

Goals vs. Risks – man-made disasters

by Patrik Kivinen

It is quite obvious that man is the only species in all of Earth's history to so radically change and shape its surroundings. The changes made by humans truly are of immense scale; square miles upon square miles of fields cover areas where mighty forests once stood; bustling metropolises are found all around the world; roads and highways form incredibly wide and complex nets across all continents. In his longing for control, efficiency, power and wealth man has caused a great deal of damage both to his environment and to his own kind.

When thinking about damage caused by man to the environment, one thing comes to mind inevitably: global warming. There is hard evidence to support the assumption that mankind is the main cause behind global warming. The accomplishments of mankind have come with a cost and global warming is the result of our usage of coal, oil and gas; once they made possible the rapid development of industry, technology and fast travel, but the carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere through the burning of these fuels is now causing our planet to heat up like a greenhouse, threatening the lives of millions of humans and the existence of entire species.

Global warming is, of course, not the only way in which we have caused huge damage to our planet's ecosystem. The rapid development of our culture during the last two centuries has cost us a very large part of Earth's rainforests and the oceans have been polluted and excessive fishing has severely unbalanced the ecosystems in some areas. Countless species have gone extinct through our actions. And all for the sake of mankind's success.

But the damage done is not limited to the environment. In his thirst for power and wealth, man has sowed incomprehensible terror upon his own species as well. Throughout history, humans have waged war on each other to gain superiority through territorial control and wealth. Perhaps the most infamous and influential conflict in the history of man was World War II, which cost the lives of innumerable human beings and divided the world in two for decades. Near the conclusion of the war mankind also received a painful demonstration of what extent of destructive capability their technological development had led them to, with the atomic bombs dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan.

Though the losses suffered in the various wars over the centuries have been immense, war is not the only way in which man has caused damage to his own species for the sake of wealth and development. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries the western world abused other countries through colonialism, slavery and imperialism. It is undeniable that much of Europe's and the United States' success is because of these dishonorable methods practiced

in the past. And even though the western countries no longer practice imperialism, large international companies continue to abuse third world countries for the sake of income.

But even though our history is full of disasters caused on both our planet and its inhabitants, I still have hope that in the future, we may learn from our mistakes and try to shape a better future for the generations to come. I have hope in mankind, that we may realize the error of our ways and instead of focusing on gaining wealth and power; we may focus on preserving the world for the future.