

World War III: It's Happening Today

Contributed by Chuck Burr
03 May 2009

We are just not using nuclear weapons. Resource war, class war, drug war, gang war, terror war, trade war, plus war on all other species is global. Is this the culture you want to say you belong to? Is your lifestyle worth it?

When you look at anything from our modern culture, think of war. Car, computer, toaster, light bulb, money, water, food, population, government, media—think of war. The more people, the more competition, the more war. Modern Taker culture is inseparable from war.

Our culture was founded on war 10,000 years ago when one group of people in the fertile crescent decided they had a better way to live, population growth supported by totalitarian agriculture-based civilization. It is now almost universally accepted that civilization is unsurpassable and must continue at all costs.

The world now wastes over \$1 trillion on military spending. When you add in everything the US spends on present defense, debt on past defense spending, off-budget covert operations, death benefits, injured veteran's benefits, national guard employment opportunity costs, we spend almost half the total federal budget on the military.

More importantly though, think about the 175 million people who lost their lives to war in the last century. Several times that many were injured -- mostly civilians.

War Did Not Exist Before our Taker Culture

Some assert that pre-agricultural revolution or Paleolithic man waged war. However, the archeological evidence does not support this. The work of Marija Gimbutas revealed that Old Europe towns and villages had no military implements or even artwork—there is a difference between hunting and warring implements. Towns and villages were sited for their aesthetics and access to crops not defensibility. Artwork frequently depicted the goddess as a universal religion.

There is also some confusion as to time periods, much of the warfare referred to as our prehistory is actually post-agricultural revolution within the last 10,000 years. Archeological references to war only start appearing as warring tribes such as the Kurgans started invading from the east.

Lastly, there is confusion between war and the Erratic Retaliator strategy that Leaver peoples employed. This strategy allowed you to give it back to your neighbors as good as they gave it to you. If you had not heard from them in a while, you could surprise them so they knew you have not gotten soft. Later you have a powwow to make up and trade. After all, it's not good to inbreed within your own tribe too much, so maintaining relations with your neighbors was important for more than trade. Yes, some were injured and even died, but this was far short of war.

Competition Requires War

We are taught since first grade that competition is good, greed is good. Competition most efficiently allocates resources, and enables the best and brightest to rise to the top. Without competition we would not have a man on the moon or this computer. You know, I can live without this computer. I would probably be better off, and the time will come for it to go. At some point I will have written enough and will just be a permaculture farmer and educator.

Darwin's natural selection or survival of the fittest has contributed to a misunderstanding of how the world really works. Ecosystems survive through mutually beneficial cooperation not competition. If nature was based solely on competition, there would only be one survivor at the top of each food chain niche instead of the 30 million species alive today.

It is physically impossible to have concentration of resources, material or financial, without war. Competition implies by definition that there will always be a winner and loser, someone at the top and many at the bottom. For the US to consume more in total and per capita than any other national in the world, we must have the largest military in the world. McDonald's goes where McDonald-Douglas goes (now Boeing).

The simplest way to put it is to envision what can be made, grown, and traded just from current local sunlight. If you cannot make it from local sunlight, you have to exploit and concentrate or take from somewhere else. If you cannot make a modern stick-frame home and everything that goes in it just from local sunlight, you need to get it's components and the energy that it takes to build and maintain it from someplace else. It is simple laws of physics.

Excessive Competition is War

War also comes in the form of occupation, building a railroad to send the occupier's people in and to send natural resources out as China has done to Tibet and the US is doing in Iraq for oil but not colonization. Tibetans will soon be a minority in their own country.

Globalization is now a common form of low level class warfare. When the IMF and World Bank make loans, it forces the small third world countries to open their markets and sell their natural resources in order to pay back the loans. Local farmers who had saved seeds for centuries are forced to go deeply into debt and buy seed and other inputs from Monsanto. Diversity in the food varieties we eat has disappeared. Free trade agreements enable large producers to leverage their size to put local farmers, manufacturers, and merchants, out of business.

If every American had to live and work to survive in the third world for just one year, things would change overnight.

Our culture has also waged an unending war on the ecosystem that we call nature. In short, our single species is responsible for the single largest mass extinction since the dinosaurs died 65 million years ago.

War is Externalized and Invisible

It is a common belief of those in the first world that we do not live in a state of war. Most would say, "my child does not resort to fisticuffs on the soccer field, we have some crime yes, and the war in Iraq is winding down." There is however a low-level pervasive conflict being waged with everything from banks to bombs and religion to rifles. The financial crisis today is a war by the banks against the rest of the world to maintain their system of profit and control.

Those in power have found that they can make more money short of large-scale war. A regional conflict here and there to keep people in line is acceptable, "but we are not going let things get out of hand like we did the last couple times." Banks make money loaning money to both sides. Corporations make money selling guns and support to both sides.

The externalities of never-ending grinding competition are hidden. No one sees the destruction they cause by pushing their cart down the store isle or by shopping online: the exploitation, civil war, resource extraction, habitat destruction, watershed pollution, are invisible to the consumer.

It would be amazing to see a time-lapse simulation of what happens around the world over the lifetime of just one first world consumer. To see the trees fall, animals raised and slaughtered, top soil lost, and marine life die. Then imagine accelerating the simulation by adding more and more people. People need to connect the dots further out over both time and geography.

What is the Solution?

Sometime I wish that everyone who believes that war is a necessary evil could be moved to some place to duke it out. Or, that I could take my family some place peaceful based on original Leaver culture where cooperation and consensus have replaced competition. But there is no place left to go.

I am just as guilty as everyone else in our Taker culture. I have now realized what I have been doing and am starting my long journey to change my lifestyle. One problem is that modern culture gives us no real alternatives. We have to make the alternatives we need. Shopping at a natural food store and a grocery store has the same affect. Get over going green. We have to become the change we want to see.

The future lies with new cultures. If modern culture was going to end poverty, hunger, war, and environmental destruction, it would have done so by now. As long as it grows, the problem grows. Things seemed fine when there were fewer of us, but now we have grown to the edge of the planetary cage. From now on, competition and war will intensify exponentially as resources dwindle and population grows.

The Bottom line is that if we want the luxuries we have, we are going to have to live with war. We will force exploitation on others we do not see. Start talking to your friends from this perspective. Start asking yourself, "is our lifestyle is worth it?"

Our generation is basically stuck where and how we are. Since the last couple world wars, we blew the cheap energy and resources on the suburbs and expanding our population. But, we still have the opportunity to change the course for our children if we change their education now. We can go green and buy a little more time and space for more people, but it is a wash. We have to level with our kids and tell them the truth that we are locked in our own cultural prison, and they have to not make the same mistakes we did and to find a way to walk away. Its the old do as I say not as I do parent's dilemma.

Maybe we have to renounce our religion of materialism and embrace each other. We may have to completely flip our world view that instead of the world belonging to us, maybe we belong to the world. Give support to get support instead of making things to get things.

Maybe this is what the future looks like, hobbit houses. This treehouse was built on our farm by Dan Shinerock (top center) from the It's a Burl Gallery in Kerby, OR. Dan walked up to the tree for the first time, engineered the treehouse, drew a sketch of it, did a materials takeoff, and calculated the cost all in an hour and a half. He built the treehouse in four days including decks and stairs you do not see here. Compare that to building a modern home or even just remodeling one.

I am not suggesting that everyone start living in a treehouse, but I would suggest every first world person consider giving away most of their "stuff" so what is left would fit in a treehouse. Just food for thought.

I'll talk more about some realistic solutions in the future such as how a greenhouse can not only feed you, but also heat your home in the winter and cool you in the summer. Or, how an old world KachelOfen can both keep your family warm in the winter and bake everything from pizza to cinnamon rolls with just one firing a day. There is hope: we just have to think outside of our cultural box.

I believe one should empower the positive aspects of their beliefs, for instance, "Peace Now!" instead of "No War!" However, I felt it was worth taking a stand on this issue and shining a light where we are afraid to look.

The destructive behavior of our culture, whether high level warfare or low level environmental destruction, happens globally at all levels, and is inherent within our culture. War and Taker culture are inseparable; is this the culture you want to say you belong to? An individual cannot end war overnight, but an individual can start the discussion.

Here is a movie I made at the 2003 Peace March in Washington, D.C. to try to stop the Iraq War. There was nothing like the feeling of being surrounded by hundreds of thousands of people who share your feelings. We are everywhere.

This essay appeared in culturequake.org on 4/27/09

See the same website to learn more about the book *Culturequake: The Fall of Modern Culture and the Rise of Earth Culture* © 2009 Chuck Burr LLC

Notes:

Fritjof Capra

Landscapes of Learning: Experiencing ecological relationships and community is the key to ecoliteracy, Resurgence, Sept/Oct 2004, p 8

Murray Bookchin

The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy, p. 91

War Resisters League

Where Your Income Tax Money Really Goes

Norman D. Livergood

America, Awake!, p. 108

Peter Starck

World Military Spending Topped \$1 Trillion in 2004

Marija Gimbutas

The Civilization of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe

Free Tibet

The Gormo-Lhasa railway

Jim Merkel

Radical Simplicity: small footprints on a finite Earth, p. 9

Chuck Burr

Fall of the American Empire

John Cavanagh and Jerry Mander

Alternatives to Economic Globalization: A Better World Is Possible

Dan Shinerock

It's A Burl Gallery