

October 5, 2015

Spiked On Line celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Simon/Ehrlich wager. We have noted this before; once **last January** and also **four years ago**. Our introduction from last January is worth repeating; "Williamson's reference to the Simon-Ehrlich wager is cause for a detour. The dénouement of that bet was reported by [John Tierney](#) in the December 2, 1990 issue of the NY Times Magazine. The whole affair is close to becoming part of the free market canon. So, it is worth repeating. And it is also germane, because an ally of Ehrlich's was John Holdren, who was picked by President Trainwreck to be his science advisor. Holdren had perfect creds; he is an academic who is usually wrong. Tailor made for this administration, we'd say."

This is one of the great divides in American intellectual life. The doom-preaching liberal/left is on one side, and free marketers, marveling in human ingenuity on the other. Here's Spiked on the wager.

... Population catastrophists, however, constantly remind us of Hegel's alleged observation that 'If theory and facts disagree, so much the worse for the facts'. This is especially true in current discussions of humanity's increased consumption of coal, petroleum and natural gas over the past two centuries where alleged problems always trump real benefits. After all, no one should argue over the notion that they made possible the development of large-scale, reliable and affordable long-distance transportation, which in turn paved the way to better and more affordable nutrition by concentrating food production in the most suitable locations. Or that kerosene, heavy oil and natural gas displaced poor quality biomass fuels such as firewood and dung that filled houses with soot, particles, carbon monoxide and toxic chemicals. Or that cars, trucks and tractors removed the need for work animals (and their attending food consumption) while helping address the diseases associated with their excrement and carcasses. Or that refined petroleum products further reduced harvesting pressures on wild resources such as whales (whale oil, perfume base), trees (lumber and firewood), birds (feathers) and other wildlife (ivory, furs, skin), thus helping preserve biodiversity. ...

*... The fact that past natural climatic events or trends were once blamed on anthropogenic causes such as insufficient offerings to the gods, witchcraft, deforestation, the invention of the lightning rod and wireless telegraphy, cannon shots in the First World War, atomic tests, supersonic flights, nuclear testing and air pollution should also perhaps temper some of the most extreme rhetoric. Or else consider that, not too long ago, countless writers suggested, as the geographer William Dando did in his 1980 book *The Geography of Famine*, that most climatologists and even a 'declassified Central Intelligence Agency' report agreed that because of air pollution, the Earth was 'entering a period of climatic change' that had already resulted in 'North African droughts, the lack of penetration of monsoonal rains in India and seasonal delay in the onset of spring rains in the Soviet Virgin Lands wheat area'. Global cooling, Dando told his readers, was 'the greatest single challenge humans will face in coming years' because it would soon trigger 'mass migration and all-encompassing international famines'.*

That the perspective put forward by the likes of Julian Simon or the social and environmental benefits of fossil fuels remain mind-boggling to a general audience is to be expected. That so many well-meaning academics and public intellectuals remain enthralled by scenarios of doom after two centuries of debates in which the depletionists' projections were repeatedly crushed by human creativity is more puzzling. ...

Joel Kotkin thinks 2016 will be the "energy election."

Blessed by Pope Francis, the drive to wipe out fossil fuels, notes activist Bill McKibben, now has "the wind in its sails." Setting aside the bizarre alliance of the Roman Catholic Church with secularists such as McKibben, who favor severe limits of family size as an environmental imperative, this is a potentially transformational moment.

Simply put, the cultural and foreign policy issues that have defined U.S. politics for the past century are increasingly subsumed by a divide over climate and energy policy. Progressive pundits increasingly envision the 2016 presidential election as a "last chance," as one activist phrased it, to stop "climate change catastrophe." As this agenda gets ever more radical, the prominence of climate change in the election will grow ever more obvious.

The key here is that the green left increasingly does not want to limit or change the mix of fossil fuels, but eliminate them entirely, the faster the better. The progressive website Common Dreams, for example, proposes eliminating fossil fuels within five or six years in order to assure "reasonable margin of safety for the world."

This new militancy is a break from the recent past, when many greens embraced natural gas and nuclear power as practical, medium-term means to slow and even reverse greenhouse gas growth. But the environmental juggernaut, deeply entrenched within the federal bureaucracy and pushed by a president with seemingly limitless authority, is committed increasing to the systematic destruction of one of the country's most important, and high-paying, industries. One goal is to demonize fossil fuel producers along the lines of the tobacco industry.

The pope's intervention has bolstered the tendency within the environmental movement not to allow any challenge to its own version of infallibility. This, despite discrepancies between some models of climate change and what has actually taken place. ...

... So will climate change be an effective issue for the Democrats next year? There is room for skepticism. In 2014 Steyer and his acolytes spent some \$85 million on "green" candidates, only to fail impressively. Geography and class work against their efforts, driving longtime working and middle-class Democrats, driving voters in places like Appalachia, the Gulf Coast and some areas of the Great Lakes increasingly out of the Democratic Party.

It is not even certain that Millennials, faced with diminishing prospects for good jobs and home ownership, will prove reliable backers of a draconian climate agenda. One recent survey suggested that young voters are actually less likely to identify as "environmentalist" than previous generations.

Like extreme social conservatism on the right, climate change thrills the coastal "base" of the Democratic Party, but threatens to lose support from other parts of the electorate. Despite the duet of hosannas of both the hyper-secular media and the Bishop of Rome, a policy that seeks, at base, to reduce living standards may well not prove politically sustainable.

You've heard of peak oil. Here's a [WSJ OpEd](#) on "peak car."

Many environmentalists hope, and oil producers worry, that we're entering a post-car era spearheaded by tech-savvy, bike-path-loving, urban-dwelling, Uber-using millennials—leaving behind generations of automobile owners whose thirst for gasoline seemed limitless. ...

... Now [J.D. Power](#) finds that millennials are the fastest growing class of car buyers. [Edmunds](#) reports that millennials lease luxury brands at a higher rate than average. [Nielsen](#) reports millennials are 40% more likely than average to buy a vehicle over the coming year. Tesla-inspired hype aside, overall [electric-car sales](#) are down 20% this year, with SUV sales up 15%.

Urban dwellers? The latest Census reveals a [net migration](#) of millennials from the city to the car-centric suburbs is already under way. And it's just starting: A [survey](#) sponsored by the National Association of Home Builders finds 66% of those born since 1977 say they plan to live in a single-family suburban home. ...

[Five Thirty Eight](#) posts on the difficulty forecasting our recent Atlantic hurricane. Forecasting models can't work two days out, but greens think they can forecast decades out.

... But here's the problem: The hurricane models don't necessarily have a good grip on either the "blocking" (that high pressure preventing the storm from turning back to sea) or the "trough" (the low pressure drawing the storm toward the coastline). Homenuk told me that the models can "struggle with the intricate details of this blocking." They aren't used to seeing high pressure this strong in the Atlantic this time of year, and minor changes in blocking can make a major difference in the track of a storm. Livingston said the models that show Joaquin coming into the coast, such as the GFS, have the storm "sufficiently captured by the incoming trough." That means they predict that the low pressure pulling it in to shore will prevail. Model outcomes such as the Euro, on the other hand, have the storm too far south for the trough to drive it back into the coastline. ...

Spiked

[The Simon-Ehrlich wager 25 years on](#)

As the famous environmentalist bet showed, Malthusians are always wrong.

by Pierre Desrochers

In 1980, economist Julian L Simon challenged Paul R Ehrlich, the biologist and author of the best-selling *Population Bomb*, to put his money where his catastrophist mouth was by staking \$10,000 on his belief that 'the cost of non-government-controlled raw materials... will not rise in the long run', with the minimum period of time over which the bet could take place being one year. If, as Ehrlich believed, the store of valuable resources was absolutely finite and subject to ever-increasing demand, the resources' price would rise. Simon, however, argued that in a market economy characterised by freely determined prices and secured property rights, a rise in the price of a valuable resource could only be temporary as it would provide incentives for people to look for more of it, to produce and use it more efficiently, and to develop substitutes. In

the long run, even non-renewable resources would become ever-less scarce as they are ultimately created by the always renewable and ever-expanding human intellect.

Ehrlich, along with his regular collaborators John P Holdren and John Harte, accepted 'Simon's astonishing offer before other greedy people' jumped in and offered 'to pay him on September 29, 1990, the 1990 equivalent of 10,000 1980 dollars (corrected by the CPI) for the quantity that \$2,000 would buy of each of the following five metals on September 29, 1980: chromium, copper, nickel, tin and tungsten'.



Between Ehrlich's chosen dates, the world's population grew by more than 800 million individuals while standards of living rose. In spite of this, the prices of all these commodities fell – from a 3.5 per cent fall for copper to a 72 per cent fall for tin – as, just as Simon had predicted, new deposits were brought into production and new substitutes created. Ehrlich honoured his financial engagement by mailing Simon a check to the amount of \$576.07, but never acknowledged the superiority of his intellectual opponent's outlook.

Since the conclusion of the bet, several analysts have observed that Simon got lucky as the initial date coincided with historically high commodity prices (although he obviously didn't know this at the time) and that different timeframes, say a different decade, would have put Ehrlich on the winning side on more than one occasion. While this is true, these comments detract from Simon's larger point and more sophisticated arguments, for he was well aware of the volatility of the commodity markets and ultimately betted on the knowledge that the odds were in his favour, though by no means absolutely certain.

Looking back, his 'astonishing offer' was arguably the clever ploy of a serious poker player with a background in marketing and statistical analysis who sought to draw attention to a perspective then shunned by most environmentally minded academics, activists and public intellectuals. Indeed, prominent critics of overpopulation rhetoric were then mostly limited to old-fashioned

Marxists who, following (mostly) Engel's writings, believed that scientific advances would overcome natural limits; the Vatican whose doctrine opposed population control on (mostly) theological grounds; and a few free-market economists and think-tank analysts who also believed in scientific advances, but guided by the price system rather than central planning.

Although much less prominent these days, the old population-control and resource-depletion rhetoric is still alive and well in some of its traditional strongholds, be they some institutions dominated by the British upper classes (see, among others, recent remarks by, [Jane Goodall](#), [David Attenborough](#) and [John Sulston](#)) or international-development bureaucracies.

For instance, when asked why Indians shouldn't aspire to the same standard of living as the Westerners, the former chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Rajendra K Pachauri answered, 'Gandhi was asked if he wanted India to reach the same level of prosperity as the United Kingdom. He [replied](#): "It took Britain half the resources of the planet to reach its level of prosperity. How many planets would India require?"' Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Christiana Figueres [once said](#), 'We should make every effort to reduce the world's population in an effort to fight climate change', that 'obviously fewer people would exert less pressure on the natural resources', and that humanity is 'already exceeding the planet's planetary carrying capacity, today'. She added that population control wasn't enough and that fundamental changes needed to be made to our current economic system. Professor Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and an influential contributor to the recent encyclical letter *Laudato si*, is similarly on record estimating the carrying capacity of the planet at '[below one billion people](#)'.

Of course, the fear that a growing population is rapidly depleting its finite store of natural resources while mercilessly wrecking its environment is probably as old as civilisation. Some scholars thus interpret the oldest surviving written story, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, [as a warning](#) against the rapid deforestation of Mesopotamia nearly 5,000 years ago. Two millennia later, Confucius (551 – 479 BC) and some of his followers [reportedly argued](#) that excessive population growth may reduce output per worker, lower standards of living and create strife.

After having determined that the ideal number of citizens per city-state was 5,040, Plato [suggested](#) measures such as fiscal and other incentives to increase the number if need be, or else to implement birth control or favour emigration if warranted. He [further warned](#) that 'exceed[ing] the limit of necessity' and the 'unlimited accumulation of wealth' would result in expansionary wars. One problem was the populace's fondness for meat that would result in struggles over pastureland. Plato's solution was a vegetarian diet consisting mainly of cereals (wheat and barley), fruits (grapes in the form of wine, olives, figs and myrtle berries), pulses (peas and beans), dairy products (mostly cheese), flavouring ingredients (relish-salt, roots and herbs) and a few other wild foods (mostly acorn). Echoing his Mesopotamian predecessors, he [further lamented](#) that Athens' back country, whose hills had once been 'covered with soil', the plains 'full of rich earth', and the mountains displaying an 'abundance of wood', had been turned after years of abuse into a landscape that could 'only afford sustenance to bees' because all the 'richer and softer parts of the soil [had] fallen away, and the mere skeleton of the land [was] being left'.

Shortly afterward, Aristotle [cautioned](#) that populations could outstrip their resource base and end up mired in poverty and social unrest. These risks justified drastic population-control measures such as abortion and exposing children to the elements. Writing half a century later, the Carthaginian Christian theologian [Tertullian observed](#) matter-of-factly that:

'[What] most frequently meets our view (and occasions complaint), is our teeming population: our numbers are burdensome to the world, which can hardly supply us from its natural elements; our wants grow more and more keen, and our complaints more bitter in all mouths, while Nature fails in affording us her usual sustenance. In very deed, pestilence, and famine, and wars, and earthquakes have to be regarded as a remedy for nations, as the means of pruning the luxuriance of the human race...'

The first full-fledged population catastrophist among modern writers is generally acknowledged to be the Italian Jesuit [Giovanni Botero](#) (1544-1617) who, more than two centuries before the better known Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834), argued that human population would increase to the maximum extent permitted by human fertility, that the means of subsistence wouldn't keep up, and that the unavoidable result would be poverty, starvation, war, diseases and population crashes.

In time, the 'Malthusian trap' came to describe the belief that population growth is absolutely limited by finite resources; that because there is only so much to share, a smaller population will be inherently better off; that technological or social innovations can at best delay the unsustainable character of population growth; and that because of projected future ills a range of – sometimes drastic – preventive policy interventions are justified in the present. This jeremiad was repeatedly brought to the fore over the past two centuries under the feather, pen, typewriter or keyboard of some (often highly credentialed) concerned individuals. And almost invariably, each time scores of public intellectuals, activists, bureaucrats, politicians, academic journal editors, private foundation and granting agency officials echoed, promoted, funded or implemented restrictive policies in the name of preventing the children of careless lemmings from jumping over the societal cliff.

Along the way, however, dissenting voices questioned the severity of the 'population problem' and made the case that free individuals were not only mouths to feed, but also arms to work and brains to develop new and better ways of doing things. The more people around, they argued, the more likely something good was going to happen. As the physicist Robert Zubrin asks, who between Louis Pasteur or Thomas Edison should not have been born in order to improve the lot of mankind? Besides, because new ideas are born out of the combination of existing ideas, processes and things, the supply of new beneficial technologies will not only never run out, but actually expand exponentially.

Of course, optimistic analysts conceded, humanity is always confronted by various challenges, but in the long run technological progress has a pretty good record of creating lesser problems than those that existed before. As a result, we now live in a world where every indicator of human wellbeing, from life expectancy, income per capita, hunger, and infant mortality to child labour and education, has improved dramatically over the past two centuries. And even more amazing, despite the fact that there now over seven times more (and much wealthier) people than two centuries ago, we live on a planet that is increasingly green and clean where in many if not most places wildlife is much more abundant than in the recent and even more distant past.

Population catastrophists, however, constantly remind us of Hegel's alleged observation that 'If theory and facts disagree, so much the worse for the facts'. This is especially true in current discussions of humanity's increased consumption of coal, petroleum and natural gas over the past two centuries where alleged problems always trump real benefits. After all, no one should argue over the notion that they made possible the development of large-scale, reliable and affordable long-distance transportation, which in turn paved the way to better and more affordable nutrition by concentrating food production in the most suitable locations. Or that kerosene, heavy oil and natural gas displaced poor quality biomass fuels such as firewood and

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One overall result of these developments – plus the fact that plants benefit from increased carbon-dioxide emissions – is that nature, in the form of growing forests and increased wildlife, has made a significant comeback in advanced economies. And yet, pretty much the only thing one hears today from activists who take these beneficial advances for granted is [something along the lines](#) of: ‘ever-increasing production and use of fossil fuels will, over time, kill billions of us and irreversibly change all life on the planet’. Of course, the fact that there were barely one billion human beings around when fossil-fuel use took off and the very notion that ‘billions’ of us might die is entirely contingent on their widespread use is completely lost on eco-warriors.

Yet, even granting the seemingly more reasonable premise that hydrocarbons are incorrectly priced because of all the negative (or unaccounted for) climate externalities they generate is problematic. After all, reducing our consumption of fossil fuels will not make bad weather and extreme natural events go away. In the end, the greater wealth generated by fossil fuels (eg, better infrastructure, advanced-warning systems, long-distance transportation) remains our best insurance policy against whatever nature may throw our way.

The fact that past natural climatic events or trends were once blamed on anthropogenic causes such as insufficient offerings to the gods, witchcraft, deforestation, the invention of the lightning rod and wireless telegraphy, cannon shots in the First World War, atomic tests, supersonic flights, nuclear testing and air pollution should also perhaps temper some of the most extreme rhetoric. Or else consider that, not too long ago, countless writers suggested, as the geographer William Dando did in his 1980 book *The Geography of Famine*, that most climatologists and even a ‘declassified Central Intelligence Agency’ report agreed that because of air pollution, the Earth was ‘entering a period of climatic change’ that had already resulted in ‘North African droughts, the lack of penetration of monsoonal rains in India and seasonal delay in the onset of spring rains in the Soviet Virgin Lands wheat area’. Global cooling, Dando told his readers, was ‘the greatest single challenge humans will face in coming years’ because it would soon trigger ‘mass migration and all-encompassing international famines’.

That the perspective put forward by the likes of Julian Simon or the social and environmental benefits of fossil fuels remain mind-boggling to a general audience is to be expected. That so many well-meaning academics and public intellectuals remain enthralled by scenarios of doom after two centuries of debates in which the depletionists’ projections were repeatedly crushed by human creativity is more puzzling. In the end though, one suspects that Paul Ehrlich, David Attenborough, Jane Goodall and other prominent messengers of gloom who have lived long and productive lives must, deep down, be grateful for living in Julian Simon’s world.

Pierre Desrochers is associate professor of geography at the University of Toronto.

Real Clear Politics

The Energy Election

by Joel Kotkin

Blessed by Pope Francis, the drive to wipe out fossil fuels, [notes](#) activist Bill McKibben, now has “the wind in its sails.” Setting aside the bizarre alliance of the Roman Catholic Church with secularists such as McKibben, who favor severe [limits of family size](#) as [an environmental imperative](#), this is a potentially transformational moment.

Simply put, the cultural and foreign policy issues that have defined U.S. politics for the past century are increasingly subsumed by a divide over climate and energy policy. [Progressive pundits](#) increasingly envision the 2016 presidential election as a “last chance,” as one activist phrased it, to stop “climate change catastrophe.” As this agenda gets ever more radical, the prominence of climate change in the election will grow ever more obvious.

The key here is that the green left increasingly does not want to limit or change the mix of fossil fuels, but eliminate them entirely, the faster the better. The progressive website [Common Dreams](#), for example, proposes eliminating fossil fuels within five or six years in order to assure “reasonable margin of safety for the world.”

This new militancy is a break from the recent past, when many greens [embraced](#) natural gas and nuclear power as practical, medium-term means to slow and even reverse greenhouse gas growth. But the environmental juggernaut, deeply entrenched within the federal bureaucracy and pushed by a president with seemingly limitless authority, is committed increasing to the systematic destruction of one of the country’s most important, and high-paying, industries. One goal is to demonize [fossil fuel producers](#) along the lines of the tobacco industry.

The pope’s intervention has bolstered the tendency within the environmental movement not to allow any challenge to its own version of infallibility. This, despite discrepancies between some [models of climate change](#) and what has actually taken place.

As we have moved from a rational discussion of the issue toward an increasingly dogmatic agenda, we have lost sight of more pragmatic, and less economically painful, ways to reduce greenhouse gases through methods such as conservation, the substitution of natural gas for coal, and a re-embrace of nuclear power. As the [Breakthrough Institute](#) has shown, most reductions in greenhouse gases in the United States have not come from subsidized renewable energy sources but instead from improved efficiency and the rise of natural gas at the expense of coal. Overall, solar and wind, the favorites of the greens, account for [barely 1.35 percent](#) of the world’s energy.

The Breakthrough Institute’s pragmatism intends to create a middle ground between the left, which demonizes even the slightest criticism of green policy dogma, and the right, which equally mistakenly dismisses climate change as essentially a fabrication. But with the extremes in control of the debate, we can expect next year to mainly hear divisive discourse instead of solutions.

The Geography of Energy

In some parts of the country, most notably the Northeast and the West Coast, the imperatives of climate change demand the destruction of the fossil fuel industry. In others, those that depend the most on low-cost energy, the attack on fossil fuels represents a moral threat to local

economies, jobs and well-being. The battleground will be in the Great Lakes, arguably the most critical region for the next election. Contrary to its sad sack image, the economy there has been on the rebound for years. Virtually every Great Lakes state except Illinois now enjoys [unemployment rates](#) below the national average. Several, led by the Dakotas, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Iowa, boast job rates that are among the nation's highest.

Three key factors are propelling this comeback: an energy boom, a resulting jump in manufacturing, and relatively low housing costs. Energy firms have been a major source of new work for industrial firms, and lower electricity costs have provided U.S. manufacturers with an energy price advantage over European and Asian firms. German [electricity prices](#), a result of their "green" energy policies, are almost three times the average of those in the United States.

The administration's directive to all but ban coal could be problematic for many Midwest states, including [several](#)—Iowa, Kansas, Ohio, Illinois, Minnesota and Indiana—that rank among those most reliant on coal for electricity. Not surprisingly, much of the [opposition](#) to the EPA's [decrees](#) come from Heartland states such as Oklahoma, Indiana, and [Michigan](#).

Politically, the energy-rich states running from Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana up to the Dakotas may be all but lost to the Democrats. Before the decline in oil prices, these areas enjoyed a [gusher in energy jobs](#), providing high wage employment (roughly \$100,000 annually) that exceeds compensation for information, professional services, or manufacturing. Due largely to energy, they have enjoyed the highest jobs growth since 2007 and were among the [first states](#) to gain back the jobs lost in the recession.

In contrast, the areas that form the solid base of the progressives—basically the Northeast and the West Coast—have an increasingly small stake in fossil fuel industries. California, which has the [fifth largest oil reserves](#) among the states, has basically decided to abandon the industry, gradually pushing the remnants of what was once a thriving sector out of the state.

For the most part, with the notable exception of Pennsylvania, Northeastern states have little in the way of fossil fuels, and have gradually been eliminating much of their manufacturing base for over a half century. Nor do they have much need for electricity for industry as they continue to deindustrialize. [Manufacturing](#) accounts for barely 5 percent of state domestic product in New York and 8 percent in California—but 19 percent in Michigan and 30 percent in Indiana.

Rise of the Climate-Industrial Complex

Climate activists such as hedge fund billionaire Tom Steyer increasingly couch their policies on theological grounds, one reason why the pope's intervention was so timely. Stark self-interest is also at work. Many of the [Silicon Valley and Wall Street supporters](#) of green policies have been among those most anxious to capitalize on big oil's demise.

This includes cash-rich firms such as Apple, as well as many high-tech financiers and venture capitalists. Some of the biggest new fortunes, notably that of [Elon Musk](#), are largely the creatures of subsidies. Neither SolarCity nor Tesla would be so attractive—and might even not exist—without generous handouts from taxpayers.

In contrast to traditional manufacturers, capitalists like Musk have a well-developed [interest](#) in taking advantage of the most draconian energy legislation. Other tech [figures](#), including top executives at [Google](#), have benefited from government-subsidized renewable energy schemes, including a remarkably inefficient and expensive [solar project](#) that has obliterated a huge part of the Mojave Desert.

No surprise, then, that the crony capitalists of Silicon Valley and their Wall Street financiers have emerged as primary funders of the green left. Much like the oil firms that help finance Republicans, particularly those who are climate change skeptics, the new oligarchs have solid business reasons to embrace the pontiff's environmental dogma, though they seem unlikely to follow his admonitions to eschew corporate greed.

Ironically, the new militancy among greens is likely to hurt most the poor and working class with whom Pope Francis takes pains to identify. A rapid ban on fossil fuels in the developing world would hurt efforts to increase access to electricity. Today, some [1.3 billion people](#) are off the grid, and not by choice. In [sub-Saharan Africa](#), where much of the world's population growth is expected to take place, roughly [two-thirds](#) of the population lacks regular access to electricity.

As [Bjorn Lomborg](#) has pointed out, whatever the negative effects of climate change on the poor, the impact of no electricity and poor sanitation are infinitely greater. Climate change policies, he notes, are an inefficient way to accomplish such things as reducing malaria; the Kyoto Protocol's carbon cuts could save 1,400 malaria deaths for about \$180 billion a year. More traditional approaches could save 300,000 people for about \$500 million year.

Greens seem to have little idea what the poor want or need. When asked, people in developing countries prioritize such things as education, health care, job opportunities and better food; climate change ranked 16th—dead last on the list—according to [a UN survey](#).

But the green gentry retain their catechisms. [Prince Charles](#) embraces the “intuitive grammar” of ultra-dense slums such as Mumbai's Dharavi, which, he claims, have perfected more “durable ways of living” than those in the suburbanized West. San Francisco's [Friends of the Earth](#) similarly applauds slum-dwellers as an “inspiration” for the low-carbon urban future, while [Stewart Brand](#) openly endorses the notion, “Save the Slums,” because they will save the planet.

Needless to say, it's unlikely these apostles of urban squalor would want their children to live like that and it is absurd to suppose that leaders of such emerging powers as [India](#) and China have any intention of giving up on their gains in reducing poverty. We cannot expect they will accommodate the passions of wealthy Westerners at the expense of their own people.

A War on the Western Working Class?

Those most likely to pay for the new green agenda will be middle- and working-class populations in what are now rich countries. Germany spends hundreds of billions of dollars on solar panels and wind turbines that provide only an unreliable [15 percent](#) of its electricity and [3 percent](#) of its total energy. German consumers pay [three times](#) more for electricity than the average American. It's so bad that Germans have added a new term to the language: [“energy poverty.”](#)

Perhaps the best test case for the impact of draconian climate policies is in my adopted home state of California. Here, high energy costs brought about by renewable mandates have devastated manufacturing growth and boosted electric bills, particularly in the poorer, and hotter, inland areas. As [one recent study](#) found, the summer electrical bills in rich, liberal Marin come to \$250 monthly while in impoverished Madera, the average is twice as high.

Of course, energy policy is just one of the things raising poverty in a state where many of the world's greatest fortunes are being minted. But it's part of a climate change-driven agenda that is also somewhat responsible for the state's absurdly high housing costs by consciously limiting affordable suburban growth. Overall, nearly a quarter of Californians live in poverty, [the highest](#)

[percentage](#) of any state, including Mississippi, and, according to a recent [United Way](#) study, close to one in three are barely able to pay their bills.

With the blessings of the pope and broad support in the media, few Democrats are likely to stand up against the green policies. [Hillary Clinton's](#) shift against the Keystone XL Pipeline, despite strong [union support](#) for the project, shows that she is willing to trade blue-collar workers in the Heartland for the approval of the coastal gentry, among whom climate change has acquired something of a religious aspect. “Whether it’s [eating vegetarian](#) or wearing [organic eye shadow](#), we’re all shopping for absolution,” observes [Daniel Engber](#) in Slate.

Ultimately Democrats will embrace the determined attempt by President Obama to secure his [“legacy”](#) as the great calmer of the Earth’s climate. Yet there’s some question how effective these policies will prove. Invariably, efforts will follow to silence those skeptical of the current course, particularly regarding the economic impact on working-class voters. In California, Steyer and his allies have worked overtime to suppress any potential dissent from politicians who hail from the largely Latino, blue-collar districts hit most directly by these policies.

Despite a massive investment in Latino “grassroots” front groups, as well as [politicians](#), this effort is not foolproof. This month a handful of [largely Latino and inland Democrats](#), some of them backed by the state’s residual energy industry, killed Jerry Brown’s attempt to force a 50 percent reduction in fossil fuel use by 2030, a measure that would have allowed the state impose [gas rationing](#).

To be sure, this rebellion may prove short-lived, as [state regulators](#) now seem determined to impose by decree what could not even make it through the state’s Democratic-dominated legislature. Steyer loyalists such as State Senate President Kevin de Leon will continue to mollify his [impoverished constituents](#)—nearly half of all households in his district earn less than \$34,000 a year—with handouts from “cap and trade funds” and the ever illusive [chimera](#) of “green jobs.”

In truth, if anyone has benefited from green policies and subsidies, it’s been the well-off.

They are the ones who benefit from subsidized solar, electric vehicles, and fuel-efficient cars; a recent [UC Berkeley](#) study found the top fifth of households received 60 percent of these wealth transfers, compared to barely 10 percent of those in the bottom quintile. Generally speaking, barrio residents don’t drive \$100,000 Teslas.

So will climate change be an effective issue for the Democrats next year? There is room for skepticism. In 2014 [Steyer and his acolytes](#) spent some \$85 million on “green” candidates, only to fail impressively. Geography and class work against their efforts, driving longtime [working and middle-class Democrats](#), driving voters in places like Appalachia, the Gulf Coast and some areas of the Great Lakes increasingly out of the Democratic Party.

It is not even certain that Millennials, faced with diminishing prospects for good jobs and home ownership, will prove reliable backers of a draconian climate agenda. One recent survey suggested that young voters are actually [less likely](#) to identify as “environmentalist” than previous generations.

Like extreme social conservatism on the right, climate change thrills the coastal “base” of the Democratic Party, but threatens to lose support from other parts of the electorate. Despite the duet of hosannas of both the hyper-secular media and the Bishop of Rome, a policy that seeks, at base, to reduce living standards may well not prove politically sustainable.

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WSJ

We're a Long Way From 'Peak Car'

Millennials are moving to the suburbs. Guess how they're going to be getting around?

by Mark Mills

Many environmentalists hope, and oil producers worry, that we're entering a post-car era spearheaded by tech-savvy, bike-path-loving, urban-dwelling, Uber-using millennials—leaving behind generations of automobile owners whose thirst for gasoline seemed limitless.

“Millennials have been reluctant to buy items such as cars,” a Goldman Sachs analysis concludes, turning to “what’s being called a ‘sharing economy.’” David Metz, former chief scientist at England’s Department of Transport, claims that the growth of Uber and its competitors guarantees a decline in automobile and fuel use. Thomas Frey, the DaVinci Institute senior futurist, says that “wealthy economies have already hit peak car.”

The idea may seem plausible given recent history: tepid new-car sales, fewer miles driven per capita and shrinking gasoline use. In reality, it’s poppycock: The car habits of young adults ages 18-33 simply reflected a lack of jobs and money.

Now [J.D. Power](#) finds that millennials are the fastest growing class of car buyers. [Edmunds](#) reports that millennials lease luxury brands at a higher rate than average. [Nielsen](#) reports millennials are 40% more likely than average to buy a vehicle over the coming year. Tesla-inspired hype aside, overall [electric-car sales](#) are down 20% this year, with SUV sales up 15%.

Urban dwellers? The latest Census reveals a [net migration](#) of millennials from the city to the car-centric suburbs is already under way. And it’s just starting: A [survey](#) sponsored by the National Association of Home Builders finds 66% of those born since 1977 say they plan to live in a single-family suburban home.

Peak driving? Federal Highway Administration [data](#) show 40 billion more total miles driven in the first half of 2015, compared with the last peak set in the same period in 2007. Gasoline demand in 2015 is rising too, soon to blow past the [previous record](#) of 9.2 million barrels a day, also set in 2007. Imagine what happens when robust economic growth resumes.

Consider a related Silicon Valley trope that self-driving vehicles promise fewer cars or less driving. One [Rocky Mountain Institute](#) analyst thinks “if implemented correctly” they could be used to increase public transit use. Lawrence Berkeley Lab researchers implausibly posit self-driving cars are “potentially disruptive,” provided they’re used mainly as taxis, and involve fewer solo rides.

But whether a human or an algorithm is driving, it’s still a car. One disruptive change that could arise from self-driving cars is that the growing elderly population, and others infirm or isolated, will be able to continue owning cars and enjoying the freedom and mobility they bring. And cool tech features may, if anything, make cars more attractive, not less, to tech-savvy millennials.

For all their iconoclasm, the baby boomers eventually got married, moved to the suburbs and bought houses, SUVs and minivans for their double-car garages. Generation Y is going down the same road. The forecasts of peak car look to be about as accurate as those of peak oil.

Mr. Mills is a Manhattan Institute senior fellow and a faculty fellow at Northwestern University's McCormick School of Engineering.

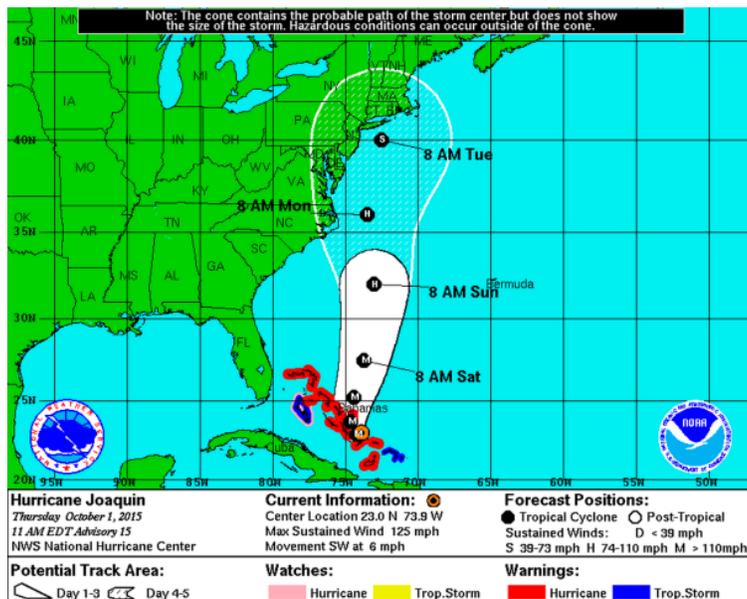
Five Thirty Eight Why Hurricane Joaquin Is So Hard To Forecast

by Harry Enten



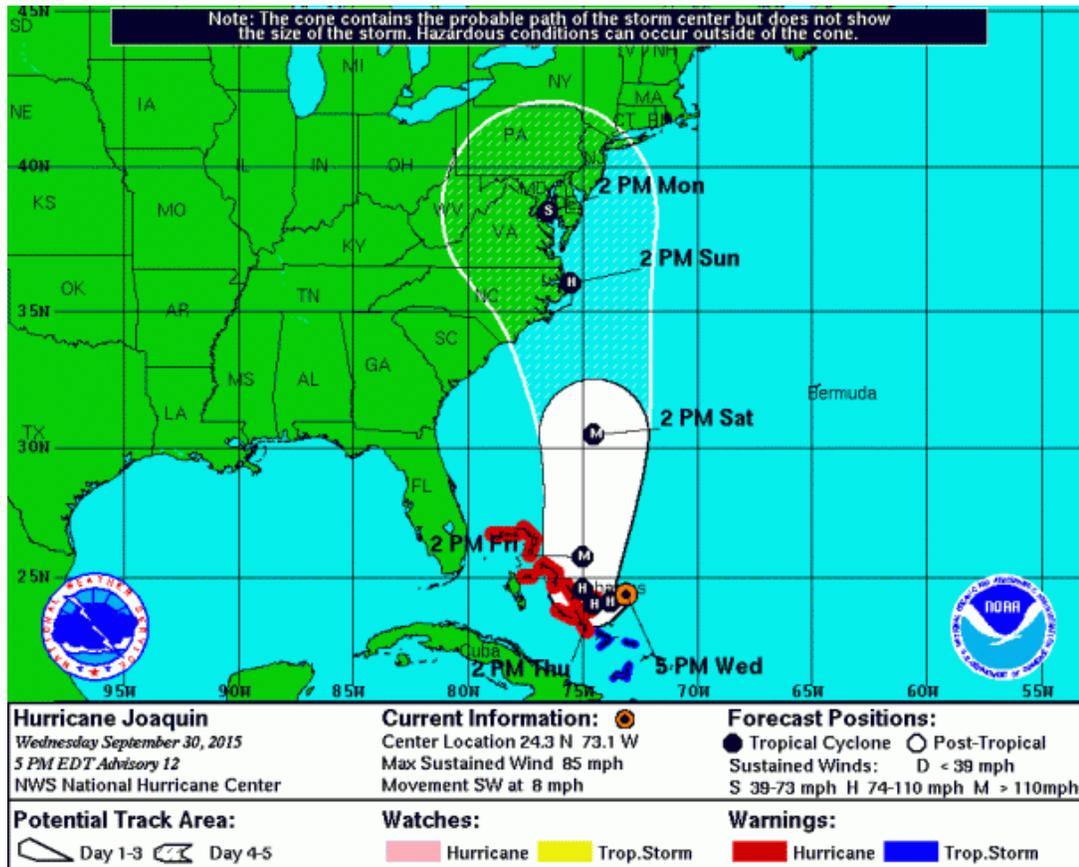
Hurricane Joaquin in the Caribbean on Wednesday.

UPDATE (Oct. 1, 1:21 p.m.): Hurricane Joaquin has been upgraded to a Category 3 storm (and is expected to hit Category 4). Here's the latest forecast:

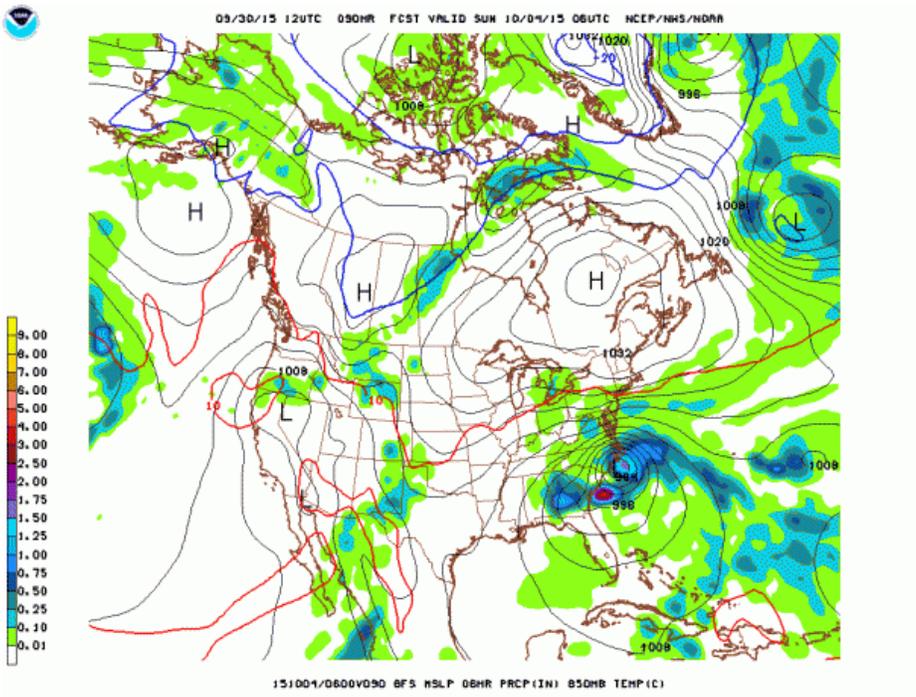


The odds are that Hurricane Joaquin, now [lingering 175 miles east-northeast of the Bahamas](#), will hit somewhere along the U.S. coastline some time in the next five days, but there's no guarantee.

The path of this storm is [more difficult to forecast](#) than that of most hurricanes. The National Hurricane Center [forecasts the storm](#) to make landfall along the North Carolina coast on Sunday, but there's a wide "cone of uncertainty" (in weather forecasting parlance) around that projection.



Why is Joaquin playing tricks with forecasters? Forecasts rely on models, and the models on this one are all over the place. The late-morning run of the [Global Forecast System](#) (GFS) model has the storm slamming into the coastline of southern North Carolina overnight Saturday and into Sunday:

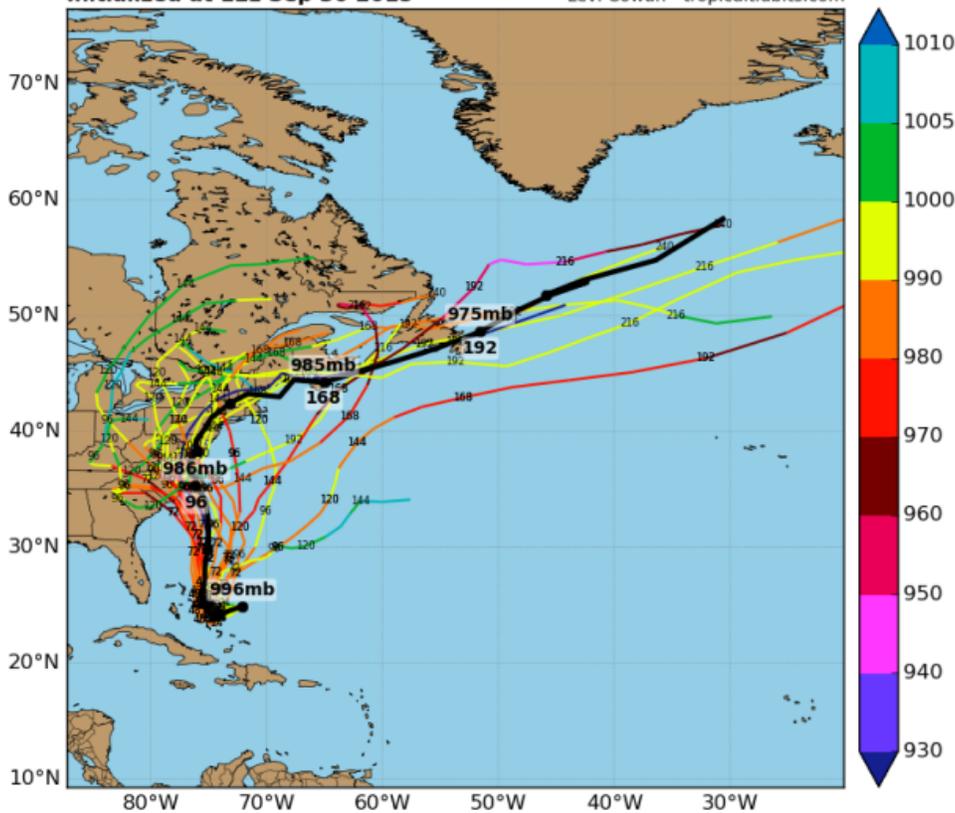


The spread of the [GFS ensembles](#) (models re-run with slightly different initial conditions because we [can't measure initial conditions perfectly](#)) include a number of scenarios where Joaquin veers out east, farther into the Atlantic Ocean, and never makes landfall.

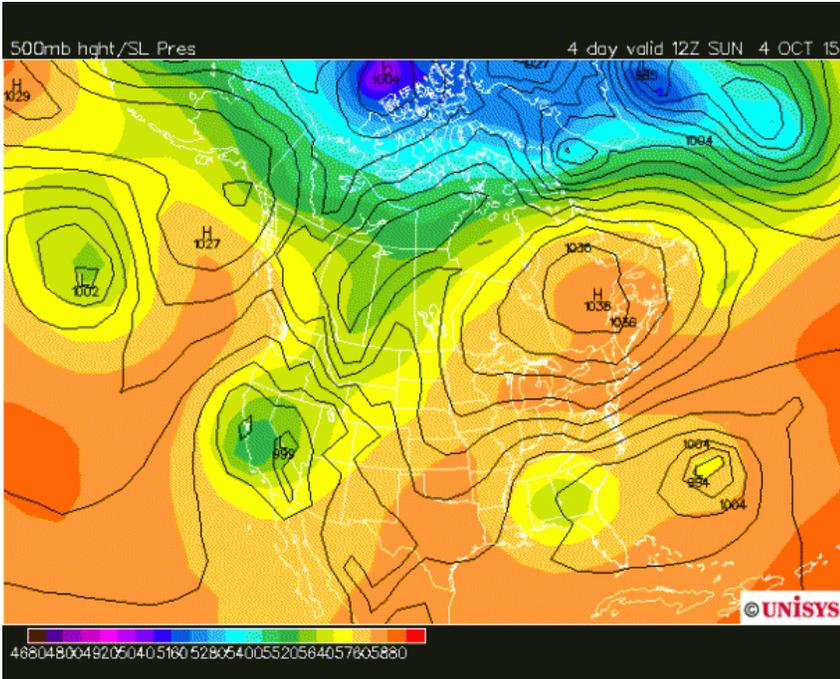
Hurricane JOAQUIN GEFS Tracks & Min. MSLP (mb)

Initialized at 12z Sep 30 2015

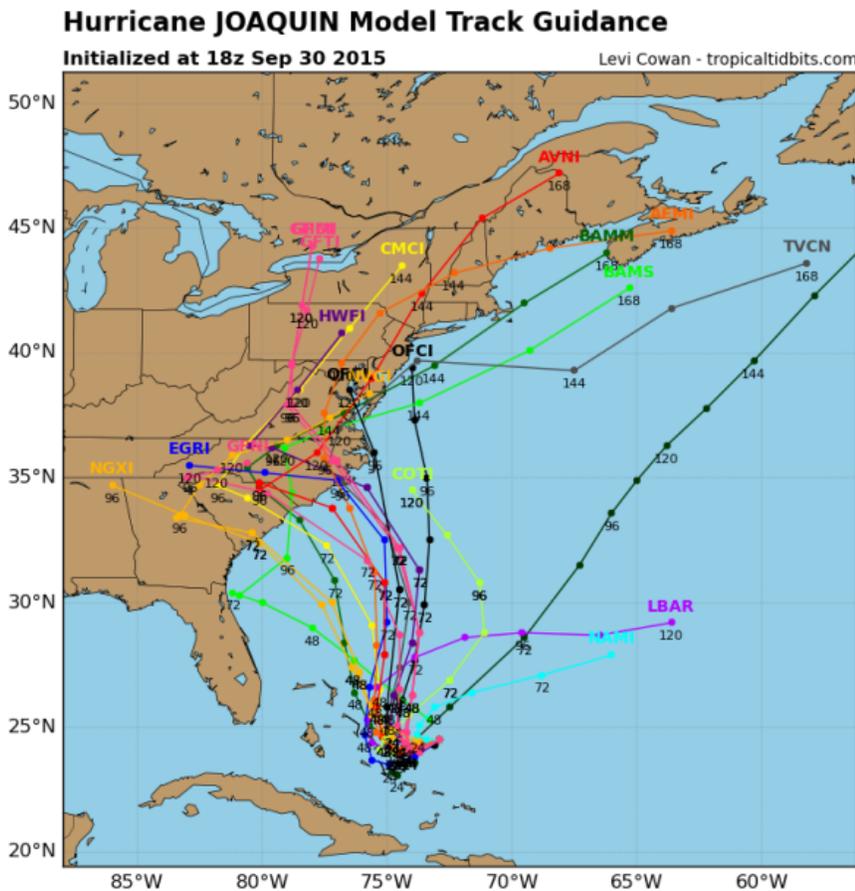
Levi Cowan - tropicaltidbits.com



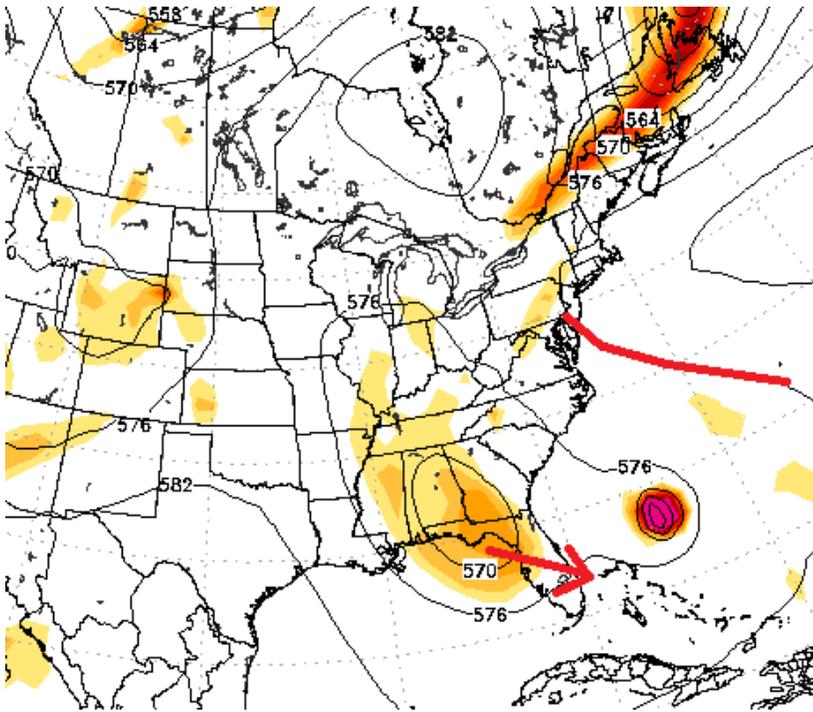
The [European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts \(Euro\)](#), which [correctly predicted](#) Hurricane Sandy's path, has Joaquin staying out at sea as well.



But the [majority of global and hurricane models](#) have the storm hitting the southeast U.S. coast late this weekend or early next week.



Indeed, there are good reasons to expect the storm to hit the U.S. We have high pressure blocking the storm's path over the northwest Atlantic Ocean (see the solid red line on the map below from New York Metro Weather), according to meteorologist [John Homenuk](#).

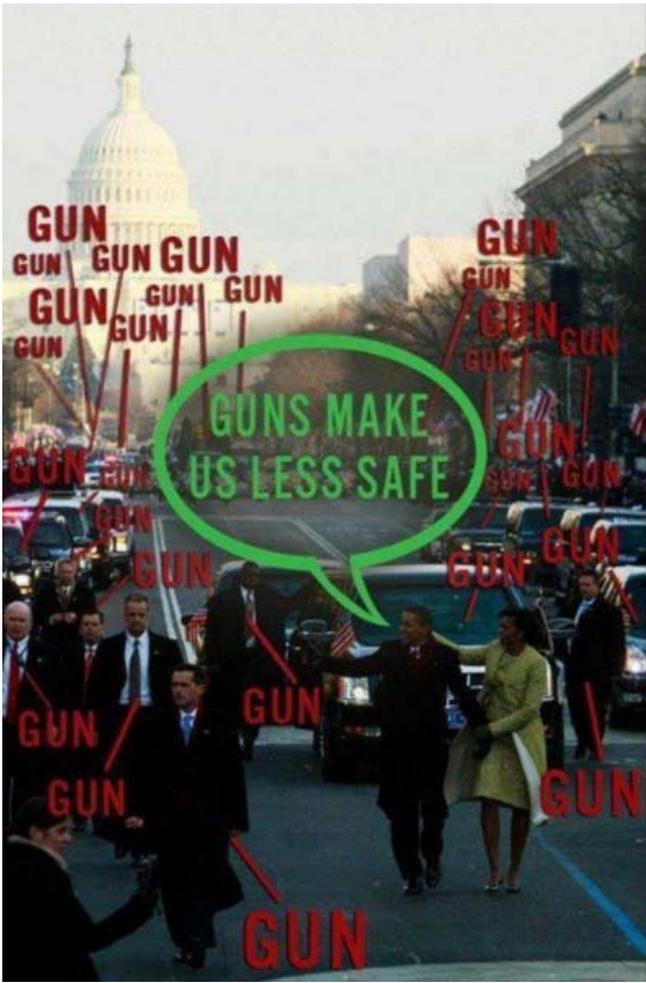


That high pressure could push the storm into the coast. Without it, Joaquin could “re-curve out to sea,” according to forecaster Ian Livingston of the [Capital Weather Gang](#). He said most storms that have made it this far north have gone back out to sea rather than making landfall.

Both Homenuk and Livingston also noted an incoming area of low pressure (red arrow on the map above) coming out of the southeast U.S. that could help draw the storm into the coastline.

But here's the problem: The hurricane models don't necessarily have a good grip on either the “blocking” (that high pressure preventing the storm from turning back to sea) or the “trough” (the low pressure drawing the storm toward the coastline). Homenuk told me that the models can “struggle with the intricate details of this blocking.” They aren't used to seeing high pressure this strong in the Atlantic this time of year, and minor changes in blocking can make a major difference in the track of a storm. Livingston said the models that show Joaquin coming into the coast, such as the GFS, have the storm “sufficiently captured by the incoming trough.” That means they predict that the low pressure pulling it in to shore will prevail. Model outcomes such as the Euro, on the other hand, have the storm too far south for the trough to drive it back into the coastline.

The safest bet for now is to keep an eye on the National Hurricane Center's forecasts.



Life Imitates the Simpsons

