

Scientific study: Industrial civilization at crossroads between authoritarian collapse and superabundance

Systems theorist who foresaw 2008 financial crash says human species on brink of next 'giant leap' in evolution to 'networked superabundance'

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, December 19, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A [new scientific study](#) in the peer-reviewed journal Foresight concludes human civilisation is on the brink of the next 'giant leap' in evolution. However, progress could be thwarted by centralised far-right political projects.

"Industrial civilisation is facing 'inevitable' decline as it is replaced by what could turn out to be a far more advanced 'postmaterialist' civilisation based on distributed superabundant clean energy. The main challenge is that industrial civilisation is facing such rapid decline that this could derail the emergence of a new and superior 'life-cycle' for the human species", commented Dr Nafeez Ahmed, author of the paper, member of The Club of Rome, member of the Earth4All Transformational Economics Commission and Distinguished Fellow at the Schumacher Institute for Sustainable Systems.

The new paper synthesizes a vast body of scientific literature across the natural and social sciences to offer a new theory of the rise and fall of civilizations in history. It finds that civilizations evolve through a four-stage life-cycle of growth, stability, decline and transformation, encompassing both material-technological and cultural-organisational change. Industrial civilisation today, the paper concludes, is moving through the final stages of its life-cycle which also means it is on the cusp of transformation. The paper examines a wide range of empirical data showing that a whole new material-technological system is emerging on a planetary scale as the old industrial order declines.

The paper demonstrates that the increase in authoritarian politics, including reactionary efforts to protect fossil fuels, is among the factors that could jeopardize civilisation. Central to this decline is the global decrease in Energy Return On Investment (EROI) for oil, gas, and coal – a challenge that can be mitigated by transitioning to clean energy sources, where EROI is exponentially improving.

Technological innovations such as clean energy, cellular agriculture, electric vehicles, artificial intelligence and 3D printing are set to massively upgrade the material capabilities of human

civilisation between the 2030s through to 2060, the study shows. If carefully designed, it says, these new material capabilities could create new forms of 'networked superabundance' that protect earth systems. But as these technologies are inherently distributed and decentralised, they cannot be governed by old centralised industrial hierarchies, the study warns. This is creating a widening gulf between what the paper calls the "industrial operating system" and the emerging new system – which is leading to major political and cultural disruptions in world affairs. Rising authoritarianism, the paper warns, could fatally disrupt the emergence of a new life-cycle for civilization.

Dr Nafeez Ahmed said: "An amazing new possibility space is emerging, where humanity could provide itself superabundant energy, transport, food and knowledge without hurting the earth. This could be the next giant leap in human evolution. But if we fail to genuinely evolve as humans by rewiring how we govern these emerging capabilities responsibly and for the benefit of all, they could be our undoing. Instead of evolving, we would regress – if not collapse. The rise in authoritarian and far-right governments around the world, increases this grave risk of collapse. The incoming Donald Trump administration, with its commitment to elevating fossil fuels while gutting clean energy – as well as its focus on centralising power along ethnonationalist lines – could prevent us successfully moving through the planetary phase shift to the next stage of human evolution."

Nafeez Ahmed is a renowned systems theorist and forecaster who has predicted some of the most significant events of the last 20 years. Ahmed originally launched his research at the UN Summit of the Future in August, where he spoke at the UN Headquarters about his findings at an event sponsored by the Governments of Panama and Antigua & Barbuda.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Publication

The new paper, "Planetary phase shift" as a new systems framework to navigate the evolutionary transformation of human civilisation' has just been released in November in the double-blind peer-reviewed journal Foresight: The Journal of Futures Studies, published by the global science publisher Emerald. Foresight is one of the most respected journals in the field of futures studies.

Synthesising a vast body of data from across the natural and social sciences – including physics, climate, energy, food, transport, materials, information, geopolitics, history and beyond – the new paper by Dr Nafeez Ahmed creates a breakthrough multidisciplinary systems framework called 'Planetary Phase Shift theory'.

Citation

Ahmed, N. (2024), "'Planetary phase shift' as a new systems framework to navigate the evolutionary transformation of human civilisation", Foresight, Vol. ahead-of-print <https://doi.org/10.1108/FS-02-2024-0025>

Core finding

The theory is the first time that earth system crises, societal change and technology disruptions have been examined together in a single systems framework to understand how they are driving large-scale civilisational transformation.

The paper concludes that:

"... multiple global crises across both earth and human systems are symptoms of the last stages of the life-cycle of global industrialisation civilisation, which is the potential precursor either for collapse, or for a new civilisational life-cycle that may represent a new stage in the biological and cultural evolution of the human species."

About the author

Dr Nafeez Ahmed is an award-winning systems theorist and bestselling author of eight books. He is Director of the Futures Lab at Unitas Global Advisory, Executive Director of the System Shift Lab and creator of the AgeofTransformation.org newsletter on systems thinking.

He was previously Director of Global Research Communications at technology forecasting think-tank RethinkX which has accurately predicted the rise of solar, wind and batteries, electric vehicles, and precision fermentation. Ahmed also accurately predicted some of the most significant events of the last two decades including the war in Afghanistan, the 2008 financial crisis, the exponential growth of clean energy, the break-up of Europe and the mainstreaming of the far-right – among many other trends. Nafeez has twice been featured in the Evening Standard's list of the top 1,000 most influential Londoners.

Ahmed is Full Member of the Club of Rome, Commissioner on the Earth4All Transformational Economics Commission, Distinguished Fellow at the Schumacher Institute.

Dr Nafeez Ahmed
System Shift Lab
+44 7824 441044
iprdoffice@gmail.com
Visit us on social media:
[YouTube](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/769696657>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors

try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2024 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.