



Written by [James Murphy](#) on January 7, 2022

Professor Endorses Authoritarian Governance as a Means to Combat Climate Change

A professor of political theory at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, a Catholic university in Santiago, Chile, is proposing “authoritarian climate governance” as a means of attacking the so-called climate emergency that allegedly faces humanity. Ross Mittiga, a political theorist who teaches on environmental political theory, public ethics, and the history of political thought, published his paper *Political Legitimacy, Authoritarianism, and Climate Change* with the Cambridge University Press in December.



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In the abstract of his [paper](#), Mittiga asks, “Is authoritarian power ever legitimate?” After paying lip service to democracy and the idea of basic human rights, the professor then argues that totalitarianism might be the way to go when it comes to climate change.

“I argue, however, that there exists another, overlooked aspect of legitimacy concerning a government’s ability to ensure safety and security. While, under normal conditions, maintaining democracy and rights is typically compatible with guaranteeing safety, in emergency situations, conflicts between these two aspects of legitimacy can and often do arise,” Mittiga writes.

Mittiga cites the COVID-19 pandemic as an example where public safety was used as an excuse to usurp individual rights.

“A salient example of this is the COVID-19 pandemic, during which severe limitations on free movement and association have become legitimate techniques of government.”

The “legitimacy” of some of the tactics used worldwide to address COVID-19 is an idea up for significant debate, of course. But Mittiga argues that more authoritarian measures should be on the table when it comes to climate change.

“Climate change poses an even graver threat to public safety,” Mittiga says. “Consequently, I argue, legitimacy may require a similarly authoritarian approach.”

A bold statement indeed. Which type of authoritarianism does the author favor? Nazism? Stalinism? Maoism?

As any good climate hysteric does, Mittiga claims that what the Earth is now experiencing is not simply global warming or climate change — but a climate “crisis.” Further, he claims that the “crisis” is getting worse the more we don’t do enough to combat it.

“As the climate crisis deepens, one can find a cautious but growing chorus of praise for ‘authoritarian



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environmentalism,” Mittiga writes.

But Mittiga cites little or no evidence of the “crisis” he claims exists.

“The problem with Mittiga’s paper is that he doesn’t offer up a single reference or shred of evidence that a ‘climate crisis’ actually exists,” writes Anthony Watt of the climate reality site [Watts Up With That](#). “It appears he simply assumes it to be fact-based on the frequency of political discussions that have embraced the term for several years.”

“If a ‘climate crisis’ actually existed, there would be human impact data to support the claim. Yet, Mittiga cites no such evidence,” Watts concludes.

But as the [Wall Street Journal](#), [Dr. Bjørn Lomborg](#), and anyone else with eyes and a brain point out, climate-related deaths are down significantly over the last century. In 1920, between 450,000 and 500,000 climate related deaths — floods, droughts, hurricanes, tropical cyclones, tornadoes, winter weather, etc. — were reported annually.

As Danish environmentalist Lomborg points out, “Over the past hundred years, annual climate-related deaths have declined by more than 96%. In the 1920s, the death count from climate-related disasters was 485,000 on average every year. In the last full decade, 2010-2019, the average was 18,362 dead per year, or 96.2% lower.

So, Mittiga’s claims of a current “climate crisis” are apparently in the eye of the beholder. A “crisis” should lead to more deaths — not 96 percent fewer deaths.

Despite his international residence, Mittiga is an American who grew up in Florida. Mittiga actually ran for a seat in Virginia’s House of Delegates and was endorsed by pro-Bernie Sanders groups in 2017. Even back then, he was arguing for strong government action on climate change.

“As someone who has dedicated his career to studying the politics and ethics of climate change, no issue is more important to me — or central to this campaign — than the need for robust environmental protection and climate action,” Mittiga said as a candidate.

Now, according to Mittiga, that “robust environmental protection and climate action” he was talking about would appear to include “authoritarian environmentalism.” Good luck running for office again on that platform.



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