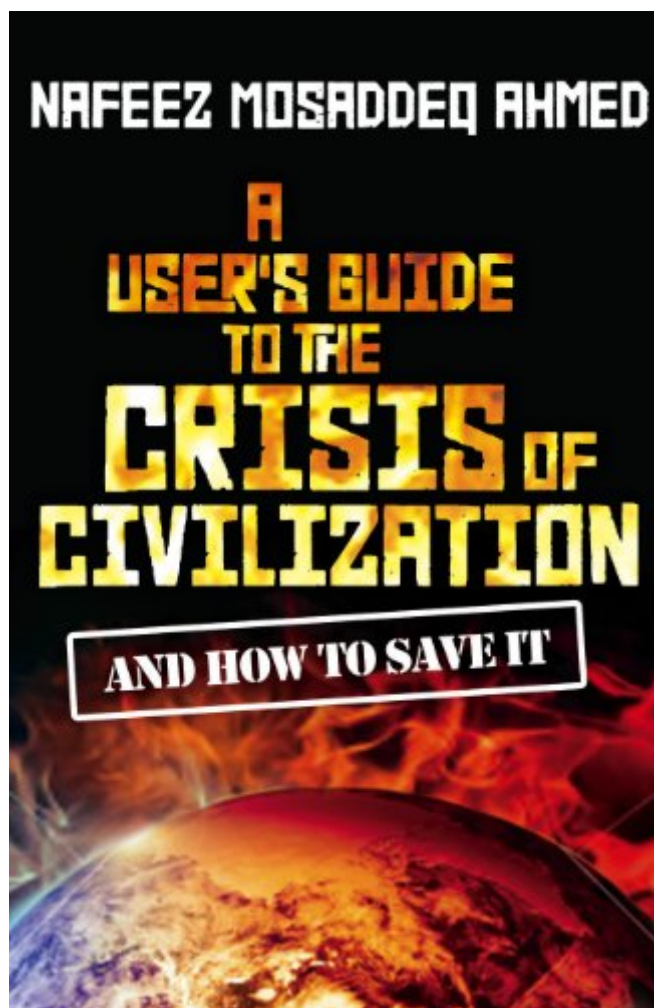


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A User's Guide To The Crisis Of Civilization: And How To Save It



Synopsis

It often seems that different crises are competing to devastate civilisation. This book argues that financial meltdown, dwindling oil reserves, terrorism and food shortages need to be considered as part of the same ailing system. Most accounts of our contemporary global crises such as climate change, or the threat of terrorism, focus on one area, or another, to the exclusion of others. Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed argues that the unwillingness of experts to look outside their own fields explains why there is so much disagreement and misunderstanding about particular crises. This book attempts to investigate all of these crises, not as isolated events, but as trends and processes that belong to a single global system. We are therefore not dealing with a 'clash of civilisations', as Huntington argued. Rather, we are dealing with a fundamental crisis of civilisation itself. This book provides a stark warning of the consequences of failing to take a broad view of the problems facing the world and shows how catastrophe can be avoided.

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Globalization

Customer Reviews

Here are a couple of (long) quotes from the Introduction: "This book provides an integrated, interdisciplinary reassessment of our current global predicament. It is an empirically driven analysis of global crises, developing a body of data from which a reinvigorated human-centered global vision for security through civilizational renewal can be developed, and through which can be revealed the myriad points of interconnection, so often missed by conventional security experts, between different global crises. It proceeds by reviewing the complex systemic interrelationships between global crises, explaining their shared trajectories, and developing a single qualitative map by which to chart their mutual convergence over the coming decades. It makes the following key sub-arguments: 1) Global crises are not aberrations from an optimized global system which require only minor adjustments to policy; they are integral to the ideology, structure and logic of the global political economy. 2) Therefore, global crises cannot be solved solely by such minor or even major policy reforms - but only by drastic reconfiguration of the system itself. Failure to achieve this will mean we are unable to curtail the escalation of crises. 3) Conventional expert projections on the impact of global crises on the political, economic, and ecological continuity of civilization are flawed due to their view of these crises as separate, distinctive processes. They must be understood holistically, intertwined in their causes and hence interrelated in their dynamics." "This book identifies and reviews trends in and across six specific global crises. It begins with a discussion of: 1) climate change; 2) energy scarcity; 3) food insecurity; and 4) economic instability. Against this background, it critically examines 5) the political economy of international terrorism and its direct relationship to global crises. The book then assesses the character and efficacy of the state-security response in terms of 6) the tendency toward militarization in the domestic and foreign policies of Western societies. Of course, these are by no means the only crises we face, but their sheer number and magnitude necessitate the focus on those which appear to be most fundamental in terms of causation. Two others that this book is unable to explore in detail, which are briefly dealt with where relevant, are worth highlighting here: demography, not simply in terms of population growth, but in terms of its uneven character in the form of massive centralization of populations in urban regions, over-exploitation of natural resources and mass displacement in the context of concomitant environmental catastrophes and social conflicts, a 'youth bulge' linked to chronic unemployment and poverty in regions of scarce resources, combined with an unsustainable expanding elderly population in the North relative to too few economically active young people; and epidemiology, in terms of the emergence of new and increasingly virulent diseases - such as avian flu and swine flu - with increasingly deadly consequences, facilitated by the conditions of industrial society such as

agricultural techniques and long-distance transport. There are other crises still, such as regional and global water shortages, but arguably the six global crises emphasized in this book are largely causally prior to these secondary crises, which can be understood in many ways as symptomatic, themselves interdependent offshoots of global systemic dysfunction."I don't have much to add, that these two quotes don't already explain about the book, other than to say that this is a very well documented and thoroughly prepared manuscript. It's evident that Nafeez Ahmed knows as much, or more, about the coming global crises as anyone I've yet read. Also, as you may have noticed in these quotes, the writing style is academic, so just know going into this book that it will be dense at times. If this doesn't sound like something you want to get into, then you might try these related books: Chris Martenson's, *The Crash Course: The Unsustainable Future Of Our Economy, Energy, And Environment*, or Ellen Brown's, *Web of Debt*, Peter Corning's, *The Fair Society: The Science of Human Nature and the Pursuit of Social Justice*. Still, this book is exceptional and well worth your time - highly recommended.

This is a comprehensive and intelligent analysis of seemingly disparate world-wide crises which Ahmed weaves together in their origins and impacts. He gives us a clear picture of how to turn these crises, moving into an intentional and positive future. This book is an absolute must-read!

This is probably the most important book you can read today if you want to learn about the greatest threats to humanity. It is full of facts, documents and testimony about the consequences of our food production shortfalls, energy shortages, financial instabilities, military/terrorist battles, the political moves to remove human rights from the general populous, and even about climate change. Its key strength is the peer reviews by a dozen world experts, inside and outside of power. The author deserves applause for bringing to our attention so many interconnected, on-going, accelerating processes. He reviews the issues already out there and adds some little-disclosed military and political agenda of consequence. He tries to connect the dots, and to some extent prioritizes the problems with analysis and suggested solutions. The first chapter is so scary that it is likely many readers will not make it through the book. It brings together the facts and analysis on global warming that have frightened the Pentagon and all European governments since at least 2004. The prognosis is so bleak that all the other chapters seem trivial by comparison, though they cover some very dark problems (genocide, martial law for the masses, large scale detention camps, global dictators, another great depression, mass starvation, acute resource shortages). He could have reversed the order of the chapters to allow the reader to better prepare for the "big one", but he had

his reasons. The author develops a social and philosophical analysis which distills to a list of "key structural problems". These include monetary systems that impose ever greater debt, militaries that serve the aggressive desires of corporations to seize foreign resources, capitalism that collapses all dimensions to a single dimension (dollars) thereby squeezing out ethics, control structures that intentionally minimize wages in colonies to prevent those nations from becoming anything more than a source for raw materials, and defining nature as a resource rather than as a life support system. For the most part they are correct and unassailable. But he thoroughly skirts one key factor in the root cause of all of the great problems he covers: Over population. He strains to hold blameless the masses of humanity that have, of course, needed food, which needed farming, which needed land, which cleared the land of nature, which caused deforestation and species extinction and soil erosion. Over population has been a serious problem since 600AD when China started to experience collapses on its millet economy. By 900AD the rice paddy had doubled food production, so population started growing again, but at the expense of thousands of species cleared off the land forever. Europe was collapsing by 1350AD with food and wood shortages, so epidemics began. Europe was "saved" by the "discovery" of the americas, which were pillaged for 5 centuries, allowing Europe to grow populations even deeper into unsustainability. Because the author refused to do the homework on ecology (contrast with Jared Diamond, for example), he ends up romanticizing nature as some amazing fabric that can blissfully support 12 billion people (his number) with abundance of food, water, shelter, beauty and high consumption rates, even though at 7 billion humanity has already slaughtered off 80% of the nature we started with (UN Millennium Ecological Survey, 2005). Of course one can choose a topic and decide what's out of scope for a given book. That's completely forgivable. But the very "analysis" he puts forth always stops right short of the effects of high populations, even while admitting strong dependence upon them. When the human population remained under the natural carrying capacity, none of the global crises he lists were even possible. They all emerge from the consequences of too many people for the earth to sustain. Only when there is "surplus population" above those that do the farming is it possible to build an army, build a metropolis, build a financial empire. In fact, overpopulation is a conscious strategy of those who covet power: Only when people are desperate are they willing to subordinate to a ruler - so make them desperate for food, water, and land via overpopulation. Farmers grow surplus food, the army comes to collect it and safe-keep it in the graineries, and then food is dispensed out only to those who do the king's bidding. That's where it all begins. Politicians gain power as people become dependent upon them. Most of the crazy politics we experience today are awkward attempts at dealing with the conflicts of resource shortages brought about directly by high

population numbers. This in no way forgives all the war mongers from their murders, nor any of the other crimes the author so aptly discusses. It is not a question of "taking sides", blaming the poor or the rich. The greatest crime of the rich is exploitation. The greatest crime of the poor is over population. The greatest crime of the middle class is to enable the other two. Plenty of blame for everyone. Its just that we cannot fix a problem until we get to the root cause of it. That is why his fixes are so anemic - the root cause is missing, so there's no point of departure from which to build a strong, sound fix. This deficiency can turn an otherwise great effort into something grossly misleading to his followers and/or into something providing the fodder to his adversaries to discredit his work. While most people of the world appreciate that harmony with nature is essential to sustainability, rulers don't want that message out there at all. So they have redefined cultures with nature regarded as something to be conquered, exploited, consumed; while "harmony with nature" was declared pagan and primitive. The author's avoidance of an ecological basis (which he admits is needed) leaves him arguing against a flawed ideology with yet another flawed ideology. With only one more good chapter, bringing in ecology/life_sciences as a basis for sustainability, and thus for ethics, the author could have shot down the current ideological flaws soundly, with science and a firm footing in a universal embrace of life on earth. But to do so he would have needed to bring in the concept of natural carrying capacity, and then step through the consequences of overstepping that bound, tracing the causal links down to the set of obscene problems that we are now wallowing in. Yes, this is three quarters of a great book! Read this book. Yes, definitely! Then read a good ecology book to complete the story and plan a realistic course toward solutions. Norm Dyer

It was written in an academic style, but has lots of good information.

Frankly, I can say that this book is one of a few that makes you think deeply about what awaits us in the coming years. Also, I am impressed with the way how the writer approaches all the problems our civilization is facing nowadays. His presentation of all the facts indicates what a thorough analysis of data he has made so far. In the beginning he mentions that all the crises that we have to deal with today are interrelated and can't be considered in isolation from each other. The first problem he describes is a global warming. He points out a number of major factors that influence it. Then he talks about a global economic system and what main flaws are present in it. Afterwards, he talks about terrorism and food shortage and how they will exacerbate the current situation globally. Finally, he discusses some ideas about how to solve all these problems or at least how to reduce their consequences. However, he emphasizes that they shouldn't

be considered as carved-in-stone solutions but possible ones. I recommend this book to anybody who would like to stay on this planet a little longer and those who would like their children to enjoy their lives and not try to survive in a desert planet which Earth can become.

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