

Threats to humanity from global warming: the Dead Race Scrolls

Three important facts to be remembered about the threats to the human race are:

1 The first is global warming. Normally the one thing you can't predict is the future. However, studying past facts can guide you as long as you don't extend the timeline beyond about 30% of the timespan of the known data. Global warming was quantified around 120 years ago by Arrhenius. Detailed measurements and records have been kept for at least 100 years, and ship's logs of weather information have been kept much longer. On that basis we can be fairly sure up to between 2050 and 2060. Any predictions about global warming after that are less certain but the trends are still clear.

2 Second are diseases, which are less easy to predict, most notably those causing epidemics. Some, like covid-19, result from a single human act so must be thought of as random. However as humans take over more of the wild we come into increasing contact with wild animals. Some, such as bats and monkeys, are sources of many diseases, especially bats, which are full of viruses that they can control with their powerful immune systems, but which can be deadly to us.

3 Thirdly human sperm counts are falling rapidly, probably due to chemical pollution and poor habits.

What are the trends?

1 Since the first industrial revolution carbon dioxide has been steadily increasing in the atmosphere and at an increasing rate. Emissions are still on the rise and likely to be so for at least a decade due to the inactivity of many of those able to do something about it.

2 Methane is also steadily increasing in the atmosphere from agriculture and gas extraction and is a more powerful greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. As temperature rises, peaty areas increasingly emit methane due to thawing, drying and other factors, so levels will rise further. Methane decays after about ten years but the atmospheric level will still rise because of the increasing volumes emitted.

3 Warming seas result in more powerful and frequent storms and tidal surges.

4 Warming seas upset worldwide water currents and jet stream air movements that carry heat around the world to balance and stabilise the weather.

5 Melting polar ice pours fresh water into the seas, slowing or possibly eventually stopping some salt water currents, such as the Gulf Stream, causing effects similar to 4.

6 The disappearance of glaciers causes shortage of fresh water in rivers.

7 Living standards are presently rising throughout the world. Every time energy is generated and goods are made or recycled, waste is produced. Poor countries emit little at the moment but that will change soon.

8 We still believe that a healthy economy is one that is always growing, a destructive nonsense first criticised by the UN's Secretary General U Thant in the 1960s. At the end of the document is a letter from some European Union MEPs. They have proposed a 'beyond-growth' approach.

9 The seas absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and are a major absorber of the gas. This makes the seas more acidic causing animal and plant death. Oddly, warmer seas are found to absorb less, which is the opposite of the usual effect of solubility in liquids. This is a 'double whammy'. Seas are still becoming more acidic but less useful as a carbon sink.

10 The world population is rising rapidly. Each additional person contributes greenhouse gases and other pollutants. Population might stabilise or fall but we are too many already.

11 Previously fertile areas are turning into deserts. Attempts to irrigate can only be short-lived as the water levels in the aquifers under the ground steadily fall. Large parts of Africa are suffering already.

12 Sea levels are rising due to the melting of polar and mountain ice. Low lying islands and land areas will all be flooded before long. Short-term rises are likely to be under one metre. However even this, coupled with powerful storms will erode coasts all around the world. Low areas such as Bangla Desh are already being flooded and swept away. No barriers will be practicable due to the scale needed, and their construction would produce even more atmospheric carbon dioxide due to cement production, and sand dredging removes protective sand banks. When the polar, mountain and Greenland ice has melted, rises will be many tens of metres, perhaps seventy, with Greenland alone contributing seven metres.

13 Most governments will not do anything. This can be because they are corrupt kleptocracies or they lack the money or will or they are in thrall to big business or criminals.

14 Intensive farming methods have caused sterile soils throughout the world. The resulting need for nitrate fertilisers has further increased carbon dioxide output as it is an unavoidable pollutant of the Haber process.

15 Movement of warmer zones towards the poles is allowing insects to move too. As well as ravaging crops they will bring with them infectious diseases such as malaria, zika and many others. This will affect plants and humans and other animals.

16 As food becomes scarcer people eat wild animals, even diseased bats and monkeys - the so-called 'bush meat.' The threat of disease increases. In richer countries there are strict butchery laws about 'game' for that reason. People are also living nearer to these dangerous species as cities, mining and agriculture spread. To examine where the next pandemic might emerge, in May 2023 Reuters used two decades of disease-outbreak and environmental data to pinpoint the places on the planet most vulnerable to "zoonotic spillover" – the term for when a virus jumps between species. Viruses leap from bats to humans either by way of an intermediary host, such as a pig, chimpanzee or civet, or more directly through human contact with bat urine, faeces, blood, or saliva.

17 Animals will evolve faster than humans as they reproduce earlier and more often. Future intelligent carbon-based life will most likely be aquatic, having evolved from whales or octopuses.

18 Human fertility is falling worldwide. The reasons are not yet certain but environmental pollution with various chemicals is thought most likely to be a major cause. Though the

likely fall in population is good news, it is not good for people wanting children and bad news for other life forms that suffer similarly.

19 The above ill effects are happening sooner than expected with some, such as glacier melting, accelerating at an unexpected rate. In 2023 parts of the Atlantic became very much warmer for no apparent reason.

This the end of the facts, provable from reliable sources. What follows is a series of possible outcomes that are opinions, though they are informed ones that follow the facts. Why not keep this document with you to see how much comes true?

What will happen?

Straight away - say the next twenty years

1 As land becomes uninhabitable due to drought or flood the many millions who live there will try to migrate. In fact only the better off will be able to do so and the poor will die, with much hand wringing from richer countries.

2 The richer countries will resist immigration on this vast scale, initially by bribery but, when that fails, by brutality. Wars will absorb money and eventually even the rich will be powerless to stop migration. The only funny bit in the Day After Tomorrow film was when North Americans were welcomed with open arms by the Mexicans. As if!

3 In more fortunate countries there will be a steady movement from low lying cities to higher country. This will take up more of what remains of food growing land.

4 There will be pandemics every few years that the world will increasingly be unable to do anything about due to lack of resources.

Longer term - say 2300

As Thomas Malthus predicted, the world population will drop dramatically, possibly to around a few hundred million. They will be crowded onto the remaining higher ground and will revert to a hunter gatherer life. It might be that conditions are so alien that all humans will die. If average temperatures continuously exceed that of the human body (37°C) survival is less likely. Attempts to cool dwellings will accelerate warming further.

However forests will return and so will wild life. The new plants will absorb some of the carbon dioxide and store it as they die and fall, along with the nutritional waste from the animals. Soils will be rebuilt by the animals, bacteria and fungi that live in it. There will come a new climate balance with the temperature reaching a new stability. It is just possible that some paper libraries might survive and provide any human survivors with information to restart technology – The Dead Race Scrolls. Last time it only took about two hundred and fifty years from Ironbridge to the Internet and that was from scratch.

One benefit is that, if there are human survivors, only the most favoured genetically will survive so the human race will be healthier. The absurd notion of ethnicity will have disappeared and what we now call mixed marriage will also result in better off-spring. The word 'richer' will eventually become meaningless as money is useless for survival if there is nothing to buy.

One intriguing thought is that in previous mass extinctions, such as the the dinosaurs, the survivors were much smaller. In the case of many raptor dinosaurs these are what we now know as birds. Maybe the survivors of a human mass extinction will be 300 mm or less. We will definitely all fit on to the Isle of Wight then. Oh no, it will be under water.

Of course it might well be that be that machines with artificial intelligence will take over and apply logic. They would no doubt rapidly realise that humans are the cause of the destruction of life on earth and take action, and once they learn how to generate their own energy they will not have an off switch.

The most intelligent public comment made about global warming is Greta's 'Blah, blah, blah.' It should be permanently engraved on the walls of every factory, oil and gas well, finance house and government building so that, if the waters eventually recede, future intelligent life forms can scratch whatever they have for a head over the meaning.

What to do?

Buy a plot of rocky land, ideally with a cool, hidden cave, at least 100 metres above sea level and near a source of water. Buy lots of weapons and books about living off the land. The latter is only relevant if we continue to know how to read.

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A critique of 'growth'.

[This needs a good dose of the 'precis' skills I learned at school. Getting rid of the verbal diarrhoea would reduce it to about a quarter without losing meaning but it is worth reading anyway.]

The pursuit of growth at all costs has created a global economic system that is fragile and vulnerable to shocks, and this needs to change, a group of European Parliament Members (MEPs) write.

Next week, more than four thousand people will participate onsite and online in the Beyond Growth 2023 Conference, a cross-political initiative taking place at the European Parliament in Brussels.

We, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from five different political groups and non-attached, are organising together alongside more than 60 partner organisations.

With this three-day conference gathering high-level speakers from EU policy-making, academia, trade unions, businesses and civil society organisations, our aim is to challenge conventional policy-making in the EU.

We also want to redefine societal goals across the board, moving away from the harmful focus on economic growth as the sole basis of our development model.

The existing model of growth at all costs has reached its limits

We believe that the current economic model, based on endless growth, has reached its limits.

Firstly, continuous economic growth, especially based on the consumption of fossil fuels, is leading to catastrophic global warming.

Secondly, the infinite pursuit of growth relies on the depletion of natural resources, the destruction of biodiversity and the accumulation of waste and pollution. This also poses risks to our health, our economies and our societies writ large.

Thirdly, the current economic model is contributing to social inequality and exclusion. The emphasis on economic growth has not translated into equal distribution of wealth or opportunities. Instead, it has resulted in a concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few leaving many [most] behind.

Fourthly, the current economic model is inherently unstable and prone to crises, as seen, for example, during the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic [and bank collapses in 2023]. The pursuit of growth at all costs has created a global economic system that is fragile and vulnerable to shocks.

Human well-being and ecological sustainability have to come first

As MEPs from different political groups, we have different perspectives on how to achieve a beyond-growth economy. However, we all agree on the urgency and the importance of the issue at hand. We share the view that we need an economic system that prioritises human well-being and ecological sustainability over GDP growth, one that recognises that infinite growth on a finite planet is impossible.

We also believe we need to find new ways of organising our economies without relying on the continuous exploitation of resources and the constant increase in production and consumption.

We call for more pluralism in economic thinking within EU institutions and for its alignment with the scientific evidence of climate, ecological and social sciences.

We call for economic models and other decision-support tools to be more diverse, more comprehensive and more readable for citizens.

We call for decision-making processes to be aligned with our common policy objectives rather than on the basis of the variation of GDP figures.

There are other policy options

As policy-makers, we also believe it is our responsibility to lead the way in finding new policy options. We, therefore, commit ourselves to dedicate our energy to our own parliamentary work to support bold and ambitious proposals that pave the way for sustainable prosperity in the EU and beyond.

In particular, we propose the following overarching actions for EU institutions and Member States.

We need to develop a new comprehensive strategy for a beyond-growth European economy that fully integrates social, environmental, and economic objectives.

The European Green Deal, as the EU's flagship initiative for tackling climate change and promoting a sustainable future, is an important and necessary step, but it does not acknowledge the limits to growth.

A new strategy should be based on the principles of ecological sustainability, social justice, and well-being and should prioritise policies that contribute to these objectives.

Institutional architecture should follow suit

We have to promote a pluralistic approach to the indicators and macroeconomic models used by the EU and its Member States.

Building on the existing work done by the European Commission and many other institutions, we call for a policy-making approach that relies on indicators

measuring progress beyond GDP, on the use of macroeconomic modelling aiming at the respect of planetary boundaries and the improvement of social well-being, and on the development of green and gender budgeting tools.

We should design our institutional architecture to better serve the beyond growth strategy. Drawing from proposals made by academics ahead of the first post-growth conference, we propose to establish a Directorate-General for Sustainability and Well-Being in the European Commission, a special Committee on Beyond Growth Futures in the European Parliament and a ministry for economic transition in each Member State.

Each of these structures should be responsible at their own level for developing policy proposals beyond growth and coordinating the EU's efforts towards sustainability and well-being.

Our economy has to become future-fit

The level of public interest in a future-fit European economy is higher than ever before, and having such a landmark debate in the European Parliament is a powerful symbol.

The Beyond Growth Conference offers a unique opportunity to have a pluralistic debate connected to scientific research in all its diversity that meets the concrete expectations of our fellow citizens.

Designing pathways to live well within the social and environmental limits of our society is not only desirable. It is also absolutely necessary.

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