its introduction that “coastal defenses are not considered”. That’s unproblematic for an academic paper, but it’s ludicrous for the media to use its findings to produce claims of “20 million people underwater”, or for campaigners to suggest that this gives us reason to become “alarmist”.

*False Alarm* argues that we should implement a CO<sub>2</sub>-taxation at a reasonable level. The best climate economist suggests 20 dollars/ton – increasing throughout the century. The Norwegian goal of 238 dollar/ton from 2030 is far beyond sound economics and implies that rich countries will spend much more money on a hardly existing problem, than what we could expect to get in return from reduced climate problems.

Lomborg is a technological optimist and believes innovation can participate in solving what he argues to be the coming problems connected to climate change. Among them, he is positive to geoeengineering. I strongly disagree when he argues that “more recently, deniers are not given space (in press), and this is for the better”. This is strange, because it hits back at himself.

I do not follow his openmindedness to geoeengineering, and I am strongly critical to the unbalanced public debate, but I am extremely happy for his book. In my opinion it should be read by every policy maker in the western world. It is a good cure against climate alarmism, and a sound basis against the waste of large amounts of green money.

