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## War mobilisation against climate change

Changes in the energy metabolism of society have been imposed through violence, repression and power pressure. To avoid the worst effects of the climate crisis, we need an unprecedented transformation of current energy metabolism. Is it possible to avoid oppression in the transition towards renewables?

More than 10 years ago, Sir Nicholas Stern corrected an estimate of the global investment needed to avert the worst effects of climate change, first introduced in a study called the Stern Report. One of the historically most influential economic studies on climate change has then calculated this investment to 2% of world GDP each year. Same proportion corresponds to the NATO member states' commitment to spending on armaments in order to sustain freedom and security. Currently we can see how climate change effects threaten both. The upcoming climatic disruption will hardly halt the current lack of social and institutional capacity for action. Equating climate change solutions to war mobilization makes it possible to look for other ways to promote far-reaching change in a short time.

Leaders of both the climate movement such as Bill Mc Kibben and prominent figures of mainstream economics like Joseph Stiglitz work with the image of global war mobilization. Although there are also comparisons to conflicts in fictional worlds such as for example, Game of Thrones, World War II remains the main reference event. Shared images of this conflict make the metaphor accessible to virtually everyone, and historical sources allow comparisons despite the ever-diminishing number of personal witnesses. The similarities could be described in a simplified way as follows: To tackle the problem, it is necessary to mobilize resources, production and labour across the whole of society. Likewise, the solution requires a change of priorities and social mobilization, when you "bite the bullet" and sacrifice your own well-being, or even sacrifice yourself fully for an idea.

## The conflict has already been here

Let us clarify the situation first. Climate change is a conflict where you have to take a side and where you cannot be neutral. Either you stand for dignified and good life on Earth, or you are collaborating with (or silently watching) the fossil industry that has been causing climate change. The energy metabolism of society, the cause of climate change, was created through violent conflicts. People are already dying in this conflict, as illustrated by the abstractly expressed years of life shortened by the environmental impacts of fossil resource use, the death toll due to extreme weather events, or the victims of violent acts of fossil industry, such as the murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa, leader of the struggle against Shell in Nigeria. Fossil energy is literally a battlefield where one frontline can be seen in the so-called commodity frontier - boundary pushed by resource-rush from the fossil industry on one side and sustained by lower quality and availability of natural resources as well as communities and ecosystem depending on the land above resource reserves. The second front line is formed in the territory devastated by the impacts of climate

change, i.e. extreme weather events such as fires, hurricanes, droughts, floods. Space of uninhabitable areas is expanding in this war, similarly as radioactive zones after a nuclear explosion. These extreme zones threaten conditions necessary for human life through combination of high temperature and humidity. Limit for human survival is calculated at 35 ° C and 90% humidity while increasing the temperature reduces the humidity limit. The most densely populated areas in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh - currently home to around 1.5 billion people are under threat of those conditions. The softest manifestation of this conflict is the widespread of climate denial propaganda, fuelled and supported by fossil fuel industry.

In other words, the war has already been here and has not disappeared. In today's global conflict, dialogue and the struggle to find a compromise with the fossil industry is a failure. The ultimate condition of a truly balanced energy mix is 100% renewable. Energy security depending on oil, coal, gas and nuclear is oxymoron.

### War mobilization as a plan for energy transition

War mobilization is not just a metaphor in popular magazines. In 2013, Laurence Delina and Mark Diesendorf published an article exploring the potential of policies implemented during the war mobilization for the energy transition. To mitigate the effects of climate change, they identify two crucial areas where war mobilization policies can also serve for energy transition.

Funding for the arms industry, especially through direct taxation and public borrowing, is seen by both authors as suitable instruments for the current transformation of the energy industry. However, only conventional state funding is not sufficient on its own, among other things because it takes a long time to implement it. It is therefore important to allow other ways of financing local projects, in particular those stemming from bottom-up initiatives.

Like Joseph Stiglitz, the authors see a second potentially positive aspect in the mobilization of labour, training and education of the workforce necessary for the deployment of renewable resources. In a similar manner as extremely rapid mobilization of a large number of workers for the arms industry responded to the introduction of new technologies in production and to the armed conflict, it would be possible to mobilise a large number of people for the development and especially for the deployment of renewable energy through governmental intervention.

The authors find the worrying aspect of war mobilization in the democratic deficit of the implementation of political regulations. It is not surprising that this aspect is becoming the focal point of criticism by Johannes Kester and Benjamin Sovacool. To sum up, undemocratic deployment of emergency wartime policies could very likely create more problems in the longer time. What can be pushed through now can go back in time as a boomerang in the form of social anger, which not only blocks continuation of a set trend but can reverse policies and regulation and in the end return us beyond the starting position. This criticism also aims at the incommensurability of the temporal dimension of the global war conflict and global

climate disruption. While the conflict lasts for a relatively short period of several years ending by time of peace, the prospects of tackling climate disruption count for decades, or rather it is an effort that cannot ever stop. It is not possible to return to the "good old days" before the climate disruption, because they are either the cause of the current state or would mean an imaginary return to the cave. As with the deconstruction of nationalist myths, it is necessary to admit that there are no golden times of the past.

The conversation between the pairs of authors Laurence Delina & Mark Diesendorf and Johannes Kester & Benjamin Sovacool ends with a consensus that the use of militaristic language creates the risk of emerging securitization approach to climate disruption, one that will eventually silence emancipation voices.

Under the pressure of time we need to make changes in the energy industry on an unprecedented scale, while we cannot betray ideals of equality and the emancipatory ethos. In his New Statesman article, Paul Mason poses important and uncomfortable questions on political power and violence (although he does not mention it explicitly). "What if the energy transition must be unfair? Who defines justice? What if the transition would have to look more like a forced relocation of Soviet industry to the Urals, rather than a New Deal?" he asks provocatively. Although climate change is indeed a global problem that ultimately affects us all, there is differentiated degree of responsibility on its cause. Perhaps we cannot expect to find a win-win solution for everyone. Based on past 30+ years experience with targeted disinformation campaigns of fossil companies, it is reasonable to assume that they will not accept moratorium on their business with gratitude and understanding. We cannot ignore issue of power precisely because the danger of abusing emancipatory ethos of the energy transition for establishing those gulags that climate deniers are using for their false warnings.

## Changing the way of war

Armed conflicts are evolving through the time and thus the current ones are hardly comparable to the World War II. In his book *Against everything*, Mark Greif describes the transformation of US intervention in Somalia and Iraq. Absolute military superiority defends the lives of American soldiers, who die incomparably less than ever before and incomparably less than fighters of the other side. The absolute disparity in technological superiority helps to dehumanize the opposition, where the less equipped warriors of the opponent die by hundreds as well as civilians that the attacking party cannot and does not need to distinguish. While the sheer superiority easily devastates the space, infrastructure and lives of the local inhabitants, it cannot provide a new free regime after the conquest of the territory, neither can establish new hegemony. Modern warfare is an example of a situation where everyone is losing.

The transformation of the war regime did not happen overnight. Marcuse describes the development of a military-industrial complex from the war economy, which further consolidates power through the interconnection of industrial production, research and also the patterns and possibilities of consumption. This complex

further dehumanizes the workforce and makes it increasingly difficult (virtually impossible) to put it under democratic control.

The interconnection of military dominance and fossil resources is well illustrated by military expenditures. In relation to GDP, Saudi Arabia spends the most per capita, while the United States spend the most in absolute terms. Both countries are blocking international climate negotiations, and their economies are producing huge amounts of CO2 emissions. Foreign military interventions are all the more frightening, especially in resource-rich countries. So called “curse of mineral resources” is a naturalization of the fact that the inhabitants of countries with mineral reserves are not only denied profits from their exploitation, but also bear political and often violent conflicts on their shoulders. Michael Watts shows on a case study from the Niger Delta that mineral resources themselves could serve as a catalyst and amplifier of a conflict. But conflicts emerge from injustice and disbalance of power that existed before exploitation of resources on industrial scale. In other words, it is not possible to justify an injustice simply and only by blaming natural resource reserves.

### The other side of the same coin: war mobilization from below

It could be argued that China, India and Israel are also spending massive arms expenditures, while investing heavily in renewables. This fact shows the other side of the energy transition: renewable technology alone is not the answer to a repressive and authoritarian political regime. It is possible to interlink repressive regime and state violence also with renewable sources.

The shift to renewable energy, which would consist solely of fuel change, will continue to exacerbate the fossil energy problems of its size and centralization. Megalomaniacal and centralized sources of renewable energy are essentially fossil sources only improved by reducing CO2 emissions. There are many documented cases of renewable energy projects built through violent conflict. Berta Cáceres is one of the world wide known fallen environmental activists. She was killed when she fought against construction of a hydroelectric power plant in Honduras. There are a numerous similar renewable energy infrastructure projects built in extractivist and colonialist manner, especially in so-called developing countries.

Alexander Dunlap names ruthlessly promoted megalomaniacal renewable energy projects as fossil fuel+. It underlines the fact that renewable technologies can cause problems to the most vulnerable groups just as fossil energy does. This controversial name should allow us to keep in mind that for a fair transformation of the energy sector it is not enough to repaint the fossil industry green, but deeper changes are needed. In other words, energy needs to be opened up to democratic and civic ways of governance.

If we continue to use the war metaphor from the introduction, we can see the most emancipatory tendencies of energy transformation as guerilla. Those are numerous small, agile, self-sufficient initiatives, using technology that they themselves can understand and control it. Besides, it is also effective. Guerilla emerge bottom-up,

it just needs undisciplined space to operate autonomously. Likewise, it can only operate in a society where social support exists. In such an environment guerrilla can hardly be defeated. Similarly to the struggle of anti-fascist guerrilla cells, guerilla energy transformation is a very practical, handworking activity. Unfortunately, there is little room for successful positive examples of bottom-up renewable energy in the Czech republic, due to systemic constraints such as the lack of support for the establishment of cooperative energy or the absurd price of purchasing power generation into the grid. Energy guerrillas are not foreseen because their activities cannot be allowed by rigid rules written by and for the fossil industry.

Is it possible to change such rules? Jeremy Brecher in his book *Against the Doom* mentions the possibility of setting up new, parallel institutions that can take into account demand of justice and of recognition, which are ignored by the established institutions. It could be courts or committees set up by the people that take into account fully requirements and demands that have been ridiculed as unrealistic. Let us look, for example, at the coal commission set up by czech government this month. Judging only by its members, mainly pro-coal actors, it would be very naïve to expect a comprehensive plan radical enough to end coal mining sooner than in 2030. But shouldn't it be exactly a coal commission who aims to settle the historical injustices caused by coal mining? Can we even imagine a coal commission defending the public interest against the coal tycoons?

Historical events can serve to open up the horizons of what you may want to create in the future world. In his book on the Paris Commune, Kristin Ross describes the environment of seemingly pointless intellectual debates, which later allowed one of the most inspiring examples of egalitarian social order to arise. Imagining the future can also lead us to anticipate potential pitfalls, to think in advance of unpleasant questions. It can relieve us of the fear of having the ambition to create the best imaginable world.