

Resource Wars - Can We Survive Them?

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Near the end of WW II, Franklin Roosevelt met with Saudi King ibn Saud on the USS Quincy. It began a six decade relationship guaranteeing US access to what his State Department called a “stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history” – the region’s oil and huge amount of it in Saudi Arabia. Today, the Middle East has two-thirds of the world’s proved oil reserves (around 675 billion barrels) and the Caspian basin an estimated 270 billion barrels more plus one-eighth of the world’s natural gas reserves. It explains a lot about why we’re at war with Iraq and Afghanistan and plan maintaining control over both countries. We want a permanent military presence in them aimed at controlling both regions’ proved energy reserves with puppet regimes, masquerading as democracies, beholden to Washington as client states. They’re in place to observe what their ousted predecessors ignored: the rules of imperial management, especially Rule One – we’re boss and what we say goes.

The Bush administration is “boss” writ large. It intends ruling the world by force, saying so in its National Security Strategy (NSS) in 2002, then updated in even stronger terms in 2006. It plainly states our newly claimed sovereign right allowed no other country – the right to wage preventive wars against perceived threats or any nations daring to challenge our status as lord and master of the universe. Key to the strategy is controlling the world’s energy reserves starting with the Middle East and Central Asia’s vast amount outside Russia and China with enough military strength to control their own, at least for now. These resources give us veto power over which nations will or won’t get them and assures Big Oil gets the lion’s share of the profits.

In Iraq, the new “Hydrocarbon Law,” if it passes the puppet parliament, is a shameless scheme to rape and plunder the country’s oil treasure. It’s a blueprint for privatization giving foreign investors (meaning US and UK mainly) a bonanza of resources, leaving Iraqis a sliver for themselves. Its complex provisions give the Iraqi National Oil Company exclusive control of just 17 of the country’s 80 known oil fields with all yet-to-be-discovered deposits set aside for foreign investors. It’s even worse with Big Oil free to expropriate all earnings with no obligation to invest anything in Iraq’s economy, partner with Iraqi companies, hire local workers, respect union rights, or share new technologies. Foreign investors would be granted long-term contracts up to 35 years, dispossessing Iraq of its own resources in a scheme to steal them.

That’s what launched our road to war in 1991 having nothing to do with Saddam threatening anyone. It hasn’t stopped since. The Bush (preventive war) Doctrine spelled out our intentions in June, 2002. It then became NSS policy in September getting us directly embroiled in the Middle East and Central Asia and indirectly with proxy forces in countries like Somalia so other oil-rich African nations (like Sudan) get the message either accede to our will or you’re next in the target queue.

With the world's energy supplies finite, the US heavily dependent on imports, and "peak oil" near or approaching, "security" for America means assuring a sustainable supply of what we can't do without. It includes waging wars to get it, protect it, and defend the maritime trade routes over which it travels. That means energy's partnered with predatory New World Order globalization, militarism, wars, ecological recklessness, and now an extremist US administration willing to risk Armageddon for world dominance. Central to its plan is first controlling essential resources everywhere, at any cost, starting with oil and where most of it is located in the Middle East and Central Asia.

The New "Great Game" and Perils From It

The new "Great Game's" begun, but this time the stakes are greater than ever as explained above. The old one lasted nearly 100 years pitting the British empire against Tsarist Russia when the issue wasn't oil. This time, it's the US with help from Israel, Britain, the West, and satellite states like Japan, South Korea and Taiwan challenging Russia and China with today's weapons and technology on both sides making earlier ones look like toys. At stake is more than oil. It's planet earth with survival of all life on it issue number one twice over.

Resources and wars for them means militarism is increasing, peace declining, and the planet's ability to sustain life front and center, if anyone's paying attention. They'd better be because beyond the point of no return, there's no second chance the way Einstein explained after the atom was split. His famous quote on future wars was : "I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones."

Under a worst case scenario, it's more dire than that. There may be nothing left but resilient beetles and bacteria in the wake of a nuclear holocaust meaning even a new stone age is way in the future, if at all. The threat is real and once nearly happened during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October, 1962. We later learned a miracle saved us at the 40th anniversary October, 2002 summit meeting in Havana attended by the US and Russia along with host country Cuba. For the first time, we were told how close we came to nuclear Armageddon. Devastation was avoided only because Soviet submarine captain Vasily Arkhipov countermanded his order to fire nuclear-tipped torpedos when Russian submarines were attacked by US destroyers near Kennedy's "quarantine" line. Had he done it, only our imagination can speculate what might have followed and whether planet earth, or at least a big part of it, would have survived.

Now we're back to square one, but this time a rogue administration, with 19 months left in office, marauds the earth endangering all life on it. It claims a unilateral right in its Nuclear Policy Review of December, 2001 to use first strike nuclear weapons as part of our "imperial grand strategy" to rule the world through discretionary preventive wars against nations we claim threaten our security, because we said so.

Orwell would love words like "security" and "stability" meaning we're boss so other countries better subordinate their interests to ours, or else. To avoid misunderstandings, we spell it out further. The May, 2000 Joint Vision 2020 claims a unilateral right to control all land, surface and sub-surface sea, air, space, electromagnetic spectrum and information systems. It gives us the right to use overwhelming force against any nation challenging our dominance with all present and future weapons in our arsenal including powerful nuclear ones.

Here's the danger. The Bush administration effectively threw out the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) over 180 nations are signatories to including the US. Under NPT's Article VI, nuclear nations pledged to make "good faith" efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons because having them heightens the risk they'll be used endangering the planet. That doesn't concern Washington now developing new ones, ignoring the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. It's no longer hampered by the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty either, and it rescinded and subverted the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention. In addition, it won't consider a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty preventing additions to present stockpiles already way too high, and spends more on its military than the rest of the world combined, plans big future increases, and is unrestrained using the weapons it has.

As things now stand, that's an agenda for disaster according to former NATO planner, Michael McGwire. He thinks "a nuclear exchange is ultimately inevitable" by intent, accident or because, sooner or later, terrorist/rogue groups will get hold of nuclear weapons or materials and use them. Harvard international relations specialist Graham Allison agrees in his 2004 book, "Nuclear Terrorism," saying "consensus in the national security community (is that a) dirty bomb (attack is) inevitable," and/or one with nuclear bombs, unless all fissionable materials are secured. At present they're not.

This raises the specter Noam Chomsky developed in his 2003 book, "Hegemony or Survival." Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez admired it enough to hold it up during his impassioned September, 2006 speech before the UN General Assembly. In the book, Chomsky cited the work of Ernst Mayr he called "one of the great figures of contemporary biology" who said human higher intelligence is no guarantee of our survival. He noted beetles and bacteria have been far more successful surviving than we're likely to be, especially since "the average life expectancy of a species is about 100,000 years" or about how long we've been around.

Mayr feared we might use our "allotted time" to destroy ourselves taking planetary life with us. Chomsky observed we have the means to do it, may recklessly try them out in real time, and if so, may become the only species ever to deliberately make ourselves extinct. Chomsky went further in his 2006 book, "Failed States," addressing the three issues he believes are of greatest concern - "the threat of nuclear war, environmental disaster, and the fact that the government of the world's only superpower is acting in ways that increase the likelihood of (causing) these catastrophes" by its recklessness.

In the book, Chomsky raises a fourth issue heightening the overall risk further. He wrote the "American system" is in danger of losing its "historic values (of) equality, liberty and meaningful democracy" because of the course it's on. And in his newest book, "Interventions," he quotes Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell saying 50 years ago when waging nuclear war was unthinkable under Dwight Eisenhower: "Here, then, is the problem which we present to you, stark and dreadful and inescapable: Shall we put an end to the human race, or shall mankind renounce war?"

The Environmental Threat to Our Survival

Human activity has consequences for the environment. It's been mostly negative in the face of technological advances that should be as friendly to the earth as to the profits industrial corporations get from them. Instead, the opposite is true because Wall Street only cares about next quarter's bottom line, Washington wants unchallengeable military dominance

and the right to use it freely, and threatening planetary life from wars or ecological havoc is someone else's problem later on – provided there is one.

Jared Diamond, for one, studied the way societies fail or survive in his 2005 book, "Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed," that hold lessons for the planet overall. He says ecological devastation brought down earlier failed ones citing one or more proximate causes:

- deforestation and habitat destruction;
- soil degradation through erosion, salinization or fertility decline;
- water management problems;
- over-hunting and/or fishing;
- over-population growth;
- increased per capita impact on the environment; and
- the impact of exotic species on native plant and animal ones.

In modern industrial states, add to these contaminated air, water and soil from toxic chemicals, biological agents and radioactive pollutants creating irremediable hazards threatening human survival. And to these add the inexorable warming of the earth's air and surface from fossil fuel burning greenhouse gas emissions causing:

- arctic ice cap melting;
- rising sea levels;
- changed rainfall patterns;
- increased frequency and intensity of weather extremes like floods, droughts, killer heat waves, wildfires, and hurricanes and cyclones.
- a plague of infectious diseases;
- water scarcity;
- agricultural disruption and loss of arable land;
- as many as one-third of plant and animal species extinct by 2050, according to some predictions; and
- increasing disease, displacement and economic losses from natural calamities like hurricanes, other extreme weather-related events, lowering of ocean pH, reductions in the ozone layer, and the possible introduction of new phenomena unseen before or never extreme enough to threaten human life or environmental sustainability that will when we experience them.

Is global warming a threat to the planet? The debate is over beyond increasing state-of-the-art knowledge further. The scientific community is almost unanimous except for outliers in it

allied to the Bush administration, Big Oil or Big Chemical willing to say anything if it pays enough. These fraudsters spurn what scientific academies from all G-8 countries plus China, India and Brazil acknowledged prior to the 2005 G-8 summit in Perthshire, Scotland. Their alarming low-key statement read: "The scientific understanding of climate change is now sufficiently clear to justify prompt action. It is vital that all nations identify cost-effective steps that they can take now, to contribute to substantial and long-term reduction in net global greenhouse gas emissions."

The Bush administration's failure to address what's now accepted as fact means America may one day face the dark future Peter Tatchell wrote about last November in the London Guardian after joining 20,000 protesters at a Saturday rally in Britain's capital. They "call(ed) for urgent international action to halt global warming" with Tatchell disturbed one million weren't in the streets demanding it.

He painted a grim picture of life in the UK with a glimpse of what's ahead for the US and other nations, especially in coastal areas, if drastic remediable action isn't undertaken soon. He began by calling "unchecked climate change....likely to be a thousand times worse than the horrors of Iraq. By 2080, England may no longer be green and pleasant. Instead, we'll probably be living in a brown, sunburnt country (like the Australian outback or US desert southwest)."

He described a scenario only Hollywood filmmakers might conceive - scorching drought, unpredictable semi-tropical downpours, flash floods with coastal cities waste-deep in water, rising sea levels and tidal surges turning streets into canals "with much of low-lying London becoming a British version of Venice," and all of London, Manchester and Liverpool frequently swamped by rising sea levels and tidal surges. This is the England he sees in less than eight decades unless global warming is stopped.

And that's just "phase one" with a nastier "phase two" ahead in the 22nd century - "a Siberian-style ice age blanketing Britain and all of Europe for most of the year, with blizzards so strong and temperatures so low that food production will almost cease and our economies will be just a shadow of what they are today." Already we've had a foretaste, he noted, with recent European heat waves killing thousands and many more devastated by flash floods.

Tatchell continued saying most climatologists predict a two to five degree average global temperature increase by 2100 as things now stand. That will produce all the devastating consequences listed above an island nation like Britain won't be able to handle - loss of "low-lying coastal and river estuary regions" shrinking and changing the country's geography permanently and harming inland areas as well.

He noted researchers at the government's Office of Science and Technology believe "catastrophic mega floods," having the negative economic impact of a major war, can be expected over the next two decades, and "lower-level floods will become routine causing around (\$40 billion in) damage annually." Regular flooding in a country Britain's size "could put two million houses and five to six million people at constant risk" making homes uninsurable and unsellable "causing a cataclysmic melt-down in house prices" in flood-prone regions and a "corresponding astronomical rise in house prices" in secure areas.

Further, millions of flooded out refugees will have to leave unusable homes behind. With no ability to pay for new accommodations, they'll need government help to get by. And

businesses, too, will suffer. Many will have to relocate to safer areas at great cost meaning job losses will follow making things even worse. Power generating plants will be hit as well including coastal nuclear reactors with potential calamitous risks from that possibility alone.

Tatchell continued with much more painting an overall picture so dire, Britain no longer will be a fit place to live in. But bad as that prospect is, poorer countries around the world will fare even worse. One billion people in river delta areas (the rice bowl parts of the countries) of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Vietnam, and China will see their land disappear under rising sea water causing a catastrophic drop in essential food production unlikely able to be made up.

Sometime around 2100, forests will have died, plankton will be gone by rising sea temperatures, and "these two important 'carbon sinks' will no longer be able to absorb dioxide emissions. (In addition, higher) sea temperatures will also release....vast amounts of methane....trapped in the world's oceans....sending temperatures soaring." Further, the disappearance of polar ice caps will raise sea levels at least five meters removing vast areas of the earth's land mass.

Now, imagine how much worse things may be in the US, facing future hazards this great, with a land mass 39 times greater than Britain and a population five times the size. Democrat and Republican leaders ignore the threat meaning manana is someone else's problem.

A day of reckoning may be approaching faster than earlier thought based on information Environment Editor Geoffrey Lean wrote June 3 in the London Independent. His article is titled "Global Warming 'Is (accelerating) Three Times Faster Than Worst Predictions' " according to new "starting, authoritative studies." One of them by the US National Academy of Sciences (NAS) shows CO2 emissions increasing 3% a year now compared to 1.1% in the 1990s. It's causing seas rising twice as rapidly and Arctic ice cap melting three times faster than previously believed.

The NAS report is even grimmer than this year's "massive reports" and worst case scenario by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) suggesting their forecasts of "devastating harvests, dwindling water supplies, melting ice and loss of species (likely understate) the threat facing the world." Another study by the University of California's National Snow and Ice Data Center shows "Arctic ice has declined by 7.8 per cent a decade over the past 50 years, compared with an average estimate by IPCC computer models of 2.5 per cent."

Sum it up everywhere, underscored by these most recent findings, and it spells apocalypse made worse with many governments having to rule by decree to control chaos and disorder. It means democracy, civil liberties, human rights and most essential amenities are out the window in tomorrow's world sounding more like Dante's hell on earth because today we didn't care enough to prevent it. Moreover, it's wishful thinking imagining new technologies will emerge solving everything. Nor will market-based economies where profits trump common sense. How could they ever improve in the future what they've only worsened up to now.

Change cuts both ways though, and despite the apocalyptic title of his book, "Collapse," Jared Diamond notes his sub-title is "How Societies Choose to Succeed or Fail" saying that better states his sense of things. Ending an interview published in the spring, 2005 issue of

New Perspectives Quarterly, he says “We are in a horse race between the forces of destruction and....a solution. It is an exponentially accelerating race of unknown outcome (with his gut feeling being) it is up for grabs.” He continues saying we have a “fighting chance” to solve a “crisis of unsustainability....if we choose to do so (but) It will be fatal to our civilization, or near fatal, if we don’t.”

Nuclear Power Is Not the Solution

In the interview cited above, Diamond doesn’t address nuclear power, but he did in a July, 2005 public lecture in San Francisco. Mark Hertsgaard featured his comments in his August 12, 2005 Tom Paine.com and Common Dreams.org articles titled “Nukes Aren’t Green.” Diamond surprised his audience saying global warming is so grave “we need everything available to us, including nuclear power” to deal with it, disagreeing with most environmentalists believing otherwise and then some.

Nuclear power won’t solve, or even alleviate global warming, according to Helen Caldicott in her important 2006 book, “Nuclear Power Is Not the Answer.” That’s aside from the catastrophic consequences from commercial reactor malfunction-caused meltdowns, terror attacks on them with the same result, or fissionable material falling into the wrong hands and used against us. Caldicott explained, contrary to government and industry propaganda, nuclear power generation discharges significant greenhouse gas emissions plus hundreds of thousands of curies of deadly radioactive gases and other radioactive elements into the environment every year.

The 103 US nuclear power plants are also sitting ducks to retaliatory terror attacks experts say will happen sooner or later. It means if one of Chicago’s 11 operating commercial reactors melts down from malfunction or attack, and the city is downwind from the fallout, the entire area will become uninhabitable forever and would have to be evacuated quickly with all possessions, including homes, left behind and lost.

Caldicott explains much more noting commercial plants are atom bomb factories. A 1000 megawatt reactor produces 500 pounds of plutonium annually while only 10 pounds of this most toxic of all substances are needed for a bomb powerful enough to devastate a large city. She also exposes the myth that nuclear energy is “cleaner and greener.” Although commercial reactors emit no carbon dioxide (CO₂), the primary greenhouse gas causing global warming, they require a vast infrastructure, called the nuclear fuel cycle, which uses huge and rapidly growing amounts of fossil fuels. Each stage in the cycle adds to the problem starting with the largest and unavoidable energy needed to mine and mill uranium fuel needing fossil fuel to do it. Then there are the tail millings and what to do with them. They require great amounts of greenhouse-emitting fossil fuels to remediate.

Other steps in the nuclear fuel cycle also depend on fossil fuels including the conversion of uranium to hexafluoride gas prior to enrichment, the enrichment process, and the conversion of enriched uranium hexafluoride gas to fuel pellets. Then there’s nuclear plant construction, dismantling and cleanup at the end of their useful life, and all this requires huge amounts of energy. So does contaminated water cooling reactors, and the enormous problem of radioactive nuclear waste handling, transportation and disposal/storage. In sum, nuclear power isn’t the solution to global warming or anything else. Its risky technology plays nuclear Russian roulette with planet earth betting against long odds where losing means losing everything.

If that's not bad enough, Caldicott shows how much worse it is summarized briefly below:

- the economics of nuclear power don't add up for an expensive technology, aside from the risks involved, the pollution generated, and the cost of insuring commercial plants needing billions in government subsidies private insurers won't cover.
- the toll on human health to uranium miners, nuclear industry workers and potentially everyone living close to reactors including those downwind from them.
- accidental or terrorist-induced nuclear core meltdowns, already addressed, in one or more of the 438 operating plants in 33 countries worldwide and huge numbers of new ones under construction or planned increasing the danger further.
- nuclear waste storage that in the US will be Yucca Mountain known to be unsafe as it's located in an active earthquake zone unable to assure no leakage or seepage will occur for the 500,000 years needed to guarantee safety.
- Newer planned so-called Generation III, III + and Generation IV reactor designs even more dangerous than earlier ones now in operation with plans to build hundreds of them worldwide despite the safety risk.
- the unacceptable madness of nuclear weapons proliferation assuring eventually a rogue nation or group will have enough fissionable material for a crude bomb and will use it with devastating consequences.
- the unacceptable threat of nuclear war causing nuclear winter ending all life on the planet if it happens.

In light of Caldicott's convincing case, the solution seems clear for friends of the earth and everyone else. Western and allied major nations need a cooperative joint "Manhattan-type Project" to develop safe, non-nuclear, non-greenhouse gas emitting, alternative energy sources replacing ones now used harming the planet and threatening our survival. In addition, conservation must be emphasized and wasteful western lifestyles must change voluntarily or by law because there's no other choice.

Final Thoughts

This article addresses reckless living unmindful of the consequences. It's about endless wars and resources they're waged for. It's about gaining control of what we can't do without, but must learn to, or we'll risk losing far more, including the planet's ability to sustain life. If we reach that point, it won't matter except to resilient beetles and bacteria free at last from us. Instead of being an asset, superior human intelligence has us on the brink of our own self-destruction. It proves Ernst Mayr right saying greater brain power won't guarantee our survival even though it may have helped him live 100 years till 2005.

The human species teeters on the edge putting excess personal gratification and living for today ahead of the long-term consequences of bad behavior. That assures one day Nixon and Ford Council of Economic Advisors chairman Herb Stein's maxim will bite us. Back then, he noted "Things that can't go on forever, don't." He meant bad economic policy, but his comment applies to all excesses, especially the worst ones, and what's worse than endless wars, the threat of nuclear ones, and the sure threat ecological havoc will destroy us if nuclear war doesn't do it first.

We know this and can explain it in precise, sensible, scientific terms, but what good does it do when we won't heed our own advice. The privileged are rolling in good times, but look at the problem this way. We're all at Cinderella's ball and have till midnight to leave or turn into pumpkins losing everything. At this ball, clocks have no hands, so guessing right plays Russian roulette with planet earth. This article asks: can we survive our resource wars? The answer is only if we stop waging them and start using our superior intelligence to protect the earth, not destroy it as we're doing now.

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