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It's the numbers, stupid!¹

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Humanity is faced with a daunting 'perfect storm' of environmental problems, broadly defined. The one that gets the most attention is climate disruption, which threatens the very existence of civilisation, but others may be equal or even bigger threats over the same or a longer time span. These include the loss of biodiversity and the vital ecosystem services provided to society, the depletion and destruction of rich agricultural soils, the pollution and overexploitation of surface and underground water sources, the spread of toxic synthetic chemicals from pole to pole, the deterioration of the epidemiological environment, the decline in quality and accessibility of essential mineral resources, and the prospects of even more resource wars, potentially nuclear ones.

This array is not just a list of problems, but a single interconnected complex of dilemmas, replete with ethical issues, that cannot be solved one aspect at a time. These dilemmas are all driven by a handful of factors: overpopulation worsened by continued population growth; overconsumption and consumption growth by the already rich; and the use of environmentally malign technologies, all of which are exacerbated by sociopolitical and economic inequity. These underlying drivers, of course, are not independent but strongly interrelated.

It is critical that the world's decision-makers understand this. Especially, they should not be fooled by the 'Fred Pearce Fallacy' that the critical growth issue is that