



# Extracted: How the Quest for Mineral Wealth Is Plundering the Planet

*Ugo Bardi*

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As we dig, drill, and excavate to unearth the planet's mineral bounty, the resources we exploit from ores, veins, seams, and wells are gradually becoming exhausted. Mineral treasures that took millions, or even billions, of years to form are now being squandered in just centuries—or sometimes just decades.

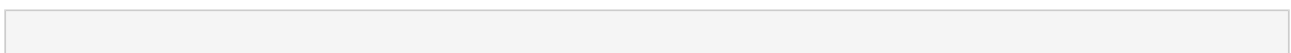
Will there come a time when we actually run out of minerals? Debates already soar over how we are going to obtain energy without oil, coal, and gas. But what about the other mineral losses we face? Without metals, and semiconductors, how are we going to keep our industrial system running? Without mineral fertilizers and fuels, how are we going to produce the food we need?

Ugo Bardi delivers a sweeping history of the mining industry, starting with its humble beginning when our early ancestors started digging underground to find the stones they needed for their tools. He traces the links between mineral riches and empires, wars, and civilizations, and shows how mining in its various forms came to be one of the largest global industries. He also illustrates how the gigantic mining machine is now starting to show signs of difficulties. The easy mineral resources, the least expensive to extract and process, have been mostly exploited and depleted. There are plenty of minerals left to extract, but at higher costs and with increasing difficulties.

The effects of depletion take different forms and one may be the economic crisis that is gripping the world system. And depletion is not the only problem. Mining has a dark side—pollution—that takes many forms and delivers many consequences, including climate change.

The world we have been accustomed to, so far, was based on cheap mineral resources and on the ability of the ecosystem to absorb pollution without generating damage to human beings. Both conditions are rapidly disappearing. Having thoroughly plundered planet Earth, we are entering a new world.

Bardi draws upon the world's leading minerals experts to offer a compelling glimpse into that new world ahead.



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