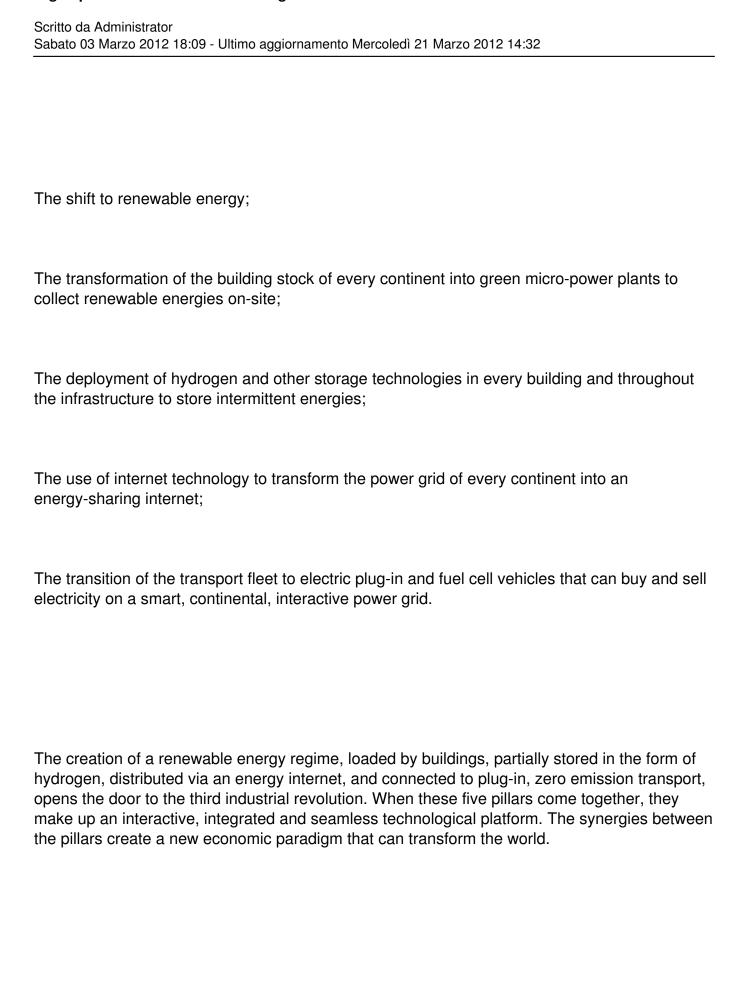


Like every other communication and energy infrastructure, the various pillars of the third

industrial revolution:

industrial revolution can only function in relation to one another, so they must all be laid down simultaneously, as otherwise the foundation will not hold. There are five pillars of the third



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To appreciate how far the third industrial revolution will transform the way we organise economic life, consider the profound changes in the past 20 years thanks to the internet revolution. The democratisation of information and communication has altered the nature of global commerce and social relations as significantly as did the print revolution. Imagine the impact that the democratisation of energy across all of society is likely to have when managed by internet technology.

Just as information likes to "run free" on the internet, distributed renewable energy will want to run uninhibitedly across national borders. When millions of people generate their own energy, sharing their energy from neighbourhood to neighbourhood and region to region, everyone becomes a node in a vast green electricity network. In the green-powered third industrial revolution, continents become the new playing field for economic life and continental-scale political unions like the EU become the new governing model. We are moving from "globalisation" to "continentalisation".

The European Union is the first continental economy and political union to begin the transition to this third industrial revolution. Other unions have recently been formed in Asia with ASEAN, Africa with the African Union and South America with the Union of South American Nations. In North America, the fledgling political associations forged between the northern states and Canadian provinces seem the precursor to a possible continental union.

Local, regional and national governments will not disappear in the coming century; they will actually be strengthened as continental unions provide an expansive political framework for overseeing and regulating integrated continental markets.

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Just as the internet connected the human race in a single distributed and collaborative virtual space, the third industrial revolution connects the human race in a parallel Pangean, or supercontinental, political space. What will this look like? The idea of a centralised world government might have been a logical fit for the second industrial revolution, but it is bizarrely out of place and out of sync in a world where the energy/communication infrastructure is nodal, interdependent and flat. Global networked communication, energy and commerce invariably gives rise to network governance at both the continental and global levels.

The continental era will transform international relations from geopolitics into biosphere politics. Our biosphere envelope is less than 40 miles deep, from ocean floor to outer space. The scientific community's recent insights into its workings amount to a rediscovery of the planet we inhabit. Researchers are beginning to think of the biosphere as analogous to a living organism whose various chemical flows and biological systems are continuously interacting with one another to allow life to flourish.

This change in how scientists view the earth is as profound in its implications as the change in thinking in the modern era, when scientists upended the Abrahamic description of the earth as a creation of God and replaced it with the notion that it was a remnant of the sun. The social Darwinist's view of nature as a battleground, where all creatures fight with each other to grab as much of the earth's resources as possible was taken up by nations and acted out on the grand stage of history in the form of geopolitics. Wars have been waged and political boundaries re-configured to secure access to fuels and resources.

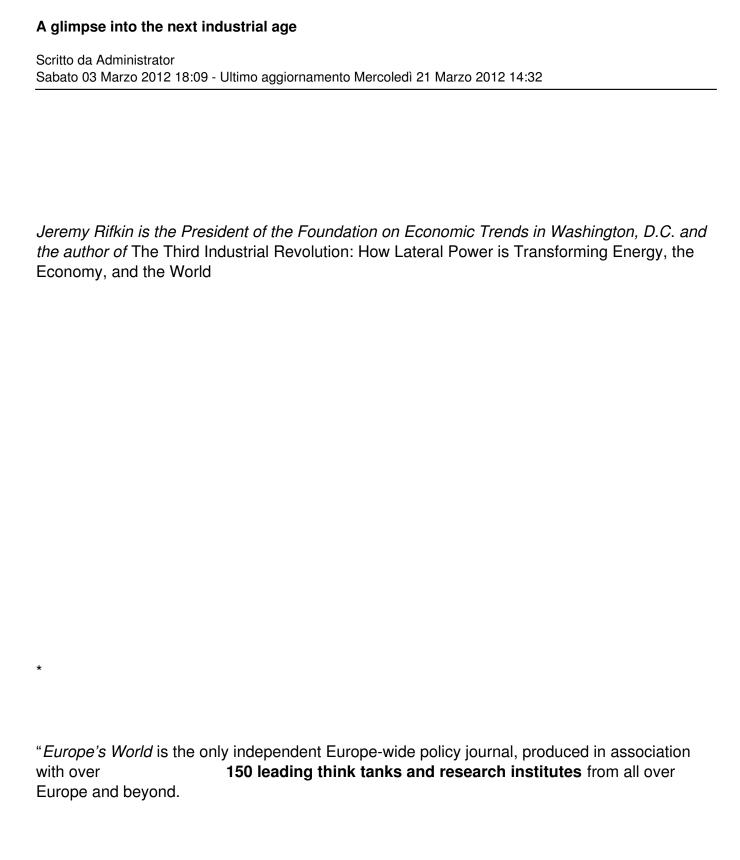
The new scientific view, by contrast, sees the evolution of life and the evolution of the planet's geo-chemistry as a co-creative process in which each adapts to the other, assuring the continuation of life within the earth's biosphere envelope. Ecologists argue that it is the

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synergistic and symbiotic relationships within and between species, as much as the competitive and aggressive drives, that help secure each organism's survival.

The shift from fossil fuels to distributed renewable energies will redefine international relations more along the lines of ecological thinking. Because the renewable energies of the third industrial revolution are ample, found everywhere and easily shared, but require collective stewardship of the earth's ecosystems, there is less likelihood of hostility over access. If the earth functions more like a living organism made up of layer upon layer of interdependent ecological relationships, then our survival depends on mutually safeguarding the well-being of the ecosystems of which we are all a part. This is the meaning of sustainable development, and the essence of biosphere politics.

We must therefore enlarge our vision and think as global citizens in a shared biosphere. Global human rights and health networks, disaster relief networks, germplasm storage, food banks, information and environmental networks, and species protection networks are a powerful sign of this historic shift from conventional geopolitics to fledgling biosphere politics. The third industrial revolution will propel the human race into uncharted territory. New energy relationships will require much wider governing jurisdictions. It is not inevitable, but it is at least highly likely that continental unions will become these new governing jurisdictions as geopolitics give way to emerging biosphere politics.



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