



Buying Time: Environmental Collapse and the Future of Energy

Kaz Makabe

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WE KNOW, from repeated failures to predict and prevent catastrophes ranging from the Great Tohoku Earthquake to the global financial crisis of 2008, that complex adaptive systems, such as those found in nature or in economies, are actually very hard to predict, much less influence. Today, we face environmental degradation caused in large part by the use of fossil fuels, ever-declining efficiencies in extracting them, a pace of development for renewable energy insufficient for replacement of the fossil fuels we are burning through, and population growth that is likely to add two billion people globally by 2045.

Despite partial recovery since the financial crisis of 2008, growth remains sluggish, and large budget deficits persist across much of the developed world. Meanwhile, developing states face their own challenges, stemming from unbalanced growth. Against this backdrop, and in light of the urgent need to pay closer heed to our environment, the last thing the world needs is an energy crisis triggered not merely by recurrent scares over supply, but by more lasting structural changes in our ability to use fossil fuels with reckless abandon.

Buying Time applies lessons learned the hard way from the global economic crisis of the past decade, to offer an overview of the state of the environment and our energy future. Grounded in subtle thinking about complex systems, including the economy, energy, and the environment, this book underscores the connections linking them all. Kaz Makabe is a veteran financial systems expert who lived through the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. He nevertheless concludes that nuclear energy is the bridge than can help us cross over the abyss we face.

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