

Geoengineering to Fight Global Warming, Pushed By Politicians and Scientists ...But It May Do “More Harm than Good”

Scientists Suggested Melting the Arctic Ice Cap to Stop a New Ice Age

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Theme: [Environment](#)

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Proposals to use geoengineering to fight global warming are [in the news](#). Indeed, humans have been intentionally modifying weather for climate control [for decades](#). But geoengineering has not always been thought of as a way to fight *global warming* ...

In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, scientists and presidents considered geoengineering to [stop a new iceage](#) and create *more* warming.

On April 28, 1975, Newsweek wrote an article stating:

Climatologists are pessimistic that political leaders will take any positive action to compensate for the climatic change, or even to allay its effects. They concede that some of the more spectacular solutions proposed, such as **melting the Arctic ice cap by covering it with black soot or diverting arctic rivers**, might create problems far greater than those they solve. But the scientists see few signs that government leaders anywhere are even prepared to take the simple measures of stockpiling food or of introducing the variables of climatic uncertainty into economic projections of future food supplies. The longer the planners delay, the more difficult will they find it to cope with climatic change once the results become grim reality.

[Here](#) is a reprint of the article in the Washington Times, and [here](#) is a copy of the 1975 Newsweek article.

Why were scientists considering melting the arctic ice cap?

Because they were worried about a new ice age.

Newsweek [discussed](#) the 1975 article in 2006:

In April, 1975 ... NEWSWEEK published a small back-page article about a very different kind of disaster. Citing “ominous signs that the earth’s weather patterns have begun to change dramatically,” the magazine warned of an impending “drastic decline in food production.” Political disruptions stemming from food shortages could affect “just about every nation on earth.” Scientists urged governments to consider emergency action to head off the terrible threat of . . . well, if you had been following the climate-change debates at the

time, you'd have known that the threat was: global cooling...

Citizens can judge for themselves what constitutes a prudent response-which, indeed, is what occurred 30 years ago. All in all, it's probably just as well that society elected not to follow one of the possible solutions mentioned in the NEWSWEEK article: to **pour soot over the Arctic ice cap, to help it melt.**

Obama's senior science adviser - John Holdren - was one of those [warning of a catastrophic ice age](#).

The Boston Globe [reported](#) in 2005:

The grandest climate engineering schemes came from the Soviet Union. The most Promethean among them was a late 1950s **proposal to dam the Bering Strait** and, by pumping water from the Arctic Ocean into the Pacific, draw warm water northward from the Atlantic to **melt the polar ice pack, making the Arctic Ocean navigable and warming Siberia.** The leading Soviet climatologist, Mikhail I. Budyko, cautioned against it, arguing that the ultimate effects were too difficult to predict (though he himself had played with the idea of warming the Arctic by covering it in soot to decrease its reflectivity). **John F. Kennedy, as a presidential candidate, suggested the United States look into collaborating on the project.** While **the two countries continued desultory discussions of the Bering Strait plan into the 1970s,** the American government was by then losing interest in the whole field of weather modification.

Similarly, the American Institute of Physics [notes](#):

Around 1956, Soviet engineers began to speculate that they might be able to throw a dam across the Bering Strait and pump water from the Arctic Ocean into the Pacific. This would draw warm water up from the Atlantic. Their aim was to eliminate the ice pack, make the Arctic Ocean navigable, and warm up Siberia. The idea attracted some notice in the United States — presidential candidate John F. Kennedy remarked that the idea was worth exploring as a joint project with the Soviets, and the discussion continued into the 1970s.

Soot is a [major cause of ice warming and melting in the Arctic and in the Himalayas](#). As NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies has [shown](#), soot in the upper atmosphere ends up on the surface of ice sheets and glaciers, such as Arctic ice cap:

South Asia is estimated to have the largest industrial soot emissions in the world, and the meteorology in that region readily sweeps pollution into the upper atmosphere where it is easily transported to the North Pole.

If scientists had convinced policy-makers to pour soot over the Arctic ice cap in the 1970s, we might have had real problems. Damning the Bering Strait would have been disastrous.

First, Do No Harm

I have previously pointed out numerous decisions regarding the environment which have caused more harm than good, such as the government [forcing](#) a switch from one type of

chemical to a chemical which turned out to be 4,470 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

Here's another one. The [mongoose](#) was introduced to Hawaii in order to control the rats (which were eating the sugar cane used to make rum). It didn't work out very well - mongeese are daylight-loving creatures while rats are nocturnal - and the mongeese trashed the native species in Hawaii.

My whole point is that we should make sure that our actions do not cause more harm than good.

For example:

- The prestigious journal *Science* published a report showing that geoengineering to fight warming could [INCREASE the risk of drought](#)
- BBC notes that geoengineering could [harm BILLIONS of people](#)
- Scientists are considering all sorts of hare-brained schemes ... For example, "government scientists are studying the feasibility of sending nearly [microscopic particles of specially made glass into the Earth's upper atmosphere to try to dampen the effects of 'global warming.'](#) " Others are currently suggesting [cutting down trees and burying them](#). Other ways to [geoengineer the planet](#) are being studied and tested (and see [this](#) and [this](#)), involving such things as dumping [barium, aluminum and other toxic metals](#) into the atmosphere

And [see this](#).

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