

# Doomsday Scenarios: Climate Change and World War III

Conversations with Guy McPherson and Mahdi Nazemroaya. Global Research News Hour Episode 110

By [Michael Welch](#) and [Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#), [Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [Environment](#), [GLOBAL RESEARCH NEWS HOUR](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [Climate Change](#), [Nuclear War](#), [UKRAINE REPORT](#)

*"The metaphor is so obvious. Easter Island isolated in the Pacific Ocean — once the island got into trouble, there was no way they could get free. There was no other people from whom they could get help. In the same way that we on Planet Earth, if we ruin our own [world], we won't be able to get help." —[Jared Diamond](#), [Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed](#)*

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Length (59:27)

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According to statistical documentation from scientists at Princeton and Stanford Universities and the the University of California Berkeley, the Earth is experiencing a mass extinction event un-rivalled since the end Cretaceous mass extinction of 65 million years ago which eradicated not only the dinosaurs, but virtually all large land animals. [1] [2]

Lead author of the study, Gerardo Ceballos, predicts that our species, homo sapiens, is likely to die off early on in this sixth great extinction. [3]

Contributing to this extinction event are climate change, pollution and deforestation.[4]

Based on the peer-reviewed scientific literature Guy McPherson predicts that habitat loss due to climate change will claim the lives of the last remaining humans on Earth as soon as 2030! [5] McPherson appears in the first half hour of the program to discuss the most recent developments pointing to this doomsday scenario.

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists have as of January moved the hands of their doomsday

clock to 3 minutes before midnight, in the wake of not only climate change but also the failure to reduce nuclear arsenal around the globe. [6] Over the past year, tensions have been flaring between the US and Russia, both nuclear armed states. Could there be a scenario in coming weeks which could escalate into a third and final world war?

Mahdi Nazemroaya points to Ukraine, The South China Sea, and Syria as a few of several flash-points around the globe which could potentially trigger World War III. In the second half hour of the program, Nazemroaya will detail the geopolitical dynamics affecting these regions and pushing humanity to the nuclear brink.

*Guy McPherson is an Emeritus Professor of Natural Resource and Ecology & Evolutionary Biology from the University of Arizona. He is the author of the 2013 book [GOING DARK](#) which outlines the strong case that runaway climate change is here. His blog [Nature Bats Last](#) contains [a monster climate change essay](#) with dozens of links to peer-reviewed analysis outlining what he sees as the hopeless reality of near term human extinction due to Climate Change.*

*Guy is also a co-host of the weekly radio podcast [Nature Bats Last](#) which airs Tuesdays on the [Progressive Radio Network](#).*

*Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya is a Sociologist and a research Associate with the Centre for Research on Globalization. He is the award-winning author of *The Globalization of NATO* (Clarity Press) and a forthcoming book *The War on Libya and the Re-Colonization of Africa*. He is also a contributor at the Strategic Culture Foundation (SCF), Moscow, and a member of the Scientific Committee of Geopolitica, Italy.*

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The show can be heard on the Progressive Radio Network at [prn.fm](#). Listen in every Monday at 3pm ET.

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Notes:

1. Ceballos et al (June 19, 2015) “Accelerated modern human-induced species losses: Entering the sixth mass extinction”, Science Advances; <http://advances.sciencemag.org/content/1/5/e1400253.full>
2. <http://www.skepticalscience.com/Earths-five-mass-extinction-events.html>
3. BBC News (June 20, 2015): “Earth ‘entering new extinction phase, US study”;  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-33209548>
4. ibid
5. <http://guymcpherson.com/2014/01/climate-change-summary-and-update/>
6. <http://thebulletin.org/three-minutes-and-counting7938>

## Interview Transcript

### Guy McPherson on Near Term Extinction of Human Species due to Climate Change

Global Research: Guy McPherson is Professor Emeritus at the Natural Resources and Ecology & Evolutionary Biology from the University of Arizona. He is the author of the 2013 book GOING DARK which outlines the strong case that runaway climate change is here. His blog Nature Bats Last contains a monster climate-change essay with dozens of links to peer-reviewed analysis outlining what he sees as the hopeless reality of near term human extinction due to Climate Change.

Guy is also a co-host of the weekly radio podcast Nature Bats Last which airs Tuesdays on the Progressive Radio Network. He joins us once again to update us on our climate predicament and other warnings on the horizon. So Professor Guy McPherson, thank you once again for joining us!

Guy McPherson: Thank you Michael! It’s a pleasure, as always to visit with you!

GR: We caught you in the middle of a speaking tour on the west coast of North America, so maybe you want to give us a bit of a brief outline of some of the things you’ve been talking about to audiences there.

GM: Sure! I started in Vancouver, British Columbia, then went over to Vancouver Island, British Columbia, as far south as Eugene, Oregon. And all along the way people are talking

about the drought, and what a significant impact it has had on vegetation here. Life-long gardeners are surprised at how abrupt climate change is impacting their ability to grow food. Nearly everybody who is paying attention has commented on the trees that are dying. So, it's been quite a receptive audience for the most part, because they're immersed in abrupt climate change and find themselves surprised that it's happening so quickly in this place.

In my presentations, and I've delivered a few so far, I focus on the time-line within which, I believe, habitat will be gone for humans, and not too long after the habitat is gone, there won't be any humans left on the planet anymore. The general idea is how long do we have with habitat on this planet for our own species, homo sapiens.

GR: Now I know that...when I first spoke to you, you were saying that it looked as if we had maybe up until about the year 2030, which isn't too far away. Is there any reason to to change that calculation? Might we be losing habitat sooner, or possibly later?

GM: It's difficult for me to imagine we have that long. Depending upon the various events that occur in the near future, we could reach 4 degrees Celsius above base-line in as little as 18 months. Even at the relatively slow rate of overall planetary warming we have observed so far, we are losing the ability of plants and animals to keep up. They can't keep up with the slow rate of climate change that has happened so far by a factor of 10,000 times!

So, now that we've entered the abrupt phase of climate change with, it appears likely that we'll reach that 4 degrees Celsius mark in a short period of time. I don't see that we could possibly make it to 2030. But it's pretty difficult to predict the future, obviously. I just don't see habitat being around for nearly that long.

GR: You talk about that 4 degrees Centigrade above uh base-line as being critical because that's, is it generally accepted among the scientific community that at 4 degrees above base-line that habitat for human habitation is just not there?

GM: Interestingly, Oliver Tickell wrote a paper in the Guardian on the 10th of August 2008, so now nearly 7 years ago, and the article is headlined "On a Planet 4C Hotter, All We Can Prepare for is Extinction," and he was writing specifically about human extinction.

I think that's pretty conservative. It represented the viewpoint at the time, the scientific viewpoint. I think it's conservative because we've had no humans on earth at 3.3 degrees Celsius above base-line in the past, base-line meaning the beginning of the Industrial Revolution or about 1750. However, it's become clear that 4C is locked in now, and in the very near term there's no way to avoid it.

And so, most climate scientists I know are back-peddalling terribly or moving the goal posts as it were in claiming that 4C won't be a problem. Considering that the ability of plants and native animals to keep up with the slow rate of change, and they lag by a factor of 10,000 times, I don't see how accelerating the process is going to help it.

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GR: I know that you've been very critical of the IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in terms of the, I think I heard you refer to it as the nonsensical conservatism around these issues. What is your understanding of why the IPCC is so hesitant about pronouncing what seems to be clearly spelled out in the scientific literature?

GM: Yes, I have been quite critical of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and I think it's well warranted. They operate by a process that is very, very conservative. When they begin their assessment process, they accept for consideration only the refereed journal literature. And then they meet in these sub-groups. The sub-groups must reach consensus on every item it's been given. One person in the group says "no, there's no way that methane is a hundred times more powerful than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas over the short term," than that's out. That's no longer under consideration.

So, it's pretty watered down by the process of consensus. And then after that process which takes a couple of years, it goes to the policy realm, where it must be approved through the political process before the information is released, before the assessment is released. So, by the time the assessment comes out, the information in it, is at least five years old, and in some cases ten years old.

It takes a long time to get a paper even published in the refereed journal literature. It takes a minimum of eighteen months and typically longer from the time of submission. Well, by the time it's submitted, the data have to be crunched and collected and the graduate student and post-docs hired to start the process, so you know you're backing this thing up and backing this thing up; by the time it appears in the refereed journal literature, it's old news and that old news is the basis for the IPCC beginning their consensus process. So. It's just very old information.

As a minor example, the word 'methane' was mentioned exactly twice in the hundreds of pages of assessments. Twice in a single table, where it was concluded methane was a problem for the grandchildren.



GR: I know that methane figures quite prominently in your list of positive feedback loops, well, not positive in a human sense, but in terms of it's self-reinforcing. In other words that, once you get these temperatures go up to a certain level, it becomes kind of like a runaway train, and even if we were to end all of our inputs tomorrow of CO<sub>2</sub>, it's going to continue warming up faster, right?

GM: That's right. That's absolutely right. Tack onto that exponential release of methane into the atmosphere. Tack onto that just one other of the fifty irreversible self-reinforcing feedback loops I know about. That upper tropospheric moistening, uh the water vapour that traps heat in the upper troposphere, um an analysis from August 2014 posted in the Proceedings of The National Academy of Sciences, verifies the presence of the largest known feedback mechanism for amplifying anthropogenic climate change. So, you know this is number 38 or 50 or 45 or something like that on my list of fifty of these irreversible self-reinforcing feedback loops, and you know that ignores methane.

That's just one other in this long list. Methane is a really, really big deal that has been largely ignored by the scientific community with the exception of the likes of courageous Paul Beckwith and courageous Natalia Shakhova and her partner Igor Semiletov. Other than that there really aren't very many people talking about it from a scientific perspective and I think that's a real tragedy.

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GR: Now, the last time I spoke with you it was around the time of the COP conference in Lima. There have been some developments since then, that I wonder if you want to maybe point out a couple of the more significant discoveries that are coming out that have uh, you know, taking a bad situation and making it worse.

GM: In fact, yeah. First of all, it's notable that at that conference Paul Beckwith made a prediction. He had been saying that we could expect methane-induced warming to cause a rapid rise in temperature. He came right out and said that it's underway at the meeting in Lima. So, that's a big deal. Even more recently, from about two weeks ago - sorry from a week ago, the 19<sup>th</sup> of January, (June) a paper in Science Advances, this quote from the abstract: “the Sixth mass extinction is already underway.” And an entry with the senior author, coincident with the release of the paper says “life would take many millions of years to recover and our species itself would likely disappear early on.”

So, it's becoming accepted within the very conservative scientific community, that we're in the midst of the Sixth Great Extinction or Mass Extinction event, and that as large body mammals, humans are not going to be the last to go extinct.

Tack on just one more paper from earlier this month in Plos Biology, and the title goes like this: “Suitable Days for Plant Growth Disappear Under Projected Climate Change.” That's ‘disappear under projected climate change, ‘and the projection is of course out to 2100, the year almost everybody uses when talking about climatic impacts. And then the subtitle is:

“Potential Human and Biotic Vulnerability,” Again reflect on the conservative nature of the scientific community. It’s a potential problem for humans. And, I love this part, potential human and biotic vulnerability, as if humans aren’t really part of the biota. (INAUDIBLE) separate from that.

So. Here again the journal literature and even the language within it is slow to catch up with the reality of the situation, that we’re in the midst of abrupt climate change right now. And it will be manifest and is being manifest in the inability to grow plants on this planet. That’s a problem.

GR: Could you maybe drill down a little bit on the issue of the the loss of ice at the poles, and like how dramatic that has been and how significantly that will alter the uh, the climate?

GM: Yes, and here is a relatively minor example. From about a week ago, in personal context in 2007 and 2012 when the arctic ice mass fell precipitously over short periods of time, um the term ‘century event’ was coined to describe what happens when a hundred thousand square kilometres of ice are lost in a day. From one day to the next a hundred thousand square kilometres of ice just disappear from the Arctic Ocean.

Well, between I believe it was June 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of this year as reported at Cryosphere Today, there was a three century event. Three hundred and twenty thousand square kilometres of ice disappeared from the Arctic in one 24 hour period. That’s an area the size of New Mexico, one of the larger states, the one I occupy in the southwestern United States. That is absolutely huge and completely ignored within the media and of course by the governments who, in my eyes, ought to be telling us about things like this.

GR: And do you have any intuition about why that might be?

GM: Um, sure. The corporations that control the media, and there are only a handful that control more than 90% of the media in the United States, and a similar trend applies for the world obviously. The same corporations that own the media outlets have significant influence over the government, I would say, to put it mildly. It used to be one citizen one vote. I would argue at this point that it’s a lot closer to one dollar one vote, or to be more pragmatic about it, one million dollars one vote.

When you control the message through the media and you more directly control the decisions made within the governments, you can exert considerable influence over what kind of message is coming out.

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GR: Now, um, there’s been considerable criticism on this program about uh geo-engineering efforts, that uh the solar radiation management, including from yourself, and I’m wondering if you’re seeing any signs that uh these sorts of geo-engineering efforts maybe already being put into place or contemplated. I know you’re citing the literature you’ve been, you’re

saying that this is just not the way to go. But do you have any intuition about whether that's being put into practice right now?

GM: That's a good question and occasionally I see some bit of writing suggesting quite strongly that the IPCC projections assume geo-engineering is either going on or soon will be, and primarily that's with solar radiation management.

Add onto that the notion that global dimming is already cooling the planet more than it otherwise would be, and the loss of reflective particulates from the atmosphere would cause the planet to warm up very, very considerably in a short period of time and it could very well be that there is a concerted effort to either now be implementing or considering implementing solar radiation management or some other form of geo-engineering. Even though you know the synopsis of the journal literature came in February of this year, February 10 from the National Academy of Sciences in the United States when they conclude that geo-engineering is not a viable solution for the Climate Predicament. And I love that they put it that way: 'Climate Predicament' not 'a problem,' as we're frequently told it is. Problems can be solved. Predicaments can't even be addressed. And they point out that geo-engineering is not a viable solution for the climate predicament.

So, that said, desperate times call for desperate measures. I've little doubt that even if all the evidence indicates something will not work, that the people pulling the levers of industry will still give those things a try.

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GR: So, now when you are looking at the way we can potentially respond as the body politic, are you seeing any optimistic signs, I mean whether it's from policy makers or from your fellow scientists or from the wider public. You just mentioned you are on your tour and you're getting some positive responses there, or at least interest. But I'm wondering if you've been seeing significant changes in terms of the way that we are responding to the kinds of warnings that you've been put out compared to you know three or four years ago.

GM: Yes, absolutely. For one thing, the count now of scientists, pundits, public figures who will admit that we're in the midst of an extinction event that is almost certain to take out our species early on, that list has grown quite large in the last three years. It includes folks like Randy Malamud, Regents' Professor at Georgia State University, who wrote a piece for the Huffington Post in December of last year, which includes this line: "It's time to accept our impending demise." Robert Burroughs (sp?) added his voice in the mainstream media outlets. Paul Ehrlich does the same with an interview with MSNBC in January of this year. So the list is growing.

Perhaps most importantly, among these people is a writer for a United States television program broadcast on HBO, a program called The News Room. Aaron Sorkin, who's always been really cutting-edge with his writing and with his understanding of reality wrote a piece that addresses our climate predicament and in this fictional program makes it quite clear that we don't have long, and he's only taking into account carbon dioxide in the



atmosphere. The program talks about several things that will occur in the future that are already occurring right now. Food and water shortages, extremely large storms, spread of deadly disease those kinds of things. So, when it makes it onto the television in the United States that's when it starts to have some impact and reach the public consciousness.

Tack on one more item and this is from three days ago in the Daily Mash. The Daily Mash is a UK publication, much like the ONION in this country. It's satire-based, and the headline there is "Humanity to keep tweeting positive slogan until point of extinction."

And in the final paragraph, here's a quote: "Hours after the last human keels over in a desert wasteland, there will be an automated tweet saying simply "well, what did you do?" It's almost as if somebody has figured out my message and is promulgating it through these "satirical outlets."

GR: Well Guy McPherson, I wish I could say it's a pleasure to have you on because you always seem to have a little bit more bad news for us. I do thank and genuinely appreciate your efforts to get this message out. I think that our listeners will take great uh satisfaction in hearing this uh unfiltered uh truth about the kind of challenges we face so thank you very much and all the best for the remainder of your tour.

GM: Well, thank you Michael it's a pleasure to be with you as always. It doesn't give me great joy to present the really, really, really dire situation, the dire straits we're in but I do think people have a right to know what I know, what the governments know what the media know but are unwilling or unable to report.

GR: Guy McPherson is Professor Emeritus of Natural Resources and Ecology & Evolutionary Biology from the University of Arizona. His blog Nature Bats Last can be found at the website [guymcpherson.com](http://guymcpherson.com).

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