

**A Perfect Storm:  
Climate Change, Emerging  
Disease, Us**

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# Climate Change is More than Warming



# An Inconvenient Truth

Climate change unites  
humanity as never before

**Climate Change is a  
National Security Crisis  
for Every Country**

**Water Security**

**Food Security**

**Public Health Security**

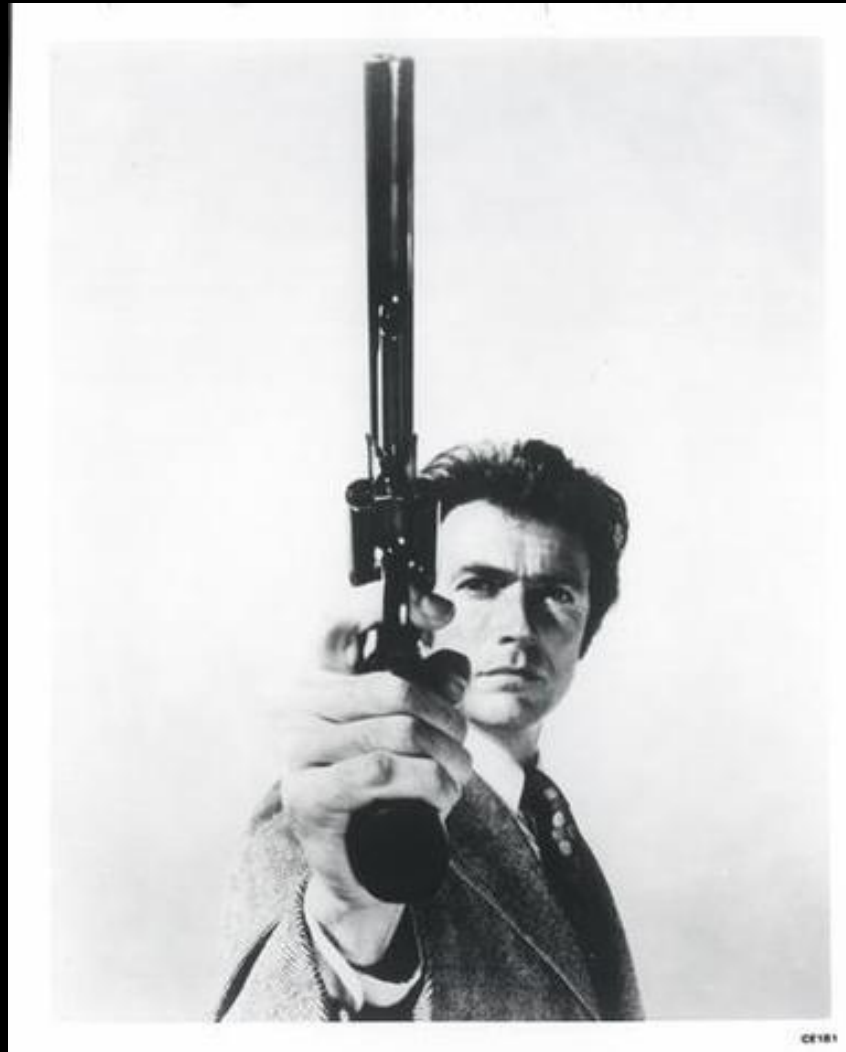
**Socio-cultural Security**

**Economic Security**

# Climate Change is also Beyond Belief

It does not discriminate  
among human belief systems:  
national borders, social,  
cultural, economic,  
political, and religious  
systems *mean nothing*

Humanity is being asked  
only one question



# What Does Evolution Promise?

There are limits to growth with  
severe penalties

The only progress is survival,  
persistence through time

If you persist long enough,  
better solutions may emerge

# TIME

## Is The Most Scarce Resource

We cannot stop climate change

We cannot reverse climate change

At this point, we likely cannot even  
slow it very much

We must buy time to cope with what  
is coming at us ever more rapidly



# We Have Been Terribly Wrong

Many of our activities have bought us time, but we wasted most of it thinking we were reversing climate change

We need policies aimed at coping with what is coming

# One Threat: The EID Crisis

EID are diseases affecting every species upon which humanity depends for survival and socio-economic development

New diseases we have never seen before; diseases we thought we had eradicated

# Where Do EID Come From?

Water, Food, Air, Casual contact,  
Sex, Wildlife, Pets, anything that  
bites or feeds on us and the species  
upon which we rely

Rural, Urban, and Wildland settings

Temperate and Tropical regions

Developed and Developing countries

# Low Probability, High Impact EID

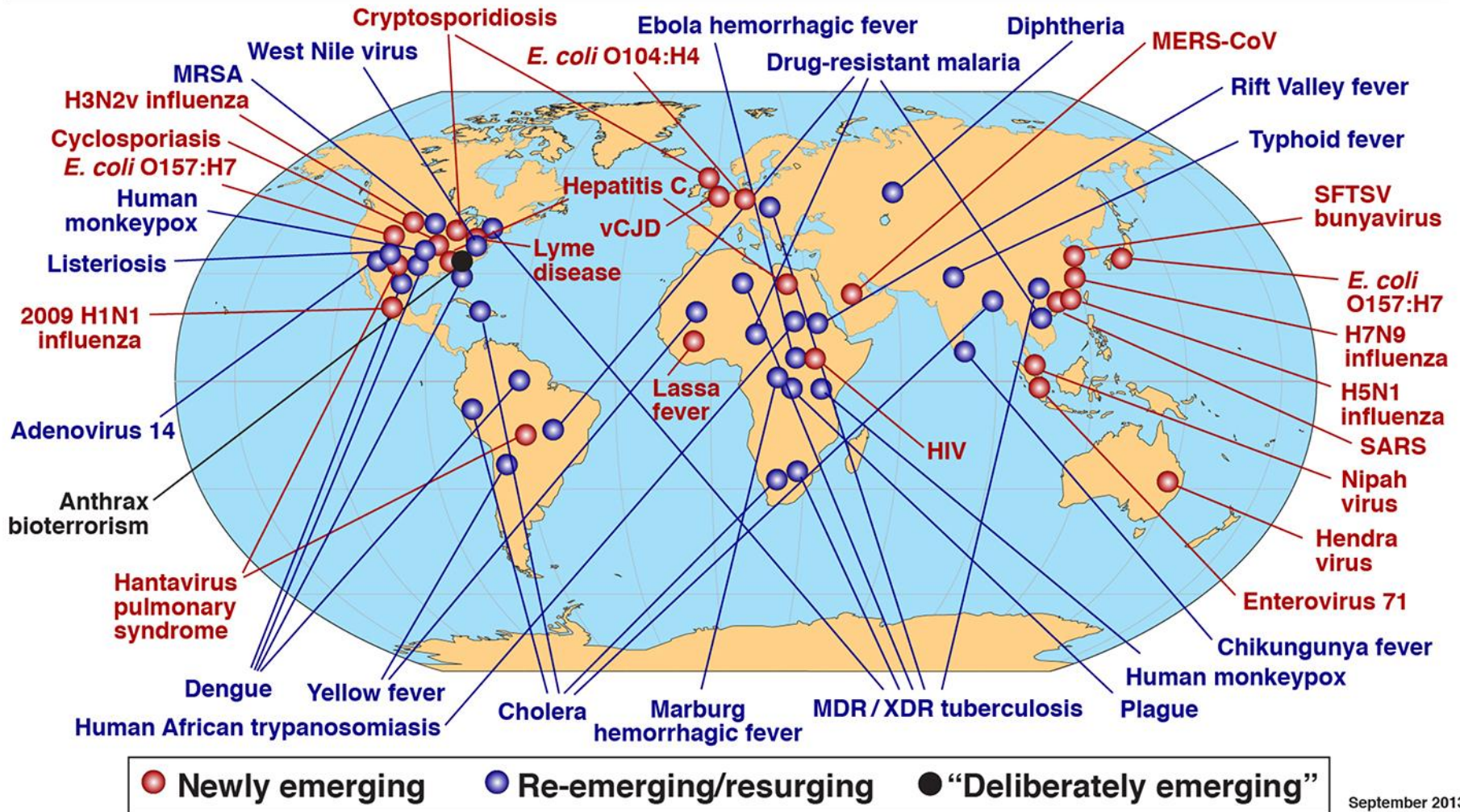
These frighten us the most, but they are not the major concern and expense



High Probability,  
Low Impact EID:  
Death by a Thousand Cuts

Each new outbreak produces acute disease, followed by selection for resistance and tolerance; the pathogen becomes an element of chronic *pathogen pollution* in its ecosystem, retaining the potential for new outbreaks and draining health system resources

# Global Examples of Emerging and Re-Emerging Infectious Diseases



# We are Hemorrhaging Money and Resources

Treatment and Production  
Losses from Emerging Diseases  
conservatively cost the world  
\$1.000.000.000.000 per year

More than the GDP of all but  
15 countries



**Crisis response to EID after  
they have emerged is not  
sustainable**



# The Stockholm Paradigm

Emerging diseases are expressions of pre-existing capacities given new opportunities - this allows EIDs to occur rapidly

Taking advantage of new opportunities allows pathogens to persist and diversify

# Climate Change Leads to Movement

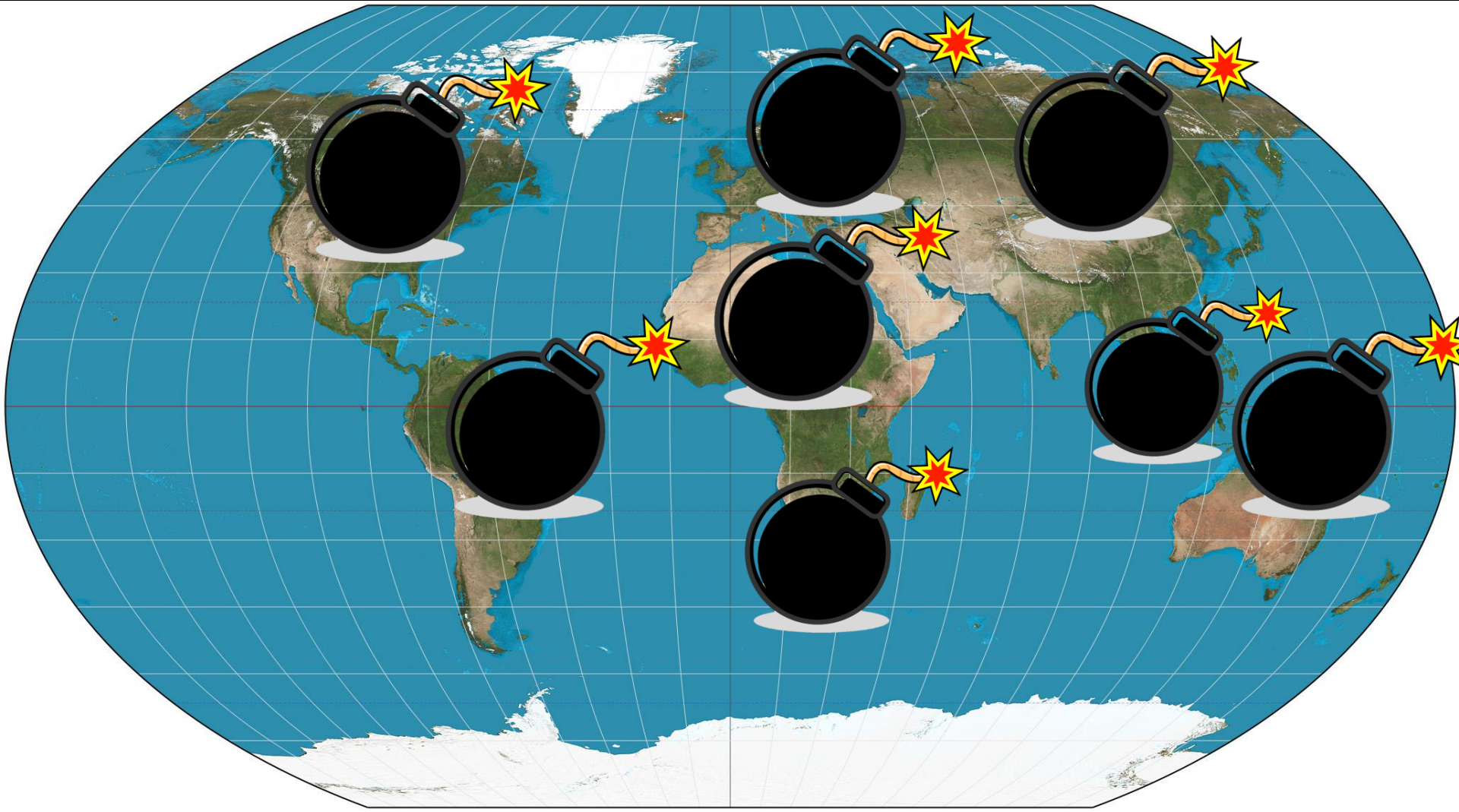
Movements of humans and their crops and livestock catalyzed by climate change expose them to pathogens to which they are susceptible but have never seen before.

**This is the direct link between  
climate change and EID**

# The Stockholm Paradigm

Repeated episodes of climate change produce host-pathogen systems with vast potential for rapid emergence and indefinite diversification

# A Minefield of Evolutionary Accidents Waiting to Happen



If this is true, why do we not see massive pandemics?

Ebola in Congo

Plague in Madagascar

Cholera in Yemen

Influenza in North America

Yellow Fever in Brazil

Nipah, Zika, Chikungunya,

Dengue in India

# Global Pandemic Dress Rehearsals

Rhinovirus pandemics  
every autumn everywhere

Norovirus pandemics  
every winter everywhere

# What is Most at Risk?

Not the biosphere

Evolution has always been  
capable of generating new  
complex biospheres  
following even massive  
extinction events



# What is Most at Risk?

Not *Homo sapiens*

We are too numerous, too widely distributed, and occupy too many habitats to go extinct as a species

# What is Most at Risk? Technological Humanity

Wtf, that can't be true!

The very infrastructure we  
created to protect us from  
the biosphere is most in  
danger from climate change?

# Civilizations have Experienced Climate Change Before

And in every instance, the  
civilization affected by the  
climate change event was  
destroyed, forever

There are far more abandoned  
than occupied cities



# The Trantor Syndrome: Density and Hyper-connectivity Traps

Require a constant flow of energy, water,  
and material goods in and out

**High population density**

Extreme division of labor with extreme  
inter-dependency

**Safe environments for species of zoonotic  
significance**

Lifestyle supported by undereducated,  
undernourished people virtually invisible  
to public health services



In 1950

30%

of population  
lived in cities



In 2050

70%

of population  
will live in cities





# This is the Perfect Storm

We have constructed a  
technological niche, and we are  
living beyond our means

It is nobody's fault but  
everybody's to blame



The Future:  
2050 Could be Humanity's  
LD50

The time is short  
The danger is great  
We are largely unprepared

But we can change that

# The Time is NOW

*There is no more neutrality in  
the world.*

*You either have to be part of  
the solution, or you're going to  
be part of the problem.*

*-Eldridge Cleaver, 1968*

# Cooperation is Key

We do not need heroics or  
whining excuses, we need  
pragmatic, effective and  
sustained action by all  
people of good will

# The Strategic Metaphor: Anticipate to Mitigate

If we know what is coming,  
we can buy time while  
searching for solutions

**The Tactical Metaphor:**  
*Finding Them Before They  
Find Us*

**Document**

**Assess**

**Monitor**

**Act**

# Humans Cooperate Well on Local Scales



# Humans Cooperate Well on Intermediate Scales



# The Most Difficult Obstacle to Cooperation

Your own future security  
requires that you help your  
neighbors

Even if you don't like them  
very much



# Reality Check

We cannot defeat a common  
foe if we are at war with  
ourselves

# The Next 30 Years Will Be Exhausting



# Lifestyle Change as Policy

This will not be cheap or easy, and life will never be the same, but it is feasible, and it may be essential for the survival of civilization

# What Does Evolutionary History Tell Us?

If conditions change, try to  
flee

If you cannot flee, try to  
cope

If you cannot cope, die

New beginnings are often  
disguised as painful endings  
– Lao Tzu

The biosphere is beginning to  
cope evolutionarily with  
climate change in the way it  
always has. And it is not  
asking our permission or  
waiting for us to decide to  
cope and survive.

Soon there will be only two  
kinds of places on earth

Places people are running  
from

Places people are running  
to

# Quo Vadis?



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