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Embracing Planetary Flow

Contribution to GTI Forum [Which Future Are We Living In?](#)

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Twenty years after the publication of the [Great Transition essay](#), we remain stuck in [Conventional Worlds](#). However, that system is fast falling apart, all by itself. We are heading into Barbarization, including both [Breakdown](#) and (perhaps temporarily) [Fortress World](#). But this is necessary for the Great Transition to begin for a clear and simple reason: we need a new mindset. We can't just smoothly reform ourselves out of our old civilization and into the Great Transition because the old categories of thought need to completely break down.

Amazingly, this is already happening spontaneously. My evidence is the astonishing war on truth taking place across so many disciplines at once—politics, journalism, health, education, and even science. Our long-term mass pickling in the bad faith world of advertising, our enthrallment with the beautiful world of movies, and now the epistemological wilderness of social media is having an effect. Old certainties look quaint, their seamy underside is exposed, and the toxic ulterior motives in the manufacturing of consent are evident everywhere.

We are in for a period of serious strangeness, volatility, and uncertainty. I am glad some of the global organizations are facing up to uncertainty. They will gain humility. Because it is beyond us. We can't, as government officials or even as activists, put our hands on the ship and steer it. All we can do is contribute ideas, memes, and values. We can care. We can stay true to our experience of love and faith. This is what can ensure immunity to the various creeping totalisms now becoming epidemic.

To get a break from the uncertainties, I like Peter Zeihan, whose most recent book is *The End of the World is Just the Beginning*. According to his research, our overshoot situation has been

heading into reverse for a long time. If you desperately need more 30 and 40-somethings, because your largest cohort is retiring en masse, you should have started working on that 41 years ago. According to Zeihan, Pax Americana, put in place after World War II to neutralize the Soviet threat, promoted globalized peace and prosperity over the past seventy years so successfully that industrialization became possible for much of the developing world, prompting large populations to move out of rural agriculture and into burgeoning cities with employment opportunities. Fewer children were needed.

The US has been abandoning the global policeman project since the end of the Cold War. We no longer maintain the large fleet of destroyers it takes to patrol the sea lanes. And we no longer have any interest in making the world safe for China. Globalization is coming to an end. Without it, China cannot carry on. 80% of its food and energy comes from far away, and it has an export-based economy. Moreover, it has the worst demographics in the world. No more Conventional World there before too long, even without some enemy disrupting its vulnerable ocean-based supply chains. Without safe shipping lanes, without China, without six-continent-wide just-in-time supply chains, the cell phone is no longer possible. Our huge incredibly interdependent world is starting to unravel. Only regional trade will be possible, and much will depend on the happenstance of geography. With a nod to humanity's reliable propensity for war, Zeihan expects China to cease to exist within ten years, 500 million perishing of famine within a year once food and energy are largely cut off. This is the kind of previously unthinkable change we will be seeing, which will presumably start making us think differently.

Another certainty, besides geography and demographics, Zeihan factors into all his forecasts is war. It looks to me like World War III has already started. Violent conflict between the major powers, East and West, has already begun and can only make everything worse, speeding up the drastic changes we were already in for. Europe this winter will be showing us a lesson in what it means not to have fossil fuels available as we are accustomed to. It is one thing to virtue-signal, but quite another to suffer the physical discomfort and political instability we confront without fossil fuels.

Another certainty is migration: because of war and climate change, this is set to increase to astonishing dimensions. Large populous areas are becoming uninhabitable. Before long, migration will become a major thing even within the United States. Once an area gets hit with natural

disasters so frequently that rebuilding no longer seems viable, especially if governments are weakened by infighting and finance get wobbly, rebuilding won't happen. If energy supplies are compromised often enough, hotter areas will start to empty out. Pretty soon everyone in the US—and the world—will either be on the move themselves or dealing with an influx of people.

Migrants, being human, are intelligent and have agency. They cannot be wished away, walled out, or outlawed. They have to be dealt with. Ironically, just as many economies are threatening to shrink because of demographic insufficiency, millions of people will soon have no economy to belong to. Perhaps healthy people of any race will soon be a greatly sought-after resource.

All these certainties will have to be dealt with, but critical uncertainties, and opportunities, still lie in wait in the realities Zeihan never mentions: psychology, philosophy, and culture. Physical limits form a frame, but within that, anything can happen, dependent only upon life and the limitless human spirit. High tech is the crowning achievement sitting atop globalized industrialization. But technology sits first of all atop water, food, energy, basic security, and social cohesion. All of these are at risk from war and climate change. And everything sits atop fossil fuel use, which is depleting and needs to stop anyway because of climate disruption. So, before too long, there will be no more high tech. Hard to imagine because tech has become so entwined with our modes of production that without it, production must shrink to suit pencil-and-paper modes.

We are getting lessons fast and furiously, from the pandemic, from supply chain disruption, from migration, from war, and from ubiquitous unintended consequences. It would seem that enough new lessons are fast approaching to effect a change to our mindset.

In conclusion, the world is about to see the end of globalization. Without the supply chains supporting reliable high tech, Conventional World is completely out of the picture, as is a [New Paradigm](#) since that seems to require a high-tech foundation. Likewise, [Fortress World](#), if that can even get started, will be short lived if it is dependent on long supply chains. Without social cohesion and productivity, no center will hold. What is left is [Eco-communalism](#) which can exist at any scale. As detailed by other contributors, there are many kinds of initiatives all over the world headed in this direction, preparing the way.

Eco-communalism can benefit from disorder, disruption, and difficulty. Humans evolve best when challenged. We made it through ice ages, and we will survive global warming, especially once

Conventional World comes to a crashing halt. “Vast coordinated action” won’t be necessary to bring it down. Conventional World as we speak is strangely and irrationally bringing about its own demise—in Europe, in Russia, in China, and in North America. Eco-communalism will rush in once the “sacrosanct state-based order” fades away, and the opportunistic demagogues fail. There will be no other choice.

We don’t have to organize to make it happen. We don’t need “structures of collective coordination” to save ourselves because any structures made with the mindset of our existing civilization won’t last anyway. We can just relax, find our center, and love fiercely. The rest will come, without effort, without planning, by simply being ourselves and merging with the ineluctable ecological flows of our beautiful blue planet.

About the Author



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About the Publication

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