

## Lecture 5 - Disasters and Collapses

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**What did you think of the reading?****Are the Utopian and dystopia visions that start Chapter 1 realistic?**

These views are explicitly tempered with an understanding of the necessary consequences of our current actions, as well as the current trends which could dominate the future.

**What does the author mean by "drivers"?**

Driver is an old, pre-cybernetic term. While useful to discuss drivers to isolate some of the variables involved, the fact is that all of those variables are defined and derive their status as major factors from their role in the whole system.

**What are the big concerns for the next 100 years?**

Recent news has centered on peak oil, climate change, nuclear war, and biological outbreak. New such "consequences of overextended human hubris" concerns seem to appear every decade, but they're well-worth considering.

**How fragile is contemporary civilization?**

Probably more fragile than it appears. Contemporary civilization is intensely interdependent, and capitalism ensures that every element is pushed to an edge. Basic functions of society rely on layers-upon-layers of necessary support systems.

Recent news has pointed out the ways that the United States support systems are decaying, and need immense work if we want them to continue to be reliable.

The environment is another necessary and highly interdependent system. The honeybee crisis is one example of unintended consequences that could vastly alter modern life before we even know the causes.

**If there are so many imminent disasters, why are we still here?**

There seems to be a new imminent disaster from humankind's hubris every five years. It's shift from Nuclear War to Bio-terrorism to Peak Oil to Global Warming. But we're still here— is it all doom-saying?

**What happens in a collapse of civilization?**

What would it be like to live through a collapse? What falls apart first, and what ceases to function properly long before people realize it's stopped? How long does it take? What would it be like afterwards? How could we recover?

**Activity: What are the major challenges of the next 20 years, and how likely (in our group opinion) is each to end in disaster?**

Peak Oil Nuclear War Water Shortages Food Shortages Bio-terrorism Global Warming

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