



laetus in praesens

Alternative view of segmented documents via Kairos

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Cultivating Global Strategic Fantasies of Choice

Learnings from Islamic Al-Qaida and the Republican Tea Party movement

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Introduction

Subsequent to the success of the Republican [Tea Party movement](#) in the recent US mid-term elections, [Gary Younge](#) argued the case that the "Tea Party" does not in fact exist (*The Tea Party is not new, or coherent. It's merely old wine in new bottles*, *The Guardian*, 7 November 2010). This elicited several hundred [comments](#). This argument follows various observations regarding the questionable nature of the "existence" of Al-Qaida (*Learning from "al-Qaida" as a source of terrorism*, 2005).

Younge's articulation was such that it seemed possible, if not fruitful, to substitute "Al-Qaida" for "Tea Party" in quest of a more generic insight into the manner in which "non-existent" movements can now engage human and other resources to such a degree -- and with such dramatic effect on national and global policy formation. The substitution, presented here as an exercise, raises the further question as to whether global policy formation is increasingly determined by the cultivation of preferred "fantasies" -- typically accepted with the greatest seriousness, even deadly seriousness.

More "serious" however is the decline in widespread credibility of cases argued in the rational mode -- as has been assumed to be the appropriate approach to policy formulation, especially in a society inspired by the rule of law. The "rational" mode of justification and development of any policy has effectively been coopted and reframed. On the one hand "rational" arguments for action on critical issues are now readily dismissed as "unproven", or otherwise unworthy of priority consideration. But on the other hand so-called "rational" arguments are developed as "proven" support for policies that would otherwise be considered quite questionable. This problematic situation is exacerbated by widespread abuse, whether publicized or suspected (*Abuse of Faith in Governance*, 2009).

More innocently perhaps is the manner in which disciplines and consultancies develop "models" through which to articulate reality and to enable policies for its navigation. These are frequently framed as intellectual property, thereby constraining their use by others, irrespective of their value and the crises for which they are applicable (*Future Coping Strategies: beyond the constraints of proprietary metaphors*, 1992). But as cognitive vehicles deemed fit for purpose, their enthusiastic use and advocacy might be understood in terms of an adaptation of the title of the TV western *Have Gun -- Will Travel* (1957-1963) into *Have Model, Will Strategize*.

Associated with this tendency is a process that might be mnemonically termed the *Wright Brothers Syndrome*. As those claiming to be first to achieve flight with their airplane, that "model" was necessarily upheld as "right" -- despite [other claimants](#), then framed as "wrong". The ability to "take off" "fly" is now associated with viability -- as implied to a lesser degree in metaphorical use of "trial balloon", or even "kite". Any "model" now developed and successfully promoted is similarly upheld as "right" by some -- as with the Tea Party model or the Al-Qaida model. The difficulty highlighted here is that, whilst each such model is "right" for its constituency, it necessarily tends to frame others as "wrong" -- and is so framed by them. The challenge has been explicitly highlighted by [Edward de Bono](#) (*I Am Right, You Are Wrong*, 1990). The issue is what global context can contain such diversity, especially when it engenders conflict.

The question explored here is whether the emerging context is one in which many, if not all, are now free to cultivate and promote global policies which others will perceive, and claim, to be "fantasies" -- if not dangerously "wrong". If required, the "evidence" substantiating the fantasy can be readily indicated (or supplied) -- in the form of bombings or threats in the case of "Al-Qaida". The "proof" as to the claim is however reframed as unquestionable, or is withheld -- for reasons of "security" in the case of "Al-Qaida".

How weird that global politics should be haunted by such imaginative fantasy -- echoing the dynamics exploited by indigenous witchdoctors and priesthoods down the ages. Back to [bogeymen](#) under the bed as the source of all ills.

The possible ways in which such "faith-based" policies then "work" was a preoccupation in various earlier explorations (*Participative Democracy vs. Participative Drama: lessons on social transformation for international organizations from Gorbachev*, 1991; *Future Challenge of Faith-based Governance*, 2003; *Promoting a Singular Global Threat -- Terrorism: strategy of choice for world governance*, 2002; *Politicization of Evidence in the Plastic Turkey Era*, 2003).

Reality and existence

The nature of reality and existence is conventionally the preoccupation and speciality of philosophers -- who tend to dispute these matters vigorously amongst themselves. As indicated by the philosopher [Nicholas Rescher](#) (*The Strife of Systems: an essay on the grounds and implications of philosophical diversity*, 1985) in concluding:

For centuries, most philosophers who have reflected on the matter have been intimidated by the strife of systems. But the time has come to put this behind us -- not the strife, that is, which is ineliminable, but the felt need to somehow end it rather than simply accept it and take it in stride. To reemphasize the salient point: it would be bizarre to think that philosophy is not of value because philosophical positions are bound to reflect the particular values we hold.

Potentially more practical is the recognition of the [social construction of reality](#) within which forms of "existence" can be recognized ([Peter L. Berger](#) and [Thomas Luckmann](#), *The Social Construction of Reality*, 1966). Without implying any definitive clustering, for the purpose of the following argument it is useful to note and distinguish the following senses of reality -- each with its implications for "existence" and "non-existence", whereby phenomena acquire salience -- however contrasted with particular understandings of "fiction" and "fantasy":

- **legal reality**, whereby the legal existence of entities is recognized, or not -- according to jurisdiction, and including the reality attributed to legislation "on the books", but having no current relevance whatsoever. A [legal fiction](#) is a fact assumed or created by courts which is then used in order to apply a legal rule which was not necessarily designed to be used in that way; reference is made to legal fantasy. Of particular interest is the nature of the "existence" of secret treaties and agreements, especially when the latter are made "informally" between intelligence agencies.
- **political reality**, by which the existence and significance of political forces and entities is recognized -- irrespective of whether or not they are legitimate, or are to be considered significant "players". Political fiction is often used to provide commentary on political events, systems and theories. Of particular interest is the nature of parliamentary debate in which opposing parties label each other's initiatives as "fantasy" -- in contrast the "realism" of their own.
- **security reality**, focusing primarily on the existence of potential threats -- attributing "existence" irrespective of other senses of reality. Concerns may be expressed with regard to fiction and fantasy in relation to security.
- **economic/financial reality**, through which value is attributed -- including the capacity to engender the existence of value *ex nihilo* (as in the case of [quantitative easing](#)), or the otherwise questionable valuation of (toxic) assets, as in the [subprime mortgage crisis](#) -- with financial significance attributed by various indicators and lists (*Forbes Global 2000*, *Forbes list of billionaires*, etc). Notions of fantasy and fiction are readily to be recognized. Quantitative easing has been criticized as enticing people to misallocate more capital in activities that can be funded, creating a false impression of 'recovery' for a time, essentially as accounting fiction, while in reality even more capital consumption occurs (*Accounting Fiction*, *Business Standard*, 23 April 2009).
- **scientific reality**, whereby the reality of phenomena is recognized (or denied), including the recognition of the "existence" of mathematical objects of complexity beyond ordinary human comprehension (*Dynamics of Symmetry Group Theorizing*, 2008). A considerable role is played by [science fiction](#) in speculating on future and alternative possibilities.
- **operational reality**, in terms of which technologies are variously controlled
- **administrative/procedural reality**, understood as the necessities of due process, however determined -- according to administrative context, and irrespective of situations considered [Kafkaesque](#) (Morton Kroll, *Administrative Fiction and Credibility*, *Public Administration Review*, March 1965; Howard E. McCurdy, *Fiction and Imagination: how they affect public administration*, *Public Administration Review*, 1995). Of particular interest, as with political reality, is recognition that only issues defined by an agenda or mandate "exist" -- with others necessarily considered only "under the table".
- **religious reality**, by which phenomena of religious significance are recognized -- typically distinctively according to religion. The realities of cults, as of religion itself, are notably deprecated in terms of fantasy and fiction.
- **social reality**, including recognition of status, reputation, entitlements (protocol, precedence) -- typically making the distinction between a "nobody" and a "somebody", variously defined (*Almanach de Gotha*, *A-list celebrities*, *Forbes list*, etc). A significant role is played by [social science fiction](#).
- **working reality**, whereby the existence of alliances, enemies and opportunities is recognized
- **recreational reality**, within which significance is attributed to sporting events and personalities, for example, and to the sites and experiences of tourism
- **media reality**, by which collective attention is focused selectively on features of society, therefore given "visibility" and "existence", as a powerful process in the creation social reality

- **historical reality**, by which the current relationship between social entities may be strongly determined -- typically a focus of commemoration, but often of bloody violence. Such realities may be nourished by [historical fiction](#).
- **ethical/moral reality**, by which behavioural norms and taboos are defined -- typically distinctively according to culture
- **aesthetic reality**, by which qualitative distinctions are made with respect to dress, decor or artefacts -- typically distinctively according to stylistic preferences. Aesthetics may be used to misrepresent reality notably by creating an alternative reality, as with cosmetics.
- **sexual reality**, by which interpersonal relationships may be determined -- typically significantly influenced by [sexual fantasy](#), "*bunga bunga*" à la Berlusconi
- **hedonistic reality**, through which the reality of pleasure and recreation is appreciated -- typically including the realities and fantasies engendered by use of psychoactive substances
- **mythical reality**, by which a degree of existence is attributed to legendary and mythical entities and their current relevance -- typically a focus of celebrations and cultural activities
- **psychological and subjective reality**. by which existence is typically attributed to what others may consider to be illusion -- notably of vital importance in the case of existential reality through which self-esteem may be severely challenged
- **psychic reality**, by which existence may be attributed to paranormal phenomena
- **auspicious reality**, in terms of which circumstances are assessed as being favourable or unfavourable -- typically central to certain decision-making processes
- **virtual reality**, through which existence is attributed to a variety of entities and processes

Of particular relevance to this argument is the extent to which these realities, and what they recognize as existing, are typically not consistent. Each may well consider the other irrelevant to the reality of its preoccupation -- even pure "fantasy". The implications of one reality for another may be complex, as with the very significant financial implications for the value of a house if it is said to be haunted. Under appropriate circumstances, each reality -- and whatever it considers to "exist" -- may take precedence over others.

A potentially fruitful approach to providing an integrative context for these distinct realities is through the various [Systems of Categories Distinguishing Cultural Biases](#) (1993), including that of: [Magoroh Maruyama](#), [Geert Hofstede](#), [Kinhide Mushakoji](#), [Will McWhinney](#), [Stephen Pepper](#), [Mary Douglas](#), [Howard Gardner](#), [Emmanuel Todd](#). As a means of understanding engagement with different realities, perhaps of most immediate relevance is that of the philosophical study of [W T Jones](#), relevantly titled [The Romantic Syndrome](#) (1961), although more appropriately subtitled [Toward a new method in cultural anthropology and the history of idea](#). This suggests that each needs to be positioned with respect to seven polar axes of preferential or methodological bias:

1. *Order vs disorder*: Namely the range between a preference for fluidity, muddle chaos, etc. and a preference for system, structure, conceptual clarity, etc.
2. *Static vs dynamic*: Namely the range between a preference for the changeless, eternal, etc. and a preference for movement, for explanation in genetic and process terms, etc.
3. *Continuity vs discreteness*: Namely the range between a preference for wholeness, unity, etc and a preference for discreteness, plurality, diversity, etc.
4. *Inner vs outer*: Namely the range between a preference for being able to project oneself into the objects of one's experience (to experience them as one experiences oneself), and a preference for a relatively external, objective relation to them.
5. *Sharp focus vs soft focus*: Namely the range between a preference for clear, direct experience and a preference for threshold experiences, felt to be saturated with more meaning than is immediately present.
6. *This world vs other world*: Namely the range between preference for belief in the spatio-temporal world as self-explanatory and preference for belief that it is not and can only be comprehended in terms of other frames.
7. *Spontaneity vs process*: Namely the range between a preference for chance, freedom, accident, etc and a preference for explanations subject to laws and definable processes.

In some cases such "realities" may be fruitfully understood as "worlds" in their own right. For example, [Nelson Goodman](#) has notably reviewed the ways in which such worlds could be created through the arts ([Ways of Worldmaking](#), 1978). As discussed separately, [world-making](#) may be considered one approach to imaginal education ([Imaginal education: game playing, science fiction, language, art and world-making](#), 2003). Surprisingly, in the reference here to recognition of whether models "fly", this rhetorical image has been discussed as fundamental to the thinking of [Ludwig Wittgenstein](#) by the philosopher [Susan G. Sterrett](#) ([Wittgenstein Flies a Kite: a story of models of wings and models of the world](#), 2006). The ability of a community to construct and sustain both a reality and its own identity can be explored in terms of the bird-flocking behaviour with which swarm intelligence is associated ([Dynamically Gated Conceptual Communities](#), 2004).

The question of what exists is brought into focus by assertions regarding "evil", yet to be defined scientifically or legally. In his acceptance speech on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009, President Barack Obama asserted, as a Christian, that: *For make no mistake: evil does exist in the world*. He specifically invoked the concept of "just war" in order to defeat the evil by which he and his security advisers believe the world to be existentially threatened. Whilst the term "evil" is frequently used in discourse, even in parliamentary discourse, this assertion would appear formally to recognize greater substance to evil than in its rhetorical use. Such acceptance raises the question why greater attention is not given to it in governance itself and in other institutions -- in educational systems and research centres. Given past difficulty in defining aggression, terrorism, and torture, where are official efforts made to clarify the nature of evil?

Many Christians hold Muslims to be "evil", just as many Muslims hold Christians to be "evil" -- with the USA frequently identified with "Satan" and Muslims believed by some to be worshipping Satan. This is a characteristic dynamic between many religious -- a "reality of the world of religion. Academic disciplines would not use "evil" in reference to each other, but their representatives would readily use "dangerously misguided" as highlighted by the [Sokal affair](#). This is the "reality" of the world of knowledge -- as explored by Rescher

(1985).

Non-existence of Al-Qaida?

With respect to the "non-existence" of Al-Qaida, ironically related arguments have long been made regarding the "non-existence" of "international" NGOs (*Legal status of international NGOs: overview and options*, 1996). Of course the point may be made that although these are both features of "civil" society, Al-Qaida can be characterized as a feature of "uncivil" society (*Interacting Fruitfully with Uncivil Society: the dilemma for non-civil society organizations*, 1996). To encompass extremes like Al-Qaida and the Tea Party movement, a set of various understandings of "civil society" can be articulated in the light of the above-mentioned axes of bias of Jones (1961), (*Exploratory System of 14 Contrasting Concepts of Civil Society*, 1996).

Related arguments apply to the nature of the "international" existence of multinational corporations typically defined within the jurisdiction of a particular country. Neither "international NGOs" nor "multinational corporations" have any legal "existence" in "international law", as defined by relevant treaties -- in contrast with "intergovernmental organizations" (*Types of international organization*, 1978). Especially challenging in this respect and in addition to the above considerations, if an entity is "illegal" or criminal, there is a particular legal sense in which it cannot be held to "exist". This is an issue with respect to both "organized" crime (Mafia, etc), and the case of "Al-Qaida". The pursuit of illegal bodies can then be compared with the pursuit of the [chimera](#) of myth.

The basic point to be made is that the evidence of a bomb explosion of any kind cannot be held to be incontrovertible evidence for the existence of "Al-Qaida", anymore than a disastrous hurricane can be presented as evidence of an "Act of God" -- even though the insurance industry may choose to label it so (*Acts of God vs Acts of al-Qaida: Hurricane Katrina as a message to Bible Belt America?* 2005). In an earlier exploration (*Learning from "al-Qaida" as a source of terrorism*, 2005), it was noted that:

- "Al-Qaida" is a name that some terrorism experts claim was imposed by Western officials on to disparate radical Islamic groups to give their amorphous enemy a degree of conventional coherence -- and by doing so blew Osama bin Laden's power and reach "out of proportion". Whilst concerned about the threat of terror, they argue that we should "debunk the myth of al-Qaeda" (cf Brendan O'Neill, *Does al-Qaeda exist? Not in the way that we think, say some terrorism experts*, 28 November 2003; Adam Dolnik and Kimberly A McCloud, *Debunk the myth of al-Qaeda*, *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 May 2002). Adam Curtis presented in 2004 a series of BBC documentaries entitled *The Power of Nightmares* that showed how the fantasy image of the "al-Qaida organization" was created, arguing that the real threat came not from a network but from individuals and groups linked only by an idea (*The making of the terror myth*, *The Guardian*, 15 October 2004). Now he argues:

For three years they told us breathlessly about a terrifying global network. Now, suddenly, it has gone away and been replaced by "an evil ideology" that inspires young, angry Muslim males in our own society. (*Creating Islamist Phantoms*, *The Guardian*, 30 August 2005)

Unfortunately hundreds, if not thousands, of suspects have been tortured to get them to admit to their links with a phantom organization -- reinforcing the outdated belief of the intelligence agencies in the existence of the "al-Qaida organization".

- According to Pierre-Henri Bunel (*The Origins of Al-Qaida*, *World Affairs*, vol 8, no 12, April-June 2004) in the mid-1980s, "Al-Qaida" was a database located in a computer in an Arabic military school and dedicated to the communications of the [Islamic Conference's](#) secretariat. Since then, with the development of the internet, the Islamic Conference developed its own network to which many Islamic organizations subscribed, few of which were groups suspected of terrorism. Not all the member countries of the Islamic Conference are considered "rogue states". But "Al-Qaida remained the database of the Islamic Conference" and many Islamic groups could pick up information from there. When Osama bin Laden was a CIA agent in Afghanistan, the Al-Qaida intranet was a good communication system through which to pass coded or covert messages.
- "Al-Qaida" is a descriptor for a loose network, understood by some as more like a movement of opinion or an ideology, rather than an "organization" in any conventional sense of the term (however convenient it might be to assume that it is an organization of some kind that could be subject to the repertoire of responses used against such bodies). For example, for Richard Norton-Taylor (*Use and abuse of intelligence*, *The Guardian*, 19 July 2005):

"Al-Qaida is now as much a concept as an organisation or network".

Ironically it may be more a *concept* for extremists, and more an *organization* for the security services seeking "master minds", "coordinators", "networks" and "cells". As noted by Jason Burke (*Al-Qaida is now an idea not an organisation*, *The Guardian*, 5 August 2005):

... we need to face up to the simple truth that Bin Laden, al-Zawahiri et al do not need to organise attacks directly. They merely need to wait for the message they have spread around the world to inspire others. Al-Qaida is now an idea, not an organisation.

- Osama bin Laden is acknowledged to have once been a CIA operative, but there is no credible evidence to prove that he no longer is one (cf Michel Chossudovsky, *"Osamagate"*, 9 October 2001) [[more](#)]. Who could prove otherwise to whose satisfaction? The case has been made for the advantages of promoting the existence of an entity named "al-Qaida" as a combination "Aunt Sally", "straw man" or "bogyman" to provide a threatening focus for collective strategy. *Who might benefit* from fabrication of threats of this kind? One might even ask whether "al-Qaida" was a construct of some rogue intelligence agency cynically leaving

their footprint in the acronym:

- American Lie - Questioning Assumptions in International Development Action?
 - Artificial Lie - Questioning Assumptions in Intelligent Defence Action?
- The killing, capture or interrogation of key figures supposedly associated with "al-Qaida" does not seem to have modified the capacity of "al-Qaida" to undertake acts of terrorism. It is not clear under what conditions those interrogated confirmed the existence of "al-Qaida", if they did.
 - The cost of faking website statements from "al-Qaida" or of fabricating videos of "Osama bin Laden", or of any other person, is trivial. Their authenticity can only be assumed, not proven in a public court of justice (whatever evidence, of possibly highly dubious quality and source, is advanced in secret tribunals). Any such communications are readily assumed to be authentic in the absence of evidence to the contrary -- facilitating the operations of hoaxers. *Who benefits* from the exploitation of such unquestioning reaction?

As noted by [Thomas L Friedman](#):

"There are no obvious terrorist headquarters and training camps in Afghanistan that we can hit with cruise missiles. The Al Qaeda threat has metastasized and become franchised. It is no longer vertical, something that we can punch in the face. It is now horizontal, flat and widely distributed, operating through the Internet and tiny cells" [[more](#)].

Anyone can claim to be "al-Qaida" and none will question the claim -- least of all the security services anxious for early leads. Anyone can claim that some target group has "links to al-Qaida", especially if they need rapid closure on their investigation to demonstrate effectiveness. Indeed, in Iraq or Afghanistan, the very fact of having bombed any group suffices to define them by that act, without further evidence, as a "group with links to al-Qaida".

However, despite the useful highlighting above of this situation, notably by columnists of *The Guardian*, a recent article indicates the nature of the challenge of misrepresentation (Vikram Dodd, Richard Norton-Taylor, and Paul Harris, *Cargo plane bomb found in Britain was primed to blow up over US*, *The Guardian*, 10 November 2010). This was subtitled:

- in the *online version* as: *Device thought to have been sent by Yemen-based al-Qaida made safe three hours from explosion.*
- in the *hardcopy version* it was titled: *Al-Qaida bomb found at British airport was primed to blow up plane over US*. There was no reference there to "thought to have been sent". The matter had already been prejudged. Of course only Al-Qaida would consider using bombs in this way -- despite many alternative scenarios explored in the movies?

A similar process is evident in the case the *Financial Times* in an article by Anthony Deutsch and Anna Fifield:

- the online version (10 November 2010) is titled: *Obama seeks to repair ties with moderate Islam.*
- the hardcopy version (11 November 2010) is titled: *Obama urges Islam to help beat al-Qaeda* -- quoting Obama as saying: *America is not and never will be at war with Islam. Instead, all of us must work together to defeat al-Qaeda and its affiliates.*

The Associated Press disseminated a statement subtitled: *"Yemen group issues statement saying it will continue to strike American and Western interests"* (*Al-Qaida claims responsibility for bombs mailed to U.S. synagogues*, *Haaretz.com*, 5th November 2010). A movement, whose very existence has never been demonstrated according to scientific or legal standards of proof, is now upheld as the source of bombs. The possibilities that the bombs might not in fact "exist", might originate from others (if only their component parts), or be part of a [false flag operation](#), are not considered in the ready use of the "Al-Qaida" label. **There is seemingly little need for intelligent analysis of any sophistication. All bombs exploded around the world -- other than those of NATO -- are now necessarily of Al-Qaida origin, even though Al-Qaida may only be an idea.**

It is therefore most puzzling that at the time of writing the [explosion of the Qantas A380 engine](#) was not immediately blamed on Al-Qaida -- evidence withheld for security reasons, as with [destruction of the Air France plane](#) the previous year. Clearly an opportunity lost which would have avoided costly insurance claims.

Organizational correspondences between Tea Party and Al-Qaida

The following exercise is presented to elicit reflection on possible isomorphism between movements which will be the focus of belief or faith in the 21st century. This comparison should not be held to imply that the Tea Party is a source of "bombs", as is alleged in the case of Al-Qaida. However it might be appropriate to consider how the Tea Party movement -- to the extent that it "exists" -- would vigorously support the manufacture and use of bombs in practice, or that it would enthusiastically engage in memetic warfare with the use of "information bombs" (*Missiles, Missives, Missions and Memetic Warfare: Navigation of strategic interfaces in multidimensional knowledge space*, 2001; *Cognitive Ballistics vs. Derivative Correlation in Memetic Warfare*, 2009).

Comparison of the "non-existence" of Al-Qaida with the Tea Party movement

Tea Party

Source: Gary Younge, *The Tea Party is not new, or coherent. It's merely old wine in new bottles*, *The Guardian*, 7 November 2010
([Comments](#))

Al-Qaida

Source: Substitutions (in bold) in the text of left hand column -- effectively used as a "template"

The "Tea Party" does not exist. It has no members, leaders, office. **Al-Qaida** does not exist. It has no members, leaders, office bearers, headquarters, policies, participatory structures, budget or bearers, headquarters, policies, participatory structures, budget representatives. The Tea Party is shorthand for a broad, shallow or representatives. **Al-Qaida** is shorthand for a broad, shallow

sentiment about low taxes and small government shared by loosely affiliated, somewhat like-minded people. That doesn't mean the right isn't resurgent. It is. But the forces driving its political energy are not those that underpinned its recent electoral success.

The Tea Party is not a new phenomenon. It's simply a new name for an old phenomenon - the American hard right. Over the last two years the term has provided a rallying point for a coalition of disparate groups, most of which have been around for many years.... who vow to resist unconstitutional government "by any means necessary"... [media] listeners who had no unifying identity before.

Having a name helps. It has offered a political identity to a significant number of people who were either not active or might not have understood themselves to be in any way connected. That name has helped reorient the stated priorities of the right away from social issues and towards fiscal ones. But this is no more than the old wine in new bottles.

Most of the characters now closely associated with the Tea Party are not new to rightwing politics. They have just moved from the margins to the mainstream.... These people didn't join the Tea Party, the "Tea Party" term attached itself to them.

It is difficult to imagine a candidate earning the Tea Party label who is not against gay marriage or abortion, for the simple reason that no such candidate could exist. White Christian evangelicals still formed one of the most crucial bedrocks of last week's Republican success.... That's far more clout than black and Latino votes combined give the Democrats .

At first the term Tea Party helped us understand the insurgent, inchoate force that took to the streets last year; now it may be hindering analysis of its more choreographed march to power. For when people ask what the Tea Party will do, talk about Tea Party demands, or lay down Tea Party threats, they mistake (wilfully or otherwise) the Tea Party for a coherent formation with power of cohesive action. It's not.

Research conducted over several months by the *Washington Post* to contact every Tea Party group in the country found that many did not exist. Seventy per cent said they had not been involved in a political event in a year - a year in which the Tea Party was credited with transforming the nation's politics.

"When a group lists themselves on our website, that's a group," Mark Meckler, a founding member of the Tea Party Patriots, told the Post. "That group could be one person, it could be 10 people, it could come in and out of existence - we don't know."

This is less of a criticism than a description. Movement-building is hard, messy work that, if it is to be truly at grassroots level, produces uneven results. In that sense it's no different from, say, the anti-war movement, and would have been about as successful were not it for two key factors.

The first is that the Tea Party has its own "news" channel - Fox - devoted to its growth. It promotes Tea Party demonstrations as though they are events of national celebration and showcases those who pose as its leaders as though they are national celebrities. Second, it has money. A lot of it. When it comes to elections it has the backing of huge amounts of money from private corporations and individuals who are behind institutions... which are run by people with a proven track record of rightwing Republican activism.

The relationship between these organisations and the base of people who call themselves Tea Party supporters is episodic and erratic. They show up in different places where they sense an opportunity for a breakthrough, throw money at it, attract media attention for it, and then see what sticks. Sometimes it works, sometimes it backfires - mostly it makes barely any difference. They have no organic, let alone democratic, relationship with the grassroots that they claim, in some way, to represent. [Leadership]... support is important, but hardly decisive.

It would be too easy to deduce from this that the Tea Party is simply a creation of big business and the rightwing media. Neither, alone, can explain the 50 or so conservative old men who have met at the Nugget Casino in Pahrump, a hard-scrabble town

loosely affiliated, somewhat like-minded people. That doesn't mean the *Islamic fundamentalism* isn't resurgent. It is. But the forces driving its political energy are not those that underpinned its recent *popularity*.

Al-Qaida is not a new phenomenon. It's simply a new name for an old phenomenon - the *Islamic* hard right. Over the last *ten years* the term has provided a rallying point for a coalition of disparate groups, most of which have been around for many years.... who vow to resist *unIslamic* government "by any means necessary"... [*mullah*] listeners who had no unifying identity before.

Having a name helps. It has offered a political identity to a significant number of people who were either not active or might not have understood themselves to be in any way connected. That name has helped reorient the stated priorities of the *fundamentalists* away from social issues and towards *religious* ones. But this is no more than the old wine in new bottles

Most of the characters now closely associated with *Al-Qaida* are not new to *fundamentalist* politics. They have just moved from the margins to the mainstream.... These people didn't join *Al-Qaida*, the "*Al-Qaida*" term attached itself to them.

It is difficult to imagine a candidate earning the *Al-Qaida* label who is not against gay marriage or abortion, for the simple reason that no such candidate could exist. *Islamic fundamentalists* still formed one of the most crucial bedrocks of *recent* success.... That's far more clout than *other believers* combined give *Islamic moderates*.

At first the term *Al-Qaida* helped us understand the insurgent, inchoate force that took to the *hills ten years ago*; now it may be hindering analysis of its more choreographed march to power. For when people ask what *Al-Qaida* will do, talk about *Al-Qaida* demands, or lay down *Al-Qaida* threats, they mistake (wilfully or otherwise) *Al-Qaida* for a coherent formation with power of cohesive action. It's not.

Interrogations conducted over several months by *secret services* to contact every *Al-Qaida* group in the world found that many did not exist. *Most* said they had not been involved in a political event in *recent years* - a *period* in which *Al-Qaida* was credited with transforming the *region's* politics.

"When a group affirms their affiliation, that's a group," *Mullah Omar*, a founding member of *Al-Qaida*, told *interrogators*. "That group could be one person, it could be 10 people, it could come in and out of existence - we don't know."

This is less of a criticism than a description. Movement-building is hard, messy work that, if it is to be truly at grassroots level, produces uneven results. In that sense it's no different from, say, the anti-war movement, and would have been about as successful were not it for two key factors.

The first is that *Al-Qaida* has its own "news" channel - *word-of-mouth* - devoted to its growth. It promotes *Al-Qaida* demonstrations as though they are events of *regional* celebration and showcases those who pose as its leaders as though they are *regional* celebrities. Second, it has *credibility*. A lot of it. When it comes to *initiatives* it has the backing of huge amounts of *credit* from private *foundations* and individuals who are behind institutions... which are run by people with a proven track record of rightwing *Islamic fundamentalist* activism.

The relationship between these organisations and the base of people who call themselves *Al-Qaida* supporters is episodic and erratic. They show up in different places where they sense an opportunity for a breakthrough, *give credibility* to it, attract media attention for it, and then see what sticks. Sometimes it works, sometimes it backfires - mostly it makes barely any difference. They have no organic, let alone democratic, relationship with the grassroots that they claim, in some way, to represent. *Leadership*... support is important, but hardly decisive.

It would be too easy to deduce from this that *Al-Qaida* is simply a creation of *Islamic radical groups* and the *fundamentalist* media. Neither, alone, can explain the 50 or so conservative old men who have met.. *at a village tea shop*

in rural Nevada, every Friday for the last five years, or most of the other groups I have seen around the country. It would also be too naive to suggest that such groups would boast anything other than a marginal presence without big money and media to amplify their voices.

What we witnessed on Tuesday was not a realignment of American politics but the first real test of the reconfiguration of the balance of forces in the American right. Exit polls show an electorate even more polarised than two years ago...

...every Friday for the last five years, or most of the other groups... seen around the **region**. It would also be too naive to suggest that such groups would boast anything other than a marginal presence without **great credibility** and media to amplify their voices.

What we witnessed... **in the recent Afghanistan election...** was not a realignment of **Afghan** politics but the first real test of the reconfiguration of the balance of forces in **Afghan fundamentalism**. Exit polls show an **Islamic community** even more polarised than two years ago...

The above technique was previously employed in an effort to learn from the dynamics of global issue articulation using, as a first example, the highly controversial and provocative presentation in 2009 by President **Mahmoud Ahmadinejad** of Iran on the occasion of the **UN Durban Review Conference on Racism and Racial Discrimination** (*Towards a Generic Global Issue Statement: evoking an instructive pattern of unquestionable responses*, 2009).

In addition to the above correspondences, it is appropriate to note the radical incitement of their respective "mullahs". In purely systemic terms, is Rupert Murdoch to be considered as the Osama bin Laden of the Tea Party movement?

Absence of scientifically appropriate examination of evidence

Missing is the kind of widely publicized analysis of "Al-Qaida" -- *The Al-Qaida Delusion* (?) -- applying the critical methodology of **Richard Dawkins** (*The God Delusion*, 2006). In the homeland of the Tea Party, Dawkins famously engaged in the **God Delusion debate** - acknowledged to be the first significant discussion on this issue in the "Bible Belt" (Naomi Schaefer Riley, *A Revelation: in Alabama, a civil debate over God's existence*, *The Wall Street Journal*, 12 October 2007). As renowned author of *The Portable Atheist: essential readings for the non-believer* (2007), the critical capacity of **Christopher Hitchens** would be equally beneficial -- perhaps, despite the trillion dollar investment, he might adapt that text for non-believers in Al-Qaida.

Many books have been written in **vigorous response** to the arguments of Dawkins and Hitchens. Curiously this process is not evident in the case of Al-Qaida. Maybe this is a characteristic of the strategic fantasies of the future -- as was evident in the **"hockey stick" controversy** in the climate change debate. Such debate raises the question of admissible evidence. Is evidence for "Al-Qaida" to be considered scientifically and legally "solid" -- when extracted under extreme duress in the light of "ticking bomb" claims? Where is that evidence according to the evidential criteria of Dawkins and Hitchens? The latter is noted for a phrase that has acquired the status of a scientific dictum: ***What can be asserted without evidence can be dismissed without evidence.***

In scientific terms, what percentage of Tea Party members would attest to being active members of Al-Qaida, supported by a legally binding signature -- after a necessarily prolonged interrogation "by the book" (stress positions, shaking, waterboarding, nakedness, hooding, sleep deprivation, dogs, sexual humiliation, etc)? Or would the percentage, when scientifically determined, be classified for "security reasons" -- and therefore inadmissible as proof in any legal proceedings? Given the pride of interrogators in being able to "break people", could the determination be rendered even more solid by using **double blind** techniques with respect to both Tea Party and Al-Qaida membership?

The problematic pattern is evident to a degree in the manner in which assumptions are made in firing on "suspects" in Afghanistan -- then labelling them as "insurgents", without any need to offer proof (to whom?). Most ironically this questionable pattern of treatment of evidence has recently been criticized by Nicolas Sarkozy, in his own defence, with respect to his alleged complicity in the scandal of **Karachigate**, as quoted by Angélique Chrisafis (*Sarkozy calls journalists paedophiles*, *The Guardian*, 24 November 2010):

... alluding to testimony by a former defence minister, Charles Millon, who said he had an "absolute conviction" there had indeed been kickbacks, Sarkozy turned to one journalist and fumed about what he called the absurdity of the investigation. He raged: *"And you! I've no evidence against you. But it would seem you're a paedophile. Who told me? I have an absolute conviction. I've seen the intelligence reports but I won't tell you which ones; I've seen someone but I won't tell you who, and it was word of mouth. But I have an absolute conviction you're a paedophile ... Can you explain yourself?"*

Of relevance to any scientific approach to such matters is the publication of the recent accounts of the leaders of the western world most deeply implicated in the framing of the nature of Al-Qaida and the need for intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan (**George W Bush**, *Decision Points*, 2010; **Tony Blair**, *A Journey*, 2010). The evident belief of both that they were "right" in sustaining a trillion dollar adventure, despite worldwide perception to the contrary, suggests the degree to which global politics and governance is imbued with fantasy at the very highest level (as currently highlighted by reviewers).

The extent of such fantasy is notably evident at this time of writing:

- Ireland: In the depths of a financial crisis with severe implications for the eurozone, reports that Ireland is in talks with the EU about a 67bn bailout have been labelled as fiction by justice minister Dermot Ahern. Is such fiction to be understood as fantasy, when all are impressed by the severity of the crisis? (*Editorial*, *The Guardian*, 16 November 2010). Are financial markets sustained by fantasy as became evident in the case of the **subprime crisis** triggering global instability?
- Berlusconi: In a further round of political, financial, legal, media and sexual scandal, allegedly involving the prime minister of Italy -- all denied by **Silvio Berlusconi** himself -- the mystery of how he manages that fantasy remains (Tobias Jones, *How can Silvio Berlusconi still be in power?* *The Guardian*, 16 November 2010)
- UK hypocrisy: How to distinguish between bluff, hypocrisy and fantasy?

- Commentators have marvelled at the capacity of the prime minister of the UK, David Cameron, to pretend superior standards of human rights to the government of China -- in a period when the depth of (previously denied) UK complicity in abusive treatment of prisoners under interrogation is becoming evident (Ian Cobain, *Interrogation techniques at 'Britain's Abu Ghraib' revealed*, *The Guardian*, 5 November 2010; Joshua Rozenberg, *Senior British officers could face war crimes trial over alleged Iraqi abuse*, *The Guardian*, 5 November 2010; Simon Jenkins, *Only Britain can beg for scraps from China and tell them how to behave*, *The Guardian*, 5 November 2010).
- Much controversy has been engendered by the revelation that the party in coalition in government with the Conservatives had made a secret decision prior to the election to abandon a pre-election pledge (Nicholas Watt, *Revealed: Lib Dems planned before election to abandon tuition fees pledge*, *The Guardian*, 12 November 2010). The party was consciously presenting a fantasy to voters in order to acquire power.

Perhaps most incredible in terms of any scientific methodology is the consequence of increasing considerably the budgets for anti-terrorism in response to claims that the threat levels have increased -- in the absence of any verifiable proof (despite the history of "egging up" such claims on the basis of secret evidence). The claim is then made, if there is then no evidence of such incidents, that this is proof that the anti-terrorist measures were effective in preventing or limiting any incidents -- whose number and nature cannot be revealed for security reasons.

Cynics would readily argue that incidents can even be fabricated (as false flag operations) if it is felt to be necessary to justify such logic. The question is then how to distinguish between reality and fantasy when there are interests vested in sustaining the fantasy and asserting it to be reality on the highest authority. Such issues cannot be debated because the fundamental assumption is made -- and sustained by the media -- that security authorities merit unquestioning confidence, despite any indications to the contrary (*Abuse of Faith in Governance: Mystery of the Unasked Question*, 2009).

To what extent does such logic resemble that of the confidence trickster who offers, for a large amount of money, to stop the Moon from falling on Earth -- then claims the success of his procedures (when asking for more) by noting that the fact that it did not is proof of the success of those procedures? Extensive media coverage has recently been given to [Paul the Octopus](#) for his ability to correctly predict the winner of each of Germany's seven matches in the 2010 football World Cup, as well as the outcome of the final match. Such logic has been summarized by the philosopher [Julian Baggini](#) (*The Duck That Won the Lottery*, 2008) -- subtitled *And 99 Other Bad Arguments*.

It is extraordinary that some of the world's most sophisticated thinking capacity is enabled to exploit one of the most costly experimental projects in physics (the CERN [Large Hadron Collider](#)) in order to determine the existence of the elusive [God Particle](#) (Leon M. Lederman, *The God Particle: if the universe is the answer, what is the question?* 1993). At the same time, the UK's Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, [Lord Carlile of Berriew](#), argues that such is the terrorist threat worldwide that "no common ground" would be discovered for decades to come (*Hardtalk*, *BBC World*, 24 November 2010).

In the light of the new understandings of spacetime explored by fundamental physics, might it not be appropriate to devote some thought to the possible nature of "common ground" amongst those in fundamental disagreement, rather than devote unprecedented defence resources to obsolete outdated assumptions regarding such "ground" and how it may be held in "common"? (*In Quest of Uncommon Ground: beyond impoverished metaphor and the impotence of words of power*, 1997; *911+ Questions in Seeking UnCommon Ground*, 2001; *And When the Bombing Stops? Territorial conflict as a challenge to mathematicians*, 2000; *Dynamic Interrelationship of Symbols of Coherent Experiential Representation of Nonduality (DISCERN)*, 2008; *Guidelines for Critical Dialogue between Worldviews*, 2006). It is of course physics that explores unconventional relationships between "reality" and "fantasy".

Integrative relationship between reality and fantasy?

One pointer to the merit of clarifying the role of "fantasy" is the even more radical argument of [John Kozy](#) (*The Mythical United States of America: Rushing into Backwardness*, *Global Research*, 11 November 2010). He argues:

The mythical United States of America so highly lauded exists nowhere. It is a Shangri-la. The Preamble of the Constitution makes perfectly clear what kind of nation the United States was meant to be. What exists today fulfills none of those goals. Some have argued that the nation was a fraud from day one. Whether accurate or not, what is clear is that it most certainly was quickly murdered by John Marshall, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who wrote the decision known as [Marbury v. Madison](#). Since that day, the Court has replicated England's seventeenth century political economy absent only the monarchy. Today's United States of America is a seventeenth century nation adorned with twenty first century trinkets, many deadly. Instead of being as it claims "the leader of the free world," it is a backward authoritarian pre-enlightenment reactionary regime.

A "fantasy" in its own right? But to what extent is the much-cited "[international community](#)" to be held to "exist"? The United Nations? To a greater degree than Al-Qaida? Following the current marketing of the fantasies of Bush and Blair, could the same be done as profitably for Osama bin Laden (*Marketable Tales of the Exploits of Osama bin Laden*, 2004)?

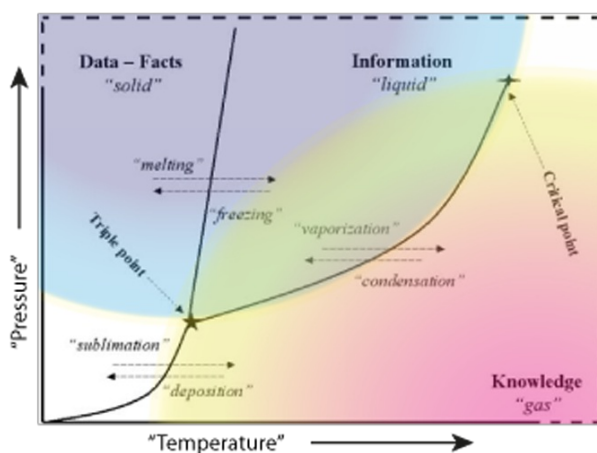
This perspective highlights the degree to which the sociopolitical "realities" of a period might come to be considered as collective "fantasies" -- by others, if not by those involved or affected. "Historical realities" are indeed readily understood as "fantasies" by the future -- however much is sacrificed to them and by them, and however much "global" coherence they offered. The [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics](#) (USSR) may be seen in this light, as with the [Third Reich](#) of Germany, which held itself to be the historical successor to the medieval [Holy Roman Empire](#) (962-1806). [Empires](#) in general may then be understood as being to a degree sustained by "imperial fantasies" or being driven by a form of fantasy as with: the [British Empire](#), the [Spanish Empire](#), the [Byzantine Empire](#) (itself a direct continuation of the [Roman Empire](#)). Even more striking are the [Aztec Empire](#) and those of China (see *List of largest empires*).

A fruitful way of understanding the relationship between reality and fantasy is by analogy to the states of matter and the phase transitions between them: solid, liquid, gas, plasma:

- "plasma": the driving inspiration or insight (the fantasy in its purest form), perhaps also including its later historical echoes -- as a later value-imbued inspiration
- "gas": the movement of opinion, as "winds of change", through which a sustaining ideology is disseminated and by which people are variously "blown about"
- "liquid": the effects on others "swept up", as by a tide or flood -- as with any imperial process of expansion and associated processes of conversion and change of allegiance (the new fshions, Mongol hordes, etc.)
- "solid": the reality becomes factually concrete, even literally so, through its manifestation in infrastructure and the associated institutions and regulations

This pattern becomes even more fruitful when seen in terms of a typical [phase diagram](#), especially of any adaptation of its application to the distinction between data, information, knowledge and wisdom -- as discussed separately (*The Isdom of the Wisdom Society: embodying time as the heartland of humanity*, 2003). Superimposed on that variant, **purely for illustrative purposes** (in the following diagram), is a "reality zone" graded blue (centred in the **top left**), and a "fantasy zone" graded from yellow to purple (centred **bottom right**)

Integrating the relationship between "reality" and "fantasy" (tentative) suggested by an idealized phase diagram for water, adapted to data, information and knowledge



The diagram suggests the "existence" of an overlap between the "reality zone" and the "fantasy zone" -- of a shape appropriately reminiscent of the [vesica piscis](#). Within the metaphor of the water phase diagram this zone (a "green zone") could be understood as corresponding to the conditions of temperature and pressure within which life is viable in nature [which could be green in the diagram]. This offers the suggestion that psychosocial "life" is similarly only viable within a "viability zone" in which there is an overlap between "reality" and "fantasy". **An excessive degree of "reality" is no more capable of sustaining normal life than an excessive degree of "fantasy"**. The polarity between "reality" (as data) and "fantasy" (as knowledge/wisdom) is a continuing tension in both science and the philosophy/wisdom traditions.

Such a diagram offers a context within which to integrate the extraordinary tendency at the core of political discourse and the layout of adversarial democratic parliaments -- namely the capacity of each "side" to frame the arguments of the other as "fantasy" whilst upholding the "reality" of its own. The diagram could then hold the quadrilemma articulated by [Kinhide Mushakoji](#) (*Global Issues and Interparadigmatic Dialogue: essays on multipolar politics*, 1988) as discussed separately (*Alternation exemplified in 4-fold pattern*, 2010), namely (duly adapted):

- upholder of reality
- engagement in fantasy
- both upholding reality and engaging in fantasy
- neither upholding reality nor engaging in fantasy

It is curious, given his key role in the United Nations University and the [Trilateral Commission](#), that there has been little exploration of the potential of such insights and those Mushakoji developed subsequently (*Towards a Multi-Cultural Modernity: beyond neo-liberal/neo-conservative global hegemony*, UNESCO, 2005).

The distinctions of the above diagram merit reflection in the light of the Biblical distinction (*John 17:14-15*) of being "in the world" (engaged with its reality) but not "of the world" (namely centered elsewhere) -- a cognitive distinction which accords with other traditions and suggestive of the possible nature of cognitive "common ground".

Of course such a representation can only provide a focus for discussion, whether in relation to the idealization of a phase diagram, the association of forms of information to it, or positioning "reality" and "fantasy" in that way -- especially with respect to the [triple point](#) (where solid, liquid and gas can "coexist") and the [critical point](#). (where a phase boundary ceases to "exist"). The suggestion that the "viability zone" might have as its extremes the critical point and the triple point is also food for reflection. The use of the states of matter is also instructive because they are dependent on the degree of bonding between atoms -- with bonds being looser in liquid and gaseous forms, notably due to any increase in temperature. This can be related to discussions regarding any integration of facts(into a "solid"

argument) and the tenuous looseness of more questionable correspondences. As previously discussed, the challenge is what degree of connectivity is necessary for viable coherence in a sociopolitical context (*Theories of Correspondences -- and potential equivalences between them in correlative thinking*, 2007).

The distinction between the "reality zone" and the "fantasy zone" is usefully highlighted at the time of writing by the following:

- UK politics, as described by Julian Glover (*As the left falls into a negative sulk, the centre-right have become the optimists*, *The Guardian*, 21 November 2010):

So let's follow Rodgers and Hammerstein to their musical *South Pacific*. The sun shines. Waves break on empty beaches. Palm trees rustle. And one character hands out comforting advice. "You've got to have a dream. If you don't have a dream, how you gonna make your dream come true?" she sings. They should start whistling the tune in Westminster. There's more good sense in the song than a score of thinktank reports. British politics has all but killed itself trying to find out "what works". It has drowned in managerialism and suffocated in analysis. We could do with some South Pacific dreaming... Balls in particular was robotically impressive, a man with a mind like an Excel spreadsheet. He knows it all and it amounts to nothing beyond the sterile computations of an Institute for Fiscal Studies assessment. This is politics by formula: insert X into the equation as the desired numerical outcome and the answer to all the other variables becomes clear. It looks precise, but it is really empty, since all the numbers are baloney. A society reliant on statistical calculation can never be optimistic; all we ever see are the limits and the failures.

- Papal indication that condoms may be used under exceptional circumstances, as noted by David Smith (*For the faithful, fear of Aids comes second to fear of God*, *The Guardian*, 21 November 2010):

Djoseky Bindusa Mongenda Tapo, 38, was wrestling with contradictions between religion and science. "The pope, as the leader of the church and as a Christian, is wrong to say this... But scientifically he is also the leader of many people, and he is right to protect them. As a Christian, as a spiritual fact, we cannot accept the use of condoms because to us marriage is between one man and one woman. The church has forbidden the use of condoms even if you are officially married because, if it allowed them, it also allows people to go around with prostitutes. Scientifically, the condoms are helping to protect people from the spread of many sicknesses and prevent premature pregnancies. Sex without condoms is a risk to people's health and their families.... Both sides are good but, as Christians, we are not afraid of sickness or to die, but we are afraid of the law of God. As God said one man is for one woman, we cannot go against God for other reasons. But if you are not Christian, you can use condoms if you have partners outside marriage."

The dynamic between reality and fantasy is further highlighted in other comment on the papal clarification, with respect to homosexuality and prostitution, Andrew Brown (*Condoms and change*, *The Guardian*, 24 November 2010) argues:

The Pope believes that sex should fulfil God's purposes, whereas secularists suppose that it should fulfil human ones. Most people, of course, not being ideologues of any sort, merely want it to fulfil their own purposes, which is why the world is full of prostitutes.

- The worldwide Anglican communion currently faces fragmentation into parties variously subscribing to the "reality" and the "illusion" associated with views on the ordination of women and the issue of homosexuality in the priesthood (Stephen Bates and Riazat Butt, *Anglican church faces 'piece by piece dissolution', warns archbishop*, *The Guardian*, 24 November 2010). For Williams:

For God's sake, don't let us waste time and energy talking or behaving as if there were competition going on here ... I don't think we are doing the job for which God has called us here if we reproduce the worst aspects of secular partisanship. He told the synod it was an "illusion" to think the communion could "carry on as usual" without some changes. And it was a "greater illusion" to think the Church of England could "derail the entire process" of the adoption of the covenant, a text that opponents claim will define who belongs and discipline those who flout rules.

Aides say he has been depressed by the battle. He said: *It is unthinkingly treated by some as almost the sole test of biblical fidelity or doctrinal orthodoxy. It is unthinkingly regarded by others as one of those matters on which the church must be brought into line with what our culture can make sense of ...*

The relevance to current strategy at the highest level is indicated by the neocon strategy of governance as presented by Ron Suskind (*Without a Doubt*, *The New York Times*, In The Magazine, 17 October 2004) following an exchange he had with an aide in the decision-making circle of President Bush:

The aide said that guys like me were "in what we call the reality-based community," which he defined as people who "believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality." I nodded and murmured something about enlightenment principles and empiricism. He cut me off. "That's not the way the world really works anymore," he continued. "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality -- judiciously, as you will -- we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors . . . and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do."

Whether it be the Tea Party movement or Al-Qaida -- or those who articulate their nature to the wider world -- it remains unclear who are "history's actors" engaged in creating their "own reality".

Challenging relationship between "fantasies" that are variously "right"

The issue is readily considered simplistic, if not naive. Clearly those attracted by the worldview of the Tea Party movement consider they

are "right" -- to a degree if not completely. And the same is true of those attracted by the worldview of Al-Qaida. Of course each considers the other to be "wrong" -- and fundamentally so. There is no methodology, acceptable to both such parties, whereby these views can be reconciled. Each is antithetical to the other.

This situation applies in many arenas, of which "climate change" and the "Middle East" are obvious examples. Typical of the situation is that any criticism of one perspective is automatically considered to be an indication of adherence to the other, as previously discussed (*Guidelines for Critical Dialogue between Worldviews*, 2006). It may readily follow from this conclusion that the other should be eliminated with prejudice -- possibly as a fundamental threat to the values of what is "right" (*Samuel Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 1996).

It is however difficult to envisage a more fantastic situation than the physical resemblance between the 2,000 year old iconic figure depicted in popular iconography of the Christian fundeamentalism of the Tea Party movement (even in places of worship) and media representations of Osama bin Laden -- the focus of Islam as evil. Could this possibly by design -- and on whose part?

Reference was made above to the value of recognizing the **Wright Brothers Syndrome** -- perhaps to be described by the **Wright Brothers Mnemonic** -- to focus on the tendency of any model to be upheld as "right". Again it is this tendency which has been explicitly highlighted by *Edward de Bono (I Am Right, You Are Wrong, 1990)*. That book is appropriately subtitled: *From This to the New Renaissance: From Rock Logic to Water Logic* -- a theme in his other arguments for the "new thinking" required for the 21st century (*New Thinking for the New Millennium, 1999; Think! Before It's Too Late, 2009*). Of course, as a "model", such advocacy is itself subject to the Wright Brothers Syndrome ! For many it is "wrong".

The possibility of some kind of comprehensible configuration -- allowing for such different perspectives and justifying them -- has been explored separately in terms of a geometric form (*Geometry of Thinking for Sustainable Global Governance, 2009*). The argument there is that the shape of the Earth as a globe offers such understanding -- simply illustrated, if not simplistically. Clearly people stand "upright" everywhere on the globe. Those in their immediate vicinity are similarly upright. Curiously, if people travel beyond their immediate "horizon" they still find people who are standing "upright". Indeed, over many centuries, it was possible to assume and assert that the Earth was flat. Some very sophisticated thinking, in the light of quite subtle observation, was required to demonstrate that the Earth was of spherical form. Few who now believe that they are "right" have the skills to prove that the Earth is round. This may however be readily accepted from satellite imagery and as an explanation for various annual phenomena. Acceptance does not constitute proof.

Missing from such thinking, despite global travel, is any ability whatsoever to sense how people elsewhere, most notably on the other "side" of the globe, have a different orientation when they stand upright. Telecommunication (even with video cameras) obscures such differences -- people are not correctly "oriented" according to their real physical location when seen from elsewhere (suggesting the possibility of a simple educational option to use with video displays when [video chatting](#)).

Curiously the "flatness" of the Earth has been reinforced in a much-lauded study by Thomas Friedman (*The World Is Flat: a brief history of the Twenty-first Century, 2007*) and its sequel (*Hot, Flat, and Crowded: why we need a Green Revolution -- and how it can renew America, 2008*). Consistent with the **Wright Brothers Syndrome**, this perspective has also been presented as "wrong" (*Irresponsible Dependence on a Flat Earth Mentality -- in response to global governance challenges, 2008*).

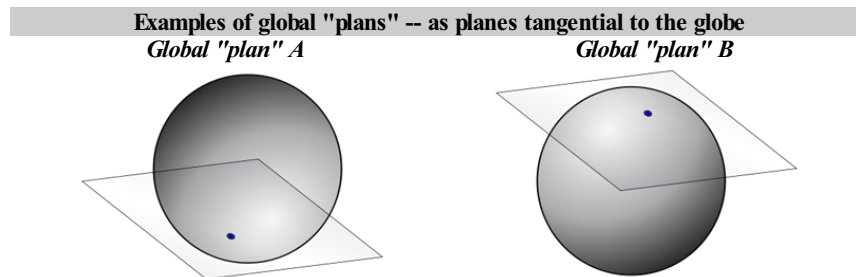
Friedman's argument obscures the manner in which people can be variously upright. More dangerous is that the argument for flatness reinforces the American (and "western") tendency to assume that everyone should recognize that there is just one way to be (up)right. This understanding of "right" is then confused with the inherent "rightness" of western values -- acclaimed and promoted as "universal" (subsuming multiple galactic perspectives). This is effectively the promotion of a form of "flat earth universality". Hence the problem arising from people being differently "right". As noted above, this is most striking in relation to "evil" which -- for the convenience of theologians -- is best located on the underside of a flat Earth, in contrast to the upside inhabited by those that are "right".

The following image makes the point that people have been educated to believe that there is a "right" way to present the map of the world. Theologians with a "universal" perspective are notably much challenged by the insights offered by any form of curvature.

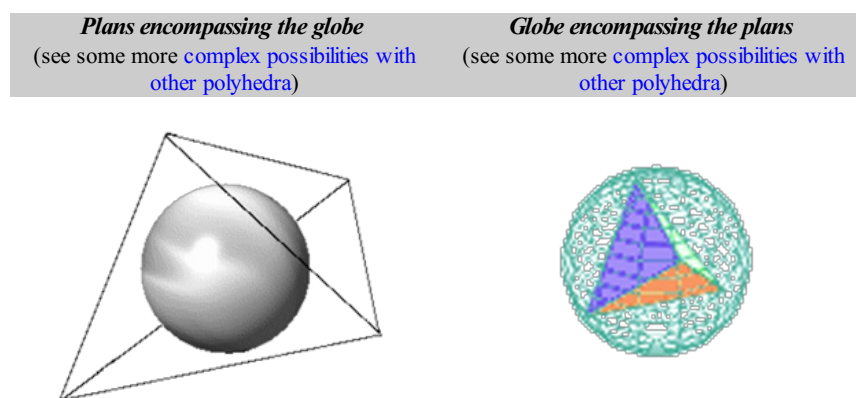


Such a presentation is of sociopolitical relevance to Alaska, as the spiritual homeland of the Tea Party movement -- given that (on the basis of the conventional presentation of the world map) a former Australian Prime Minister [Paul Keating](#) is renowned for declaring that Australia was "the arse end of the Earth" (a phrase subsequently incorporated into a [musical](#)).

The role of [conceptual metaphor](#) has long been recognized in framing thinking (George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 1980). It is appropriate to acknowledge the geometric metaphors which frame "global" policy-making and global "plans" -- especially when "flatness" is asserted. A "plan" -- intimately associated as it is with the geometry of a "plane" -- raises fundamental issues of how any "global plan" can be expected to be relevant to a spherical globe. The "tangential" possibilities, presumably at the "point" at which the plan originated, only too adequately illustrate the inadequacy of such thinking to global challenges -- well-emphasized by the widespread use of [PowerPoint](#) to articulate such plans. Other metaphorical possibilities call for exploration (*Metaphorical Geometry in Quest of Globality*, 2009).



Is it the case that the slogan of the [1992 UN Earth Summit](#) -- *Think Globally, Act Locally* -- has been effectively reframed in practice as *Think Globally, Act Linearly*? Seemingly there is no call or capacity to think "voluminously", as "global" might suggest? (*From Lateral Thinking to Voluminous Thinking*, 2007). Thinking "laterally" (following Edward de Bono), a set of plans could be configured "voluminously" to form a polyhedron.



Geometrically, a minimum of four such "plans" might be configured, as shown above (left-hand image), to encompass the globe -- then understood as the [insphere](#). On the other hand a richer insight might be suggested by the [circumsphere](#) (right-hand image above). Such suggestive models are typical examples of fantasies which have been cultivated separately (*Towards Polyhedral Global Governance: complexifying oversimplistic strategic metaphors*, 2008; *Polyhedral Pattern Language*, 2008).

Configuring the relationship between "fantasies" that are variously "right"

The issue is what global context can contain such diversity, especially when it engenders conflict.

In this light, given that people do understand (in theory at least) that those standing upright elsewhere are differently oriented, even upside down (in reality), it is then possible to use the spherical form to "hold" different orientations -- different ways of being "right". One of the advantages of the horizon effect is that people differently upright cannot be readily seen from where one is oneself "right". The means by which people otherwise oriented are encountered is another matter. What sort of "transportation" and "travel" are required to confront them? As with Albert Einstein's preoccupation with communication between disparate frames of reference, this is potentially an issue meriting careful reflection.

The argument can be taken further using a visual innovation announced in the *Guardian Technology Blog* in the form of a regularly updated "cut-out-and-keep" diagram. In its initial form it focuses on the lawsuits between some 25 smartphone companies variously holding patents, licensing patents and accusing each other of patent infringement (Charles Arthur, *The smartphone patent wars, pt 94: SmartPhone Technologies sues HTC, Nokia, Sony Ericsson and Kyocera*, *The Guardian*, 1 November 2010). Of course each smartphone company claims it is "right" and that others are variously "wrong".

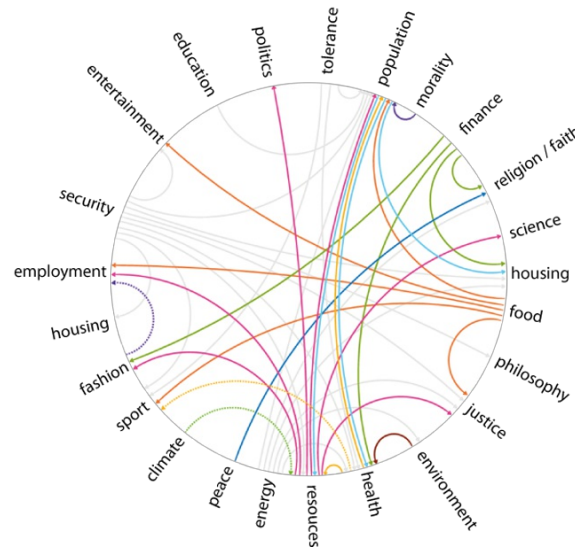
In the following adaptation, for the purpose of the above argument:

- the names of the smartphone companies (around the circumference) have been relabelled in the [original Guardian diagram](#) to enable the following adaptation to be presented. In other words only the inner links have been kept -- variously indicating (in the original) the nature of the relationships and lawsuits between other corporations. It is of course the case that some smartphone

companies have patent agreements with others -- acknowledged "rightness", partially shared.

- conventional labels of domains with which modelling "fantasies" are associated have been positioned around the circumference (replacing the smartphone company names). Each label has been placed "upright", to emphasize the manner in which those associated with that perspective consider that it is "right". Clearly those elsewhere around the circumference are progressively less "right", even significantly "wrong" when on the other side of the circle
- **the following presentation is only illustrative of a visualization possibility**, specifically:
 - the selection of the "fantasies", depicted upright, is merely **suggestive** of typical inter-sectoral disputes, notably confronted in reconciling the priorities of governance
 - the order and positioning are **arbitrary** and without significance
 - the linking lines are purely **suggestive**, being those borrowed from the smartphone presentation

Suggestive visualization of relationship between strategic fantasies
Relabelled version of diagram illustrating legal/patent relationships between smartphone corporations
[see [original Guardian diagram](#)]



This circular configuration could of course be appropriately extended to a spherical form, better to reflect the sense of "global". An exercise with related concerns also made use of a circular configuration (*Mapping the Global Underground*, 2010).

Unquestionable preference for linear thinking

Presentation of a map of the form of that above in a widely read newspaper is most unusual. Typically, whether in media presentations or policy debates, the preference is for linear, sequential presentations of the crudest ("we right, you wrong" form). This characterizes linear thinking and reinforces it whatever the degree of "twisting" and "turning" by participants. There is little else on offer. Many policy environments do not have a facility for non-linear presentations. This is also true of rallies eliciting support for policies, typically supported by banners of the briefest kind -- to make a "point".

Perhaps of most relevance to the above argument is not why such a global map does not exist but rather why the case for such a map is considered to be irrelevant to the comprehension and management of the challenges of global governance -- despite the "existence" of destabilizing Tea Party and Al-Qaida movements. It is therefore somewhat ironic that such a map is considered useful to comprehension of the disputes between the global smartphone suppliers, symbolizing as they do the emerging facility for global communication -- on a globalizing Earth, "universally" lauded as being "flat" in communication terms.

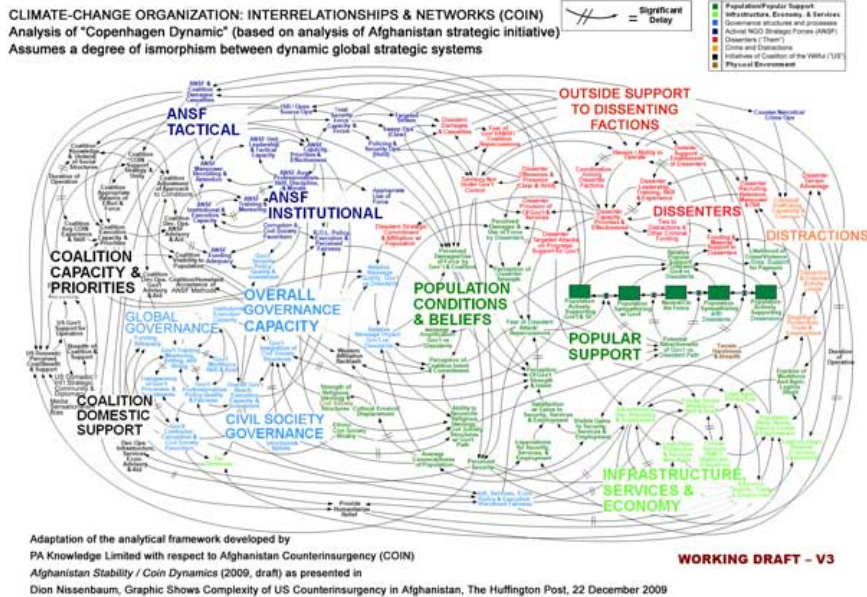
Why for example has no such map been produced in relationship to the climate change debate or to other problematic dialogue arenas? The point has recently been emphasized in the long-standing dispute over Kashmir, in which calls have been made to indict [Arundhati Roy](#) for treason following her suggestion that there might be some validity to the Kashmiri perspective (Gethin Chamberlain, *Arundhati Roy faces arrest over Kashmir remark*, *The Guardian*, 26 October 2010).

Curiously, to the extent that such maps are used, it is primarily by the security services for the detection of threats or fraud -- notably by tracking phone contacts or banking transactions. They are seemingly never used to map and communicate conflicting perspectives and opportunities even in the case of security challenges, as more generally argued (*From ECHELON to NOLEHCE: enabling a strategic conversion to a faith-based global brain*, 2007).

This has been shown in the apparent contrast between the aversion to an analytical overview by the [Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the US](#) of the [counterinsurgency](#) (COIN) initiative in Afghanistan as represented by the [PA Consulting Group](#). This takes the form of a map, notably publicized on behalf of McClatchy Newspapers by Dion Nissenbaum (*The great Afghan spaghetti monster*, *Checkpoint Kabul*, 20 December 2009; *Graphic Shows Complexity of US Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, *The Huffington Post*, 22 December 2009). Coincidentally this map was publicized over the web at the end of the Copenhagen climate change event.

To illustrate the possibilities (as in the above exercise), the "spaghetti map" was adapted (as reproduced below) to suggest the relevance of such a perspective to the climate change debate (*Insights for the Future from the Change of Climate in Copenhagen*, 2010).

**Adaptation to climate change
of a representation of counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan**
(click on image for larger version)



Afghanistan COIN dynamic
(clusters in original map)

- Population/Popular support
- Infrastructure, Economy and Services
- Government
- Afghanistan Security Forces (ANSF)
- Insurgents
- Crime and Narcotics
- Coalition Forces and Actions
- Physical Environment

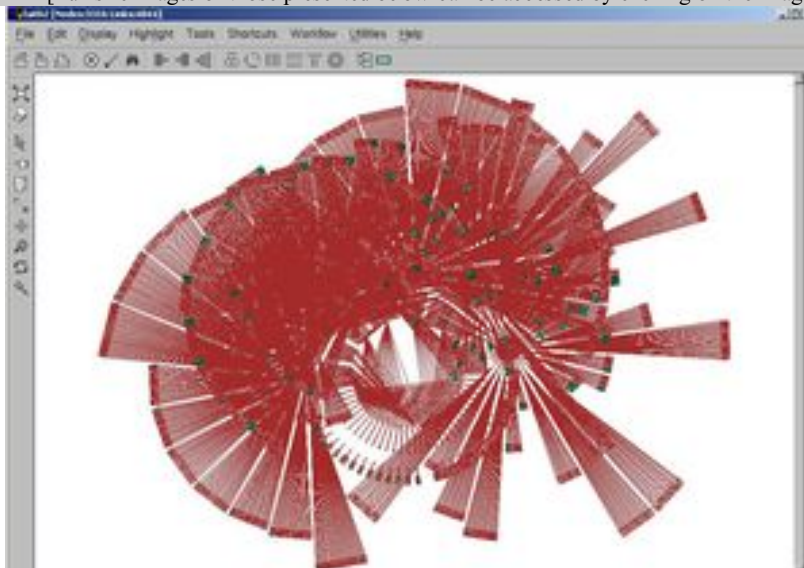
Climate change COIN dynamic
(clusters in adapted map)

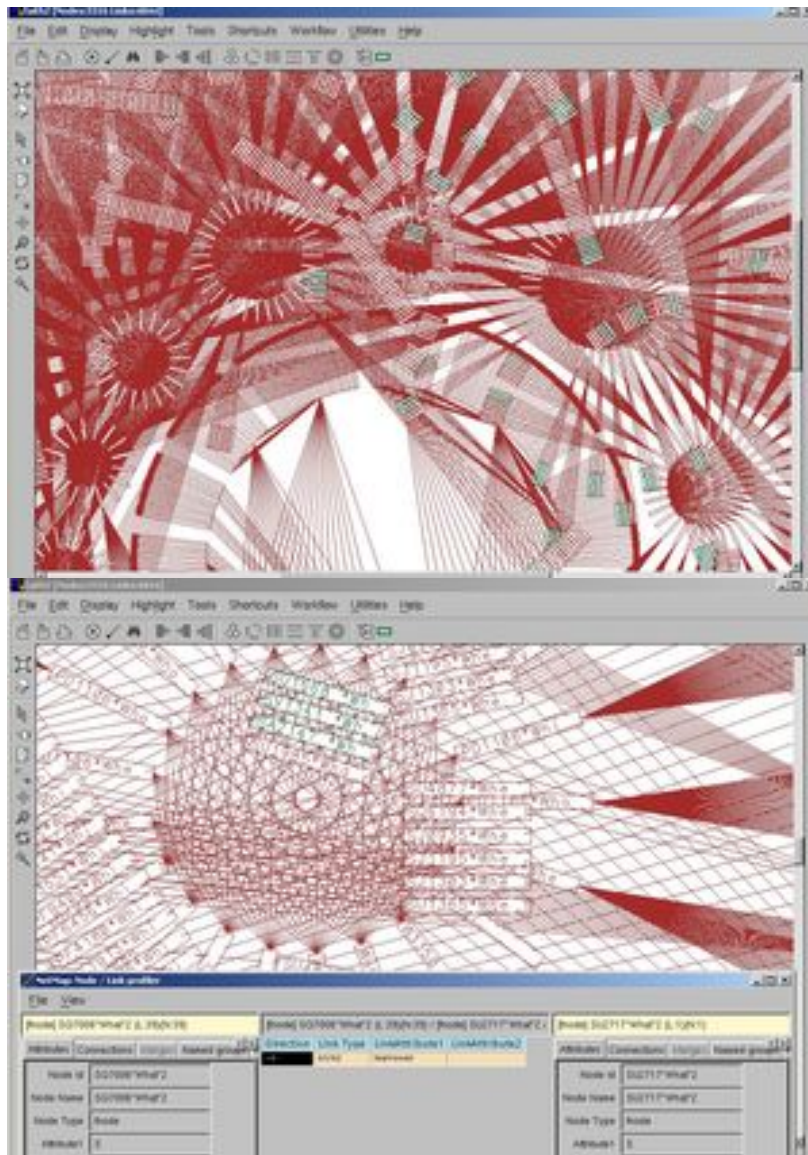
- Population/Popular support
- Infrastructure, Economy and Services
- Governance
- Activist NGO Strategic Forces (ANSF)
- Dissenters ("Them")
- Crime and Distractions
- Initiatives of Coalition of the Willful ("US")
- Physical Environment

However the sophisticated application currently used for security purposes can indeed be adapted to the exploration of incommensurable issues (*Preliminary Netmap Studies of Databases on Questions, World Problems, Global Strategies, and Values*, 2006). Some screen shot examples are reproduced below.

**Studies of potential Where, When, What, Which, How, Who and Why-Questions
to be asked about the relationship between Faith and Prosperity (emergent groups and detail)**
(represents 2980 Questions and 4804 links)

[Full size images of those presented below can be accessed by clicking on the image]





The point remains that **it is not whether such applications can be used (they can), but why they are not used (since they are not)** -- despite being available over an extended period (*Holistic network mapping using NETMAP*, 1995). Clearly there is a deep commitment to the binary logic of linear debate and the manner in which that logic can be enacted (using bombs and missiles) against those who do not think "right". There is a deep irony that the original [intercontinental ballistic missiles](#) were necessarily based on a sophisticated understanding of curvature -- in order to be able to flatten those who were otherwise upright, but with the "wrong" orientation.

Fantastic world of global strategy

It is intriguing, faced with a global crisis of crises, that any proposed "global plan" is effectively based on a carefully articulated "model" and that these demonstrably fail to "fly". Some may however be launched as "trial balloons", as separately explored (*Globallooning -- Strategic Inflation of Expectations and Inconsequential Drift*, 2009).

As with the classical metaphor, although promoted as though they were "eagles" (capable of soaring over the afflicted domain) they typically turn out to be "turkeys" -- incapable of "getting off the ground". It is of course the case that, irrespective of the misleading promotion and puffery, they may well achieve a degree of "lift" for a short period. This may be sufficient to convince many -- the credulous -- that the promotion is credible.

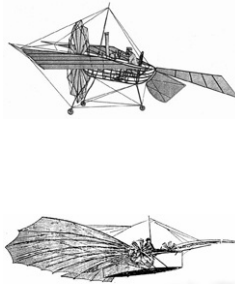
At the time of writing the [G20 Summit](#) (Korea, 2010) offers yet another example. It might be said that, within the metaphor, global leadership hops desperately from promise to promise seeking lift -- like a "turkey". The process might well be compared to indulgence in fantasies lacking in coherence and substance. The G20 bears an interesting resemblance to the court of an Emperor of the international community. It is held at great cost and typically celebrates the new clothing which the Emperor's tailors have designed according to the very latest fashion. Unfortunately, as with the classic tale of the *Emperor's New Clothes*, it is only external commentators who note that the Emperor parades naked before an audience vociferous in its appreciation of the new fashion (*Entangled Tales of Memetic Disaster: Mutual implication of the Emperor and the Little Boy*, 2009). Of the latest G20 Summit, for example, President Obama declared that it "achieved a hard won consensus" (*Voice of America*, 12 November 2010).

Inspirational models for global exploration?

*Winnie the Pooh exploring
the Tree of Knowledge*

*Early airplane flying machines
and their "magnificent men"*

Magic carpets



Such "models" (as in the middle panel above) could be fruitfully compared to those explored in the cult movie (*Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines*, 1965). This helpfully highlights the degrees of fantasy, arrogance, duplicity and underhandedness characteristic of elaborators and users of such "models". A more empathetic depiction is offered by the classic image of Pooh Bear using a balloon to rise up to the level of a bee hive in a tree in order to obtain the honey -- perhaps the ultimate metaphor for global strategic aspirations. More intriguing is the inspiration offered by flying kites in all their variety -- as noted above in the case of Ludwig Wittgenstein.

At the same time it is the "non-existent" movements, indifferent to any "universal" rule of law or rationality -- the Al-Qaidas and the Tea Parties -- which offer and attract a sense of "universal" coherence. Experienced as "right" by those they sway, they are readily experienced as "flying" and able to transport others with them. Rather than isolated "eagles", they may be compared to strategically nimble swarms, whether of starlings, locusts, or fish. As swarms they exhibit a particular form of [collective intelligence](#) -- currently researched as [swarm intelligence](#). Conventional institutions, much constrained in their collective intelligence, are much challenged in their capacity to benefit from this mode, as separately discussed (*Enabling Collective Intelligence in Response to Emergencies*, 2010).

Aside from the "visible" models, fantastic or otherwise, worldwide engagement with fantasy is evident in the case of the blockbuster book/movie series of recent decades (*Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, *Avatar*, etc). These could be understood as fruitfully exploring the interface between the conventional models and the fantastic. As commentators have noted, *Avatar's* underlying social and political themes attracted attention, with [commentary controversy](#) polarized between:

- its highlighting of the disastrous application of Pentagon-inspired NATO-logic to a world of quality imbued with other principles -- showing profound resistance to capitalism and the struggle for the defence of nature. It is the world of those so attacked and exploited that emerges as more attractive, credible and coherent.
- its use of villainous American characters to misrepresent facets of militarism, capitalism, and imperialism.

This trend is even more evident in the development of video games and virtual worlds. In contrast to the misleading global promotion of (western) "democracy" as a "universal" model, these actually offer interactive engagement of a kind -- to the point of involving "swarms" of people for many hours each day. What so-called "global plans" achieve this? How is the meaning of the one to be compared with the meaning of the other -- and who is to pronounce credibly on the matter in a world of "spin", as an authoritative variant of fantasy?

There is a huge irony to the release at the time of writing of a video game *Call of Duty: Black Ops*. Developed in the USA (as with other videos glorifying war and used to promote conscription), it challenges players to assassinate former Cuban president Fidel Castro. This has provoked an angry response from the Cuban government arguing that it glorifies real [targetted assassination](#) attempts by the USA (Adam Gabbatt, *Call of Duty: Black Ops upsets Cuba with Castro mission*, *The Guardian*, November 2010). The irony is all the greater given:




- the banning in 2008 of a video game (*Medal of Honor*) on US military bases, allowing players to pretend to be a Taliban fighter and to "shoot" U.S. troops in Afghanistan (as reported by [IranDefence.net](#))
- the appeal by Reverend [Pat Robertson](#) (a former US Presidential candidate and friend of George Bush), speaking to 7 million viewers of the evangelical [Christian Broadcasting Network](#) on 23 August 2005 [\[more\]](#) called for the assassination of the president of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez: *We have the ability to take him out, and I think the time has come to exercise that ability... It's a whole lot easier to have some of the covert operatives do the job and then get it over with.* [\[more more more\]](#)
- that operatives of [Blackwater Worldwide](#) -- a prime security company under contract to the US government, noted for the secretive nature of its operations -- have recently been indicted for killing Iraqis (*Blackwater Indictment Alleges Grisly Tale*, *CBS News*, 8 December 2008); the company subsequently changed its name to *Xe Services*
- as noted on a [Cuban government-run website](#), what the United States government did not achieve in more than 50 years, it now tries to do virtually
- frequent claims that the President of the USA is the "most powerful man on Earth" are seemingly belied (at least according to the rules of boxing and wrestling) by the fact that Castro remained unbeaten after [638 attempts on his life](#) -- instigated by a long succession of US presidents seeking his mantle. (Others who might appropriately wear the mantle include Osama bin Laden, given that he too stands undefeated after the expenditure of a trillion dollars over a decade.)
- video game technology will certainly evolve in the near future to enable players to substitute the face, dress and name of "Castro" with those of enemies of choice -- Obama, Osama, Pope, Jesus, Mohamed, father, mother-in-law, boss, neighbour, etc? This will allow for many opportunities of exploring private and collective fantasies and will undoubtedly evoke far greater protest, especially when upheld as seditious, blasphemous, or an incitement to terrorism. It is effectively a democratization of a mode long inspired by the Pentagon-Hollywood script writing association (*Hollywood and The Pentagon: A Dangerous Liaison*).

Far more interesting however, in such imaginative environments, is the nature of cognitive engagement with the fantasy archetypes from the past -- deprecated so thoroughly by a science that is much constrained in its ability to offer alternatives with the same power and

accessibility. Ironically technology has become the handmaiden of fantasy -- whether in support of online gaming or use of drones in Afghanistan. Especially interesting in relation to any "models" capable of "flying" is the popular enthusiasm for "dragons" -- whether dangerously destructive, or offering a magical ride as a consequence of appropriate bonding between dragon and rider. Part of the myth are the conditions in which such bonding can be enabled -- somewhat akin to enabling any cognitive "model". However the dragons are felt to be "alive" and worthy of respect .

It can be readily imagined how enthralling and credible would be archetypal battles by a "swarm" (or "fellowship") of dragon riders in a virtual world -- in response to the "black operatives" of the Pentagon fantasy worldview. The latter, complete with its **Saurons**, **Dark Lords** and **Darth Vadars**, would then be cast as commanding the "dark force" -- complete with its "dark riders" (*The "Dark Riders" of Social Change: a challenge for any Fellowship of the Ring*, 2002). Of course, with the Pentagon controlled by the Tea Party worldview, it would be the dragon riders who would be cast as the demonic force -- calling for action by Imperial forces of law and order with the aid of their drones.

In the Al-Qaida worldview, the cultural preference might be for "magic carpets" rather than dragons. Ironically the "magic carpet" metaphor has been used in Afghanistan to describe an educational strategy (*Operation Magic Carpet Ride*, *Radio Free Afghanistan*, 18 June 2010) and a US-government funded carpet weaving program (*The Pentagon's Million-Dollar Magic Carpet Ride*, *MSM Monitor*, 28 August 2010). More curious is the adaptation of the metaphor for the construction of a *Medium Altitude Global ISR and Communications (MAGIC)* (Bill Sweetman, *Believing in Magic*, *Ares: A Defense Technology Blog*, 27 August 2010). Is this the nature of memetic warfare (*Missiles, Missives, Missions and Memetic Warfare*, 2001)?

Kite flying?	Strategic balloons?	Strategic dragons to ride?
		
<p>see <i>Wittgenstein Flies a Kite: a story of models of wings and models of the world</i>, 2006</p>	<p>see <i>Globallooming: Strategic Inflation of Expectations and Inconsequential Drift</i>, 2009</p>	<p>see Chinese symbolism of the dragon dance and two dragons in pursuit of a pearl of wisdom</p>

Conclusion

Strategic concerns with "global" initiatives are undermined by misapplication of otherwise fruitful metaphors. These reinforce confusion and tendencies to oversimplification. They fail to challenge reliance on both linear thinking and the role of a **plan view** (with respect to planning and explanation). These confusions are evident in assumptions made in taking advantage of the spherical form of the planetary globe to obscure the challenges of "universality" within which each perspective claiming validity necessarily holds alternatives to be misguided or "wrong". The use of the globe as a metaphor could therefore benefit from new thinking to highlight the real possibilities of integrative, "global" conversation (*Future Generation through Global Conversation: in quest of collective well-being through conversation in the present moment*, 1997). However, it also follows from the above argument that such renewed understanding of the metaphor should provide for the sense that those considering themselves "enlightened" by a particular model of reality necessarily recognize that those favouring alternative perspectives are variously "endarkened". The cyclic movements of the Earth readily integrate and reconcile such otherwise inexplicable (and unacceptable) paradoxes (*Engaging with the Inexplicable, the Incomprehensible and the Unexpected*, 2010).

For an individual, the above argument suggests that, if a model "works for you", and "tickles your fancy", then "grab a hold of it and fly" -- as advocated in the **Woody Allen** comedy (*Whatever Works*, 2009). Become a "dragon rider" and team up with others of your kind. It is this kind of team building and magical bonding that interactive online gaming facilitates. This contrasts with the primitive and unimaginative team building developed by such means through Pentagon-NATO gaming, notably for recruitment purposes (*Army Game Project*). Part of the challenge may be communicating the nature of any richer sense of identity. In that respect the comment by **Kenneth Boulding** is relevant with regard to the use of "metaphor", could be usefully replaced by "fantasy" in the following:

Our consciousness of the unity of the self in the middle of a vast complexity of images or material structures is at least a suitable metaphor for the unity of a group, organization, department, discipline, or science. If personification is only a metaphor, let us not despise metaphors - we might be one ourselves. (*Ecodynamics: a new theory of societal evolution*, 1978).

On the collective and global scale, there is a case for attentive exploration of how fantasy "works" where conventional modalities so clearly fail and are increasingly lacking in credibility (*Relevance of Mythopoeic Insights to Global Challenges*, 2009). How indeed will collective and swarm intelligence work in the 21st century? One exploration emphasized the relation between Twitter and swarm intelligence (*Re-Emergence of the Language of the Birds through Twitter?*, 2010). The intimate relation between fantasy and the dynamics of "spin" suggest that insights into the latter through the whirlpools and tornados of nature may offer a vital key (*Enabling Governance through the Dynamics of Nature: exemplified by cognitive implication of vortices and helicoidal flow*, 2010).

The need for a preoccupation with the role of "strategic fantasies" at this time is very "realistic", as suggested by **John O'Sullivan** (*'Everything Changed': Would That the Cliche Were True*, 16 September 2002):

It would be comforting to report that American conservatives had criticized and opposed this State Department drift [of favoring European integration]. Unfortunately, with few exceptions, they have accepted the false picture of a Europe already unified in opposition to the U.S., denounced it in apocalyptic terms, and gone on to advance strategic fantasies of replacing NATO with an anti-Islamic alliance built on Turkey (an Islamic country), Russia (which just signed a trade deal with Iraq), India (which is violently hostile to America's client, President Musharraf of Pakistan), and Israel. It is, of course, an achievement of sorts to have produced a foreign policy even more unrealistic than that of the U.S. State Department.

Reference is also made to "strategic fantasies" by [Sergey Karaganov](#) (*Strategic Havoc, Russia in Global Affairs*, 9 April 2010) with respect to the recent call for setting a specific goal of ridding the world of nuclear arms and for launching a massive campaign in support of Nuclear Zero. Google -- with a corporate motto of *Don't be evil* -- currently offers 814 hits in response to the query "strategic fantasies".

The current strategic fantasies follow those of an earlier period, as noted by Patrick Deer (*Culture in Camouflage: war, empire, and modern British literature*, 2009):

The interwar years saw a massive effort to make strategic fantasies a reality; if the technology of imperial air power or mobile armoured warfare did not yet exist, culture could be mobilized to shore up the ramshackle war machine.

Ironically, the fundamental importance attached to the [dragon in Chinese culture](#) -- framing themselves as the "descendants of the dragon" -- suggests that more attention should be given to the widely popular fantasy of the [dragon dance](#). Through it teams of up to 50 people embody a dragon -- even two or [nine dragons](#), requiring complex choreography to explore their intertwining. The dance might then even be understood as framing the intertwined relationships between contrasting fantasies -- such as those of Al-Qaida or the Tea Party movement, or perhaps of the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Although any notion of "dragon" by modern military forces might now be considered ridiculous, it is most curious that the military has already indulged in this fantasy to a high degree through the naming of many forms of weaponry and mission, whether in the specific case of "dragon" (eg. [B-23 Dragon](#), [HMS Dragon](#)) or other such entities and their associated artefacts ([X-47 Pegasus](#), [HAI Pegasus](#), [Operation Pegasus](#) (1968), [Trident](#) (missile), [Operation Mars](#), [Supermarine Scimitar](#), [Centaur tank](#), etc). Which mythical entities have not been used in this way and why? It would not be surprising to discover that the comprehensive manuals of *Dungeons and Dragons* were used as a resource. A number of intergovernmental organizations follow this pattern in using names of classical deities and their symbols. The process is notably well developed in the fashion industry where the names of most classical deities are now brand names.

Librarians have a tale regarding the misfiling -- under "urban planning" -- of the *City of God* by [St Augustine of Hippo](#). Might the reverse now be appropriate, namely filing any isolated "global plan" under fantasy -- especially if based on a "universal declaration"? This would be consistent with what Peter A. Clark has described as the *"the strategic fantasies of formal, written mission statements"* in contrast with a *"can do emphasis"* (*Organisations in Action: competition between contexts*, 2000, p. 214).

Rather than sterile "plans", shifting metaphor, there may indeed be a case for "magic carpets" in which contrasting thematic threads are interwoven in braided discourse (*Interweaving Thematic Threads and Learning Pathways: Noonautics, Magic carpets and Wizardomes*, 2010). The implication of such magic carpets for governance have been separately explored (*Magic Carpets as Psychoactive Systems Diagrams*, 2010).

The apparent degree of abandonment of the "rational" regarding matters global, in contrast with "local" technical detail, does in fact open opportunities for forms of reconciliation which would be impossible in a purely "rational" context. This point is made, by [Robert Sapolsky](#) with regard to possibilities of exploiting the brain's tendency to confuse reality and literalness with metaphor and symbol (*This Is Your Brain on Metaphors*, *The New York Times*, 14 November 2010). Citing the work of [Robert Axelrod](#), a political scientist and game theorist, he argues that this neural confusion about the literal versus the metaphorical gives symbols enormous power, including the power to make peace and to facilitate conflict resolution. How then best to cultivate global strategic fantasies of choice?

Symbolic representation of strategic fantasies



1965 Logo of UN International Cooperation Year



Dragon dance in quest of the Tao



Tao embodying the dragon dance



1971 Logo of UN International Year for Action to Combat Racism

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