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Planetary Peace for Human Security: Responses to Existential Risks in the Anthropocene

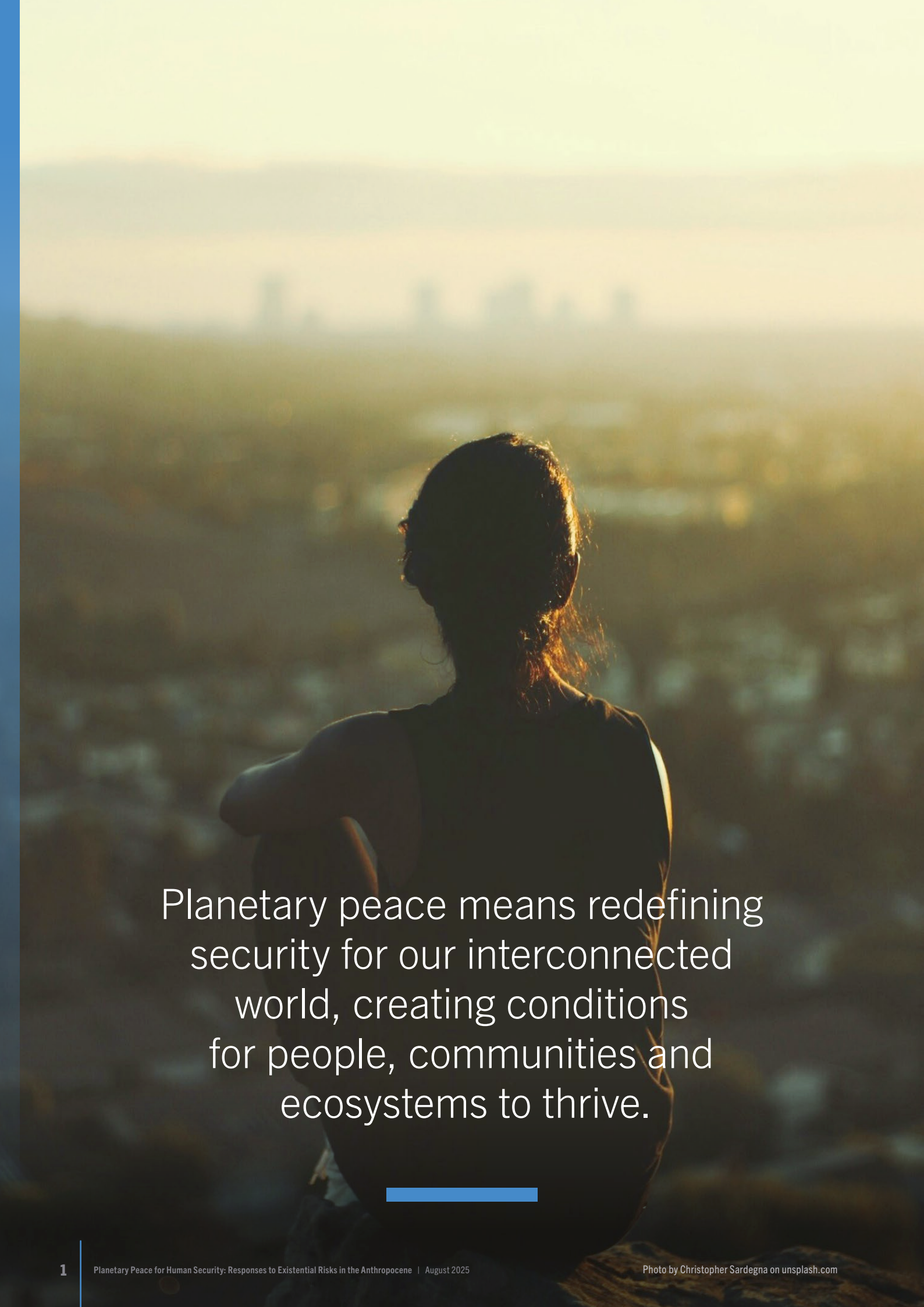
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A person is seen from behind, looking out over a city at sunset. The city lights are visible in the distance, and the sky is a mix of orange and blue. The person's silhouette is dark against the bright background.

Planetary peace means redefining security for our interconnected world, creating conditions for people, communities and ecosystems to thrive.

Executive summary

In the Anthropocene, humanity faces a convergence of existential threats, climate disruption, biodiversity loss, pandemics, technological risks and escalating warfare. These interconnected crises expose the deep inadequacies of traditional peace frameworks, shaped after the Second World War by a small group of powerful, often colonial states. Rooted in militarisation, dominance and Western-centric values, these models are ill-suited to today's interdependent, polycrisis world.

In response, The Club of Rome proposes a new paradigm: planetary peace.

Conventional definitions of peace, narrowly focused on the absence of war, fail to address systemic threats like ecological collapse, widening inequality and disruptive technologies. Current economic and governance systems often exacerbate these risks, fuelling injustice and environmental harm.

Planetary peace offers a regenerative, systemic approach centred on the wellbeing of people, the planet and future generations. It calls for transforming economic, political, cultural and technological systems that undermine sustainability and security. Rejecting hegemonic dominance and the dehumanisation of the "other," it promotes collaboration, mutual respect and harmony with nature.

In 2025, with 56 active conflicts and a growing AI arms race, the failure of militarised security is increasingly clear. These crises reflect deeper systemic breakdowns, extractive economies, exploitative labour and unaccountable governance. Multilateral institutions remain fragmented and outdated, unable to address today's complex risks.

Planetary peace suggests a path from crisis to regeneration. It envisions a shift from extractive growth to restorative economies, anticipatory and polycentric governance, and the integration of indigenous knowledge, systems science and ethical technology. This transformation can heal the modern disconnect from nature and develop a renewed sense of global interdependence.

At its core is the empowerment of young people and intergenerational leadership. Young people bring innovation, clarity and moral urgency to the pursuit of a peaceful future. Equally important is cultural renewal, grounded in empathy, solidarity and shared responsibility across society.

Finally, planetary peace calls for realigning human activity within Earth's ecological limits, recognising the planet as a living system and restoring our relationship with it.

The Club of Rome invites governments, civil society, business, academia and young people to co-create a new global framework for peace. This is not only a necessary response to our current crises but a bold invitation to redefine peace for the 21st century, a step toward global equity on a thriving, healthy plan

The need for redefinition: peace beyond the absence of war

Peace has been a central concern of The Club of Rome since our founding. Several current projects including [Earth4All](#) and [The Fifth Element](#) already deal with different aspects of peace. Without peace there is little chance of attaining equitable sustainable development.

However, the current global moment, rife with war and planetary dislocation, necessitates a rethinking of peace. Our prevailing understanding is shaped by histories of war and dominance, failing to reflect the emerging challenges of the Anthropocene.

Without peace there is little chance of attaining equitable sustainable development.

Our current understanding of peace is both incomplete and distorted, shaped by a long history and culture dominated by war. Wars, often the most extreme manifestation of underlying tensions in extractive and exploitative systems, are becoming more destructive and surreal. We need to reimagine peace holistically, as an integral core element of sustainability and a natural state of a world that recognises our innate interdependence. This is particularly urgent given the diverse types of conflicts that are emerging in the Anthropocene era (The United Nations, 2024; Pope Francis, 2024).

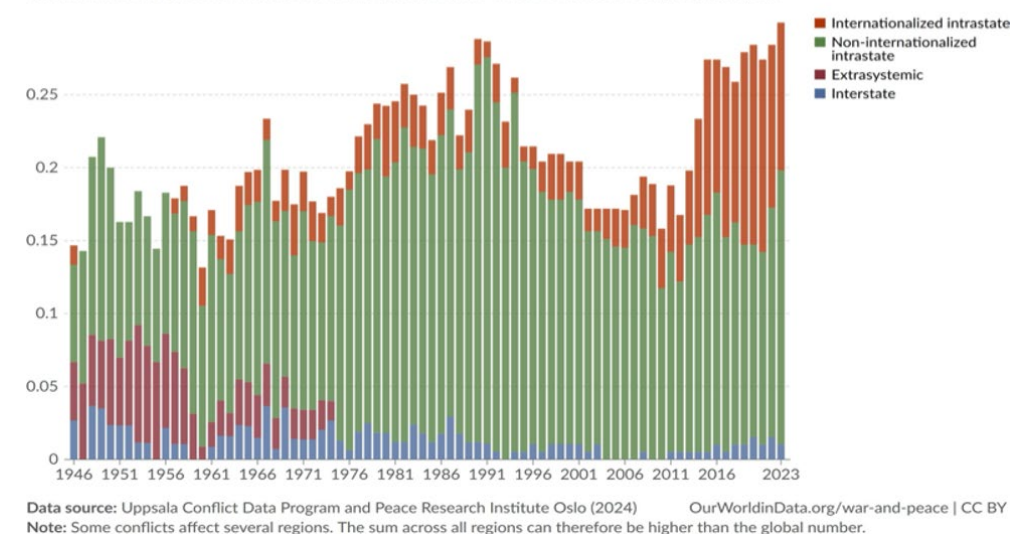
At this stage, a first attempt to define a renewed concept of peace is needed, however imperfect it may be: we understand planetary peace as a state of affairs in which the concept of enemy is abolished and the aspiration to hegemony over others, humans and nature alike, is abandoned for the sake of peaceful collaboration and emulation, aimed at addressing the existential challenges of humanity and bringing about equitable wellbeing for all on a healthy planet.

Conflict and risk in the Anthropocene

This state of affairs is clearly not where we stand today, as the lives of hundreds of millions of people are directly affected by wars and all kinds of violent conflicts. These occur in specific places such as Gaza, Lebanon, Iran, Yemen, Ukraine, Sudan, the Sahel, Myanmar and many others but are all inter-national in nature: they involve major military powers and are largely driven by non-local factors, such as the pursuit of critical resources. Some of the participants involved are nuclear armed. State-based conflicts are on the rise as the chart opposite shows.

Rate of state-based conflicts, World

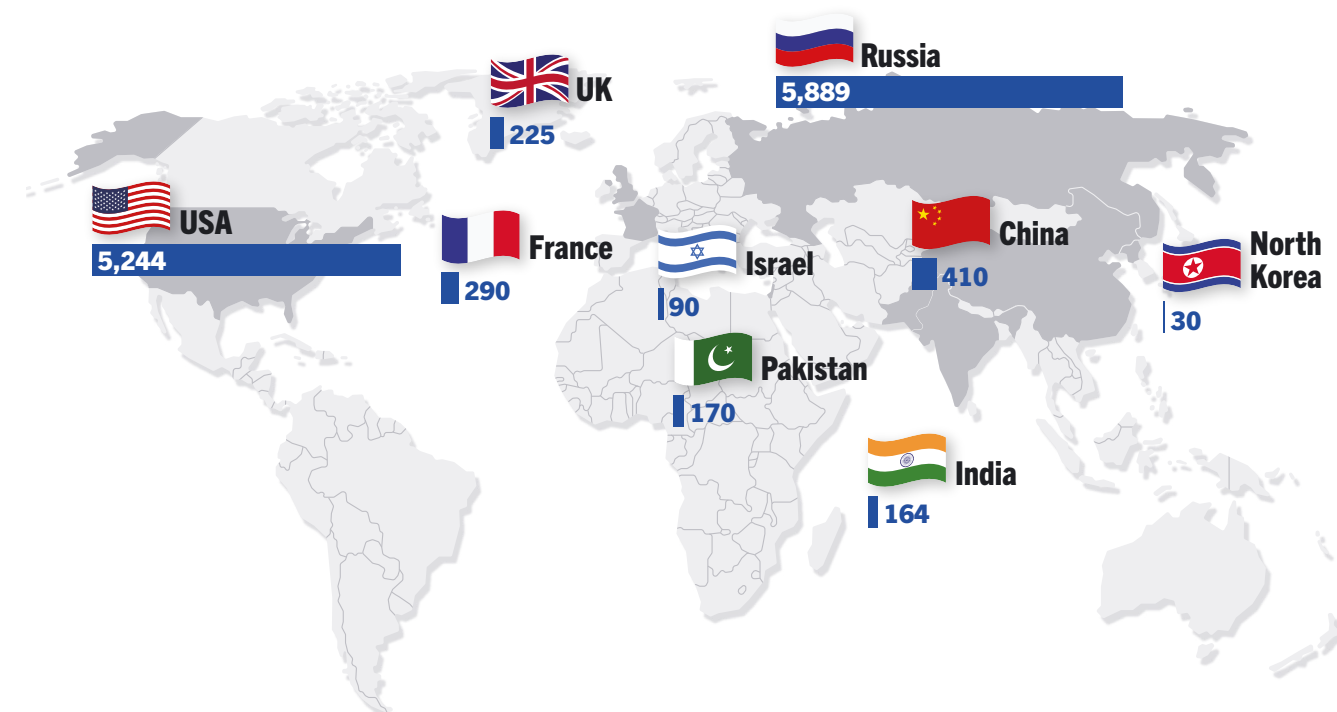
The number of conflicts divided by the number of all states. This accounts for the changing number of states over time. Included are interstate¹, intrastate², and extrasystemic³ conflicts that were ongoing that year.



In 2024, there were 56 ongoing conflicts, the largest number since World War II. They have become more international with 92 countries involved in conflicts outside their borders (Vision of Humanity, 2024).

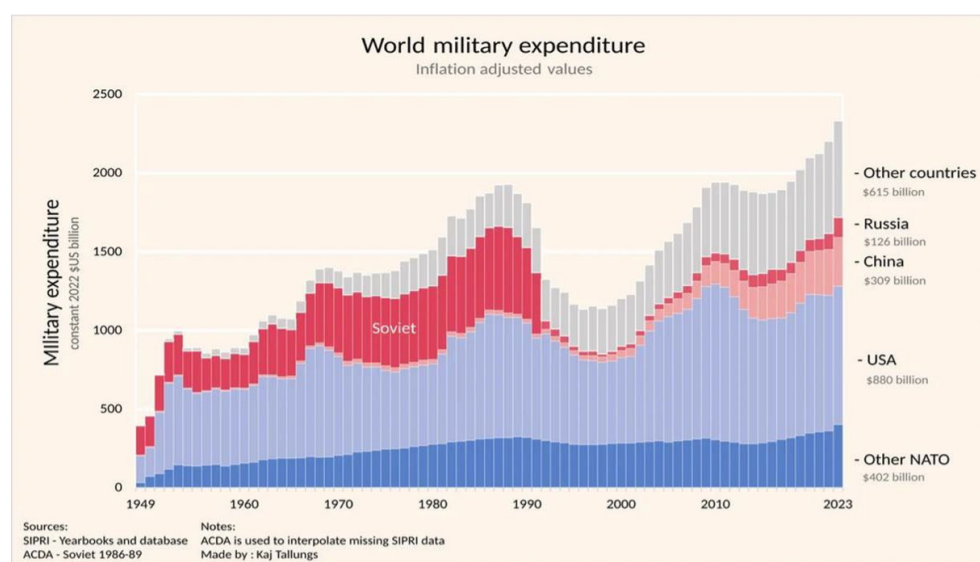
Humanity is armed to the brink, with enough weaponry to destroy civilisation many times over. Stockpiles of nuclear bombs are over 12,500 globally.

Estimated global nuclear warhead inventories, 2023



Source: Federation of American Scientists

Military expenditure around the world had risen rapidly during the cold-war period from the mid 1950s to 1990. The decade of the 1990s saw some decline in these expenditures. But the rise began again at the beginning of the 21st century. Spending on arms and defence are at an all-time high reaching \$2.3 trillion in 2023. Moreover, recent decisions show a run towards expanding militarisation. The Trump Administration has raised the 2025 federal defence budget to over \$1 Trillion. It is asking NATO countries to increase their defence spending to 5% of their GDP. China increased its defence budget for 2026 by 7% and India by 6.5%. This creates the conditions for a dangerous double bind in which countries engaged in mutual confrontation enter a cycle of further escalation provoked by judgments about the intentions of the other party. Not the least, while the bombing of Iran by Israel and the USA was supposed to discourage nuclearisation, the message perceived might be exactly the opposite: that only by acquiring the nuclear bomb can a country feel safe.



The destruction wrought by modern warfare is exponentially intensified by emerging technologies including AI and synthetic biological agents. Contemporary war tactics are not only more lethal but increasingly surreal, devastating to the natural environment and creating even more uncertainty. Drones and cyber-attacks are employed to counter power imbalances, strike elusive targets, disrupt civil infrastructures and harm civilians, whether deliberately or as ‘collateral damage’, while also ravaging ecosystems. The rapid advancement of AI and its integration into weapons systems is amplifying both the precision and scale of destruction.

The systematic adoption of advanced information technologies was, decades ago, justified on the grounds of making military action more precise, enabling better targeting of the so-called “bad guys”, and thereby potentially reducing lethality. Yet something profoundly different and terrible occurred: advanced technology became a tool for the further dehumanisation of the enemy, who are now reduced to mere blips on a screen, akin to targets in a video game. This shift has reinforced a supremacist mindset, in which technological civilisations perceive themselves as entitled to destroy the so-called “barbarians”. Technological superiority has served to amplify the darkest part of our souls in our relationship with the other. In this context recent calls for the reintroduction of ‘limited’ nuclear strikes in warfare, highlight the deep irrationality of our current trajectory.

In response to the ongoing wars across the globe, the Club of Rome initiated a dialogue on shaping a new narrative for planetary peace. Members contributed to the report [Enduring Peace in the Anthropocene](#) offering diverse perspectives on peace and identifying a wide range of factors that fuel global conflict. These include confrontational ideologies and belief systems, divisive extremist thinking, outdated patriarchal institutions and practices of dominance practices, extractive economic models, the military-industrial-media-academic complex, nationalistic politics and the enduring legacies of colonialism. In this paper, we continue the task of reimagining peace as a social, cultural and economic process, one that maintains harmony among nations, amity among peoples, peace with nature, and inner peace within ourselves.

In the traditional narrative, peace is often defined simply as the absence of war. However, this understanding is an inadequate conception of peace, even though modern security doctrines continue to largely focus on this narrow outcome. Increasingly analysts are calling for reconsidering peace a key pillar of development. The World Academy of Art and Science and the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, recently set out their vision for a [Global Peace Offensive](#), articulating the responsibility of artists and scientists to re-engage with the pursuit of peace issues in the face of the polycrises confronting the world and the inability of traditional diplomacy to address them effectively.

Unveiling existential risks

The Anthropocene era presents a range of existential risks to humanity. In 1992, Ulrich Beck warned of a “new modernity” marked by the accumulation of risks resulting from our systems of production and consumption. Over time, these risks have escalated to a planetary scale, posing a profound threat to humankind (Bostrom 2012). While the factors underpinning current conflicts are complex, traditional geopolitical views and hegemonic belief systems, seeking dominance over territories and populations are now increasingly interwoven with, and exacerbated by, the tensions coming from the ecological unsustainability of consumerist lifestyles and the growing imperative to secure critical resources essential to both emerging and legacy industrial systems.

Emerging existential risks have the potential to cause catastrophic harm upon humanity. In the 21st century, these risks are not only increasing in frequency and intensity, but are also interacting and reinforcing one another, creating complex and escalating nexuses that pose significant challenges to global security. Unlike traditional conflicts, which have typically centred on territorial disputes between nation-states, these contemporary threats — such as pandemics, climate change, biodiversity loss and ocean acidification — are transnational in nature, necessitating a fundamental shift in how we perceive security. As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned “We are losing our suicidal war against nature” (United Nations, 2021). It is long overdue to envision peace on a planetary scale, where global cooperation supersedes national boundaries and the interdependencies of all living systems is sufficiently acknowledged.

Furthermore, the current structure of globalisation, coupled with the extreme financialisation of the economy, has become a powerful engine driving massive inequalities — fuelling both conventional and unconventional forms of conflict within and between nations. In today’s globalised, interconnected

and digitalised economy, the system is skewed: a few benefit and win and most lose. This leaves vast numbers of people dispossessed and powerless, fostering fear and mistrust, which in turn nurtures polarisation and future conflicts.

A pervasive lack of accountability for causing harm, often reinforced by its routine incentivisation, acts as high-octane fuel for this already flawed engine, significantly amplifying its impact. Further exacerbating the pernicious damage, yet remaining inadequately addressed, is the failure to account for externalities, along with the exponentially rising opportunity cost of not doing the right thing. The continued disregard of these factors perpetuates dysfunctional policies and operations.

Our existing international governance and security frameworks were not designed to address the modern and escalating risks we now face. Furthermore, in many ways those inherently siloed frameworks have caused or aggravated the very risks they are meant to manage. They are profoundly limited in their capacity to effectively prevent or reduce the existential threats facing humanity today. Not least, among its flaws, the current multilateral system embodies a fundamental contradiction. While aspiring to be built on universal values and the equal respect of all nations and cultures, its foundation and implementation remain shaped by the biases present at its inception: it was established by the victorious powers of the Second World War, at a time when many of today's independent nations were still under colonial rule. It has struggled to adapt to the reality of the world today, in which most countries are affirming their own pathways to development and are asserting a strong will for emancipation from Western dominance and dependency. Moreover, even in the West, the discourse of universalism has been steadily undermined. Time and again, it has been made evident that when universal values come into conflict with national interests, it is invariably the latter that will prevail, however implacable that may be.

Therefore, in the Anthropocene, planetary peace must be substantially reimagined. It must enable humans and other species to thrive in regenerative ecocivilisations and in harmony with the flourishing of the planet. This calls for a commitment to living regeneratively, where the continual transformation of both natural and social life systems is framed by the development of peace infrastructures and cultures, and underpinned by an evidence-based holistic and unitive perspective that embodies our complex interdependencies. Conceived in this way, planetary peace becomes a means of confronting existential risks and embracing our evolutionary potential. It opens 'emergent opportunities' to transform our economic, political, social, cultural and technological systems in service of regenerative ecocivilisations.

Defining existential risks

Existential risks can be defined and framed in various ways, with significant implications for humanity. The definition and assessment of such risks have become a discipline in their own right, not necessarily driven by a hopeful vision for the future of humanity. The Centre for the Study of Existential Risks at the University of Cambridge defines these risks as potential events that lead to human extinction or the collapse of civilisations. Key areas of concern include biological risks, environmental risks, risks from AI and the management of extreme technological risks (Centre for the Study of Existential Risk. (n.d.). The Future of Life Institute identifies biotechnology, nuclear weapons, AI and climate change as existential risks, which they define as "any risk that has the potential to eliminate all of humanity or, at the very least, kill large swaths of the global population, leaving the survivors without sufficient means to rebuild society to current standards of living" (Conn, 2015). The institute seeks to steer transformative technologies away from 'extreme large-scale risks' to humanity.

On the other hand, to raise awareness and spark concrete action, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, has advanced the hands of their Doomsday Clock to 89 seconds to midnight in 2025, the closest it has ever come to symbolising human extinction (Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 2025).

The Interaction Council, in collaboration with One Young World frames existential threats within the Sustainable Development Goals clusters of Planet, Peace, People and Prosperity, to include:

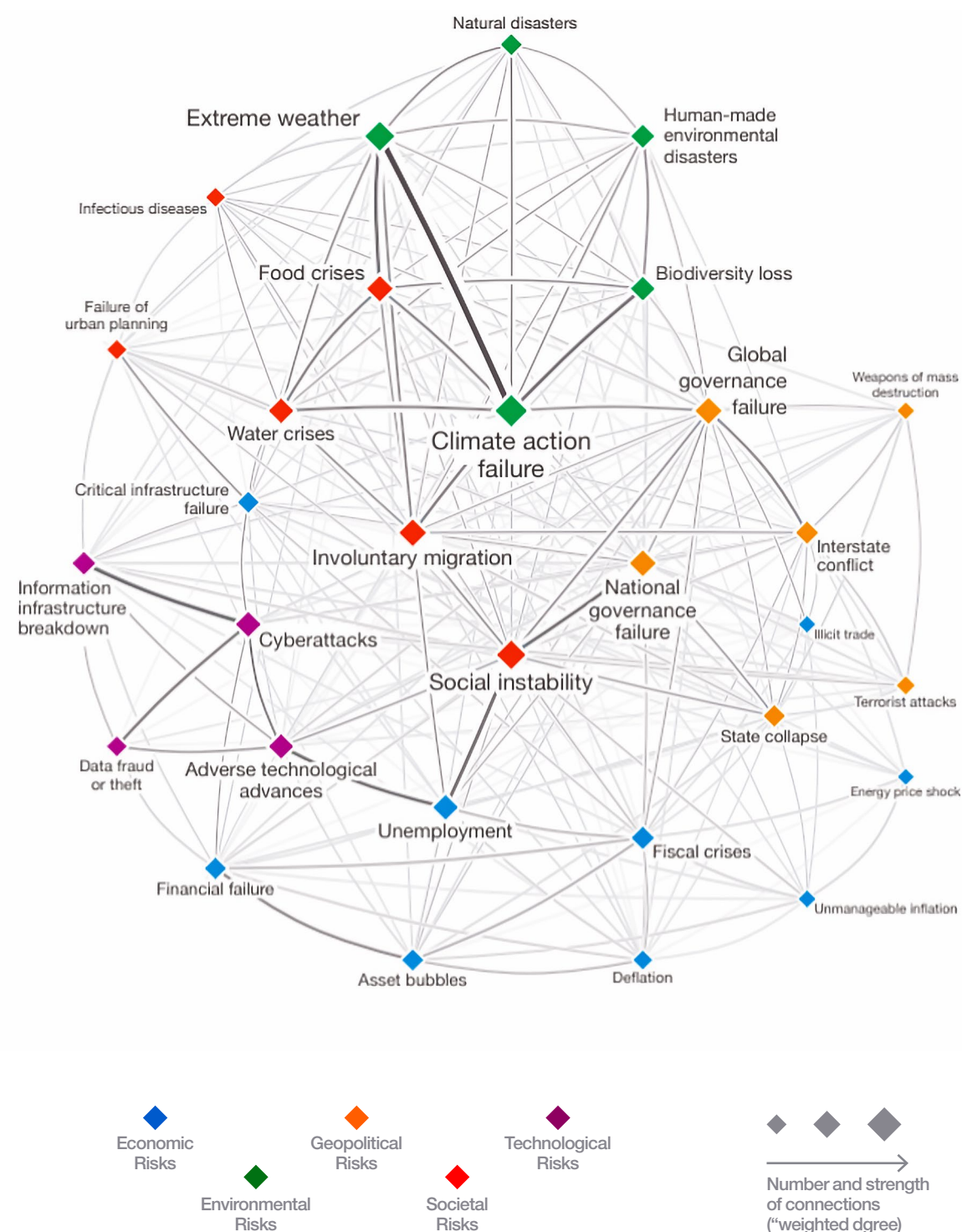
- **Planet:** Threats range from mass extinctions from asteroids to massive volcanic eruptions and biodiversity collapse to threats from our climate emergency.
- **People:** Inequalities, food and water insecurity act as drivers for migration and conflict, social unrest and divides, whilst a warming planet increases the risk of pandemics with the potential to threaten human existence.
- **Peace:** Nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare, including engineered pandemics; Digital Warfare and AI.
- **Prosperity:** Mechanical-Technical-Industrialisation including unsustainable growth (planet); unhealthy crowded cities and rapid travel (pandemics) and widening inequalities (peace); human security risks are posed from emerging technology, including Quantum Computing and genetic engineering.

How then, are existential risks distinctive, and what sorts of peace disruptions should we expect from them? As existential threats of such immense depth and scale have not been experienced in modern times, characterising these risks remains somewhat speculative. Moreover, the very concept of risk itself depends on the standpoint from which it is defined: do we consider that the world system has been functional and overall beneficial in recent times, with risks just coming from "collateral" damage? Or do we largely feel the system has been dysfunctional, thereby positioning the identified risks as being products of the system itself? The question appears markedly different if analysed from the perspective of so-called "developed" countries, as opposed to that of the Global Majority.

Risk interdependencies and global fragility

Beyond the anticipated of annihilation of populations or massive destruction of property and the environment, there are several additional features we want to emphasise. First, existential risks are embedded within a range of economic and social processes; as such, existential threats are interconnected and must be understood as systemic. Even in the absence of harmful or damaging incidents, the presence of risk alone, can serve as catalysts for social unrest and heighten security risks within regions. For instance, climate action failure, leading to prolonged droughts, can exacerbate water scarcity and food shortages, resulting in mass migration and social instability.

To demonstrate these interdependencies, the World Economic Forum (WEF) developed the Global Risks Interconnections Map, highlighting these relationships (WEF, 2020).



Governance and accountability gaps

The WEF warns that without effective intervention, these risks could lead to widespread conflict and even total societal collapse. Policymakers are currently failing to prioritise these interlinked issues adequately, hence contributing to the emergence of potential existential risks. These risks subtly interact across multiple levels and multiple subsystems creating pathways through which errors may propagate, ultimately leading to serious systemic breakdown. Recognising the profound interconnectedness of these challenges calls for a shift away from conventional, siloed, sector-specific approaches. Instead, we must embrace a holistic vision of transformation and regeneration.

At the same time, only recognising the existence of these risks is not enough. What truly matters is how we respond to them. Denial is of course an option that is still practiced by many, even among those whose responsibilities demand the opposite. Fear is an even more pervasive and dangerous response. It reinforces a sense of exclusion of “them” to protect “us” and can lead to violent actions, including genocides (as seen, for example, in Gaza), or to the will to close borders and attempting to freeze societies in an imagined idealised past. The current panic over migrants which is shaping Western politics, particularly in Europe and North America, is a manifestation of this fear-driven response to global challenges. However, it is all too easy to blame people for that kind of reaction from positions of privilege still relatively untouched by the unfolding polycrisis. The true challenge lies in how we choose to respond collectively, bridging the divides that separate us.



Photo by Karen Toro / Climate Visuals Countdown on climatevisuals.org

The Elysium illusion: escapism, elitism and the myth of isolation

A peculiar reaction is that of some elites seeking to detach themselves from the rest of the world, retreating to bunkers or remote islands in the middle of the ocean. This reflects the “Elysium” fantasy, as depicted in the 2013 film Elysium directed by Neill Blomkamp, which portrays a privileged minority living in a luxurious orbital habitat while the rest of humanity endures hardship on a degraded Earth. It embodies the belief that a privileged few might continue with their comfortable lives in isolation on Earth or another planet, without concern for the fate of the majority. Such a drive towards fragmentation, what Gregory Bateson (1935) termed “schismogenesis”, constitutes an existential risk in its own right, emerging from the pervasive trend of dehumanisation that is part of the dominant culture of our time. The Elysium fantasy is exactly that, a fantasy. No fortified refuge can provide sufficient protection from the consequences of the multiple, interlinked crises we face. There can be no viable path forward for humanity without recognising ourselves as part of a greater whole, humans and natural alike.

Hence, the vision of transformation and regeneration that we propose begins with prioritising the restoration of our global commons, those shared elements without which human existence becomes simply untenable, while simultaneously implementing comprehensive economic and social reforms aimed at securing the long-term health and wellbeing of both people and our planetary home.

The conflicts that emerge from existential risks are not confined within national boundaries. Their transboundary nature threatens people across multiple jurisdictions and can fuel migration at massive scales, for which existing security, border controls, social and cultural systems are ill-equipped to manage or contain the resulting tensions.



Photo by Shibasish Saha / Climate Visuals Countdown on climatevisuals.org

Existential opportunities: turning risk into regeneration

The Club of Rome’s focus on the “global problematique” of human survival has consistently pursued a bold, non-conventional vision of alternatives. Recognising existential risks not only alerts us to the many threats and challenges facing humanity but also unveils “existential opportunities” that could fundamentally change the trajectory of our collective future.

Through our activity hubs, such as Planetary Emergency, Emerging New Civilisations, Youth Leadership and Intergenerational Dialogues, Reframing Economics and Rethinking Finance we seek to address some of these risks.

Discussions around emerging new civilisations at the Club of Rome have been an attempt to reimagine possibilities of a peaceful and sustainable world. They offer an opportunity both to shift mindsets and to transform the complex economic, financial and social systems that underpins our daily interactions. Its aim is to identify and mobilise those already engaged in the quest for new ways of living. We remain acutely aware of the planetary boundaries that humanity is now exceeding, and of the need to build just and safe systems that fulfil our social aspirations, while respecting the Earth’s capacity to sustain life.

Existential opportunities are woven around the idea of living a regenerative life in harmony with nature. Uncovering these opportunities requires a fundamental orientation of our lifestyles and livelihoods, the development of new living skills, and new economic, social and political systems, to overcome the current gridlocks imposed by the historical narrative of modernity. Such opportunities invite us to reimagine our existence as “regenerative beings” living in alignment with the cycles of nature and cultivating a sustainable relationship with the planet. Planetary peace, in this context, may come to mean more than an absence of conflict; it could evolve into the creation of peace infrastructures, designed to sustain life, support ecosystems, and enable the flourishing of future generations.

To navigate future challenges effectively, we could proactively nurture societal characteristics that serve as strengths for the way forward—such as resilience, empathy, and strong community ties—while addressing and mitigating prevailing weaknesses including narcissism, greed and inequality. Such an approach can inform strategies for achieving a sustainable coexistence between humans and nature, ultimately promoting a regenerative future.

Ecocivilisations and emerging alternatives

The guiding star of existential opportunities lies in reconnecting human existence with ways that advance the emergence of ecocivilisations. The idea of ecocivilisations is not new. It has existed various forms for almost two decades. The *Earth Charter* established an international declaration of fundamental values and principles aimed at building a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st century. It emerged from a global consultation process and was endorsed by organisations representing millions of people. It “seeks to inspire in all peoples a sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the human family, the greater community of life, and future generations”. In 2015 the Chinese government introduced its “ecological civilisation” economic policy which proposed a new system of development and governance grounded in the principles of environmental management, ecological restoration and green development. Despite its many limitations, this policy placed China, for centuries the world’s largest economy and poised to reclaim that position, on a trajectory towards a more environmentally and sensitive form of development.

In the following section, we explore several dimensions of the existential opportunities whose potential we are only beginning to comprehend.

Transformational pathways for planetary peace

The Club of Rome’s traditional systems approach envisions the potential for a holistic transformation of all systems in the direction of planetary peace. The components of such transformation, and thus of existential opportunities, could include the following:

Economic and financial systems, livelihoods and work

In our view planetary peace is inextricably linked to the ways in which societies organise economic and financial provisioning. Current economies are characterised by extractive relations with nature and exploitative labour practices. These dynamics generate tensions that periodically escalate into conflict, sometimes culminating in armed violence and war. At the root of this are deeply flawed economic theories and institutional designs, notably exemplified by the Washington Consensus promoted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other bodies in the 1990s.

Moreover, financial systems not only contribute to systemic instability but are also inadequately equipped to address the consequences of existential threats. The continued application of risk management and accountability frameworks that disregard such existential risks represents a sophisticated form of denial, one that ultimately creates the very conditions for the resurgence of the dangers they seek to overlook. Transforming this situation within finance could enable societies to

better anticipate, respond to, and recover from a range of threats, while also reducing vulnerabilities across interconnected systems. Accordingly, a socially just economy underpinned by a regenerative financial system is essential to the pursuit of planetary peace. In this context, further analysis is needed on the role of the military-industrial-media-complex in creating self-fulfilling prophecies: militarisation purports to address perceived existential risks yet simultaneously contributes to the very tragedies it seeks to prevent.

We understand that human behaviours and societal arrangements (the material conditions) are shaped by underlying assumptions, mental frameworks and values (the cultural conditions). The same holds true for our responses to crises. For example, whether such are framed by individual interest or collective wellbeing and resilience makes a profound difference. Current economic practices have, arguably, undermined economies, destroyed livelihoods and initiated conflicts. These practices are among the key forces driving peace or violence, yet they are not natural or inevitable, they are rooted in particular systems of thought. It is therefore essential to address these underlying cognitive and cultural dimensions.

Thought systems: acceptance of pluriversal interdependence

Systems transformation requires close attention to the ideologies and beliefs that underpin our social systems and social contracts. The pursuit of planetary peace demands substantial work on our collective gaps in understanding, particularly on what we know but prefer not to see. This calls for a profound re-examination of what it means to be human in the 21st century, while navigating a modern culture geared towards consumerism, dehumanisation and narcissism, manifestations of the same underlying condition.

Many people refer to that work as a matter of consciousness. To realise the deep and rapid transformation required by the crises, and as called for by the UN Secretary General António Guterres, it is vital to embody a sense of mutual interdependency, both with each other and with our planetary home. Such transformation, however, cannot be achieved within the currently dominant and so-called “universal” worldview, “*always the universal of somebody*”, as Barbara Cassin aptly observed. One key limitation is that the core worldview of Western modernity is built on assumptions such as the separation of humanity from nature, the confinement of intelligibility to the rational and the reduction and fragmentation of wholes into isolated parts, from which the very notion of interdependency is excluded from the outset.

Most importantly, the practices of Western modernity reveal a profound contradiction between the aspiration to universal values and the reality of colonisation, the exploitation of human’s beings and ecosystems, and the destruction of cultures and peoples that do not conform to the so-called “universal”. While purporting to promote greater welfare for all, the powerful instruments of modern science and technology have played the dual role, of on the one-hand providing for better lives; and on the other, sustaining what Naomi Klein (2014) calls the “shadow lands”, where the industrialisation of violence against both humans and nature ensures that an individualist and consumerist lifestyle remains attainable for a privileged minority.

The structural violence stemming from an exploitative and extractive worldview has given rise to levels of conflict and destruction unimaginable in earlier civilisations, including the normalisation of genocide on a massive scale and the use of the atomic bomb. Despite this, traditional knowledge is still alive, whether in originary (also known as “indigenous”) cultures that have persisted for millennia, or at the cultural heart of ancient civilisations across Africa and Asia.



Photo by Markus Mainka on shutterstock.com

For many people —and indeed for everyone, if we dig deeply enough —the embodiment of interdependence is already inherent, it does not need to be newly learned. This unitive perception has long been the domain of universal wisdom, teachings and indigenous traditions. But what of the necessary evolution of the Western modern worldview? Interestingly, through the work of pioneers and scientific discoveries across all scales of existence and diverse fields of research, a universe of innate meaning and purpose is progressively and vitally being revealed: a universe that exists and evolves as an essentially living and wholly unitive entity.

This convergence of mounting scientific evidence with the amazing intuitions of traditional knowledge, offers a pivotal and powerful opportunity to heal our collective affliction of separation to transform our world. An evidence-based unitive perspective, one that recognises our mutually interdependence with one another and our planetary home, is essential to underpin and frame collective efforts. It enables an evolutionary perspective grounded in a cosmological and planetary context and affirms our emergent potential. In doing so, rather than perpetuating conflicts that continue to play out the illusion of separation, it can cultivate respect for pluriversality and support the embodiment of post-hegemonic values and ethical behaviours that are equitable, inclusive and rooted in experiential kinship and reverence for all life.

Political will and global governance

Political systems, governance mechanisms and prevailing leadership notions, shaped over the past century, largely serve the interests of the status quo. The political will to pursue peace is often absent not only in warring nations, but also among the most powerful states, who have yet to relinquish aspirations to regional or global hegemony, regardless of their political systems. In many countries, particularly Western democracies, political gridlock and polarisation do not only undermine internal political consensus on key issues, but they also exacerbate social divisions and heighten the risk confrontation.

Planetary peace challenges us to critically reconsider models of governance and international coordination, as well as prevailing notions of leadership, in order to accomplish peace at planetary scale, steward the global commons, and ensure the equitable sharing of Earth's resources by all. Reforming existing multilateral governance structures is particularly challenging, given the reluctance of dominant powers to acknowledge that, among nations, the world is now far less hierarchical than when the UN system was created, after the Second World War.

The evolution of the USA's relationship with multilateralism, beginning in the Reagan era and even more markedly now, has progressively undermined the coherence and credibility of both the concept and practice of global governance. This has created a vacuum, which new arrangements such as the BRICS+ and the emerging roles of certain middle powers are trying to fill.

It is long overdue to envisage new frameworks for peaceful, post-hegemonic and pluriversal forms of collaboration, capable of addressing our existential challenges.

Institutional capacity for anticipatory learning and co-creation of futures

Existential risks and opportunities typically manifest over timeframes that are one or more orders of magnitude longer than the prevailing human, social, governmental and corporate planning time horizons of 5 to 10 or 20 years. This results in a significant mismatch in time horizons. Furthermore, existing government planning and decision-making bodies are predominantly occupied with their core portfolios, such as, economic growth, defence, security, health, education, finance, industry, agriculture, transport, etc.

There are no dedicated government departments or agencies responsible for 'existential risks', particularly not from a systemic perspective. This represents a critical gap in national capacity for future long-term design and planning.

This gap was already identified in 1979 in the Report to the Club of Rome *No Limits to Learning*, as the distance between our capacity to take direct action to transform the world and our (lack of) capacity to understand and address the consequences of our actions. This is not merely a cognitive shortfall, but fundamentally an ethical failure. Addressing existential risks requires us to develop appropriate anticipatory and decision-making capacities.

Such capacity-building goes beyond the conventional remit of public administrations. It requires a fundamentally new ability to work across the traditional silos of academia, the public sector, decision-making, the business community and civil society to co-create responses to the most critical global challenges, such as food security and sovereignty, access to water and energy, and beyond.

Habitats and mobility systems

Our vision of planetary peace entails ensuring that the Earth is a just and safe habitat for an estimated population of 10 billion people by 2050. This requires a fundamental rethinking of systems relating to food and water provision and security, the built environment, infrastructure and mobility. Crucially, it also calls for a rethinking of our relationship with territory.

Rather than imposing centrally conceived "solutions", sometimes at global scale, onto vastly different local contexts and ecosystems, we must begin with the lived experiences and challenges of communities on the ground. All available knowledge and capacities for action should be placed at their service, as their local understanding and resilience offer the most effective basis for place-based responses to existential risks.

“The role of young people lies at the heart of international peace and security”.

FORMER UN SECRETARY GENERAL BAN KI-MOON

Regenerative living and cultures

Planetary peace implies peace among Earth’s natural systems and human social and economic systems. Peace with nature entails recognising the Earth as a living entity and enabling life in all its forms to flourish. Regenerative living and cultures are grounded in an awareness of our human responsibilities towards all of nature, acknowledging that we are a part of it, not apart from it.

Regenerative principles and responsibilities are especially pertinent to agriculture, where the restoration of living soils is paramount. Industrialised farming and the mass killing of animals including pigs, sheep, goats, cows, chickens, buffaloes and horses for human consumption, pet food, leather, and fur reached a staggering 3 billion animals in 2022, in addition to 91 million tons of fish (Infogram, 2024). The devastating ecological consequences of this food system are well known.

These regenerative principles also extend to other domains, such as economics (through the circular economy), finance (via regenerative capitalism), medicine (e.g. cell therapies), and education, reimagined as dynamic learning ecosystems.

Intergenerational justice

50% of the world’s population is under 30 years of age, and half of those who will be living in 2050, are not yet born. War disproportionately kills and injures young people more than any other age group. Child soldiers under the age of 18 are still recruited in over 50 countries and 18 years of age remains the standard age of eligibility worldwide. The burden of war falls heavily and unjustly on younger generations.

Future generations are set to inherit a world marked by climate disruption, social instability and the risk of widespread violence. Transformations towards planetary peace must therefore be grounded in a commitment to intergenerational justice. Young people have a critical role to play in shaping and co-creating a new paradigm of planetary peace. Across the globe they are raising a unanimous and urgent call for a peaceful future.

They are both the most affected by the consequences of war and the most dynamic in vision and thought bringing innovation, energy, and moral clarity to the pursuit of lasting peace.

Youth have the potential to lead the way in developing new approaches to peacebuilding grounded in systemic thinking, cooperation, dialogue and social justice. They are well placed to challenge the status quo, holding governments and other stakeholders to account and demanding action to address the root causes of armed conflict and violence.

As former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said: “The role of youth lies at the heart of international peace and security”. A shared determination to be ‘good ancestors’ for future generations can also guide and empower the transformational change needed today.

Community and connection

Planetary peace is a concept grounded in the many forms of human community that have existed since the origins of civilisation. As human beings we seek connection with one another; we value it and generate meaning and wellbeing through it.

Photo by Lukasz Klimkiewicz on pexels.com

Planetary peace entails a conscious choice to live together within communities, to observe the rules of community and contribute to its wellbeing. Despite our many natural, learned or socially constructed differences, we are connected by a fundamental bond of shared humanity.

Epistemologies and methodologies for understanding existential risks and opportunities

Planetary peace calls for alternative ways of knowing and understanding, ways that can respond to the fragility of our interconnected systems, the complexity of emerging challenges and the potential for transformative, positive responses. Conventional metrics and models are insufficient, as they tend to fragment issues in ways that align with existing silos, but fail to support a holistic appreciation of the whole, of humanity living within the planetary ecosystem.

And yet additional dimensions and systems could be added to this initial list to provide a more comprehensive view of the transformations required.

Framing a pluriversal future: peace as process and practice

The purpose of this paper is not to provide ready-made responses to the multidimensional challenge of making peace with the Earth, with each other and within ourselves. Rather, it seeks to open a space for reflection on the complexity of the challenge and to explore some of its most salient characteristics, beyond the laudable yet all too often ineffective declarations that affirm the necessity of peace while reducing it merely to the absence of war.

As discussed in the [Enduring Peace in the Anthropocene](#) report to The Club of Rome (Shrivastava & Álvarez Pereira, Eds., 2025), during the Cold War between the USA and the Soviet Union, Europe and North America lived under the privileged illusion that peace and prosperity were achievable, as long as one accepted the supposed benevolent supremacy of Western civilisation. That illusion persisted even as dozens of countries around the world endured unspeakable tragedies resulting from colonialism and the violent pressure exerted by both blocs to force them to align with one side or the other.

There has always been a dark side to the process of so-called “civilisation”. One manifestation of this was the doctrine of the Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). It is predicated on the existence of the ‘other’ the powerful enemy whose destruction begets our own destruction. That sense of containment is now lost. The Anthropocene is the period in which we have unleashed so much power in our relationship with the ‘other’ (human cultures and nature) that we are able to create spirals of increasing violence without even realising they are suicidal. Violence also kills the killer. Even worse, when perceiving the cracks of our civilisation, we attribute them to the ‘other’, and we try to keep control by doubling down on violence, just accelerating the collapse. Because violence reproduces itself, it does not disappear, and the sense of humiliation and rage coming with it is passed on to future generations and feeds future conflicts.

A post-hegemonic, regenerative global framework

The Club of Rome owes it to itself to be uncompromising in its search for the root causes of the challenges facing humanity. Through a systemic lens, we will continue to develop the Planetary Peace Initiative guided by the following elements:

- **The vision outlined above seeks to reinvent the concept of peace** by expanding it beyond the absence of war to encompass the regeneration of entire planetary systems. This requires de-siloing peace from its traditional confinement to the domain of international relation specialists and instead placing it at the heart of socio-ecological transformations aimed at achieving wellbeing for all on a healthy planet.
- **A reimagined conception of international relations**, one no longer founded on the notion of a benevolent domination by a hegemon, nor on the precarious equilibrium of terror among competing powers, but rather grounded in a post-hegemonic order that abolishes the notion of the “enemy”. In its place a pluriversal framework of collaboration and mutual emulation among nations is envisioned, directed towards addressing our existential challenges.
- **The characteristics and conditions of the materialisation of planetary peace**, as outlined in this paper, span a wide spectrum, from the material to cultural, encompassing economic, social and governance systems, as well as epistemologies and evolving meanings of what it means to become fully human again in the 21st century.
- **The vectors of transformation necessary for the realisation of planetary peace**, with special emphasis on the roles played by:
 - The engagement of young generations and the development of intergenerational leadership,
 - The reconciliation of science, innovation and technology with the aim of advancing the peaceful development of humanity; this includes the specific contribution of science diplomacy and, importantly, the unitive weaving together of modern and traditional knowledge, de-siloed disciplines and ancient wisdom,
 - Business and finance promoting the emergence of regenerative economies,
 - The necessary resonance between partners of all kinds, NGOs, universities and actors in the multilateral system and in the private sector, to share this systemic orientation.
- **A deliberate attempt to make sense of the current situation**, marked by the unravelling of existing forms of multilateralism, not as a descent into more confrontation, rearmament and ultimately more wars among humans and against nature, but as an opportunity to shape a new, pluriversal future. This future would be grounded in peaceful post-hegemony collaboration to address existential challenges of humanity.

While we are on a journey whose destination remains largely unknown, this paper signals planetary peace as both a process and a project. A key step lies in is the elaboration of a **general framework for planetary peace**, one that is both audacious and hopeful, yet also rigorous. Such a framework aims to inform, influence and ideally shape, not only immediate actions to resolve existing conflicts, but also the emergence of a form of peace that transcends hegemony and the absence of war.



Photo by Shibasish Saha on climatevisuals.org

Co-creation, partnership and narrative change

Co-creating pathways beyond the conventional narratives that constrain our ways of thinking including those rooted in militarism and consumerism, is essential to this endeavour.

Identifying and partnering with relevant organisations and individuals is key. In the early stages of this initiative, we have undertaken a mapping of related efforts and begun to collaborate with several key partners including, the [InterAction Council](#), the [World Academy of Art and Science \(WAAS\)](#), the [Elders for Disarmament](#), and [Kyung Hee University](#), among others.

We acknowledge the vital work of numerous organisations engaged in the pursuit of peace and we warmly invite them to consider planetary peace as part of the broader international efforts to manage emerging global existential risks. Beyond the consideration of such risks, this initiative seeks to contribute to the emergence of peaceful ecocivilisations.

Concluding invitation

At the outset of this new initiative in 2024, we began by asking ourselves: where we are headed? What does The Club of Rome aim to achieve with this vision and work? What added value can we bring and what is our objective with this framing?

The answers presented here are tentative and will evolve with experience. One of our ambitions is to have the concept of planetary peace become a significant element of global security discourse.

This approach offers a unitary, integrative and holistic framework for catalysing the emergence of regenerative and peaceful civilisations, as we address emergencies in socially just ways and transform our economic and financial systems, empowered by young people and intergenerational engagement.

This paper is also an invitation to all stakeholders and to the wider citizenry to work together, across the divides of entrenched silos, such as international relations, academia, public sector, business and finance etc. Such collaboration requires deliberate intentions and specific methods to transcend these bubbles and challenge the internal logics that, while coherent within each narrow domain, are ultimately limiting. Even the logic of confrontation between powers appears rational and self-reinforcing when viewed from within its own frame. Yet that logic only relates to a dehumanised world which, viewed collectively across all bubbles, is on a path to self-destruction.

Unfolding this planetary peace initiative in the company of others is the response of The Club of Rome to allow the logic of life to prevail over our shadow impulses that nurture the exclusion of the 'other' and, ultimately, risk a self-inflicted end to human civilisations. Welcome to this existential journey!



Photo by Judith Scharnowski on pixabay.com

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Planetary peace goes beyond the absence of war, it means creating conditions for people and planet to flourish through just economies, inclusive governance and a renewed relationship with the Earth.

Annex 1: Peace Initiative actors mapping

The Club of Rome has direct connections with the following initiatives and partners through its members or secretariat:

- **OECD:** working on international regulatory cooperation [framework](#) around existential risks. In June 2024, they organized a workshop on Anticipation and Preparation for Emerging Critical Risks in Geneva and are now working on Guidelines or 'protocol' document for OECD country members
- **World Economic Forum:** Every year, The Global Risks Report explores some of the most severe risks we may face over the next decade, against a backdrop of rapid technological change, economic uncertainty, and a warming planet. Here is the [2024 report](#)
- **InterAction Council:** The InterAction Council is developing an [EXIST Strategy](#) and [Board to deal with human security](#) around existential risks. They invited the Club of Rome to be part of the Founding meeting in Beijing Oct 7-8, 2024.
- **Aziz Abu Sarah & Maoz Inon/ Israeli Palestinian Peace Movement:** peace activists working together in the wake of 7th October 2023 and the war in Gaza.
- **Elders for Disarmament (Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend):** Informal group of relevant personalities. They have elaborate documents.
- **International Federation of Systems Research IFSR** (Louis Klein): "Soft Landing". Joint topic, contents being elaborated with T5E (blog post / brief 12-14pp / academic articles).
- **Soka Gakkai International SGI** (Joan Anderson, Robert Harrap): Peace is a central topic for them. Through T5E we organised a joint event with them on 8-9 October in London to celebrate "No Limits to Learning" and "Before It Is Too Late".
- **Pugwash** (Karen Hallberg, newly elected Secretary General): Long-standing organisation working for suppression of nuclear and other mass destruction weapons. Karen Halleberg is high level physicist, also linked to Instituto Bariloche. We have been working together in the context of the UN Decade of Sciences for SD.
- **Council for the Human Future (Julian Cribb, Ian Dunlop):** Organisation of a Roundtable discussion in July regrouping a wide range of organizations around existential risks.
- **World Academy of Art and Science WAAS (Garry Jacobs, Janani Ramanathan and many others):** Human Security is a key pillar of their current strategy. That includes activities like the "Peace Offensive" led by Donato Kiniger-Passigli (Vice President).
- **Global Peace and Transformation Summit:** organised by the International Spiritual Council for Transforming Humanity (Kaivalya Kashyap). The Summit was held recently in Geneva.
- **A Second UN Charter** (Augusto López Clarós): Representative of a whole movement to reform the UN system.
- **World in Conversation – Transforming Conflict & Collaboration @ PSU College of Liberal Arts** (Laurie L. Mulvey, Sheffy Minick, Michelle Frisby).

Education and Research on Planetary Peace

- **Nagasaki University Center for Risk Research** is developing a multidisciplinary approach to peace on a healthy planet and interested in nuclear disarmament. Paul will present the "planetary peace" framework at their inauguration lecture in December 2024.
- **Kyung Hee University**, Seoul (Professor Jong-Bok Kim) - 2 proposals: (1) Joint forum in 2025 on the UN International Day of Peace, (2) Miwon Peace Prize, a new initiative by the university to "promote global wisdom and practice in this transitional era of civilization" (we are invited to nominate candidates to the prize). This initiative could develop into a platform for education and research on planetary peace, particularly in collaboration with Hiroshima University and Nagasaki University efforts.
- **Hiroshima University NERPS** collaboration. Network for Education and Research on Peace and Sustainability holds conferences every two years.
- **Jeffrey Sachs** has strong and interesting views on peace that resonate with "planetary peace".
- **Academics for Peace**

Youth and Intergenerational Dialogue

- **Circle of Young Humanitarians** (Kay von Merey): Youth-led organisation created in Zürich, in the process of expanding to other cities. It has a very interesting spirit and has shown capacity in mobilising volunteers for pro-bono work.
- **One Young World** has formed a Youth Security Council in collaboration with the Inter Action Council.
- **Hiroshima University:** The 50 Percent's collaboration with the Planetary Peace Society from Hiroshima University on youth capacity building for peace building

Please note this list is not exhaustive.



The Club of Rome is a platform of diverse thought leaders. Drawing on the collective know-how of our members, the organisation provides holistic solutions to global issues such as climate, economics and the wellbeing of humanity. It promotes policy initiatives and action so that humanity can emerge from its self-inflicted planetary emergencies.

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