
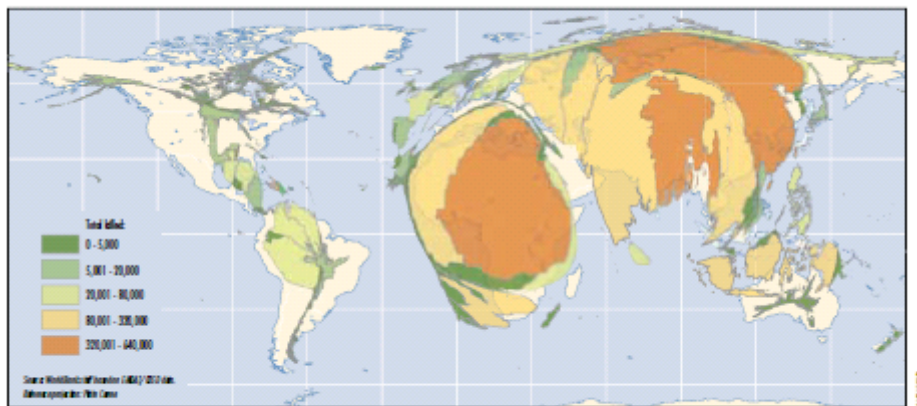


Sins in the name of children

 The NAPSNet Policy Forum provides expert analysis of contemporary peace and security issues in Northeast Asia. As always, we invite your responses to this report and hope you will take the opportunity to participate in discussion of the analysis.

Map 1 Deaths shrink Asia and the Americas—but expand Africa



Note: Areas reflect cumulative deaths from disasters for 1970 to 2010 (February).
Source: World Bank staff based on EM-DAT/CRED.

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Go to the Weekly Report for 22 November 2012

Every climatic disaster is an opportunity to demonise fossil fuels and whip up guilt, anxiety, moral pretensions, and political or business gains.

Superstorm Sandy came just before Obama v. Romney, and Mayor Bloomberg – owner of business interests in “clean energy” – [endorsed](#) Mr. Obama for re-election just in time, apparently trusting him as someone who might take [immediate action](#). Considering that this is the first time since Kyoto Protocol that a Democrat is in the White House unencumbered by re-election concerns, Mr. Obama has fallen prey to “do something-ism”. He declares, “*I think we’ve got **an obligation to future generations to do something** about it.*”

For now, Mr. Obama is not promising much other than to have a “conversation” with “scientists, engineers and elected officials to find out what more we can do to make *short-term* progress in *reducing carbons*”. This is remarkably refreshing. It seems to get away from the very long term that isn't planable, as also from lofty but fuzzy goals – such as keeping warming limited to 2 degrees Centigrade increase by the turn of the century (averaged over what period, and what if there is an undershot or an overshoot?)

With long-term goals, there is no telling just what impact will be avoided when, where and how – even at what cost – except by pretentious assertions resting on the listener's credulity. Or, which is the same thing, tricks and tweaks of models; ignorance embedded with sophistication.

Jim Kim of the World Bank says, “...we need to assume the moral responsibility to take action on *behalf of future generations*, especially the poorest.”

What if there just isn't enough money to take care of children and adults today AND leave our children a decent inheritance and a more comfortable, more secure world? In the name of future generations, the current generation – some two billion people living at the bottom of the pyramid – will be compromised.

Disasters hit the richer countries and poorer differently. The loss in the former consist largely of property damage, much of it covered by insurance and much of the rest eased by government actions. Loss in latter largely of death, with practically no insurance coverage. As the following map from the UN/World Bank (2010) book [Natural Hazards, Unnatural Disasters – The economics of effective prevention \(Overview](#) (p. 11) shows, "Deaths shrink Asia and the Americas, but expand Africa". Another map in the book (p. 12) shows, "Damages shrink Africa, but expand middle-income countries.") Of course, inequalities of vulnerability and risk protection within countries also show similar outcomes.

True, even within countries, the nature of the calamities, people's vulnerabilities, and government responses, may vary; for example, Hurricane Katrina versus Superstorm Sandy in the US. Either of them would likely have caused far much more human damage in Africa or Asia, and in absolute numbers much less property damage. Governments would've been bankrupted once more.

When the World Bank claims a trillion dollar budget for fighting climate change, about the same figure as the UN and IEA have been hankering for in order to achieve “universal access” to modern energy by 2030, what will get priority?

Whose lives, whose property, whose atmosphere, whose money for what? Whose children?

Knowingly or not, climate change activists may have hijacked the ship of poverty alleviation.

The saviours of the earth are not answerable to people.

- [Nikhil Desai](#), NAPSNet contributor

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