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The human condition

Within the universe I am completely insignificant. Insignificance opens up the awe, wonder, and on our temporal scale, the powers to understand and to comprehend the marvels of our natural existence. Marvels include creativity both artistic and technological, and the disgust and fear of our primitive uglier nature. Insignificance is both inspirational beauty and gut-wrenching insanity, for how can we as a natural species so proud and arrogant of our supposed superior morality, intellectual capacity, and emotional sensitivity be so primitively unaware and destructive so as to destroy not only ourselves but our one tiny blue watery planet? My lifetime will pass and I can choose to a degree the manner in which it passes: to live life at its best and to reach for the best in others; or to fall back into hedonistic pleasure; or choose a complacency bathed in entertainments and mediocre artificial status quo.

A point is reached in life where one's mortality is recognized. Its first glimpse may not be at all soul searching, earth shattering, but simply an awareness. For many it comes under the duress of war and famine, losses so significant that the psyche is scarred forever, maybe gentled over time, maybe aggravated, always there. That sense generalizes to everyone in one's sphere, indeed to everyone alive - family, friends and foes, strangers - all equally are subject to death. Within that awareness people generally work through life without any great emotional trauma as it is a commonality for everyone. Instead life is pursued in support of oneself, one's family, one's group, one's nation, not necessarily in that order of importance. In western societies the cult of youth disguises much of this common human endpoint under an almost overwhelming assault of entertainment, distractions, and the general pursuit of self-interest and self-satisfaction based mainly on acquiring things. Some escape this chase early, some escape it as age itself kicks them outside of cultural consumer norms, many others

never escape it, always striving to pretend that life will never end, or simply so saturated with their beliefs that strangely enough life goes on eternally after this corporal body passes.

Part of the problem is the human inability to think beyond more than short term survival, securing food, shelter, and clothing, working perhaps towards some retirement planning, which in the grand scheme of things, is still very short. It is a combination of our natural heritage as hunter gatherers challenged for survival, and our perceptions which are limited to a range suitable for survival but not broad enough to perceive much or most of the universe. In our modern world, somewhat detached from the natural world, seasonal sports, seasonal movie and TV episodes, quarterly and semi-annual and annualized business reports, cycles of life tend to turn around the short term.

Given a long enough time line, and even then not all that long on a universal scale, and it all ends for everyone. The reality of that awareness can produce some mundane results, but it can also induce some awe inspiring moments as a realization arrives of an individual's infinitely tiny existence in a seemingly eternal universe. Generations pass, and as the time line extends forwards and backwards through memory and expectations, the beginnings of homo sapien and the end of homo sapiens become apparent. A trillion years from now our universe may have expanded into a stretched thin nothingness; or perhaps it will contract into an infinitely small undefinable point before bursting forth in another round of existence; or maybe - nothing - forever - a nothing even devoid of time as it is the fourth dimension allowing the physical dimensions to exist and move.

We will never know, but take a shorter timeline, a billion years on, and our technological advances and mathematical physics advances do allow us to understand a bit more of what our universe is all about. The sun and earth, the stars and galaxies, will still exist, but will we, the all inclusive human "we", still walk this earth? Considering that early life originated on earth some

three and a half billion years ago, chances are some form of life will continue to exist. But also considering that homo sapiens, “we” the people, have only been around for an estimated one hundred to three hundred thousand years at most, and that most species have cycles within millions of years or shorter, chances are it will not be human life. Cockroaches will assuredly wander around in the crevices of newer species habitats.

The human timeline brings us to the inflection point where our current circumstance are brought into a bit more focus as the timeline based on past geological and biological evidence is realizable if still a seeming infinity away for a species averaging at best around 80 years per individual. The concept of individual life and death, of a few remembered generations past, of a few unconceived generations of the future, and the present reality is very focussed on day to day existence. So focussed perhaps, that most cannot see, or do not want to see, the reality of our own creations may be the very things terminating our existence well before its natural due date.

We are at an inflection point, nearing a point of no return, wherein our self created societies could terminate our existence at any given moment. We live in an environment in which the horsemen of the apocalypse lurk, restless, waiting, growing stronger with each passing day. The first apocalyptic rider readily visible is that of global warming, part of climate change, itself part of large scale environmental degradation. The second rider, always visible, but seldom considered inside apocalyptic scenarios, operating openly, seldom truly understood, is financial collapse, not the collapse itself, but the ramifications of how it occurs and what follows. The third rider, also operating openly but seldom discussed, never apparently understood for its true effects, always goaded into more restrained fury, susceptible to ignite on a moment's whim, is nuclear war.

These are not solitary riders, searching for their own particular onslaught, but work in cohort with one another, united in their threat, and their growing efforts to erase humanity - and much more. We are creating possible scenarios that sooner or later one or another rider will find the breakout point.

Seemingly conquered are the ancient scourges of famine, pestilence, and Death, who have become mere groomsmen for the apocalyptic riders, waiting their turn to feast on the remnants of collapsed societies. Death is much maligned but completely neutral, the harvester of humanity but not a cause unto himself. We all meet him someday, somehow, without malice, revenge, or wilful evil intent on his part. The malice and pain, the agony before Death arrives, comes from the strange workings of the human imperative to survive and have ultimate power over others, or from the natural processes of aging, illness and disease.

The riders of the modern apocalypse simply wait their turn, strengthening on the ever increasing folly of current human endeavour, trained by the past, ready to be present when opportunity appears, as it already is presenting itself, manifesting itself in activities of global current events, the current human condition.

The weakest rider, but still capable of setting off an apocalyptic finale, is financial collapse. Scoff if you must to think that financial problems will end the world - and I would agree to a point and with a major caveat - as will be discussed later, one currency rules us all and binds us all together, and attempts to hold onto and further strengthen its rule. If it fails to do so it may well call upon its groomsmen for assistance, but more fearfully, may call upon his associate, nuclear war. It would be the metaphorical Samson option, to destroy the world if the US\$ was going down, for its destruction would certainly destroy the power of the western oligarchs, banksters, neocons, et al, those who hold the ultimate game button near at hand. For

these plotting, conceiving, and believing in a winnable nuclear war, or even a last gasp military send off to a dead empire, financial collapse could release the gate.

The current economic system is built on debt, debt so large it cannot conceivably be paid off, a debt so encompassing that all people and states will suffer as it collapses to a value of zero. Based on debt, electronic credit transactions, ongoing commodity and currency manipulations happening at lightning fast speeds, it could all collapse over a weekend. Hopefully it will be a more controlled softer landing, with one or two state powers rising as the others descend, a transition over years, or if we are lucky, over decades - but lucky only in the sense if current and new tragedies are taken care of.

Debt is not the only problem for the US\$ as more importantly it is also the global reserve currency, the petrodollar. This feature allows the U.S. centered debt to grow very large. When the U.S. went off the gold standard, repositioning the US\$ as a petrodollar necessity for the purchase of oil, the debt soared as the U.S. Federal Bank (a private institution) could essentially print all the money it needed. Seemingly bizarre, but two nations transacting outside of the U.S. still need the US\$ to do so. Now that the petrodollar hegemony is being effectively challenged in part, this apocalyptic rider is champing at the bit to go for a global gallop, perhaps challenging his compatriot, nuclear war, to ride with him.

The second apocalyptic rider presents a more obvious problem as changes are already evident and understood for global warming, climate change, and environmental degradation in general. It is evident from anyone having lived long enough and been able to witness changes to their own environments. It is also evident from the ever increasing scientific awareness - regardless of the manipulations of self-interested deniers - gathering information from a wide range of signals: increasing carbon dioxide levels, species loss, ocean acidification, agricultural herbicides and pesticides among others. It has been a slow inexorable process to date but

statistics pertaining to global temperatures, storm frequencies and sizes, insect species loss, epidemics of cancer, diabetes, and other diseases not caused by pathogens - which should not allow us to ignore the newer chemically resistant superbugs - are all cause for concern.

In my own lifetime of a baby boomer born after the Second World War, significant changes are obvious. I have witnessed the retreat of large glaciers from where I first encountered them in my youth. Forests once forever green have turned brown and then disappeared, partly as humans rush to salvage the bug infested wood, bugs no longer affected by seriously cold winter, and partly as forest fires rage through a much drier fuel source. The seasons are officially the same, but plants bloom earlier in the spring, stay green longer into the fall, and the seering cold of midwinter no longer cuts quite so harshly, if at all.

All of this could be somewhat reasonably argued as part of natural forces, but given the many other anecdotal reports combined with the preponderance of scientific knowledge saying yes, anthropogenic warming is happening, and more importantly, is happening at a rate unprecedented in geological or biological timelines. Importantly that only covers one aspect of environmental change and its future parameters are not truly known other than what is extrapolated from our current knowledge, a decidedly limited set of knowledge. Is there a tipping point beyond which "runaway" global heating will rapidly and drastically alter conditions for human survival? Will I see it in my lifetime, or will it be seen by the next generation, or the next...?

Other factors threaten the environment and human health. The human body is resilient but signs are showing of chemically related concerns for all of our systems - immune, circulatory, reproductive, and endocrine - with cancer attacking all parts of our body and other systemic diseases becoming more pronounced. The external environment suffers under the onslaught of herbicides, pesticides, antibiotics, and thousands of chemicals such as from white

phosphorous, Agent Orange, Roundup, and Febreze. Many earlier open air nuclear tests, several very large and many smaller nuclear power plant accidents and incidents have happened globally. Is it a surprise then that cancer rates have exploded along with the rise of the nuclear industry?

The third apocalyptic rider, nuclear war, has so far always held back. His weapons have been tested hundreds of times, and twice on civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a demonstrated threat of U.S. power against the Soviet Union. He is the swiftest and immediately deadliest of the three horsemen, a sprinter, not in it for the long run - when released everything will fall to him. Scenarios of limited war, survivable war, or winnable wars are simply absurd and not in his stable of tricks. Once the gates are dropped, nuclear war will override everything else.

Several underlying human features set the stage for some form of calamity involving one or a combination of all the riders. These factors include abstract geopolitical alignments and posturing, unregulated and unfettered capitalism (the prancing fancy show horse pretending to be a contender in control of the others...), corporate trade agreements, government protectionist policies, a variety of global institutions of formal but not official policy making think tanks, and the power of the private and more or less secretive groups such as the Davos and Bilderberg power festivals. But truly underlying all that is human greed, narcissism, hunger for power and also for affiliation and protection of like minded people with a range of social emotional skills ranging from outright psychopathy to a crafted dissonance accepting that while others have thoughts and feelings, they are too stupid, too ignorant, too irrelevant, too savage and primitive to be honoured with any rights or protections.

Certainly there are many positive human values but few if any of them seek out power, a few bravely speak truth to power, while the majority appear to want to wish it all away, to get on with their lives undisturbed and unperturbed by the sorrows of the many, the damaging and

damning power of the few. This applies more in the “developed” world where comfort and complacency tend to rule, whereas the human condition in exploited regions of the world necessitates more awareness and more alertness to life’s situation.

We live in an age where material security - food, clothing, shelter - and material wealth could construct societies with little if any need or want, and then provide enrichment beyond what any of our ancestors could even conceive. In recognition of human frailties of the psychological kind, it is not to posit a utopia, but societies and cultures being able to explore their own development without outside interference. No interference, but in our world of many kinds of mass communication, a world of human interaction unbounded by the the threats of manipulations from outside.

That both denies and accepts the human condition. Human nature has through its natural growth developed not only material tools for survival, but also many psychological tools that are also used for survival. It is the latter, deeply embedded within our physiological, psychological, and cultural structures, creating our mix of human endeavours ranging from the artistically divine to the divinity of death.

Given how humanity inhabits a world of its own creation with the three horsemen of the apocalypse impatiently biding their time, it is sometimes difficult to see a future for humanity. Solutions present themselves, answers quite simple and plain. It is the implementation of the answers that will prove difficult. Implementing the answers is difficult partly because most of the people in the west do not want to give up their privileges, comforts, and entertainments of life. On top of this heap of complacency and incessant talk are the real power brokers - the politicians, bankers, corporate executives, and the military brass - who do not seem capable of ceding power and authority to a more egalitarian benign system.

In the face of the horsemen, the responses are clear. First, surrender all nuclear arms to a citizen/scientific body dedicated to their dismantlement, conventional armaments to follow later. Secondly, collapse the US\$, float new currencies pegged to gold, and have a global debt jubilee for common citizens after the banksters have been rewarded generously for their fraud and manipulation. Finally change our energy sources from carbon to green, and do away with our consumer throw away economy. See! Simple answers, probably impossible to institute given human nature - leading me to believe humanity will have run its course much sooner rather than much later.

Family of man

It is all rather unfortunate as we are a single species inhabiting a single planet, somewhat fragile but eminently suited for our survival - or rather vice versa, we are eminently suited through selection to survive in its current condition. Many different species have come and gone, and even if widely irradiated for several hundred thousand years, life will emerge from its hidden nooks and crannies in another blossoming of life, not to be witnessed by us. We are not even giving ourselves a chance to change into something capable of transiting many generations, many millennia of existence, perhaps at some point to transcend the limits of living on just one planet - for the meantime, our only habitable environment.

Our own ancestry takes us back through genetic history. All humans are related to all other humans, much more so than our superficial differences are credited with making us different. Our common primate cousins stretch our lineage farther back to some common mammalian predecessor surviving the meteor strike generally believed to have cause the large dinosaur extinction, the Cretaceous-Tertiary extinction. The K-T extinction wiped out an

estimated seventy-five percent of all species due to fire, atmospheric dust (nuclear winter style) and massive firestorms well beyond the initial shock wave of impact. Behind the meteor ruled the dinosaurs and behind them species going back through several other mass extinctions, back to the origins of life about 3.5 billion years ago. Obviously the world was much different then, with life forming in a rich iron and sulfur environment far different from our hospitable - to us - blue green world. [one of the best overviews of this history is *A New History of Life - The Radical New Discoveries About the Origins and Evolution of Life on Earth*. By Joe Kirschvink and Peter Ward. Bloomsbury Press, New York, 2015]

Take a closer look at our history, our genetic ancestry, and bring it back to a more manageable and imaginable timeline.

Extensive mythologies exist with creation stories describing how mankind and all other living things came into existence. At one extreme of brevity, humans - and the world - have existed for about six thousand years. At the other end of timelines is the Hindu kalpa in its longest form, wherein a silk scarf brushed against the highest mountain once a year will wear it down in only the smallest part of a kalpa.

Modern studies of paleobiology put human existence, modern humans, homo sapiens, within a timeline of a four and a half billion year old earth, itself within a thirteen billion year old universe within an unstated eternity beyond the limits of our knowledge or comprehension. Within that extensive timeline, individual humans live on average a mere eighty years. Long in human terms, but once again short by astral timelines, the family of modern homo sapiens, our one big family of man (pardon the structural sexism of the language used) lives at the tail end of a roughly five to seven million year old lineage of primates considered "homo" or man. Our modern family of many is the only species of this longer genus of primates to have survived. It is a big squabbling, frequently violent, sometimes empathetic family having survived an

estimated 150 to 300 thousand years of existence. Our family is of many colours, many sizes, many diverse customs, habits, and beliefs but also with many similar emotions - laughter, fear, love, uncertainty, happiness and on. We, the royal family we, all have basic needs for survival, for food, shelter, and clothing, and strive to grow, obtain, safeguard, and then enhance our own survival, our families, our tribes and now our nations. As each cycle of contact becomes larger, more diverse, then so do the problems associated with human interactions with each other and the environment.

I am not sure it provides hope for the future, but given the human tendency for self aggrandizement, it is instructive to be aware of how much we have in common, how much we have to lose, and raises the big question: If we are as smart as we think we are, why are we doing what we are doing to ourselves and our planet, our only planet?

To start with the most proximate part of a biological regression for examining the family of man, parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and on is the easiest part to understand. Taken purely mathematically we all have 2 parents, 4 grandparents, 8 great grandparents, 16 great-great-grandparents and so on. If the generations are followed back twenty-six times (using twenty years as a generation, thus 520 years) we - at least those of European descent - have great/.../grandparents enough to equal the whole population of Europe at that time. I had not thought this out beforehand, but for reference that happens to be 1498, the decade the European "Doctrine of Discovery" began its treacherous voyages to the 'New World'.

It is possible for anyone to claim they are related to any famous king, queen, prince, princess, nobleman, or noblewoman. We all carry royal blood. In the same vein (literally) anyone can claim philosophers, scientists, and statesmen as their kin. Unfortunately it also means we are related to the villains, murderers, and thieves of those earlier eras - be they kings and queens or brigands and pirates - along with all the hard scrabble plebeians,

the "deplorables" of their age, mixed with the blood of Genghis Khan and the Mongol hordes.

1000 - 1500 years earlier everyone is related to Caesar, Pontius Pilate, Brutus, Cicero, Cleopatra, Alexander, Spartacus, Barabas all mixed together with the blood of the Huns, Visigoths and other barbarians invading from the wilds of northeastern Europe.

But humanity is much older than just the European line of descent, although current events might make one think otherwise. Regardless, there are a variety of human races that have developed over the millennia and most have mixed and mingled in some form or another at different times. Wars of conquest, occupation, settler-colonialism along with the human proclivity for rape has created much intermixing of genetic material. Superficially there are significant differences, and this has created many of our global problems with European racism against all coloured people being one of them (not exclusively, just predominantly for the current era). The misinterpretations of social darwinism and the false science of eugenics helped create many incorrect ideas about racial purity between the two world wars. Charles Darwin's ideas have significantly changed the course of humanities perception of itself whether it is accepted or is denied. Eugenics, a misinterpretation of Darwin's ideas, supported the racial divisions of society, in particular as it was mainly western white male scientists doing the interpreting of the science of evolution.

Underneath those superficial differences lies a strong genetic similarity. Without getting into the details of the genetics it can be illustrated with a black and white colour illustration (verbally). If a white person is sitting between two black people, according to regressive genetic analysis, the white person is more closely related to the two black people on either side of them than the two black people are to each other. Obviously this is simplified, made black and white for simplicity, but the main point is that through the various migrations of humanity around the

world - out of Africa - there is more significant genetic differences between people still residing in Africa than between all those who have left Africa by whatever means or process.

In short, racial differences while real, are superficial, mostly artifacts of culture except for the obvious physical colour differences, while the underlying similarities of humanity greatly exceed and - if we are truly a sapient superior being - should overwhelm the colour differences. According to the genetic record modern humanity appears to have left Africa in two waves, from a very constricted and narrow (E. O. Wilson uses the term bottleneck) population that was lucky to survive when all of our early hominid ancestors died out. From that small base, one group expanded mostly towards other parts of Asia and farther into the Americas and Australasia, and the second group moved more westward through the Levant into Europe.

Meet your great/.../grandmother....I will go one step further back along this long (by human terms) journey. Inside all human cells requiring energy (almost all of them) resides an organelle called the mitochondria. It contains its own genetic structure and is transferred from mother to mother only and thus represents a matrilineal line of descent. Using that line of regression takes humanity all the way back to our original matriarch: your great/.../grandmother, known scientifically as "Mitochondrial Eve", was a black woman living in southern Africa some 150 to 300 thousand years ago (range varies by source).

Obviously there had to be a great/.../grandfather, but I find the vision of a matriarchal genetic lineage more compelling than the usual white male dominated image created by those of European ancestry.

We - the human we - are a single species, all closely related, a large family of 7.5 billion people trying to live on our one habitable planet. Yet we endanger/threaten both ourselves and most of the rest of the planet with extinction in spite of our supposed intelligence and

technological wizardry that has helped produce the recent spectacular increase in both the human population and the degradation of the environment.

So where do we go from here? Our current lifestyle - at least that of the competitive consumer oriented societies of the world - does not tend to create a long term outlook for our species. Our Mitochondrial Eve ancestor nurtured her family; our Mother Earth may decide that she has had enough of nurturing us if we do not act to the best of our capacity as we like to perceive ourselves at our best. Sometime, probably all too soon, we will discover whether we as a species will do ourselves in or somehow manage to rework our human systems in order to survive along with a healthy planet for the long term.

Influences and rationale for this presentation

This book is presented as the summation of many influences on my thinking, from observing, viewing and reading, and personal experiences. Many voices, many pictures, many words, and many moments experiencing the artifices of human creation and the creations of the natural world developed my particular analysis and synthesis of what it all means - it being life itself.

A few standout voices around the world rise above others within the mainstream media, and other voices speak independently, prevalent on alternate media and deserve equal attention. Not only are the political/geopolitical strategies of global powers exposed, but also the reality of everyday life of many global citizens.

Within my current world of discovering the generally little understood realities of modern economic and political intrigues are many voices using all forms of modern media in order to reveal the true machinations and intentions of the world order. Only a few have achieved

celebrity status, which unfortunately spends more time on the status rather than the message, a convenient diversion for the powers that be. As for my position within this, it is that of amassing and collating large amounts of information from all media, mainly printed works, online articles, and many forms of video (Youtube, embedded, Vimeo, independent, Telesur et al). Having kept up with current affairs all of my life through magazines, books, and television, the advent of the internet broadened my perspectives immensely. Viewpoints, perspectives, and interpretations are available from around the world with a minimum of physical or mental effort.

I leave one element out - social media. Social media would provide a study unto itself. Digging deep into related articles, digging deeper into the many books still being published regardless of electronic production, provides the time to absorb, digest, and interpret a diverse set of views. Presenting 124 character soundbites and reading or viewing other homilies and platitudes posted mainly for like minded individuals to take comfort with does little to provoke intelligent assessment of a given situation. From that, several names - who in a sense are my mentors - stand out, some as signposts and markers and others as ongoing remote advisors and sources of information.

One of the first books I read after 9 11 was *Manufacturing Consent*, by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky. I knew about the historical events in their work, but what was new, and at the time reinforcing of previous doubts, was the manner in which language is used to manipulate viewpoints, and the way in which facts are highlighted while more important contextual ideas have been downplayed or eliminated or both. It is not the facts or their lack that is of paramount importance - as important as they are - it is the choice of the descriptors, the intellectual rationalizing used to create an emotional belief system providing the surreal basis for U.S. exceptionalism and indispensability, and the purported goodness of what it does.

Since then, much of my critique has been to analyze the juxtapositions of word against deed, the idea being, "What you do speaks so loud I can't hear what you are saying." Looking for contradictions and self contradictions in assessing actions and descriptors becomes a very strong analytical tool. Taken over a long time line and lo and behold, an aggressive imperial hubris and arrogance is exposed, covered in a veneer of platitudes and feel good homilies of little contextual value.

Chomsky is a linguist and much of his written work on the U.S. empire is valuable reading. It is perplexing that with 9 11 he seems to accept the official version, somehow a blind spot perhaps from not grasping the basics of the science of physics.

Questioning all sources, all material, is valuable, including work deriving from the exceptionalist hubris of the mainstream center. Another early influence along this line is Thomas Friedman of the New York Times. He is an engaging writer using an easygoing anecdotal style. He has travelled much of the world and talked to the high and mighty as well as the small and inconsequential. He makes his points often with easily understood analogies. He has a major fault - everything he sees and then writes about is through U.S. made rose coloured glasses with blinders on and really does not see the world in any other context than the beneficence and good will of the U.S. Fortunately he occasionally reveals mostly unintended deeper truths countering his own rose coloured view.

The one I love and use the most is his notion of the hidden fist of the military protecting corporate business overseas, "The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist—McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the builder of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps." [from *The Lexus and the Olive Tree - Understanding Globalization*. Thomas Friedman, Harper Collins, London, 1999] Truer words are seldom found

so clearly presented - it makes me wonder what the thought process was behind this, or was it a simple innocent observation?

Not so much a mentor but as a significant signpost along the way is Martin Luther King. Speaking mainly for the black people of the U.S. but also for the general inequalities and inhumanities of the war oriented capitalist society, he exposed himself to the racial hatred so raw in the late 1960s in the U.S. Speaking of human freedom and human rights he also highly criticized the capitalist system and the wars it raged against other peoples of the world, words that simply made him an enemy of the state. A lone gunman...perhaps...but the hidden layers of the state had significant reason to want him silenced. Unfortunately his legacy has been captured by the state, by the mainstream media, making a cultural icon out of him. White society has pre-empted his peace and non-violence attitudes while pushing aside the depth of his racial statements which are still valid today, and also pushing aside his message about capitalist society in general. For King, the overriding political-economic system played a large part in the unwritten code of racial bias and antagonism.

Many different media personnel reveal the different aspects, the different ramifications of Friedman's hidden fist, the blood, gore, and violence used to maintain the empire. Several of these writer's bylines are a 'do not miss' read for my information interests, consisting mainly of those who have the physical and emotional stamina to persist in the field, the war zones, and areas affected by any kind of imperial harassment. All of them are available for reading/viewing on many different alternate websites, many of which are crosslinked with each other.

Pepe Escobar, a Brazilian journalist, provides many insights into events in Eurasia and Latin America, travelling and following events many western reporters do not even glance at other than from the balcony of some safe hotel hundreds of kilometers distant. His reports always provide insights tending to run against the inbred preconceptions of most other

reporters, mainly concerning Russia, China, the New Silk Road, and the BRICS. His manner of writing displays a wide range of literary interests and knowledge supporting his presentations philosophically and factually.

Andre Vltchek is a multi-faceted writer, photographer, videographer, travelling through some of the more desperate regions of the world oppressed by capitalism and its greed for resources, money, and power at the expense of mostly indigenous people of different regions. His chronicles on Indonesia, the Philippines, and the South Sea Islands are pretty much unique, and he covers many hotspots on the Eurasian landmass.

Another early important read for my understanding of the Middle East was Robert Fisk's *The Great War for Civilization - The Conquest of the Middle East*. [Fourth Estate/HarperCollins, London, 2005] It is a large work of 1300 plus pages, highly descriptive, highly informative for not only the larger academic historical aspect, but also from the nitty-gritty and ugliness of actually being there and experiencing the death and destruction wrought upon the people of the region. His recent posts from Syria expose the lies of the mainstream media from where reporters seldom if ever enter from the safety of their hotel rooms in Tel Aviv or Beirut.

Another amazing insightful videographer, writer, and speaker is John Pilger, an Australian mainly based in Britain. He exposes mostly the nastiness of British imperial rule and its ongoing influence in today's imperial overreach. His voice, as with others, is a must listen/read in order to be well informed on global affairs, including the poorly noted racism in Australia concerning the Australian Aborigines.

Unfortunately William Blum has most recently become inactive in writing his periodical "Blum Report". The report provided on online analysis of current events from the perspective of a former CIA officer able to see the forest and the trees. He has written many books chronicling the history of U.S. interventions around the world and criticisms of U.S. policy

upholding those actions. His work *Killing Hope - U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* should be considered a bible for those interested in learning more about how widespread U.S. interventions are.[Common Courage Press, Monroe, Maine, 1995]

A more recent strong voice discussing U.S. imperialism is Andrew Bacevich, now described as an historian, but with twenty-three years of U.S. army experience under his belt, having achieved the rank of Colonel. His many books provide a strong contrast to the militarism supporting the many U.S. misadventures overseas, a strong voice against the imperial military drive. A good antidote for the hidden fist.

In my home country Canada the politicians generally follow U.S. foreign policy pretty much without question while sometimes remaining quietly on the sidelines but still acquiescent to U.S. actions. This includes the supposedly socialist New Democratic Party that like most 'labour' parties has succumbed to the rhetoric of empire and capitalism in its broader forms while still trying to maintain some domestic social ideas.

In opposition to that, Canada has produced a few strong voices in opposition to the mainstream flow of ideas. Maude Barlow provided strong opposition to the 1990s original Multilateral Agreement on Investment a "free" trade agreement that died after it was revealed - but unfortunately morphed into the many other trade agreements supposedly freeing the world. Her publishing record includes the global fight for clean water rights. Naomi Klein's *Shock Doctrine* and *No is NOT Enough* are valued critiques of our current situation. Andrew Nikiforuk's *Tar Sands* discusses the implications of Canada's bitumen extraction and *The Energy of Slaves* compares the wealth accumulated by slavery with the wealth accumulated due to our slavery to an oil economy.

A more vociferous political attack voice comes from Yves Engler. Engler has written several smaller works exposing Canada's complicity to U.S. foreign policy in all its aspects -

military, industrial, and racial actions. Combined, the works are an indictment of Canadian human rights violations around the world while supporting the U.S. in its adventurism and supporting its own homegrown adventurism - a lot of which has to do with government support for foreign mining operations and non-democratic governments.

Eva Bartlett is an independent Canadian journalist who has spent a lot of time in the Middle East, in particular Syria and Palestine recently. Her written and verbal lecture reports from the region are well informed from both personal experience and historical and contemporary knowledge of the region and expose the lies of the mainstream media supporting the common western narrative.

Again on the international scene are many others - too many - to go into much more detail. The ones described above are the most influential on my analysis of historical and current events (with a special exception noted below). There are some others of note. Abby Martin, now of Telesur, formerly of RT, presents a strong analysis of U.S. influence around the world. Chris Hedges is another standout for those who have been in the field (of fire) journalists, also well read and informed philosophically and historically. I like to mention Russell Bentley, a renegade Texan now working in (and fighting for) the Donbas republics, an interesting and outspoken opponent of corporatism and empire.

There are many websites available that host these authors and videographers and many more. As they tend to post and repost each other's material only a few need to be attended to, those few being simply a personal preference for style of presentation and broadness of perspective.

My first read each morning is Counterpunch as it collates many articles on a wide variety of topics from across the net into one neat easy to read and navigate format. Its editors, Patrick Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair, are still active in the field providing their own informed view from

time to time. The weekly column “Roaming Charges” provides interesting, amusing, and controversial insights into U.S. domestic politics. The writers supported by the website cover a wide range of topics and some I follow quite faithfully, knowing their writing style and general areas of interest.

Of central importance to all my work is Ramzy Baroud of Palestine Chronicle. He has been an eloquent and powerful voice for not only Palestinian rights but also for global human rights. Much of what has to do with the U.S. empire centers on its domestic and foreign affairs with Israel, the settler-colonial state attempting to ethnically cleanse its Palestinian population, serving as an outpost for Anglo/U.S. hegemony in the Middle East. Palestine Chronicle reports and records extensively on both the internal and external events having an impact on Palestine. While there are many strong correspondents providing much information, two who have strongly influenced my perceptions and informed discussions are Ilan Pappé and Jonathan Cook. Both are articulate, well informed, and able to present the reality of Palestine hidden behind the Israeli/western mainstream narrative.

More recently, Axis of Logic, a Canadian based website, has hosted my column “The View From Canada”. It contains most of my recent writing - commentaries, reviews, and periodical political letters. Mine is not the only view as noted above, and I need to thank Paul Harris for his editorial support in hosting my writing.

Note on format and references

During the writing of this material, I have not included a large number of footnotes or direct references to the actual factual material of what happened, who did what, when it happened, or how it was carried out. That information was drawn originally from my own train of

thought ramblings, a combination of a lifetime of exposure to mainstream media news and a more recent focussed search for information after 9 11. I then expanded and detailed these original lines of thought in a rewriting, that did require checks for various more mundane bits of information, mostly checking my memory on dates and spellings of names. All the basic information contained in this work is in my estimate widely publicly available, should the public care to read and view all the material that is currently available.

What is different, what is mine, are the various interpretations how these various events fit together, how they are all tied, in my mind, to the central idea of how consumer capitalism and human greed for power are supported by the U.S. imperial stance for global hegemony and full spectrum dominance, the latter which more recently includes dominance via trade wars, sanctions, and tariffs.

It is perhaps presumptuous of me, a conceit even, to say that if you wish to inform yourself more fully of this presentation, then go read the material I have read, watch the videos I have viewed, and then construct logical arguments to support how you interpret all that material.

I have read many hundreds of books from all perspectives. I have read tens of thousands of online articles from many perspectives. I have viewed hundreds of videos - documentaries, lectures, speeches - on many different areas of interest. The reference section of this book will list many of these books as they are the foundation for understanding the history of and current events relating to the storyline of U.S. imperial drive. There are far, far too many websites of note and far too many videos of note to list those viewed over the course of the past several years let alone since 9/11. All of the above noted personages provide strong sources of material on various websites, in printed and video formats.

In short, this is my interpretation of global current events and global history, informed through personal experience and lots of reading and viewing of other people's experiences - and hopefully a good dose of humanitarian common sense. Read on....

Financial collapse of the US\$

It may seem bizarre to consider that the an apocalyptic end of the world will come about due to a financial situation. Even during the Great Depression, obviously very important for many, did not produce anything near an apocalyptic ending - unless one considers World War II and all the subsequent wars since then. The war itself taken in the isolation of history had little if anything to do with finances as it was a war of good guys against bad guys. So go back farther to the end of the First World War which was essentially a war among all the then 'modern' empires of Europe, with the Ottoman empire tacked on to the side. At its conclusion, the poorly laid out Versailles peace resulted in a situation that did create financial havoc within Germany at the same time the British were losing their sterling silver global reserve status. The financial collapse of the German mark followed and aided the rise to power of Adolf Hitler.

Essentially wars are about finances: who gets to control the resources, who gets to control the transportation routes, who is able to print as much debt as they need as others need that debt to finance their foreign business affairs. The U.S.' position today is that of global financial hegemon, exerting its economic power in many ways not easily seen on the surface and certainly not made visible by the media supporting that hegemony. Part of the problem today is the impact of seven billion people harvesting ever more resources on a finite world. It is

this activity that underscores the previous discussion on global warming and nuclear winter but it contains another element of its own creation.

The entire global system is based on the belief in a fiat currency backed by a military with a slim support of the physical backing of oil, and the control of oil enforced by the military in a convenient circle of power dominance. Currency is both coins and paper, but the global system runs more truly in the electronic realm, a realm controlled by the bankster corporations. Money is essentially created out of thin air and not the result of human effort nor the process of providing goods and essential services: doctors, nurses, teachers, police, firefighters, maintenance et al.

The more the economy falls under computer algorithms, the more it can be manipulated by unseen persons acting in high speed interactions never seen on earlier less technical markets. It is manipulated in a manner that allows the economy to technically never fail even as more and more people become indebted servants to the few controlling the computers. Ronald Reagan reacting to market problems in 1989 created the "Working Group on Financial Markets" commonly known as the Plunge Protection Team. Its job - to prevent markets from varying downwards by any significant amount on any given day. Markets have always been manipulated by people with big money, but only recently has big money become so big that it is "too big to fail."

In order to maintain the illusion of a functioning economy statistics are manipulated and definitions and laws concerning economic factors are changed in order to maintain its supposed integrity. This pretty much describes the current situation of the U.S. petrodollar as the global reserve currency. As long as the world has to use the US\$ to buy oil, the U.S. economy, previously the world's leading economy, will continue its attempts at global hegemony through control of the oil/petrodollar matrix, a matrix involving the military, the corporations, the

government, and the establishments of the Washington consensus established after World War II.

The success of the global system rides in a major way on the ignorance of the majority believing the mythology of an independent market operating on a set of natural economic 'laws' that are scientific principles. It is more basic than that as most people use the system because to some degree it works, they are duped into thinking there is no alternative and, at least for the U.S., big government is one of the main problems. The bottom line is that our economic system is nothing but a belief that the money I hold today will in all probability be there tomorrow, and generally worth about the same for purchasing power.

The economy is a house of cards and economics is sleight of hand. Economics is not scientific as it uses invented math formulas based on an imagined market rather than on critical observation of data and analysis and applied scientific methodology. Astrology has more science in it as astrologers at least know the positions of the stars and planets, past, present, and future, based on long scientific observation and the construction of physical laws based on those observations - and not on an idealized crystal sphere. In short our economy is a fully fallible construct based on human whims and desires, controlled in a large part by the all encompassing soft propaganda of commercial advertising and biased news, promulgating our ongoing consumer oriented society and its incessant distractions from the underlying reality of existence.

As much as the computer operators and the algorithm writers can keep the economy afloat for a seemingly long time (at least since 2008, the last 'crash') several factors could bring it down in an even bigger event than before. As the previous crash had no real structural changes applied to it, the same or similar problems still exist. This time around they are also

significantly bigger, and the essential problem is the size of both domestic private and federal debts which have increased enormously since 2008.

Admittedly with the US\$ as the reserve currency it is in demand by the rest of the world in order to buy primarily oil but also most other purchases. Because countries need the US\$ to buy oil, the purchase of the US\$ and U.S. debt instruments continues to dominate global currency transactions. The U.S. Fed (the private bank with the deceptive sounding name that creates the money supply generally speaking) combined with the other financial aspects of Wall Street and big corporations control the computer interactions providing a fair bit of protection for supporting the system. As current currency and trade wars heat up, and as Trump and his financial advisors continue to throw sanctions around the world in order to make America great again, the chances for an overlap into military activity increases especially in oil rich areas of the Middle East, where Saudi Arabia is the keystone support for the US\$.

Several large problems are waiting to disturb the apparent calm of the financial markets. First is the size of the debt itself, protected at a near zero interest rate, or negative rates in some cases in Europe. The “barbarous relic” called gold is manipulated by massive paper markets, making it appear to be a poor investment, keeping it away from consumer interest and keeping it from exposing the precarious position of all global currencies. Then there are always the unexpected blowbacks to the sanctions and manipulations creating major obstacles to continued dominance of the petrodollar.

Currency control is a global phenomenon orchestrated by others as well as the U.S. but the post World War II Washington consensus banking matrix established at Bretton Woods is the main focal point. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Bank of International Settlements (BIS), and the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) are essentially a means for the cabal of banksters to navigate and

control all global transactions, and thus corporate trade and commerce, and ultimately governments. It is a powerful set of instruments used to establish a global economy without any democratic control or oversight, but it is coming up against blowback from those resisting the demands of the U.S. government.

Both China and Russia have established independent domestic systems accessible to other foreign interests beyond the control of the IMF, World Bank, the BIS, and SWIFT. As of this writing, due to the nuclear agreement abrogation by the U.S. vis a vis Iran and the other co-signees, European states involved are looking at their own system to bypass using the US\$.

It is not truly possible to isolate financial problems from the other problems of the world as they are all interconnected, but it is possible to examine financial issues through a lense looking at it from a different perspective. And right away, the overlap is obvious:

Not so hidden...

The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist -- McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the builder of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps. (Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, NY, 1999)

I keep returning to this Friedman quote as it says much more than originally intended. Two decades later however the "hidden hand" of the market and the "hidden fist" of the military for the U.S. are no longer hidden but plainly visible for all to see. They always were.

There are no free markets, only markets manipulated by corporate trade agreements, markets manipulated by a cabal of banksters, and markets manipulated by computer algorithms and high speed traders. All three are mainly concerned with creating wealth through a rentier economy that transfers wealth from the workers and labourers to the financial and corporate elite.

Certainly it is argued, "But what about the jobs these corporations create". Well and good, but generally while the wealth of the top ten per cent and much more so with the top one percent has skyrocketed, the workers and labourers, including those relatively better off in the middle class, have seen their income stagnate over the past several decades relative to the cost of living/inflation. With the lack of increased income, combined with the ever increasing cost of living, a more comfortable acceptable method of wealth transfer is occurring - debt.

It is true that large corporations create jobs. It is also true that most employment is small business and self-employment and that part-time and 'gig' employment is becoming more and more widespread. In order to maintain a particular lifestyle - one imaginatively created by a lifelong dosage of advertising and media distractions - most people support this wealth transfer back to the banksters through personal debt - mortgages, educational loans, personal consumption loans, credit card interest, the ubiquitous bank charges on all and any transactions. So yes, work is created, after all we must have 'growth', but mostly what is earned will be transferred back to the banker/corporate elite several times over. Few are "free" of these market forces. Debt also concerns the global situation more than most citizens are willing to consider, to which I will return after an interlude with the "hidden" military.

According to Friedman's not so cute aphorism, it is the hidden military which keeps all this economic activity free - a severe case of cognitive dissonance if there ever was one. The military is obvious in all its factors. It is an economic/political tool for domestic consumption -

both ideologically and for the money it spreads around to any electoral precinct where votes can be bought for a pinch of that wealth. It is a physical bludgeoning tool used by that same political/economic class to counter any challenge to the ultimate goal - global hegemony without any contenders for the purpose of harvesting the wealth of others for the central "one percenters".

Many excuses are offered for that bludgeoning. Christianity and the civilizing factor of the Anglo based empire was the first. That developed into rabid anti-communism, shown by the violent repression of unions and trades workers through the 1920s and 1930s in the early anti-Soviet era (Homestead and Pullman workers' strikes were violently repressed). That was followed by the even more rabid anti-communism of the McCarthy era, accompanying the solidifying of the invented missile gap between the Soviet Union and the U.S. during the heyday of the first Cold War. It then morphed into the more recent "global war on terror" wherein fanatic religious militants were created and used by the military to deter and contain Soviet actions in Afghanistan, with the unintended - perhaps - result that the militants expanded and created their own mode of operating resulting in the setup for 9/11. Most recently the prime target has been Russia, incorporating the use of terrorism (ISIS, al-Qaeda et al) as a significant factor in the extension of US military activity around the world, but most specifically in the Middle East and Africa.

The reason for the military's actions is to protect the wealth harvesting of the corporations (oligarchs) as they seek resources and wealth in other parts of the empire. This is true from the U.S. imperial acquisitions of the Spanish War, through the misadventures in China, its overt use in the so called banana republics (mainly because of corporations such as United Fruit of Boston - now Chiquita; Honduras, 1953), and on into countries from Iran (1953) to Vietnam. The CIA had large if not central roles to play in all these actions after WW II, but for now I subsume it

under the general topic of the "hidden fist". Currently, it is about oil, and it is not about oil. It is about power and money. Ultimately it is about the survival of the US\$ as the world's petrodollar reserve currency.

Both Britain and the U.S. recognized the ease and benefits of the newly discovered sources of ample oil, both in the U.S. and in the Middle East. For the latter, the Jewish settlement of Palestine became a British governmental cause, not because of discrimination (although there was plenty of that) but because it would serve as an "outpost" of western power in order to control the oil resources and transportation routes (especially the Suez Canal) in the region. Skipping some of the intervening history, the post WW II history shows the U.S. increasingly involving itself in the region, overthrowing governments, colluding with governments (Saudi Arabia), and supporting the Jewish state as its frontline military outpost.

The big concern with the US\$ arrived during the Vietnam war, when the old gold standard severely hindered the U.S.' ability to pay its war debts and other countries were starting to repatriate their gold. Nixon went off the gold standard in 1971. After the CIA/Saudi oil embargo enabled by the 1973 Yom Kippur war, the US persuaded Saudi Arabia of the benefits of selling oil only in US\$ - thus the birth of the petrodollar. As the Saudis recirculated the dollars for both military and consumer items, and made investments in the U.S., it also acquired a substantial holding of US debt, enough to be of concern to the US\$ itself - a factor that plays a strong role in the US essentially ignoring Saudi support for terror throughout the region and elsewhere in Asia and Africa - and in trying to not reveal any Saudi complicity of any type in 9/11.

It is the petrodollar as the global reserve currency that gives the US its ultimate power in manipulating the countries of the world. It is required for any country wishing to purchase oil, the prime energy base for the global economy. Along with the oil based dollar, the U.S. has up to now had a stranglehold on all financial transactions through its network of "Washington

consensus" establishments: The previously mentioned IMF, the BIS, the World Trade Organization (WTO), SWIFT et al. Any country not wanting to bow down to the US manner of doing business found itself either manipulated through the power of the US\$, either by direct bribery, or kickbacks, or currency manipulation, or CIA threats, or debt manipulation or other financial means. Then, if that failed, call in the marines, or more so lately, the war planes and missiles.

Attempts to get around the petrodollar have resulted in much of what is commonly considered the war on terror (as well as the old war on communism). While Iran's government was overthrown (Mossadegh, 1953) well before "terrorism" became the charge of the day, a counter revolution overthrew the US installed puppet of the Shah and his U.S. and Israeli trained Savak. The current Iranian government has long defied the restrictions and hegemony of the US\$, which for some countries is a minor deal, but Iran also has a lot of oil outside US control and is willing to barter, trade for gold, or sell for yuan.

Looking at other countries with oil who defied US imperial control a distinct pattern emerges. Iraq was sanctioned for years and then attacked, partly for Israel, partly for gold, and partly for oil, the latter two having the biggest impact on the US\$. Libya under Gaddafi was considering a pan-African gold based dollar and also had significant oil reserves. Syria has oil but more importantly it is a Russian/Iranian ally sitting on a major pipeline route for Arab oil transfers under the US\$ regime - and is still technically at war with Israel, the latter having illegally annexed the Golan Heights. Sudan has oil with a significant Chinese interest, enough to create a civil war, divide the nation and kick the Chinese out.

Enter Russia and China

Which more or less brings the topic up to date, with Russia being the big bogeyman, the great hindrance to US\$ hegemony/imperial hegemony. This is a result of Russia's oil, gold, a powerful military, a revived economy, a strengthening national spirit, and the rather significant alliance with China.

For a short period of time, after the U.S. 'won' the Cold War, after the dissolution of the USSR, Russia as a country was on the skids. With the advent of Boris Yeltsin, his drunken behaviour and erratic ruling style, the country slid even further towards outside control. Losing in the polls to the communist party before the 1996 elections, the U.S. stepped in with its manipulative political expertise and helped Yeltsin win the election. The setup for the continuation of the U.S. economic "shock doctrine" (it could be called the Jeffrey Sach's Harvard Doctrine) continued, and the Russian oligarchs became millionaires and billionaires, U.S. financeers walked away with more billions, and the economy and general health of the country declined significantly.

When Yeltsin quit his position (1999), a little known bureaucrat, Vladimir Putin (shortly before appointed Prime Minister), was placed into the presidency. Presumably this was done with the full knowledge and acceptance of Yeltsin's U.S. handlers, expecting to be able to control one man in the presidency, a position they had helped create in the first place. At first, Putin's rule was tentative and hampered by events in Chechnya, but as that problem was resolved and other events unfolded, Putin's skill and power increased significantly. With that success came a strong degree of support from the Russian people, and while some did not agree with Putin, they objected to U.S. interventions even more.

Russia wanted to become part of the European/western business sector, wanted to work cooperatively as military partners with the U.S./NATO in particular against terrorism. But the many events leading up to today's U.S. overt aggression against Russia had its basis in several factors. First, the U.S. military-industrial-financial complex needs an enemy in order to account for the huge sums of money required to keep its economy going and to keep the voters somewhat content. Secondly, the Russians brought their oligarchs more or less under control at the same time protesting against the eastward expansion of NATO, stopping U.S. initiated aggressive actions in Ossetia, and in regaining control of Crimea and protecting the Russian population of Donbas from more U.S. initiated activity in Ukraine.

But the final factor is simply Russia's desire to retain its independence from U.S. hegemony all the while that U.S. foreign policy turns on the principal of containing and dominating Russia. And once again it is about oil, gold, and the almighty US\$. Added to that is the Eurasian heartland and the rise of China as an economic power that increasingly added its voice in denouncing the domination of the US\$.

The rise of China to economic prominence is fully tied into U.S. financial and corporate interests. With many millennia of history, with the last couple of centuries suffering at the hands of western imperialism, China's rise to a revived culture and economic success is amazing. The U.S. accuses the Chinese of unfair trade practices, of making it difficult to do business inside China, of manipulating their currency, of stealing patented and copyrighted material, of being protectionist and nationalistic for some of its prime industries. Ironically, those practices to some degree or other are what brought all the previous European empires to success, in particular the British empire, of which the U.S. empire is the offspring.

But what of the U.S.' role? U.S. corporations willingly went along with whatever they had to in order to get into China's huge markets, both for the cheap labour, cheap resources, and

potential huge new sales markets. It played out well domestically as well. The cheap imports from China helped offset the lack of wage growth in the U.S. and China's buying of U.S. debt allowed the U.S. to continue financing its military. It was, sort of, a win-win, except that the real losers were U.S. citizens - and those under U.S. military attack.

As China grew more prosperous, the U.S. maintained its belligerence in the region, in particular supporting Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea militarily and economically as part of the Eurasian heartland encirclement, wanting again to control and dominate it all. The continual aggressive stance towards North Korea - technically still at war - aggravated tensions between the U.S. and China. Recognizing this, China modernized its military capabilities, demonstrated its technical skills in computer engineering and space research, bought thousand of tons of gold, started buying oil for yuan/rubles, set up an independent though not global gold exchange, and most recently established a bourse for trading oil futures using gold backed yuan. Several times they announced that the US\$ was too dominant and needed to be accompanied by other equally strong currencies or replaced.

Which circles the argument back to debt. China owns a lot of it, as do Japan and Saudi Arabia, and much smaller amounts with a whole host of other countries. The U.S. and its economic allies are seriously in debt trouble in spite of all the superficial braggadocio concerning the rising stock market indices and the official low unemployment rates. Because of its ability to simply print more and more money as the global fiat currency holder, the U.S. Federal Reserve (a private bank, not a government agency, although it is arguable as the two are highly entwined with each others actions) can simply print more money and more money yet to cover its needs. Many trillions of dollars were used to salvage the banks and certain corporations during the 2008-09 market downturn.

If the US\$ loses its global reserve status, the Fed can continue to print money to cover U.S. debt and losses - with the result being rampant inflation and the devaluation of the dollar. The loss of US\$ hegemony is the bottom line security concern of the U.S. That is why Iraq went down. That is why Libya went down. That is why Syria is being pushed down. That is why Iran is next. It is why Russia and China must be contained and controlled by the military-industrial-financial complex if the U.S. is to maintain its one percenters global hegemony on wealth creation.

China has used the debt creation paradigm of the U.S. banksters in order to bankroll much of their rapid economic rise - but backing that up are the thousands of tons of gold that China has bought and imported (possession is the only true ownership) as well as mining significant amounts of its own. Even should the debt implode on them, they also have the civic and manufacturing infrastructure already in place from which to begin a Eurasian revival.

Russia's gold wealth disappeared at the advent of the Yeltsin oligarch era, but the Russian renaissance includes a very low foreign debt load (about 15-17 percent of the GDP) as well as the accumulation of - officially - almost two thousand tons of gold, probably much more mined within Russian and not reported as purchases or official stores. Both Russia and China are in a much better economic position than the U.S., and part of that position is the increasing economic interactions between the two avoiding the use of the US\$.

Not so hidden...just ignored

U.S. foreign policy is not about democracy; it is not about freedom; it is not about human rights. It is about a dominant US\$ and global economic hegemony. But if it is not "hidden" as per Friedman, then why is it ignored?

The answer to that question is the immense control over the narrative by U.S. and western media. It is not just the evil guy Putin narrative but the whole matrix of control that envelops the people of the western nations in its carefully structured psychological cocoon of wilful ignorance. That matrix consists of government propaganda (those "government sources" cited by the mainstream media). It consists of the incessant preaching about morality and the divine nature of the U.S. exceptionalism and indispensability. It covers all forms of media: TV newsrooms; magazines (TIME, Life); newspapers (Washington Post, New York Times); social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube et al); digital diversions ranging from video games through to the dominance of U.S. superheros.

It is inculcated into the population from birth, via the media, the education system, the daily onslaught of advertising for a life increasingly dictated by the many divertissements available to take one's mind off global systemic problems. Even better, it sells pills for all that ails, provides loans for all one's desires, provides distracting entertainments of all kinds like sports and simulated war games (Paintball), gives facelifts, stomach staples, and steroidal muscles to all who desire them, and now virtual reality and AI robotic playmates have entered the stage of irreality.

With all that, the market is obvious, as is the military. The work of the media advertisers and propagandists is to enable society to simply ignore it all - except - except for the all important fear factor. The fear factor is used two ways: first as an item of domestic control and the so-called wars on drugs, poverty, and crime which become 'entertainment' items within the media news to keep the fear level engaged at all times; secondly, fear is the largest factor used to sustain the U.S. military establishment, the creation of a fearful 'other' in order that the military-industrial-financial complex can continue its wealth harvesting domestically and globally.

Fear, repressed, unacknowledged, superficial or deep, weakens the ability of people to think critically. It becomes a fight or flight response allowing the rulers to fight their little wars, while the flight response seeks out all the mass entertainment diversions available to it. The psychology of fear and mass distraction allows the wars/subversions to go on while the citizens remain wilfully ignorant and insouciant about what happens to others.

There is no winning an all out war with the U.S. military. The Russians and the Chinese seem well aware of this and are playing a very smart long game compared to the U.S.' cycle of quarterly reports and short quick financial gains. The Russians and Chinese are both working towards strengthening and defending the Asian continent by using both economic and military strategies.

Economically the big idea is China's "One belt, one road" or the "belt and road initiative" (BRI), essentially a revival in spirit and new technology of the many centuries previous Silk Roads that carried trade around and through the continent. This is accompanied by a variety of trade agreements between different countries excluding U.S. involvement. China has initiated an Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, has worked towards an effective BRICS bank, has established several trading bourses - all excluding the U.S.

Russia and China have engaged in large trade agreements, notably in oil and gas, priced in yuan/rubles, again outside of U.S. participation. While there is no formal military alliance between the two, cooperation in military terms - training, materials, technology - is strengthening. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, established in 2001, now covers the majority of the Eurasian landmass with a combination of members, dialogue partners, observers, and guest members (including the Russian based Commonwealth of Independent States and the UN). It has specifically denied the U.S. even a minimal role as observer. Its role,

originally set up for security (i.e. terrorist) concerns, also works within the fields of military, economic, and cultural interactions.

Neither Russia nor China would want to see the U.S. initiate a nuclear war (nor obviously a 'regular' war). Nor would they wish the U.S. to collapse catastrophically as that would probably lead to a major decline in their own economies. A soft landing allows the two countries to continue to strengthen their own economies, continue buying gold, slowly weaken the US\$ hold on international trade, and continue to build their defenses such that any U.S. military action would be, as it is now, suicide. While that may not satisfy the primitive instincts wanting a quick and explosive demise of the U.S., it is much better in the long term for the safety and security of the people and environment of the planet.

Wouldn't it be nice if the U.S. simply pulled its eight hundred plus military sites out of the one hundred and fifty or more countries where they are based? Fantasy, yes, countered also by the fantastical arguments about who then would keep the international order operating? Who would police the world? Who would support the "rule of law"? What about the neoliberal trading order? All hell will break loose! Maybe, maybe not, but the questions have no practical significance because it simply will not happen (unless the US\$ collapses - see above).

A return to present day reality indicates strongly that the arguments presented above about the relationship between the US\$, its economic and military power, and its manipulation of many sycophantic governments (including Canada, more later) are still in progress in the Middle East, always ongoing in Israel, moving through and destroying countries that object to U.S. hegemony, now focussed clearly on Syria (and thus Russia).

The most recent events concerning the Skripals in Britain, and the Douma liberation in Syria highlights all the duplicity, lies, rhetoric, hubris, arrogance, and ignorance of western beliefs and actions as presented and promulgated by various governments and most western

media. Britain attempts to carry on its long lost imperial mightiness, while its belligerent offspring, the U.S., follows the same values of deception, lies, and 'guilt before innocence' of its parent.

The Skripal affair has all the hallmarks of a false flag setup. No proof or evidence has surfaced that remotely implicates Russia in the affair, although as Russian citizens, the Skripal affair obviously involves Russia - essentially as the created 'evil' other. British propaganda attempted to blame Russia, and Putin, as the guilty party in the attack. The British story lacks coherence (How did the chemical get into Britain? How was it used? When was it used? How did the Skripals manage to walk around for so long? If it was so deadly, why are they now alive? And why are they not allowed to talk to the media on their own?) and is significantly short of evidence as to what the chemical used actually was. It is British hubris and arrogance at its best, almost Pythonesque if its intentions were not so globally deadly.

The Douma liberation from insurgent fanatics of ISIS and al-Qaeda and the supposed gas attack is the next in line false flag. Western media regurgitated the official U.S./British "sources" using social media videos as their main source. Anyone with a sense of critical analysis can see in the videos that the children involved are a bit perplexed, but not until they are doused in water and have some form of antihistamine inhalator stuffed up their noses do they actually look distressed.

One of the world's preeminent war correspondents, Robert Fisk, journeyed to Douma shortly after the U.S./British/French airstrikes in Syria. His report [Robert Fisk, "The Search for Truth in Douma". Counterpunch, 2018-04-17. www.counterpunch.org] clearly signals that yes, the videos are 'real', but only in the sense that they were staged by the so called White Helmets (another U.S. subsidised terror organization). The real culprit apparently was a massive amount of dust/smoke settling into the tunnels built underneath Douma by ISIS creating a hypoxic

environment for those sheltering there. The details of the article will not be repeated here, but given the status of Robert Fisk as a war correspondent who has witnessed some of the worst atrocities in the Middle East going back to the Iraq-Iran war, his account is the one to be believed, not the lies and evasions of the U.S. and Britain (and their French poodle).

The aftermath of the subsequent U.S. missile attack against three alleged chemical bases in Syria poses more questions than it answers. One set of questions concerns the ideological realm: the conversation/narratives around why it was done in the way it was done and through whom was it actually authorized and why Russia did not (as yet) respond. The second set of questions concerns the material aspects of the attack: why those three sites and not others, whose account of missiles fired/missiles killed is the reality - in other words questions about the effectiveness of the U.S. offense versus the effectiveness of the Syrian defense. The two cannot truly be separated as the lack of Russian military response has an impact on the discussion about the overall effectiveness/purposes/behind the scenes action of the whole operation.

That discussion will not take place here, but I would summarize from all that I have read that Trump was allowed to get his 'hit' against carefully chosen former or non-chemical sites (e.g. else why no concerns about spreading chemical weapons residues caused by the attack). Further the attacks stayed well away from Russian and Iranian assets, indicating perhaps a combination of two things: first, the U.S. is well aware of Russia's defensive ability to strike back hard at the same time they have "had enough" of U.S. intransigence; secondly, just maybe, an iota of concern rose in the U.S. defense department that they were not quite yet willing to start WW III.

Another aspect is that it creates a sensation in the media allowing the Skripal affair to fade into oblivion as it has pretty much been thoroughly discredited as a false flag, regardless of

Boris 'Donald' Johnson continuing to rant on against Russia. It also precludes an investigation by the OCPW, making that investigation an after the fact bit of research that can also be lost in the 'fog' of war, or in this case the fog created by the suppliant compliant mainstream media.

Why Syria? Short answer: for all the above reasons. The Syrian people have the misfortune of being in the geopolitical hotspot between Russia and the U.S., as well as being the most proximate sore spot against Israel's ambitions for its own regional hegemony. Both are highly relevant to each other.

Syria is geographically located on what could be a major pipeline route for U.S. oriented hegemony oil from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and other gulf states. Conversely, it could also be a major route for Iranian and Iraqi oil as Russian partners.

Syria is a long time client ally of Russia and contains - now - two significant Russian military bases, well protected with the latest Russian field technology.

Syria is well located to become a focal transit point for the Chinese BRI, a node leading to and from the Mediterranean and thus Europe.

Turkey and Russia have a cantankerous relationship, with Turkey being a NATO partner, but at the moment appears to be working remarkably well with Russia's interests, while Russia has allowed some degree of freedom for Turkey to attack the Syrian Kurds, temporarily befriended by the U.S. If Turkey should turn solidly NATO again (if it does, probably through a coup d'état) Syria becomes even more important - and dangerous - for Russia, but it also becomes more important and dangerous for the U.S./NATO.

Iran is partnered with Syria, Israel's currently avowed enemy at large. Iran has supported Assad in Syria, demonstrating a strong ability to fight asymmetrically and within the confines of urban warfare. Hezbollah, Iran's Lebanese partner, fights with the Syrian government, showing significant power against the terrorists along the Lebanon-Syria border.

Israel is the real cancer of the Middle East, but as the tumour in the centre of all the action it is being generally ignored or supplicated while the symptoms, the mainstream action, occurs in Syria. In the meantime Israel continues its settlements, its military occupation of green line Palestine (truly all of Palestine), its murderous policy against peaceful protesters in Gaza ("every bullet is accounted for"), and its belligerent rhetoric against Iran at the same time cozying up more publicly with its long time ally Saudi Arabia. The Saudis could care less about the Palestinian plight - other than for superficial optics - as long as the US\$ continues to guard their lazy ignorant theocracy with a stranglehold on the region while attempting to prove their manliness with its U.S./Israel supported war in Yemen.

Israel is quite happy to see the fanatic religious elements within the Middle East battle it out with each other, and are known to have assisted ISIS and al-Qaeda in their fight in Syria. They have established an extension of their illegally annexed Golan Heights territory, Attempting to keep a small part of Syria under their military control. This is held in abeyance to some degree by Russian military posts placed along the de facto Syria/Israel border in the Golan.

Another way of answering why Syria is to say because of Israel. Israel is the geopolitical keystone holding the U.S. on attack mode for the region. It is the tail that wags the U.S. dog. It is one of the main reasons for the U.S. uncaringly destroys government after government in the region, leaving behind only chaos and more militant fanatics, all to provide Israel with their 'other', their set of terrorists to campaign against and control their weak but carefully constructed narrative about being the victim of all that terror. As the most powerful military in the area, using the military preemptively against all its neighbours, and using the military to control the Palestinian population (now larger than the Jewish population if Gaza is included), the Israeli narrative is the glossy cover that receives the support of western mainstream media and the greater part of western governments.

All along the U.S. domestic scene remains relatively insouciant, ignorant, not at all war weary. The military-industrial-financial complex makes huge profits from this series of wars - really just one amoeba like war, ooching from territory to territory - and the politicians, part and parcel of it all, retain their share of the profits.

As should be obvious debt cannot be segregated from other geopolitical arguments let alone domestic problems. Along with the zero interest effects, the "leverage" factor increases significantly the debt load many times over. I am no economist and do not understand all that economists attempt to say, but at the same time economists create their own 'fog of war' their own lexicon based on invented theories and formulas created out of thin air of a presumed model market that does not exist in reality.

Debt, zero interest, and gold are highly related. After the US went off the gold standard, wages essentially flatlined while inflation raised the apparent economic prosperity. House prices soared, being one of the few means for citizens to move 'up' economically in the world with interventions of interest rate manipulations creating at one moment a real estate crisis (and a general debt crisis) when rates rose too much (as in the early 1980s), then later reversed themselves as a necessary panacea to allow business to stay alive and consumers still being able to afford more expensive housing units. With wages stagnating rising house prices - helped greatly by the banks and mortgage lenders - created the wealth affect needed to keep the consumer drive alive.

Parallel to the real estate debt accumulation, the use of credit cards soared, and while they retain exorbitant interest rates, have dominated global consumerism for long while. Psychologically credit cards are easier to use than 'real' money and they help enormously in creating new money out of thin air. The same applies to mortgages as the hundreds of thousands dollar costs are not borrowed money owned by the bank, but money made out of thin

air, the click of a keyboard and the stroke of a pen. Mortgages in comparison require low interest rates in order to keep housing within the reach of buyers. As prices rise and wages do not, the main financial means of sustaining the market, all those interest profits, and the image of a prosperous economy, is low interest rates.

Interest rates are not truly zero as any debt laden consumer knows, as that applies only to the financial institutions for interbank borrowing and corporate largesse. They are however tiny, marginal, and are currently stuck there simply because debt of all kinds is so large, and leveraged debt is exponentially larger, that the system could not survive a sudden significant rise in interest rates. A large interest rise would affect interbank lending and the belief that the other guy, the other bank, could not make payment. It would make the large leveraged debt of all kinds of corporations unlikely to be payable. For the general public, mortgage and credit card expenses would soar, placing many, possibly the majority, into bankruptcy. The only cover would be a massive increase in the dollar supply, for 'helicopter' money to be passed on to the banks from the Federal Reserve (remember, it too is a bank).

One of the results would be a large deflation of prices as debt requirements put a hold on most consumer demand as people retained what finances they could to pay off previously acquired debt, or simply went broke, unable to make further purchases. As more money is pumped artificially into the economy (is it done any other way?) to support the too big to fail banks and faltering corporations in another bout of quantitative easing (QE 4), massive inflation would greatly decrease the purchasing power of the dollar. Because so many debts are interlinked thanks to deregulated markets and the creation of obtuse and opaque financial obligations, the demise of one or the other of these collateralized debt obligations with their trillions of dollars of leveraged value could crash the whole system as one failure chain-reacted out to create many others - the domino theory in many directions - the fall of the house of cards.

Increasing geopolitical tensions including tensions concerning trade tariffs and currency manipulations inflame the insecurity of the global financial system. Emerging markets offer large financial gains when things are going well, especially in the financialized markets of housing and stocks. When events become more hostile, as they are now between the U.S. and anyone it deems to be against U.S. interests at the same time that the Fed raises interest rates, emerging markets (submerging markets?) suffer first as money is withdrawn to less threatened safer havens with better returns on investment. Two of those havens are the US\$ because it is the global reserve currency and U.S. stocks as they appear to be on an endless run towards prosperity (thanks in large part to executive buy backs for pension benefits). Neither of those have an effect on the enormous debt loads carried by banks, corporations, and regular citizens.

So while things can look all rosy and good, the GDP is growing steadily (thanks to the military economy and the FIRE economy), unemployment is way down (thanks to the “seasonal adjustments”, birth-death model, and the fact that the percent of people actively employed has decreased i.e. many workers have simply dropped out of sight), wages are rising (without taking into account inflation), and inflation is under control (thanks to manipulated price adjustments on replacement values), the underlying economy is still running on high debt and low interest rates. (see John Williams: shadowstats.com). In sum, our economy is a charade that we all willingly or ignorantly participate in because at the moment there is no alternative and its debt momentum keeps it stumbling farther down the road. But what about that “barbarous relic” - gold - that for thousands of years has served as humanities means of wealth preservation and physical currency and that is now being bought in large quantities by Russia and China at below production prices?

Barbarous relics

There are two active paradigms with gold in our current financial sectors. One is the classical physical gold market, the other is the paper or certificate market, with the latter at the moment controlling the price of the former. The market is made opaque and seemingly a bad bet for western purchasers by government, corporate, and media complicity ignoring the physical market and manipulating the paper market. As with oil, the underlying reason is once again geopolitical protection of the US\$ for hegemony and control. In short, if gold were left to a free physical market only, it would be a whole lot more valuable than its paper price and the dollar - well, it could still carry the same value against other currencies providing everyone else remained off the gold standard and other currency and computer manipulations kept the dollar afloat.

Once the dollar was removed from the gold standard, gold's value increased in large increments, especially after the 2008 crash. Along the way it had its setbacks as when the UK, the City, sold most of its gold at then rock bottom prices. It peaked at just over \$1900 (US) in 2011, and was then pushed down to where it has bounced around between \$1100 and \$1250 for the past few years, still well above the official price in the U.S. of \$42.00 per ounce.

In reality it is not so much the price of gold that changes as the value of the dollar - essentially the dollar is becoming weaker and weaker in relationship to the value of gold. Another way to look at it is if the price of gold rises significantly that signals that the dollar is losing its value, and that means controlling the price of gold becomes very important. The price of gold is controlled on the paper market - not too high to allow people to lose faith in the dollar, and not so low that it becomes a super bargain in comparison to the cost of mining it (generally

around \$1200). As previously discussed, don't forget the contributions of the military/CIA/NSA in maintaining the value of the US\$ as well.

It is not supply and demand that keep gold floating around the \$1200 level but paper certificates (and even more realistically some electrons stored somewhere on someone's computer) that claims the bearer owns a certain amount of gold...somewhere, sort of....and they do own it if they are first in line to redeem their certificates and the real gold is actually present for it to be redeemed.

When someone buys an ounce of gold, or a kilo, or a "contract" - a specific trading device readily used to manipulate markets - they receive a "paper" receipt for it, or at least its electronic equivalent. The COMEX, the paper exchange marketplace does not have to actually set aside any real gold or move it to some special location, although, also in theory, they do have the gold available. In theory as well, the purchaser owns an ounce of gold, but so do about 500 other people as the exchange assumes that not everyone will want to redeem the certificates on any given date and therefore sells more paper gold than they actually carry in physical. It is a bookie system for betting on gold, a system that is rigged in order to keep the price down.

If demand raises the price too much, someone, somewhere - a financial computer geek working for the COMEX, or the U.S. government, or the Fed, or maybe even the Chinese or Russian governments (not likely, see below) - will 'sell' a huge amount of gold (sometimes exceeding a half year of mine supply), paper gold, causing a very quick drop in value. When so much is dumped at one time there is a vacuum of buyers and the price drops until - usually - the sell contract is withdrawn.

The only reason for dumping so much at once is not to take as much profit as possible but to push the price down. Once the sell order is withdrawn without takers for that volume - as

intended - the price more or less stabilizes within the acceptable value range once again. No gold is touched, none moves, none is ever seen.

Otherwise if someone wants to realize their metal, standing for delivery, they may not actually be able to receive it. If the gold is not available (as many believe) or is not going to be handed over due to difficulty in procuring it by the distributor, the exchange has its systems in place wherein they pay out an equivalent cash value. This occurs in part because the contract for delivery contains an 'escape' clause essentially saying the contract can be paid out in cash. That in itself could be a problem as the cash flow is basically a flowing Ponzi scheme.

The other position for gold trading is many smaller trades taking advantage of the relatively small daily movements of the artificial gold price. The London Bullion Market Association (LBMA) illustrates the 'fakeness' of the gold market when analyzed for the quantity of gold traded, bought and sold, daily, monthly, and annually. For all the gold held by the LBMA, about 7684 tons (June 2018) is available for trading, but each month the LBMA trades about 68 percent of all gold ever mined, and annually trades about eleven times more gold than ever mined (estimated to be about 190,000 tons). It is a "fractional reserve banking system...trading huge quantities of 'gold' that does not exist...where activity is just leveraged speculation...and where positions are cash settled." [Ronan Manly, "LBMA Clearing and Vaulting data reveal the absurdity of the London 'Gold' Market."

www.bullionstar.com/blogs/ronan-manly/. 2018-10-01]

The only way to ensure that one owns gold is to either have it physically in personal possession or to have it secured - allocated - through a private investment dealer who only carries physical gold and physically sets aside and labels it as yours. Should the market run out of leveraged gold (and if it actually owns it and is not just 'leasing' it) or out of cash funds, the whole scheme could collapse. The conditional is used here as there are external forces wanting

to keep it operating as it is in order to control the physical price. Why and how become the most interesting questions resulting from this.

The U.S. government, the Washington consensus Group of organizations, do not want the price of physical gold to represent market demands as the heavily affects the value of the dollar. If many investor turned to physical gold it would reveal the loss of faith in the value, the future prospects of value, for the US\$. Ever since leaving the gold standard in order to free itself from its constraints (there is only so much gold) debt and debt instruments have been the means to finance all the wars and control the global currency exchange rates. Without being pegged to a gold standard, the U.S. can issue more and more debt - what we call money - without being hampered by its relationship to anything finite.

It also allows greater manipulation of foreign exchange rates, the manipulation of other currencies, and more control for the enforcement of sanctions and boycotts. If the paper market collapses, the value of the US\$ will drop dramatically as people wishing to preserve their wealth - rather than short term speculation on the paper market - will start buying the real stuff, physical gold. In financial terms the opposite could happen - if inflation hits the hyper level, gold's value in a sense drops to zero as the dollar value simply runs off the charts and only a fool and his gold would then be parted.

Hidden, not so well, are the geopolitical concerns with physical gold. If it is a "barbarous relic" why then do other countries, mostly Asian, buy up such large quantities of it? China officially has just under two thousand tons; Russia officially has about the same. China unofficially is calculated to have bought thousands more tons on the visible markets (estimates vary up to 30 000 tons) and both countries have a strong gold mining sector, and probably more unofficial imports. The U.S. officially claims to have just over eight thousand tons but that has not been audited since the 1950s and its existence is doubted by a significant few. Even if it is

there it is calculated that in order to actually protect the dollar - the debt - it would have to be at least eighty times more valuable. Having done the math, Bill Holter calculated that gold would have to be valued at \$80,000 per ounce in order to cover the current debt of \$21 trillion [Bill Holter/SGTReport. www.jsmineset.com. 2018-08-19].

China and Russia both seek a multipolar world (as is happening); both wish to see the dollar weaken for business and trade concerns but also for sovereign independence away from the depredations of the current empirical system. Gold is one means to protect their economies for US\$ threats and manipulations. China has already introduced a gold yuan backed oil bourse. Russia has sold virtually all of its U.S. debt. Short of the U.S. going to war, the decline of imperial hegemony is underway as more and more countries work with Russian and China to create an alternate independent financial system.

Due to the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the UK., France, and Germany are developing a "special purpose vehicle" (SPV) in order to continue dealing financially with Iran away from proposed future U.S. sanctions against nations and companies still trading with Iran. Russia and China would not be greatly affected by such sanctions, as they would ignore them and continue trade pretty much as usual outside the US\$, but the SPV would allow European companies to trade with Iran outside the influence of the US\$ controlled SWIFT system. The SPV would also be available for others interested in trading outside the current system - speculation, but it could well be tied into Russian and Chinese already independent internal systems for banking transactions. As of this writing, the SPV is still only a consideration and has not been set up, signalling a reluctance to try and evade U.S. abilities to control corporations and governments through their financial controls.

Should all that come to pass - some form of gold supported financial device and systems independent of SWIFT - it will happen at the expense of the US\$, and hopefully for some, the collapse of the US\$.

Are Russia and China the ones meddling in the paper exchange? Not likely simply because they do not need to as either U.S. agencies or U.S. corporations or even private individuals have an obvious interest in maintaining the US\$'s strength versus gold. It is a balancing act between demand for real gold, the short term investments/manipulations of the paper market, and the requirements of the state institutions, the latter who need to support the facade of dollar control. China and Russia can sit back and watch it play out as they continue to buy gold at near or below production costs.

Blowbacks

Without a dominant dollar the U.S. empire will crumble. Its value to bribe and corrupt will be gone. It could not serve as foreign 'aid' money which provides kickbacks to local politicians: domestic, as they procure the loans for local manufacturers and financial institutions who are the ultimate recipients of the aid; foreign, as corruption and bribery are an accepted way of doing business. The dollar would have no power over foreign exchanges and foreign markets as demand for its now vanished security would similarly vanish. Military alliances may not collapse while the preponderance of physical power resides with the remnants of the military, but as infrastructure fails, wages and contracts are paid only in useless inflated dollars, and domestic procurement falters as military business cannot guard against inflationary pressures and the inability to purchase necessary raw materials (especially rare earths) then the military becomes more and more non-functional. International trade would rearrange itself around a

new global currency or basket of currencies some backed by, others pegged to, the enduring value of gold. Already beset by domestic debt pressures, the U.S. domestic economy would be shambles, except maybe for a lucky few possessing gold - providing the government does not make it illegal to hold and confiscate it as they did in the 1930s.

U.S. attempts to control US\$ dominance and thus imperial hegemony have already created much blowback. Other countries buying lots of gold, as above, is one such action used to protect their domestic economies, the domestic currency, and help safeguard against possible 'eviction' from the Washington consensus system. Other countries, although constrained somewhat by the necessity of obtaining US\$ for trade, can alter their currency exchange value in order to enhance their trade balance and keep domestic industries and services alive. Another form of financial resistance are tariffs and taxes protecting domestic business - exactly what the U.S. itself is doing, causing as much domestic harm as well as foreign harm and lots of foreign ill will. No country in history has grown wealthy without protecting its own business from outside predation, but if that business infrastructure has already moved offshore, tariffs do little but raise prices for the domestic consumer.

A slower by probably more serious blowback are the agreements between pairs or groups of partners to use their own currencies to finance trade. While the U.S. maintains, so far, its global dominance, bilateral and multilateral agreements avoiding use of the US\$ are increasingly significant especially between China and Russia and countries on their side of the emerging multipolar world. With the recent U.S. abrogation of the Iran nuclear treaty, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) France, Germany, and the U.K. are looking at setting up a "special purpose vehicle" to avoid the US\$ and U.S. sanctions against traders. Germany is also proceeding with the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia against U.S. wishes and interests. If, an unlikely if, Saudi Arabia followed suit away from the US\$, perhaps in trade with

China, that in itself would probably destroy the US\$ dominance not to mention that it would destroy Saudi Arabia as well (as per Libya, Iraq, Syria et al). No currency at the moment is backed by gold (save the Chinese oil bourse with gold backed yuan) but its use in international trade can help stabilize a currency simply by having it as a physical store of wealth that cannot be manipulated by the electronic transfer systems or government decree.

For countries such as China and Russia who are able to soften the effects of U.S.belligerence due to their own military strength (a realized form of blowback), growth and innovation in all economic sectors (another form of blowback from applied sanctions and new alliances) - manufacturing and agriculture in particular - can be created. With sanctions place on Russia, with U.S. trade tariffs and military belligerence towards China (even though the two comprise an economic unit) the natural consequence is to push Russia and China closer in all areas of foreign and domestic operations, from fighter jets to high speed rail links, pipelines, and a widening range of interactions with other Eurasian countries.

The ultimate blowback from U.S. efforts to make itself great again arise from China, which owns a large amount of U.S. debt (as before, in our economic system, debt truly is money). Along with that many U.S.corporations have established large manufacturing units in China in order to take advantage of cheap labour, lax labour law enforcement , and the proximity to global trade routes. In addition China has ready access to most natural resources including the highly valued rare earths used in the electronics industry, all facets of it. Energy from oil/gas is its largest resource shortfall, but recent deals with Russia, the new sanctions imposed on Iran which China will ignore, and the recently settled Caspian Sea agreement will allow China a good base for energy security. With the U.S. applying tariffs and possibly sanctions against it, China could absorb the economic problems and in return inflict serious damage to the U.S. economy. It is highly doubtful that the U.S. could quickly kickstart their

domestic manufacturing base as much of it is in China and other Southeast Asian countries.

With all that is spent on the military, U.S. infrastructure is in no shape to reconstruct a high tech on-demand industrial production base now residing overseas in China.

Domestic blowbacks from imperial hegemony and 'making America great again' are also significant. There are the obvious physical acts of blowback such as the 9/11 destruction of the World Trade Center towers (even in its incarnation as a false flag attack allowed/perpetrated by whomever - the official story is unbelievable, a separate topic altogether). As for terrorists, one is more likely to be killed by lightning than a terrorist, and the vast majority of U.S. mass murder incidents are from domestic sources, usually angry white guys, part of the culture of violence pervading the U.S. (another separate but not unrelated topic). Domestically the U.S. implemented all sorts of laws, rules, and regulations undermining the rights and privacy of its own citizens. The Homeland Security Act (conveniently ready to go right after 9/11) is the modern foundation for this, preceded by the FBI, CIA, and other government organizations and other laws used perhaps for "national security" but also used to control and manipulate domestic situations. Since then the security state has grown enormously as electronic gadgets are generally widely diffused throughout all levels of society and can be used for multiple assignments for different types of information including who your friends or contacts are, what your movements are, your thoughts, interests, and on.

New methods of crowd control are now in play, many of the already field tested in the Palestinian territories by the Israeli IDF/Mossad/ Shin Bet. As the U.S. is already a highly militarized society, it is not a surprise that more aggressive and more damaging forms of control are made available to local and private enforcement agencies. All forms of domestic protest from environmental issues, through race and gender issues, on to corporate and military protests can all be classified as "terrorist" incidents, domestic terror, should the authorities

decide to make it so. Stemming from the terrorism fear are all the issues concerning illegal immigration - especially from Latin America - but also largely concerned with Arab/Muslim supposed evil habits and intentions. Again this feeds back into the larger problems of international geopolitical concerns.

All these actions move forwards as all the actors involved allow them to. The majority of the media is corporate controlled, corporations that support the mainstream politicians - and vice versa - and are part and parcel of the military-industrial-financial complex. The recognition of this controlling hegemonic mindset is increasingly strengthened by ever larger number of countries unwilling to submit to U.S. dictates. Based on Russia's resurgent economy, nationalism, and a newly demonstrated military capability; and accompanied by China's post-Mao renaissance (with credit to Mao for kicking out western economic and military power) that in a sense has capture the U.S. corporations for its own rapid rise, with a large skilled population: the new multipolar order promises some relief, and maybe some future abandonment of U.S. imperial power.

Climate change

The Black Tusk is an old volcanic throat, the plug, or core, with much of the surrounding cinder cone stripped away during the last glacial age and subsequent erosion. It is visible from many kilometers distance, and thus serves as a magnificent viewpoint for its location in B.C.'s Garibaldi Provincial Park. Standing at 2,319 meters, it offers a panorama of the volcanic and glaciated backcountry of the Coast Mountain Range, standing some 590 meters above the surrounding alpine meadow. At the summit a sheer drop on three sides falls away to a glaciated rubble field many meters - and many seconds - below.

The view is astounding, better in my opinion than those offered in the Canadian Rockies, with massive peaks covered in glaciers spreading to the south and east, with wonderful turquoise blue of Garibaldi Lake's glacial waters rippled with wind and sun. In July, 1966 I stood at the summit on a fantastically clear coastal day, fully in awe of the spectacle - and with camera in hand, an old Yashica twin lens reflex model. With only 12 shots per roll of film I took only a few photos, with one looking southeast towards Gentic Peak, Gentic Ridge, and the Helm Glacier. After lunch we climbed down and crossed the cinder flats to the snout of the glacier and explored a short way underneath where a creek carved an ice cave. Cold still air, the constant drip of ice melt, and the gurgle of the creek echoed in the hollow of ice.

Almost forty years later, in the summer of 2005 I camped at Garibaldi Lake and hiked to the snout of the Helm Glacier...only now the snout had receded about two kilometers from where I had originally stood, and the remaining glacier was about half as thick as when I first visited. With camera in hand, now using a new state of the art Nikon digital, I took many more photos, and was able to compare the before and after images. Still wild, still beautiful, still impressive - but I had scrambled over a jumble of large cinder blocks along the original bed of the glacier in order to touch the same glacial ice.

Another park, another scenario. Manning Park sits along the U.S.-Canada border and is the northern extension of the Cascade Mountain Range. From the summit of Snow Camp Mountain another panorama spreads to the south of the glacier encrusted snow clad mountains just across the border in the U.S.' Northern Cascades. This story is not of glaciers, but of the deep green forests through which the trails climb. In the summer of 1971 I spent a night on Snow Camp's summit, and the next night by the side of Lightning Lake, all the while enjoying the dark emerald and jade greens of the forest. Being just on the interior side of the Cascades, the forest was a mix of pine and fir with many variations in densities according to the aspect of the mountain slopes. It is the transition zone between the coastal and the interior continental climate so that on one trail the experience ranges from denser cedar-fir-hemlock forest to the dry pine forest fully on the interior dry side. It is still my favorite early season hiking park and up until the late 1990s it never seemed to change much, never overrun with tourists and development as in some more popular parks.

But then it changed, and rather quickly. In a short time line the forests went from the myriad greens to a mottled red-brown followed by a silver gray-brown of standing dead trees. The pine bark beetle had very quickly blown its way through the pine trees, in some spots leaving the forest cleared of all but a few smaller fir trees and some overlooked baby pines. The

beetle larvae were only killed by longer winters with temperatures well below the freezing point, an occurrence that has been less and less common over the last decades. Over the span of a few years the beetle spread like wildfire through the interior pine forests and later penetrated the Rocky Mountains, travelling with the wind through passes such as the Yellowhead and Kicking Horse. The forests became fuel for many summers of longer and larger fire events, and those areas salvage logged but not replanted are still, many years later, presenting a rather barren landscape compared to the once sea of green trees.

There has been other less readily documented signs of global climate change within my explorations of the local wilderness - including seashore wilderness - along with overall environmental degradation, but these are two that I have witnessed in my lifetime and have the photographic evidence to back it up. Yes, glaciers melt, and yes, forests change, but the consensus is the rate of change tied in with other scientific observation of other weather phenomenon supporting these experiences and their strong indications that climate change is real, with effects that happen quickly, both in geological terms for the glaciers, and biological terms for the forests.

Other environmental changes are occurring: loss of species, chemical pollutants in the thousands, loss of bees, huge insect and animal species declines, over harvesting of the oceans, breaks in the ozone layer, acidification of the oceans. The major element of concern has concentrated on global climate change - everyone talks about the weather - as the evidence for its reality and probable disastrous consequences has caught the attention of the people and the mainstream media. The ramifications of major global climate change could be enormous.

Homo sapiens is a driving force in the next round of planetary extinctions. In all of global history - not history as written by humans, but history as written by the forces of nature onto the rocks of the earth - in all of that history scientists have read not just of one or two extinctions

but of many, from many causes. Global cooling created a “snowball” earth, assisted by the particular geography of the era, when the entire planet froze and extinguished most of the then current life forms. Atmospheric changes that we cannot comprehend today such as an overabundance of hydrogen sulfide has caused another extinction. Better known examples of extinctions include large magma flows, one possibility is the Siberian Traps of northern Russia, another being the Deccan Traps of India. The latter may have resulted from the most widely known incidence of mass extinction, the universally accepted knowledge of a large meteor strike that ended the era of the dinosaurs and created conditions for the survival and adaptations of mammals, including us, homo sapiens.

Today the most publicized possibility of future extinction comes under the rubric of global warming, specifically the global warming greenhouse effect of rapidly rising carbon dioxide concentrations. Generally accepted by the vast majority of scientists, except for a few bought out by large corporations, or who are “creation” or “intelligent design” pseudo-scientists, anthropogenic warming is happening now and is reaching the stage where positive feedbacks, beyond human control, are beginning their massive contributions. The release of Arctic methane from its perma-frozen state, and the loss of reflective albedo as the Arctic ice diminishes more and more each year may be tipping points, both occurring for the most part out of sight of most individuals, two serious feedbacks now in process.

Humans, living on such small scales as we do temporally and spatially, frequently do not recognize the big picture, seeing only more local severe weather as an aberration rather than - if one could see it all - a trend towards more highly energetic storm systems, interspersed with systems of drought stabilities with increasingly record temperatures. It is an illusory series of events, at the limits of our perceptions, and seemingly well beyond the knowledge of most of us to understand its full ramifications.

Certainly it is recognized that the planet has been much warmer than its current state, or even its forecast state of a now conservative estimate of an average global increase of +2 degrees celsius. At its origin and for ages after, the earth was nothing more than a molten ball of magma, constantly stirred by gravity and meteor showers unimaginable in today's skies. After it cooled, and after life formed, and as the chemical components of the atmosphere changed in varying degrees of toxicity, and the continental masses formed and moved - all that while global temperatures changed from the snowball end to the tropical arctic end.

Life flourished, died out, flourished again, died out again - and on - but even in moments of rapid change - and it is not hard to think of a large meteor strike inducing global change within days if not hours - rapid by the geological record, life in its various forms adapted to the new conditions. Some of the life survived, small remnants moving into vacated niches, creating new emergent forms better suited to the newer climate.

The difference now is that we, homo sapiens, are the main cause of the meteorological/geological rapid rise in temperature. Our awareness of it, while it has created a few inducements to attempt changing away from our CO2 carbon creating fossil fuel diet, appears to be over-ridden by our short term mentality, our wilful ignorance or neglect, our imagined reliance on technological solutions, and our genetically primed brain seeking the ultimate in personal comfort, shelter, and - unfortunately - power. Homo sapien is the strange construct of natural genetic recreation combined with a conscious working intelligence that at times appears to have overcome the limits of our genes, creating the conditions for our own self destruction. On one level we seem to have outsmarted nature; on the natural level, nature will always reclaim its space.

The arrogance of homo sapiens in considering themselves a higher form of evolution leads to a condition of mental separation from the reality of natural forces. Many life forms have

outlived our species, both as recorded in the rocky historical record, and as witnessed by many current living species that have survived longer than our several hundred thousand years history as “sapien” and our several million year history as “homo”. Humans are adaptable, but other life forms exist in conditions totally intolerable to all mammalian species: undersea plants/animals living off the mineral rich undersea vents of the oceanic rift zones; bacteria living in hot thermal zones of volcanic regions, possible and probable survivors of earth’s most ancient biotic forms; creatures living in sulfuric acid water in caves beyond the reach of sunlight; and the reliable cockroach, more than a hundred million years our predecessor.

Unless humans as individuals and as larger societies recognize the fallibility of our creations, we too will pass much sooner than our pure intelligence should allow, overcome by our own emotional primitiveness and our self-serving (temporarily) preening ignorance. With our demise, we will take many other species down with us. We already have if the large mammals of the last glacial period, the mammoths, mastodons, dire wolves, sabre tooth cats, and great bears are any indicator. In our wake will be a messy corrosive extinction that nature will spend thousands upon thousands of millennia to clean up.

Consider this: short term results, humanity will die out in its current highly technological condition; long term results, all of humanity will be gone, along with millions of other species. Eventually homo sapiens will inevitably die out anyway, on a long enough time line, either disappearing through genetic stagnation, or maybe evolving beyond homo sapiens to something that only science fiction fantasy writers dream of. In the meantime we are simply hastening our own end, apparently without the ability to change direction. The ability of humans to significantly change societal lifestyles is highly doubtful, leaving the prognosis of our future open to much negative speculation, or rather much negative scientific forecasting.

Even at that the science forecasts are probably quite conservative, and, either conservative or explosive, the mainstream media, the large corporations, those in power and the wealthy, while maybe accepting the notion, seem hell-bent on avoiding any practical solutions that will diminish their current lifestyles. Those in command of the ships of state will look for their own life preservers and life boats as we approach the reefs of climate change denial, expecting to survive on a much less populated planet but without the necessary primitive survival skills in order to exist in a much more savage and technologically damaged world.

Assume for a moment that our current actions in regards to global warming plays itself out to the finale without extenuating circumstances - other acts such as nuclear war or a Yellowstone super volcano. Assume also that the scientific forecasts are accurate and likely understated, given that current events indicate they are on the right forecast path - more frequent, more deadly, more severe weather of all kinds. The outcome from current predictions will not be a sustainable one for most of humanity and it will be the primitive remnants of society that would be able to survive in the new normal, and even then perhaps not for long.

The consequences of global warming will be enormous: low lying fertile farmlands flooded; coastal cities flooded; mass migrations, famines, pandemics as societal infrastructure breaks down through neglect and geophysical actions; agricultural losses of staggering proportions as drought alternating with severe storms strictly limits food production; regional wars flaring up (remember assuming no nuclear war, a big assumption on risk factors) devolving into tribal wars, ethnic cleansings and genocides. Finally, even though there are no nuclear wars in this assumed future, there remain over four hundred nuclear power plants and their associated live, or hot, operations as well as the massive piles of nuclear waste, and in all probability there are also tens of thousands of deteriorating nuclear warheads.

Make another assumption that at the finale to all this there are five hundred million formerly wealthy and powerful survivors still standing, as some speculate, ready to continue life on this planet at a much lower but still healthy stable society. That scenario of a smaller, more stable global population surviving in a somewhat comfortable situation is simply an illusion.

Would those remnants have the necessary skills to maintain any technological environments for their continuation? Would they have the agricultural skills to survive? Who would supply the manpower that currently supports their current extravagant lifestyle? Will all necessary medical personnel survive ranging from the elite highly skilled doctors through the regular physicians, on through to the nurses, laboratory technicians, and all other backup personnel? Will enough technicians and programmers be available to save and support the global network of computers for communications, finance, daily operations of power supplies and water resources?

At a more basic level, will there be enough of the poor masses remaining, those whose toil we currently exploit to garner our riches of things and foodstuffs? In this newly downsized world of humanity, who will pull the plough, turn the spade, hoe the row, if the computerized and mechanized state of labour cannot continue? And what about knowledge itself - even if it were retained in books, hard copies, and not lost on some defunct computer drive, would anyone have the skills to apply it?

Finally, would the technical knowhow and operational ability survive that could safely decommission 400 nuclear power plants and hundreds more waste sites? Unless humanity finds some amazing wonderful technological break through to avoid sudden global warming, the idea of a surviving population being in anyway prosperous or minimally safe after a series of critical events is at best minimal, more certainly delusional - but then again, humanity is very good about deluding itself.

In this worst case scenario even existing primitive tribes would only be able to cling tenuously to life, dependent on the actual conditions of change from global warming, one of the effects very possibly being extensive nuclear radiation. At this moment there are three large commonly known nuclear sites that have gone critical with two remaining critical: Chernobyl, Fukushima, and Three Mile Island are examples of 'peaceful' reactors running wild.

Chernobyl sits in a highly contaminated restricted no go zone, encased in a deteriorating sarcophagus, covered with a newer hangar like structure that will need continual replacement every so many years for thousands of years. Fukushima has three highly reactive missing cores spilling large amounts of radioactive elements into the ocean and atmosphere. This is not in current news cycles as the Japanese government, complicit with the Japanese energy producer, TEPCO, have censored most of the reporting concerning the site, at the same time manipulating the few statistics available to make the threat levels appear minimal. In contrast, Chernobyl has acknowledged hundreds of deaths, and hundreds of thousands of illnesses - mostly cancer - stemming from the initial fight to control the site, plus ongoing high levels of cancer in surrounding populations. Three Mile Island news was originally suppressed having suffered a critical shutdown with subsequent high censorship of information.

Along with these sites are many hazardous waste sites to contend with, Hanford in Washington state and the Mayak/Kyshtyn region in Russia being two large noteworthy regions. In addition to these five examples, overwhelming in their seriousness, add hundreds more sites to be contained and treated, and then wonder if the surviving population would be able to handle any of it. Not likely: the meek shall inherit the earth, but they will not survive it.

Regardless of what this imagined future looks like, or how fast its timelines will unfold in regards to whether it is a linear rate, or an exponential rate, or an explosive tipping point, the process is happening now, generally faster than previously predicted. Most recent reports

indicate two areas of potentially rapid near explosive change. One region is the thawing permafrost regions of Arctic Russia, including the undersea shallow beds where massive amounts of frozen methane are starting to be released. Another sector mostly out of view of human news cycles are the ice sheets of Antarctica. Large amounts of ice have broken away from the West Antarctic ice sheet, with other Antarctic glaciers weakening along the ocean boundary due to warming waters and rising sea levels. A balancing factor for the latter may be the rebound in the land mass beneath the glaciers, but the cautionary principle would indicate that sea level rise continues and will have a large impact on littoral states of the world.

Any single weather aberration can be passed off as an unusual occurrence without long term implications. A series of record events has accumulated - larger storms, more powerful, more persistent, hundreds of record breaking temperatures around the world from the Middle East (where an overnight record low temperature in the low 40 degrees celsius range occurred) to the Arctic and the very geographic North Pole. This demonstrates a pattern of not just weather phenomenon, but a pattern indicating a climate phenomenon - global warming. At the current moderate level of about .8 degrees celsius disruption, large scale problems are already occurring, perhaps not evident for those cloistered away in air-conditioned climate controlled lifestyles, but certainly for those with their eyes and minds open to the natural environment. As well, much of the larger changes are occurring - so far - in regions remote from the larger population centers. For the younger generation, this is the normal, the new normal, while the older generations have witnessed, if not yet identified, the accumulating evidence demonstrating the reality of global warming.

Climatologists predicted decades ago that weather systems would be larger, stronger, more destructive at either end - from prolonged droughts to overwhelming rainfalls. Current meteorologists have started using the term "loopy" to describe the movement and positioning of

the jet stream, the upper air confluence of warmer tropical air with colder Arctic air. This loopiness helps stall weather systems of both extremes, with prolonged droughts in many regions, and conversely severe winter conditions in eastern Canada as the polar vortex moves down into the region, trapped there by a jet stream loop. More heat, more moisture when meeting relatively cooler air will produce more snowfall, and shifting ice patterns. Ocean currents and loopy jet streams all create events counter indicative of global warming for those only aware of regional weather events. It all ties in with climatologists predictions and observable weather patterns.

Climate is more than just the air above us, it is also the oceans that surround us and dominate the planet, projecting a huge influence on to weather patterns as it interacts with the atmosphere. The oceans are warming as well, not surprising as water retains more heat than air. As the waters warm, they expand, they interact more energetically with the atmosphere - hurricanes, typhoons, and 'regular' storms. They interact more actively with littoral regions causing more erosion, pushing back the margins of habitable space, and for the smaller island nations of the Pacific, eventually overwhelming their survivability.

Along the Greenland coast and the whole of the Antarctic coast the warmer waters melt the leading edges of the ice floes and land based glaciers along with the rising waters lifting 'grounded' glaciers off the ocean bottom allowing them to move and collapse more quickly. It is this latter effect that will cause the huge rise - predicted - of ocean levels as calculated from their current mass as well as witnessed from the geological records of earlier warmer eras. The already floating but mostly immersed ice of the Arctic ocean will provide only a minimal increase in ocean levels.

It is not just the heat of the oceans people need to be concerned about, but also its chemical and biological makeup. The vastness and depths of the oceans guard it out of sight

and out of mind for most people. Even with most people living close to the ocean and interacting with it in some manner, it remains largely an unknown to most, important for fish hauled from the unseen depths and recreational use barely scratching its surface. Other than the concern about ocean flooding as warmer waters rise, the oceans are seldom considered within mainstream information circles, but they are all important to human survival. Without global warming, ocean species are already endangered, over fished with the loss of significant prime food stocks, chasing the fisherman and consumer further down the food chain to coarser stock. Pollution from agricultural and human waste runoff and from the massive consumer plastic invasion destroys feeding grounds and birthing areas as witnessed by such examples as the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, the die off of Australia's Great Barrier Reef (among others), and the depleted cod stocks off eastern North America.

The effects of ocean warming are little seen, seldom considered within mainstream information circles, but are all important for human survival, and not just for the further effects for the rapidly depleting or fully depleted food stocks. The oceans serve as a carbon sink, absorbing large quantities of carbon dioxide; on the other hand, the ocean's phytoplankton produce about two thirds of global oxygen. As the ocean acidifies and warms, the danger exists of a large kill off of phytoplankton, which obviously would seriously affect global oxygen generation.

The carbon dioxide in the oceans creates the problem of acidification of the water. This has a large impact on both the large and the microscopic flora and fauna as many of these creatures build shells and carapaces for protection from predators. Many of the larger species, already threatened by over harvesting, depend on the micro end of the scale, the beginning of the planetary food chain and the source, as indicated, of much of the global oxygen. These

mostly unrecognized oceanic chain of events may have an impact beyond what the more evident actions of coastal flooding will have.

If the climate changed slowly over millennia these micro fauna would probably and realistically be able to evolve different systems of protection or different way to protect current systems - either way it is a systemic change to global habitats and habits. Given that humans continue to pump carbon dioxide into the air at unprecedented rates, these micro flora and fauna are already showing distress, as indicated by the loss of the great oceanic reefs. The combination of warmer water, acidity change, increased sedimentation, and larger storms make increasing damage to the reefs an ongoing threat.

Considering how Darwin's survival of the fittest meme operates, the decreased oxygen and increased acidity appear to be supporting larger jellyfish blooms. It is a prime example of how nature will replenish a biological vacuum with some species, serendipitously expanding into an empty environment or where a new species has the opportunity to expand.

As the bottom of the food chain collapses from the acidification, the rest of the food chain follows suit - except perhaps for those exotic deep ocean forms living near the rich ocean rift vents - and those that eat jellyfish. How long any of this will take is unknown as scientists, while positing the possibility, do not know if there are radical tipping points somewhere along the hypothesized values of change, nor when they would occur on the timeline of increasing warming from increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

Already and well acknowledged has been considerable loss to the terrestrial lungs of the earth: the rainforests across the tropical belt being rapidly harvested for building wood, hardwoods for expensive furniture, or for large corporations to move in and plant cash crops for export. The large scale palm oil plantations of the Philippines and Indonesia require the destruction of the natural forests and its biodiversity, forcing the indigenous farmers to be wage

slave earners for the corporations, giving up the subsistence farming that sustained them through many generations. The Amazon basin forests are being harvested and depleted rapidly, a combination of resource harvesting, settlement patterns, and the raising of cash crops such as sugar cane, soya, and palm oil, crops used partly in a disillusioned quest for biofuels. Again, subsistence farmers are pushed off the land and used as or replaced by wage slave labour to harvest the crops - all great for the GNP but not good for the people, the land, or the environment.

Humans have proven capable of surviving at very low oxygen levels as shown by the indigenous people of the Himalayas and Andes mountain ranges. At the 3500 meter level the available oxygen is reduced about forty per cent compared to sea level. The overall environment is hostile to most life and living at such altitudes is on the margins of human existence. The decline of earth's oxygen levels will be a very slow process (unless the elimination of phytoplankton occurs suddenly having reached an unforeseen tipping point) but the ability of humans to adapt to that and all its related impacts on other life forms, the whole realm of biological supports, is improbable. At best, surviving humanity would be living a marginal existence in a much more hostile world.

Obscured by the fog of information on climate change, other detrimental environmental events are occurring. The rate of species extinction due to climate change, destruction of habitat, and perhaps more importantly the chemical pollutants released into the air, soil, and water has serious implications for the future. In particular in some regions a drastic decline in insect populations - up to 75 percent - creates the possibility of the loss of life sustaining plant species requiring pollination. The loss of insects may superficially appeal to some, but it is a very poor metric indicating the weaker ability of human adaptation to environmental changes

Homo sapiens will die out eventually but due to our ignorance - wilful or otherwise - and self aggrandizement, we are in the process of terminating ourselves more quickly than our earlier more primitive conditions would cause, or that our short term expectations will foresee. Our daily lives, at least in the developed 'western' world, are filled with numerous distractions, many tailored to our primitive brains hunt-search-reward system, our very short term sexual drive, and anything that titillates our brain's pleasure centers. We are surrounded by technological devices essentially trapping the mind into a fake reality, and endless 'reality' events ranging from watching others' lives on some form of visual media to the natural highs of gopro inspired adrenaline rushes.

Television, computers, cell phones, wrist watch life monitors and the many variations of electronic devices available are capable of providing 24/7 infotainment of all kinds, keeping us connected - wired into the matrix of control - while at the same time stealing away immediacy and the relevance of real life personal contact. Global warming is discussed, warnings are ample, the scientific evidence is available, yet to no avail as the issue is covered with no apparent urgency. War may happen tomorrow, somewhere else, our favorite sports franchise may win tomorrow, perhaps I'll have sex tonight, or tomorrow, Trump will tweet something idiotic again, but, oh yeah, hey, the weather's bad, the droughts are bad, the excess rain is flooding someone somewhere, sure but life goes on.

Therein lies the danger, the lack of conceptual ability to perceive and care about the long term effects of our current lifestyle. The two main ways of at least attempting to change all this are conceptually easy but probably well nigh impossible to implement. First thing would be to get rid of our private automobile culture, gasoline and electric - and this refers to 'culture' in its broadest sense, from its geographical impact of streets and roads shaping our physical living

space to the emotional desires created by the advertising media in which automobiles become objects of our emotional desires.

Our culture is clearly based on the individual gas powered auto, thanks to the machinations of the early 1920s and 1930s when car companies destroyed the then prevalent, functional, and successful bus and trolley systems of major U.S. cities. Our cultural geography and most our cultural relationships are created by the car - the second most expensive purchase after housing, and now, maybe, after a good education (or depending on your school of choice, a bad education). The demand on our time, personal energy, on our landscapes and resources are enormous, and for this context, the consumption of oil and fuels is very costly on both finances and the cost of climate change due to carbon dioxide emissions.

A conversion to more centralized local population centres, provided with and linked to each other with light rapid transit electric rail alleviates much of our current vehicular emissions distress, notwithstanding the arguments as to how to supply the energy. A change along these lines would have an impact on other areas of society, the largest possibly being on the demands of the financial world's fiat currency based on the U.S. petrodollar and all its requirements for stability and power - but much more on that shortly.

The largest institutional user of oil in the world is the U.S. military, and in spite of arguments falsely propagated about the U.S. seeking global peace and freedom, the military itself indicates that its main function is to control if not own our global oil resources - and all other resources from rare earth metals to the coffee and bananas extracted from obedient minions abroad. Underneath the oil requirements is the preservation of the U.S. petrodollar as the world's reserve currency that is the essential target for the military. Again I transgress into a future highly related topic but it does suggest another simply conceived hard to implement fix to global climate change: bring all the military home and use only what is necessary for true

defence of the country. That line of thinking raises all kinds of rebuttal arguments and questions of a geopolitical nature, but we need to turn off the multi-trillion dollar defense industry (properly including the nuclear arms, nuclear power, and 'security' industries) and use the funds towards global solutions for green energy infrastructure and climate remediation projects.

As with the automobile, our political and cultural geography is enormously shaped by the military of the U.S. and its global empire of bases (over 800 in over 130 countries is a reasonable average estimate from various sources) used to support a consumptive, highly unequal, gas-guzzling economy and lifestyle. Again, many arguments would be made about the U.S. as the indispensable nation (i.e. global policeman), about the hardships on the economy, about the poor terrorist displacing people around the world et al, but the focus here for the moment remains on the global warming climate change issue.

There are of course many popularized attempts to slow and stop global warming. Unfortunately many are really nothing more than feel good greenwashing, including the societally accepted three Rs: reduce, reuse, and recycle. Reusing and recycling simply means that the final trip to the landfill site will be longer, and maybe routed through impoverished areas of India, South and East Asia, and Africa (with much depleted uranium going to the Middle East). Reducing - and reducing significantly - is the only one of the three with potential long term positive effects, and the most significant reductions need to be made with the global militaries and the global culture of consumerism and individual automobile ownership. Both of course would drastically reshape societies towards a better possibility of ameliorating the rise of global carbon dioxide, but short term interests and the inertia of societal impulses make that highly improbable.

Against the three Rs is a lifetime of being inculcated and propagandized into accepting life as a consumer in a throwaway society. The massive advertising on all media is mostly

about consumption of stuff when directed at young children and that carries over into adulthood. In the U.S. in particular but also significant in other countries is the cult of the military: the promotional events, the hubris and arrogance of the public face: the murderous killing aspect of the training, followed after a turn at war with patriotic honours from politicians, football executives, and talk show hosts; and followed by the discarding of those who suffered through the actual hell of bombs, bullets, torture, and murders. To break through the psychological barriers narrowing citizens interests to consumption and entertainment, and to break the cycle of corporate sponsored wars will require some form of huge societal calamity or breakdown in order to start the restructuring of society.

Other possible events can seriously alter the trajectory towards disaster, with one of the main ones not really even being considered as threat. The economy, the crash of the US\$, as will be discussed later in more purely financial-geopolitical terms, could also have major ramifications on actions and attitudes related to climate change. If the dollar collapses, as eventually it must in our hugely indebted society, economic activity would essentially grind to a halt, at least for a while, with the subsequent drop in demand for goods of all kinds and the massive inflation in the cost of fuel would slow the output of greenhouse gases. If the dollar collapses, so to must military spending in all its aspects: the ability to bribe, to support cronies, to provide kickbacks, to pay the military personnel, to pay to support the military infrastructure. It would probably not be sufficient to stop the overall rise of temperatures and flood waters. It would also probably have the adverse effect of distracting everyone from potential climate related damages as the fight for simple day to day survival intensifies.

Ultimately, climate change presents another scenario that could override the long term concerns about its progression with a very quick punctuation of the timeline with equally

disastrous results - nuclear war, wherein we are once again both participants and spectators of our own demise.

Most of all of our lives have been lived under the shadow of nuclear war. The exaggerated and false threat of Soviet nuclear supremacy and hostile intent, the inflammatory domestic lies of the 'missile gap' permeated all the news from the 1950s onward. Several times the rhetoric - mainly from U.S. media and political warhawks - was punctuated with very close calls, the most notable being the Cuban missile crisis with other much less visible but noted by historical research. With that history and the ongoing increasing abilities of nuclear destruction and the current increasing hostility and overt belligerence of the U.S. against all who defy its hegemony, it becomes the theorised environmental aftermath of nuclear war that is of concern here.

In its early years nuclear war only posed a threat to those directly hit by the weapon and secondarily to those in the path of the initial radioactive plume of debris and dust. That of course amounted to hundreds of millions of people, mainly in Russia, China, and Europe, being incinerated immediately or suffering horrible deaths from burns, injuries, and radiation sickness. Incredibly in hindsight it was thought to be survivable. Not until later, when nuclear weaponry grew to the "mutually assured destruction" stage, did a new previously unrealized concept work its way into the overall concept of nuclear war. Scientists using computer models identified that after such a war, a very short war ranging from a few hours to less than a few minutes depending on one's location, a "nuclear winter" would set in, creating conditions that would lead to another global mass extinction.

Unlike global warming which is happening more or less gradually in human terms, although rapidly in geological terms, nuclear winter would commence literally in a flash. The thousands of nuclear weapons detonated within a span of an hour or so would blast tons of fine

particles high into the atmosphere where suspended by their fineness would block enough of the sun's energy to create a global cooling. It would have a similar effect to the previous extinction of the dinosaurs caused by the meteor strike millions of years ago.

It would not have to be a snowball earth style of winter, but one or two severe winters and colder summer seasons would destroy crops and food sources for the remnants of humanity that survived the initial attack. With all the technological infrastructure destroyed or disabled, only primitive societies would survive, only to eventually die out from agricultural losses combined with the massive radiation released around the world. In contrast to global warming which would take millennia to revert to some sort of new normal (if ever), a nuclear winter would endure for a few years, rapidly decreasing in severity as weather events cleansed the atmosphere, before allowing the sun's energy once again to fall upon the world, a toxic highly radiated world.

Unfortunately, apart from the political rhetoric and geopolitical intentions of the major powers, nuclear war could well stem from the slower progression of global warming. As conditions deteriorate and threatened populations become more belligerent and demanding domestically, any real or imagined adversary becomes a convenient target of distraction which, knowing how the minds of politicians, religious fanatics, and power seeking psychopaths work, could well lead to a last minute attempt to retain superiority through a nuclear strike in a vain hope of survival. As with previous scenarios, there will be no long term survivors, and those that do survive may well end up envying those that died instantly in the initial volley of missiles.

The ultimate extinction would combine global warming initiating a nuclear war, creating a short lived nuclear winter that would revert to the warmer/hotter climate now thoroughly irradiated from both the weapons and the many nuclear power plants and waste sites continually spewing more deadly radiation for thousand of years. Earth would become a

severely hostile environment with perhaps some radiation resistant bacteria surviving in deep earth crevices. Such an ugly scenario for such a marvellous creation, yet it is all 'natural' in that humans, human technology, and human artifacts all operate within the known laws of nature.

Global warming, global climate change, is well under way. At the same time all the prerequisites for a nuclear war are in place, only waiting some perverse madman's touch to set it off. It has to be asked if under these conditions do we deserve to survive? Deserving falls into the realm of human self-aggrandizement, a concept reserved for our own peculiar human mental constructions and carrying absolutely no force within the physical forces of the world.

If perhaps we somehow manage to avoid both these scenarios, then perhaps we can internally rate ourselves as 'deserving' but otherwise nature does not care and the physical laws combined with our intellectual hubris do not make a promising partnership. Can we do better? Obviously, yes. Will we do better? Only time will tell, but time is relentless and allows no room for wastage in the pursuit of a peaceful biologically healthy world. Already it may be too late, but the endeavor should be made or we will join the bones of the dinosaurs no matter how much more intelligent we think we are.

Survivalists of the back to nature type and those with a bunker mentality would do well to consider their efforts in all probability will be futile. Certainly anyone living off the land or ensconced - entombed - in some buried self sufficient cocoon or silo will have better short term survival prospects than those physically unprepared. A hot irradiated world would not provide any means of survival for anyone emerging from multiple weeks or even a multiple year protective barrier. If all that energy, physical and mental, was directed at advocating for societal change the results could be much more constructive than attempting to survive by withdrawal. The only means to survival is to change.

Nuclear War

Empire - Always has been, always will be

Arguments about where or when the U.S. became an empire place many different dates to it, more or less due to political and religious moral beliefs and definition of intent. Rather than that the definition should relate to the actions of the colonial settlers, militias, or military as actions do speak much louder than words. In the latter sense, that of actions, the U.S. has always been an empire, “discovered” and conquered and exploited initially by European empires, becoming its own empire seeking land and resources, exploiting a variety of people, the heartland of the new country growing ever richer with the expanding hinterland frontier.

Always a “civilizing” action, a Christian action, bringing freedom and democracy to the savages of the world. Actions spoke otherwise as both land and peoples of all kinds were exploited by those in control. Truly it begins with human nature, the tribal imperative writ large, as certain individuals seek power and control, personal glory, tribal fame, while others aid and abet the impulse as it increases their own patterns of success and survival. It also ends with human nature as individuals and empire have always over reached a balance, maybe not for long periods, but with all empires - always - to the ruin of the empire and much of what is associated with it. Today that ruin encompasses almost all of everything that is living.

The gestation for the modern U.S. empire began in Europe. With the Renaissance and its great flourishing of trade, crafts, and culture came also the flourishing of science and the materials of war. Not that science is to blame as it is more of a thought process than a thing, but its derived creations and refinements of technology led to ever more powerful armies and navies fighting among themselves in Europe and continued fighting in foreign lands for the acquisition of colonies and settlements.

The largest philosophical rationalization for the overseas ventures was the Christian Doctrine of Discovery. White European Christians, having successfully expelled or blocked the expansion of the Arab Islamic powers, adopted the position that the world was open to be discovered, settled, claimed, exploited, all in the name of the Christian civilizing mission. All brown races were primitive savages, lesser beings according to the European interpretations of the bible who could be eradicated or subjugated because even though they could be educated and have their demonic rituals negated, would never achieve the superior level of the Christian white man. Remember also it was the 'man' who was superior in intellect and moral understanding to women, a central trait of all patriarchal religions.

After Columbus first 'discovered' the Americas, at first perceived to be part of India, rapid expansion and exploitation followed. Accompanying the guns and violence of the explorers were the powerful diseases decimating large swathes of North and South America, spread by trade interactions between the whites and natives, and among the natives themselves. Millions, some estimate hundreds of millions, died from imported European disease, unable to cope with the germs endemic to the Europeans crowded and unsanitary living conditions. Decimated by germs, local governance alliances and economies fell apart, famine and servitude followed in many areas, and for some, extinction. The African slave trade expanded to the Americas, the Africans replacing the indentured Europeans who could not survive the New World hardships.

and the indigenous Indians decimated by disease and war. The newly imported slaves, survivors of harrowing shipment across the Atlantic, were used to exploit and work the land, to do the heavy labour for their new white overlords who simply staked out the land and called it their own.

The powerful seafaring nations of Europe, ever increasingly armed with military ships, “man o’ wars”, all sought and claimed various islands and regions, fighting the indigenous populations as needed, and fighting each other as part of the global competition for land and resources. In general, Europe enriched itself at the expense of the newly claimed territories, receiving agricultural products, mineral resources, and harvestable natural resources such as timber and furs. Much of this was done indirectly by the European empires by giving charters to various affluent and influential noblemen entrepreneurs willing to aid in and profit from the newly acquired lands.

The Dutch, along with Companies from France, Portugal, and Britain were named as “East India Company”, all attempting to gain dominance over the South Asia region. In North America, the Hudson Bay Company, the Northwest Company, the American Fur Company were early exploiters of indigenous knowledge and abilities in their native lands. Having received extensive grants of land regardless of indigenous settlements or history, the European empires guarded and fought each other through treaties and alliances. To assist themselves, the European powers exploited indigenous tribes and organizations with different kinds of treaties and alliances, ones that could be forever broken after their convenience of use was fulfilled.

Along the eastern North America seaboard, the British dominated, with the French settling Quebec and part of the Maritimes, and exploring the Mississippi and Ohio river valleys down to the Gulf of Mexico. The Spanish claimed Florida and coastal areas in the southeast. Most of the rest was British (with the Dutch in New Amsterdam being a prime exception) and

became the germination of the U.S. empire. The Spanish initially exploited the west coast from the south, having conquered most of Latin America. They reached up to the Pacific Northwest where they intersected with Russian traders, who claimed and traded over much of the northwest portion of the continent, the Russian-American Company acting much in the same way as other European colonial settler companies.

In North America, the British ultimately succeeded and their first colonial charters set the tone for later expansion. Most of the charters of the original settlements were religious, different sects wishing to escape some form of persecution and have the ability to practice their beliefs as they best saw fit in the promised land of the New World. The areas they departed from were generally happy to see them go, as it relieved the local rulers of a possible dissension problem at the same time creating a physical claim to the new territories - occupation being the confirming sign of ownership.

The newcomers viewed the Indians as savages, to be converted to Christianity, or be killed, or both, as more Christians in heaven was deemed to be a good thing and solved some of the occupiers problems for possessing territory and resources. The mythologies around the first Thanksgiving and the native perspective that visionaries had seen the coming of the white man are more than likely contrived in flattering terms by the whites from a series of then current events and previous Indian mythologies. After all are not millions of Christians expecting Armageddon and the second coming of Christ any day now? Mythical beliefs and a lack of scientific understanding creates a magical world of internal delusions about the reality of natural phenomenon and their consequences, whether it be volcanic gods, gods of famine - or the arrival of the white man in his white sailed tall masted ships on the eastern coasts of the Americas.

Religion was the superficial rationale behind the settlements (still not uncommon in today's world) but as with most religions, power and control were the fundamental elements. Control of land and resources - the wealth of the new world - harvested by controlling the indigenous and settler populations - was and is the underlying theme of imperial expansion and its support of religious orders. Personal profits and hoards of money may have been personal objectives, if not totally subjugated to someone else's notion of divine will, but personal power tends to be the ultimate goal.

Settlements spread up and down the east coast and west into the new frontier, with the Appalachians acting as the first barrier geographically. Treaties and alliances were made, broken as needed (rather similar to U.S. imperial actions on international treaties today), killing and murdering of many of those who resisted, many who were simply in the way, and many innocents, mostly because they were savages with the wrong skin colour (also sounds familiar to current international - and resurgent racial nationalist - events).

The U.S. empire did not start at any particular time, but simply flowed from its British-European background. The revolution creating the original "United States" was about taxation, but taxation that removed money and power from the new American aristocracy. Freedom and democracy were not the goals, but retention of power - including local taxation - and future prospects for more wealth and power underlay the creation of a united front. Democracy had little to do with it: many of the founding fathers owned slaves; only landholders could vote and hold office; and a reading of the Federalist Papers shows that a "republic" was a preferred system to avoid populist factions, otherwise known as popular discontent with those in power. Once the electoral college system was set up later, the lack of democracy, except for its superficial pretence, became embedded into the voting system.

Land served as one of the main creators of wealth - an “empty” continent just waiting to be settled, but also waiting for profits made from essentially free land. George Washington, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson were all land speculators as the original colonies pushed up and over the Appalachian barrier.

The empire and its land acquisitions moved westward and southward. After the Napoleonic wars in Europe - spilling over into North America as the War of 1812 - France sold “Louisiana” - essentially the Mississippi and Ohio valleys - to the U.S. The Mexican war, one of the first large imperial wars of aggression by the U.S., secured large sections of the southwest for settlement and exploitation, the Alamo serving as a convenient false flag event for the attack on Texas, then an independent state.

Agricultural land, forest products, mineral products, especially gold and silver, iron ore, and coal drew expansion ever westward as millions more European settlers continued arriving into the country. Most of the new immigrants supplied the labour under very poor conditions to build the mines, mills, railways, and factories of the burgeoning economy. A different economy settled into the south, as slavery provided the energy to create the wealth of the southern agricultural population, the landed gentry owning large swathes of land and many slaves.

Following from that the Civil War rose, a four year long slaughter fought not so much for the rights of the African slave population, but fought for the preservation of an economic lifestyle contrasted with the industrial power centers of the north-east. Were it truly about slavery and democracy and freedom, Sherman’s devastating “march” through the south would appear even more overwhelmingly savage than it is even recognized to be today by modern historians. The “march” however fits well within the imperial approach of warfare superseding diplomacy, as it did in Mexico and would do in all subsequent imperial adventures of acquisition of land and power. With the war settled in favour of the north, settlement continued westward.

A northern boundary had been established at the 49th Parallel leaving the northern half of the continent to Britain. Later Russia sold Alaska to the U.S. (at about two cents an acre) as the Tsar needed the finances and the U.S. knew a good deal when they saw it. The final war for the continent was the Indian war.

As always with the U.S., the brown savages were in the way of settler expansion, but more importantly in the way of power and profit. In accordance with their subhuman status, the continent was considered uninhabited. This stems from a simple rhetorical rational combined with religious views and the ever present imperial racism. Agreements were made and destroyed. Reservations set aside then annulled. Forced resettlement marches killed thousands and placed the survivors on poor quality lands. Homestead lands were given out to settlers, along the paths of the wagon trains and spreading out from the newly constructed "iron horse". Finally, like vermin infesting a farmer's field and barn, a bounty was placed on Indian heads, war was actually declared, and the indigenous people were slaughtered into total submission, the survivors placed on small and desolate reservations, pushed aside for God, glory, and the republic.

To some degree the natives resisted successfully and recorded several victories over armies sent to kill them, but armies kept coming, with more powerful weapons, and eventually episodes such as Wounded Knee demonstrated the savagery of the white racist population and the death knell for indigenous independence and cultural survival. Names such as Sitting Bull, Chief Joseph, and Geronimo have all entered the mythology of the white conquest of the west, softened with the idea of the noble savage giving them the dubious honour of becoming part of the pantheon of Wild West mythology along with Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone, Wyatt Earp, Jim Bridger and their kind - all the while still being savages requiring death or confinement, murder glorified for the sake of empire. It remains today with the many military machines being given

native names: Apache, Lakota, Black Hawk, all helicopters, and the infamous Tomahawk cruise missile - as if to heighten the primitive savagery and uncaring of advanced technology. Some natives are noted as being honoured to have the names attached to military vehicles - more than likely they are for some reason unaware of the savagery with which their ancestors were treated.

The west, the continent was won, but the rest of the world beckoned, financially and militarily.

Overseas expansion

In the late 19th and early 20th Centuries the world in general was dominated by several European empires with their widespread colonies. France controlled much of Western Africa and Southeast Asia. The British controlled Australia and Canada, much of eastern and southern Africa with smaller enclaves along the “gold coast”, all of what is currently India and Pakistan, Burma, Malaysia and Singapore. Along with Amsterdam and Spain these two also held colonies in the Caribbean Sea and the north coast of South America. The Ottoman Empire rules the Levant and much of northern Africa, soon to lose it all to the French and British after World War I. After the Opium wars the Chinese were forced to open their markets to foreign entrepreneurs seeking easy money and cheap labour for their own enrichment, as always. After the unsuccessful Boxer rebellion, the nationalist leader Sun Yat Sen became more active and eventually displaced the Qing (Manchu) dynasty, but foreign influences remained.

Again in Africa, the Belgian King Leopold held central Africa, the Belgian Congo, as a private fiefdom instituting horrific racial practices affecting the region ever since. Germany controlled colonies in western Africa (Cameroon, Togoland), southwest Africa (Namibia), and

east Africa, all lost after the first world war. Namibia suffered massive genocide presented as deriving from the social darwinism/eugenics ideas that became politically popular in the post World War I era.

The U.S. forced “open” Japan when Commodore Perry sailed his gunboats into Tokyo harbour, this gunboat diplomacy remaining selectively active and then dominating the oceans and weaker littoral states with the massive firepower of the aircraft carrier attack forces. China had also been subject to U.S. military power, indirectly as Perry visited the commercial enclaves established after the Opium Wars forced China to allow foreign commercial interests into larger sections of the country. These overseas adventures are not generally considered to be imperial as they did not colonize, settle, or otherwise control the regions apart from the “business” agreements signed at gunpoint. Closer to home, similar corporate related adventures, again backed by military strength, brought large profits home.

In the early 1800s Simon Bolivar had freed South America from Spanish rule, but could not hold back the tide of U.S. economic and military infiltration. The Monroe Doctrine had been presented in 1823, essentially claiming the whole of Latin America as the U.S.’ colonial frontier - mainly in the form of economic colonialism favoring corporations trading from the U.S. In Central America major U.S. corporations, in particular United Fruit (now Chiquita) controlled much of the geographic and political landscapes. The large ports, the railway system and huge swathes of agricultural land were owned and controlled by United Fruit and friends. Unemployed and disenfranchised natives provided cheap labour. Bribes and kickbacks maintained a compliant local political scene. The moniker “banana republic” earned its authenticity in these countries where bananas were a major export. Farther south, the U.S. forced a split in Columbia, creating the new country of Panama. Both were controlled by US.

interests, allowing the construction of the Panama canal with the Canal Zone under direct U.S. jurisdiction until recently.

The tendrils of the U.S. empire had spread out, economic tendrils backed by the military, but overseas empire did not thrive until the Spanish American War. When the USS Maine exploded and sank in Havana harbour, U.S. war drums sounded loud and clear. Accused of sabotage, Spain - more correctly her empire - became the target. Commercial and political interests wanted the bounty offered by Cuba; William Randolph Hearst provided the public media hysteria boosting war fever against Spain. Although the explosion probably originated in the coal bunkers and not from a mine, the false flag had been set and U.S. patriotism and jingoism set the course for war - a war for empire.

With the U.S. and Spain at war, two actions formed quickly: Admiral Dewey's naval forces attacked and decimated the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay in the Spanish possession of the Philippines; a similar naval squadron entered Cuban waters in Santiago Bay in Cuba. Both the Philippines and Cuba had their own already active insurgent forces working domestically and both were given aid to overthrow the colonial Spanish government. Both were successful, only to be betrayed by the U.S. who then attacked the rebel forces in order to gain control. The Philippine War proved to be long and bloody with the U.S. using its domestically funded practice of massacres in order to eventually subdue the native rebels. The Cuban war proved shorter and more dramatic, involving the creation of Teddy Roosevelt's war hero persona.

Cuba's sugar plantations fell under U.S. corporate control and the ruling government was fully corrupted by commercial largesse and large crime syndicates. The Philippines offered up the resources of oil, gold, tin, iron ore, agricultural plantations - and a stepping stone to the huge markets of China and Japan and to the resources then controlled by France in southeast Asia. At the same time, through ruse, deception and lies backed by the threat of military force,

the U.S. forced the annexation of Hawaii, mainly as military naval supply depot, but also gaining the large wealth of the white controlled sugar plantations (Dole) whose U.S. owners proved very helpful in creating the situation promoting annexation. Guam was taken from Spain after a very brief non-violent confrontation. In all cases - typically - Christianity, democracy, and free enterprise supplied the rationale for the hometown crowd. Overseas empire was born.

The empire was not so much born as reinvigorated, reinvented. The Philippines and Cuba received nominal independence with only Puerto Rico, Guantanamo, and Guam remaining as U.S. territories. It was not a colonial-settler empire, or an empire claiming large land areas through military forces alone, but one of financial-industrial-agricultural dominance backed by the ever present readiness, willingness, in some cases eagerness to use military force. Not until after World War II did the U.S. establish occupation forces in nominally independent countries, forces that remain to this day. In between the Spanish war and World War II the U.S. used its gunboat diplomacy around the world: Africa (Morocco), China, Korea, Russia, most of Latin America and southeast Asia all received U.S. military interventions in order to protect U.S. "interests". Those interests, as they are today, consisted of corporate activities harvesting whatever resources were available - agricultural, mineral, and labour being the main areas of exploitation.

During World War I the U.S. remained isolationist, profiting from the melee of European empires attempting to destroy each other mainly on European soil. When the opportunities turned in favour of the British and French, as Germany suffered more and more from the attrition of both supplies and cannon fodder, the U.S. joined the fray in order to stake a claim on the outcome, promote its own financial good, and if we are to believe the mainstream media, won the war for the good guys against the evil Huns. At war's conclusion, the Paris peace accords at Versailles were conducted under the illusion of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, the main

one being the importance of national independence for all groups. While this heightened expectations it was a false promise as boundaries were shifted in favour of the winner and new colonies were established, particularly in the Middle East as the Ottoman Empire collapsed.

The secret Sykes-Picot agreement between France and Britain in 1916 divided up the Levant as colonial regions, quasi disguised as "Mandates" to be granted future independence but then with assigned and controlled leaders and sovereignty (Faisal, in an action to distract and contain Arab power, was placed in control of Iraq, a conglomeration of three Ottoman provinces). The Balfour Letter of 1917 became a policy within British politics that over the next century created huge problems in the region. The U.S. received none of the geographic spoils, but received increased financial, corporate and industrial strength leading them towards global power. Finally the U.S. itself rejected Wilson's ideals, did not join the new League of Nations, and continued on its path of military-corporate dominance of many other nations.

Britain, while losing millions of lives and incurring large war debts was at the height of its imperial extension, with dominions and colonies spread around the world. The biggest prize was the Middle East, a combination of geopolitical strategic control of transportation routes to South and Southeast Asia, and the capture of much of the newly discovered oil wealth in the region. The soon to be fought over oil resources of Iraq and Iran were starting to come on line.

The Palestinian Mandate and the independence movement in India drew upon the resources of the empire, both situations inflamed by World War II, in particular its post war newly created UN anti-colonial framework. Britain's corporate positioning in Iran with oil created more headaches leading to future and current turmoil in the region.

Setup for dominance - World War II

Before participating in World War II the U.S. retained its 'egalitarian' policy towards all main players, and domestically had serious problems to contend with. The excesses of the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression brought the U.S. into an era of labour market confrontation. Many thousands were unemployed and no safety net was in place for them until Roosevelt acted to assist the situation with his New Deal programs and legislation. Confrontations and riots ensued - following on many earlier labour protests especially following the Civil War - with the government and corporations using military, police, and private security (Pinkerton's) to quell the disturbances. The threat of Bolshevism had to be stopped before it reshaped the political-corporate scene.

Business as usual continued with U.S. corporate interests financing and supplying and trading with both British and German interests. Much sympathy was actually held for Germany, with one of the underlying wishes being that Germany would take on and defeat the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was a prime U.S. target - philosophically for its socialist/communist ideals and, as always, as a main target, never realized until the Yeltsin years, of financial and geopolitical subjugation. An evil other is necessary in order to construct an empire and distract the citizens.

World War II as with World War I had its many internally contained and defined historical events, and as the main history of World War I was about empires colliding with each other for regional controls of people and resources, World War II also had its main overarching history. The highly flawed Versailles peace agreement left many situations unresolved while creating several potentially destructive new situations, setting the stage for World War II. Germany was at fault for the actual events starting the war, but as always it was not a clear cut case of good

versus evil - although evil was generally present on both sides as the ideas of Darwin were distorted into social Darwinism, the ideas of eugenics, and following this for Germany, the promotion of a superior Aryan race and culture.

The final battle of World War I was World War II, a much broader and more destructive battle witnessing the end of one empire, and the rapid rise and dominance of another. Both Britain and the U.S. hoped for the destruction of the Soviet Union by German forces. Corporations and political leaders from all three belligerents continued trading and dealing with each other during the first months of the war. Jingoism, hubris, lies, and deceit created the image of a "good" war when it was truly another major clash between empires. Yes, Germany used genocide against the Jewish population - as well as others - but it was not the first nor the last genocide perpetrated by racial hatred and the creation of the evil other. Germany had previously set its standard in its African colony of Namibia where the indigenous people were slaughtered with survivors being contained in concentration camps.

As a "good" war it used mass fire-bombings of civilian centres in both theatres of war, Dresden and Hamburg being the prime atrocities in Germany, while the incendiary bombings of Japanese cities such as Tokyo and Yokohama killed far more civilians than the nuclear weapons used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After the war, aerial bombardment using conventional weapons and the threat of nuclear weapons became the dominant military policy for the 'modern' period.

The war, the last battle of World War I, ended with the allied victory, a victory generally acclaimed by the U.S. and Britain. The real victory was won on the eastern front where the tenacity, resistance, and ferocity of the Soviet counter-attack destroyed several German armies then went on to occupy most of Eastern Europe. A new world order was created.

Post war alignments

After World War II, the U.S. emerged as the most powerful nation on earth. It had not suffered any homeland aggression after Pearl Harbour, an event some current historians describe as a form of false flag as information concerning a pending attack was available but not acted on. Japan had been under U.S. blockade and restricted in its ability to harvest rubber and oil resources that as an island nation it could not supply domestically. Consequently the U.S.' industrial sector was running on full power, the war having restored the economy to high levels of production, down available for conversion to producing civilian goods. The bankers were happy, holding much of the European war debt in their books. The homeland was safe and secure, flowing with wealth and industrial strength, the pre-war New Deal was in place, and society settled into an era of generalized prosperity.

Not all were happy, not all were content and large obstacles loomed ahead - primarily the positioning of the Soviet Union as the main contender for global power, accompanied by the rise of militant nationalism as the colonial ideal waded into the swamp of its death throes. Britain, technically a winner, was losing its empire, had huge war debts, and much rebuilding to do. Germany lay in impoverished ruins as did much of the rest of Europe, leaving them open to political if not military rebellion against the dominant capitalism of the surviving states. Japan's cities had been destroyed but they survived with their most precious symbol - the emperor Hirohito. China, Korea, and South Asia faced powerful upheaval as forces victorious against the Japanese now sought national liberation from colonial rule and influence.

In Europe, an "iron curtain" divided the continent, a concept urged by Churchill (who if his biography is well understood was a racist, drunken war loving person) as the Soviet Union retained its control of eastern Europe, minus part of Berlin, and minus eastern Austria. Having

suffered its third major military attack from the west, the Soviets were not about to let Europe retrench itself as an anti-Soviet entity dedicated to their destruction. The Soviets were exhausted, losing 20 to 30 million of their population, their European agricultural and industrial bases destroyed, and now threatened by the U.S. with nuclear destruction. Current research indicates Churchill wished to utilize the former Nazi military combined with the victorious allied forces to attack the Soviet Union as well. Opportunity for friendlier Soviet relations with the rest of Europe appeared imminent as various national communist and socialist groups were being well received by the newly freed nations, their politics starting to realign as a result of the success of different resistance groups against German occupation. The U.S. recognized this and set about rectifying the situation for their political-corporate benefit.

Just previous to the end of the war, the U.S. and other mostly European interest met at the Bretton Woods Conference (1944) to discuss and set up a new economic system essentially controlled by U.S. corporate/bankster interests. At wars end the establishment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (then the Bank of Reconstruction and International Development) combined with a U.S. dollar pegged to a gold quantity created the U.S. dominance of international finance.

Straying from their original concept - but not necessarily their mandate - these institutions tied many newly independent states to the U.S. centric finance system using loans and "structural adjustment programs" from the 1960s through the 1980s. The loans led to corruption and large debts forcing countries to make "structural adjustments" that ended up keeping the government in poverty, indebted to the U.S. financial system. These adjustments included the privatization of businesses and assets (ports, airports, trains et al), the forced closure of private agricultural lands to benefit large agrocollections, and the opening up for exploitation of available resources (minerals, hydrocarbons, forests). Today it is called

“austerity” and continues to capture countries through debt burdens and threats of financial terror should they not accede to IMF/World Bank conditions.

More particular to Europe another idea that helped seal U.S. corporate control of western Europe was the financial Marshall Plan from 1948 to 1954. Initially postwar construction was left to the individual countries whose civic structures and economies had been seriously affected. The post war conditions and the failure of the corporate capitalist class, the class largely responsible for the war, in a sense allowing the war in the first place, increased the popularity of the socialist and communist political parties. It helped that they had also been leading participants in the underground forces and local rebellions against German occupation. The socialists and communists were receiving significant voter support, and not only placing sitting members in various governments, they were also being included as ministers within the ruling parties framework. As the post war years proceeded, the U.S. decided it needed to do something in order to stop these political successes in order to retain western Europe under its corporate wing, away from perceived Soviet advantages - the main one being the will of the people - democracy. Starting in 1948, the U.S. loaned and granted European states about \$17 billion (\$110 billion adjusted for inflation). The money was tied back to the U.S., either as loans payable to the banks or as outright grants, both tied to the dominant productive power of the west, a means of ensuring that Europe remained a vassal in the U.S. camp.

Another post war establishment was the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Ostensibly it replaced previous U.S. government intelligence operations, subsuming or superceding them in order to gather information on other countries. As it developed it sprawled into an agency operating around the world, not just for information, but also - and perhaps mainly - for covert operations to disrupt countries not wanting to follow U.S. dictates, and to keep in line other countries that threatened to stray.

The CIA's first operations were in Europe. In Greece, the western countries supported the dictatorial monarchy against the forces that had done the insurgent fighting against the German forces and made their occupation difficult and deadly. As many of the insurgents were communist or socialists the CIA helped reinstitute the non-democratic monarchy leading to Greece's longstanding subservience to the west and its organizations (very obvious from current financial struggles wrapped up in the EU/euro envelope). In Italy and France massive media and political input changed the direction of the post war Italian and French elections, using soft power printed and commercial propaganda, as well as disruptive direct action against protests.

The first actual overthrows of governments occurred outside Europe. In 1953 the democratically elected Iranian government of Mohammed Mossadegh was overthrown in a coup directed by the CIA and MI6. Kermit Roosevelt led the CIA faction coordinating the various protests, strikes, and rebellions that led to the downfall of the government. The goal, then as ever more to current times, was the control of the oil wealth of the state, regardless of how democratic or not the government was. The British retained control of "their" oil corporation and helped install the dictatorial rule of the Shah Pahlavi.

Happy with that success, the CIA shortly after orchestrated a coup in Guatemala against another popular democratically elected government. This time it was not about oil, but as response from U.S. companies complaining about the local government's actions for land redistribution and direct state competition against mostly U.S. corporate entities. Both cases resulted in the establishment of servile governments, as noted above with Iran and with Arbenz replaced by Armosa in Guatemala.. Both also suffered severely in different ways from the oppressive actions taken by the new puppet regimes. The CIA had spread its wings.

Another post war alignment set up to establish a form of control over other countries is the largely Canadian sponsored North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), ostensibly to serve as protection from a Soviet invasion. The Soviet Union at the time had neither the intention nor the ability to invade and occupy other countries beyond eastern Europe, and while there was some equivalence in conventional forces, at that time there was no equivalence in nuclear weapons and delivery systems. NATO's two main commanders are U.S. military men, and the European commander is a vetted European puppet (quite naturally). As the Cold War ramped up through episodes of belligerence and detente then suddenly died (to both the surprise and and delighted consternation of the U.S./West) NATO remained within its borders. Just as the IMF/World Bank morphed into a stronger weapon of financial neo-colonialism, NATO changed its attitude and actions, but not necessarily its long term intentions.

President Bill Clinton had verbally promised Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev that after the reunification of Germany, NATO would not move "an inch" eastward. That promise died quickly and as the U.S. manipulated a largely weakened new Russian government under their puppet leader Boris Yeltsin, NATO proceeded to move eastward, absorbing the former Warsaw Pact countries first - against a perception that perhaps NATO should disband as well. The U.S. and Britain in particular supported its continued existence as an instrument of empire, an empire aimed at global financial and military hegemony, aimed thus at the very heartland of Russia. Continuing eastward NATO incorporated some of the former Soviet Union states, placing NATO boundaries directly on Russia's borders. Finally, after setting up a Ukrainian coup that brought in a new combination oligarch/neonazi government, and after initiating an attack by Georgia on its breakaway South Ossetia republic, NATO's advances against Russia stopped, at least temporarily, by Russian moves to counter the U.S. threat.

NATO went well beyond its own 'defensive' borders in three major wars/crises.

Yugoslavia was the first, ripped apart by various smaller rivalries manipulated mainly by U.S. interests, the false flag of genocide, the illusive pretext of the "right to protect", culminating in the illegal bombing of Serbia - recently described by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg as being good for the people of Serbia - in order to tear Kosovo away and implant a new section of the new world order. Kosovo now contains one of the U.S.' - and thus the world's - largest overseas military base, a guardian for the eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans.

NATO's second military attack was its actions supporting the U.S. in Afghanistan. Ostensibly a UN operation, NATO nations provided direct military support for U.S. attempts to control the nation for its strategic geopolitical position against Russia and China. Many false narratives surrounded the operation, starting with Osama bin Laden (whom the local Taliban would surrender if proof of his culpability in 9/11 was provided) then working through the usual rhetoric and excuses about freedom, democracy, liberating women, educating the children, and stopping terror there before it come here. The narrative was polished by the mainstream media, believed largely by the masses and most recently, even as it is the longest war in U.S. history (17 years and counting) it is essentially ignored by everybody.

Finally, NATO went well beyond the UN sponsored no-fly zone for Libya, bombing civilian infrastructure, and actively supporting ground forces with equipment and 'advisors'. Today Libya is a defunct nation, the center of a large refugee shift, and its weapons and militants are spreading throughout the region, creating chaos in the Sahel.

Without UN sponsorship, or any declaration of official purpose, NATO has extended itself as a global protector, functioning as an adjunct to the empire. The evil enemy needs to be contained and deconstructed, otherwise U.S. hegemony cannot succeed.

Asia rebels

In eastern and southern Asia many other scenarios played out, not surprisingly after such a large scale war between two major power, entangled with liberation movements from occupation by Japan, along with liberation from earlier colonial powers.

Britain occupied India, Burma, Malaysia, and Ceylon; France clung to its Indo-Chinese states of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam; the Portuguese retained Indonesia and other island states. Only Thailand retained some form of non-colonial status, but after the war when it had sided with Japan - unwillingly - it became subject to military and commercial pressure from its surrounding colonial forces, as well as U.S. pressure. The region was ripe for explosion and explode it did.

India's rebellion forced Britain to 'grant' its independence, in the process dividing it somewhat arbitrarily into separate Muslim and Hindu states, splitting Pakistan away from historical colonial India. This division, and the division of Pakistan into east and west brought about serious military, commercial, and political problems throughout the region, with a series of wars between the two. Kashmir became a hot spot contested between the two, a region largely ignored by the western world not at all concerned about its independence - apparently it offered little in the way of resources or strategic advantage, other than perhaps to keep India and Pakistan in a state of disruption.

Vietnam rebelled against French rule being reimposed after the Japanese defeat, the French side aided by the U.S. and its newly reinforced fear of communism. The French were

defeated, most notably at Dien Ben Phu, with the threat of nuclear weapons being used on the Viet forces held back for fear of their proximity to the French forces. The UN then set up an election commission that would have seen a unified communist victory, but the U.S. managed to subvert and divert any actions that would realize the vote. The U.S. established a non-democratic puppet government in the south of Vietnam, it increasingly supplied more material and more “advisors” and “trainers” until they were fully involved in the mud of the Mekong River delta, up to their necks, pushing forward anyway. Eventually losing the war, the U.S. did achieve one objective - the destruction of what could have been a healthy prosperous communist state. Ironically, the state model idealized by Ho Chi Minh was based on the U.S. constitution and the not so democratic institutions of U.S. government.

Korea presented similar but not identical problems for the U.S. as Vietnam - that of a country arbitrarily divided along an imaginary line, a line decided by the U.S. and accepted in the interim by the Soviet Union. As with Vietnam, the main intention was to prevent a successful unification under Kim Il-sung, the leader of the Korean insurrection against Japanese military rule. His underground rebellion had arguable success, but Kim Il-sung had the support of the vast majority of the Korean population after the war. Russia temporarily occupied North Korea, then withdrew. In the south, the U.S. used Koreans who had sided with the Japanese, as well as still resident Japanese commanders, in order to quell disturbances in the south before establishing conditions to set up a dictatorial puppet government. This division and ongoing hostilities and incursions from both sides along the 38th Parallel led to the Korean war and subsequent ongoing hostilities in the region.

The war against Japan ended shortly after the U.S. used two nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, purportedly by western histories as an action justified, both by appearances and proximity, ending the war, saving a conjectured million or so U.S. lives from a

theorized invasion of Japan. However, as revealed by more recent honest research, Japan had been ready to surrender granted only one condition the retention of the emperor. The U.S. refused until after the bombs had been dropped, and the imperial throne continues today.

Two sets of persuasive arguments and sets of events deny the 'ending the war' scenario of the bombs' use. First were the massive fire bombings of many of Japan's industrial-political urban centres, causing more death and destruction than the nuclear weapons did. Secondly, and more importantly, and considered now the real reason for using the bombs, was the Soviet Union's successes against Germany and its turning towards its eastern flank against Japan. Fearing Russian successes against Japan, the U.S. used its chance to demonstrate their power in order to signal against further aggressive actions towards U.S. interests, especially as well in the European theatre.

To this day, Russia and Japan have not signed a peace treaty even though peace has broken out, as Russia retains possession of the Kuril Islands. The return of the islands will probably only happen if it becomes geopolitically expedient against U.S. waning 'moral' persuasion power in the region. Japan currently is one of the most nuclearized countries in the world with much of its domestic power coming from nuclear power plants. Having accepted the lie of the peaceful uses of atomic power in spite of their own experience, Japan has accumulated large stores of weapons material - plutonium - along the way, 47 tons, enough for 6,000 nuclear weapons. Presumably Japan also has the technical knowledge available in order to construct its own weapons should it ever decide to proceed along those lines. Japan, as with Germany, remains an occupied power by the U.S., partly for containment of Russia and keeping the Korean kettle boiling, but also because of the success of Mao's communist insurgency in China.

China had been in decline for a long time. Previously a seafaring nation with trade and commerce extending across the Indian Ocean to Africa, in the early 15th Century the rulers stopped these overseas missions. This occurred as the rising powers of European empires began their global quests for colonies and riches, using their warships, a military attitude, and the various royal prerogatives for conquest. China slowly succumbed to European powers first, then later to U.S. power. Using gunship diplomacy the European powers carved out a series of trade regions, spheres of influence, protected by treaties forced onto the Chinese leaders. The European's benefits included immunity from prosecution of Chinese law within the protected enclaves, and as always, a role was reserved for Christian proselytizing, a fundamental way to altar a culture and its attitudes towards the imperialists - or so it was hoped. After all, an invisible all powerful being demanding supplicance and obedience is a wonderful ally against rebellion.

Many internal factions struggled against each other as China shed its emperor and became a republic in the early 20th Century. Sun Yat Sen, at times working domestically and other times operating from offshore, led the transition, bringing along an acolyte, Chiang Kai Shek. During the ups and downs alliances were also made with the Chinese Communist Party. In amongst the domestic turmoil, the Boxer Rebellion attempted to kick out the foreigners, eventually defeated by the many military units sent to repress it by the European countries involved as well as from the U.S. Russia attempted to take advantage of Chinese weakness mainly interested in Manchuria for its resources and access to Pacific waters and faced off with Japan who were similarly interested. The conflict over Manchuria was settled in Japan's favour after the 1905 Russo-Japanese war. Later in 1937 Japan invaded the rest of China, setting up a situation with large repercussions for the Chinese and their desire for an independent country free from any foreign influence.

Before the Second World War China was simply a mess. Riven by domestic factions, controlled by foreign influences, invaded and occupied by Japan, its future was entirely unpredictable. When Chiang Kai Shek split with the communists he began receiving U.S. financial, military, and political support, leading the Kuo Min Tang or Nationalist Party (created by Sun Yat Sen). In spite of the rhetoric, Chiang never gained the domestic popularity claimed by those supporting him. Mao Tse-tung, head of the communist party, received more domestic support as the communists observed their strict code of conduct while conducting their military and civic functions in the areas they controlled. While Chiang fought mostly domestic competitors, of which the communists were the main target, Mao and the communists remained the main resistance to the occupying Japanese forces.

During the Second World War, after the U.S. declared officially, the same patterns continued. After the war, with the Japanese forces out of the picture, the nationalist-communist fight continued and intensified. For a short while the communist forces were on the run, best remembered by the historic "long march" by Mao while evading the nationalist forces. More and more money and materials were provided by the U.S. to Chiang's nationalist party but eventually the communist party under the ever strengthening People's Liberation Army defeated the Kuo Min Tang, who made their escape to Taiwan. This created a military and political division within China, as the U.S. backed Chiang Kai Shek and the Kuo Min Tang, supporting them with military and economic aid.

Theoretically the Kuo Min Tang, founded in 1911, governed China until 1949, but they governed very little and controlled very little, artificially supported by U.S. desires.

For the U.S., the "red menace" was everywhere. The Soviet Union was deemed a global threat, with forces ready to attack in Europe, subversives operating around the world, and with domestic spies and sympathizers riddling U.S. government institutions. The Joseph McCarthy

tirades against anyone perceived - or who the authorities wanted to perceive - as being communist supporters ruined many people's livelihoods and careers before ending in 1954. China was "lost", its territory cleansed of corporate commercial and military foreign interests for the first time in centuries. It was not so much deemed a threat - except when the Vietnam war intensified - except as a lost opportunity for capitalist adventures, lamenting the loss of its markets and resources. Regardless of its public posturing, the U.S. retained a large conventional and nuclear weapons force primed and ready to attack, with different sources planning and calling for a nuclear attack on both Russia and China.

Russia exploded its first atomic bomb in 1949 and its first hydrogen or thermonuclear weapon in 1953. China responded later, and within a three year period from 1964 to 1967 demonstrated its new power with an atomic test, a ballistic missile launch, and then a thermonuclear device. The Red Menace could now be amplified and re-amplified many times, the postwar nuclear era was in full swing.

There were opportunities to prevent the ensuing craziness of nuclear proliferation and the later balance of "mutually assured destruction", defining a certifiably MAD world. Suggestions were made to place the weapons under international control, with civilian and global guardianship. A similar domestic idea was put forward, eventually leading to the "peaceful use" purposes of the whole U.S. nuclear industry, a facade for the manufacture of more and more fissile material and ongoing research for better weapons while offering very expensive electricity and increased levels of radiation exposure. Generally the U.S. wanted control, its secrets retained, its war plans kept ready to use nuclear weapons, its dominance in all spheres of activity not to be threatened. Global hegemony with full spectrum dominance became the goal.

Living with the bomb

The nuclear era had originated many decades before World War II as scientists had discovered the inner workings of the atom and discovered its significance for various purposes. The atom itself had been postulated since ancient Greek times (and probably well before if one stands outside Eurocentric history). It was not until the late 19th Century that the structure of the atom itself began to be understood. All fields of study became involved with the quest for information including biology and the study of Brownian motion, and obviously the scientific worlds of chemistry and physics as the two disciplines essentially become one once the observer moves inside the atomic structures.

Many names are associated with the research, too many to work through the various fields of study, experiments, and advancement of proposals concerning the structure and function of the atom. Many people played significant roles in the understanding of the atom, a combination of working to expand the understanding of those who went before them, and working cooperatively or competitively with their peers. Theories proposed became experiments tested, experiments became results to stand the next set of ideas and experiments on. Names such as Dalton, Thompson, Planck, Rutherford, Bohr, Pauli, Broglie, Schrodinger (of the dead and alive cat fame), Heisenberg (of uncertainty fame), Chadwick, Dirac, Curie, Yukawa, and many others less well known developed our current knowledge of the inner

workings of the atom. Albert Einstein is arguably the best known, but far from universal considering the state of knowledge around the world.

Einstein is generally considered to be the link between atomic theory and the initial idea that a great amount of energy is stored within atoms which given the right conditions could be released for man's use. After the processes within the atom were understood, the human mind naturally turned to ideas on how to utilize, to "harness", the energy available inside the atom. The ideas and processes involved with fission and fusion developed through the first half of the 20th Century. All the industrial countries had scientists working on both the quest for understanding, the quest for usefulness, and finally, the quest for a weapon based on that knowledge.

Enrico Fermi and Leo Szilard worked on determining the actual construction of a device that could create - and control - a chain reaction. At the University of Chicago in 1942 Fermi constructed the first working nuclear pile, a "critical" but controlled chain reaction. From that base the ultimate weapon of war, a nuclear weapon that released a mass of energy all at once, came into practical knowledge.

By the advent of World War II the idea and the knowledge that a powerful new weapon could be made was widespread. German, British, French, Italian, and Soviet researchers worked towards weaponizing the knowledge. The great fear in the allied west was that Germany was probably working towards their own nuclear weapon. This prompted the U.S. program, the secretive Manhattan Project, where the first useful atomic weapon came into existence. Fermi, called the "architect of the atomic bomb", worked with Robert Oppenheimer, labelled the "father of the atomic bomb", for their role in developing the weapon at Los Alamos. The first weapon was tested in 1945 and then used shortly after towards the end of World War II. Both Fermi and Oppenheimer died from cancer.

The generation born after the war, the “boomer” generation and those beyond have lived with the threat of nuclear war all their lives. Much of that threat is used to direct and control people, while others profit immensely from the large part it plays in the economy different countries. As witnessed at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and later at test sites, the power of nuclear weapons is awesomely destructive. As destructive as the first weapons were, the consequent production of thermonuclear bombs increased the destructive power significantly.

Not all of the destruction came through careful planning. The U.S. Bravo test on Bikini in 1954 at 15 megatons was three times more powerful than expected due to a lack of knowledge as to how reactive the lithium compound was. The atoll was destroyed, spreading radiation far and wide, leaving a radiated no go zone in the newly created crater where formerly an island had existed. The Soviet Union replied later with a 50 megaton device. All this destructive power was improved and increased over the following decades, a political and military threat encompassing the whole world.

The nuclear era coincided with the era of the CIA, the era of global “free” trade, the era of international financial hegemony by the corporate military empire, and the era of anthropogenic global warming. For almost four generations this has been the norm, the “new” normal for each succeeding generation born into an increasingly endangered planet. The U.S. empire and its demands has been the main progenitor of this global malaise.

There is no one moment when my conscience turned against war and empire. Not having any television until the ripe age of ten, I was not inundated with endless mind-numbing commercial advertising or glorious movies and games about some evil other that I should continuously fear. For whatever reason, the elementary school I attended did not practice the idiotic “duck and cover” drills, perhaps as the administration realized how ignorant they were, or simply because no one thought anyone would bother to bomb us at that time. The Korean War

was history to me, but the supposed Soviet threat, the Berlin crisis, the Cuban missile crisis, and the assassination of John Kennedy were all part of my nascent global awareness. When our household did buy a television, the main thrust of movies/episodes at the time was towards the cowboy versus Indian theme, the replay of much of World War II in documentary form, and news about the Soviet threat.

Even after plugging into the mainstream, I did not buy into the mainstream message, perhaps just not caring at the time, but also I had no reason to personally feel threatened by the Soviet Union. The Berlin airlift seemed strange when history said that the Soviet Union had been our allies against Germany. I was absorbing information, but held no conviction in any direction.

The Cuban missile crisis had a larger impact as it was splashed over all the media for several weeks. At the time of course, no one in the public sphere knew what transpired behind the scenes, but the impression came across that the Soviets were really and truly the bad guys, a sense I do not recall believing very much at the time - it always seemed it took two to create such a mess, the pot calling the kettle black as far as nuclear weapons were concerned. Castro's revolution appeared to have been somewhat heroic to me for kicking out the gangsters, banksters, and corporations that kept the wealth and the land from the people. All these thoughts and ideas developed through my exposure to the news broadcasts and the TIME and LIFE magazines delivered by subscription to our household. Either they were not as strictly controlled by the politicians and corporations of the day, or I simply chose my own perceptions towards what they presented, and my views were more of a consternation as to why the Soviet Union was considered such a bad entity. It was not until the assassination of President Kennedy when the deeper realization of state skullduggery started to settle in.

I was saddened by the news of Kennedy's assassination as he presented such a hopeful image for peace. At the time I was unaware - as were most others - of his conflicts with the CIA, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or the power of the crime bosses of the day. Lyndon B. Johnson has been implicated in some presentations about the assassination. Certainly in hindsight Kennedy had sufficient enemies internally without worrying about an external Soviet threat in the form of Lee Harvey Oswald. Oswald worked in the Texas School Book depository from where he supposedly shot Kennedy, declaring to journalists at the time, "I work there....I'm just a patsy." At the time, watching events unfold and the explanations of what happened and how, it all seemed inconsistent and unclear.

When Jack Ruby murdered Oswald, and then Ruby's back story came to light, my belief in the official narrative faltered considerably. The Warren Commission with all its attempts to explain how one bullet could do all the damage to Kennedy and Connally and how three bullets could be fired from an old Italian rifle in ten seconds seemed unrealistic and "conspiracy" doubters were already questioning official descriptions. I did not know what really happened, did not develop any ideas about the how, what, and why, but then as now the official story is simply not credible.

Following the Berlin crisis, the Cuban missile crisis, and the Kennedy assassination, the coverage of the Vietnam war ramped up. Walter Cronkite became an evening regular, unfortunately always at dinner time, reporting on the increasing involvement in Vietnam. Watching in black and white the war became more and more senseless as it became larger and larger, more troops, more planes, more napalm, more body counts. By this stage of my life I was already a self-defined pacifist and the war did not make sense, and juxtaposed with the news concerning race relations in the U.S. it became a violent absurdity. Several events during this era highlighted my transformation to a truly conscious anti-war, anti-empire person.

The first incident, quite minor in the overall presentation of the war and the rationales and violence that accompanied it, came on the very same evening news. Some U.S. military brass, all dressed up in uniform with shiny buttons and epaulets and a military cap to top off the costume explained what the U.S. was going to do as they moved into Cambodia to stop the nasty Viet Minh from infiltrating into South Vietnam. Standing before a state of the art magnetic board this military brass of long forgotten status moved a series of magnetic pucks around as he explained how U.S. forces were to enter Cambodia and attack the Viet Minh in their hideouts. Listening to his banal flat voiced presentation it suddenly struck me that this man had no compassion for human life, he had no personal concern for his own units and whether they lived or died. Rather than sacrificing their lives for their country, their lives were being sacrificed for some other purpose - military power and control. No emotional content entered the display, it was just another game of checkers as the pucks were slid around the board.

It all tied in to the anti-draft movement that protested against the war games played by those in power, those who would never see the war up close and personal. It tied together with the racial protests occurring throughout the U.S. at the time. I had my Smedley Butler moment - war was not just two countries being belligerent with each other for stupid reasons, unfathomable reasons, but was a means for those in power to reach for more power while sacrificing the lives of their fellow citizens conscripted into their war games. It was a grasp for imperial control of as many others as could be realized, no longer about freedom and democracy or this nebulous crazy thing called capitalism and its implied necessity for that freedom and democracy. At that beginning moment, I still had no true idea and did not grasp how truly deep and dark the motivations and actions were for the sake of corporate empire.

In the same era, in April 1967 I visited distant family members in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for three weeks. Raised in a calm mostly white neighbourhood in a city with a

noticeable Chinese and East Indian population, I could not truly comprehend the depth and seriousness of U.S. racial attitudes. Along with the Vietnam war, Walter Cronkite also provided stories from the domestic front, the many racial protests and demonstrations taking place mostly in the Southern U.S. - I could see and hear it on television but it was not palpable, no visceral reaction even as I did hold the intellectual rejection of the racial ignorance presented. Two minor encounters changed that, or more correctly the avoidance of two minor encounters triggered the emotional response.

My visit to Philadelphia included several walks through the downtown part of the city. It may seem strange that such a minor encounter would trigger the knowledge through the feeling of the fear on the streets. However it was simply the hostility expressed by the police on the street, an attitude in my mind saying "don't look me in the eyes". They all wore wrap around sunglasses, they all had open carry guns unstrapped in holsters, and they all seemed to swagger, a warning to people to move out of the way. In my naivete and compared to the peace officers of my hometown, these dudes did not appear at all approachable or friendly, all too ready to respond quickly and painfully. This of course was downtown Philadelphia a few months before the deadly race riots broke out across many major cities in the U.S.

Another day my cousin guided me through some of the tourist features - the Liberty Bell, the William Penn statue atop city hall - and then we were to go on to a particular church. As I stepped off the curb headed towards it, he indicated "No, we can't go that way." A bit confused as to why, he indicated that the intervening neighbourhood was black. I truly did not understand the depth, the profoundness of that simple statement even though it stuck with me as it seemed rather strange to not take a direct line to someplace because of certain people living there. So instead of walking three blocks, we walked nine blocks around the neighbourhood.

Both these moments now seem minor, but to my developing mind, they had a powerful impact. After the race riots, the whole agony of the Civil Rights movement, the memories of those incidents remained, reinforced. It did not make me think anything negative about black people, but made me wonder what kind of sick society was so afraid of one of its own racial components that one could not walk down a certain street. Slavery was over, but obviously racial hatred and denigration thrived in the supposedly "Just Society" to be, and fear of the 'other' was a significant component of western society. The news I had seen on television was real, and the attitudes and motives took on a whole new meaning - deeper and uglier.

Perhaps, more than likely, these experiences underlay a current events essay written in my Social Studies class. The actual topic concerned the economy or economic features of the black communities leading to the rioting. I went beyond the pure economics as the explanations I read all tied into a pattern of racial segregation enforced by combinations of work availability, Jim Crow laws, underlying attitudes supporting the racial hatred of this particular group - prejudice - and the cultural geographies of race established in the major U.S. cities. My main source of reference, beyond the above experiences, were many issues of TIME magazine reporting on the different factors involved with various protests. These days I avoid TIME as it is generally infotainment for the masses but then it carried longer more well constructed and more critical commentary on current events in the U.S.

To this day I often wonder about the experiences of the few black people I see in my mostly geriatric white small town community. What are their experiences? What are their feelings? What discomfort level are they - or not- living with in this community? On the other hand, walking the streets of downtown Vancouver, or its beaches - anywhere for that matter - there is such a mixture of races and ethnicities and languages and it all feels very comfortable and, yes, normal. It is the world as it should be, integrated yet diverse, without my being blind to

the knowledge that racial problems do still exist. Incidentally, I received an "A" on the paper, probably the only one I had that year.

As well as being the year of racial violence, it was also the year of the "summer of love", the blossoming of the hippie counter-culture. Racial issues accompanied it but also burgeoning at the time were actions and information concerning the environment, the Vietnam war, the nuclear tests, and the Cold War's nuclear threats in general were all part of the anti-establishment culture. In hindsight the focus would have to be on the war, its mounting losses, mounting incredibility, and the inequalities of the draft system. It has been argued that if conscription had not existed then, and the military had been all voluntary, the cultural resistance may not have had nearly as much impetus and force. The sights of draft avoiders burning their draft cards publicly, the disturbing views of the maimed soldiers attempting, frequently unsuccessfully, to adapt to life back in the U.S. after the violence and mayhem of Vietnam all added to the extent of the protests. All these issues strengthened over the years, creating a pop culture questioning the very foundations of contemporary society.

The memories are mixed but indelible. The Tet offensive in the later years of the war surprised the western powers, indicating that the Vietnamese were never going to give up, they had nowhere else to go, and they had already beaten back the French and the Japanese. The massive bombing campaigns illuminated the news screen almost every night either from some more or less local firefight - Khe Sanh comes to mind - or the insane Christmas bombing of Hanoi near the end of the war. Nightly body counts were announced and I remember one pundit remarking that more enemy were killed than there were enemy. Johnson and McNamara continued spouting their war dogma. Anti-war protests increased in size and violence and the notable memory from that is the Kent State murder of four protesters during a protest against the Cambodia bombings. During the 1968 Democratic National Convention - itself a minor

battlefield between those wanting to continue the war and those wanting to end it - a protest was suppressed violently by some 27 000 state and federal officers. The Black Panther Party had its origins within the racial violence of the day. The assassination of Martin Luther King occurred within the racial context, but in truth may have been more for his strong anti-establishment pro-socialist ideas rather than his calls for racial liberation - both being tied together for the realization of a truly peaceful world. All the violence, domestic and foreign, seemed endless.

It was the era of the folk song revival as many groups and individuals wrote about peace and war. Bob Dylan and Joan Baez appeared to be the 'leaders' of the movement if there were any leaders, as it was more of a pacifist form of protest by a group of like-minded individuals who independently formed similar ideas and expressions. Pete Seeger provided an eloquent folksy voice to the protests, banned by most mainstream programs. The Smothers Brothers regularly sponsored the folk culture on their own mainstream show by bringing in other anti-war musicians, leading eventually to the cancellation of their show. Protest music entered the mainstream as well with Country Joe and the Fish, Creedence Clearwater, and John Lennon among many who wrote against the war and its political-corporate sponsors.

Many things were kept from public view. The Phoenix program of torture and murder did not, for obvious reasons, appear on public news programs. The relocations of many of the peasant farmers, destroying villages and agricultural fields in order to "save" them did not become common public knowledge. The massive use of chemical warfare received no concern for its war crimes classification, nor for its environmental effects, nor for the effects on humans, the long term legacy of health problems, birth defects, and cancers for both the U.S. soldiers and Vietnamese society as a whole.

Napalm was one of those chemicals, still used extensively today, and its horrors came to light in one particularly significant photo. It was a small event in the larger course of the war, but it displayed the savagery of the U.S. campaign normally hidden from view. The photo of the “napalm girl” spanned the world, showing a naked Vietnamese girl, crying in pain and terror, blackened skin showing where the napalm - jellied gasoline made by Dow - had hit her and stuck, running away from a village bombed by the U.S. (in order to save it, probably).

A larger event, one that carried far more political weight but not necessarily the immediate impact was the My Lai massacre revealing the murderous war crimes actions of U.S. marines killing the majority of people in a Vietnamese hamlet. After the war, and more individual accounts and memoirs surfaced, My Lai was exposed as being a typical action, rather than the “few bad apples” explanation of the military brass and politicians.

While the My Lai massacre and the napalm girl incident were exposed to public view, another event connected to the war but not making a big splash in the newscasts was the breaking of the gold standard established at Bretton Woods. Wars cost money and have been one of the main underlying causes of internal collapse of empires throughout history. U.S. debts rose significantly because of the Vietnam War, and under the gold standard the trade balances were kept under control by the physical ownership of gold. Needing more money to pay for its wars, not wanting to lose its gold in payments to other countries creditors, the U.S. unilaterally left the standard in 1971, effectively killing it. Money could now be ‘printed’ as desired, unhindered by something physically limiting it. The war effort and its costs could go on, aided and abetted by private agreements with Saudi Arabia to price and sell oil using only U.S. dollars. Military power and oil were and still are the underlying fundamentals of the US\$, of the U.S. economy in general.

The falling dominos rationale and the evils of communism provided the rationale for the war, both fallacies propagated by the political system and its supportive media. The media at the time was not quite as servile then as now, as the reporting on Pentagon Papers followed a year later with the Watergate scandal prompted much political commentary with both affecting the course of the war and the careers of politicians. The Cold war kept ramping up, with more propaganda continually thrown concerning the Soviet missile superiority. Eventually, after the Christmas bombing of 1972 in the middle of the above scandals, the war would slowly wind down. The peace agreement signed in 1973 signalled the end of U.S. involvement with the last personnel being helicoptered out in 1975 leading to the unification of Vietnam as should have occurred after World War II.

The costs of the war were massive. About 58 thousand U.S. military personnel lost their lives, over 100 thousand vets are recorded as having committed suicide, over 300 thousand were injured with over 70 thousand quadriplegics and multiple amputees, out of a total of about 3.5 million participants. Vietnamese losses were in the millions with many delayed effects from the chemical weapons spraying and unexploded ordinance of various types.

[\[//gulfwarvets.com/vietnam_suicides.htm\]](http://gulfwarvets.com/vietnam_suicides.htm) Laos and Cambodia suffered similar losses and the savage reign of Pol Pot can be attributed both to the leftover political situation from the war and from covert U.S. assistance. Another domestic blowback was the financial results of leaving the gold standard and creating the petrodollar in alliance with the Saudi Arabian theocracy as discussed previously.

Enter Israel

Another seemingly unrelated event occurred during the “summer of love”, one with far reaching effects both geopolitically and temporally. The Six Day war between Israel and three Arab states - Jordan, Egypt, and Syria - took place June 5 to 10 in 1967. It received big time play in the media, presented without any context and without a true presentation of the facts, many of which were repressed and misrepresented by Israel and the U.S. media. I recall both TIME and LIFE, my family’s reliable weeklies, splashing huge coverage of the war in photos and reports across many pages, extolling the heroic resistance of the Israelis from the Arab attack, a view I had no reason to argue with at the time.

After World War I, the British aided the colonial settler movement of mainly east European Jews to the Palestine Mandate, based on the policies stated in the Balfour Letter of 1917. It was not a law either for Britain or in the international sense but it committed the British to aiding the Jewish emigration to Palestine under the premise that the local Palestinian population was not to be harmed by this. The actions of the British occupying forces generally favored the Jewish settler, and as time passed the forces had to become more and more aggressive against both the Jews and the Palestinians, with the brunt of it directed at the Palestinians.

The Jewish population kept itself separate from the Palestinian centers, trading as necessity required but establishing their own independent units as much as they could. Militarily they formed armed militias, underground military units - the Haganah, the Irgun, and the more violent splinter group, the Stern gang. The British considered these groups terrorists as they fought against the occupation forces as well as being protection and enforcement units against the Palestinians. During pre World War II years they had already established underground supply routes and formed into coherent military groups, not without some internal squabbling.

During the war, they established much stronger units, receiving training and advice from their service with the British military.

After the war, hostilities against the British continued, and as with India, the British government signalled its intention to quit the Mandate. The newly created United Nations devised the UN Partition Plan, allocating sixty per cent of the land to the Jews to Israel, including the best agricultural land, leaving Jerusalem to be a separate international entity. The plan was accepted by most of the Jewish leaders, operating on the idea that this concession, however one looked at it, was better than nothing. The Palestinians, noting that the minority population with an even smaller minority of landowners were to receive most of the land, rejected the plan. Although it was just a plan and not a legal document, not part of international law, it is still used by some today to justify the “legality” of the existence of the state of Israel.

There is little legality to the establishment of any state - in spite of treaties most are established by force, then followed by the legalities of treaties of surrender, peace, concessions, and the recognition by other powers, other states for the new state. Israel knows this well, as after the Partition Plan and the departure of the British military, the former terrorists morphed into the Israeli Defense Forces [IDF] and initiated the ethnic cleansing of over 500 Palestinian villages and cities. Designated the Allon Plan, it was well underway when Israel declared independence, with the following war of independence fought against outside Arab forces in May of 1948. With better trained military forces, with established supply lines and beginning industrial armaments industries, and only a few instances of fierce resistance, the IDF had little trouble with the less well trained and less well equipped Arab forces.

When the dust settled, Israel controlled all but the twenty-two percent of the land leaving two parts, Gaza and the West Bank, and all but east Jerusalem under their control. Jordan sort of held the West Bank and Egypt controlled Gaza. A state established by force of arms, initially

recognized by the Soviet Union, followed by other UN members, Israel existed as a western ally, an outpost of civilization in a region rich in oil resources and a cross roads of international transportation.

The U.S. supported Israel but resisted some of the allure - or better the thrall - that holds it to Israel today. The Truman government supported the Zionist project partly from domestic worries about voters and partly recognizing its own interests in the Middle East against the Soviet Union and for the control of oil. After the Second World War, the U.S. as with other western countries helped the project by denying Jewish immigration to the U.S., where the majority wanted to settle. When France, Britain, and Israel conspired to take back control of the Suez Canal and to give Israel dominance in the Sinai, Eisenhower objected noting the need for a 'just peace' in the region for overall global stability. Israel withdrew but the rhetoric of just peace and negotiating peace has worked against Palestine ever since.

Up to the 1967 war, Israel simply existed as another small Middle east country in a region evoking little public/media attention especially with the problems concerning Vietnam and domestic racial relations in the U.S. The 1967 war became big news as it unfolded violently and quickly. As before, the news magazines of the day, along with the U.S. news channels, supplied a large visual/verbal wash of pro-Israeli news. The Arabs were the bad guys, having supposedly started the war. The Israelis were the heroes, the victims of a massed Arab attack, against their poor tiny country. The news essentially rejoiced at the swift victory over the combined Arab forces of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, rejoiced at the efficiency of mostly U.S. armaments over Soviet armaments. When it ended, after breaking an initial truce in order to secure Syria's Golan Heights, Israel controlled the whole of Sinai up to the Suez Canal, all of Jerusalem, and the Syrian Golan Heights.

Personally I accepted the media line, having no other resources or knowledge about the situation at that time. It seemed remote from other current events, a small vicious war by the heroic Israelis against the sneaky Arab attack. Obviously much was hidden from view, and the larger global picture I later developed had not yet informed my analysis of events. Beyond that, the war established parameters for ongoing regional and global problems and the hidden truths were slow to be revealed and are still not fully within public cognizance due to a combination of media compliance/supplication, the general indifference of the public, plus the strengthening of the U.S. evangelical Christian Zionists awaiting their Armageddon.

The main item surfacing later was the revelation by historians, validated by anecdotal memoirs and IDF archives, that Israel began the war with a well timed pre-emptive attack against the Egyptian air force caught resting on the ground during a morning 'shift change'. The impetus came from Israeli generals looking at a situation they knew they could win, supported by the Zionist ideals for the conquest of Eretz Israel. Egypt was involved in the Yemen civil war of that era, with as many as 60 thousand troops fighting, an engagement fully detrimental to their fighting effectiveness.

Within the overall conflict a smaller event occurred that should have made the news but was effectively squelched. It occurred in international waters off the Egyptian coast, near Gaza - the attempted sinking of the USS Liberty. The Liberty was a lightly armed spy or surveillance ship sent to the eastern Mediterranean to monitor communications, probably all communications from all sides for a possible variety of reasons ranging from a simple need to know to concerns about possible Soviet intervention. After locating and checking out the ship which clearly flew the U.S. flag and communicated its status to the initial reconnaissance planes, the Israel's attacked using a combination of jet fighters and smaller naval patrol boats. Unable to defend itself, the ship endured several hours of attack, yet in spite of hits by bombs and torpedoes, it

did not sink. Nearby U.S. forces initially responded to calls for assistance but were called back by their superiors. In the aftermath, the surviving members of Liberty crew refused assistance from an Israeli patrol boat and waited until U.S. assistance belatedly showed up. In all, thirty-four personnel were killed and 171 wounded. The incident was glossed over in public and disappeared from history, more or less.

After making cosmetic repairs overseas the Liberty sailed home and was soon decommissioned, the crew silenced. The official story of misidentification by the Israelis do not stand up to separate individual accounts, including those in the Israeli military acknowledging they recognized the ship as belonging to the U.S. Many questions are left about the intent of the Israelis, the intent of the U.S., in essence, the reason for the cover up. What it does signal is that as much as the U.S. had been aiding Israel before, they were now operating and cooperating at a deeper geopolitical level, holding secrets that neither wanted the world to know about.

The war set the stage for most future events in the Middle East and beyond, events all inclusive of financial and geopolitical strategies. Before the war, Israel built its main nuclear reactor at Dimona with French, U.S., and Norwegian technical and materials assistance. By the 1967 war they had successfully made - and perhaps with South African assistance - tested a nuclear weapon. They have always maintained an official no comment policy on its nuclear endeavors, but the revelations of Mordechai Vanunu and subsequent slips of the tongue clearly indicate Israeli success at making deliverable nuclear weapons. As an increasingly significant U.S. ally and partner, no push by the U.S. has been made to make it official or to join the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty [NPT]. The "Samson option" has remained a ghostly backbone to Israeli military and geostrategic policy ever since.

1979

The year 1979 proved significant in a series of events seemingly unrelated at the time, or so the mainstream media made it seem so.

After the 1967 war Israel became an increasingly significant factor in my awareness of global affairs as it remained within the news cycle, lightly at first, and then with another significant event, the Yom Kippur war. On October 06, 1973, Egypt's Anwar Sadat attacked Israeli forces in the Sinai, quickly overcoming the Bar Lev defensive line, moving it to re-occupy its Sinai territory. Israel successfully counter-attacked and after backroom manipulations the U.S. and Soviet Union managed to halt the fighting. An immediate result of the war was a Saudi led oil embargo against those countries supporting Israel, mainly the U.S. but essentially all western supporters of Israel. This obviously resulted in a large price increase in the price of consumer oil and industrial oil. The U.S. economy suffered from the oil shortage and the rising cost of everything dependent on it - most of the economy as it is an oil based economy from agriculture through to pharmaceuticals. The new price brought new wealth to the Arab states, who in turn recycled the dollars back through the U.S. economic system.

After a long process of negotiation, it all led to the 1979 peace agreement, the Camp David Accords. Part of the peace arrangement was Iran supplying oil to Israel in compensation for the loss of Sinai oil. From all the politicizing and media commentary Israel's image became more prominent and its flaws more pronounced. I started to recognize that Israel was at least partly responsible for its own problems.

The Shah of Iran led a U.S. supported regime, nominally democratic but controlled domestically by the SAVAK, Iran's secret police service. Originally established after the coup that overthrew the democratic Mossadegh government (1953), the Shah led Iran in a U.S. military alignment friendly to Israel and incorporating much U.S. military and financial

assistance, including development of a nuclear industry. It was hostile to the Soviet Union, a protection against propagandized Soviet expansion into the region. In 1979 rising domestic anger against the suppression by the regime, a poor economy, and the rise of religious fundamentalism fueled the events overthrowing the government.

A Shia theocracy was established, creating a strongly antagonistic position towards both the U.S. and Israeli governments. It was greatly exacerbated by the seizure of the U.S. embassy, the holding of embassy staff as hostages, and the revelations to the new Iranian government concerning U.S. influence within the Shah's regime. The hostage taking made consistent headlines and played a large role in the defeat of Jimmy Carter and the election of Ronald Reagan. After a botched rescue attempt and many negative news headlines, Carter lost to Reagan. After Reagan's election the hostages were released, with some sources suggesting - believably, knowing how the U.S. operates - that the release was negotiated by Reagan supporters to be timed for after his election.

Another major 1979 event occurred with the Soviet 'invasion' of Afghanistan. For many years an elected socialist government attempted to introduce more progressive ideas into a conservative Afghan society. To a degree they were successful, supporting women's rights, education, and medical services, building civic infrastructure, but the ongoing domestic turmoil allowed the U.S. to subvert government operations and entice the Soviet military to come to the assistance of the beleaguered Afghan government. Afghanistan, part of the British imperial "Great Game" vis a vis India, China, and Russia, now suffered the imperial U.S. version, Zbigniew Brzezinski's "Grand Chessboard", supported by foreign policy advisor Henry Kissinger, and as always and everywhere, the covert operations of the CIA.

Leonid Brezhnev took the bait and sent the Soviet military into Afghanistan to support the government. In the background the U.S. manoevered to set up a Soviet 'quagmire' as the

U.S. sought revenge for its defeat in Vietnam. Gathering and training fundamentalist Muslims, working through Pakistan's military and ISIS, its secret service, the U.S. created the Afghan mujahideen, Reagan's "freedom fighters", today's terrorists. This set the stage for not only the ten year long Soviet attempts at gaining control, but also the multi-decades long war on terror.

These three events of 1979 - the Egyptian-Israeli peace, the Iranian revolution, and the Soviet entrance into Afghanistan - established in my mind a much larger less discreet image of U.S. imperial adventures around the world. The events tied separate actions together under the panoply of U.S. military-industrial hegemony attempting to destroy, destabilize, and eventually control all of Eurasia.

As somewhat of a side issue, Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, another long exhausting fight between a secular Baathist government in Iraq and the fundamentalist Shias of Iran. Israel and the U.S. played each side against the other as the war essentially stalemated with massive casualties on both sides. The west hoped the two sides would both be so weakened that Iraq would no longer threaten Israel, and Iran could no longer sustain its anti U.S. theocracy. Tying the globe together the Iran-Contra scandal drew connecting lines between Iran, the CIA, the U.S. government and the ongoing subversive war in Guatemala. The tentacles of the U.S. empire stretched, strengthened, and entangled large seemingly disparate events and characters into a view of the U.S. imperial grasp as a global phenomenon.

Domestically, secure at home in western Canada, the big issue after the Vietnam war ended was that of nuclear weapons. Canada had previously rejected the placement of nuclear weapons on its soil, then accepted them, and after years of protests, finally terminated their presence on Canadian soil in 1972. As usual, the protesters were labelled as 'communist' a label not as sinister in Canada as in the U.S., but not without its political and security concerns.

In an action that had later widespread consequences around the world, Canadian political and environmental activists organized protests against the Amchitka Island nuclear test scheduled in 1971. As my small part, I participated in a UBC organized protest at the Peace Arch border crossing, stopping traffic for a short while. Border security at the time was minimal in comparison to what might come to pass if the same form of protest were to occur currently. The protests were organized in part by Bob Hunter, shortly after the leader of the Greenpeace organization, with the newly christened ship The Greenpeace heading towards Amchitka in protest. The test went ahead, but the foundations for Greenpeace activism globally had started.

During the 1960s, -70s, and -80s the stockpiles of nuclear weapons on both sides increased dramatically with combined totals from all countries reaching above 60 thousand warheads in 1985. No longer was war limited to a relatively small arsenal deliverable by long range bombers, nuclear war had become a hair-trigger reality of dozens of thousand of powerful warheads deliverable by intercontinental ballistic missiles launched from land and sea based platforms, while retaining the long range nuclear bombers - in U.S. parlance, the nuclear triad.

The larger numbers created the scenario for the mutually assured destruction power of these otherwise useless weapons. The larger yields were and still are incomprehensible to most people. One of the leading anti-war, anti-nuclear proponents, Dr. Helen Caldicott strived to bring awareness to the dangers of the blast itself, the lingering and ongoing long term effects of radiation, and the then dawning awareness of the possibility of a nuclear winter. Official government authorities could not deny the massive explosive firepower of nuclear weapons, they have tried and to a degree have succeeded to downplay the effects of both radiation and nuclear winter scenarios.

In the 1980s Ronald Reagan ramped up the rhetoric against the Soviet Union, the “evil empire”, continuing the decades long canard of Soviet missile supremacy - the invented missile

gap that never existed. The Soviet Union eventually carried more warheads for a very brief tenure on top of the list, but that collapsed quite quickly with the fall of the Soviet Union and the various nuclear treaties accompanying that. The U.S. nuclear industry profited enormously from the increasing requirements for more and more sophisticated weapons and all the hype about the evil empire and the missile gap only served to enhance the profits of the industry and their supply lines scattered through a large number of states, corralling the constituents into the profits of war mongering.

At this point in time the increasing government debts had not yet tied themselves together with all the war rhetoric, appearing as separate categories, to be dealt with as separate items. In hindsight they have always been linked as the military increasingly dominated most aspects of foreign affairs. And the wars continued. The Soviet Union had increasing difficulties in Afghanistan against the U.S. funded mujahideen, whose use of U.S. made Stinger missiles increased the level and lethality of the fighting. Israel increased pressure on occupied Palestine territories (really all of Israel) receiving substantial U.S. funding as part of the Egyptian peace deal (from which Egypt profited as well), much of the rewards funding the establishment of new settlements in the occupation zone. The majority of the money became outright grants used for military purchases from the U.S. Profits and wars walked hand in hand in the U.S. corporate world.

Other little wars kept popping up. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the “iron lady” of Britain, Reagan’s soulmate in the United Kingdom, fought a war of the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic close to and claimed by Argentina. Reagan, not to be outdone, staged his own little war on Granada, theoretically in order to “rescue” some 600 U.S. medical students (receiving training from Cuban doctors?) but true to form in eradicating another socialist government that threatened the mighty U.S. In Central America, Guatemala continued its

ongoing 'civil' war, with the government side assisted with U.S. equipment and advisors, and the ongoing military training from the notorious School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia, now known as Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) and still training Latin American military and paramilitary forces. Panama suffered ongoing treatment at the hands of the CIA and the U.S. drug wars culminating in another wonderful little war deposing Panamanian leader Noriega and installing a U.S. friendly regime.

On the global front, away from the influence of the Monroe Doctrine's ongoing enforcement, Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 in order to chase the Palestine Liberation Army out of the region, previously chased out of Jordan. After devastating attacks on civilian and PLO targets, the PLO were given passage to Tunisia. The attacks included the massacre of Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Shatila camps, actuated by a Lebanese militia, the Christian Phalange, under the not so watchful eye of Ariel Sharon, the Israeli military commander in the region at the time with the IDF. The biggest headlines did not come from this massacre but from the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, killing 241 U.S. military personnel. This led to the withdrawal of U.S. ground forces but the U.S. navy, most famously the USS New Jersey, remained to shell forces hostile to Israeli involvement in the area. Increasingly, U.S. and Israeli actions were coordinated in the Middle East.

The invasion became an occupation when Israel pulled out of Beirut but settled into a 'defensive' zone in southern Lebanon. The rising power of Hezbollah, an indigenous religious group supporting the Muslim population, created rising costs in financial and material terms for the Israelis who pulled back to the official border line in May, 2000, eighteen years after the initial invasion.

Israel was in it for its own benefit, regardless of U.S. interests, in order to gain as much as it could from U.S. financial sources and military sources. Always pleading the victim,

increasingly framing the attacks against its forces as Arab terrorists, the power of Israeli influence on U.S. politics became obvious. Ever since World War II, U.S. politicians feared the apparent power of the Jewish vote, the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and the increasing political power of the fundamentalist evangelical Christian Zionists. By providing electoral support both financially and through propaganda supporting its own interests against politicians not supporting the Israeli cause, Israel controlled much of the foreign policy sector of the U.S. government.

For the U.S., beyond the Israeli political manipulations of AIPAC and the evangelical vote, two other factors maintained U.S. interest and involvement. Publicly stated at this time was the rhetoric concerning communism and the need to protect “our interests” - oil - in the Middle East. Somewhat hidden within that was the U.S. petrodollar, based on Saudi Arabia only using the US\$ to sell its oil while circulating the money back through U.S. financial and military corporations as discussed previously. Israel served as the Western military outpost in the Middle East, maintaining western power in the region, and as is more obvious now, allied with Saudi Arabia, the latter officially mouthing off against Israel, but doing nothing to support its rhetoric.

Gorbachev/Yeltsin - Soviet Union down; Deng - China rising; Putin - Russia rising

Near the end of his term, Reagan made an honest attempt to negotiate a denuclearization treaty with Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet leader. They almost succeeded except for Reagan’s insistence on creating a “Star Wars” defense initiative. Entirely speculative but maybe his growing dementia prohibited a truly critical analysis of the situation and the relative impossibility of establishing a Star Wars scenario, at least as envisioned at the time. Or

maybe the influence of the rising neocon aggressive war posturing prevented his ideals to be realized. Whatever the case, the moment passed, a fading glimmer of what might have been, only to be revived in an idealized way forty years later.

Gorbachev's "perestroika" and "glasnost" revealed the faults and impoverishment of the Soviet dictatorship, the words essentially signifying opening up the economy and liberalizing the citizen's abilities for critical commentary. This began in 1985. Beset with problems in Poland and the rising power of its independent labour union Solidarity and its leader Lech Walesa, having withdrawn from the bloodletting in Afghanistan in early 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the Soviet era in eastern Europe was coming to a close. After the withdrawal of Soviet troops began, followed by the promises of the Clinton government to not move NATO "one inch closer" to Soviet territory, the Soviet era ended in eastern Europe, truly ended with the reunification of Germany in 1990. The Cold War was over.

For a brief while the perception was that the moment for global peace had arrived, and in a manner it had. The U.S. dominated the world militarily although the Russian state still maintained a large nuclear weapons stockpile. China had not yet risen enough to achieve the status of competitor, challenger, enemy from the U.S. establishment. Peace loomed large on the horizon.

The Soviet Union no longer existed. In 1991 under the weak leadership of Boris Yeltsin the Soviet Union disassembled into its constituent republics, large parts of its former territory becoming independent states. The new Russia, while still a nuclear power had been seriously weakened economically and militarily and it settled into a serious recession. Events were leading toward the democratization of Russia U.S. style.

According to Francis Fukuyama, history was over, the neoliberal order as exemplified by the U.S. and its leaders was triumphant, being the natural order of the human world. Its rule of

law had proven to be the highest endeavour of democratic freedoms and individual liberties. All alternatives had failed and a Pax Americana was to rule the world - a short sighted vision ignoring many cracks in the facade of imperial success. Russia politically and demographically continued its downward momentum, forgotten by most of the world as a threat, treated as a commercial resource prize by a few dominant corporate-political liaisons.

Several undercurrents would later become major tides in turning the world's course of history away from anything remotely resembling peace. Russia's neighbour China had begun a long continuous period of financial and industrial growth after the death of Mao tse-tung and the popularized slogan "to be rich is wonderful" made its way into the lexicon of understanding China. While still not a dominant financial and production center, its rapid growth was leading it towards larger global status. The war in Afghanistan had become a domestic fight when the Soviet forces extricated themselves soon leading to the success of the Pashtun based Pakistani supported taliban - students. Mullah Omar ruled most of Afghanistan from 1996, establishing a strict sharia governance over the area he ruled. About ten per cent fell under the control of several other war lords joined together as the Northern Alliance, a group that later provided the gateway for U.S. intervention several years later.

Saudi Arabia sponsored its brand of Wahhabi fundamentalism, a Sunni based Muslim sect, throughout the Middle East and beyond into other Muslim territories. Many madrassas or religious schools were established, the ones of note for the coming debacle in South Asia were the ones established throughout Pakistan. At the same time, the Saudi based millionaire, Osama bin Laden, established and funded al-Qaeda, the base, an organization dedicated to violent acts of terrorism against governments complying with western demands and western culture. The peaceful jihad of the Koran became the violent jihad of Osama bin Laden wanting to destroy the west, in particular the U.S., by drawing them into conflict in a series of debilitating

conflicts throughout the Middle East and South Asia. After the U.S. had established its own form of jihad in Afghanistan by creating and aligning itself with and arming the mujahideen, the blowback from that had yet to be recognized.

Inside the U.S. itself a gradually developing group of neoconservatives gathered more and more power through the passage of different presidents. Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld, Douglas Feith, "Scooter" Libby, John Bolton, Richard Perle and others who later founded the Project For a New American Century - and its call for a "new Pearl Harbor" - held different and changing positions within the administrations and in various private organizations, corporations, and think tanks. This unelected group of "chicken hawks" determined the course of many governmental actions in support of Israel, and headed towards a global hegemony wanting to take down any and all those who opposed them. While the masses expected and were led to believe in a "peace dividend" from the perceived success in the Cold War over Russia, no domestic money flowed into infrastructure or socially progressive programs. The system increasingly ran on financialized wealth rather than the creation of goods and services. History was not over, but breathing deeply, gathering wind for the next set of events.

When Gorbachev resigned from his position Boris Yeltsin became president of the new much smaller Russia. U.S. advisors swarmed into the country, a country devoid of financial and commercial law, without a strong banking system, and no private corporations. The state/government repositioned under a new constitution, written by Russians under the advisement of U.S. academics, many from Harvard, the most notable being Jeffrey Sachs. The so called neo-liberals applied their "shock therapy" to an already declining economy, the idea being to break away from any remnants of previous Soviet governance - in short to open up all the state industries and resources for private enterprise capture and harvest.

A market economy burst forth out of thin air and millions of shares of former state run industries were distributed to the populace. As the economy crashed, people had little recourse but to sell their share to whoever would buy them. Unsurprisingly, many former Soviet officials quickly harvested the shares, creating the oligarchs that held sway over the Russian economy for many years. Much of the money travelled overseas, aided and abetted by western entrepreneurs taking advantage of the new financial wild frontier. The money bought assets and sought refuge in offshore accounts away from ruble depreciation and the reach of what little financial law there was. The oligarchs, corruption, and cronyism ruled Yeltsin's Russia, eventually creating a backlash threatening the rule of the oligarchs and their western partners and co-profiteers.

Interfering in foreign countries for financial and political gains was nothing new for the U.S. In 1996 Yeltsin's popularity had fallen to single digits inside Russia. The U.S. and its various government and NGO organizations mounted a campaign to have Yeltsin re-elected against the rising popularity of the old Communist party. Using a media blitz more common to U.S. elections - using mudslinging as opponents, creating a fear factor in the population - the U.S. succeeded in having Yeltsin elected again. It was a well documented, publicly known, foreign intervention in another country's election, signalled proudly on the cover of TIME, accompanied by stories of fraud and ballot stuffing to ensure the victory.

In essence, the U.S. owned the Russian government, controlled indirectly much of its financial operations and the economic and demographic decline continued. When emerging markets in Asia suffered a meltdown, the ruble threatened to follow with a large depreciation. In order to protect western investors, the IMF arranged a \$17 billion loan in 1998 essentially to cover earlier loans and help western financial dealers retrieve their money safely from the system. With falling commodity prices due to the Asian market decline, Russia's economy

continued to collapse. Not surprisingly as the economic situation worsened so did the demographic data: life expectancy dropped dramatically, births declined, infant mortality increased, the population as a whole declined. Russia rapidly became a nuclear armed third world country. Interfering in other countries and creating economic and political chaos appeared to be working for U.S. hegemony, and Russia became a side issue as the U.S. focussed on the Middle East.

With Russia sidelined China became more of an interest for its large potential markets, large resources (except oil and gas), and an abundance of cheap labour. The disasters of the Great Leap Forward and the cultural revolution had witnessed Deng Xiaoping as an opponent to some of Mao's ideas while remaining loyal to the communist ethos that had rid China of foreign imperial interference. After the fall of MAao and then the "Gang of Four", Deng became China's leader in 1978. Known for his earlier comment "it doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice", Deng opened China up to foreign investments, received recognition from the Jimmy Carter government in 1989 and later toured the U.S., visiting several large corporations including Boeing and Coca-Cola.

Remaining ideologically communist, Deng instituted the first reforms to the system, his first being the all important agricultural sector - rather than the state (local committees thereof) owning all the harvest, a quota was established beyond which the farmer was free to keep for their own needs or to sell or trade on an open market. The quota system was then applied to manufacturing and trades business allowing profits to be "harvested" or reinvested in other profitable ventures. This was old school capitalism in which the money saved was used to reinvest in productivity. It took some time before the financialized economy of rents and leverages was adopted from the U.S. Deng's cat aphorism was accompanied by the apocryphal saying, "it is glorious to be rich." Politically Deng's rule was not easy and

straightforward as party reactionaries had him ousted for a while until Deng's own clever counter actions brought him back to power. China was beginning its not so long march to prosperity.

No shock doctrine accompanied China's changing system. It carefully controlled entrance to the country, established rules on how to operate within the country, subjected foreign companies to comply with sharing some of the "intellectual property" secrets and information. Large corporations were eager to locate into the market, avoiding U.S. taxes and high labour wages, so much so that intellectual proprietary rights were handed over while the domestic U.S. manufacturing base went on an equally paced decline (not all due to China - the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994 saw many manufacturing plants head to Mexico for cheap labour).

China however was not an equal player in the market as the US\$ still reigned supreme. An essential difference in the markets is that the Chinese are capable of long term planning, a legacy of five thousand years of history and a generally centralized system of governance. Five year plans seem long by western standards used to quarterly profit seeking and reports on profits and losses, but the five years are only segments of a much broader temporal and spatial world view. China's rise to global multipolarity power status was not a short game, but one based on long term planning.

Several long term goals and interlocking strategies combined within the overall plan to move China into the global power sphere. These included accession to the WTO, inclusion into the basket of currencies making up the "special drawing rights" or SDR 'money of the IMF, an expanding financial/commercial sector, and a rapid and significant growth in domestic technology to aid in gaining independence against ongoing U.S. military threats. In 2001 China finally achieved its goal of accession to the WTO. This signalled to the world that China's

economy and trade would be more open to the world, more liberal, with the yuan or renminbi now on the international markets. China did allow more investment, but also gained a larger manufacturing base; exports increased enormously as those same companies exported many different products ranging from cheap plastic trinkets to more sophisticated electronics. A majority of this travelled to the U.S. creating a large U.S. trade deficit and a surplus of US\$ in Chinese coffers. Shopping at the nearest Walmart was shopping at the nearest Chinese manufacturers outlet store.

In 2016 having demonstrated a more liberal economic policy, China succeeded in placing the yuan into the IMF SDR basket of currencies. This is largely a symbolic move moving the yuan into the realm of currencies operating globally. Other factors affected the value of the yuan and its place in international economies. The ongoing belligerence of the U.S. in spite of the trade dependency - or because of it from other perspectives - and remembering the U.S. goal of global hegemony - forced the Chinese to work on other financial systems and arrangements.

China worked increasingly and openly, having stated its desire officially even if unacknowledged by the U.S. mainstream media, to reduce the role of the US\$ as sole reserve currency, aiming to join or to replace it. To this end, and with increasing assistance from a rising Russia (more in a moment), the BRICS nations established their own independent global bank and China initiated and many other countries joined in a new Asian Infrastructure Development Bank (AIIB). In spite of U.S. pressure to not do so, such stalwart allies as Canada and Britain have signed on as members of the AIIB.

China has negotiated international trade deals in local currencies, avoiding use of the US\$, avoiding the SWIFT payment system, and along with Russia developed their own internal banking exchange system in case of sanctions imposed through the SWIFT system that might

block foreign trade. Other initiatives include the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, now expanding throughout central Asia and on into Iran. More ambitiously, China's long term planning includes a New Silk Road or the Belt and Road Initiative with the physical infrastructure already in progress: high speed railways, ports, communication systems, manufacturing and civic structures are all spreading out from China's center, creating trade lines and alliances throughout Asia and into Europe. Beyond Asia, China is investing in many other countries in Africa and Latin America, avoiding the U.S. debt trap as used by the IMF and their structural adjustment programs.

Finally, indicating even more its long term financial planning, China has bought many thousands of tons of gold over the last two decades, mining its own deposits, and accumulating an estimated minimum of twenty thousand tons. Some of this has been put to use recently in a gold backed yuan based oil bourse signalling perhaps a future move to peg the yuan to gold or to make it fully convertible. Sooner or later, the US\$, as a pure fiat currency, will print itself out of existence and China will be able to step into the breach.

But that is moving into speculative territory, a place I generally fear to tread (as similarly I fear to tread into historical "what if " scenarios) and it is time to return to the late Twentieth Century and Yeltsin's successor in Russia.

Russia had bottomed out. Declining demographics, a weak and oligarch controlled economy, an outdated and ineffective military, and an essentially dazed and confused political system rendered the country on the fringes of international interest, at least in the news of the mainstream media. The breakaway republic of Chechnya, almost independent after the 1996 peace, continued its export of terror into the Russian heartland. Yeltsin more or less served at the will of the oligarchs and the Clinton government.

Serving in the Yeltsin government was a then little known bureaucrat, Vladimir Putin. Putin had worked in politics in St. Petersburg, served with the Soviet KGB in East Germany, held tenure as head of the Russian FSB, the KGB's successor. He worked quietly and effectively in all positions, someone who acted rather than talking dogma. He proved loyal to those working beneath him, beside him, or those who had appointed him to these positions. For whatever reason, Yeltsin elevated Putin to the position of Prime Minister, more than likely based on the political virtues of loyalty seconded by efficiency. It was not smooth sailing in the newly reconstructed Russia as domestic struggles combined with foreign influences greatly weakened the state in all areas. The slow dissembling of Yugoslavia revealed the weakness of the Russian position as it could offer no resistance from NATO aggravations nor offer any assistance to the region.

In failing health and with little political capital left, Yeltsin, in spite of all his faults, made a move proving critical to the survival of an independent Russia. With elections looming, he stepped aside and appointed Putin as temporary President of Russia in 1999. Yeltsin then managed the election process, for which Putin showed disdain - not for its democratic aspects but for the showmanship and rhetoric involved - and Putin was elected, officially becoming president three months later on January 01, 2000, . Yeltsin in resigning acknowledged the failures of his government, but wanted to have a peaceful succession, a peaceful transfer of power so uncommon in Russian history. Putin's appointment and election highlighted the loyalty and effectiveness demonstrated as he worked in previous positions supporting the Yeltsin government.

The decision appeared to have been accepted by the west, the U.S. government, the CIA, with equanimity. No great announcements of angst, or threats or challenges came from the direction of western governments. Perhaps, then viewed as a weak and declining state,

embroiled in terrorist actions from Chechnya signalling the possible breakup of Russia itself, no reason presented itself to think the status quo would change. Putin made no great waves, perceived perhaps to be simply another leader to be readily controlled and manipulated by the oligarchs and U.S. advisors. Yeltsin's parting words to Putin on the changeover were "Take care of Russia." [The New Tsar. Steven Lee Myers, Simon & Schuster, 2016]. It was a quiet peaceful transition, under rated by the media at the time as the popular bureaucrat stepped into the top spot with huge repercussions to global geopolitics yet to be seen.

Putin had significant problems during his first year, with the ongoing severity of the second Chechen war and the continued poor economic situation. The sinking of the nuclear powered submarine Kursk played out in public light revealing some of the stagnation of procedures both diplomatically and militarily in the new Russia. Those news items were overshadowed, pretty much eliminated by a spectacular event enabling and creating immediate and lasting transitions to global geopolitics.

Post 9/11 The indispensable empire.

There are only two events in my life that fit the clichéd opening “Everyone will remember where they were when....”

The first remains a very controversial moment, one that had more impact on the course of history than was realized at the time. When JFK was assassinated, I heard the news over the high school public address system during a class change. It was as expected a somber announcement including the announcement that school was cancelled for the rest of the day. The decision to close school early clearly indicated how important the event was for society at large and was not just a domestic U.S. political concern. Having followed current events reasonably closely in my early teens, my own emotional reaction, even without the significance of school cancellation, was a broad sadness and a growing awareness that the world appeared increasingly less benign, more violent, and not at all what appeared on the surface.

The second event also occurred at school, although this time I was the teacher, much more aware of global concerns, with an already strong anti-corporate, anti-imperial mindset well developed. Little did I know how much deeper and broader that understanding would become in the following few months and years.

Locally, it was a clear sunny September morning, and I had cycled to work as usual on good autumn days, arriving about a half hour before first bell. When I arrived and entered the school, another teacher asked if I had heard the news. As I had not - morning news and television were not part of my morning routine - I went to the library where a TV monitor had been set up displaying the live news concerning the World Trade Center attacks. As I live in the Pacific time zone, the major events had already occurred, but as tapes and comments were repeated and repeated, I do remember my first images of the two towers, their top floors

engulfed in smoke, people panicking in the streets, firefighters working at whatever clip the news channel showed, and then somewhere in the sequence, the repeated view of the buildings collapsing straight down into their footprint, steel beams being ejected, and concrete being pulverized.

School was not cancelled perhaps because at the time the real significance of the attack, other than terrorist blowback on the U.S., was yet to be revealed. When the students walked into class, all of them aware of the events, they knew something serious had happened but none appeared overly concerned or fearful. My first political thoughts were of a much more dangerous nature - would the U.S. use this as an excuse to use nuclear weapons against some or other perceived enemy? Such were the workings of my mind in relation to U.S. desires.

One of the brighter students tersely remarked as she walked in the classroom door, "The U.S. is just getting what it deserves." I offered no counter viewpoint, simply continuing with the day's routine, but silently acknowledging her awareness of current events and the possible and probable influence of her parents thoughts.

By the end of the day I had been able to put together the sequence of attacks, including the downed flight in Pennsylvania and the attack on the Pentagon (for which I thought it was too bad more damage had not been done). Surprisingly, it was already blamed on Osama bin Laden, all the flight manifests showed the names of and number of hijackers, all from Saudi Arabia and Yemen, someone's passport had miraculously survived where even concrete had turned to dust and steel had melted, and Tower Seven had somehow collapsed much later in the day from a few minor internal fires.

I do remember another not significant event that happened to me two days later. I hiked up the local ski mountain, another beautiful sunny fall day. What surprised me was the clarity of the skies - the mountain summit had an airplane locator beacon and the skies were usually

laced with contrails as the beacon signalled a transit turning point between major Canadian cities. It was a very pleasant moment, signalling how beautiful our world could be without airplanes streaking the sky and broadcasting their distant engine roars across the landscape. At the same time I knew it signalled the control the U.S. military had over North American skies.

What was really significant were the political actions of the U.S. right from the start. Signalled with the statement, "You're either with us or against us," the global war on terror had begun and it was going to be a long one.

However as time passed and hindsight grew, it was not a full out change, but a moment which permitted previously conceived ideas to become public and acted upon, actions that intensified dramatically the U.S.' agenda for hegemonic power, for "full spectrum dominance" not only militarily, but also financially, and thus obviously, politically. It also became evident as time passed, that as with the Kennedy assassination (coup?) not all was what it seemed. Far too many discrepancies existed, too many coincidences revealed, too many people profiting from this who may have had reason to allow it to happen, to want it to happen - all similarities to the Kennedy case.

The official stories did not fit within what was viewed and heard - most predominantly the "collapse" of both towers into their own footprints followed by the demolition collapse of Tower Seven that was "pulled" later. Common sense knowledge of physics should have made it apparent that the official story had problems. Many other discrepancies and inconsistencies existed, most caught on video, both in the overall cover narrative but also within various revelations in the political and financial worlds providing almost too much food for thought.

It is not within the scope of this story to discuss the relative merits of one idea over another, but in simplest terms, as with the Kennedy assassination, the official story is a lie. What I did see, can see, did discover, is an even deeper state, more violent state, more power

hungry state than I had already conceived. Essentially by following current events and contemporary comments - Vietnam angst; the end of history gloating by U.S. academics and politicians; through the wars in Serbia where once again war crimes actions accompanied imperial reach; and the many ongoing little military actions of the U.S. - my anti-empire thoughts were already well conditioned.

Yet I felt that I did not know enough of the situation even though I was aware from my own reading and viewing of current events that the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, and Israel all played some role in the imperial control of the Middle East. My research, based on a desire to understand the events of 9 11 more fully, more clearly, began immediately. Already a vociferous reader, I became ravenous...and the usefulness of the relatively new internet proved invaluable.

What was really happening in the Middle East? Even if actually carried out by al-Qaeda why the vicious hatred of all things Muslim on the part of the U.S.? Who was Osama bin Laden other than a terrorist - his history, his ideas? Who benefitted domestically from this new global war other than the military corporations? My readings took me everywhere: global finances and financial history; media control and manipulation; capitalism, oil, and international organizations serving the empire; obviously pure history of the academic kind, but also revisionist histories, religious histories and beliefs; and with the many sites for information on the internet, opposing and alternate viewpoints and historians. It all eventually came together in one big tangled story such that any topic could be subsumed into a wholly global perspective - and for current events up to and shortly after 9 11, it focussed onto one particular item.

The mainstream media in the west - Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand - was almost entirely black and white. "They" were the bad guys, evil incarnate; "we" were the good guys and therefore can use all means to catch and destroy the bad guys. It was pure

John Wayne, John McCain, Ayn Rand, Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan kind of material updated for the new century.

Even though the majority of the hijackers were purportedly Saudis, no action was directed at Saudi Arabia. Instead in order to support other actions, the U.S. attacked Afghanistan, a country they had ignored after the Soviets left. The Taliban - "students" - had taken over most of the country and in spite of their alleged hostility to the west, were negotiating for a major pipeline project and, more relevantly, were open to handing over Osama bin Laden and his base, al-Qaeda, if the U.S. could provide proof of his culpability. Either not having proof, or not wanting to stay out of the region as it is part of Russia's underbelly, the U.S. attacked Afghanistan, the world's lone superpower against one of the weakest, most impoverished countries in the world. The good guys were after bin Laden and plunged into what was to become their longest war ever, still ongoing. In Afghanistan, the U.S. came up against a gray world of warlords, shifting alliances, tribal allegiances, international interests of Pakistan and India (in opposition to each other's interests), and the interests of Iran and Russia.

Russia's response was sympathetic and supportive. Putin, still somewhat innocent and naive concerning the U.S.' ultimate goal - a world of chaos for corporate interests - offered aid for strategic purposes, opening Russian bases and air space in order to attack the Taliban from the north as well as through their partners in Pakistan. Not yet the future nemesis he was to become, Putin expressed a desire to work with the U.S. against global terrorism.

Iran also aided the U.S. effort, concerned about possible cross border tribalism and cross border terrorists stirring up trouble in their own country. This was not a publicly acknowledged assistance, partly as Iran was also on the enemies list, and partly as it did not at the time have external repercussions for the U.S.

After failing to capture bin Laden, who escaped to Pakistan through the mountains of Tora Bora, the U.S. settled in for a long stay, ostensibly to create an effective Afghan army to bring stability to the state. Bin Laden had fled to Pakistan, Mullah Omar disappeared, but the mostly Pashtun Taliban had nowhere to go as they were already at home, and willing to stand up to the foreign invaders, as they had done so for centuries.

The media world of the west became super patriotic, not allowing a dissenting voice or a disparaging word to be heard. President George Bush handled the public platitudes, homilies, and quotable quotes while Dick Cheney and his neocon cabal - Bolton, Feith, Perle, Wolfowitz, Wolsey, et al - set about creating the new world order foretold by the neocon's argument presented in the "Project for a New American Century" (PNAC). It signalled the desire for a dominant U.S. allowing no contender or competitors to emerge against their global control, initiated by their 9 11 "new Pearl Harbor."

The domestic scene also began a dramatic change as the Patriot Act followed by the Homeland Security Act set up a new internal security regime followed by other 'security' legislation and a militarization of local police forces. The Patriot Act was served up very quickly to Congress suggesting that perhaps it was an item ready to go and simply needing the right environment in order to enable it. The general effect of all these acts was to allow the unlimited harvesting of personal information on all citizens of the country. These actions were copied in part by other countries in the empire, more frequently to quell domestic protests than to stop terrorists.

The Israeli plexus

As my personal reading and research broadened it quickly became apparent that the focal point of all these current events was Israel - and not so much Israel by its little lonesome but Israel and how it received support from the U.S. in particular but also from other Anglo empire countries (considerably, Canada) and from the EU. My first published summary article "What lies beneath" (Palestine Chronicle, 2003) explored the right wing evangelical Christian Zionists in the U.S. who provided a base for Israeli support from Congress. Behind Congress and perhaps more influential were the neocons of PNAC, among whom many were Jewish and all were avid Jewish supporters, some with dual citizenship, as well as many Christian evangelicals. More influential yet was the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, which seemingly controlled Congress on any matter affecting Israel whether it be financial, military, industrial, security or as in most cases, all the above. Politicians of all stripes vowed their fealty to Israel at annual AIPAC gatherings, pledging their allegiance to a government able and willing to manipulate them all.

Several reasons made for this strong support for Israel beyond the domestic religious and political environment. From before its inception Israel was perceived as an outpost of western power in the Middle East, a bridgehead to the oriental world. After its independence the idea became more well phrased as being a "light" to the region and the world, the only true democracy in the area, a miracle of survival in a hostile political and physical ("a land without people for a people without land") environment. Ironically, the Christian evangelicals supported Israel from their apocryphal belief in the prophetic coming end times as espoused by the likes of Mike Evans, John Hagee, and the "End Times Saga" writer, John Ball. Ultimately all the Jews were to be gathered in one location - Israel - to either be converted or killed when the messiah

came again. This does not apparently bother Israel as the political and financial support, mainly directed at settlements, was well received by Israel while they waited for their own messiah.

Israel existed in a hostile environment, most of it centered on its very existence as a colonial-settler state occupying indigenous Arab/Palestinian land. In 1948 they had ethnically cleansed hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and force them into neighbouring countries or into refugee camps internally. At that time they instituted a previously prepared plan for the military governance and control of whatever population remained. The military in an area deemed as an occupied territory went against most of the post World War II standards of military conduct in an occupied zone as well as against common human rights standards as established at Nuremberg and with the Vienna Accords. This control and governance system was reinforced after the 1967 war. The control and later full out siege on Gaza, the world's largest open air prison, demonstrated and highlighted the vicious nature of Israeli military control. The atrocities committed in the West Bank and Gaza, the use of white phosphorous, the killing of POWs, the attacks on civilian infrastructure carried over into their attacks on neighbouring countries. Much of this never featured in western mainstream media news, controlled as they are by corporate conglomerates faithful to the empire, but to the Arab "street" they were the radioactive element creating on all consuming hostile malign cancer throughout the region. Supported by the U.S. government, presented in religious terms against a sea of surrounding Arab/Muslim governments, the global war on terror began its destruction of many countries, all tied to Israel in one way or another.

Oil has generally been accepted as part and parcel of these interactions, an idea present in the public mind if not fully understood for all its ramifications. As discussed previously, what was more important than the oil was the petrodollar, and to guard the petrodollar dissent against empire needed to be squashed. The oil producing Arab governments neighbouring Israel had

basically been silenced: Egypt with its peace agreement with Israel; Saudi Arabia, superficially vocal, but the vital part in the U.S. control of oil and finances; Jordan simply a puppet government also with a peace agreement with Israel; and only one exception, Syria, but they had never attacked Israel after the 1967 war and had little power or support to do so. Russia appeared to be out of the scenario. China was still rising, but not overtly hostile nor yet considered a threat, indeed a principal part of the new financialized U.S. economy based on debt. The Middle East became the main target of the new global war on terror, coinciding nicely with some Arab states recalcitrant with U.S. actions.

After Afghanistan was summarily 'defeated', Iraq became the main target. Historically Iraq had worked with the empire, most recently in the Iran-Iraq war. U.S. officials visited the country in signs of support - Rumsfeld's visit of special note - and received information, equipment, and supplies, some of which ended up being used to make poison gas for use against Iran and against domestic Kurdish problems. That alignment soured after Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait - another former Ottoman province rich with oil - and purportedly threatened Saudi Arabia. In spite of no real evidence to support the Saudi claim, and then proclaiming loudly about freedom and democracy, the U.S. cobbled together a coalition to push Iraqi forces back, but not to destroy the government of Saddam Hussein.

Following the first Gulf War, a prolonged period of sanctions and military attacks under the Clinton administration seriously degraded all aspects of Iraqi life. UN authorized sanctions were imposed and an oil for food bargain served mainly to support those in power. As the rhetoric against Iraq heated up after 9/11, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright responded to a journalist's question that yes, the 500 thousand deaths of children were worth it to get rid of Hussein. For the U.S., any means could be used to meet the end.

Rejoicing in the militaristic, anti-Muslim mood post 9/11, the U.S. set its sights on Iraq again, using the arguments of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) , both nuclear and chemical, and the tried and true platitudes of liberation, freedom, and democracy. In spite of reports made by Hans Blix, Mohamed elBaradei, and Scott Ritter concerning the lack of evidence for Iraqi WMDs, the U.S. contrived its own evidence to support the looming attack. The evidence for the WMDs was manufactured from aerial photos of indefinite and indeterminate structures and transports and was presented to the UN by General Colin Powell, then Secretary of State under George Bush. Much assistance was provided by Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair manufacturing 'evidence' from thin air and falsified documents. Around the world, tens of millions of people protested, mostly in western states, but the war proceeded as previously conceived, a display of "shock and awe" to liberate the people - certainly shock, but the awe more than likely came from U.S. political-military personnel excited to be allowed to use their toys in a demonstration of ego and power.

Once again, the real reasons were not open for public discourse. The overriding offense to empire was simply defiance, defiance expressed in different ways. Hussein supported the Palestinian cause by honoring the suicide bombers against Israel, and providing financial support to families whose members had become martyrs for the cause. Arguably more significant to the U.S. was Hussein's expressed desire to sell oil using the euro and avoiding the US\$. Oil for that reason and for domestic financial reasons needed to be controlled - as became evident when the invading forces protected the oil ministry building and oil infrastructure before anything else.

What was not found, nor was ever to be found, were the weapons of mass destruction. No apologies, no remorse, mainstream news played it down, lauding the great victory over a largely disproportionate weaker opposition. Even regardless of all that, the ignorance of the

general U.S. population shone through when polls showed a majority connecting Hussein and Iraq to the destruction of the Twin Towers. The majority believed the relationship connecting Hussein to the destruction of the buildings, a number that has dwindled somewhat over time. Similarly, many believed that al-Qaeda had a presence in Iraq, a belief that came true after the war in the chaos created by U.S. destruction of civic government and the military, such as it was at the time. Hussein was a secular Baathist - from the Sunni side of tradition - and had no involvement with al-Qaeda, nor did he want their influence in his country. Al-Qaeda arrived as the U.S. occupation ruled primarily from the safety of the Green Zone, while the internecine fighting between Shia and Sunni increased in intensity throughout the country.

False reasons, unintended consequences, and the empire of chaos rolled on.

Seven countries in five years meets resistance

Even as Afghanistan suffered its first months of bombing, General Wesley Clark revealed that the U.S. had already targeted seven countries for destruction over five years: Iraq, Syria, Libya, Lebanon, Somalia, Sudan, and Iran. Fortunately for the world it did not proceed as planned - if there actually was a plan and not just spur of the moment opportunism. Somalia and Sudan are ongoing crisis centers: Somalia having been torn up by various warlords in the 1990s; Sudan split after a protracted civil war with oil, gold, the petrodollar, and Chinese participation in the economy being factors for imperial interference.

Lebanon and Iran have not been directly attacked in this iteration of Middle East wars but face constant manipulations and threats, and if one considers sanctions to be an act of war, certainly a precursor to war, then they too are still targeted. Both of the latter two are also targets of Israeli hostility. Lebanon is targeted because it is the home of Hezbollah and

significant water resources as well as offshore resources. Iran is targeted because Israel needs a good enemy in order to maintain its victimhood, but also as a U.S. imperial outpost, Israel is the tool to target Iranian oil, trade outside the petrodollar, and general defiance of imperial authority.

These plans were unknown to the public in any official sense, but even the bias of the news media, if reconstructed properly, would lead to the conclusion that the U.S. empire was attempting to gain military and economic control over all the Middle East countries.

Much delayed according to General Clark's stated five year plan, Libya became the next country to suffer demolition at the hands of empire. The U.S. did not participate explicitly but was involved at different levels while engineering the attacks. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton seemed to derive great joy from her overseas war-mongering promotion in Libya. The excuse this time was not weapons of mass destruction as Gaddafi had voluntarily surrendered his nuclear program to the U.S. years earlier. The excuse was the contrived right to protect against a supposed genocide soon to occur in eastern Libya in Benghazi. Certainly Gaddafi was about to militarily eliminate a weakly supported Islamic fundamentalist insurgency, but he had not intention of mass murder. The so called right to protect dogma had been abused in Yugoslavia in general and later in Kosovo and was again abused in Libya, at least for anyone truly interested in understanding U.S. geopolitical intentions in the region.

From that a no fly zone was established under UN authorization - probably the last time Russia was hoodwinked into authorizing an action that reeked of U.S. interventionism. At the time, Medvedev was President and Putin was the Prime Minister of the Duma. The U.S. contracted out the real war effort to its servile NATO mercenary partners and they took it well beyond a no fly zone, into the zone of war crimes. Military ordinance and supplies, advisors, and aerial bombing of civilian and military targets were all used to assist the rebels, while fake

stories of atrocities kept the domestic audience in the U.S. entertained and servile. The end result is a destroyed country, with ongoing domestic “civil” wars, massive refugee immigration to Europe (later combined with refugees from Syria), a large increase in the spread of fundamentalist Islam in the form of al-Qaeda and ISIS into the Sahel, supplied in part by large armaments transfers from Gaddafi’s arsenal as well as U.S. supplies.

The real reasons for the attacks destroying civic infrastructure and governance capabilities are - or should be - all too familiar. Libya had oil. The oil fields were supported by hundreds of Chinese technicians and workers. Libya had gold with which Gaddafi had proposed a gold backed pan-African currency. For once, Israel did not appear to be a player, as Egypt, a defacto Israeli ally, spread between the two. The threat to empire had to be stopped and succeeded in creating another failed state and a new state of chaos.

The most memorable incident from the whole war for those watching on mainstream media was Hillary Clinton’s caustic yet gleeful remark, “We came, we saw, he died,” referring to the murder of Gaddafi by the so called rebels. No military tribunals here.

As chaos settled over Libya and simmered ever ready in Iraq, the protests in Syria provided the next scenario for interference. The combined services of the U.S., Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar came to the “aid” of the protesters. Unlike Iraq and Libya, Syria quickly became a wasp’s nest of intrigues short of all out invasion and short of an aerial bombardment campaign as per Yugoslavia/Libya/ Serbia, a vicious ground war with sometimes no real frontline spread through the country. The Syrian army proved to be effective to a degree in preventing a full quick onslaught against Assad and Damascus even as they lost ground through severe attrition and the near overwhelming support given the rebels by the U.S. and its allies. From Iraq, the relatively newly proclaimed Islamic State of the Levant (ISIL) morphed into ISIS in Syria and with support from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Israel and the U.S. established

a caliphate centered in Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria. ISIS is believed to have originated from the Iraqi Sunni military remnants, with al-Qaeda being its predecessor (and son of Taliban, son of mujahideen). Syria had more reasons than Libya to become a target for imperial aggression.

Israel provided the main reason to create chaos in Syria. No peace agreement has been signed between the two parties from the 1967 war. Israel illegally annexed the Golan Heights they had occupied in that war, desiring its water and agricultural resources as well as the military advantage of holding the high ground. Although Assad is an Alawite Shia, he runs a secular government, but is accused of working with Iran and Hezbollah: given Israel's record of illegal activities and war crimes atrocities in the region, that is a reasonable conclusion. Israel supported ISIS and other derivative al-Qaeda groups with medical, material, and information support. Syria is the only Arab country defiant of Israeli foreign aggression as the other neighbours - Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Jordan - sometimes make public protests against Israeli actions but are increasingly acquiescent and subservient to Israeli power and accepting of U.S. military and financial largesse.

Another factor is the neighbouring country of Lebanon. After its offensive attack in 1982, Israel remained in southern Lebanon until 2000. As a result of the rising demands of the Shia population domestically and the ongoing occupation, Hezbollah became a local force. It has served as an effective Iranian proxy - while retaining its independence of action - becoming an important factor in the survival of the Assad government.

If Islamic fundamentalism had succeeded Syria would simply remain as an Islamic state full of rhetoric and bluster but - a big but - constrained by NATO, Turkey in particular, and the Israeli IDF. A big but as Turkey's leader Recep Erdogan had other illusions concerning its role in the region, the Kurds had their ongoing desire for an independent state, Lebanon was

susceptible to attacks from any of the parties concerned, and Iran would be on high alert. Fortunately, Russia stepped in to aid in the fight against ISIS, one of the main actions that revealed the dubious actions of the U.S. and its hidden support, along with Israel, of ISIS' attempts to win Syria.

Syria also carries the oil curse, actually a double whammy as its oil resources face the usual impositions of the imperial petrodollar and all the hegemonic pressures that implies, and it also faces the geopolitical position of being in a strategic path for pipelines from the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia to Europe. These pipelines are proposed to avoid European usage of Russian oil and gas, a major problem for the U.S. in Europe, wanting to supply them with subservient compliant friendly oil from their Middle East regional allies, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.

Enter Russia

This idea introduces the now largest player in Syria - Russia. Russia has had a long standing agreement with Syria to maintain two small military bases - one naval, one air force - on the Mediterranean coast of Syria. In addition Russia has maintained military and commercial trade with Syria during the full extent of the post World War II time. During that time, Russia did not directly assist in any Syrian military actions, nor defend Syria from Israeli infractions across the border, and did not publicly react negatively to Israeli actions domestically.

While all the other wars were ongoing, Russia quietly set about reinventing itself. The Chechen war was eventually settled with the effectively full destruction of Grozny and the installation of a loyal governor, Ramzan Kadyrov, who pledged loyalty to Russia and remained fiercely anti-terrorist. Kadyrov himself ruled with tight control and maintained an Islamic base.

Closer to the center, the oligarchs were brought under control using a series of actions ranging from criminal accusations for fraud and corruption to reigning in and harnessing oligarchs to work with the state and not against it. The military shrank in size, switching to a professional volunteer system.

The military began a large modernization not competing with U.S. conventional force - although that does occur - but emphasizing defensive needs with the electronic cyber realms and defensive needs for modern high speed maneuverable planes, rockets, and missiles. Not given to U.S. style affluence and political gerrymandering, the Russian military budget remained comparatively much smaller. Rather than serving as a means to distribute political and financial largesse throughout many districts in order to buy support, the Russian defense industry had a more focussed centralized structure allowing for lower costs and very effective designs.

Domestically, the Russian economy improved, aided by higher oil prices and a relatively strong manufacturing sector. Social demographics rose significantly: wages were increased; pensions increased and paid; banking and financial transactions were cleaned and defined better; a new tax system was set in place, and enforced. Life expectancy, having fallen notably under Yeltsin after the Soviet Union's dissolution, began rising again. The birth rate rose, infant mortality declined, and although the revival of Russia was obvious to those who cared to look, it surprisingly remained a non-contender for creating a multi-polar world.

The event signalling a new Russian stance were events in Georgia, another state created from the remnants of the Soviet Union, formerly contributing many strong political personalities to the local scene. The new Georgian state contained its own internal problems for freedom and democracy, consisting mainly of two ethnic groups, the Abkhazians and the Ossetians, both of whom did not wish to part of the dominant majority Georgians. The two regions were granted conditional autonomy after a short military rebellion with the Abkhazians

comfortably nestled up against Russia's southern border, while Ossetia was a peninsular bulge in the side of the state.

Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili made it obvious he wanted to take control of the regions again. In the meantime Russian forces served as peacekeepers in the two breakaway republics. Saakashvili also made it obvious he wished to join NATO, and increasingly militarized the country with U.S. and Israeli training and arms. As with many areas wanting their independence, military force from the dominant side is usually the negative answer. Several skirmishes occurred along the border until August 2008, when Saakashvili launched his attack. More than likely he expected a weak Russian response and a strong U.S. response in order to fulfill his plans, but received the opposite.

The Russian forces responded quickly and could have readily overtaken the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, but withdrew to the Ossetian demarcation line. Neither the U.S. nor Israel supported Georgia, although the western media was replete with "Russian aggression" a label still thrown readily around by western politicians and media personnel. As a consequence Russia officially recognized the break away regions and essentially guaranteed their independence, while Saakashvili's corrupt government was kicked out of power. Now wanted on criminal charges in Georgia, Saakashvili has become a stateless wanderer, trying to improve his fortunes in Ukraine. There were no direct repercussions from the U.S. and NATO, a first crack in the rhetoric from the U.S. coming up against an aggressive and powerful defender.

While it quickly died out in the media, the U.S. military deep state obviously paid attention to the Russian actions. What the U.S. noticed was simply that Russia would react with a full military advance - or maybe not as the U.S. did not seem to internalize the message about the speed of the response, nor take note of the efficiency of a restructured Russian military. It is almost as if the U.S./NATO, NSA military intelligence remained blinded by the idea that Russia

had a creaky rusty organization. Someone somewhere noticed at least on the public relations side as during Obama's presidency the Russian aggression meme played over and over again, along with rising undercurrents about the "evil" Putin. As always a military state needs a good "evil" enemy to justify its existence and terrorism could no longer justify its obligations as the evil enemy able to stop the spread of democracy and freedom, whereas Russia resurgent was a readily identifiable physical and economic base defying U.S. interests.

The U.S. generally kept the missile gap idea alive in order to keep its military industrial complex well greased with funds, keeping the U.S. economy rolling along. The new Russia, still recognized as a nuclear power appeared much weaker, in particular at first under Yeltsin. Without huge budget increases - at least by U.S. standards - Putin's governance revamped and modernized the military seemingly without public acknowledgement of any kind from the U.S. The message was no longer missile gap but aggression and belligerence. Georgia provided a hint of what was to come yet the U.S. remained blind to its signal of greater military competence, an intelligence gap similar to Condoleezza Rice's lack of perception on the collapse of the Soviet Union. The situation in Ukraine woke them up to the new Russian refutation of U.S. covert actions.

U.S. NGOs and other non-military actors had created an opportunity in Ukraine to turn its government to a pro-U.S. attitude, using internal problems and dissension to organize the so called "orange revolution" in 2004-05. The U.S. won a partial advance as Yushchenko defeated Yanukovich in the next elections, but beset by domestic problems, corruption and the rule of the oligarchs (a common element with the fall of the Soviet Union), Yanukovich won the next election in 2010. His presidency involved pushes from pro U.S./NATO interests against those wanting to retain close relations with Russia. After spending \$5 billion dollars and receiving assistance from the CIA, NSA, several NGOs and a bagful of cookies from Victoria "fuck the

EU” Nuland, the right wing neo-nazi groups staged a violent murderous scene in Kiev’s Maidan, blaming it on the Yanukovych government.

The coup succeeded, Yanukovych fled to Russia, and for a brief moment it appeared that a pro U.S. neo-nazi government was about to lead Ukraine into a glorious future inside the EU and NATO. Ukrainians remained divided as they had throughout the electoral process, divided between East and West, with the stronger Russian districts, while not necessarily wanting to join Russia, wanted to retain the stronger ties to them. The new regime under the new Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, an avowed nazi sympathizer, attempted to control the state but their violent actions and violent rhetoric in Odessa, the eastern districts, and towards Crimea led to immediate resistance.

Eastern Ukraine is predominantly Russian speaking, formerly districts within the Russian Republic of the Soviet Union, donated to Ukraine by Premier Nikita Khrushchev in 1954, never suspecting the Soviet Union would collapse in the future in the manner in which it did. The region is the main industrial belt for Ukraine with large clean coal reserves and carried on significant industrial and resource trade with Russia. After the Maidan violence and the violence of the neo-nazi militias against their opponents, the eastern districts of Luhansk and Donetsk formed their own militias in order to block the neo-nazi militias in their hostilities in the region. The physical violence was complemented with the vitriolic rhetoric coming from some Verkhovna Rada members, the worst coming from the empire’s braided princess Yulia Tymoshenko and her remark concerning the Russians in eastern Ukraine, “They must be killed with nuclear weapons.”

With threats of ethnic cleansing and genocide, the Donbas militias achieved some success in keeping the attacking neo-nazi battalions and regular Ukrainian forces from taking control of the two major cities in each respective district. The attacking forces suffered heavy

losses of men and material creating the impetus towards the Minsk I agreement. When the fighting renewed and the Kiev forces were once again suffering large losses in the Debaltsevo cauldron, the Kiev government panicked for another ceasefire. The ceasefire, the Minsk II agreement has sort of held to this day, but the Ukrainian forces have continually violated its terms, bringing their heavy artillery to the dividing line, and have continued to use large caliber munitions to continuously shell Donetsk and Luhansk towns and cities and the lightly armed forward positions of the Donbas defenders.

Many attempts have been made by western media to lay the blame for the Kiev losses on Russian military support. No true evidence has ever surfaced for this, but undoubtedly Russia would provide material support and volunteer assistance for the defenders. To this day the U.S./NATO calls on Russia to live up to its Minsk agreements regardless of the fact that Russia's name is not on the agreement, they are not signatory to it. It is an agreement between the Kiev government and the two breakaway districts.

Crimea's situation contained similarities and differences. The military base and city of Sevastopol were established by Catherine the Great in 1783 and Crimea remained a part of Russia, a part also "donated" to Ukraine by the Soviet Union. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and Ukraine's independence, the Crimeans also wanted their independence from Ukraine - somewhat similar to the breakaway regions of Georgia. Two votes were held, one in 1991 and again in 1993 in order to achieve a high degree of autonomy if not outright independence. Kiev held the reigns of power and denied Crimea of its democratic wishes. After the violence of the Maidan coup, Crimea again spoke up for their domestic rights, but this time, unlike the Donbas, the Russian military was directly involved.

Russia had an agreement with Ukraine to keep its Sevastopol naval base and to keep military contingents on site. These personnel were activated for two purposes. The first action

was to neutralize the Ukrainian military forces in order to prevent any further violent confrontations. It was a successful operation allowing the Ukrainian personnel to withdraw to mainland Ukraine or join the newly forming Crimean independence movement. This succeeded without a death.

The second reason presented a far more sinister scenario for Russia as U.S./NATO forces were identified heading towards Sevastopol seeking to wrest the prime Russian base away, providing a deep water NATO military base on the Black Sea, within short striking distance of the Russian heartland. The Russian military moved quickly, unannounced, and secured the military facilities and the region. Again, no one died, the U.S./NATO military movement was thwarted, and the Crimeans generally supported the Russian move as the majority of the population were Russian. The western countries protested, but the citizens of Crimea voted by a large margin in favour of joining Russia itself. The Russia Duma accepted and Russia had protected its southwestern flank against more U.S./NATO deceit and confrontation. As usual, the western countries refused to acknowledge the vote, saying they were forced under duress of an occupying force.

Double Standard

That particular argument apart from simply being wrong highlights the huge double standard, the hypocrisy, of western propaganda over the many decades after World War II, and indeed well before then.

This hypocritical stance can be taken back to Cuba and the Philippines where anti-colonial insurgencies were denied their hard earned right to govern, becoming enemies of the U.S. who imposed their own puppet governments on the two countries. South Korea is a

prime example of elections held under duress. With the U.S. imposed dictator Syngman Rhee placed in power, South Korea - "protected" by many who had worked with the Japanese occupying forces - experienced dozens of thousands of citizens murdered who had opposed the regime. Had a vote been taken the Korean insurgent leader Kim Il-sung would have won, being viewed as a hero by the majority of the Koreans, and a unified Korea would have provided a much more stable northeast Asian area. Unfortunately for the Koreans, the U.S. does not take well to true independence movements.

Vietnam suffered a similar imposition of western power as the U.S. denied a country wide vote. Vietnam was not initially divided into two countries, but had been divided with a demilitarized zone pending a vote on governance. Done indirectly, with quiet collusion of Canada in not pursuing the UN requested vote, the vote would have favoured the anti-colonialist, anti-Japanese leader Ho Chi Minh. Instead, the U.S. once again imposed a puppet leader in the now newly created South Vietnam, the first of several, Ngo Dinh Diem, who again used violence against his opposition forces.

More modern examples include the U.S./NATO bombing of Serbia to aid the breakaway region of Kosovo. In Afghanistan the U.S. imported a government in waiting, Hamid Karzai, who had sensibly fled the country when the Taliban took over. He won consecutive elections, both held under conditions of U.S. occupation. The first elections in Iraq after the 2003 invasion were held under occupation and duress. The Shia Ayatollah al-Sistani insisted elections be held knowing his own side could achieve victory, as the rising insurgency pressured the U.S. against their own intentions.

In the one instance where truly democratic elections were held even then under military occupation and duress, the U.S. and other western countries rejected the results. In 2006 the Palestinians held an election for the Palestinian Authority council and the Hamas group won a

strong majority. The elections was considered open and fair by all observers, but the wrong guys won. Canada, the U.S., then all other western countries denied the validity of the election and withdrew financial support from the PA to force them to “correct” the error.

Hypocrisy and double standards abound within U.S. geopolitical interests. It has taken some time, but Russians and Putin himself seem to have finally accepted that regardless of the U.S.’ wonderful rhetoric about freedom and democracy, and their overweening hubris (yes a tautology, a double emphasis for a double standard), the U.S.’ main ideal is of global hegemony in a unipolar world.

The U.S. on the other hand seems to have problems of awareness that it is definitely not a unipolar world, but now has at least two other poles to contend with, Russia and China, quickly working to secure the Eurasian heartland with China in particular using its economic clout to spread its influence and advantage around the world. Russia at the same time takes an economic defensive position, divesting itself of U.S. funds, imposing counter sanctions against NATO (particularly harmful in the agricultural sector), buying lots of gold, developing independent financial communications, and more importantly, maintaining a level headed dialogue between and among a wide assortment of external interests. U.S. self acclamation of its supposed divine mission, its indispensable nation status, its exceptionalism, supports mainly its domestic and sycophantic audiences, when truly it is no longer the hegemon, but an increasingly violent and dying empire.

...and the rest of the world

So many other events occupied this nuclear war status of my timeline. All during this period, the Monroe Doctrine remained alive and well throughout Latin America.

Not a single South American country has been untouched by U.S. military intervention - overt, covert, or as trained by - or by financial/corporate interference. Salvador Allende's democratically elected government in Chile received the brunt of CIA and corporate sponsored anger in the September 11, 1973 coup placing Augusto Pinochet in power. Lauded as a victory over socialist corruption, the Pinochet dictatorship murdered tens of thousands of Allende's supporters. U.S. and allied countries, in particular Canada, extolled the virtues of the new capitalist government as the economy turned decidedly in favor of the corporations (banking, telecommunications, resource extraction) over the people.

Both Argentina and Brazil were dragged through the ringer of CIA organized political coups and IMF/World Bank financialized austerity programs. U.S. trained death squads assisted newly created governments in destroying any organized opposition. Peru received the same CIA interest in its anti-socialist, anti-peasant jungle wars in the early 1960s. Colombia, in spite of the U.S. wresting Panama away as an independent entity - or perhaps because of it - has remained a highly militarized narco-state, receiving large amounts of military support by way of the so called "war on drugs". Bolivia and Ecuador encountered the same treatment, both temporarily shrugging U.S. hegemony off their backs in favour of indigenous supported movements achieving governance, only later to lapse back into the U.S. military and economic embrace.

Venezuela is the long standing bad boy of current events. Watching the local news (for me, the CBC) and its non-contextual reporting on the disaster of "Chavisism" presents a misunderstanding of the long held attempts to control Venezuela's large oil reserves. Once nationalized with state profits directed towards helping the poor with housing, education, health and other non-capitalist ideals, the U.S. set about attempting - and unfortunately succeeding - in destroying the Venezuelan economy. This proved successful through a regime of financial and

material sanctions plus the added internal unrest propagated by the rich right wing controlled media. Recent events, under the direction of war-hawks John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, have gone well beyond that in full contradiction of international law and the UN charter in calling for a revolution of some kind to replace the current government with the imposition of their chosen one, Juan Guaido, as leader. Similar actions as those used in Ukraine, but with much more use of direct threats and an acknowledgement by Bolton that the real target is Venezuelan oil.

In Central America all but Belize and Costa Rica made it into the headlines temporarily. Costa Rica disbanded its military and created one of the most egalitarian societies in Latin America. In the Caribbean, Haiti has suffered for centuries after rebelling against French rule, mainly controlled by French, U.S., and Canadian financial and military intrigues. Racism is a significant factor as initially it would not do to have a former slave colony become a successful independent country. This began immediately after independence with French demands for reparations, through to a coup orchestrated by the U.S. and Canada to oust another popularly elected government, that of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, continuing overall under the financial tutelage of major Canadian banks. The small island of Granada was attacked by the U.S. as a non-compliant socialist government, the pretext being to “rescue” U.S. students who signalled that, really, they were not in any danger. It was touted as the U.S. getting over its “Vietnam syndrome”.

Cuba has received the brunt of publicity as the government of Fidel Castro, after kicking out the mafia bosses and the large corporate owners, turned towards the Soviet Union for support when the U.S. proved to be rather obstreperous toward the new government. Withstanding many U.S. attempts on his life, defeating the rag-tag Bay of Pigs invasion, surviving the missile crisis of 1963, using its military to support indigenous movements in

Ethiopia, Algeria, Mozambique, and Angola, and then being orphaned by the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba remains a successful socialist country. Its demographic indices for the most part outshine those of the U.S. in areas of medicine, healthcare (infant mortality, longevity, rate/incidences of diseases), and perhaps most importantly, sustainable agriculture. The U.S. refuses to drop its sanctions against Cuba and the lure of conspicuous consumerism and a hedonistic lifestyle promoted by the U.S. media remain the most powerful antagonists to Cuban success. While maintaining a facade of fighting terrorism globally, the U.S. protects anti-Cuban terrorists itself. Cuba is viewed as a potential untapped corporate market only requiring a concession to U.S. hegemony in order to prosper in the capitalist elitist world.

Across the Atlantic, Africa seldom makes the headlines, and does so mainly as the result of some bloody massacre or a large famine, and then only for a brief period of time as western liberals cry woe over the deaths of innocents. Africa's problems are not endemic but are as severe or more severe than other regions and receive much less media time than other areas. While the problems may have some roots deeper than the colonial past, it is the European colonization of Africa that started today's ongoing problems.

While establishing their territorial boundaries the Europeans used some geographical features but also often drew random lines across the maps. None of the boundaries paid much attention to indigenous population groups other than to curry favour with a particular group used to control another group. When different tribes were within a colonial boundary the preferred tactic by the colonial governors was to favour one tribe over another. Assuredly pre-colonial times offered their share of tribal rivalry but not on the scale afforded by being "chosen" as the favorite supplied with benefits of the western kind - weapons, positions of power, food after resources were over harvested - that deepened divisions and often or not created new divisions.

Much of the colonial effort involved the extraction of resources - slaves, minerals, agricultural products - while another significant proportion involved the influx of white settlers.

Certain Euro compatible areas received the main influx, one that typically was racist, arrogant, and always heavily armed and brutal in their efforts to subjugate the indigenous people. The Germans slaughtered the Herero people of Namibia (German Southwest Africa) before World War I, establishing their first concentration camps, then later ceding the territory to British rule under South African control. The British and the Dutch Boers fought for control of South Africa, both determined to take the best agricultural lands and mineral resources (gold and diamonds) for themselves. The native people became serfs to the dominant white minority, pushed aside into so called homelands ostensibly under their own governance and covering a miniscule proportion of the land.

In the central regions of Africa, many smaller colonies were created but few presented the same quality of climate and lifestyle for Europeans, their essence being slavery and resources. The largest concession was the Belgian Congo (currently Republic of the Congo, also Zaire), named appropriately after its "owner", King Leopold of Belgium, essentially a private fiefdom from which to harvest its many riches. Leopold set the tone that has endured to this day, using military savagery, creating inter tribal rivalries to support the savagery, an overall tone of violence that continued after independence and has endured to this day. On the other coast, the British colonies in British East Africa (Kenya, Uganda) ruled with the same practices of tribal divisions, some settlement of prime agricultural lands, eviction of native peoples from their lands, and using the military as deemed appropriate.

In northern Africa, the Mediterranean coast had always interacted with the empires of southern Europe and the Middle East. Algeria served as a colonial-settler region for France, with its fertile north coast becoming a province of France. It achieved its independence after a

protracted and bloody insurgency. Having employed many of the native population using the colonial practice of divide and conquer, the post independence war repercussions proved to be equally as bloody in Algeria. Italy annexed Libya and started a colonial settler movement there to provide land for housing and agriculture. The indigenous people were removed from the best lands, deprived of power, and existed at an impoverished level compared to the settlers. Agricultural cash crops for export to the homeland and mineral resources supported homeland industrial production.

Most of the liberation of Africa from colonial rule occurred after World War II along with the global anti-colonial movement ended with the support of the Soviet Union, China, and the growing number of independent states in the UN. U.S. rhetoric supported the move towards independence, but as its actions spoke much louder than its words, as the Monroe Doctrine remained in effect, the corporate based Marshall Plan harnessed Europe, and any country hinting of going socialist suffered major repercussions. The European nations used violence in its attempts to retain empire in some cases, and for many other countries the problems created by divisive politics, corporate power, and poorly structured governance made the independence struggle difficult.

My first awareness of Africa's problems surfaced with the CIA assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the democratically elected leader of the former Belgian Congo, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). A highly popular socialist leader, the west, the U.S., used the all too familiar tactics of inciting tribal conflict and the generalized fear of communism in order to get rid of him. The death of UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld has been associated with these actions as he strongly supported the independence of former colonial states. The Congo - first under the dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko and known as Zaire - has suffered endless civil strife and repeated external interference ever since, with tens of millions of people

regarded as victims in the incessant struggles - struggles pertaining to the greed of western nations for African resources. In our modern age of computer technology, the Congo's rare earths are the target of mining corporations profiting from their strong demand and utility within most common computerized/digital systems.

Most of the criticisms I have heard of Africa and its problems concern the corruption and cronyism of the governments and native businessmen. Given the continent's history of colonization, the favoritism afforded one people over another, the arbitrary division of the geopolitical landscape into areas of control, and then add to that the post war fear of communism (as an external imposition) and the ruthless methodologies of the CIA and the global financial institutions, it is of little wonder that cronyism and corruption remain endemic. It is the influence of the IMF and World Bank keeping the African states as neocolonial servants to the western world.

One of the strongest cases of IMF/World Bank intransigence towards Africa is highlighted by the defeat of South African apartheid. Under a state legalized and globally supported through apathy and ignorance if not outright racist political support from other white governments and institutions, South Africa prospered for its white settlers. Under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, the African National Congress struggled against the apartheid laws, frequently violently. In combination with a long term global boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement (BDS) the South African government finally wavered, began negotiating, then finally reached an agreement ending apartheid.

The ANC had long advocated a socialist cause of land redistribution and nationalization of industry and resource extraction. However and very unfortunately the ANC denied its own principles and accepted the dictates of the IMF and World Bank to leave the economic sphere alone, meaning no land redistribution and no nationalization of industry. Apartheid was officially

over, but racial barriers remained in place through white ownership of the major elements of the economy. As a deterrence to the socialist instinct of many newly independent African countries, the manipulations of the IMF brought many of the countries under the control of western capitalism. The result is an increase in the corruption and cronyism as first instigated by the colonial powers, the newer neocolonialism established itself through the manipulations of financial power.

With weak governments, weak systems of governance including financial knowledge, and a significant lack of funds to propel them into the modern era, many African nations looked abroad for support. The IMF and World Bank offered a solution, and indeed were set up for exactly that purpose - to create countries whose financial interests resided with the capitalist west. The promises were tempting, the future looked progressive, but the results were destructive. Not destructive for the leaders and their cronies, but for the general health and well being of society in general.

The methodology was simple. First on offer were large loans to provide grand infrastructure projects promising future modernization: dams, bridges, highways, airports, seaports. These loans came from western banks and were tied to the condition of purchasing from western corporations. It seemed wonderful at the time but as many governments discovered when loan payments were due, they were short of cash, either through project mismanagement, lack of a good tax base, but also from bribes, kickbacks, and embezzlement. The solution was simple, another loan to turn over the previous one, but with conditions attached, conditions under the polite heading of "structural adjustment programs" (SAP). These SAPs are the real cause of economic misery for the African countries (not just Africa as Argentina defaulted its World Bank payments in 2002, and Brazil also faces significant problems with its IMF/World Bank loans).

Under the structural adjustment programs the governments were forced into what are now termed austerity programs. Any and all state owned industries, all port and airport facilities, all state owned transportation became subject to privatization, sold cheaply to wealth strippers, corporations from the west. Resources not already privatized were to be made so, everything from forestry and mining to water and fishing rights. For those sectors still private, especially in agriculture, onerous systems were put in place to make them fail and thus available to international corporations. Coke and Nestlé's have been great at obtaining exclusive rights to large sectors if not whole sectors of public water base, largely aquifers in arid countries. Canada's mining industry operates many third world mines, operating with the blessing and financial benefits from the federal government. Canada has been implicated in several African countries civil violence pitting one group against another. Mining interests have been noted to utilize cheap labour, send most profit overseas, and use hired guns to protect their property.

The agriculture sector has been one of the hardest hit by austerity. The structural adjustments in the commercial and transportation sectors increased costs to many who were subsistence and small market farmers. Needing more cash, farmers were forced into taking out exorbitant loans (not the near zero percent used between banks and large corporations and their government supporters) and/or change to cash crops for sale to western interests. In both cases bankruptcy and poverty would ensue with the result that the farmers now had to sell their land in order to survive. The sold land, financially extorted, came under the ownership of large landowners, either foreign agribusinesses, large investment corporations, or cronies with government influence. Crops were then turned into cash crops (think coffee, chocolate, soya) for sale to foreign distributors and producers.

The former land owners or tenant farmers essentially became serfs on the land, or more commonly, moved into the urban centers to become generally impoverished wage slaves. The

rich become richer and more powerful; the peasants, the natives, the former small landowners become poorer, without land and food resources. This worked in favour of the new landowners and corporations once again as the now landless impoverished people became cheap labour to harvest the produce or make their products. Labour exploitation became the norm as unions were disallowed and individuals and groups were played off against one another.

Africa today is a land seemingly continually on the brink of disaster, with different areas at different times experiencing real but limited disasters of famine and/or war. All factors play a part. Climate change is affecting the Sahel countries more than other areas, but it has impacts in all areas as seen with the severe water shortage in Cape Town recently. Terrorism created by and supported by the west along with its domestic impetus is increasingly active in the Sahel and Central and East Africa, in turn creating the scenario for more western interventions into the region. In Niger, the French continue their neocolonialism along with U.S. establishment of a drone base and the 2017 killing of four U.S. Green Berets along the Mali border. Canadian troops are in Mali, associated with the UN mission to stabilize the country. Had NATO not destroyed much of Libya's civic and military infrastructure, these missions may not have had the excuse to put their boots on the ground. Boko Haram operates in the interstate area of Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria; Lake Chad, a significant water source for the area, had shrunk to less than five per cent of its original size by 1998, with very minimal recovery more recently.

The U.S. has created its own central command AFRICOM, albeit based in Stuttgart, Germany, to facilitate interventions using both covert and overt special operations in attempts to influence and control the area. Control in this sense does not necessarily mean law and order, but U.S. imperial hegemony - chaos will do just fine if it keeps competitors out.

China is increasingly involved with the economics of the continent, using its new financial power to aid countries with major infrastructure projects without forcing or coercing countries

using military power. Recently in 2018 the Chinese were accused of reducing its partner countries to debt serfs - the well known IMF/WOrld Bank tactic - but it has no structural adjustment programs or austerity demands tied into its assistance and makes no demands on the domestic political scene.

Much of what occurs is never viewed in the media unless it is some large catastrophe or some infotainment - while revealing a superficial expression of human sympathy along with some feel good liberal moment attempting to ameliorate the situation - which distracts everyone from the contextual underlying circumstances causing the problem in the first place. These "Band Aids" may create a momentary sympathy for the impoverished masses, a sympathy that is quickly vacated as the news cycle moves on to the next disheartening item. Seldom if ever are the underlying factors exposed, and even when some attempt is made, it is distorted through the lens of language and the lack of a true understanding of what creates the symptoms from the underlying problems.

Austerity has replaced the structural adjustments as the means to harvest the labour and resources of the world, having an impact not just in Africa but in many other regions of the world. Greece is a prime example of European austerity imposed by the IMF, the European bankers in Brussels, and the German banks demanding large cuts in social programs and the sale of many Greek assets from islands to sea ports. The United Kingdom is a prime example of self imposed austerity wherein the wealthy controlling political class, mostly since the Margaret Thatcher era, have presided over the privatization of the National Health Service, education, the rail system, and other areas of government control, allowing the rich few to harvest the profits from the many.

Austerity is the natural child of - and it all returns to this topic eventually - the massive debt of all countries, the massive financialization of the banking and investment corporations,

real estate, and insurance sectors (FIRE), the huge sums printed/created out of thin air to support - in particular - the U.S. military, while wages have flat lined over the last four decades making it ever more difficult to purchase homes, properties, and consumer items. During the 1980s interest rates spiked exorbitantly, creating both large gains for some and disaster for others. Since then the rates have lowered continually towards zero, creating a diversity of problems ranging from the rich amassing most of the wealth gains, the artificially pumped up stock markets from corporate and central bank buybacks, to the increasing financial precariousness of many families and individuals. The still as yet vague realization that increasing rates to try and control the financial extremes only makes all the debt more onerous for everyone. For the moment austerity rules, at least until the collapse of the petrodollar when many debts will simply be erased to zero.

The fallacy of modern economics is evident in the different contradictions expressed by many politicians. At one time it will be announced how well the economy is going, with more jobs, the stock market rising, the GDP rising significantly, and the cost of living remaining within a theoretical good two percentage points. The next moment, different requirement, they express the poverty of the government, the lack of funds for mostly social programs, the need for smaller government (less money) and fewer regulations (more money) and the need to practice austerity to keep within our means. All of which signals power to the corporations and submission of the masses.

It all returns to Thomas Friedman's hidden fist - hidden only from those who take care not to see it, from those who cannot see due to the veneers of entertainment and infotainment covering it thinly, not hidden from those who are able to connect different news items together and those who are able and willing to do some independent reading and thinking. Finances, climate change, war, terrorism, austerity, are all current derivatives of the hidden fist, of the U.S.

military inside the faux velvet glove of the U.S. petrodollar. Greed and power dominance, a factor of the human condition, provides the energy for the fist, ignorance provides the lubricant.

The Case for Palestine

In all my research since 9 11 there is a commonality highlighting one of our current more significant acts of ethnic cleansing, cultural genocide, and military subjugation of an indigenous population: the Jewish colonial-settler usurpation of the lands of Palestine. On its own it is presented as a “dispute” between two parties, one side presented in mainstream media as uncivilized terrorists, the other side as the moral defender of democracy and liberty made real by the Jewish state. This small state, often only seen in the mainstream media when it imposes some kind of “proportionate” retaliation against Arabic attacks, is the keystone supporting the imperial arch, the imperial imposition on the Middle East. At the same time it maintains a disproportionate power to manipulate and control the imperial center, the imperial headquarters in Washington, DC.

The prime fundamental myth of the Jewish state is that of a land for a people having suffered enormous terror in the holocaust of World War II. The germinating roots of the Jewish state reach much farther back into history, relegating the holocaust to a horrible but convenient narrative for Jewish actions against the Palestinians. It is fully contradictory for Israel to claim victimhood at the hands of Germany in particular and the rest of western society in general and then proceed with the same actions - ethnic cleansing, genocide, cultural erasure, concentration camps - that had been imposed upon them. Well before the foundational myth of the holocaust are two main taproots underlying the current problems in the Middle East and also the current problems with U.S. governance.

The first problem is Christianity itself and within it are two veins interacting to strengthen each other. In simplest terms Christianity is based on a Jewish dissident who was betrayed to Roman officials by another Jew. It has long been a fundamental Christian belief, maybe not expressed this simply, that Jews are at fault for Christ's death. As a result Jewish people were later regularly subject to rules and regulations to keep them subordinate to Christians, and used as a convenient target for complaints by the masses when economic conditions were poor, or simply used as a scapegoat for whatever government at the moment needed to distract the populace, the proletariat, from government irregularities.

The prophecies of Christianity are a second factor tying Christian beliefs and actions towards Jews as an integral part of the overall Christian message. Again simply put, Christian fundamentalists and evangelicals support the ingathering of Jews into Jerusalem as that is where they will all be converted or killed when the Messiah returns again. This belief, this prophecy, is what creates large support for the Jewish state among Christian churches in the western world, and it is this prophetic belief supporting the emigration of Jews to the Holy Land even before the European Jews entered the post-holocaust scene.

During the Nineteenth Century Europe underwent an era of amalgamation and consolidation of different state groups. Otto von Bismarck became the first Chancellor of a unified German state; Giuseppe Garibaldi unified the Italian provinces; France underwent various regime changes with one of the main political ideas being the Napoleonic Code which helped the spread of nation states across Europe as it ended many feudal practices. Marx and Lenin developed their philosophies, aiming to create governments reflective of workers needs and abilities rather than those of the bourgeoisie. In the midst of this ongoing series of national state awakenings, the idea of a Jewish homeland formed within a group of socialist secular Jews.

The traditional Jewish belief was that the coming of the Messiah would happen first, then it would be the time to re-establish the Jewish Kingdom in Jerusalem. Reversing this order was a concept initiated by two main Jewish politicians/philosophers, Theodor Herzl and Ze'ev Jabotinsky. The creation of Israel was to be a political one, and not one based on prophetic beliefs - not directly at least - and the religious beliefs were useful in order to manipulate the various governments involved, primarily Great Britain at the time. While still under Ottoman control, Palestine became the proposed home, a return home, for the Jewish people of Europe.

The British held much interest in Palestine as a transportation route to India after the Suez canal was built, as well as being a means to control the canal. Oil was not originally an item of interest, but quickly became a priority when large oil fields were discovered in the region. In 1908 oil was discovered in Iran by a British entrepreneur/explorer and very quickly its control became a large issue mainly for the military but also for industry. Iran would suffer immensely from it over the years. The idea of an "outpost" of western civilization in this supposedly backward land appealed to those wanting imperial control of the oil resources as well as to those wanting to assist Europe in getting rid of its Jewish population, even if many Jews held high ranking positions in political and financial institutions.

The more modern mythology of "a land without people for a people without land" was not evident to Herzl or Jabotinsky, both of whom recognized the existence of the indigenous Palestinian population and expected resistance, probably violent, to their plans. They expected the Palestinians would not welcome a people usurping their land, not, it should be emphasized, because of religion as the three Hebraic religions had more or less co-existed for hundreds of years, disturbed mainly by external forces. The incoming Jewish population kept to themselves as much as possible, establishing internal rules and regulations which were the start of Palestinian dispossession. The lionized "father" of Israel, David ben Gurion is cited as

indicating the same perspective on Palestinian resistance, in effect saying “What did you expect?”

Between Jabotinsky’s advocacy for an “iron wall” and Ben Gurion’s development of nuclear weapons, Jewish immigration continued, protests, demonstrations, and civil war of a kind became more frequent: Jews against the British, Palestinians against the Jewish immigrants and British occupiers. The advent of the Second World War provided a double bonus for the creation of the Jewish state. The Jewish terrorist forces - as labelled by the British - of the Haganah, Palmach, and Stern gang had good armaments smuggling channels, and received extra training and experience during the war working with the British. The holocaust was a double-edged sword - millions of Jews were murdered, creating the impetus and the ongoing excuse for future Israeli violence against the Palestinians and other Arab states.

The contemporary history of Israel /Palestine is well documented, mainly from the Israeli narrative as supported by the western media. It is less well known but more accurately portrayed by both revisionist historians and researchers using archival evidence and anecdotal reports surfacing for view after decades of repression and concealment. It is a story of occupation, annexation, settlements, interstate wars, domestic uprisings, the use of murder, torture, harassment, and all kinds of arbitrary rules under military ‘law’ used to control the remaining Palestinian population. The largest thread in all this contemporary history is the transition from British imperial influence to the almost complete subjugation of U.S. imperial interests to Israeli purposes.

When British military forces withdrew, the Jewish state was declared and in the Palestinian nakba hundreds of villages were destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of refugees were created. The U.S. government, ever fearful of the domestic Jewish and Christian Zionist vote, supported Israel’s actions as a new state. The U.S. also accepted the British view of

Israel as an “outpost”, superficially for its democracy and civilizational impacts, but underneath was its desire for geopolitical control of the oil resources as well as standing against the Soviet Union. U.S. support today is still oil, but with its US\$ price structure, and the resurgent power and presence of Russia, not as a communist country but as a country that defies U.S. hegemony. At first U.S. support was not unconditional, as indicated by the Suez Canal war with Eisenhower warning the attackers to back off. Two major influences tied the U.S. to Israeli power.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) established in 1951, has risen to a position of great political power within the U.S. The 1967 pre-emptive Six Day war against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria realized the consolidation of Jewish military power in the region. Within the war, the attack on the USS Liberty, a U.S. intelligence and communications ship, and its subsequent suppression from the news and indeed the historical narrative, demonstrated Israel’s control of the political relationship between the two countries. From that time AIPAC increasingly subordinated or shaped U.S. foreign policy towards its own interests. Its main impact is on the electoral process making sure that pro-Israeli politicians are elected or are even eligible to be elected .

As it stands now politicians in the U.S. need to at minimum pay lip service to supporting Israel although arguably most are well above that in the strength of their support and advocacy. Generally they kowtow to AIPAC, attending their meetings, providing enthusiastic sycophantic support with physical expressions through standing ovations for various speakers. When examining U.S. foreign policy, its imperial militaristic and financial support, Israel - or at least AIPAC - is a very successful parasite sucking nourishment from its willing host, willing in the same sense that some parasites take over the immune and reproductive systems of the host, using them for their own purposes.

The second major influence on U.S./Israeli policy has been the subversive aspects of the whole Oslo Accords process. This followed the less clearly understood Camp David Accords, the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel after the YOm Kippur War, in which the Palestinian interests were pushed aside. The Oslo Accords served Israeli purposes extremely well, and are still maintained by some as a means to achieve the ever elusive two state solution. Probably alarmed by the first Intifada, Israel and the U.S. brought Yasir Arafat in from exile, harnessing his name and record of resistance towards a supposed peaceful route to a solution. Arafat and the PLO were recognized as the representatives of the future Palestinian state, a state that from the outset was subject to dismemberment. It was - and is - a two pronged assault.

The first prong was the creation of three zones of control giving Israel direct control of a large percent of the occupied territories (in the Israeli narrative “disputed” lands) with the newly created Palestinian Authority (PA) nominally in control of only main population centers. The military controlled the rest, but even as the years rolled by, and especially after Arafat’s death (assassination?) and Abbas became the PA leader, the militant Fatah branch of the PA became more and more a tool of Israeli control. Corrupted by the power of money, lots of it foreign aid donations, the PA and Fatah have ensconced themselves as a subordinate unit of Israeli control over the Palestinian population.

The second prong from Oslo was the endless rounds of negotiations. The PA representatives concede more and more, the Israelis accepted less and less (as per the Palestinian papers), but the largest impact was simply the time factor. Israel never wanted two states and has always considered ways to fully control or eliminate (through expulsion, rhetorically) the Palestinian population. While they talked, and talked some more, then some more again, Israel built settlements to create “facts on the ground” as a means to prevent a

contiguous Palestinian state as a possibility. They push Palestinians into ever smaller enclaves of existence using the encroaching settlements, the usurpation of land through military usage and straight annexation, and the support of the settler's active hostility towards any near by Palestinian settlement or farmland. This results in creating an apartheid state with small cantons or bantustans of fully controlled open air prisons.

Israel today is a fully militarized economy, a full right wing theocracy. It uses the U.S. and other western countries for its own purposes. It really has no fear of terrorists as indicated by its support of ISIS, al-Qaeda and al-Nusra in Syria. It is cautious with Russia, perhaps realizing its super patron may be bankrupt someday soon as China and Russia combine to work against US\$ hegemony. China has recently accepted an offer to operate a new Haifa port - where U.S. warships dock - for 25 years in 2021 and is also contracted to build a new port at Ashdod. This is a sure sign that Israel is no longer betting on U.S. longevity and is also looking forward to becoming a partner in the Chinese BRI, with further ramifications for its posturing on Iran.

Israel is a nuclear power, with an average estimated two hundred deliverable nuclear warheads (different sources vary between 80 and 400), operates outside the Non-proliferation Treaty while continually advocating for the U.S. to attack Iran. The U.S. abrogation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action signed multi-laterally with Germany, France, Russia, China, the U.K. and Iran serves as a rhetorical - for now - paean to Israeli (and Saudi) interests. Israel will look after itself only, and will manipulate whomever it needs to achieve its goals.

For individual Palestinians living under occupation and military law daily life is fraught with struggle. It comes from their quisling PA government operating as part of Israel's occupying forces, arresting, detaining, torturing, and manipulating its own citizens. Other Arab

governments are also complicit, fearful of Israel, fearful of the large number of Palestinian refugees generally viewed as a disruptive presence. The Gaza Strip, the world's largest open air prison hovers on the brink of starvation - an actual stated Israeli strategic goal - and a paucity of all major conveniences of modern life: electric power, clean water, sewer system, and civic structures such as hospitals and schools.

The record shows that creating an open air prison of the West Bank and a maximum security prison of Gaza was in Israel's plans four years before the 1967 war. The plan for control is an extension of the overall plan for the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, an accepted part of Zionist policy since its origins in the 1870s. The military has always been in the forefront of all Israel's colonial-settler efforts as it has been with all other global colonial-settler movements deriving from the British Empire. Today the military controls Gaza using genocidal tactics while doing so; the West Bank remains generally under a repressive regime of actions in defiance of international law and human rights standards.

The plight of the 'internal' Palestinians has little apparent regional effect for other Arab governments, most of who have accommodated to Israel's military power backed by U.S. imperial intentions. Iraq used to be a strong supporter but has been overwhelmed by its own externally created problems. Saudi Arabia sometimes speaks supportively, but only acts within the limits of what does not upset Israel and is essentially a de facto ally of Israel. Its antagonism towards Iran, its domestic economy enriched by the petrodollar association, and its military purchases of U.S. materials signal that Palestine is not a true concern of the government.

All the neighbouring countries have maintained a distance from supporting the Palestinians beyond some fleeting rhetorical announcements. The Egyptians maintain a closed border with Gaza. Jordan contains a large Palestinian refugee population somewhat integrated into its society, yet at the same time is entirely docile in the face of Israel's domestic concerns.

Lebanon, with its many internal problems, does not allow Palestinians rights of citizenship or employment, a situation complicated by the aid received in the refugee camps necessitating the maintenance of those same camps. Syria suffers its own major concerns and while previously offering a welcoming climate, the status of refugees and next generation refugees becomes clouded in particular as they once again become refugees from the Syrian war. Beyond the Middle East, Europe has felt the impact of many refugees, in a sense blowback for U.S. and western sponsored actions in the Middle East and Israel.

Still, Palestine persists. It has no choice. It is the Palestinian homeland and for the majority there is nowhere else to go. As refugees they are treated with contempt and in some cases hostility and death: Sabra, Shatila, more recently Yarmouk. The main resistance remains the simple fact of existence. Fortitude and endurance are the traits keeping them going, accompanied in small ways by those attempting to speak for them outside Israel. Their memory, hopes, and dreams will not expire and they will carry on living in their homeland, steadfast.

Apocalypse....now - a new perspective

Reprise

As of this writing - and your reading - humanity remains always on the brink of nuclear war. Faster, higher, stronger, more evasive, more accurate, the olympics of nuclear weaponry continues for the moment unabated and unrestricted. The nuclear world has several polarities with nine nations having deliverable weapons technology (U.S., U.K., France, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea) and many others probably capable of putting an arsenal together in reasonably short time. Japan itself stores tons of plutonium and undeniably has the technological resources ready at hand to make several hundred weapons. Saudi Arabia is currently building a nuclear plant with designs from Argentina and technical support from the U.S.

The recent Russophobia directed by the U.S., always strongly supported by Britain's elected idiots and supported by its NATO minions, creates a situation of military tension. With the U.S. neocons/chickenhawks still maintaining their beliefs in a winnable nuclear war and uncontested dominance, the threat to the planet is all too real. The U.S.' description of China as a "threat" increases the danger in many respects, and also serves to elevate the positive relationship between Russia and China, making it all the more difficult for the U.S. to attain full

spectrum dominance over the Eurasian heartland, or even its periphery. The nuclear threat is a one off - hopefully if the time comes someone with a cooler level of common sense will refuse to push the button.

The Chinese “threat” and the Russophobia are expressions of the U.S.’ desire for global hegemony encountering a significant strong resistance from two nations capable of holding their own militarily and financially. Renewed sanctions on Iran are being ignored by some with the use of sovereign currencies in direct trade, the creation of alternate financial institutions and processes have been realized by Russia and China. The shaky ‘wanna be’ pretences of Mohammad bin Salman of Saudi Arabia endanger the petrodollar security, and the overall massive debt accumulated by most nations of the world creates a financial world residing within a house of cards. On the other hand, the central banks and other financial institutions have had decades long practice in manipulating statistics and values for all currencies and commodities. They may well be able to craft a soft landing for the financial world leaving themselves in charge with a new basket of currencies, a single existing currency, or providing the support of another rising currency - and corporate exploitation will endure.

Nuclear war can happen in an instant, financial collapse could be relatively short term, but will probably be manipulated in order to make a soft landing avoiding the excesses of a sudden transformation - war being one of those excesses.

What is already in process, and will be for some time, is global climate change and environmental degradation. The U.S. has been hit by some of the strongest hurricanes on record, and California has suffered its largest wildfire destruction - and still the government denies global climate change. Recent reports indicate that as much as sixty per cent of insect populations have declined along with the same amount for larger animal populations, a combination of climate change and environmental pollution and destruction. The ongoing study

and observation of environmental changes presents indicators that outcomes are occurring faster than original computer models had predicted and the only way to prevent future disasters from flooding, drought, stronger storms and loss of flora and fauna is to make large reductions in carbon dioxide output very quickly and stop producing chemicals of dubious short term benefit and acknowledged long term detriment. If this was the only problem facing humanity there is a good chance that a transition of some kind would be possible, but combined with a nuclear militarized world and very shaky financial structures, I remain guardedly pessimistic.

Generally, it is the current condition of geopolitical manoeuvring creating the most immediate problem. Africa on many fronts is succumbing to a brand of neocolonialism as U.S. and European military forces establish military bases in different former colonial countries (as was all of Africa at one time). The spread of ISIS and its affiliates, largely through the destruction wrought by the U.S. on Libya, provides the always convenient U.S. excuse to establish a military presence in Africa, sowing more discord and chaos as it goes. Tensions remain around Russia's request to accept Crimea's accession to the country along with the ongoing hostilities by a failing Ukraine government against the resistance in the Donbas. The Minsk agreement between Ukraine and Luhansk and Donetsk and the drawback and ceasefire conditions are continually broken by the Ukrainian army and neonazi battallions.

China's presence in the South China Sea poses a problem for U.S. interests in containing both Russia and China by controlling the Eurasian periphery. With the development of a new generation of area denial weapons, China is in a much stronger position to protect its ocean frontier, transportation routes, and its littoral interests in much of Southeast Asia. The fake "freedom of navigation" mantra as used by the U.S. is an excuse to place its military and naval presence within regions far from its own shores.

The Middle East remains the largest brew of geopolitical intentions. Russia has demonstrated its clear intentions, will, and ability to protect its assets in Syria, being both the government and its naval and air bases. Israel's military faux pas of attacking behind the signal of a Russian communications plane demonstrated a Russian turn away from allowing Israel to use Syrian airspace at will without resistance as it introduced more defensive missiles into Syria and stronger communications between radar and other data gathering sources. Turkey is playing a tenuous strategy involving a balance between U.S. presence in Kurdish Syria and the U.S. base in Incirlik while working with Russia on containing problems in Syria, which in Turkey's situation means controlling the Kurdish interests.

Israel remains the real radioactive element poisoning the region. It controls U.S. foreign policy through AIPAC and its willingness to support U.S. interests in the region. However, the U.S. is not indispensable for Israel, as they are willing to trade armaments and security with any nation willing to be a buyer. Their friendship with the Saudi's - de facto allies - demonstrates they are willing to use anybody in any way that suits their purpose, highlighted by the support of ISIS and al-Qaeda in Syria. That purpose is regional hegemony, the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, and the control of undersea resources in the Mediterranean. Its rhetoric against Iran is largely for domestic consumption, largely to suck the U.S. into doing more of their bidding, with a good probability of success in creating another chaotic war scenario. Against that impulse is Iran's increasing interactions with Russia, China, India, the SCO and the BRI. Underneath all these distractions in the international arena, Israel continues to control and put pressure on the Palestinian population, corralling them in essentially open air prisons under the guard of the quisling Palestinian Authority direction of Abbas all the while claiming victimhood.

Any one of these situations placed in context of the U.S.' military belligerence now strongly advocated for by the phoenix like revival of John Bolton creates a potential near term

global disaster. Bolton is a chicken hawk with several decades of history arguing for military action against perceived and created U.S. opponents. The addition of the pompous Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and his unbridled antagonisms towards anyone considered an enemy of the state adds power to Bolton's warmongering. The U.S. itself poses its own internal threats as it removes environmental protections of all kinds, ramps up the nationalist rhetoric along with ill conceived tariffs and sanctions, and seemingly refuses to acknowledge the \$21 trillion debt as any kind of problem.

As long as these geopolitical problems remain, not much attention will be put towards changing society to a more environmentally friendly state and a healthier economic paradigm.

Inertia and fear

The future is truly unpredictable but certain trend lines extrapolated into their possible outcomes presents a forum where ideas of how we are to shape events can occur. The current state of humanity, superficially rich and prosperous - at least for western societies - is quite simply precarious. I remain skeptical and pessimistic for the future although I try to act positively within my mundane daily life and proximate space and time. We - again the royal we - have the intellectual and technical skills to create what we have already - obviously - but that same skill set needs to be used to change direction and correct or ameliorate the negative aspects of our global culture in order to create a long term prosperity.

How much time we have to do this is uncertain. It could be a very short timeline, a half hour from launch to nuclear decimation of the planet today, tomorrow, next month, next year. At its longest the last single primate species of homo could endure millennia until the attrition of genetic stagnation halts our adaptability to changing conditions. In between those extremes

climate change could be a long term - albeit increasingly short term - inexorable struggle with adverse environmental phenomenon. Changes to our financial world can be sudden, but if wisdom - arguably in short supply - comes into play, this could be the softest of problems as it is certainly a human created factor subject to our emotional whims more than anything else. The main problem with all of these is inertia.

Emotional and cultural inertia keep our society moving along a path that is not entirely predetermined or foreseen, but a path that is obscured by short term thought and action patterns. For many people there is both an emotional and intellectual inertia expressed in conversations tending towards these problems with the comments “we don’t want to go there,” or “I don’t want to think about it.”

It is one manifestation of the fear factor - fear of uncertainty, fear of the unknown, fear of death. Many people do not want to address those fears, to contemplate the insignificant finiteness of their lives. Corporate media plays with these emotions, providing infotainment - the presentation of wars, disasters, accidents, and violence interspersed with feel good stories, sports, social media, entertainment guides and other items designed to calm the frightened mind from actually thinking about the context of all the bad stuff, unless as presented by an acceptable indispensable pundit. This emotional inertia becomes a cultural inertia and becomes a readily manipulated factor in political life.

Politicians are adept at manipulating the emotional basis of fear in order to grab the power they desire and to maintain the power through a fearful submissiveness. This submissiveness can be unspoken, simply the overall patriarchy of society. It can also be verbally expressed in the oft spoken statement about certain subjects being “complex” and thus beyond the ken of most individuals. Often times subject matter is “secret” or “classified”, simply

because it is necessary to keep things secret and privileged that the public would probably be appalled by if they discovered what was really happening, what was really being said.

On a larger scale, though, fear relies on the creation of an 'other' - someone outside the law not in the criminal sense, but basically as a non-person with no rights at all, deemed to have malicious intentions towards the 'homeland'. This creation depends on lies about the other and the leader of the other - their desire for conquest and power by a malevolent anti-hero.

Common to this but also used separately, fear is used to malign the religion of the other as evil, oppressive, hateful, and demanding death to the infidel, takfir, raghead, gook, or satanist.

Inertia is not all encompassing. Certain forms of progress, change, and sunny ways are happily accepted. Many technological functions are quickly adapted in the fields of medicine and science. The ever expanding world of electronics is a prime consumer example with new advanced/improved features presented on an annual basis. Entertainment media have become more sophisticated, more attractive, more able to capture and divert both emotions and intellect away from any existential fears.

Medication, drugs - legal and illegal - are beneficial to society until they are oversubscribed and overused leading to many problems from side effects of the drugs to overt addiction problems. The growth of antibiotic resistant bacteria from this over prescription and from their large overuse in factory scale farming is a growing major problem for hospitals. Drugs play a major role in our society ranging from the financial and political influence of the major corporations to the personal costs of misuse.

The ever increasing wonders of material goods and consumer products create a demand from the seven and a half billion of us, imposing costs and problems from the harvesting of resources, through the processing of the resources into a product, and finally the carefree manner in which all this stuff is simply thrown away. Advertising inculcates in us the irrational

need and want for many consumer goods with short staying power. Harvesting and manufacturing processes demand large amounts of power, the vast majority derived from carbon sources. Energy refinement from crude resources creates many harmful chemical byproducts, producing a few useful chemicals with short term benefits, but then adding long term environmental and physiological dangers.

And we do not care.

Sure, superficially we care. We apply the reduce, recycle, and reuse mantra to our daily lives in a limited response to our consumer culture. We buy millions more automobiles with increased mileage and reduced emissions. For larger humanitarian purposes rallies and concerts are held to raise awareness and money for whatever the most recent mainstream drama is unfolding in some distant region. Politicians of all stripes generally acknowledge climate change, pollution, foreign human disasters, natural or man made, then continue on their double standard routine of chasing down the money path and blaming others for their inability to act in a manner conducive to saving the environment or preventing more war. More growth, more jobs, more stuff, more money for the bankers and corporations. In general the inertia of our daily lives, the routines of working, eating, recreating, shopping, entertaining restrains us at a level of complacency and wilful ignorance towards the end results of it all. It keeps us in short term comfort, for the most part not able and willing to conceive the big changes necessary or inevitable.

Reality is more demanding once realized and confronted. Change is already underway as indicated in the previous chapters, financially and environmentally. For the moment nuclear warfare is not "in process", but many background changes are occurring increasing the probable risk. The environmental changes are inexorable, the pace of change increasing. Financial change tends towards inexorable downturns or outright collapse, but has such a large human

component that it could be readily softened as to consequences for most of the world. There are solutions but they demand a large change to our inertia, in direction, energy, and time. Otherwise, human society as it stands will cease to exist. Either a new paradigm will be created by ourselves for ourselves and the natural world, or a new paradigm will emerge with the possible and probable exclusion of humanity.

Energy

At the beginning I presented some solutions in basic format, all challenging the structures of globalized society, all difficult to implement against human shortsightedness and societal inertia. But now I propose a different perspective, based on a long term broader view accepting our place in the environment as a consumer of energy. Instead of describing details about climate, finances, or nuclear war, an examination of energy's role in all systems provides a perspective for the way forward.

All systems require energy and at the ultimate point of creation contemporary cosmological thought derived from the study of modern physics indicates that empty space devoid of all 'stuff' has energy. Bringing that quickly back to earth, literally and figuratively, we need to examine earth's energy sources. Not sources, but one singular source, our sun for contemporary energy, the daily input of solar energy fueling life, fueling plants, providing just the right amount of heat to neither bake us nor deep freeze us.

Consider all the power used by societies of all types. Wood fires release solar energy stored by trees and plants using photosynthesis to harvest the sun's energy, combining it with naturally occurring earth chemicals to make life sustaining structures. Automobiles, airplanes, ships, and trains, use stored solar energy in the form of ancient carbon forests condensed over

millions of years into anthracite, bitumen, coal tars, oils of varying grades, along with their associated natural gases. More recently much more difficult extraction processes using huge quantities of water and other chemicals - fracking - produces more oil and gas from shale beds.

Hydro power demonstrates the transformation of solar energy in the atmosphere to mechanical power. Stored rainwater, from the solar powered hydrological cycles of weather, pushes large turbines to make electrical power. The power of rainstorms, blizzards, monsoons become stored solar energy harvested for human use. Somewhat similar, the use of tidal power and ocean currents being the idea as the 'weather' of the oceans. The mechanical power of the tides derive from the gravitational pull of sun and moon while ocean currents are affected by the tides and by the heating/cooling and salinity factors involved with ocean water.

Consider our own bodies. Our own cellular microbiology and physiology depends on solar power for all the reasons already indicated. All agricultural products are from solar power and then transformed by our digestive system into our daily energy. The support materials for agriculture - fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, harvesters, transportation - are all products derived from energy from the sun. Our cellular mitochondria transform our internally created biofuel into the energy needed for cellular function. More directly, the input of sunlight on skin is our main source of vitamin D, a valuable chemical for a healthy body. And how many times do we all simply sit or lie in the sun to absorb its warmth?

But what about nuclear energy? Human capacity to study how the physical world operates down to the subatomic level has led the way for applied technologies used to create the energy of the sun, originally declared a clean source of energy available forever. Except that it is decidedly not clean, is very much a finite product, and is also a by product of solar processes - not our Sol, not our solar power, but the power of massive stellar explosions with enormous amounts of energy capable of smashing/compressing atomic particles together to

make all the physical components of our earth. Gathered together by gravity - a form of energy yet to be fully understood - these newly made chemical components formed our galaxy, our solar system, the planets, earth, and eventually all that is contained within earth's environments - homo sapiens included. We are quite simply stardust.

What it determines is that nuclear energy primarily through the use of uranium is another finite form of power created from solar power. Just as the sun can be deadly to us when we are exposed to too much of its energy, human created nuclear power is also deadly to us, both short term and unfortunately for the very long term in comparison to our generational history. From our sun and from other suns long ago supernova explosions, all we have comes from the stars. But enough with the cosmological components of our existence, so what?

So eventually we will run out of stored solar power - coal, oil, gas, uranium - and due to overharvesting in an overpopulated world we will be severely limited by harvestable energy resources, wood being the prime example. Concurrently there will be limitations on the amount of chemicals produced to maintain our enhanced agricultural systems.

Therefore, apart from real concerns about global warming, financial collapse, and nuclear war (really, any kind of war) we must learn to live in a society using and storing our daily dose of solar energy.

Adjusting to that will transform society, and if done properly will allow us to maintain our technological expertise and create new technological advances. What it looks like and what it feels like in practical terms will hopefully be a positive surprise for all.

Part of it would look like large fields of direct solar energy panels harvesting the direct energy from daytime sun, storing it in some form of electrical cell. Other parts would look like fields of wind turbines, perhaps not a pretty sight, but a clean functional one. Much of our current electrical grid is hardly pretty as it stands now, and there will always be some manner of

making it more efficient and less unsightly. Hydroelectric power is mostly clean, but will have to be designed intelligently to not destroy animal and plant habitats required for food, migration, feeding, and breeding. Downstream problems will need to be carefully considered for the same reasons as well as for agricultural and domestic water usage. Tidal power is somewhat similar, but currently we understand far less about the oceans than we do about rivers and the atmosphere, but certainly it will require safeguards and well chosen placements to eliminate damage to ocean flora and fauna.

From the harvesting end solar power is achievable and realistic without even entering the realm of science fiction speculation about new wonderful alternate forms of energy e.g. nuclear fusion under control - rather than in stars and thermonuclear weapons; or gravitational energy from "empty" space.

The cultural geography of our living spaces will change. The automobile is the prime determinant of our present infrastructure, but in a progressive society it should be replaced with ubiquitous high speed light rapid transit powered in some way by electricity. Apart from specialized and necessary service and emergency vehicles - fire, police, ambulance, trash collection, utility services - the era of the gas guzzling private auto should disappear - and right away it is evident significant personal emotional changes must accompany that change in infrastructure. Our era of selfish energy use, created for the most part by large energy and automobile corporations, needs to be arrested. Movement would be less hectic in urban centers, not necessarily slower, but more relaxed, a smoother transit rather than having tens of thousands of individual vehicles jostling for position and time. The electric auto is a coming fad for those rich enough to afford them, but they are still environmentally unhealthy because of the chemical structures required for power and all the requisite mining, processing, maintenance, and recycling impositions on energy levels. At any rate, this is not a dissertation on the

complexities of technological wizardry for future societies, but a recognition that resources are finite and energy in human terms is limitless over time if constricted to our daily doses of sunlight, wind, rain, and a rational amount of harvestable resources.

A sustainable society in an ever increasing populous earth will necessitate a lower per capita level of energy consumption. In the domestic world, in daily life, society will have to live at lower power levels. If we do not plan for it now, it will certainly be imposed on us in the future, an imposition that may not be to our liking - or our long term survival. This hints at the problems associated with the rapid growth in global population, a touchy subject within the context of the western wealthy countries presupposing solutions for the developing and underdeveloped world. Religion is another large factor within the population debate, and one of the underlying factors of most religions is that they are patriarchal, male dominated, and keeping women from having any control of their own bodies and lives is crucial to male dominance.

So it is not only physical changes to the structures of society that requires changing, but change is also required for human social, emotional, and intellectual capacities, a much more difficult proposition.

Education

One of the best ways to promote social change is education, perhaps the most important even beyond technological wonders. Most western schools operate on a factory model, a more benign factory than in the earlier days of public education, but still generally a means of mass production. Regardless of the educational rhetoric provided to rationalize teaching methods and behaviours, schools are followers of society, carefully expressed as creating tomorrow's leaders

and shakers. Schools mostly prepare students to some degree to fit somewhere within the different aspects of our consumer lifestyle.

In consideration of the need for social change, the largest single educational factor for global change is educating women. Education for women should not just be a means to put them to work independently, although that in itself would be a positive step in some regions, but a source of a very broad perspective on all facets of life, including control of their own reproduction. Our world is substantially patriarchal in nature for politics, religion, and business crammed full of male power, ambitions, and ego. The glass ceiling if broken does not deny those traits but simply introduces women with the same traits into the male domain - Thatcher and Clinton being two prime examples of the kind whom we do not need. Educating all women is a way to give them more power and influence over their own lives, the lives of their children, and the shape of society in general.

Obviously education is important for all and should be a combination of a general basic education - literacy in language(s) and math - and the provision of a wide variety of other choices for science and the humanities. Science should be understood by all, first as a process of inquiry, of questioning and testing ideas, secondly as a knowledge base common to all, and more narrowly for individuals interested in pursuing it further as a career choice. For a sustainable society scientific environmental information is a necessity and its presentation is a means of helping break the inertia of an acquisitive consumer perspective.

Not everyone has the same talents, skill sets, or interests - we are not equal in our individual abilities. A good educational system will provide strong opportunities for a wide variety of skills and interests. Much broader room - literally and figuratively - needs to be made for technical courses, trades courses, arts, music, theatre, not just as small time electives but as

fully programmed choices. To some degree some of that already exists but it needs to occur much earlier in the school cycle and to a much larger degree.

We need to formulate an educational model spread around the world, inclusive to all, responsive to all. Instead of inculcating corporate consumer minions we should be drawing out - educating -- the best in every individual.

We need to take all the resources currently allocated to the military and apply them to education, to research through education, and to pure research and science inquiry for medical purposes and for energy solutions, and for the pure understanding of the universe and our place in it. Had those trillions of dollars of military spending already been applied to low energy infrastructure and high quality educational opportunities perhaps the nature of the overall problems we face could be more easily ameliorated.

We need to provide opportunities for a well supplied, full range of choices of many activities from physical technical skills and their requisite design factors to the pure arts presented and performed simply for the beauty and emotional power they evoke. Regional cultural practices can be encouraged - languages, music, and traditions can be understood without prejudice.

With the change to our cultural geography elicited through significantly improved energy usage and better educational opportunities, personal societal space will also take on a different image. As education is a major component more teachers, more aids, and all the associated personnel should be more pervasive and more respected - and better remunerated. Medical personnel of all kind - surgeons, family doctors, nurses, aids, lab technicians, and all support staff - should likewise be more pervasive, respected and remunerated. Applied technical science as well as pure research science especially in the medical/environmental/agricultural fields of study should have much more emphasis.

On the other side of the equation obviously the military would be highly downgraded, to the level of being essentially a national guard on reserve call up for domestic emergencies. Many changes could be made to police and security, the prison system, the financial and commercial exchange processes, the legalities, limitations, and even the elimination of certain kinds of corporations and their influence. In general, there would be a much more organic social structure, much more accessible to all, much more supportive of environmental health.

Utopia denied

A utopia through energy and environmental concerns and a superlative educational system? Not likely, there are too many residual problems to contend with, and one that will never go away, our own human nature. It circles back to the original environmental concerns expressed earlier. Pollution from chemicals will not simply disappear, and many of the plastics and organic chemicals used for agriculture will endure for a significant time. The ozone layer is healing, but very slowly, and the carbon levels in the atmosphere will not magically be reduced in a short time.

Probably the largest concern for the future - apart from escaping the effects of rising ocean levels and more tempestuous storms - will be the safeguarding of all nuclear waste. Even today most of the world's four hundred nuclear power plants are reaching or exceeding their "best before" date. The large quantities of waste materials of all kinds - structural contamination, decommissioned weapons and generating plants, spent and highly toxic nuclear fuel - will be extremely difficult for following generations to deal with. The materials cannot be left forever in containers undergoing the wear and tear of hundreds and thousands of years of residual radioactive decay. They cannot be buried without concerns for earthquakes, water

tables, and critical reactivity if the concentration of materials becomes too high. As noted before, there are too many existing waste sites and nuclear accident sites demonstrating the long term difficulties with the whole nuclear industry. At least if somehow the weapons can be decommissioned, the fears and possibilities of nuclear annihilation from war will be removed.

Then there are the problems associated with we the people: too many of us and our basic nature.

I hinted at the population problem earlier. It is a problem tending to disappear as women become better educated and as society becomes safer in many respects. Family planning in all its facets - number of children, timing of children, educational opportunities, medical knowledge of maternal and children's problems and diseases - goes a long way towards reducing population increases. A basic comfort level based partly on financial comfort combined with a good knowledge base, opportunities for employment, care and assistance all contribute to a declining birth rate. Religion could be a barrier but not necessarily so as a much stronger barrier will be any surviving resistance from a patriarchal perspective, the two often being strongly intertwined. There are enough examples of populations stripping their environments of resources to support them, and with a changing climate, limitations will be imposed on access to food resources, at least temporarily, making it a necessity to reduce overall population levels and/or establish a balanced energy paradigm. Energy needs to be balanced numerically for consumption and then balanced for equality between groups and layers of society.

Unfortunately, the more serious obstacle to any perceived utopia is human nature itself. Our nature, our natural dispositions, our culturally reinforced emotions and thoughts, all stem from our primitive brain, the brain used by our long ago ancestors to survive in the jungles and grasslands of Africa. Our survival is not just about technological superiority over certain aspects of the environment for more and better food and shelter. It is also about the jealousies, fears,

envies, hatreds, loves, fight or flight modes of our emotional reactions that are carried within humans from generation to generation. These emotions serve the genetic line of inheritance quite well, the non-rational brain using all sorts of emotional mechanisms to protect oneself and to replicate oneself. More often than not our rational mind is put to service to provide rationalizations for our emotional desires which in their own right may be logical to a particular circumstance.

Having a stronger educational system, living in a society that is more secure overall with many threats removed, still leaves us with all our emotions, logical or illogical as they may be. Fights will occur, competition will endure, partner breakups will happen, jealousies will emerge, all the usual kind of results long produced by our emotional brain. A small proportion will have little or no moral compass, a weak or no awareness of others emotional or cognitive states. The young will always have hormonal changes to work through as they struggle to understand the changes and the impulses created by them. These are all traits helping one gene survive over another, one familial group surviving over another.

Can those traits be controlled? Controlled probably, through the educational process and a more aware societal structure in general. It would be folly, in my estimate, to use drugs so prolifically as are currently used in some modern societies attempting to soften the malaise of emotional stress. Too many side effects, too much pharmaceutical power, and really it would be the elimination of what makes us human. Technology could be called into play, particularly artificial genetic modification, but that reintroduces the false attitudes associated with the biases and prejudices of eugenics and once again would be the elimination of what makes us human.

Our basic brain remains with us, but consider also that language, music, nurturing, caring, altruism, cooperation, compassion are all part of it as well. These positive traits also support the survival of one gene over another. And that perhaps is the crux - two sides of

emotional actions and reactions - and it is up to a strongly supported generalized nurturing side of our beings to create a much more agreeable social, technological, and environmental friendly lifestyle. Not utopia, but decidedly better than what exists now.

The wonder of it all

Allow me one last look at our primal origins, Simply put, we - homo sapiens - are not necessary. We do not deserve to live any more or less than any other creature crafted to survive in a particular environment. We are not the end all and be all of creation from here to eternity. It is also a conceit, an anthropomorphic conceit, to argue that the universe exists because we observe it, that our existence is a necessary prerequisite for the existence of the universe.

However life started, in metaphorical terms it is miraculous, a highly unlikely probability on a planet beset by meteors, earthquakes, and volcanoes all introducing different chemicals into the environment, some toxic to all life, some supporting many fascinating and different forms of life. Somehow, somewhere, different atoms combined into molecules which then became self-replicating molecules, which then changed even more to attempt to protect their self-replication. That small chance on this small world should be celebrated, the metaphorical miracle of all life celebrated by remembering we are only a small part of this universal experience. We are all connected.

Apocalypse now does not have to happen. Supposedly through our intellect we should be able to rise above our own self destruction. If we deserve to live, we can only deserve it if we work to protect our own, to nurture our own, our own being this single oxygenated blue-green planet in the critical life zone around a middling yellow star.

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