

Generals always fight the last war, especially if they have won it.

Fighting against the polluting and depletion of resources is the real war. Not bombing other countries. Yet they say generals always fight the last war, especially if they have won it, and the war against our own excessive consumerism has never before been fought. We cannot bomb pollution into shape.

Prosperity has brought us cars, fast-food, stress and frightening pollution. An average coal-fired power station emits the same amount of CO₂ as the felling of 61 million trees a year, every year.

We know we have rampant air pollution which damages our health, we know we are choking our landfill with myriad consumer waste, and we know that our energy creation, with few exceptions, creates dangerous toxins which will foul the air and the ground indefinitely.

If everything we create comes from the planet, how is that humans have managed to turn passive worldly resources into poison?

Basically design has failed. We have to accept that fact, correct our mistakes and move forward. We have to accept that our methodology has not looked beyond the end of our noses. Short term gain has seen us burn oil to get our cars to the shops, burn heavily polluting coal to create energy so that we can cook our over-packaged, over-refined meals which fall short on nutrition and clog up landfill with their residue. It's a lose/lose situation, but we could not have known that in the beginning because the whole picture was yet to emerge.

The climate is changing. Do we wait for more crop withering heat waves such as in Russia in 2010? Do we wait for water shortages as aquifers become depleted and salinated? Do we wait for droves of desperate climate refugees to knock at our own front doors? We do not know where the tipping point is. Nature is the timekeeper and we cannot see the clock.

We have never experienced these things. They are the unknowns, the complexities and the challenges for which no strategy has yet been written, yet this is the real war.

The faint-hearted turn away from the sheer magnitude of the task, but it can be done. It has been costed at \$200 billion a year of additional expenditure - one-eighth of the current world military budget. This is the new security budget and we must act at wartime speed. It can be done! In 1942 President Roosevelt met the car manufacturers and asked them to switch to making armaments. All car manufacture was stopped and in just 2 years American industry had created 229,600 aircraft and 5000 extra ships from a standing start. But it wasn't just quantity, innovation was essential, and the Rolls-Royce Merlin aero engine went from 1000hp in 1939 to 2000hp by 1945

through intensive experimental development and the incorporation of new features into the production lines in a highly controlled and imaginative way.

Restructuring the economy - wartime speed

We cannot continue to measure economic data as a measure of success because

the market is not telling us the truth. The true cost of everything we do and buy is hidden. We need tax shifts away from income tax towards carbon emitters. The amount of tax we pay will not change, but we must price pollution in order to minimise it. Puma, for example, have published the environmental impact of its business in cost terms. They understand that ecosystem services upon which businesses depend include pollination by bees, flood protection by forests and genetic resources from plants used for life-saving drugs. As these resources become ever-more scarce, businesses will have to pay to protect them. The services nature provides are not infinite, and therefore should no longer be considered as free.

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-13410397>>

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Redefining security for the 21st Century - wartime speed

The threats are climate change, population growth, water shortages and failing states. Most governments are still choosing to define security in military terms, but you cannot have food, water or energy security without climate security. Food price stability depends on near record world grain harvests every single year. Grain harvest depends on water which is over used and diminishing. Saudi Arabia has depleted its fossil aquifer (fossil aquifers do not recharge with rainfall) and its 3 million ton wheat harvest is virtually eliminated. Similar events are happening all over the world. Food prices are rising.

Cut global carbon emissions by 80% - wartime speed.

Ban deforestation worldwide and plant billions of trees. It can be done! India mobilised 600,000 people to plant 10.5 million trees in ONE DAY. China has planted 2 billion trees, Ethiopia 1.5 billion, Turkey 700 million, and we need more.

We must arrest the fall in water tables by raising water productivity - more efficient irrigation systems and water efficient crops. Continuous recycling is needed in cities.

Help for Failing States - wartime speed

The absence of democratic power is symptomatic in environmental degradation.

For example Yemen is running out of both oil and water. Economic and social

stresses brought on by rapid population growth in a poverty stricken society where the absence of order allows depletion of resources such as wells drying out, trees disappearing and soils eroding.

Stabilizing population through education - wartime speed

Universal primary school education for girls and boys, reproductive healthcare and family planning services for girls and women everywhere. Let women choose the size of their families, not poverty and ignorance.

All this and more, but it can be done!

World on the Edge by Lester Brown -
<<http://www.earth-policy.org/books/wote>>
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