

Military Madness: Has our Species become Insane?

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Helen Caldicott is the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize and a world renowned campaigner against nuclear weapons. She says that our species is 'mentally sick...'

The whole society is sick¹. We are in the grip of a death wish. She points out that 1 in 25 people are sociopaths with 'no moral conscience' and these are the people who rise to the top; who are in charge. Is she right? Have we really become insane? There is good reason to believe so. By insane behaviour I am referring to avoidable behaviour which will result in our own destruction and would be seen as such if we were 'in our right minds'.

There are many reasons for the belief that much of our behaviour has become insane. Here are some of them.

1. Nuclear Weapons on High Alert - 2000 nuclear weapons are held ready for launch at the press of a button. This could happen by accident, misunderstanding or malicious intent. It came within hours of happening in 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis. It came within seconds of happening when the drunkard President Yeltsin had his finger on the button after being told Russia was under nuclear attack. It could happen now at any time. Is this sane?
2. Nuclear Arsenals - There are seventeen thousand nuclear weapons in existence; enough to incinerate everyone on the planet many times over as well as destroying most of the other nine million species we share the planet with. Is this sane?

We are not told the destructive power of the weapons being deployed but we do know, for example, that the 180 B61 American bombs now in Europe can be 30 times more destructive than the Hiroshima bomb. President Obama has recently put \$537 million in his 2014 budget proposal (total cost is expected to be \$10 billion) to upgrade these bombs and make them more accurate!² Each bomb can destroy a major city the size of London or New York. Is this sane? All this is totally unnecessary. A perfectly sane alternative is available - an enforceable treaty banning nuclear weapons. The existence of a feasible sane option compounds the madness.

Harbouring arsenals of nuclear weapons undermines our very humanity. As the Nobel Laureate in Literature, Kenzaburo Oe, declared "The most terrifying monster lurking in the darkness of Hiroshima is precisely the possibility that man might become no longer human."

3. Nuclear power and radiation - Contamination from a single failure at Chernobyl spread right across Europe. The struggle to keep the lethal emissions at bay is going on still, 27 years later. At Fukushima three complete meltdowns of reactor cores have been emitting radioactive material for over two years and nobody knows how to stop it. If the wind had been blowing the other way when the disaster started Tokyo would have had to be

evacuated and a large part of Japan would have become uninhabitable for 300 hundred years³. If another earthquake occurs the cooling ponds of reactor 4 (loaded with fuel rods) could lose their coolant releasing sufficient radiation to pollute the entire northern hemisphere³. Two and half years after the triple meltdowns started the general manager of TEPCO, the responsible corporation, announced, referring to the discharge of radioactive cooling water into the sea, "We understand that this discharge is beyond our control and we do not think the current situation is good."⁴

Humanity is refusing to abandon a technology which can, through a single accident, pollute countries and continents. Is this sane?

4. The Arms Trade - The arms trade fuels the world's wars. It is a major cause of human suffering. Each year, around \$45-60 billion worth of arms sales are agreed. The 5 permanent members of the UN Security Council (US, Russia, France, United Kingdom and China), together with Germany and Italy account for around 85% of the arms sold between 2004 and 2011⁵. Most arms sales (something like 75%) are to developing countries⁵. The leaders of selling countries are shameless. Prime Minister Cameron recently led a bevy of arms dealers on a selling spree to Saudi Arabia (the only likely use of weapons sold to the Saudi government will be against their own citizens when the Arab Spring finally arrives). Senior UK Minister Dr Cable MP took another 'defense delegation' to India. Dr Cable publicly justified the UK government's behavior by saying if we didn't do it someone else would. This does not earn a reprieve for other criminal activities like robbing banks. Another common justification is 'The arms industry creates jobs' - jobs for killing people. Can any of this be considered rational behavior by mature human beings?

5. Wars - Global military spending is over \$1.7 trillion dollars; more that 2/5th of this is by the US⁵. The western powers purport to be peace-loving. The only countries on the planet who currently routinely invade other countries and kill their citizens are the UK and the US. The western powers claim to be law-abiding. Yet the United Nations forbids armed attack on other states. The 1970 UN Declaration on Principles of International Law declares, 'Every State has the duty to refrain in its international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. Such a threat or use of force constitutes a violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations and shall never be employed as a means if settling international issues'. Clear enough?

In order to stop terrorism we invade other countries where we think there might be terrorists and slaughter their families. Like dousing a fire by throwing petrol on it.

Despite thousands of years of experience to the contrary our leaders still behave as though the best way of solving a dispute is to kill the opposition. Madness.

6. Global Warming - The planet is warming (up 0.8° F since start of 20th c). Scientist are over 90% sure the primary cause is human activities such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation⁶.

Lowest estimate of rise is 1.1 to 2.9 °C (2 to 5.2 °F); highest estimate 2.4 to 6.4 °C (4.3 to

11.5 °F). Acceptable level of rise is generally considered to be 2.0 °C. Our response is to continue with a system of fossil fuel dependency for billions; a system which is expanding round the globe.

A 2012 report in the Guardian states 'The first phase of Kyoto, the only international binding treaty on emissions cuts, has failed to slow global carbon emissions'⁷.

A recent World Meteorological Organisation Report (WMO) gives current actual trends based on measurements. The report confirms the upward trend of temperatures. The recent decades was the warmest ever recorded for the northern and southern hemispheres. This is true of both land and sea temperatures. The rate of temperature rise in the past two decades has been unprecedented and moreover the rate of sea level rising is accelerating⁸. The extreme weather of recent years which has caused countless deaths is believed, by most meteorologists and climate scientists to be an indicator of what is to come from climate change.

The fact that climate change is happening and that pollution is a contributing factor has overwhelming scientific support. Yet our species is in a state of denial. There is a lack of political will and denial is encouraged by powerful economic interests.

Excessive increase in global temperature will result in famine, floods, water shortages, large population movements, and land and resource wars. Surely a rational sane world would ensure that this does not happen due to human pollutants by agreeing and imposing necessary limits on polluting emissions.

7. Sociopathic and psychopathic leaders - The gratuitous wars started and waged by the US and UK governments result in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. These governments support and/or turn a blind eye to kidnap and torture and terrorise innocent villagers in Afghanistan and Pakistan with drone attacks. Both governments authorise the use of the nuclear agent depleted uranium which deposits radiating materials injurious for thousands of years and which condemn the unborn to a lifetime of suffering. Since the war there has been a huge increase in cancers and the number of deformed babies born in Iraq⁹. In Fallujah doctors have advised women not to have babies because of the terrible risk¹⁰. Deeds which would be prosecuted as major crimes if performed by citizens are routinely enacted by our leaders yet they take no responsibility for these crimes and exhibit no remorse. They act without conscience; they are sociopaths and, in some cases, psychopaths (occupying the extreme end of the sociopathic range).

Sociopaths and psychopaths are characterised by their lack of empathy^{11,12}; the ability to experience the feelings and emotions of others. Guilt and remorse are a foreign land. They are both irresponsible and have an overblown sense of entitlement. Nothing is ever their fault. All these are characteristic which we can readily recognise among the power elites of our mad world; in politics, in banking, in the world of 'defence'.

At one time psychopathology was called moral insanity, an apt term ripe for reinstatement.

As stated above 1 in 25 people are sociopaths¹³ and, like oil in water they pollute the top layer of society; their ruthless drive facilitates their access to power.

The renowned US writer and journalist William Blum declares, in an article referring to 'Washington's endless bombings and endless wars' and Kerry's hounding of whistleblowers, that we are witnessing 'Unlimited power in the hands of psychopaths' He adds, 'My own country truly scares me'¹⁴.

Corporations which in some cases seem to be more powerful than governments are also reported to suffer from the same malaise. We are told that 'People like Thom Hartmann have suggested that to be the head of a fortune 1000 corporation, one must be a sociopath. A researcher on corporate psychopaths puts the numbers between three and 12 percent of managers'¹⁵. The book 'Snakes in Suits' by the psychologist Robert Hare is about psychopaths in the world of corporations.

The psychopathic behaviour of our political and corporate leaders is clear for all to see; but what about ourselves, the citizens. There are very many more of us than there are of them. Why do we tolerate their crimes? Is our passivity not itself a form of madness?

Notes

1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUJwWR3VIGQ>
2. http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-05-27/news/39557419_1_senate-republicans-national-allies-president-barack-obama
3. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVOvasvXMVM> (Preview)
<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/05/20/1092637/-Fukushima-Reactor-4-In-Danger-Of-Making-Northern-Hemisphere-Uninhabitable#>
4. <http://enenews.com/tepco-situation-fukushima-bleak-discharge-beyond-control-video>
5. <http://www.globalissues.org/issue/73/arms-trade-a-major-cause-of-suffering>
6. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_warming
7. <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/blog/2012/nov/26/kyoto-protocol-carbon-emissions>
8. <http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/sites/default/files/JulEn13.pdf>
9. <http://theforvm.org/diary/mmghosh/deformed-people-iraq>
10. <http://www.dailyjihad.com/154525/fallujah-city-of-no-children>
11. <http://www.chinastategies.com/defenseagainstpsychopath.pdf>
12. <http://aftermath-surviving-psychopathy.org/index.php/2011/02/24/this-charming-psychopath-how-to-spot-social-predators-before-they-attack/>
13. See book 'The Sociopath Next Door' by Dr. Martha Stout, psychologist and clinical instructor in psychiatry at Harvard Medical School

14. <http://williamblum.org/aer/read/119>

15. http://www.opednews.com/populum/printer_friendly.php?content=a&id=16912

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