Thoughts on Coming Apart and the Coming Great Reset

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

The falcon cannot hear the falconer

Kit Webster

Themes and Theses

Why I'm Contemplating Out Loud

(Initially formulated in the early 90s, following decades of reading history, philosophy, religion, psychology and a lot of contemplation, particularly on the subject of cycles. In the end, this is a relatively straightforward story about human nature and of history rhyming.)

The US will enter a period of crisis in the early 2000s. In the late 90s, I incorporated Strauss' and Howe's terminology of the Fourth Turning (without incorporating their generations paradigm) and agreed with Howe that the end stage of the crisis began with the Great Financial Crisis and would last into the early 2030s. We are now at the beginning of the end stage of the crisis.

The crisis will be serious and could be existential.

Internal strife will increase, up to and including secession and civil war.

International conflicts will increase as the vacuum created by the weakening of the US is filled by other players.

There will be many threads to the crisis, but the primary thread will be debt, deficits and entitlements. Other factors include, eg, demographics, a loss of meaning and myth and a loss of self-discipline.

Politics will move leftward as citizens look for some refuge from the chaos. The US will become increasingly susceptible to a (man) on a white horse, who can come from either the left or the right.

Inflation, as the most likely way to address debt since austerity is not politically acceptable, will significantly lower standards of living, exacerbating the civil crises.

Eventually, the dollar will be inflated away and lose its reserve status.

Once the old rot is cleared out, and assuming continuity, there will be the basis for the establishment of a new order.

There will be what Strauss and Howe calls a First Turning . It will be constructed out of the physical infrastructure, wealth, energy sources, thoughts and values in the culture at the time. At this point in time, those components are unknowable. We can anticipate that the next five years or so will be increasingly chaotic. We can anticipate that there will be destruction, and then reconstruction from some level. We cannot yet anticipate the form of the reconstruction or the level from which it will begin.

(Added around 2020) The loss of faith by our youth in our founding principles means that the new order will at least partially be based on new principles. As yet, I have no visibility as to what those principles might be.

(Added in the early 00s) While humans are contributing to global warming, policies implemented to address manmade global warming will create a significant energy crisis, probably toward the end of the Fourth Turning.

(Added in 2023) The lowering / elimination of standards in education, the judiciary, law enforcement, the military and other segments of our society will create a population unable to adequately comprehend, do or respond to the challenges of democracy and culture.

The Irresistible Force Meets The Immovable Object

October 17, 2025

Quotes to Contemplate

Some people have actually said I was the most qualified candidate ever to run for president. - Kamala Harris

We live beyond our means on other people's dreams, and that's succeeding.

Between the lines of photographs, I've seen the past; it isn't pleasing - Janis Ian

Summary of Primary Thoughts To Contemplate In This Issue

We are running up against and/or have created very big problems and challenges that may not be solvable in any practical sense - global warming, AI, debt-deficits-entitlements. They will all continue until there is a significant disruption.

China has us in an awkward bind - but we still have some power and alternatives. Trump is blunt; Xi is subtle. This pas de deux will make for incredible soap opera with profound consequences. Trump-Xi meeting coming up.

It now looks like oil will make a new low. Strange world we are living in. The next move up, however, could be, using a word I never use, awesome.

The increase in the price of gold is telling us that the system is broken and the dollar is overvalued. The dollar should generally increase in value over the next months, but a mighty crash lies ahead.

The first, functional retail robot assistants are now on the market.

The Irresistble Force Meets The Immovable Object

"When an irresistible force such as you, meets an old immovable object like me, you can bet as sure as you live - something's gotta give, something's gotta give, something's gotta give." - One of the many great songs from before my time.

Let's set the stage -

Very divided country.

Trump winning and shooting sacred cows, particularly Democrat sacred cows, right and left.

Dems want back in to undo everything Trump has done.

Global warming is taken literally as religion by Dems.

Trump thinks global warming is a con, so that he is removing subsidies, loosening regulations on coal and shutting down green projects.

AI is a wonder that will, if it can survive, literally reshape humanity.

AI is a national security necessity - China is pursuing it as a priority.

AI requires gargantuan amounts of energy - in the short and medium terms, most of that energy will be hydrocarbon-based.

For now, all is well from a policy perspective - don't care about global warming; bring on the hydrocarbons; let's do AI.

One day the Democrats will be back in power.

They - and indeed all of us - will face a conundrum. How to square the global warming / need massive amounts of energy / China is pulling ahead now circle?

In the end, we are left with Captain Kirk and the Kobiashi Maru.

Or Alexander the Great and the Gordian Knot.

Somebody has to think outside of the box - and cheat.

Otherwise, we are literally damned if we do and damned if we don't.

Something's gotta give, something's gotta give, something's gotta give.

Too Big To Solve

The other day, I was pondering an issue in an email when I had a thought:

We have advanced our knowledge and technology so far that we are now encountering problems that are too big, too complex and require too much change in behavior to solve:

1. Global warming

2. Debt, deficits and entitlements

3. AI's impact on, well, everything.

We have to live with each of them until something breaks.

Is Trump Bluffing China?

I have been saying for some time that Trump is running a bluff. Reality, as always, is a little more nuanced. In poker parlance, he is running a semi-bluff - a bluff with some limited actual credibility - instead of 72 offsuit, he has the JT (jack-ten) of diamonds (of course, China is holding KK (king-king), so Trump has a 20% chance). The US still has power and wealth and a market that China wants to participate in. It also has technology, primarily semiconductor and AI, that China, at least for now, wants. Trump has a reasonable-but-not-great hand. But, as a long-time mediocre poker player, I can confidently say that he is playing it poorly. (Taiwan will be in there, somewhere, but you know I think, short of nuclear war, we will not fight for Taiwan.)

He almost broke the world with his first tariff pronouncements and now he and Xi are in a game of chicken that could result in the breaking of at least the US.

The risk/reward curve is just in the wrong place.

Nothing to do but cross your fingers.

China has new export restrictions — on goods like cars, computer chips and fighter jets. Trump increased tariffs on China.

Pippa Malmgren is arguing that one of the things China wants from the US is access to He3 - a gas particularly useful in fusion (and a different isotope from the helium that goes into baloons).

Trump has agreed that existing tariffs are "unsustainable."

We will have peace, a highly-inflationary and time-consuming re-shoring of the US defense industrial base, and a global monetary system reset. - Luke Gromen

Markets

Updated charts

> I'm now beginning to think that oil is heading toward a new low. It looks like the retracements in stock markets and bitcoin have begun.

> Pet rocks - Foreign central banks now hold more gold on their balance sheets than US Treasurys.

> The Trump administration will set price floors across a range of industries to combat market manipulation by China, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said.

> Everybody, including me, thinks AI is in a bubble. Since I am also a confirmed contrarian, the only way to resolve this conundrum is for the bubble to keep going.

So, You Say You Want A Revolution?

> The Israeli hostages were freed in exchange for Palestinian prisoners.

In a statesman-like address, Trump said, “Israel has won all that can be won by force of arms, now, it is time to translate these victories against terrorists on the battlefield into the ultimate prize of peace and prosperity for the entire Middle East.”

Food and medicine are beginning to enter Gaza.

Keep your fingers crossed.

> Xi and Trump have agreed to meet.

> Democrats are continuing the shutdown over Affordable Care subsidies. Wait! Don't just move on. Think, oxymoron, think irony, and then read again - Affordable Care subsidies.

> Reader CH summed up my email from last week about, as I put it, Xi being fed up with Trump's shenanigans, in one term - fafo.

> The joy and wonder of irony - what a great headline - Zelensky Says He'll Push For Trump To Receive 2026 Nobel If Ukraine Gets Tomahawk Missiles.

> Trump reinstated Columbus day, and statues of Columbus are being resurrected.

> Trump's most recent physical exam (last week) -

'President Trump continues to demonstrate excellent overall health,' Barbabella wrote. 'He continues to maintain a demanding daily schedule without restriction.'

The physician added that the president exhibits 'strong cardiovascular, pulmonary, neurological, and physical performance.'

> Sarah Isgur -

The Insurrection Act says: “Whenever the President considers that unlawful obstructions. . . make it impracticable to enforce the laws of the United States in any State…he may use the armed forces, as he considers necessary to enforce those laws.” A couple things to notice…

1. The Act doesn’t just let POTUS federalize the national guard to protect federal buildings. He can send in active duty military to enforce the law and do civilian law enforcement. MUCH MUCH bigger power.

2. Very little room for judicial review. “When the president considers” not “when a reasonable person would agree.” Congress gave POTUS the discretion to decide, not a judge.

3. “Impracticable to enforce the laws” is basically a blank check. The standard isn’t “impossible” or “extremely hard.” If POTUS thinks some federal law isn’t able to be enforced fully, that’s enough.

4. Nearly half of U.S. presidents have invoked the Insurrection Act. Some (many) more than once. We've known about this problem for a long time. Plenty of people pointed it out in 2021 when Dems controlled WH+Congress. But nobody wants to give up power when their team has it.

> Trump says India will stop buying Russian oil. India most likely will not - but it will throw Trump a bone.

> Trump has a meeting with Putin coming up in the next few weeks.

> S&P Global published new analysis on Thursday estimating that Trump's tariffs will cost companies more than $1.2 trillion in 2025, the majority of which is passed on to consumers.

Short Takes

> Highly functional robot assistants are coming onto the market for around $20,000 each.

> Sure sign of the end of times - PepsiCo announced that it would be releasing a protein-packed line of Doritos.

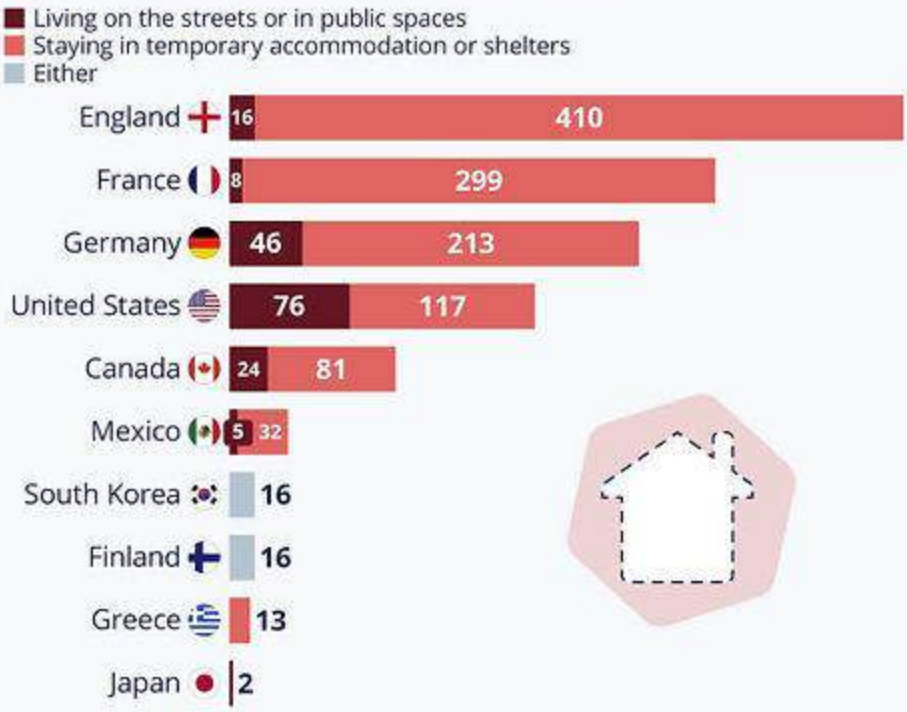
> Very serious question - how does someone like Katie Porter become the leading Democrat candidate for governor in California? (Or Ken

Paxton the AG of Texas?) We do these things to ourselves, and we will not learn.

> Somebody's gotta do it - Rep. Anna Paulina Luna says her office has been informed by the Russian Embassy in Washington that the Russian ambassador will personally deliver a 350-page document detailing the Russian government's findings on who assassinated JFK.

Where Homelessness Is More (& Less) Prevalent

Number of people experiencing homelessness per 100,000 population in selected countries*

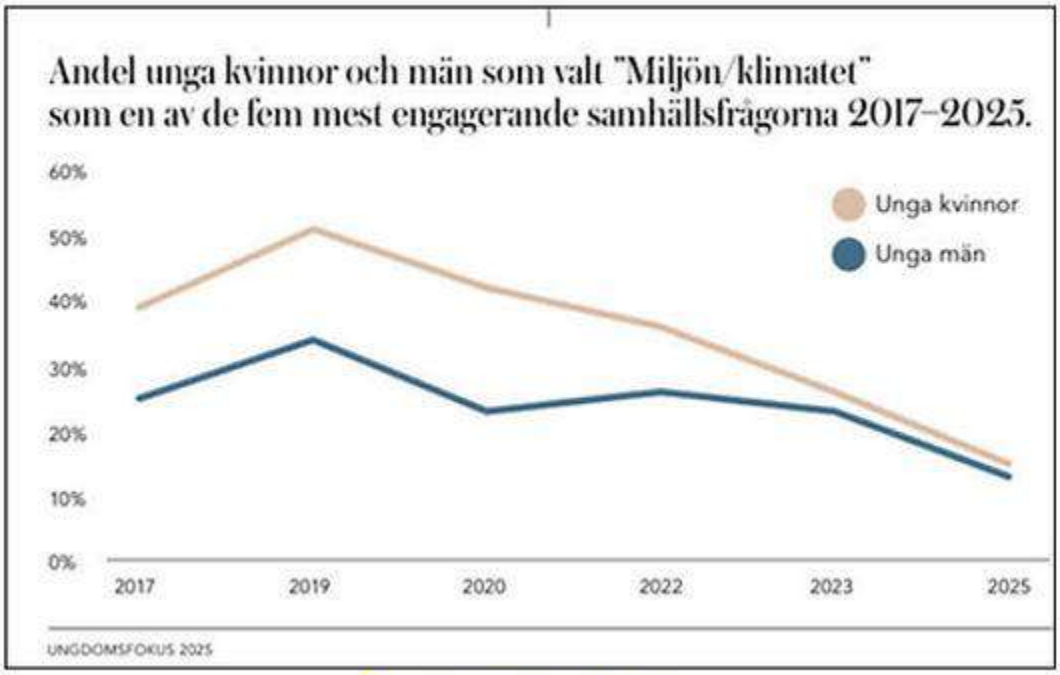


* As of 2023 or latest available
Data for England is reported in households
Source: OECD via Our World in Data

statista

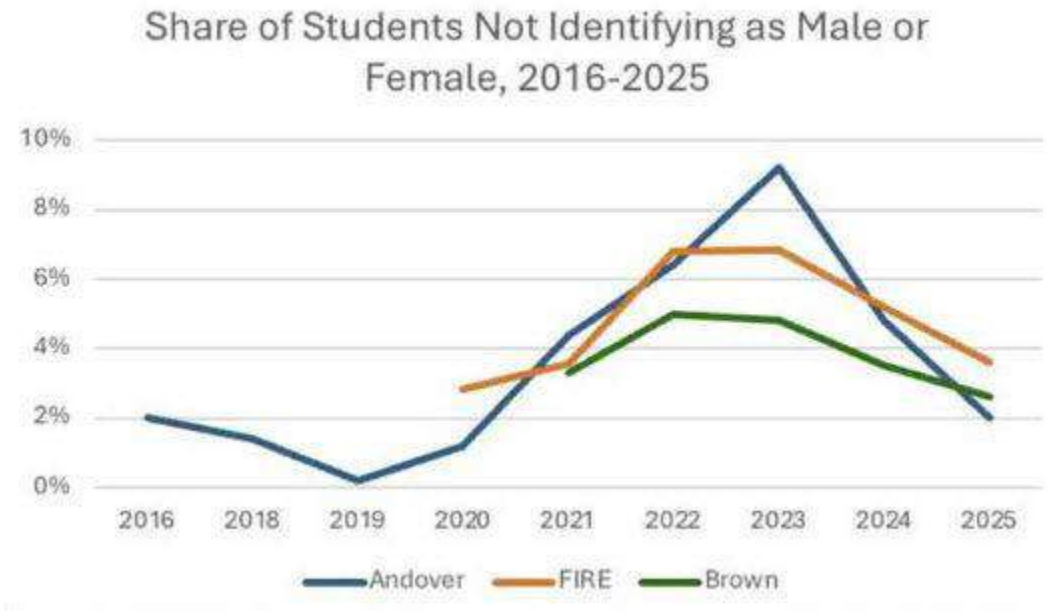
I blame Greta.

Collapse of Concern About Climate Change Among Young Swedes



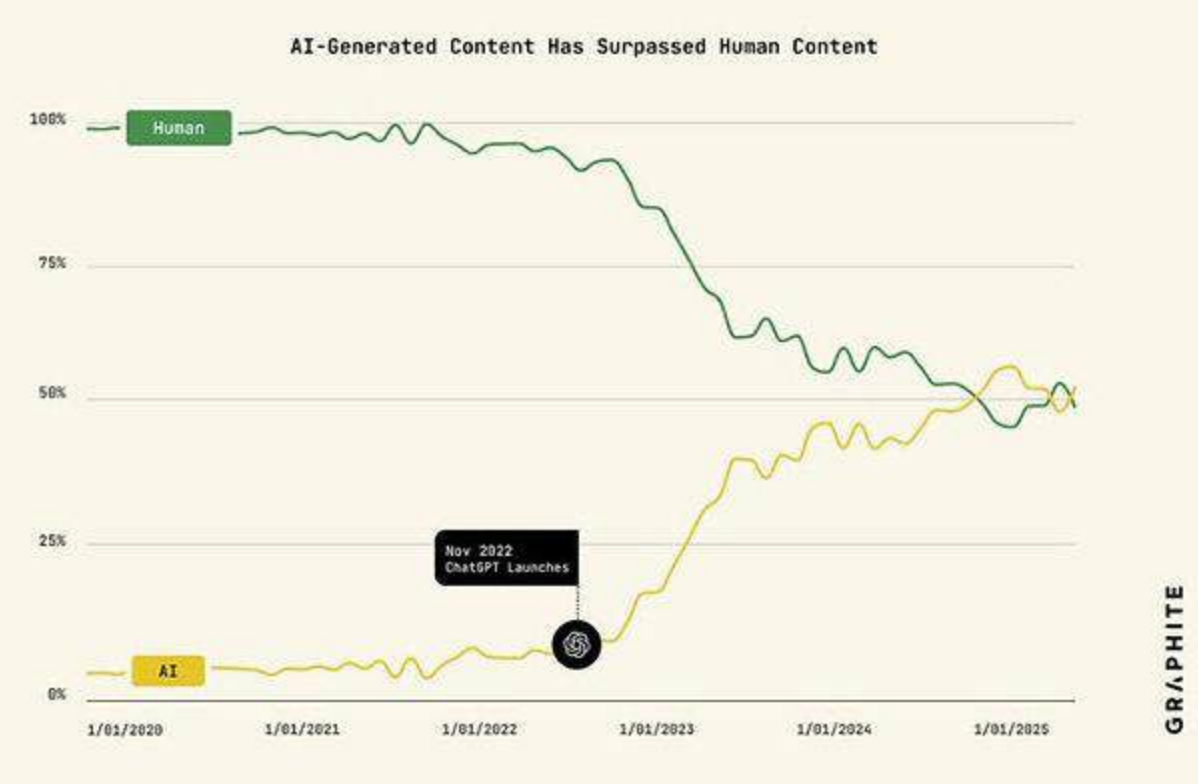
Down, down, down. Source: Rasmussenanalys.se

The fad is waning - it is becoming less trendy to be trans or binary - we should get to a steady-state number over the next few years as people obsess on other things.

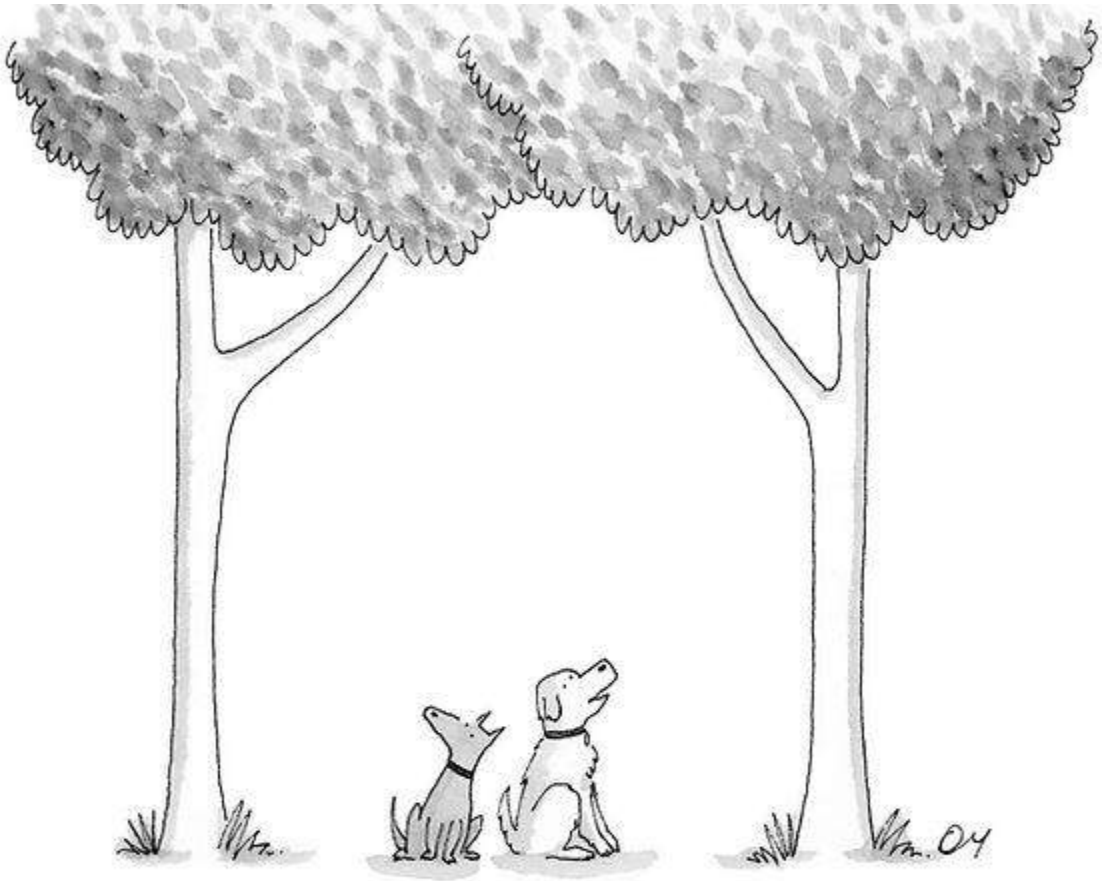


A Jewish socialist, a Muslim socialist, and a Latina socialist walk into a bar.

So... who's paying the bill?


AI-Generated Content Has Surpassed Human Content
100%
75%
50%
25%
0%
Human
AI
Nov 2022
ChatGPT Launches
1/01/2020
1/01/2021
1/01/2022
1/01/2023
1/01/2024
1/01/2025
GRAPHITE

Miscellany



"It's that perfect time of year when the leaves turn different shades of gray."