Pentagon prepares for hundred year corporate resources war

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Pentagon Prepares For Century of Climate Emergencies and Oil Wars

> *Whatever else could be said about the corporate/banker ruled USA, it is clear that war is the only vision it has. Note, not a word about cooperative relations or business just grab your gun like a bandit and attempt to steal what you should rightfully pay for, as has been done over the past 15 years. Nevertheless, other nations today will not have a bar of it, neocon perpetual war spells disaster for the US and the world and if the masses tolerate this mafia mindset and tactics then they deserve what they get -- fallout if not complete obliteration!*

The US Army is preparing for a new era of war for oil.

While energy has always played a role in military conflicts, US military experts believe the geopolitics of energy, land and water is increasingly central to who rules, or ruins, the world.

Two research documents published in recent months by the US Army reveal the military establishment's latest thinking in startlingly frank terms. The research not only lends credence to environmental warnings about how climate change will fuel political instability, but also vindicates concerns about how looming resource shortages could destabilise the global economy.

Scarcity verdict

In June the US Army published its report to the Department of Defence (DoD), outlining a new energy security strategy. Future US Army operations, it says, will be shaped by "increased urbanisation, rising populations, young adult unemployment, and a growing middle class that drive resource competition".

The report also flags up "climate change, rapid technology proliferation and shifts in centres of economic activity" as major forces of change:

"Global resource constraints will also undermine the integrity of the Army's supply chain... We can no longer assume unimpeded access to the energy, water, land, and other resources required to train, sustain, and deploy a globally responsive Army."

The report therefore sets out a blueprint for how the US Army intends to sustain operational effectiveness, based on minimising its resource footprint, maximising efficiency, as well as securing resources critical to the military's global supply chains.

Sustainability and national security

Many of the proposed changes draw extensively on new scientific research on environmental sustainability. The blueprint calls for integrating "resource considerations and cost management" into the core of US Army decision-making processes, including "total life-cycle costs" and even "enhanced resource stewardship".

Business processes, acquisition strategies, management of technologies, and even the very conduct of military operations will be redesigned to incorporate new principles of “resilience” and “sustainability”.

While the corporate and private sector is often criticised for using such concepts as public relations "buzzwords" without applying them fully, the new US Army strategy is refreshingly different.

The report to the Pentagon shows that the US Army sees “resource stewardship” not as a fluffy concern of hippy tree-huggers who want to save the planet, but as a fundamental national security imperative.

For the US military to maintain its capabilities into the future, it must be prepared to face the new age of resource shortages with hard-nosed realism: the result vindicates scientists and activists urging governments to reduce dependence on traditional energy sources and improve our ability to manage access to water and land.

The future is green

Much of the vision would work well in a Greenpeace handbook. For instance:

“The Army can use energy more efficiently by purchasing energy efficient products, modernising buildings and utility systems, purchasing energy efficient vehicles, and using more renewable/alternative energy sources. We can use water more efficiently by purchasing water-efficient products, matching water quality to use, maximising opportunities for water reuse, and increasing water recharge.

"The Army will build on its Sustainable Range Programme, integrated natural resource management plans, and real property master plans to optimise land use requirements, while protecting the natural and cultural resources entrusted to our care. Additionally, the Army can support resource sustainability by using building materials or products that are derived or manufactured within a region.”

The lessons for industrial-era technologies in fossil fuel production, transport, infrastructure and so on, are stark.

Many technologies widely used today started life for narrow military purposes. The US Army’s concerted decision to spearhead a rapid transition to sustainable energy, land and water systems sounds the death knell for the old, industrial-era systems.

Protecting US interests from ‘disruption’

The plan is not perfect. The US Army’s understanding of “resilience” – the capacity to anticipate, prepare for, withstand and adapt to “natural or man-made disruptions” and to “recover rapidly” from them – is based on the unquestionable assumption that US-dominated global capitalism must be protected.

This notion of resilience is not about transforming the system that generates disruptions, but about increasing the US military’s ability to withstand disruptions to capitalism, thus keeping the system rumbling along:

“Resilience is essential for a responsive Army force posture and an effective network of installations

and capabilities at home and abroad to protect US interests and those of our allies."

The Army must become more resource-efficient so that "US interests," tied to ongoing resource exploitation elsewhere, can continue.

That stance is not surprising given that the Army can only plan within the framework of the Pentagon's directives.

Energy wars

The imperative to protect business-as-usual is reflected in a separate report published by the US Army's institute for geostrategic and national security research.

That report, New Realities: Energy Security in the 2010s and Implications for the US Military, forecasts a bold new century of conflict over global energy supplies, due to dramatic shifts in the way energy is produced and consumed in key regions.

Released earlier this year, the document is a collection of papers from a US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) conference on energy security, edited by John R Deni, a former political adviser and strategic planner for US military commanders in Europe. Currently a research professor in security studies at SSI, Deni was also a national security consultant for the Departments of Energy, Defence and State.

The US Army War College report argues that the global energy landscape is undergoing a major transformation due to the dawn of the shale revolution in the US, the declining power of Middle East oil and gas producers, rising demand from China, India and the "developing world," as well as Russia's mismanagement of its domestic energy arrangements.

It also specifically warns that US energy interests – including the need to regulate the global oil supply and price system – may lead to more US military interventions across the Middle East and Africa, especially in the context of proliferating climate-induced emergencies:

"Evolving energy-based US national interests in Africa or the Middle East may shape the degree to which the US military becomes involved in political or humanitarian crises in those regions. Tightening energy supplies may alter fundamentally the way in which the United States wields military force in a contingency operation."

Reports published by the US Army's SSI do not "necessarily" represent official government policy – but they do "use independent analysis to conduct strategic studies that develop policy recommendations" relevant for "the Army, the Department of Defence, and the larger national security community," and particularly "in support of Army participation in national security policy formation".

Fossil fuels are here to stay

The SSI report contains significant tensions with the US Army's proposed energy security strategy. A paper by Karen Smith-Stegan, Professor of Renewable Energy and Environmental Politics at Jacobs University in Bremer, Germany, warns that there are major risks with an energy strategy centred on renewables, largely due to China's monopoly on rare earth minerals critical for solar panels, wind turbines, electric cars and batteries.

The report does, however, take note of ongoing US Army and Pentagon efforts to increase resilience and efficiency, while reducing the military's energy and resource footprint.

But this is against the backdrop of protecting US interests in a global system that, the report presumes, will remain heavily dependent on fossil fuels for the foreseeable future.

"Burgeoning demand in China, India, and across the developing world may cause oil prices to remain stubbornly high, increasing the cost of fuel-intensive military operations in remote, austere environments," the report warns.

It predicts not just continuing, but intensifying dependence on fossil fuels across the global economy.

Demand in poorer, developing countries will be met mostly with fossil fuels, "exacerbating human-induced climate change and potentially intensifying the effects of natural disasters. Additionally, as fossil fuel production in the Western hemisphere expands exponentially, there will be corresponding increases in global fossil fuel movements."

Increased vulnerability to terrorism and natural disasters will accompany "more traditional state-versus-state security competition over limited fossil fuel resources," especially among poorer countries.

Eastward military expansion

In some areas, declining oil production could reduce US regional engagement:

"Decreasing oil production in Sub-Saharan Africa, coupled with reduced saliency of those same resources in America's energy import mix, may severely limit US interests in the region while simultaneously increasing the risk of socio-political instability in Africa due to decreasing state revenues."

More broadly, though, the continued centrality of oil to the global economy will underpin the need for an active US military.

In his contribution, Michael Klare, Professor of Peace and World Security Studies at Hampshire College, highlights America's self-appointed role as vanguard of the world's oil transshipment routes. The largest flows of oil "pass from perennial conflict zones in North Africa and the Middle East to Europe and East Asia, often travelling through narrow 'chokepoints' that have proved powerful magnets for insurgents, terrorists and pirates."

This is why, despite the shale revolution in the US, there is a continued need for US military forces to police these crucial regions to keep the world safe for capitalism. In Klare's words, "the stability of the global economy rests, to a considerable degree, on the uninterrupted flow of oil shipments from the Gulf."

Klare's chapter provides a candid history of the evolution of US military expansionism as a function of diversifying and protecting access to global energy supplies. The search for new sources of energy has led US military operations to extend far beyond the Middle East, to areas like the Caucasus, the Caspian and West Africa.

As global energy demand shifts further eastwards, the report warns, there is a worsening risk of the

US and China clashing in their determination to enhance their respective capacities to defend critical energy shipping lanes, across the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea and the Western Pacific.

As the old cheap sources of oil and gas have depleted, there is an increasing shift to more expensive unconventional energy forms permitted by new extraction technologies, in challenging environments like the Arctic:

“As reserves in older production areas have become depleted – a natural consequence of the intense production we have witnessed over the years since World War II – energy firms are being forced to rely on ever more remote and hard-to-exploit deposits.”

The problem of nationalist democracies

Elsewhere, the report advocates a far more interventionist approach to Latin America, described as “potentially rich in unconventional oil and shale gas resources, as well as renewables. These resources can fuel domestic growth” as well as make-up for the declining significance of Middle East oil resources.

According to Professor David Mares, a Latin America energy specialist at the James Baker III Institute for Public Policy, the countries most favourable to US interests are Colombia and Peru, as they “encourage exploration and production”.

He fails to acknowledge, though, that the openness of both countries to foreign investment has been enabled by extensive US military interference involving colossal human rights abuses.

In contrast, Mares singles out Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico for raising “significant obstacles” to oil investment and production. Such democracies must be “crafted” until they adopt political stances favourable to US interests:

“The essential challenge for Latin America to meet its hydrocarbon potential is crafting stable domestic political coalitions that see the benefit of providing incentives for foreign investors to bring the requisite capital, skill, and technology to the region. Historically, Latin American democracies do not have a stellar record in providing such incentives when they perceive that they have an asset that others desire.”

The observation is a telling one, given the implication that the US sees its mission as countering regional democracies if they insist on too much “resource nationalism,” by resisting the intrusion of foreign corporations.

Mares laments that such stubborn democratic nationalism in the region would forestall the desired “bonanza for Latin America and a shift in the geopolitical centre of energy toward the Western Hemisphere”.

Resurgence of the oil empire

That shift to the West, according to former State Department official Robert Manning – whose most recent post in the Obama administration was as a senior strategist in the office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) – is being driven by the US shale revolution.

Manning, along with most other contributors to the US Army’s SSI report, agree that shale will

contribute to the “resurgence” of the American economy into the 2020s, while weaning off its immediate dependence on conventional energy resources in unstable regions.

Of course, the US Army’s recognition of the urgency of transitioning to more resilient and sustainable ways of using energy, land and water is heartening. It shows that environmental concerns are not merely the province of green activists, but are increasingly acknowledged at the highest levels of military power.

But the geopolitical context of the US Army’s new energy strategy highlights the chronic short-sightedness of US military planners. The Army’s sustainability strategy is ultimately about maintaining US military dominance despite resource scarcity, while safeguarding the wider fossil fuel system – not changing it.

The unswerving commitment to protecting business-as-usual, the fatalistic capitulation to a future of expanding oil dependence, and the blinkered belief that global economic health is tied to endless resource exploitation, all show that US policymakers still have their heads in the sand.

If Pentagon officials really want to defend US national security, they must wake up to the fact that the global system itself must undergo a fundamental transformation, in which economic stability is no longer dependent on the unlimited consumption of fossil fuels.

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