laetus in praesens

Alternative view of segmented documents via Kairos

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From ECHELON to NOLEHCE

enabling a strategic conversion to a faith-based global brain

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Introduction

ECHELON is the name used to describe a highly secretive worldwide signals intelligence and analysis network that is alleged to be operated by the intelligence agencies of five English-speaking nations (otherwise known as the UKUSA Community). Its existence has been documented by a number of sources -- most notably in a report by the European Parliament (European Parliament Report on ECHELON, 2001).

It is claimed that ECHELON can capture radio and satellite communications, telephone calls, faxes, e-mails and other data streams nearly anywhere in the world and includes computer automated analysis and sorting of intercepts. However the European Parliament concluded that "the analysis carried out in the report has revealed that the technical capabilities of the system are probably not nearly as extensive as some sections of the media had assumed". However it is necessarily unproven that it is operating in the best interests of the population of the world enjoined to engage in democratic processes in response to the challenges of the future.

One of the early researchers into ECHELON, Steve Wright (*The ECHELON Trail: an Illegal Vision. Surveillance and Society*, 3, 2005) usefully distinguishes between its former nature and its currently supposed nature:

> ECHELON is a (now out-of-date) code name given to the US National Security Agency's worldwide facility for the mass interception of electronic telecommunications including, phone, fax and email using key words and context.... Essentially, the system can work because for some of its journey, telecommunications traffic is travelling as an electronic stream that can be intercepted if the appropriate infrastructure is in place.

> However, the current wisdom is that ECHELON does not exist in the way it was originally construed but is a now thought to be a collection of subsets of interception capabilities using a range of code names of which we remain ignorant. Nevertheless, for the sake of simplicity, it makes sense to continue to use the generic label 'ECHELON' whilst recognizing that new surveillance algorithms have evolved since the early researchers built their crude paradigms.

As an operation of the "shadow world", the issue explored here is the possibility of the "conversion" of ECHELON into a counterpart, with a reversal of style and intent -- and therefore to be suitably named as NOLEHCE. The lessons of history and psychodynamics point to strategic vulnerabilities within operations like ECHELON that render them vulnerable to such reversals at critical "tipping points" associated with "paradigm shifts". Just as the security services of the modern democracies have ensured implementation of measures abhorred in the totalitarian systems of the past, such a role reversal (otherwise termed enantiodromia) may be anticipated (and possibly

enabled) with respect to ECHELON.

Strategic approach

The intent here is not to repeat descriptions of ECHELON, nor to assess their validity or the significance of the cases variously made by conspiracy theorists, civil rights campaigners, or those justifiably concerned with the implications for industrial espionage and unfair commercial advantage. That is the focus of an extensive body of literature accessible via the web (see *Wikipedia* entry, for example).

The catalyst for the argument here was a BBC interview with the retiring head of a UK intelligence agency who indicated, in effect, that their main focus was the prevention (or destabilization) of relationships understood to be potentially threatening to UK security. To this end a vast security apparatus is deployed under budgets whose nature and extent is necessarily concealed. The same is believed to be true of other countries -- notably those collaborating with the UK in ECHELON.

As a counterpart to this secretly controlled activity -- essentially undemocratic -- are the activities of myriads of civil society and other bodies. These are enjoined to openness and democratic principles, which they may fiercely defend. Typically they are extremely under-resourced in terms of the challenges they feel impelled to address. Typically also they are fragmented and uncoordinated in their efforts, however valuable may be the sociodiversity they represent and the psychocultural ecosystems they enrich.

The question to be asked is: **what would be the consequence of allocating the resources -- currently devoted (through ECHELON) to preventing or destabilizing civil society relationships -- to the process of building and enriching patterns of relationship, whether societal or cognitive?** More generally, what is the information system appropriate to a learning society? This is the anticipated orientation of NOLEHCE -- following the strategic conversion of ECHELON.

Paradigmatic distinction

Etymologically "echelon" derives from the concept of a rung in a ladder. In modern organizational parlance it has been adapted to describe levels in an organization hierarchy or authority structure ("upper echelons", "lower echelons"). It is notably used in this way within some religious institutions and secret societies. With respect to ECHELON, and the faith-based governments that have sustained it in recent years, this raises the interesting question as to the degree to which the term was understood in some way as a symbolic analogue to Jacob's Ladder to heaven. This would be consistent with the agendas of some religious constituencies promoting the "end times" scenarios of the Abrahamic religions and the possibility of direct ascent to heaven in the near future -- notably through rapture.

The hierarchical emphasis on levels and degrees, much favoured in the process of advancement within secret societies, is of course totally in contrast to the strategic emphasis on networks and networking in democratic society. This emphasis has of course openly emerged over the period in which ECHELON has allegedly been secretly organized and deployed.

Following the widely reported intelligence failures associated with 9/11 and the response to it, it is increasingly clear that the capacity to interpret meaningfully the available information (on disasters facing social systems and the planet) is inadequate to the challenge. This was dramatically illustrated by the problematic capacity of the intelligence services, aided and abetted by their political masters, to interpret information relating to weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Ironically the lessons learnt from Iraq are the need for ever more invasive surveillance information without any increase in interpretative ability beyond that relating to immediate security preoccupations. There is no record of intelligence services offering insights into solutions to the non-security challenges of society -- or creatively and imaginatively enabling appropriate patterns of relationships.

Contrasting ECHELON and NOLEHCE

It can be fruitfully argued that:

- ECHELON is the art of knowing more and more about less and less. There is an inherent failure of integrative capacity in focusing on the threat associated with the threat potential of every individual in every situation. There is both a deliberate, and inadvertent, commitment to breaking "the pattern that connects" -- namely an effective commitment to the destruction of quality in terms of the classic quote by Gregory Bateson (*Mind and Nature: a necessary unity*, 1979) in making the point that:

  > *The pattern which connects is a meta-pattern. It is a pattern of patterns. It is that meta-pattern which defines the vast generalization that, indeed, it is patterns which connect.*

  It is from this perspective that he warns in a much-cited phrase: *Break the pattern which connects the items of learning and you necessarily destroy all quality.*

- NOLEHCE is therefore the art of knowing less and less about more and more. In a period of increasing information overload, NOLEHCE deploys its information resources to elicit patterns that enable more global comprehension of greater complexity. It is focused on configuring links to facilitate higher orders of comprehension.

Whereas:

- ECHELON is necessarily committed to:
  - the entropic process of eroding and destroying patterns of relationships, whether the interpersonal tissue of civil society or its sustaining psychocultural patterns -- but framed as preserving and perpetuating the current level of order.
  - rendering complexity more comprehensible by simply reducing it to simpler forms more amenable to comprehension by the necessarily limited intellectual resources available -- whatever needs to be destroyed to achieve such "transparency" and "openness"

- treating all who are in disagreement with its fundamental strategic commitment as potential threats, notably as a consequence of inability to develop frameworks through which to handle disagreement more creatively and fruitfully

- NOLEHCE is necessarily committed to:
  - the negentropic process of finding more (and more sophisticated) ways of building up more and more meaningful patterns of relationship. Ironically, even without the resources of ECHELON, the web is notably now being used towards that end by social networking sites (YouTube, MyFace, etc).
  - responding to the challenge of enabling and enriching a diversity of potentially incommensurable initiatives -- and ensuring the coherence of the resultant ecosystem, namely eliciting sustainable configurations of a higher degree of order. Missing, as yet, is the deployment to imaginative and creative ends of the kinds of resources used so destructively by ECHELON. Possibilities are discussed elsewhere (*Consciously Self-reflexive Global Initiatives: Renaissance zones, complex adaptive systems, and third order organizations*, 2007; *Preliminary NetMap Studies of Databases on Questions, World Problems, Global Strategies, and Values*, 2006).

Although both share a preoccupation with detecting potential and emergence, the concern of ECHELON is primarily to inhibit to maintain the status quo, or divert it in support of narrow interests. Whereas NOLEHCE is focused on how any innovation can be woven into a richer pattern. The contrast might be caricatured as between "defiguring" and "configuring".

Given the considerable use made by ECHELON of mathematics and mathematicians, the contrast is also reflected in the failure to use such resources to the constructive ends associated with the NOLEHCE agenda (cf *And When the Bombing Stops? Territorial conflict as a challenge to mathematicians*, 2000). The embryonic, if not tokenistic or cynical, nature of the steps in this direction within the ECHELON context are exemplified by the NATO Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society (CCMS), founded in 1969, which merged with the NATO Science Committee (SCOM) in 2006 to form the NATO Science for Peace and Security Committee (SPS) [more].

Transformation of ECHELON capacities to NOLEHCE priorities

The issue in the transformation of ECHELON into NOLEHCE is how the threat-obsessed surveillance capacity of ECHELON can be adapted to the detection of potential relationships and patterns that could enable fruitful new forms of action.

Issues in this connection are:

- how is "fruitfulness" to be defined and detected in contrast to "threat"?
- what patterns are to be considered more fruitful?
- how is the capacity to imagine threats to be converted into the capacity to imagine creative possibilities?
- how is the "fruitfulness" of new patterns to be distinguished from the "threat" they may constitute for some?
- how can pattern recognition techniques, employed for threat-monitoring, be adapted to detection of potential innovation?
- how are fruitful "surprises" to be encouraged rather than automatically inhibited as a "threat"?
- how is the capacity to detect and covertly "take out" individual threats to be converted into the capacity to detect and "enable" individual potential?

Aspects of these challenges are evident in the following institutional inadequacies at the present time:

- limited ability to make use of immense military resources, "operational readiness", and " rapid reaction capacity", in times of natural disaster (eg Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, humanitarian disasters, etc); typically it is the absence of the military in the event of such disasters that is more significant than any presence, whether at the national level or through regional military alliances (NATO, etc)

- limited ability to detect individuals, groups and potential projects to which resources could be usefully allocated, whether in the case of:
  - foundations and philanthropists -- epitomized by the recognition that is often easier to make money than to give it away
  - intergovernmental institutions -- epitomized by recognized weaknesses in the appropriateness of procedures through which to support innovation, despite efforts to enable "networks of excellence"

- tokenistic input and feedback mechanisms, supposedly threatened by information overload, whether in the case of:
  - elected representatives, anxious to appear responsive to their (potential) constituents -- without having to engage in meaningful dialogue or commitment
  - commercial enterprises, anxious to appear responsive to (potential) customers -- without having to engage in meaningful dialogue or commitment
  - broadcast and internet media, anxious to appear responsive to (potential) users -- without having to engage in meaningful dialogue or commitment (cf the BBC scandal in 2007 regarding fabricated audience feedback)
  - threat warning systems -- typically resistant to potential disasters until it is too late (eg Hurricane Katrina, Asian tsunami, transport infrastructure, etc)
  - remedial action proposals -- typically considered irrelevant unless channelled through, and authorized by, institutional channels inhibited by outdated and unimaginative thinking

  Typically in each case the challenge of information overload is used as a means of avoiding the kinds of intelligent filtration in which ECHELON is alleged to have developed immense skill. Instead those seeking to provide feedback are made responsible for penetrating barriers to feedback. The situation is ironically analogous to the situation with regard to "spam" as unsolicited mail,

enabling the proliferation of which offers a means of "polluting" the web and disenabling characteristics that are to be valued from a NOLEHCE perspective. (*Practicalities of Participatory Democracy with International Institutions: attitudinal, quantitative and qualitative challenges*, 2003).

- inability to articulate more imaginative inter-perspectival modes of dialogue and the need for integrative responses, whether in the case of:
  - interfaith dialogue, despite the level of religiously-based violence
  - interdisciplinary dialogue, despite the level of disciplinary fragmentation
  - intersectoral dialogue, despite the degree of jurisdictional conflict
  - intercultural dialogue, despite the degree of ethnically-based violence
  - intergenerational dialogue, despite the increasing alienation between generations and the distinct threats to those of different generations

Such examples highlight the systemic deficiencies of pattern building capacity at the present time -- to which the resources and skills of NOLEHCE could be fruitfully devoted.

Given the "listening capacity" and the "interpretive capacity" of ECHELON in relation to potential threat, the question is how to transform such skills into the capacity of NOLEHCE to "listen" for creative potential and to "interpret" it into a language and form which justifies allocation of enabling resources.

A lesson from Google?
It might be the case that ECHELON derives part of its power from a paradigm significantly shared with Google -- and responsible for the latter's success. Google scans content (search queries, emails) for patterns with which advertising messages can be meaningfully associated for commercial purposes. Clearly ECHELON scans content to detect opportunities for disruptive intervention, "below the radar", in support of national security (defined to include national commercial advantage). However, NOLEHCE benefits from a different application of the same paradigm. It detects subtle patterns with which enabling messages can be associated to facilitate emergence of higher order knowledge or social structures. Where ECHELON essentially feeds a "toxic" agent into a pattern to destroy, deactivate or denature it -- a "dumbing down" process -- NOLEHCE feeds in appropriate resonance enhancing agents and catalysts. These enable new learning and the communication of more complex memes.
Of course the question with regard to both the Google and the NOLEHCE application, as for ECHELON, is who assesses the validity with which psychosocial systems are "groomed" and "cultivated" in this way? Whether under systems of faith-based or ideological governance, how will these applications be designed to operate and by whom? Who will understand their implications -- effectively as "mega-nanny" programmes of the emergent global brain?

Emergent global brain

It could be argued that any "global brain" is to be recognized in terms of its enhanced pattern recognition and pattern building capacity.

ECHELON can be understood as one of the systems integral to an emergent "global brain" (Peter Russell, *The Global Brain*, 1983/2000) as promoted by the Global Brain Group. The world wide web is another, as many have acknowledged -- notably in efforts to promote a recognition of some form of "planetary consciousness" (cf Ervin Laszlo, *Planetary Consciousness: Our next Evolutionary Step*. *Cybernetics and Human Knowing: A Journal of Second Order Cybernetics and Cyber-Semiotics*, 4, 4, 1997).

The challenge to reflection on the significance of such emergent processes for representing and processing knowledge is the degree to which such "modules" complement each other fruitfully or compete with each other dysfunctionally, even pathologically (*Simulating a Global Brain using networks of international organizations, world problems, strategies, and values*, 2001). For some, ECHELON might well be understood as a "tumour" on the global brain. Of course, for supporters of ECHELON, any effort to promote the processes that might be empowered by NOLEHCE is effectively facilitating a form of psychosocial "cancer" -- enabling "metastasis" (otherwise characteristic of malignant tumour cells).

Institutionally at the present time, the dysfunctional transformational dynamics between ECHELON and NOLEHCE is suggestively embodied in the relationship between "Davos" and "Porto Alegre" (cf *All Blacks of Davos vs All Greens of Porto Alegre: reframing global strategic discord through polyphony?* 2007)

Patterns of global order: a common structural symbol

Curiously both ECHELON and NOLEHCE share a common pattern that is given operational expression in quite different ways:

- For ECHELON, the worldwide surveillance system has long been dependent for the protection of its detector facilities on geodesic domes -- radar domes (radomes). Indeed it is these "global" structures which have come to symbolize the operation of such secretive "global" surveillance from various locations (Buckley Air Force Base, USA, Menwith Hill, UK; Pine Gap, Australia; Misawa Air Base, Japan; etc).

- For NOLEHCE, geodesic domes have long been seen as an architectural alternative to conventional, soulless habitats. As such they have figured prominently in alternative intentional communities. Such domes have been widely used by governments as a symbol of future-oriented thinking, notably at world exhibitions. The underlying principles of tensional integrity ("tensegrity") have been seen as a pattern of great potential significance for new forms of social and knowledge organization (cf *Documents relating to Networking, Tensegrity, Virtual Organization*). Tensegrity has notably been adapted to new forms of inter-perspectival dialogue processes in order to bypass the limitations of conventional hierarchical dialogue (Stafford Beer, *Beyond Dispute: the invention of*

team syntegrity, 1994). Of particular interest in relation to the reference above to metastasis, is the characteristic dynamic through which tensegrity structures redistribute local tensions around the structure as a whole in a constant search for dynamic equilibrium. The contrast from ECHELON's superficial use of geodesic is striking given that NOLEHCE focuses on the counter-intuitive tensegrity organizing principle as fundamental to the sustainability of new styles of psychosocial organization -- consistent with its role in biological cells (cf Donald E. Ingber, *Cellular tensegrity: defining new rules of biological design that govern the cytoskeleton*, *Journal of Cell Science*, 1993).

Faith-based dimensions

Curiously ECHELON and NOLEHCE can also be fruitfully contrasted in the psycho-cognitive and spiritual terms more central to the emergent patterns of faith-based governance that have sustained ECHELON in a lasting spirit of "*Gott Mit Uns*". Thus:

- ECHELON, in seeking to know more and more, is exhibiting a degree of pathological anxiety resulting in an obsession to know everything. This is strikingly indicated by the title of the programme proposed under a faith-based regime in the US, allegedly in support of ECHELON: Total Information Awareness. Such a need for total control is, in many spiritual traditions, the antithesis of spiritual maturity

- NOLEHCE, in focusing on the configuration of larger, more comprehensible, more communicable patterns of insight, is following an approach respected in many spiritual traditions. To that extent, NOLEHCE is appropriately pronounced "Know Less". Operationally this highly practical approach has been partially reflected in the much-cited phrase: *Small is Beautiful*. It is also notably reflected in the Quaker practice of simplicity -- in order to focus on what is most important and ignore or play down what is least important. This echoes both the Delphic injunction *Know Thyself* and the Vedic injunction *Neti Neti* (Not this, Not that)..

There is a curious degree of "metaphysical" symmetry to the relation between the ECHELON and NOLEHCE:

- For the supporters of ECHELON, there is a fundamental commitment to "minding" other people's business. This translates partly into the espionage terminology regarding "minders" for covert operatives. Conspiracy theorists speculate on the nature of the minds and mindset responsible for ECHELON. Unfortunately this mindset also disposed to forms of "mindless" brutality against those who may or may not be a threat -- justified in terms of regrettable "collateral damage. This may be understood as a form of existential "emptiness" at the core of ECHELON, possibly to be understood as nihilism..

- For the supporters of NOLEHCE, there may well be a degree of commitment to "mindlessness" as a goal of spiritual development, notably from the Buddhist and Zen understanding of "empty mind" or "no mind". The correspondence to the "violence" against others of the ECHELON mindset is here transformed into a form of radical challenge to one's own cognitive structure, epistemology or pattern of received ideas -- a partial explanation for ECHELON's typical antipathy to "radicalism" and its inability to find a basis for meaningful dialogue with "extremists" of any kind (cf *Norms in the Global Struggle against Extremism: "rooting for" normalization vs. "rooting out" extremism?* 2005).

This essential emptiness is curiously echoed in both cases by an essential structural feature of the geodesic dome discussed above. Such a dome is valued because of the "emptiness" of the centre. Within a NOLEHCE framework, in terms of some mystical traditions, notably Christian, this emptiness is associated with "unknowing" (cf *The Cloud of Unknowing*). It is otherwise associated with the challenge of unlearning. In Eastern traditions two-dimensional graphic symbols (mandalas or yantras), echo the emptiness at the centre of a geodesic structure. The central significance and "usefulness" of NOLEHCE is, for example, exemplified by the following much-cited quote:

> Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub; It is the centre hole that makes it useful.
> Shape clay into a vessel; It is the space within that makes it useful.
> Cut doors and windows for a room; It is the holes which make it useful.
> Therefore profit comes from what is there;
> Usefulness from what is not there.
> (Lao Tzu, *Tao The Ching*. Random Books, 1972).

As a focus of aspiration of humanity, ECHELON and NOLEHCE offer distorted images of another characteristic:

- For ECHELON, the operational challenge is to be "everywhere" but "nowhere" -- remaining above all invisible to any who might challenge its dominant strategic role and any covert intervention this may be held to justify

- For NOLEHCE, the operational challenge is to sustain coherence whilst avoiding any form of intervention -- traditionally upheld as the art of Taoist-inspired governance and a contrasting understanding of being "everywhere" but "nowhere".

Socio-political "revolution"

As noted earlier, the term "echelon" is strongly associated with social hierarchy and a sense of rank. The contrast with NOLEHCE implies other distinctions relevant to economic and social development and the use of resources:

- From an ECHELON mindset, notions of rank and elite are appropriately associated with the "centres of excellence" and "networks of excellence" whose creation is fostered by European intergovernmental initiatives. Resources are appropriately allocated to those with the greatest capacity to employ them fruitfully. The French verb *échelonner* notably implies such a "scaled" distribution.

- From a NOLEHCE mindset, a variant pronunciation as "*No Less*" is appropriately indicative of the socio-political challenge of

ensuring minimum threshold standards (of health, income, diet, education, etc). In the case of design it is appropriately associated with minimum use of resources -- of minimalist design in the face of penury of resources. This is reflected in mottos such as "*Less is more*" (Ludwig Mies van der Rohe) and "*Doing more with less*" (Buckminster Fuller developer of the tensegrity principles underlying the geodesic dome) .

Cognitive fusion and groupthink

The term "cognitive fusion" is used in military research to describe the process whereby a wide variety and quantity of information must be brought together, integrated and presented comprehensibly to a fighter pilot needing to make instant decisions. This may be seen as a very adequate metaphor of the challenge of global governance as it might be supported by information systems.

At this point is it unclear whether ECHELON can do any more than support the default destructive options open to governance framed as being in a defensive posture -- under attack on many fronts. That such threats may have been fabricated to some degree as a means of mobilizing support is a matter of speculation (*Promoting a Singular Global Threat -- Terrorism; strategy of choice for world governance*, 2002). The fact is the inability to respond effectively to current crises, whether real or imagined.

NOLEHCE offers an alternative strategic option to the configuration of information for all, as explored elsewhere (*Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor: Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing (ITER-8)*. 2006).

ECHELON and NOLEHCE share different variants of a knowledge processing challenge related to any cognitive "fusion" process:

- For ECHELON, this challenge is in the form of groupthink that resulted in the intelligence community "connecting the dots" in a particular way in response to the terrorist threat of 9/11. The pattern into which their mindset "clicked" ensured that counter-indicative information was deprioritised or excluded in order to amplify to degree of threat (cf *Groupthink: the Search for Archaeoraptor as a Metaphoric Tale -- missing the link between "freedom fighters" and "terrorists"*, 2002). Ironically, the associated spin frames any strategic response in a "positive" manner, downplaying any issues relating to the ineffectual nature of the response.

- For NOHLECE, this challenge takes the form of focusing on "positive" news in order to amplify the degree of hope, deprioritising or excluding counter-indicative information. NOHLECE is indeed very effective in highlighting problems -- in all their "negativity" -- and the need to attend to them. However, like ECHELON, it is dependent on assessing its actions as effective in engendering an adequate response.

Proponents of both ECHELON and NOHELCE are therefore variously trapped by the challenges of processing "negative" and "positive" information in order to engender and sustain effective responses -- despite vulnerability to premature closure (*Being Positive Avoiding Negativity: management challenge of positive vs negative*, 2005).

Tipping point to reversal through enantiodromia

It is of course the tension associated with the focus of ECHELON that renders it vulnerable to any trigger for its conversion, inversion, or transformation into NOLEHCE. The challenge for supporters of faith-based governance in their support of ECHELON is their implicit lack of faith -- a profound form of "infidelity" to the coherent dynamics of the whole, translated through ECHELON into obsession over total control of the parts. Ironically ECHELON is an exemplification of the faithlessness of people of faith in denial.

By contrast NOLEHCE exemplifies faith in the whole and the possibilities of giving expression to the patterns through which it can be better comprehended as a basis for coherent collective action.

The transformation from ECHELON to NOLEHCE will therefore take the form of a crisis of faith -- resulting in "conversion" to the alternative strategy. The unforeseen rapidity of such a conversion is exemplified by the rapid transformation of the USSR.

The inexorable approach to the "tipping point", phase transition (perhaps at some form of supersaturation) or singularity is increasingly well documented. For the promoters of "end times" scenarios for governance, it is confused with the process of rapture (*Spontaneous Initiation of Armageddon a heartfelt response to systemic negligence*, 2004).

The trigger maybe a combination of events, a "crisis of crises" as foreseen by John Platt (What We Must Do, *Science*, 166, November 1969). Following the earlier more generic analysis of Jared Diamond (*Collapse: how societies choose to fail or succeed*, 2005), Thomas Homer-Dixon (*The Upside of Down: catastrophe, creativity and the renewal of civilization*, 2007) identifies five "tectonic stresses" that are accumulating deep underneath the surface of today's global order and could individually or collectively constitute such a trigger:

- energy stress, especially from increasing scarcity of conventional oil;
- economic stress from greater global economic instability and widening income gaps between rich and poor;
- demographic stress from differentials in population growth rates between rich and poor societies and from expansion of megacities in poor societies;
- environmental stress from worsening damage to land, water forests, and fisheries; and,
- climate stress from changes in the composition of Earth's atmosphere.

The unpredictable nature of the consequences are well-documented by Nassim Nicholas Taleb (*The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, 2007). ECHELON is poorly equipped in terms of the complexity sciences to respond to such a crisis.

Homer-Dixon suggests however that breakdown could open up extraordinary opportunities for creative, bold reform of our societies. As humanity's best hope for a prosperous and humane future, he suggests that, if people are well-prepared, they may be able to exploit less extreme forms of breakdown to achieve deep reform and renewal of institutions, social relations, technologies, and entrenched habits of

behavior. It is NOLEHCE which offers the enabling facility for this process.

Symbolic inversion

ECHELON and NOLEHCE may indeed be understood as strangely distorted mirror images of each other -- with any transition from one to the other evoking self-referential issues raised by Douglas Hofstadter (*Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid*, 1980) and in fictional form by Lewis Carroll (*Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, 1871).

Aspects of the transition "through the mirror" have been recognized in the literature on "symbolic inversion" (Barbara Babcock, *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, 1978). Of relevance to any faith-based understanding, Paul A Kruger (*Symbolic Inversion in Death: some examples from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near Eastern World*, *Verbum and Ecclesia*, 26, 2005) argues that the phenomenon of a 'topsy-turvy world' (*mundus inversus*) is widespread in the literatures and cultures of the world, referring to a place where everything is reversed in relation to the normal state of affairs.

> Symbolic inversion is a widespread cultural phenomenon, the earliest examples of which can be traced back to the cultures of the ancient Near East. Symbolic inversion (*mundus inversus*) relates to those forms of expressive behaviour which invert commonly accepted social codes.

It is curious that a form of "symbolic inversion" is one of the transformations fundamental to the cryptography so vital to the secrecy of ECHELON's covert operations. The significance of such inversion has been highlighted by Xavier Sallantin (*L'Epreuve de Force*, 1975), a military theorist working on the logic of conflictual systems who has provided a valuable analysis of the nature of the domains to which game theory applies (see commentary in *Game comprehension and identity transformation* of *Development through Alternation*, 1983). In a study of mathematical epistemology he illustrates the issue by the simple example of the need for prior agreement before the referee tosses the coin between the captains at the opening of a competitive event -- agreement on how to signal agreement or disagreement (*yes* or *no*). His insight proved vital to this writer facing recovery from a computer system crash when months of carefully backed up data appeared meaninglessly scrambled -- a poorly tested new interface card had simply inverted bit values (0 for 1).

Aspects of an inversion process are differently evident within ECHELON and NOLEHCE:

- For ECHELON, there is the puzzling solving capacity characteristic of cryptography and extended to its analytical interpretation through which patterns of relationship are recognized between actors thereby framed as a threat. Although any such discovery process may detect networks of threat, it is not recognized as being associated with the capacity to create new networks and patterns of relationship, other than to extend its threat detection capacity through espionage networks. New processing capacities -- new learning -- would seem to be limited to this defensive process, as exemplified by restrictive response to new cryptographic possibilities.
- For NOLEHCE, the "puzzles" to which conceptual resources are allocated are those characteristic of strategic, if not existential, dilemmas associated with "hard problems" in the psychosocial realm -- where their challenge has the somewhat magically transformative qualities of an existential "riddle". The challenge is how to give sustainable operational form to understandings of multiplier and synergic effects in a context of incommensurables and intractably opposed framings. Rather than the use for security purposes, of transactional pattern recognition software such as Netmap a contrast from ECHELON is notably to be seen in its application to eliciting and sustaining psychosocial and knowledge networks (*Complementary Knowledge Analysis / Mapping Process*. 2006; *Preliminary NetMap Studies of Databases on Questions, World Problems, Global Strategies, and Values*, 2006)

Kruger cites Babcock's characterization of symbolic inversion:

> Symbolic inversion may be broadly defined as any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values, and norms be they linguistic, literary or artistic, religious, or social and political.

He clarifies the implications for any engagement with "the other". So, for instance, certain groups could construct their idea of "other" groups through the strategy of "symbolic inversion". The "we" (one's own group) are accordingly endowed with every aspect that can be deemed as "cultivated", whilst the "other" is described in terms of direct opposite qualities.

By focusing on the relationship between life and death, Kruger highlights the nature of the symbolic "death" associated with this inversion -- which may here be usefully associated with the strategic transition from the mindset of ECHELON to that of NOLEHCE. Cognitively the transition may also be related to the perceptual multistability of the "figure-ground" transition that has been highlighted by Gestalt psychology.

A somewhat analogous relationship was explored in a novel by Samuel Butler (*Erewhon*, 1872) regarding a utopia contrasting with conventional European society. Within a NOLEHCE framework, rather than Butler's distorted spatially-oriented derivation of "nowhere" -- the challenge might be better understood in temporal terms as one of "now here". This is consistent with the increasing importance attached to the special reality of the present moment (cf *Presenting the Future: an alternative to dependence on human sacrifice through global pyramid selling schemes*, 2001).

Paradoxical partnership

For the secretive supporters of ECHELON, their need for total control is readily comprehensible. In an open society it is easy to understand how repugnant this may be to others in whose name such covert initiatives are taken without consultation or democratic

oversight. Such misleadership is discussed elsewhere (*Emergence of a Global Misleadership Council: misleading as vital to governance of the future?* 2007). It is currently exemplified by plans to force through a "non-constitutional" European treaty containing over 90% of the previously rejected "constitutional treaty" -- without any promised referendum.

Ironically, given the concerns exhibited at the European institutional level by ECHELON, many of the concerned European governments are acknowledged to have been complicit in the process of "extraordinary rendition" in service to the information gathering capacity of ECHELON. Many have also been complicit in NATO's covert Operation Gladio. It is in this sense that ECHELON might be associated symbolically with the "heart of darkness" of democracy.

NOLEHCE would indeed be a valuable corrective to ECHELON. However there is the curious phenomenon that leadership seems to necessitate an element of strategic bluff to be successful. There is indeed a necessary element of "misleadership" in leadership -- even of the most admirable kind.

However, curiously enough, it is to be expected that a larger picture calls for an understanding of the "seed" of NOLEHCE in ECHELON -- and for the seed of ECHELON in NOLEHCE:

- For ECHELON, there is a way in which the programme "knows nothing" through the process of striving so desperately to "know everything" (as recognized to some extent in the strategic "battle for hearts and minds")

- For NOLEHCE, there is a way in which striving to avoid "knowing anything" results in a form of "knowing everything" (as indicated in the mystical literature).

These opposing strategic approaches are indeed complementary processes in paradoxical ways for which new understanding is required (cf *Snoring of The Other: a politically relevant psycho-spiritual metaphor?* 2006). Symbolically their relationship might be fruitfully understood in terms of ECHELON as supportive of a martial "blade", with NOLEHCE as "chalice" -- in accordance with the framing offered by cultural historian Riane Eisler (*The Chalice and The Blade: Our History, Our Future*, 1987). She notably coined the term "domination culture" to describe a system of top-down rankings (characteristic of the ECHELON mindset) ultimately backed up by fear or force, noting that one of the core components of this system of authoritarian rule in both the family and the state is the subordination of women. Such a framing fruitfully associates the NOLEHCE mindset with a womb-like psychocultural role potentially essential to recognition of any new Renaissance (cf *Consciously Self-reflexive Global Initiatives: Renaissance zones, complex adaptive systems, and third order organizations*, 2007).

Both ECHELON and NOLEHCE are effectively trapped in an autopoietic process -- of their own making. It is their complementarity which evokes the larger process of enantiodromia which ensures the continuity through the hubris of the disorientation associated with the transition between them (*Psychosocial Energy from Polarization within a Cyclic Pattern of Enantiodromia*, 2007). They both offer contexts for learning.

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