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Climate change: crisis or cliché? Fox News published an article written by Alex Nitzberg titled “Bernie Sanders takes heat for blaming California wildfires on climate change: ‘Global warming ate my homework’,” which claims that California wildfires are not caused by climate change; however, it is proven through various other trusted sources that this article contains misinformation on both the cause of California wildfires as well as the dangers of climate change.

Nitzberg suggests that the current California wildfires were so severe not because of climate change but rather due to overregulation and improper state level governance, which resulted in a water shortage as well as prevention of brush clearing. Furthermore, he believes that wildfires have been consistently happening throughout time in California and are therefore not now occurring due to climate change. The last critical point that Nitzberg makes is that democrats are using climate change as an excuse for their fault in preparing for the wildfires, which suggests the belief that climate change has no role in promoting their occurrence.

Nitzberg’s belief that climate change is an insignificant issue is expressed through a quote he cited by Elon Musk. Musk stated, “Climate change risk is real, just much slower than alarmists claim.” According to a recent article published by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) titled, “Climate Change: Global Temperature,” the rate of increase in Earth’s temperature per decade has risen since 1982 to nearly three times its previous rate, which is illustrated in the Figure 1 (Lindsey and Dahlman).

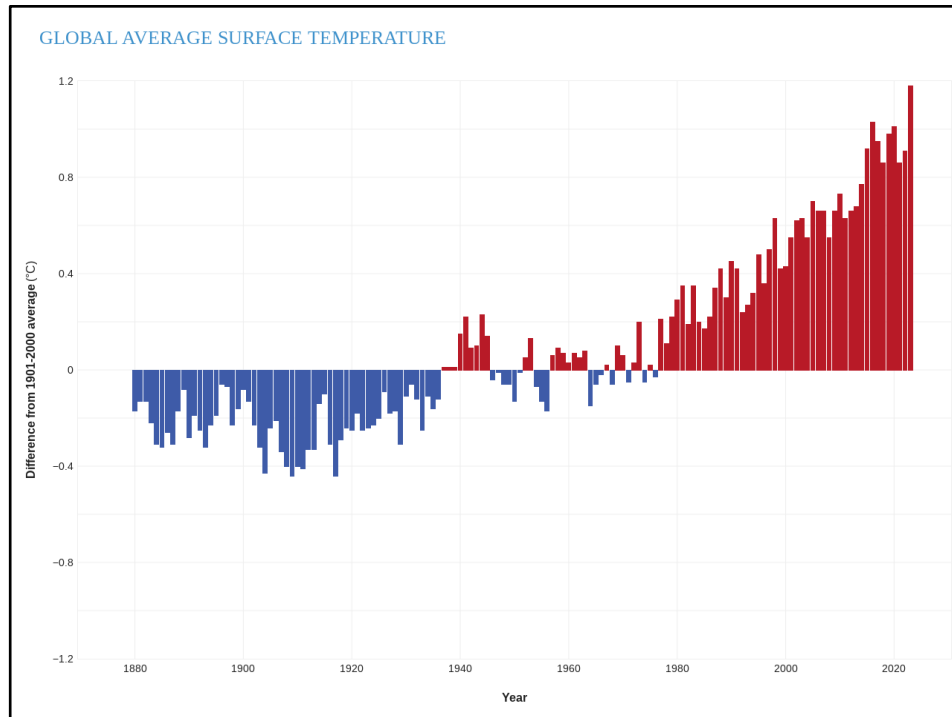


Fig. 1. NOAA average surface temperature over time graph.

Both Nitzberg’s belief and Musk’s claim that climate change is occurring much slower than people think clearly does not correlate with this study that suggests global temperatures continue to increase more rapidly than they have ever before.

Additionally, Nitzberg quoted a conservative author, Justin Haskins, to exemplify his view that wildfires, even ones more severe than the current fires, have been consistently occurring in California over time and are not *now* happening as an effect of climate change. “Wildfires, including ones much larger than this, have been happening in California forever,” Nitzberg quoted Haskins. While Nitzberg fosters the idea that climate change plays no role in the occurrence of wildfires, a study published by Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) revealed, through creating a model of interactions between BA (burned area) in California and climate, that BA has a positive correlation with various climate components

(Turco *et al.*). They placed emphasis on its correlation with temperature, which is shown in Figure 2.

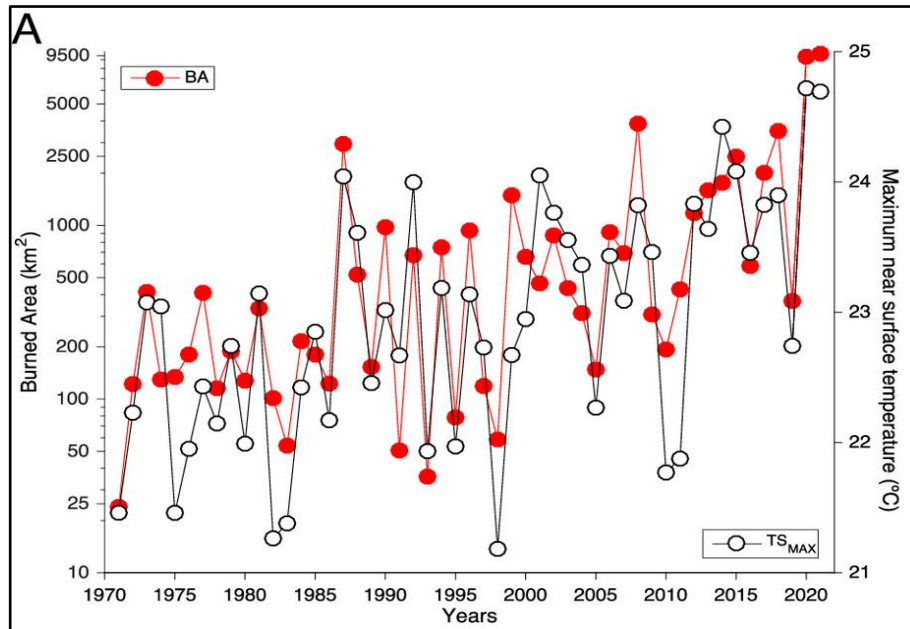


Fig. 2. PNAS graph showing positive correlation between temperature and burned area.

This graph illustrates the tremendous effect that climate change has had on the burned areas of California, with which both have increased over time. This PNAS study contradicts Nitzberg’s belief that wildfires have never and will never occur on account of climate change by expressing the exact opposite: that burned area has a positive correlation with climate change, meaning that climate change does influence the occurrence of wildfires. Nitzberg’s claim that wildfires as severe – if not more severe – than current wildfires have been happening “forever” in California is also disproved by this PNAS study since the burned area of California amounted to much less in the past than the abundance of burned area in California that there has been in recent years.

Lastly, Nitzberg quoted the editor-in-chief of Pirate Wires, Mike Solana, who described his belief that global warming is simply an excuse made by democrats to shade their fault in preparing for the California wildfires. Nitzberg included Solana’s quote, “Global warming ate

my homework' doesn't work anymore. Literally every single politician in California responsible for the catastrophic failure to prepare for this, from water management and controlled burns to the fire department's budget, is a democrat." Since Nitzberg claims that the reason the California wildfires were so damaging was due to improper preparation by democrats, he eliminated global warming as a factor in their extremity. An informative Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES) article labeled "Wildfires and Climate Change" explains that the warmer temperatures caused by climate change indirectly affect the increasing amount of wildfires. Through climate change, temperatures are rising in various locations. These rising temperatures increase the rate in which water evaporates and therefore cause organic material to become much drier and more susceptible to burning, as seen in Figure 3.

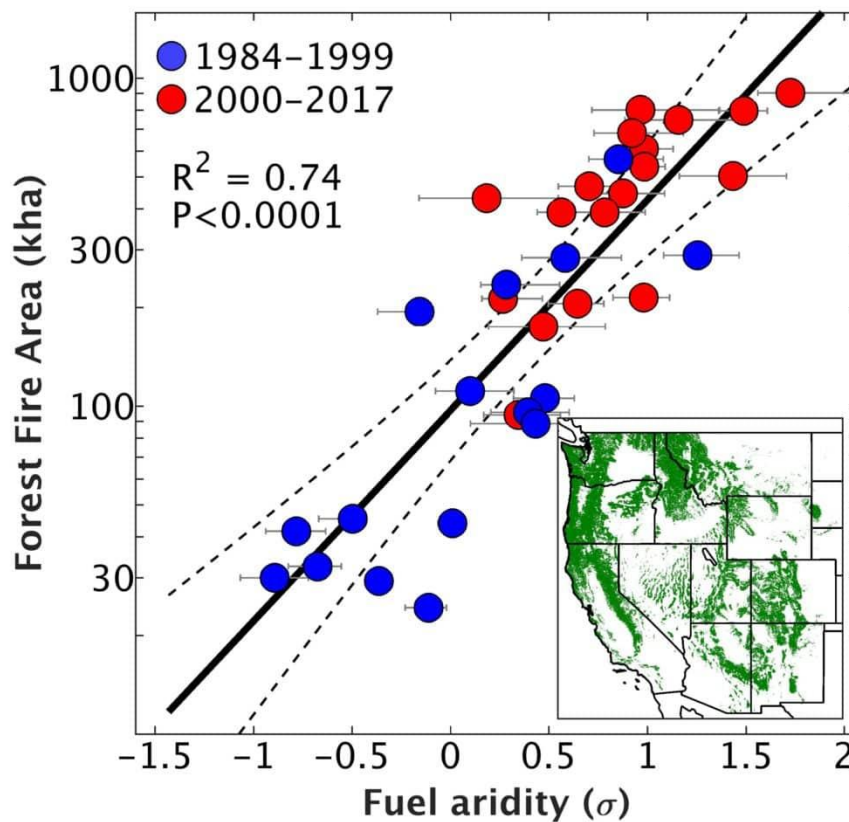


Fig. 3. A graph of the relationship over time between forest fire area and fuel aridity (the dryness and flammability of organic material) (Forrester).

Considering this knowledge, the article further describes that in Western U.S. forests, such as those in California, an average increase of 1 degree celsius annually could cause the yearly median BA to rise by nearly 600% (“Wildfires and Climate Change”). While Nitzberg alluded to the claim that global warming has simply no role in the intensity of California wildfires, this article disproves his claim by explaining how worsening climate change leads to a much greater chance of wildfire occurrence.

In conclusion, Alex Nitzberg, a writer for Fox News, expressed that climate change has little risk, climate change has never affected the California wildfires, and that the wildfires were primarily caused by human fault of preparation. Through trusted sources such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, and the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, these claims were proven incorrect. To refute the belief that climate change poses insignificant risk, studies have actually shown that the rate in which Earth’s temperature rises per decade has increased to approximately 3 times its previous speed since 1982. Furthermore, Nitzberg claimed that climate change never has and never will affect the California wildfires, which was disproven through a PNAS study. The results of this study showed that climate change has a clear positive correlation with BA, which confirms that climate change contributed to the California wildfires. Finally, Nitzberg expressed in his article that the only reason the California wildfires were so extreme was since people failed to properly prepare for them. Challenging this claim, an article published by C2ES showed that climate change, specifically temperature, was found to not only indirectly increase wildfire occurrence through causing drier conditions, but if raised by about 1 degree celsius per year, it could cause the annual median BA to increase by 600%. So based on this knowledge, Alex Nitzberg’s article

was inaccurate: climate change has not only been proven to be a crisis, but it also greatly influences the chance of wildfires occurring.

## Works Cited

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