
Introduction

Thomas Malthus and his followers or why this book was written 9

Chapter I. Israel or the war over water 14

Where better to start with the quest for water than in an area that has been likened to the proverbial powder keg with a burning fuse. We shall visit Israel, where water is one of the leading causes of local tension. We will reveal how water can not only propel countries to war but also reconcile sworn enemies. At the same time, the example of Israel will demonstrate the technical possibilities, which our civilization has to offer, and to dispel a number of myths and catastrophic predictions.

Chapter II. The best of the best, made in Dubai! 35

There is no more extravagant a country that revels so much in excess than the United Arab Emirates. We shall visit its showcase, Dubai, to illustrate the methods and technologies that enable man to indulge in the highest imaginable luxury in the most adverse conditions that exist on Earth. The foundation for success is based on the trade with the so-called virtual water and on the use of leading technologies.

Chapter III. When a lake is dying 44

Some erroneous human activities have an irreversible impact on nature. The territory of the Central Asian countries of the former Soviet Union serves as a counterpoint to the water management in Israel. The Aral Sea is now a symbol and deterrent example of grandiose efforts to control nature without regard for scientific evidence.

Chapter IV. The Lake of Flies 60

Technology is a good servant but a bad master. With this paraphrase of the motto of all firefighters we head to hot California, where a bizarre waterbody illustrates the history of water resource use in the USA. Although there are a number of parallels with the story of the Aral Sea, the ending is considerably more optimistic.

Chapter V. Nepal or Kathmandu is thirsty 67

Upon hearing the name Nepal, everyone most likely recalls its resilient sherpas, Mount Everest, trekking and mountaineering expeditions to the Himalayas. But this is only a part of Nepal. Its capital has serious concerns.

Thirsty Kathmandu is suffering from a catastrophic shortage of drinking water. That is a brief description of its most serious problem. The example of this small but interesting country illustrates how extremely difficult it is to help developing countries and how seemingly simple solutions face entirely unexpected obstacles due to local conditions – in the case of Nepal, it is the unusual combination of politics and religion.

Chapter VI. A monument to a dictator, the Great Man-Made River80

It is peculiar how often despotic rulers are involved in water management. Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi decided to rewrite world history with a controversial project called the Great Man-Made River, a river created by man. This grandiose water pipeline, stretching through the desert, arouses controversy. On one hand, it provides much-needed water to the arid region of Greater Maghreb, but on the other hand it irreversibly destroys old non-renewable water resources deep beneath the Sahara and escalates tensions with neighbouring Egypt. Should we condemn or acknowledge Gaddafi's project?

Chapter VII. Stalin's legacy, South Ossetia88

A visit to a region where, even several decades after his death, the spirit of Stalin continues to cause destruction and to devastate water management. We shall visit Georgia and South Ossetia. The example of this explosive region demonstrates the errors made by the civilized world in providing humanitarian aid.

Chapter VIII. Countries where water can be lit up97

In this chapter, we shall visit Iceland, where people use water as a unique source of energy. The Svartsengi geothermal power plant will help us reflect on the principles of today's energy policy.

Chapter IX. The Southeast Asian Chernobyl, which no one cares about . . . 110

Bangladesh lies in an area with excess water. At times, it even has too much of it to the dismay of its inhabitants. However, a dramatically increasing population has polluted the water to such an extent that the global public intervened and built new sources of potable water. But the role of expert supervision in the implementation of aid was underestimated, thereby triggering a drama of unprecedented scope in the entire world. And it has yet to be solved...

Chapter X. Everything has a price, even water115

The next stop on the world tour is the Indian subcontinent, which demonstrates how important the proper pricing of water is. If we give something away for free, it may ultimately end up being a white elephant for the recipient.

Chapter XI. A paradise among crocodiles.120

This time we head to the magnificent beaches of South Florida. Here, we shall observe the huge development potential of human society. However, its implementation is associated with a serious dilemma...

Chapter XII. Artificial water128

The pursuit of water brings us to an environment that, from a certain perspective, may resemble something out of a science fiction novel. We shall stroll through the streets of the city state of Singapore, which with slight exaggeration may be regarded as a “laboratory” in which humanity tests the possibilities of future water supply.

Chapter XIII. A final journey through time.134

The aim of this unusual chapter is to refute another myth that is increasingly used to scare us. We will look at global climate change through the eyes of a geologist, who measures time in millions of years. Futile efforts to stabilize the climate, a phenomenon that has always developed very dynamically throughout the history of our planet, will come at a huge financial cost. However, much more meaningful adaptation measures in water management lack such funding.

Chapter XIV. Do we have enough water? Or what is scarcity?150

The Earth can never run out of water. Sometimes more and sometimes less of it will be available but not always enough to meet momentary needs. Catastrophic predictions are not appropriate. A final overview of figures and facts should show that the problem does not lie in water scarcity but in poverty and lack of education.