

The horrors of climate change and war

Alan Betts (April 9th)

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Climate extremes are getting worse and harder to forecast. My columns this past year have covered the two aspects of this. One side is simply the destruction of the Earth for profit by the Fossil Empire and business-as-usual capitalism. Industries and individuals are making billions from this, and it is supported by webs of lies and massive advertising that is self-funding. A related thread has been the struggle between these webs of lies and the Truth that sets you free to act on behalf of the Earth.

In contrast, the Earth's emerging takeover of the climate system, refocusing explicit damage on our fossil fuel infrastructure suggests a brighter future, unless you are part of the corrupt establishment. After waiting forty years for the Fossil Empire to change direction, the living Earth, faced with human stupidity and destruction, has chosen to exercise its broad long-term responsibility to life on Earth. Our webs of lies and our greed mean nothing to the Earth.

You may recall the extreme record temperatures last summer in the north-western US and Canada, far above any ever seen before. As I write even more extreme temperature records were set in eastern Antarctica, as much as 70°F above the climatology that goes back 66 years. Stunned scientists simply said: "If you had told me this was going to happen a few days ago, we would never have believed you". But the Earth simply sent warm winds from Australia. Does it matter since Antarctica is the coldest place on Earth, even though it is the region that is warming the fastest? Well it does matter because with a few degrees more warming, the massive ice-sheets will start melting and global sea-level will rise some 20-30 ft. We cannot give you a date as the Earth is in charge, but we can advise you not to buy that coastal home, and suggest you ignore the climate change lies from Florida.

The war in Ukraine for the past month has exposed many dark sides, and many more webs of lies. In US politics it is a reminder of the first impeachment trial of Trump, who withheld key military aid to Ukraine, because Ukrainian President Zelensky could not be blackmailed to create fake evidence against Biden.

More generally all our wars are based on dark webs of lies. The US has the largest military budget in the world but it cannot intervene in the Ukraine, as Russia has threatened to respond by using its nuclear weapons. The US also has a rather weak moral platform as it too has shamelessly attacked nations like Iraq, killing half a million civilians. This attack was based on a sea of lies about the Iraq's involvement in the 9/11 attacks, which were in fact planned by a team of Saudi Arabians. In reality it was just a convenient excuse for the US to try to get control of Iraq's oil supplies.

Everywhere the fossil fuel industry has a dark history. Another example is Venezuela where the oil industry was developed by US companies. We were furious when Venezuela elected a "communist" government, which nationalized the oil industry to help the Venezuelan people, rather than fund the Rockefellers. US sanctions have damaged Venezuela for decades. No surprise that we are now talking again to the Venezuelans about their oil, since the Russian supply has been cut off.

The Ukrainian war has exposed the dark side of other false promises. In Europe, promises to move away from fossil fuels have been exposed by the Putin's dastardly rush to destroy Ukraine and slaughter its people, because they are defying his dream of restoring the Soviet Empire. It is clear that most of the western oil companies are still investing in fossil fuel exploration and development in Russia. Europe is

also heavily dependent on gas exports from Russia for winter heating, which means its plans to move to renewables were weak. Burning more gas enabled Germany to promise to shut down their nuclear power plants after the Chernobyl disaster.

A separate issue is global food supplies. Both Ukraine and Russia are key food exporters, so this war will also be linked to global food shortages. Most exports from the Ukraine have already ended, as Russia has blockaded the Black Sea ports in an effort to starve the people into submission. This has forced Europe to reassess the imports it gets from the Ukraine, but poorer countries such as Egypt will suffer shortages.

The stupidity of the huge and increasing US military budget needs more discussion. Nuclear weapons spending increased by 50% during the Trump administration. Nations have refused to take steps to dismantle nuclear weapons because they are a symbol of human power. Readers will notice that this misuse of human power has a parallel in the climate crisis, which also reflects the stupidity and misuse of human power. We are trapped in this “We must be in charge” mode, when clearly we are not. The Earth is taking over the climate crisis; but the future of nuclear brinkmanship is dark. The arsenals we have built now have large numbers of small precision nuclear warheads that can be accurately targeted, as well as old massive nuclear warheads that Carl Sagan feared might trigger a nuclear winter. Watching Russian nuclear threats and US counter threats over the Ukraine, I am shocked to realize that a few hours of strike and counter-strike would “solve” our refusal to dismantle them. But millions would die in the nuclear disaster and the damage to the Earth is unknown. What will it take for the militarists to wake-up and stop planning for this destruction of the Earth?