



Arms, Agribusiness, Finance and Fossil Fuels: The Four Horsemen of the Neoliberal Apocalypse

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Featured image: From the poster for the 1962 film 'Les Quatre Cavaliers de l'Acocalypse'. Photo: CartelesCine via Flickr (CC BY-NC-SA)

The world is in the grip of a structural war against people, land, economies and ecosystems, writes Colin Todhunter. It is being waged by a quartet of organised criminal interests bent on monopolizing energy, money, food and violence across the globe. But a deep-rooted resistance against their 'neoliberal' doctrine of death and destruction is fighting back.

The US has about 5% of the world's population but consumes 24% of global energy. On average, [one person in the US consumes as much energy as](#) two Japanese, six Mexicans, 13 Chinese, 31 Indians, 128 Bangladeshis, 307 Tanzanians and 370 Ethiopians.

It is able to consume at such a level because the dollar serves as the world reserve currency. This means high demand for it is guaranteed as most international trade (especially oil) is carried out using the dollar. US dominance and wealth accumulation depends on maintaining the currency's leading role.

The international monetary system that emerged near the end of the Second World War was based on the US being the dominant economic power and the main creditor nation, with institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund eventually being created to serve its interests.

Since coming off the gold standard in the early 1970s, Washington has been able to run up a huge balance of payments deficit by using the (oil-backed) paper dollar as security in itself (rather than outright ownership of gold) and engaging in [petro-dollar recycling](#) and treasury-bond [super-imperialism](#).

Like all empires, Washington has developed a system to hitch a ride courtesy of the rest of the world funding its generally high standard of living, militarism, financial bubbles, speculations and corporate takeovers.

With its [control and manipulation of](#) the World Bank, IMF and WTO, the US has been able to lever the trade and the financial system to its advantage by various means (for example, see [this](#) analysis of how Saudi Arabia's oil profits enabled Wall Street to entrap African nations into debt).

Based on the US neocons' objectives for the 21st century war, as outlined by the [Project for](#)

[a New American Century](#) and underpinned by the Wolfowitz doctrine, Washington will not allow its global hegemony and the role of the dollar to be challenged.

Given Russia's re-emergence on the global stage and China's rise, we are witnessing a sense of urgency to destabilise and undermine both countries, especially as they are now increasingly bypassing the dollar when doing business.

US strategic objectives and the role of agribusiness

The only real alternative for humanity is to turn away from what Gandhi called a « *nine-day wonder* » model of development, which strips the environment bare. If we are to avoid ecological meltdown and ultimately what appears to be a [possible nuclear conflict](#), we must reject capitalism and militarism by reorganising economies so that nations live within their environmental means.

Part of this involves a major shift away from the petro-chemical industrial model of agriculture and food production, not only because it leads to [bad food, poor health and environmental degradation](#) and is ultimately [unsustainable](#) but also because this model has underpinned a destructive US foreign policy agenda for many decades.

Such a shift would however run counter to the aims of the powerful agribusiness cartel, which, despite its propaganda about helping poor farmers and feeding the world's hungry, regards ordinary people as impediments to commercial gain or as assets to be exploited for profit.

Any talk about 'helping' people is a case of the iron fist of capitalism being wrapped up in a velvet glove. We need look no further than Global Justice Now's [recent report](#) on the role of the [Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in Africa](#) to appreciate this.

If this cartel and its compliant politicians and cheerleaders in academia and the media really want to 'help the poor', they would be challenging the [policies and structures](#) that create hunger and poverty rather than continue to offer the disease as the cure and attack those who are actually spearheading this challenge.

Oil-fuelled monocropping - thanks for that, Rockefellers!

However, the prevailing order exists for the benefit of big agribusiness, which continues to colonise global agriculture and is in effect part of an establishment (for example see [this](#) and [this](#)) that regards food and agriculture as integral to US strategic objectives.

For instance, the 'green revolution' was exported [courtesy of the oil-rich Rockefeller family](#). Poorer nations adopted petrochemical-dependent agriculture that required loans for inputs and infrastructure development. This was underpinned by the propaganda that these countries would earn dollars to prosper (and repay the loans) through adopting mono-crop, export-oriented policies.

It entailed uprooting traditional agriculture and integrating nations into a globalised system of debt bondage, rigged trade relations and the hollowing out and destruction of national and local economies.

Despite the often presented claims that the green revolution saved tens (or hundreds) of millions of lives, speculative assessments must be placed within a [suitable context](#) and

[vehemently contested](#), not least because of the deleterious impacts on food, health, the environment and farmers' livelihoods.

But it cannot be denied that some have benefited enormously: oil, financial and agribusiness interests in the West.

GMOs are Green Revolution 2.0

The [fraudulent GMO project](#) represents the second coming of the green revolution.

Of course, appropriate frameworks have to be put to uproot indigenous farming and replace it with a corporate-controlled, chemical-intensive industrialised model. We need look no further to see this in action from [Mexico to India](#) and beyond, where traditional food production and retail sectors are being hijacked by mainly US corporate interests.

NAFTA set the framework for plunder in Mexico, the [Knowledge Initiative on Agriculture](#) is playing a similar role in India and various bilateral trade agreements such as TTIP and TPP will [consolidate the process](#).

Thanks to the interests and demands of global agribusiness, farmers are leaving agriculture in India because it has been deliberately made [financially non viable to continue](#). This, along with the impact of GM cotton (see [this report](#) on the direct link between Bt cotton and farmer suicides in rain-fed areas of India), is the main reason why 300,000 have committed suicide in the last two decades.

In attempting to dismiss or play down the link between Bt cotton and farmer suicides, prominent neoliberal apologists should consider the role of the interests they represent (see '[The Making of an Agribusiness Apologist](#)') in causing hardship, hunger, poverty and devastation, instead of setting out to [smear the likes of Vandana Shiva](#) or spending their time trying to sideline the issue by attempting to debunk each and every GM-suicide link that emerges.

Although the globalized hijack of food and agriculture by powerful corporations results in [poverty, dependency and food insecurity](#), we are deceitfully informed that we must have more of the same if we are to feed an increasing global population and eradicate poverty.

We are told that the solutions for feeding a projected world population of nine billion are more technical fixes: more petrochemical-dependent agriculture, more GMOs and more unnecessary shifting of food across the planet.

Another bogus 'solution' that benefits only the global monopolists

Such a 'solution' [is bogus](#): we already produce enough food to feed the world's population and did so even at the peak of the world food crisis in 2008, and GM crops that are on the market today are not designed to address hunger.

Four GM crops account for almost 100% of worldwide GM crop acreage, and all four have been developed for large-scale industrial farming systems and are used as cash crops for export, to produce fuel or for processed food and animal feed. Of course, throw in a heavy dose of '[family planning](#)' (depopulation) for the 'third world' and we will be just fine.

But even if the world would at some stage require increased agricultural productivity,

organic methods could fulfil the need. For example, there are agro-ecological approaches like system of rice intensification, non-pesticidal management of crops, integrated farming systems, which have all been shown to increase yields in sustainable ways.

Moreover, many of these systems have demonstrated their capacity for dealing with climate change issues, not least drought.

The current situation is that the likes of trade policies, land takeovers, commodity speculation and strings-attached loans serve to marginalise small holder farmers in the global south, who comprise the backbone of food production, and lead to food insecurity.

The four horsemen of the Apocalypse

There is a prevailing notion that we can just continue as we are, with an endless supply of oil, endless supplies of meat and the endless assault on soil, human and environmental well-being that intensive petrochemical agriculture entails. Given the figures quoted at the start of this article, this is unsustainable and unrealistic and is a recipe for continued resource-driven conflicts and devastation.

The genuine answer is to adopt more organic and ecological farming systems that are locally based and less reliant on petrochemicals. This would also mean a shift away from an emphasis on producing meat that places a [massive burden on the environment](#) and is highly land, water and energy-input intensive.

The current economic system suits the interests of oil barons, Wall Street (including [land](#) and [commodity](#) speculators), global agribusiness and the major arms companies. These interlocking, self-serving interests constitute the four horsemen of the modern-day capitalist Apocalypse (big pharma probably should probably be included) and through their actions have managed to institute a globalised system of war and structural violence that results in poverty and [devastated economies](#).

Through this elite interests' influence over [powerful think tanks](#), directorships and board memberships and the horizontal and vertical integration of parent/sister corporate entities and cross-ownership, it ensures the [corporate media](#) says what it wants it to say, [opposition](#) is side-lined, muzzled or subverted, wars are fought [on its behalf](#) and the corporate control of every facet of life is increasingly brought under its influence – and that includes food: what is in it, who grows it and who sells it.

Fail to understand the set up described here and you will fail to grasp that companies like Monsanto are but a tentacle of elite interests.

Monsanto is integral to a system of globalisation that benefits the US-Anglo Western elite, whose neoliberal agenda is backed up by a militarism that ensures these interests are served if other means fail (see John Perkins [here](#) discussing his time as an economic hitman).

And the result has often been highly profitable on the back of economic and social devastation. Look no further than Michel Chossudovsky's analysis of [Somalia](#) or [Ethiopia](#) to see how agribusiness made a killing from policies that destroyed local economies and farming.

The US and its corporations, facilitated by the IMF and WTO, effectively dismantle agrarian

economies and then offer the problem as the cure.

Resisting global food imperialism

Ultimately, food and agrarian issues are not about 'marching against Monsanto' - as important as that is - it is about understanding the [geopolitics of food and agriculture](#) and challenging an increasingly integrated [global cartel](#) of finance, oil, military and agribusiness concerns that seek to gain from war, debt bondage and the control of resources.

Concerns about food security, good health and nutrition, biodiversity, food democracy, farmers' livelihoods in the global south, etc, must be placed within this wider context if we are to fully understand them.

People want solutions for hunger, poverty and conflict but are too often told there is no alternative to what exists. The solution lies in taking manipulated markets and rigged trade rules out of farming and investing in and supporting indigenous knowledge, agroecology, education and infrastructure, instead of inappropriately diverting funds to [underperforming sectors](#).

This involves rejecting the agenda of big agribusiness, whether in Africa, India, South America or elsewhere, and resisting the strategy of using agriculture as a geopolitical tool.

It involves [challenging the corporate takeover](#) of agriculture, supporting [food sovereignty movements](#) and embracing sustainable agriculture that is locally owned and rooted in the needs of communities.

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