



Fire on the Mountain

Get ready for "Global Boiling"...frontline scenes from Greece's fires...

JOEL BOWMAN

JUL 30 · PAID



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Joel Bowman, surveying the scene from Corfu, Greece...

"I'm not afraid of death; I just don't want to be there when it happens."

~ Woody Allen

Massive floods in Italy... deadly shootings in Israel... and now fires here in Greece. Dear readers may wish to pay close attention to your Editor-at-Large's travel itinerary... if only so they can avoid it.

When we wrote to you last Sunday, from Athens, we had just spent a spell on the Dodecanese island of Rhodes. (Dear wife publishes [a newsletter](#) dedicated to the Greco-Roman classics, which she co-founded with Bill over a decade ago... ergo, our Aegean expedition may be excused as *something* of a work trip.)

Back in the capital, our Greek friends wanted to know how bad the fires out there really were. They are used to the summer blazes...but not the international media conflagration that now routinely accompanies them.

"We see news reports," remarked one friend, over drinks in the trendy Koukaki neighborhood, "but it's almost impossible to tell. So much is what they call

'fake news' these days. One never knows what's real...and what's just drummed up by the media to get clicks."

Owing to a spectacular display of dumb luck, we had missed the fires on Rhodes by a day. So we were shocked to see photos of the paradisiacal island, very close to where we had been staying not 24-hours before, near Lindos, ablaze. The papers all ran the usual, apocalyptic headlines...

Vacationers Endure Holiday Hell as Forest Fires Ravage Rhodes ~ BNN

Mediterranean fires reach Athens as world enters era of 'global boiling' ~ The National

Black skies, scorched earth, extreme weather ~ The Guardian

Having narrowly missed the Dantean inferno ourselves, we were almost embarrassed not to be able to offer a first hand account of events. Then we flew to Corfu, an island 500 miles away from Rhodes, to which the fires had mysteriously "spread."

Within hours, the flames were practically on our back doorstep. We would have an opportunity to give you a first hand account after all...



(Source: Joel)

In his essay on Friday, Bill wondered aloud about “how the mainstream media turned into a toady press, merely interpreting and reinforcing the elites’ messaging.”

What is “The Message?” How does it differ from reality on the ground? And who benefits when the once-proud, once-independent Fourth Estate goes from speaking truth to power... to ignoring truth on behalf of the powerful?

More in today’s essay, below...

Fire on the Mountain

By Joel Bowman

“Make sure you have an evacuation plan and that everyone knows it. And whatever you do, don’t split up.”

Your editor’s father, a veteran firefighter of 40+ years in Australia, was calm but firm in his advice. We thanked him (via text), put on a pot of coffee and settled in for our first night shift – the 2:00-4:30 am slot. We would stay awake, monitor the news and watch the hazy orange glow light up the night sky from our back balcony. Our friend would take the 4:30-7:00 am slot. Then, we’d reconvene in the morning and discuss plans with our respective families.

The scenes down on the streets a few hours earlier ranged from that of wary vigilance (Corfiot locals)...to sunburned panic (BBC-streaming tourists). Witnessing the dozens of emergency vehicles heading north... and the busloads of sunseekers being evacuated south... we counted ourselves somewhere between the two.

When the next beach along from us was evacuated, we experienced the curious conflict of someone who is relieved to see a helpless stranger spirited to safety... mixed with the abrupt realization that *we* were now at the back of the escape line... and closest to having our own feet in the fire. We’d been watching the smoke rise peacefully into the atmosphere all Sunday afternoon, a calm that belied the building torment on the mountains below.

By the time we had put the kids to bed, the glow covered the whole hillside. The Internet, too, was becoming a kind of wildfire, with conflicting stories vying for attention across the newswires...

Get Ready for “Global Boiling”

The globe is boiling, haven’t you noticed? At least, that’s what Secretary of the United Nations, António Guterres, assures everyone.

“The era of global warming has ended,” declared Guterres, fumbling slightly over remarks prepared to shock and awe. “The era of global boiling has arrived.”

Readers are warned to be *en garde* against the eras of global sizzling, global scorching and global scalding, soon to be pronounced from on high.

Certainly, Sr. Guterres talks like a man who believes his own words. In times of yore, he would have been at home as a tubby televangelist, ranting about the End of Days, or wandering the streets wide-eyed with a sandwich board, vociferously immanentizing the eschaton. But in 2023, the Age of Certainty, Sr. Guterres enjoys a position of near ecumenical authority.

Here he is, sermonizing at last week’s United Nations summit in New York, where he switched seamlessly from catastrophizing... to censuring... to prophesying with alarming alacrity.

“For scientists, it is unequivocal — humans are to blame. All this is entirely consistent with predictions and repeated warnings. The only surprise is the speed of the change. Climate change is here. It is terrifying, and it is just the beginning.”

As far as we can tell, Senhor has never had a real job, never met a payroll, never flipped a burger, produced a widget or (mercifully) danced a lap. Rather, our antihero was flushed through the familiar pipeline of elite schools and colleges in his home country of Portugal before entering academia and, finally, circling the ceramic bowl known as politics. A proud, card-carrying socialist, Sr. Guterres (whose official designation is His Excellency, GCC GCL), now sits comfortably at the top of that heap, the very apex of the elite establishment, installed there by secret ballot, where regular/non-elite citizens have no vote and no say.

So comfortably ensconced, his proclamations are taken – by his fellow elites... by those in the media... in academia... on corporate boards... at billionaire

donor galas... in Hollywood... in Silicon Valley... – as a special kind of gospel. Whether they contain any truth or not hardly seems to matter...

Intoned Senhor, before a coven of high priests and climate acolytes gathered in New York City last week: “For vast parts of North America, Asia, Africa and Europe, it is a cruel summer. For the entire planet, it is a disaster.”

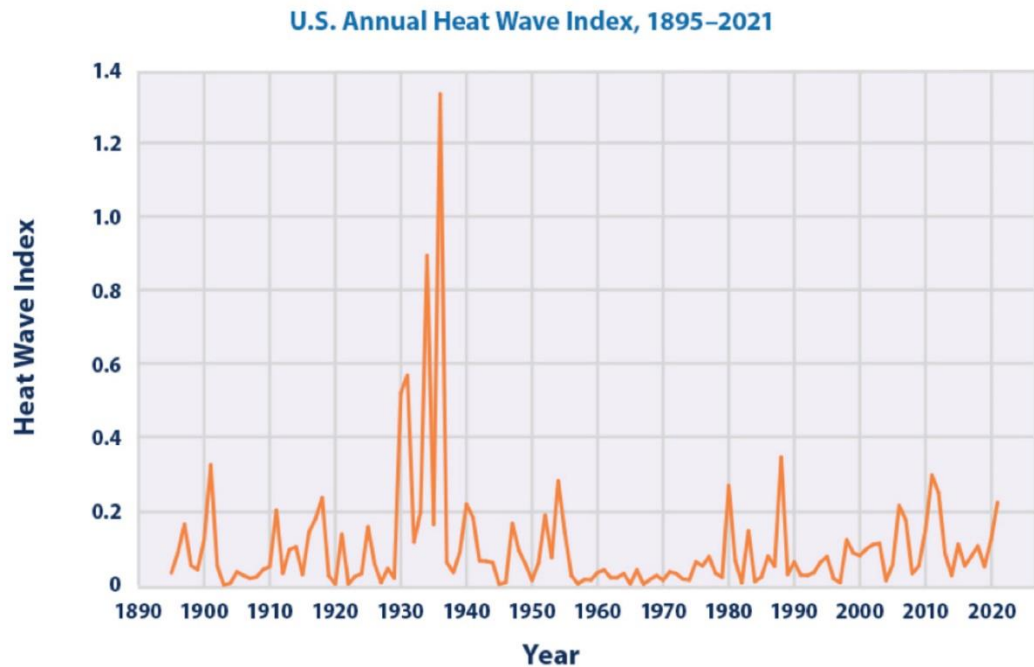
Only, it’s not. Current temperatures across the UK and Ireland are unseasonably cool, according to the Met Office, with London a fresh 66...and Dublin a rainy old 60. Over on the continent, it’s... well, summer. Berlin is 73... Paris 69... Budapest 70... Prague 68... Vienna 62... Florence 84... Moscow 73... Krakow 75...

Of the 50 European capitals, the average temperature today... during the “hottest July on record”... is a searing, sweltering, blood boiling...

...76.1 fahrenheit.

In the United States, the summer so far (June 1 - July 19, 2023) across the Lower 48 states has seen unspectacularly normal temperatures of a mere +0.07°C above average. Readers along the mid-Atlantic, the Carolinas and the Ohio Valley are no doubt enjoying the relatively unextreme weather. Same for the Pacific Northwest. And the Northeast. And along the Prairies. And the Rockies. Sea to shining sea, as it were... and practically anywhere that is not Phoenix, Arizona... which was virtually uninhabitable before the advent of air conditioning anyway. Death Valley, too, has been pretty hot. Who woulda thunk?

But what about all these “extreme heat waves” we’re hearing about? Perhaps some perspective might come in handy. The folks over at the EPA (the Environmental Protection Agency...that bastion of racist, transphobic, right-wing climate deniers) provide the US Annual Heat Wave Index going back 120+ years.



Data source: Kunkel, K. 2022. Updated version of Figure 2.3 in: CCSP (U.S. Climate Change Science Program). 2008. Synthesis and Assessment Product 3.3: Weather and climate extremes in a changing climate. www.globalchange.gov/browse/reports/sap-33-weather-and-climate-extremes-changing-climate.

For more information, visit U.S. EPA's "Climate Change Indicators in the United States" at www.epa.gov/climate-indicators.

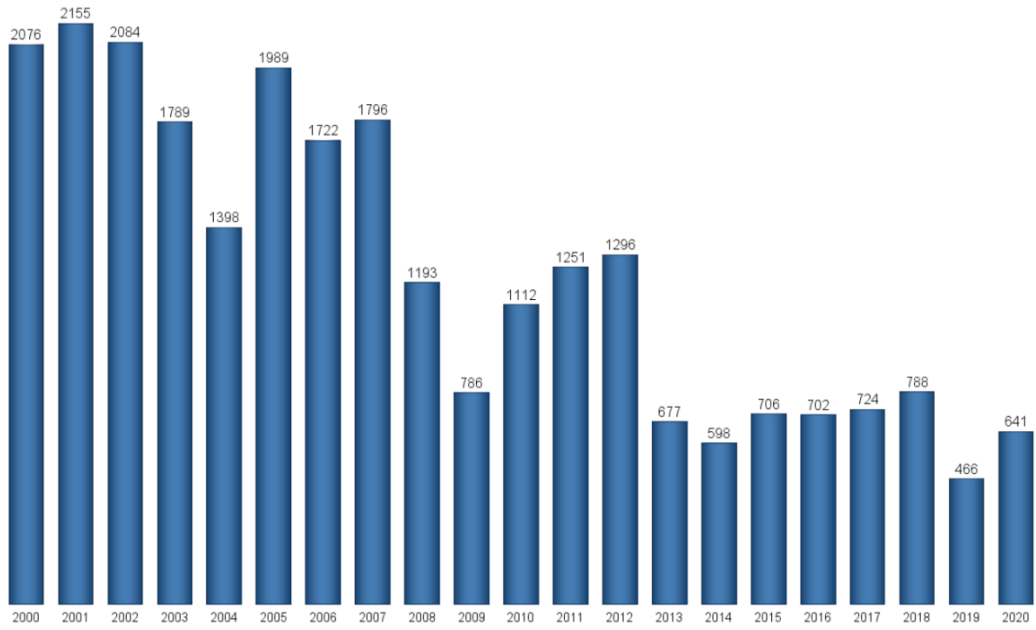
Never mind all that, says Senhor. The gods are angry...and now mankind must atone for its sins against nature.

"Extreme weather is becoming the new normal. All countries must respond and protect their people from the searing heat, fatal floods, storms, drought and raging fires that result."

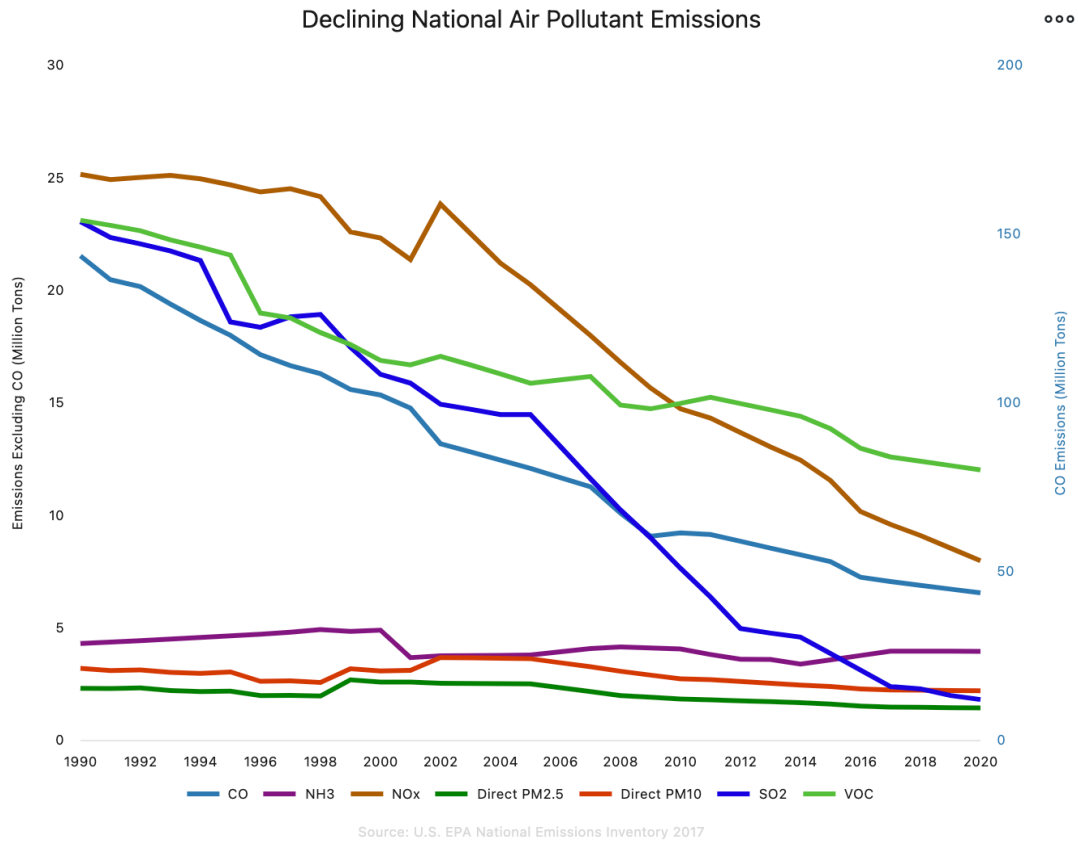
Do you understand yet? The land is burning... the oceans are boiling... and the air? Pssh!

"The air is unbreathable," panted Senhor from the UN pulpit. And yet, data from the EPA indicates air quality is the best it has been in decades...

Number of Days Reaching *Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups* or Above on the Air Quality Index
(Among 35 major U.S. Cities, for Ozone and PM2.5 Combined)



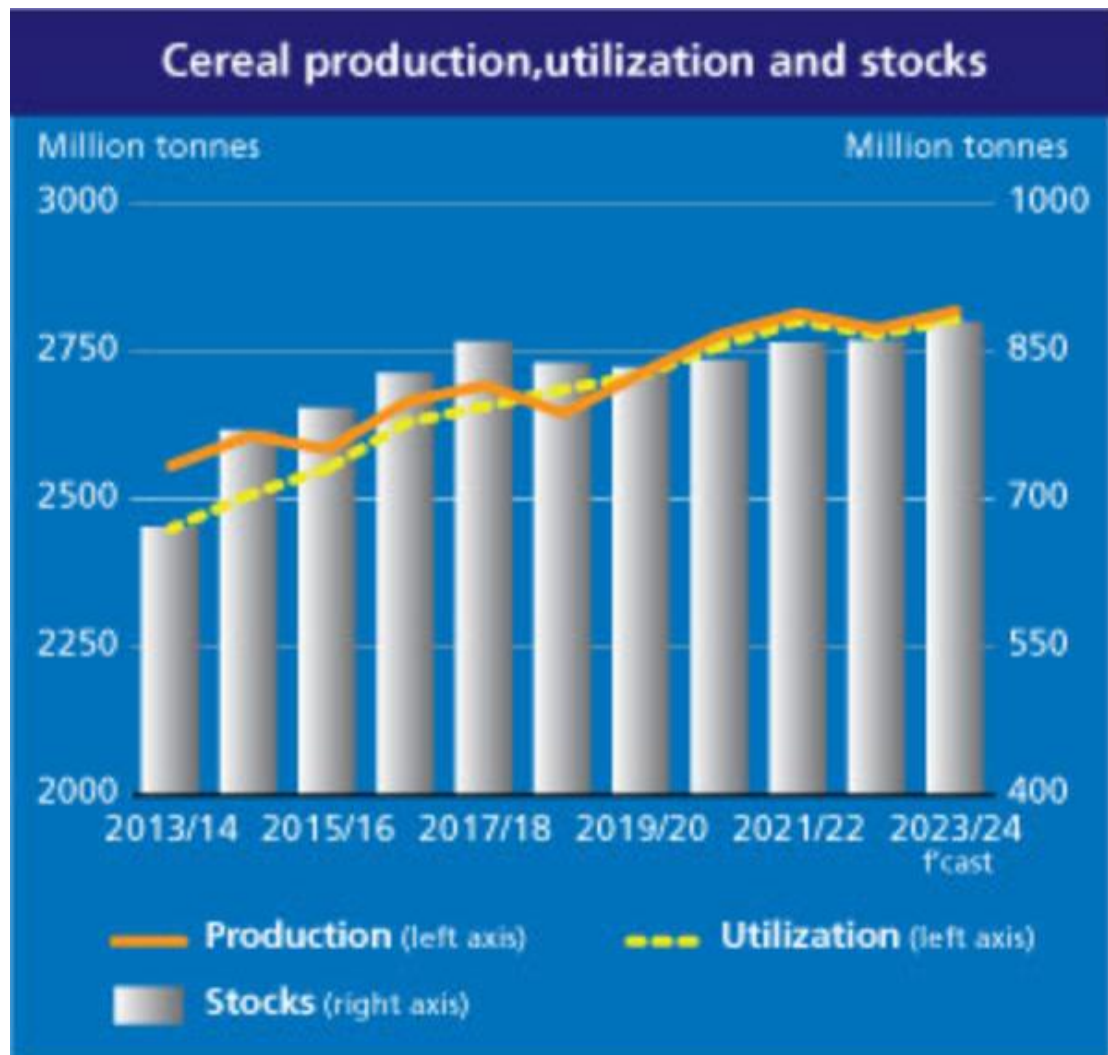
(Source: EPA)



(Source: EPA)

But... but... but... isn't the earth warming... slightly? Most scientists agree that a gradual warming is, indeed, occurring. Some – like Princeton's William Happer and Dr Richard Lindzen of M.I.T. – even go so far as to suggest that might be a good thing. Carbon is plant food, after all. And indeed, NASA data shows a considerable "greening" of the planet over the recent past. Satellite imagery shows significant greening in China and India (the world's biggest carbon sinners).

Meanwhile, global food production continues to set records, even as the UN releases reports fretting that climate change is "pushing millions into hunger." Such claims were contradicted by... wait for it... the UN's own data, which shows production, utilization and stocks for the world's staple cereals – wheat, coarse grains, rice – steadily increasing.



(Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 7 July 2023)

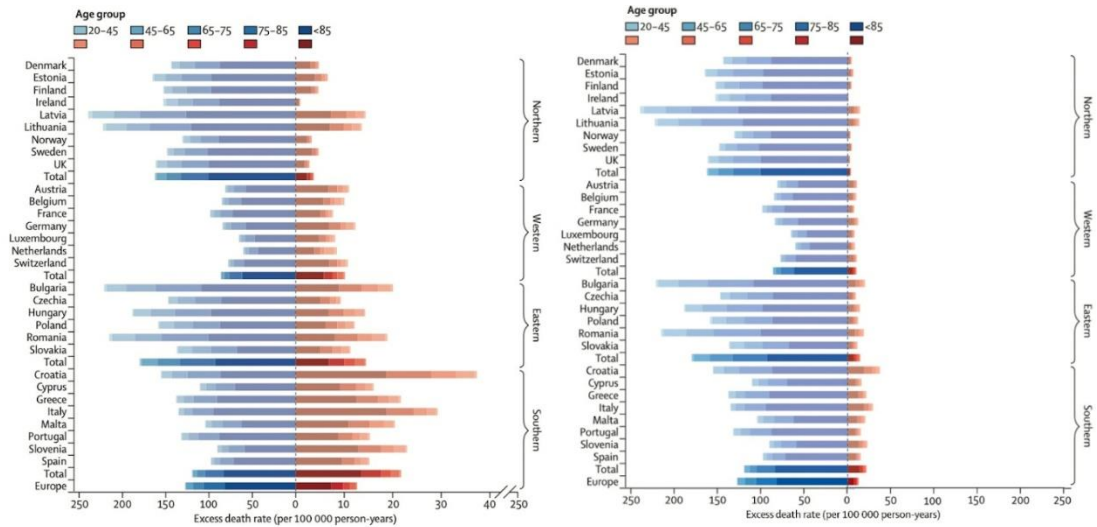
Even Pakistan, which made headlines in 2022 for “climate related flood disasters,” just announced a record-breaking harvest this year. Scarce mention in the popular presses. ¡Que sorpresa!

Also ignored by Senhor and his climate catastrophists: far more people die from extreme cold in any given year than do from extreme heat, although you might not realize that if you read the data as presented by the now-disgraced Lancet. Their graph, below on the left, exaggerates the excess deaths due to heat by manipulating the values along the y-axis. Climate realist, Bjorn

Lomborg (h/t [@BjornLomborg](#)) corrects for this in the graph on the right, presenting equal axes... and the real picture.

10x more Cold Deaths than Heat Deaths in Europe

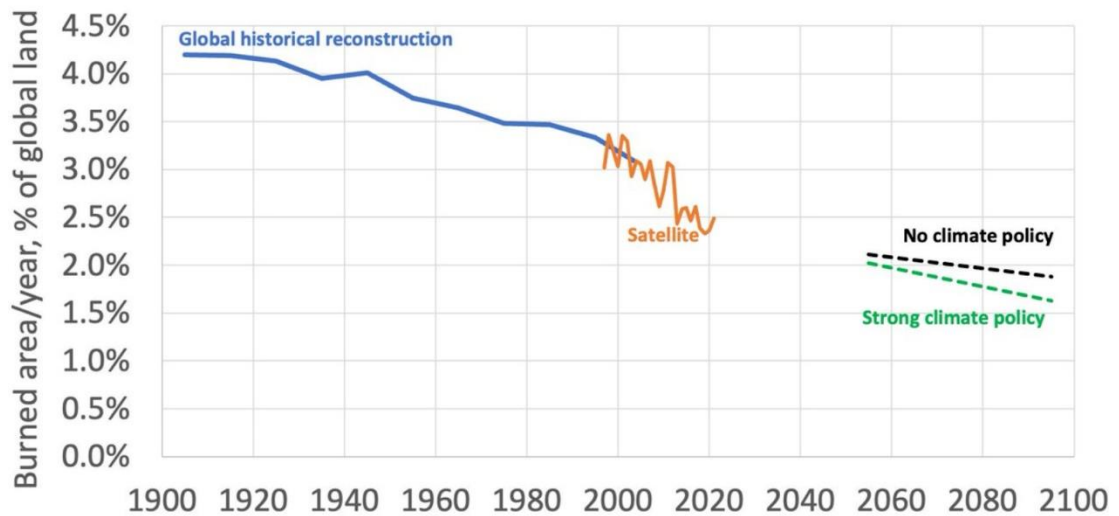
On the left, how it is presented, on the right with equal axes



2023 paper: "Excess mortality attributed to heat and cold: a health impact assessment study in 854 cities in Europe" based on 2000-19 data, [www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196\(23\)00023-2/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196(23)00023-2/fulltext), Figure 3 left, Figure 3 with equal axes for rates of heat deaths (red) and cold death (blue) on right. twitter.com/bjornlomborg

In reality, cold deaths exceed heath deaths by between 500-1,500%. As for extreme weather events, like the fires roaring across (a tiny fraction of) northern Corfu, those too are receding over time as we humans learn to adapt to our ever changing surroundings. Again, Bjorn Lomborg puts the panic in perspective...

Global Burned Area 1901-2100



1901-2007 from <https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/2013JG002532>, 1997-2016 from <http://globalfiredata.org/analysis.html>, and 2002-21 from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0034425718303705>, updated with data from lead author. The two satellite data series were harmonized 2003-16 (very similar). 2021 is an estimate, based on satellite data from Jan-Aug, adjusted to empirical relation between Jan-Aug and full year for 2001-20. Historical reconstruction was adjusted to last version of satellite data (GFED3), and GFED4 is now higher, so historical reconstruction adjusted upwards to still fit GFED4 2000-2007. Model estimates for 2050s and 2090s average of 4 models, similar to GFED4 satellite data, showing RCP6.0 and RCP2.8, <https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1029/2020EF001786>, global land area at 148.94 km², twitter.com/bjornlomborg

From the Ashes...

By morning time, the Corfiot authorities had the blaze largely under control. Even the BBC offered a grudging admission that the apocalypse had not, despite their best reporting, come to pass.

The fires were the result of climate change, they had warned, with ill-concealed glee. This is what you get for your fossil fuel transgressions!

Meanwhile, authorities in Corfu and Rhodes began to release preliminary intelligence claiming, actually, humans were to blame for starting the fires after all..just not in the way the media had willed it. (Here in Corfu, six separate fires started simultaneously, all within close proximity to one another.)

But alarmists would not be deterred. They had a message to adhere to, unfalsifiable though it may be. "Climate deniers are the real arsonists," squealed one headline.

As it turns out, arsonists were the real arsonists. A couple of days later, one such pyromaniac surrendered to police over on the mainland, admitting to lighting more fires around the Peloponnese. Same on Rhodes. And Evia. And here on Corfu. In the end, the government admitted that "the vast majority" of the blazes were set "by human hands."

We asked our new friends down at the local cafe for their take on the matter. What do the arsonists want, we inquired.

"We'll know in a year or so," responded one Cofriot with a wry grin.

"You can't develop forested areas," explained another, "so most of the real estate on the island is not for sale. It belongs to the government. Every year we get fires like this that wipe out prime acreage. Then, in another year, or maybe two, we see hotels and resort developments spring up where there was once green forest..."

We have no idea whence cometh the flames... or whether they will get worse as the climate continues to change... or what the planet's temperature will be ten, twenty or fifty years from now... but when the sun rose on Monday morning, we sure were glad to see overhead a steady procession of aerial firefighters and helicopters carrying enormous buckets of water from the sea up into the mountains behind us. And we're pretty sure those Herculean machines of human ingenuity don't run on pixie dust and solar power...

Special thanks to all the brave firefighters here in Greece and the world over, including Dear Father, whose instinct when they sense danger is to run toward it and never to shy away in cowardice. Whatever our chosen métier, a measure of their fortitude and gallantry would surely be to our betterment.

As usual, feel free to leave your comments down below. We'll write again next week... hopefully from somewhere calm and boring.

Bill will return tomorrow with his usual daily missives. Tom and Dan will be back on Wednesday and Friday, respectively, with their regular research notes.

Whatever you're up to this weekend, enjoy the fine weather.

Until next time...

Cheers,

Joel Bowman

[Leave a comment](#)

P.S. The good people of Greece depend heavily on tourism...which, thanks to the hysterical reporting over the past week or so, is likely to swoon considerably over the all-important summer season. Don't let the fear-mongering press deter you from visiting. This place is awesome. *Yiomas!*



(Today's office... Source: Me, just now.)

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