

Climate Change Is “Not a Threat”?

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Global Research, September 19, 2019

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I only listened to a small part of the Greta Thunberg’s U.S. congressional hearings this morning but was rather stupefied by the general ignorance and hubris of several of the U.S. commentators. Two main ideas stood out for the short period during which I listened to several U.S. government speakers and the commonality behind the two ideas – other than climate change – is that the U.S. has cause and effect backwards.

Climate change does not threaten the economy

First off is the idea that climate change is a “threat” to the economy (everything is a “threat” in the U.S. but climate change is a real one and an existing one). Sorry, that is wrong as the chain of cause and effect would posit that the economy is a threat to the climate. It is our consumer oriented capitalist economy that is destroying the environment, the whole environment and not just climate. It has poisoned land, sea, and air. It has destroyed forests, mountains, lakes, rivers, coral reefs and many other features.

One representative held up a chart purportedly showing that since 1970, the U.S. economy has grown enormously (as per GDP, a highly manipulated number in itself) while carbon output has decreased. I have not fact checked that and it may well be true, but the unstated reality is that after 1970 much of the U.S. industrial production, and much of its agricultural production was outsourced to other countries where cheap labour, poor environmental standards and poor working conditions combined with IMF “structural adjustment programs” promoted corruption in other countries while promoting the harvesting of cash crops for U.S. consumption and the harvesting of other resources in order to maintain their own technologically “clean” society.

Another much younger pundit argued that innovation was the way to go, not deconstructing the economy. That would be nice it had a chance of succeeding, but in a capitalist society the money will remain on the big ticket items, most of which rely on a combination of the above mentioned environmental outsourcing and our continual artificial demand for more and more consumer products and unnecessary creature comforts.

Climate change does not threaten “national security”

The idea that climate change does not threaten security is a hard one for the U.S. and other western nations to swallow. As the foremost militarized nation in the world, and as stated by the New York Times mouthpiece Thomas Friedman, it is the U.S. military that is the “hidden hand” of the military that supports U.S. corporate endeavours around the world. That hand is no longer hidden but is very much exposed – in reality it always has been for those that have understood U.S. history – especially since 9/11 and the consequent foreign

wars and domestic surveillance and control.

National security as practiced by the U.S. is one of the major threats to the climate and the environment in general, including the lives of tens of millions around the world. “Security” means maintaining the largest institutional user of carbon products in the world, the U.S. military. “Security” means protecting dictators and monarchs who help the U.S. military industrial complex control the usage of the almighty petrodollar for without oil products bought and sold globally using the US\$ that same dollar would collapse. “Security” means threatening and attacking anyone who tries to not use the US\$ for its transactions with other countries as witnessed by many countries recently – Libya, Iraq, Sudan, Syria.

It is also why the “security” state is making so much noise about Russia and China, threatening and acting against them in mostly economic sanction terms, but also in indirect military terms. Fortunately, not withstanding any problems China and Russia may have domestically, they both are creating a multipolar world in which the U.S. “security” vis a vis its military-financial empire is being contained and restrained. While that is not the answer to global climate change, it does create opportunities if dealt with wisely (I know, not likely with the ignorance and hubris of the U.S. and their allies) for climate and the environment to be dealt with more constructively.

Yes, climate change is a threat

It is true that there are threats arising from climate change. But we need to recognize that it is not climate threatening the economy or security, but it is the imperial security state and the economy that is destroying the climate and the overall environment. Of the many species bound for extinction, our current societal structures are helping determine that homo sapiens will be one of the species facing extinction.

Greta Thunberg is to be commended for speaking a simple truth to power. Unfortunately for her and current and future generations of young people, the inertia of society, and the ignorance as demonstrated by the reversal of the “threat” idiom as indicated by the U.S. congress, the path ahead will be very difficult.

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