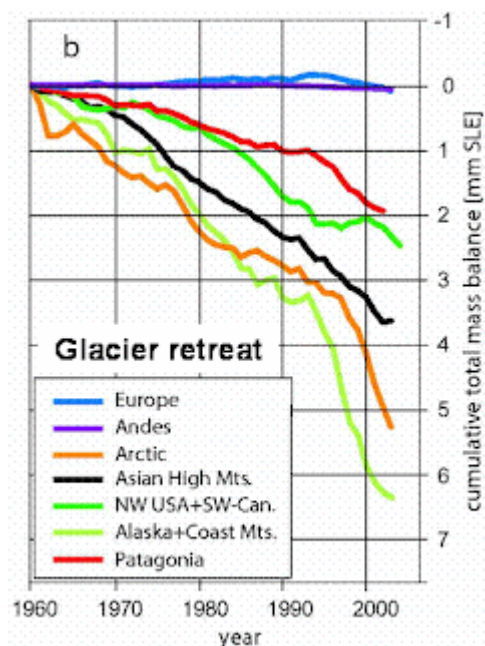


IPCC ends the adaptation = defeat argument



There has been a kind of [omertà](#) over talking too much about adapting to climate change - to do so would surely be an act of resignation, a distraction from reducing emissions and effectively a 'gated community' mentality by rich countries that would look after themselves and build walls to keep out the poor.

That argument cannot stand any longer. The [IPCC](#) 4th Assessment Report on impacts of climate change: [Summary for Policymakers](#) makes very uncomfortable reading... documenting climate change already underway and painting a picture of a slow burning apocalypse over the 21st century. One of many impacts it points to is the loss of glaciers: (see chart from [WG1 presentation](#) - the units are cumulative contribution to sea level rise in millimetres). The impacts group follows this up with the consequences for water security:

In the course of the century, water supplies stored in glaciers and snow cover are projected to decline, reducing water availability in regions supplied by meltwater from major mountain ranges, where more than one-sixth of the world population currently lives.

A neat statement, but it means drought risk for 2 billion people and rising. For Africa, there are dire warnings - with serious consequences stated for 2020.

By 2020, between 75 and 250 million people are projected to be exposed to an increase of water stress due to climate change. If coupled with increased demand, this will adversely affect livelihoods and exacerbate water-related problems. Agricultural production, including access to food, in many African

countries and regions is projected to be severely compromised by climate variability and change. The area suitable for agriculture, the length of growing seasons and yield potential, particularly along the margins of semi-arid and arid areas, are expected to decrease. This would further adversely affect food security and exacerbate malnutrition in the continent. In some countries, yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50% by 2020.

Those changes don't just cause people to go hungry, they cause some people to form militias and fight - it's a recipe for conflict amongst a growing and ethnically diverse population over the declining productive resources. None of it looks good for Darfur or other marginal areas in the Sahel.

The report is at pains to tell us that we cannot ignore these changes. It points out:

Even the most stringent mitigation efforts cannot avoid further impacts of climate change in the next few decades, which makes adaptation essential, particularly in addressing near-term impacts. Unmitigated climate change would, in the long term, be likely to exceed the capacity of natural, managed and human systems to adapt.

I agree totally... our mitigation efforts are vital, but we are on a warming trend for the next 30-40 years that will be virtually impossible to even vary, let alone stop.... see my 'troubled' posting on the lags between mitigation action and slowing the warming [[Cut greenhouse gases and see results in 50 years](#)].

One final observation - apparently, national delegations from India and China were involved with US and Saudi Arabia in trying to water down the conclusions. If they did, the conclusions must have been very scary in undiluted form. What I can't understand is why India and China would do this? They have nothing to gain by being in denial and have a strong claim to demand deep cuts in developing country emissions, money and technology to reduce emissions and 'assistance' with for adaptation.