A Most Uncertain Fiction

by strannikov

While the mechanism for the recorded melt of West Antarctica's Pine Island Glacier and Thwaites Glacier is likely enough due to a misfortunate combination of underlying (and perfectly natural) geothermal activity with pernicious atmospheric and oceanic effects courtesy of Technogenic Climate Change, the fact remains that both glaciers are exhibiting historically high rates of melt, as measured by summer runoff amounts far exceeding winter snowfall replacement and as also measured by glacial losses of thickness and topographic elevation (losses in glacial elevations are now measured [as of April 2021] in tens of meters over recent decades).

The rates of degradation for these two large Antarctic glaciers show no sign of abating. As the melt rates continue over Antarctic summers, concerns begin to rise particularly over the condition of the Thwaites Glacier (dubbed by media sages as “the Doomsday Glacier”), since the volume of its melting ice alone has been calculated by some to be able to contribute a full two feet to global sea level rises once it has dissolved into the planet's oceans.

Just as it is likely that the cause of this melting is a combination of geothermal action with the atmospheric and thermal oceanic expansion effects of Technogenic Climate Change, there is every expectation that the melting will continue. It is equally likely that just as the rate of melt continues, the rate of melt will also continue to accelerate. And just as the melting of these two enormous West Antarctic glaciers (their volumes of ice and water measured in gigatons) will likely proceed apace over the coming century, it is just as likely that the melting of these two large glaciers into the world's oceans cannot be stopped now no matter what actions humanity takes globally and that significant sea level rise globally by mid-April 2121 is already inevitable.

And now, because it is likely already too late to forestall these events, humanity globally will continue to do nothing or next to nothing over the coming decade to reduce the pernicious global

atmospheric and oceanic effects of Technogenic Climate Change. Assuming for a few moments that this is so, by the end of the next decade humanity will perhaps finally be able to see perfectly unambiguously not only that Technogenic Climate Change is a real and actual phenomenon but that by early 2031 the phenomenon will have to be properly named Runaway Technogenic Climate Change, meaning that many of the controlling processes unleashed, as they clash with natural climatic, meteorological, oceanic, and geothermal conditions, will begin wreaking havoc for the global humanity that has been unleashing its lethal contributions relentlessly for centuries and decades.

The enormity of human dislocations that will be necessary from many low-lying coastal regions cannot yet be calculated, but the displacement globally of tens of millions of people (one hundred million would be a bare global minimum) and the complete loss of the cities, ports, and coastal regions they will be forced to evacuate will occur even if the exact calculations cannot be even initially performed for another two or three decades. In the interim it's anyone's guess about what polar ice melts might yield in terms of annual numbers of typhoons and cyclones and hurricanes and their intensities (ditto for tornados), but there should be at least an even chance that these will be wreaking appreciable havoc even while human accountants and statisticians begin to wonder what the global displacements of tens of millions might begin to yield further decades along. It's anyone's guess what the cumulative loss of the world's mountain glaciers will entail, from the Rockies to the Alps, from the Andes to the Himalayas. Equally, it is anyone's guess about how the global climate will respond “naturally” with both seasonal flooding in specific locales and opportunistic droughts in others, which could cause problems for agricultural yields for both humans and livestock, not to fail to mention further displacements and disruptions of human populations.

Nobody knows anything about the foregoing with any certainty whatsoever, for the simple reason that the data are not available yet (or at least, not that we are being told) and that their analysis

remains most uncertain. Yet if the foregoing catalogue of coming attractions has any merit to it and if at least some of these occurrences in fact begin to come to pass over the decades of the next century (2021 to 2121 inclusive), a most uncertain future awaits all residents of this planet: but dismal portents certainly abound.

Whether ice harvesting or “ice mining” of Antarctica's global reserves of over sixty percent of the planet's fresh water would be permitted among international players has not been broached publicly. Whether ice mining on our Moon is feasible remains unknown. Whether ice mining in the asteroid belt is feasible remains unknown. In either case, by the time feasible missions can actually be dispatched, it very likely will already be 2040 or 2050, and (again: who knows?) the ability of any such mission to be able even to begin to respond with any action which might help mitigate dire conditions on everyone's favorite planet might well be far too little and far too late. And in this eventuality, with the suggestions of global mayhem already sketched, it is not hard to imagine that with changing climatic and meteorological patterns globally that plagues even more ferocious than coronavirus will be unleashed to accompany any spotty floods and inopportune droughts waiting to pop up across the globe (with ensuing shortfalls of food production: and gosh golly gee whiz, we've not even addressed the advent of microplastics up and down the global food chain courtesy of oceanic garbage patches leaching microplastics and nanoplastics): with all these unsavory conditions brewing, the prospect for a massive human die-off by century's end would hardly be surprising.

No one knows, no one can say. But the comfort that “we'll know soon enough”, say by 2031, may only mean that as of 2021, it's already too late: Runaway Technogenic Climate Change may have begun already, in which case it already cannot be averted.

Recall briefly that the global human population was a scant one billion as recently as circa 1800 CE. Two billion were living on the planet simultaneously by circa 1900. Three billion by circa 1960. Four billion by circa 1980. Five billion by circa 2000. Six billion by

circa 2010. We have already passed seven billion as of 2021, and attaining eight billion before 2031 remains likely even if Runaway Technogenic Climate Change has already begun to acquire phenomenal status.

Always and again: no one knows, no one can say. If all of the foregoing is only an alarmist bit of dystopian fiction, the challenges facing humanity over the decades of the next century will be only (or mostly) just “the normal kind”. —but if this dire fiction bears just a bit of resemblance towards the real and the actual, then by mid-century (less than thirty years away), being a human being will have begun to become an altogether unpleasant occupational hazard for the mass of humanity. The psychological effects upon surviving humanity witnessing the disappearance of familiar landmarks and topographies worldwide, accompanied by the death and demise of entire billions within a matter of short decades—or less—cannot be anticipated. “Envy of the dead”, one of the takeaways from immediately past centuries, could easily acquire an entirely new significance.

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