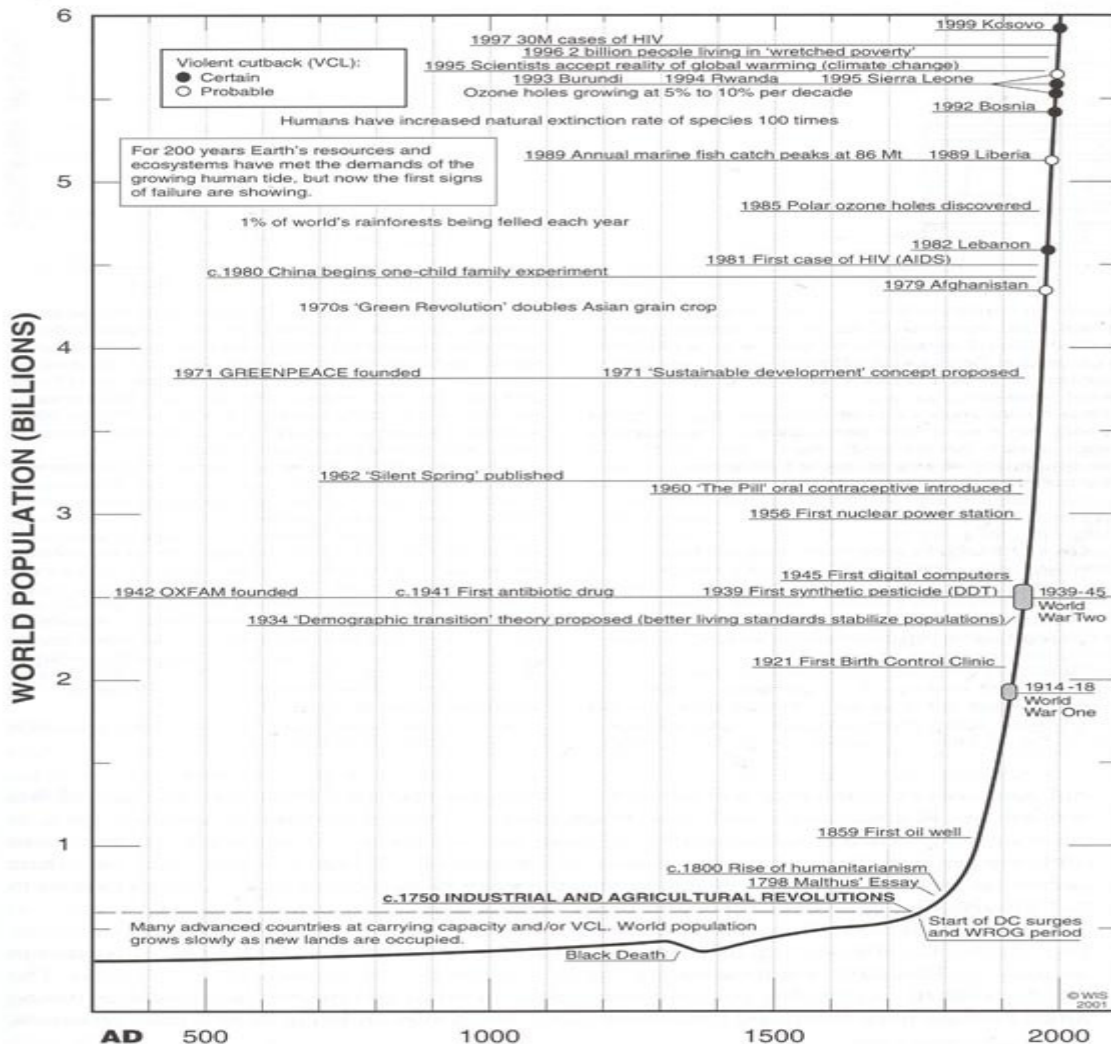


## WHAT WILL COME OF HUMAN EXPONENTIAL GROWTH?

The reality of the human condition is really quite a simple one. What we have is a very powerful predatory animal, possessed with a huge brain relative to body size, a hyper-sexuality, and a complex and elaborate language. We have come to dominate the planet Earth in the brief time that we have been around. We kill and exterminate nearly all the other large mammals that we encounter. This includes the other primates, which are our closest genetic relatives. The population of the human animal has been growing exponentially for several centuries now. It is an amazing story.

### WORLD POPULATION GROWTH

Key events on the graph



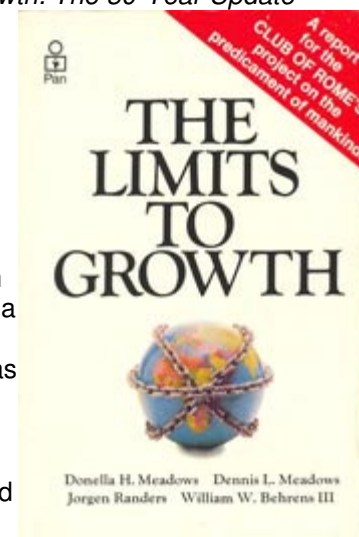
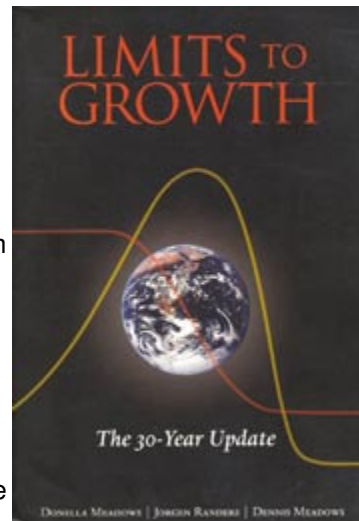
Exponential growth characterizes the human animal. The question we will want to ask is why. No other animal on Earth can manage exponential growth. What is going on? What makes us so unique in the world? Why are we so powerful? Why are we so brainy?

I do not think we have any answers to these questions. We do have speculation, but it is only speculation. We know nothing with certainty. What I do sense, however, is that our potential has only been expressed to a small degree. If I am right, then it would seem that our numbers will grow quite a bit more in the years and decades ahead. We have, I think, huge potential. We are just at the beginning of the human story. Does this sound implausible? What is interesting is that most people now think that the human story is coming to an end, or at least it is in jeopardy of coming to an end. In March 1972 in Washington, DC a group of scientists and scholars proposed that there are “limits to growth” and they published a book with this title. It was brilliant research, and it gave the scholars almost instant fame and fortune. All serious scholars in the world must have two volumes in their libraries: *Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update* (Chelsea Green Publishing Company, Vermont) and *The Limits to Growth: A Report for The Club of Rome’s Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (Pan Books, United Kingdom).

The group called themselves “the club of Rome.” Dennis Meadows was among them, a professor of systems management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is now at the University of New Hampshire, in Durham, New Hampshire. Their message: the world would likely come under severe pressure from a combination of rising population and depleting resources. It was a message which resonated with a lot of people around the world, and particularly with highly educated and affluent Westerners. I was a teenager at the time, just entering high school. Mankind was going to the Moon, and yet there were problems – notably exponential growth. What was beginning to happen is that our affluence was giving us the luxury of noticing just how powerful and exceptional we were. And a lot of people got worried. Industrial development was rapidly changing the human lifestyle along with the face of the Earth. As I have said, we are a very powerful animal, a mysteriously powerful animal.

What has happened since 1972? Well, the human animal has continued to grow, and continued to inhabit every corner of the Earth. We just keep on growing and growing, and our influence also continues to grow. Communism is gone, central planning is gone, and indeed all forms of planning, whether grandiose or not, is gone. We are now ruled by the forces of the market.

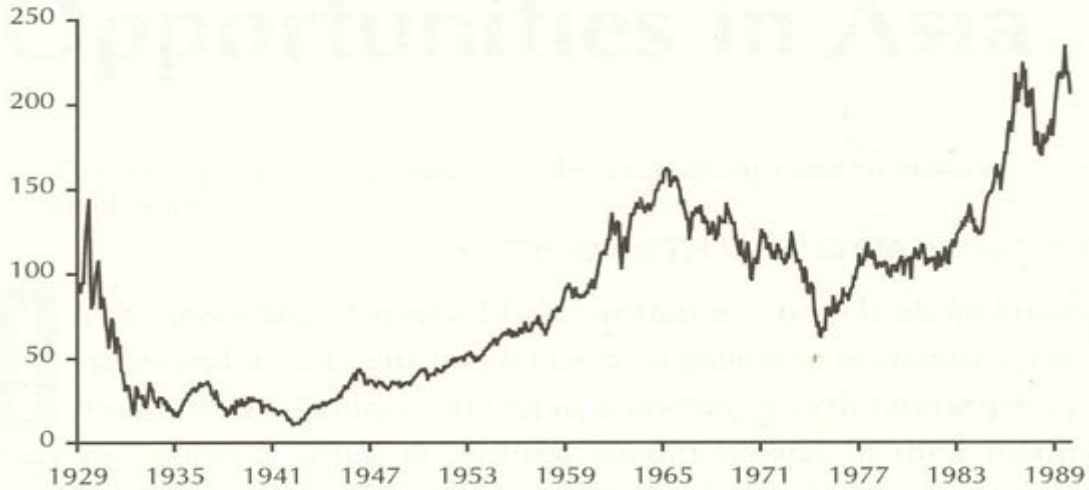
I recently called up Dennis Meadows to see how he now sees things. I have been in touch with Meadows for several years, and I am very happy that we decided to at last have a serious talk about their 1972 thesis. How powerful are these limits? Are the limits or the human animal more powerful? It is a good question, and in many ways it is not yet really answerable. We do not know. I do suspect the human animal will prove to be more powerful, but this is not a popular view. Most people seem to think the human animal is doomed. [Click here](#) or on the audio icon above to listen to the editor of **World Affairs Monthly** interview Dennis L. Meadows. The University of New Hampshire can be found on the net at [www.unh.edu](http://www.unh.edu).



We are now aware of the market, to be sure. The human brain is powerful, indeed more powerful than we had ever imagined.

### LONG CLIMB BACK

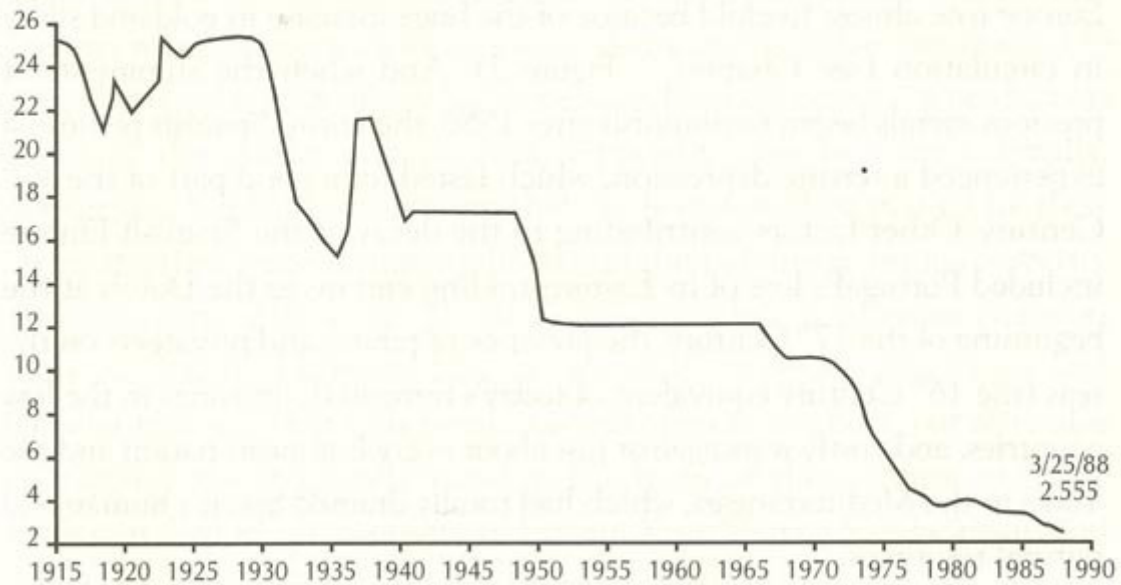
*Dow Jones Utility Average, 1929-1989*



Source: Arnold Investment Counsel, Inc.

### SUNSET OF EMPIRE 1

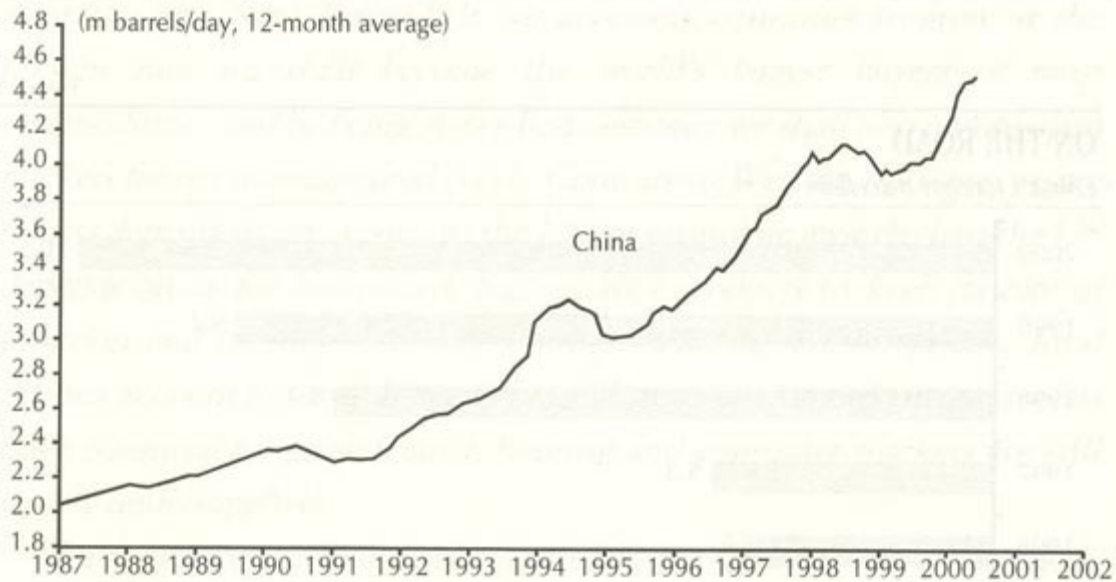
*Pound Sterling versus Swiss Franc, 1915-1988*



Source: Datastream.

## ASIAN GUZZLING

Crude oil demand



Source: Oil Market Intelligence, Ed Yardeni / Prudential Securities ([www.prudential.com](http://www.prudential.com)).

We are an ingenious animal, and if left to figure out how to manage things, we typically do quite well. We even flourish. This has been the case so far, and I strongly suspect it will be the case going forward. This does not mean, however, that we will not suffer in the transition to Phase 3 of human history. I predict that we will suffer horribly. We will be shocked by our suffering. Using computers to model the human future, or even the life trajectory of an individual human animal, is absurd and foolish. We cannot expect a computer program to have the intellectual power to predict our future. Only the human brain can predict the future of humanity. Indeed, this is what I have attempted. We shall see how well I do. My hunch is that my predictions will prove to be accurate, uncannily accurate. Thanks so much Dennis for the fascinating and informative talk. I will be calling you for periodic updates.

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