

# Review of: "When did post-truth begin? From climate change denial to war-mongering nationalism"

Marinus Ossewaarde<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Twente

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

This is a very interesting and relevant article on the interminglings between post-truth politics, climate change denial and nationalism. The article makes a variety of interesting points and makes a relevant contribution to the current state of the art. I have some comments for the author:

1. I think the paper can have a stricter focus and be written in a more strictly coherent way. That is, I think the paper is a bit too fragmented.
2. I think the introduction is poorly written and that this is mainly so because the author wishes to say too much, raise too many important issues. I recommend merging the first two sections (pp1-3), and make the introduction section way more focussed on the formulation of the research question. And explain what this paper adds to the current state of the art, given that more papers have written on this topic.
3. Introduction section on post-truth. I do not understand why the topic of propaganda does not come in, which is key in spreading misinformation. And propaganda is particularly key in totalitarian politics - current post-truth politics also seems to have a non-democratic, neo-totalitarian character.
4. pp.4-5. I think the notion of banal nationalism can be better explained and linked to the topic of this paper, more directly connected to the Copenhagen summit. And more systematically used throughout the paper, in the discussion on nationalism.
5. The section on the modern age I find poorly written and in the end redundant. I recommend to delete it. But if the author wishes to keep it, then issues like the modern politics of nation-building and the enlightenment project of the mastery of nature (and indigenous peoples and indigenous knowledges) should be key topics. And perhaps a notion of banal Cartesianism of the sort that is discussed in Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, first chapters/sections of Volume II.
6. Section on nationalism and modernism. Why is modernism included? Also, nationalism is not the only ideology that closes the mind: I would say that all ideologies do, as all ideologies politicize thought. Furthermore, the author introduces the concept of nebulous nationalism: I recommend to explain that concept in more detail, link it to the concept of banal nationalism, discuss it in relation to the Copenhagen summit.
7. The section on precursors of post-truth. This section, I believe, needs to be more discussed in terms of banal and nebulous nationalism, and more linked to the Copenhagen summit. And this comment also applies to the other sections (including a discussion of nebulous post-truth politics), up to the conclusion section
8. Conclusion section is too weak. What is the answer to the research question, what are the key insights developed in

this paper, what are suggestions for future research?.

9. Conclusion section: I find the final sentence highly problematic and unconnected to the paper. Particularly the 'trust in science' expresion. Which science? Enlightenment science? But enlightenment science is part of the problem, given that it is marked by the mastery of nature project, ultimately becoming techno-science. Besides, isn't science an intellectual elite project? But isn't populism precisely marked by an attack on elites? Isn't a fundamental renewal needed then, something like a new renaissance? Some (like Max Haiven) indeed have argued that we live a dark ages today.

Again, I have enjoyed reading this paper.